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# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**THE MECHANICS OF RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN  
THE CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA – REGIONAL  
HEGEMONY OR NEO-IMPERIALISM?**

by

Andrea L. Hlosek

March 2006

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CENTRAL ASIA – REGIONAL HEGEMONY OR NEO-IMPERIALISM?**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS**

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Under President Putin, Russia's foreign policy adopted the characteristics of Great Power Normalization, a pragmatic, economically focused model described by Andrei Tsygankov. Its tenets include cooperative economic and security relationships with the West, to include tolerance of Western military presence in the Former Soviet Union (FSU); a refocused foreign policy toward the FSU designed to secure regional hegemony; and a de-emphasis of large-scale integration efforts such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in lieu of bilateral and regionally focused multilateral efforts that elevate geo-economic goals over military presence. Russian foreign policy during President Putin's second term of office however, appears to have become more assertive, characterized by increasing conflict with CIS member Georgia, renewed military presence in Central Asia and the Caspian Basin at the expense of Western presence, and an aggressive energy agenda that has secured Russia large stakes in FSU energy infrastructure and a monopoly on regional oil and gas pipelines that export raw materials to outside markets. This thesis analyzed Russian influence in diplomatic, cultural, economic and military efforts across two regions, the Caucasus and Central Asia, to determine whether Russia is merely pursuing regional hegemony or establishing neo-imperialistic ties in its backyard.



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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

On 2 February 2006, U.S. National Intelligence Director John Negroponte provided the Senate Intelligence Committee his annual Threat Assessment. While the bulk of the document focuses on the global Islamic Jihadist threat, Negroponte also outlined developments in several traditional states deemed to be of greatest concern to the United States, among them Russia. Negroponte testified that:

Russia could become a more inward-looking and difficult interlocutor for the United States over the next several years. High profits from exports of oil and gas and perceived policy successes at home and abroad have bolstered Moscow's confidence... [G]rowing suspicions about Western intentions and Moscow's desire to demonstrate its independence and defend its own interests may make it harder to cooperate with Russia on areas of concern to the United States.<sup>1</sup>

In an open letter to the governments of NATO and the European Union (EU), a significant number of eminent Russia scholars, policy analysts and Euro-Atlantic political leaders observed the deteriorating nature of Russian democracy under President Putin. In the area of foreign relations they remarked that "President Putin's foreign policy is increasingly marked by a threatening attitude towards Russia's neighbors and Europe's energy security, the return of rhetoric of militarism and empire, and by a refusal to comply with Russia's international treaty obligations."<sup>2</sup> Other scholars argue to the contrary: that Russian foreign policy has been accommodating to the West, despite being confronted with events such as NATO and EU expansion and U.S. military presence in its backyard, specifically Georgia, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. They argue that with instability arising from Islam extremists on its Southern flank and

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<sup>1</sup> Transcript of statement available online at Director of National Intelligence Homepage <http://www.dni.gov/WWT%20Oral%20Statement%20UNCLASSIFIED%201%20February%20FINAL%20VERSION.pdf> (accessed February 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Urban Ahlin et al., An Open Letter to the Governments of NATO and the European Union dated 28 September 2004. The Brookings Institution. <http://www.brookings.edu/fp/cuse/russia20040928.htm> (accessed March 2006).

growing economic power of China to its East, Russia has little choice but to embrace the Euro-Atlantic community and commit to peaceful coexistence with the West, if not full integration.<sup>3</sup>

Between these extremes lie foreign policy experts like Andrei Tsygankov, who maintain President Putin's strategy, described as Great-Power Normalization, has resulted in foreign policy that is pragmatic, focused neither exclusively on Western integration, nor on renewed imperial ambitions and *realpolitik* attempts to balance against the West. It is driven by economic imperatives, not the geopolitical ambitions or ideological roots that characterize Russia's more nationalist or Eurasianist policy activists. The Great Power Normalization agenda is supported domestically by a coalition of commercial and security interests, but is not dominated by military industrialists and security forces. Its foreign policy goal is to maintain economic and security cooperation with the West while also becoming the dominant center of influence in former Soviet areas. It is not preoccupied with perceptions of American unipolarity as Russia's greatest threat, but it is also not seeking integration with the West or a pro-Western foreign policy.

This thesis examines the aspect of Tsygankov's argument that deals with Russia's relations with the members of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). It will deal specifically with Moscow's foreign policy toward its neighbors in two geographic regions: the Caucasus and Central Asia, both on the country's strategic southern flank. On the one hand, Tsygankov argues that Putin's approach differs from Russian Westernizers' non-interference model that would allow former Soviet states to pursue their own path of development (even if it means integration in Western institutional structures such as NATO and the EU). On the other hand, it stops short of reintegration or neo-imperialism; it eschews integration efforts that come at a high price, and focuses on a pragmatic course of bilateral relations and coalition building to combat regional terrorist threats. Under this policy Russia seeks to reclaim its great power status through

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<sup>3</sup> Dmitri Trenin, *The End of Eurasia: Russia on the Border between Geopolitics and Globalization* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002).

economic revitalization. It would then once again become an attractive model and security partner to its post-Soviet neighbors and regain the dominant influence in the region that it lost in the 1990s.

Three related research questions arise from consideration of Russia's pursuit of influence in the former Soviet republics.

First, what are the mechanisms Russia has used in its efforts to reestablish a presence in the former Soviet republics? Second, how successful have Moscow's efforts been? Third, what motivates Russia's policy in the former Soviet republics? Does it reflect the tenets of Great Power Normalization, Great Power Balancing, or Liberal Imperialism current among the Russian political elite? If motivated by Tsygankov's Great Power Normalization, then Moscow is simply exercising its prerogative (as a regional Great Power) to be a dominant player in its own backyard (much as the United States did when it articulated the Monroe Doctrine and the Roosevelt Corollary). Or is Russian policy driven by what Tsygankov describes as Great Power Balancers, who seek re-integration of the former Soviet areas and a formal re-creation of the Soviet empire? Tsygankov describes this type of imperialism as one where one country formally assumes control over another's sovereignty through military force and subsequent colonial economic and social development (the Soviet model). He argues that neither of these characteristics is evident in Russia's current behavior. While Moscow still intends to use "sticks and carrots" to extract support from the newly independent states, the sticks will no longer come in the form of brute force intended to subjugate another state, but "informal diplomatic influences and soft power."<sup>4</sup> Is Russian policy instead motivated by economic liberalism? Rather than a traditional, expansionist oriented empire, Russia is attempting to create a "liberal" empire, driven by mutually beneficial incentives, primarily economic. Successful pursuit of these efforts requires that the influence of the West in this region, especially the United States, be limited as much as possible in order for Russia to preserve and build its own power and enhance its prestige and influence."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Andrei Tsygankov, "Vladimir Putin's Vision of Russia as a Normal Great Power," *Post Soviet Affairs* 21, no. 2, (2005): 133.

<sup>5</sup> The reference to a "liberal" empire was made by Anatoly Chubais, head of Russia's electricity monopoly, RAO UES during a press conference in September 2003 and will be discussed further in subsequent chapters.



The methodology used to answer these questions is a comparative case study of two regions: the Caucasus and Central Asia, with specific emphasis on Georgia and Uzbekistan. These regions were selected because of their strategic importance to Russia. They lie on its vulnerable southern flank, a multi-ethnic patchwork of primarily Muslim regions in the Caucasus and permeable borders vulnerable to Islamic extremists and drug traffickers in Central Asia. In addition, both regions border the energy-rich Caspian Basin. Within the regions, Georgia and Uzbekistan were selected for emphasis because they both have attempted to distance themselves from Moscow since the fall of the Soviet Union. They have pursued largely independent foreign policies and agendas, and therefore provide a good litmus test for assessing Russian motives as well as how effective Russia's attempts to re-exert its influence have been. .

## **B. THESIS FINDINGS**

The central question addressed is whether Russia's efforts to establish a dominant influence in post Soviet spaces reflect the pragmatic nature of the policy described by Tsygankov or a more imperial ambition. It should be noted that Tsygankov's definition of imperialism relies on a model that seems to have become antiquated in a post Cold War era, where national sovereignty is the defining tenet of global affairs. Historically, imperialism was the direct territorial conquest or settlement of another country, or the indirect exercise of control through the politics and/or economy of other countries. This is the role Moscow played during the Cold War, direct territorial conquest with respect to its "inner" empire and indirect political and economic control of its "outer" empire through the Communist Party. It is highly unlikely that imperialism based on this definition would arise again anywhere on the globe. Instead, one must look at more modern manifestations of imperialism, frequently referred to as neo-imperialism, where a strong country trades territorial and political domination for economic domination and diplomatic influence; in other words, major powers using economic and political means to perpetuate or extend their influence over weaker states.<sup>6</sup>

Using Tsygankov's models and definitions, this thesis largely reveals that Russian behavior does most closely resemble Great-Power Normalization – the pragmatic,

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<sup>6</sup> These types of relationships are examined closely in Dependency Theory, a model of international relations usually applied to study of relationships between modern nations and the poor states of Africa.

economic oriented approach to projecting influence -- versus an anti-Western balancing approach, integration, and a military emphasis in projecting influence. Despite an extensive increase in Moscow's ability and willingness to influence regional issues and dominate the regional agenda, Russian actions had not yet in 2006 alienated the West nor set up a new Great Game. On the contrary, both the U.S. and Europe appeared far more occupied in 2006 with Russia's domestic political issues -- its stalled path toward democracy -- than its foreign policy agenda in its "near abroad." The U.S. National Security Strategy 2006 document cited Russia as a partner in global security issues related to counterterrorism and nonproliferation, especially in regard to Iran and the DPRK. It further recognized that due to its geography and power "Russia has great influence not only in Europe and its own immediate neighborhood, but also in many other regions of vital interest to us: the broader Middle East, South and Central Asia, and East Asia."<sup>7</sup>

Economic cooperation with the West, another key component of Putin's pragmatic foreign policy approach, was also not impaired by Russian policy in Central Asia and the Caucasus. In fact, foreign investment in Russia continued to increase <sup>8</sup> and Moscow embarked on several large scale cooperative energy projects with EU and/or NATO countries, specifically the Northern European and the Blue Stream gas pipelines. Russia felt confident enough in its international position to play a major role in global affairs, taking an independent position on issues such as Iranian nuclear proliferation and diplomatic relations with Hamas. Both issues showcased Moscow as an important interlocutor for the West, taking a middle ground that did not parrot the Euro-Atlantic position but did not undermine it either.

Where Tsygankov's approach falls short however, is in addressing the impact of Russia's economic offensive on its neighbors. While Russia has every right to normalize

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<sup>7</sup> National Security Strategy Report 2006, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/nss2006.pdf> (accessed March 2006).

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report Global Investment Prospects Assessment 2005-2008. Half of the top 10 countries ranked by experts and transnational corporations were from the developing world. China was considered the most attractive with the other top five being the US, India, the Russian Federation and Brazil, <http://www.unctad.org/Templateswebflyer.asp?docid=6301&intItemID=1528&lang=1> (accessed March 2006)

its energy relationships with CIS neighbors and stop subsidizing their gas, oil and electricity consumption, its increasing stranglehold on regional energy infrastructure in the early twenty-first century began to border on neo-imperialism, the ability to exert control over another country using economic power. Tsygankov's criteria does not sufficiently address this phenomenon because it focuses on political reintegration through mechanisms such as the CIS and uses an anti-Western agenda as the sole measure of whether Russia has moved beyond pragmatic Great Power normalization. The line between these two arenas is far more nuanced and merits closer examination. Analysis of the case studies will enable the reader to judge better whether or not Russia has crossed this boundary. While the difference between exerting "normal" Great Power influence and imperial domination may be a fine line (especially for those in backyard who may not perceive a difference at all), for the West, which strongly supports unhampered democratic development in the FSU, it is an important distinction. Moscow's efforts have met with somewhat mixed success. While President Putin's administration has been characterized by a renewed attention to its "near abroad," pro-West popular revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine led many Russian experts to consider 2004 a low point in Russian foreign policy, a repudiation of Russia's influence in the former Soviet republics.<sup>9</sup> Russia's diplomatic rhetoric at the time concerning the CIS was appropriately evenhanded. President Putin told a conference of Russian ambassadors in July 2004 that Russia did not have a monopoly on the CIS. Foreign Minister Lavrov elaborated further, explaining that CIS states enjoyed "the sovereign right to build their foreign policies in accordance with their own national interests. This is the reason why no other state or group of states can lay claims to monopoly influence. Any attempt to place the CIS countries in a false dilemma ("either with the West, or with Russia") would be unnatural, dangerous and irresponsible. No one would gain from a revival of obsolete methods of geopolitical rivalry."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Newspaper interview with Sergei Karaganov, Chairman of the presidium of the Foreign and Defense Policy Council. Yulia Petrovskaya, "Take Care Not to Repeat the Same Mistake - Russia Can Replace Regimes, but Cannot Offer an Attractive Model. A Review of Russia's Foreign Policy Performance in 2004," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta – Dipkurier*, No. 16 (79), December 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Lavrov, Sergei, "Democracy, International Governance, and the Future World Order," *Russia in Global Affairs*, (January - March 2005), <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/numbers/10/818.html> (accessed February 2006).

Throughout 2005 however, as the U.S. struggled with the insurgency in Iraq and natural disasters at home, and the confidence of the EU was shaken by failures to ratify its new constitution, Russia's international stock was rising. Despite cooperation with the United States on issues ranging from counterterrorism to counter proliferation, and public declarations to the contrary, Moscow continued to view foreign influence in these spaces as a zero sum game: American presence was viewed as a painful concession, with other countries filling a vacuum left by Russian retreat.<sup>11</sup> Moscow's relationship with westward-leaning Georgia grew increasingly tense in 2005, characterized by energy disputes and controversy over Russian peacekeepers. Having successfully lobbied in 2005 for closure of Russian bases left over from the Soviet era, Tbilisi then attempted to secure the withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from its two secessionist regions and draw increased international visibility to the frozen conflicts. At the same time however, Moscow appeared to have rebounded and reasserted itself in Central Asia, particularly in historically neutral Uzbekistan. In 2005, working through the SCO, Moscow helped orchestrate the eviction of U.S. military forces from Karshi-Kanabad (K2) Airbase in Uzbekistan. Shortly thereafter, Moscow entered into a historic mutual defense pact with Uzbekistan, a country that has held Russia at arms length and was a strategic partner in the U.S.-led "Global War on Terrorism." Uzbekistan was the first Central Asian state to participate in NATO's Partnership for Peace and has held joint exercises with US and NATO troops. In 1999 President Karimov pulled out of the CIS collective security pact and joined the pro-Western GUAM organization (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova). In March 2002 President Karimov signed the Uzbek-American Declaration on Strategic Partnership which pledged economic, military, political and cultural cooperation. The US emphasized pursuit of democratic values and institutions, in addition to security, and accompanied the pact with a \$160M aid package to support internal reforms.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Zagorski, Andrei, "Russia and the Shared Neighbourhood," *Chaillot Paper* #74 (January 2005), 69.

<sup>12</sup> Government of Uzbekistan Homepage. [http://2004.press-service.uz/eng/pressa\\_eng/pressa\\_eng8.htm](http://2004.press-service.uz/eng/pressa_eng/pressa_eng8.htm) and US Department of State Homepage. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2002/8736.htm> (accessed February 2006).

## **C. METHODOLOGY**

Russia's available levers of power in the region and the identification of its most (and least) effective means in advancing its foreign policy goals. This is done through a Diplomatic, Information, Military and Economic (DIME) construct, a format frequently used by the United States military. It examines areas of national power that are leveraged in "effects-based" operations against an adversary's vulnerabilities. This model, traditionally used by information operators to assist combatant commands, attempts to outline the full range of DIME actions that a state can use to achieve specific effects on an adversary's will and capability in support of national objectives.<sup>13</sup> Within each case study, this thesis first examines the information realm, specifically the impact of Russia's cultural influence in the region. Second, in the diplomatic realm focuses on key Kremlin political initiatives, such as regional integration and efforts to maintain the political status quo of authoritarian regimes in the CIS, as well as efforts to exploit the internal instability of others to maximize Moscow's influence. Third, a look at economic mechanisms, the most significant of which is an aggressive energy agenda, reveals how Russia has focused upon its comparative advantage -- its natural resources -- to gain leverage in its relationships with CIS members. Finally, each case study closes with examination of military and security mechanisms such as regional threat-protection efforts. Analysis of all these factors reveals Russia has been extremely active in waging a multi-dimensional geopolitical offensive to restore its influence throughout much of the CIS, with its greatest success taking place in Central Asia.

## **D. CHAPTER SUMMARY**

### **1. Chapter II: Theoretical Framework and Background**

This chapter provides a literature review and explains three primary schools of Russian thought regarding foreign policy: Integrationists, Great Power Normalizers and Great Power Balancers.<sup>14</sup> It discusses the history of the CIS organization and why it does not serve as a useful tool for Russian integration efforts. Finally, it provides background on several key issues that affect Russian foreign policy, to include:

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<sup>13</sup> U.S. Joint Forces Command Glossary. DIME and Operational Net Assessment (ONA) definitions available online at <http://www.jfcom.mil/about/glossary.htm> (accessed January 2006).

<sup>14</sup> Tsygankov. 2005

- Impact of “color” revolutions
- Significant economic issues
- Significant security issues

## **2. Chapter III: Caucasus Case Study**

This chapter will cover the Caucasus and identify major Russian policy efforts using the DIME construct (diplomacy, information, military and economy). Issues that will dominate this section are regional security with regard to terrorism and organized crime, Chechnya, and the presence of Russian peacekeeping troops in Georgia, as well as economic issues related specifically to the Caspian oil reserves and access to transshipment pipelines.

## **3. Chapter IV: Central Asia Case Study**

This chapter will cover Central Asia and identify major policy efforts also using the DIME construct. Issues of regional security, especially as it relates to Islamic extremism, as well as basing of both Russian and Western troops dominate this chapter. However, it will also discuss regional security and economic cooperation through efforts such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

## **4. Chapter V: Conclusion**

The final chapter reviews the mechanisms that have reinvigorated Russia’s influence in Central Asia and the Caucasus and analyzes whether the key economic, political and military initiatives in select former-Soviet countries in the past two years support the thesis of Russia’s Great-Power Normalization or arguments suggesting Russian policy is above all aimed at balancing the United States, with corresponding significance for US-Russia relations. The DIME construct reveals the relative strengths of the different mechanisms of influence within each region, making it easier for Western policy makers to devise appropriate strategies for countering or cooperating with Russian interests and addressing the implications for U.S. policy interests when competing with Russia for influence in the former Soviet republics.

The overall conclusion drawn here is that while Russian foreign policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia may appear confrontational to outside observers, overall it reflects Tsygankov’s model of a new pragmatic approach to foreign policy and does not appear to be characterized by a return to the anti-American balancing approach.

Nonetheless, Moscow's relations with the CIS leave cause for concern which Tsygankov's model does not adequately address. Moscow, as a regional hegemon, has a natural role to play in the former Soviet republics, especially in Central Asia. However, that role should not consist of military intervention, political subversion and economic colonialism however. Russia possesses a cultural advantage in the CIS (more so in Central Asia than the Caucasus) that makes it a more attractive economic and strategic partner to its neighbors. In addition, due to geographic proximity, it shares more intensely the security concerns of the region than the West ever could. These are comparative advantages that should allow Russia to be the dominant influence in its backyard, leading by the strength of its economy and its political relationships. When Russia oversteps this boundary, and attempts to subvert the interests of its neighbors, or subordinate their interests to its own, it risks repudiation and a backlash of the sort that spawns colored revolutions.

## **II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND BACKGROUND**

This chapter describes the theoretical framework used in this thesis and provides the historical background and context that enables readers who may be unfamiliar with the study of Russia to better interpret the motivations behind Russian foreign policy efforts. The first two sections consist of a literature review which focuses on a key issue in Russian discourse, the search for identity. It also explains three primary schools of Russian thought regarding foreign policy and how they fit into Tsygankov's model. The third section provides an overview of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) organization and why it does not serve as an adequate vehicle for implementing President Putin's foreign policy efforts in the former Soviet republics and prompting the need to closer bilateral and sub-regional ties as called for in the Great Power Normalizer model. The fourth sections provide the reader background on several key issues that impact Russia foreign policy: the impact of the recent Color Revolutions on Russia; the large role that economic development has taken in Russia's foreign policy agenda, especially its emphasis on energy; and a synopsis of Russia's security concerns relative to its Southern flank.

### **A. PART ONE - LITERATURE REVIEW**

A common theme that emerges in literature on Russian foreign policy is that it is hindered by the country's struggle for national identity. Throughout its centuries long history, Russia can not seem to consistently decide whether it wants to be European or something uniquely different; whether it wants to embrace the West or stand as an opposing pole in a multipolar international system. This identity crisis creates significant philosophical space for domestic debate and room for geopolitical maneuver and in post-Soviet Russia manifests itself in the political debates between Westernizers (also known as Integrationists or Atlanticists) at one end of the spectrum and Realists (also known as Balancers) at the other. While other fringe movements in Russian foreign policy thinking exist, Russian scholar Andrei Tsygankov points out that "the competition in the mainstream national discourse has become a contest fought out among the Integrationists, the great power Balancers and great power Normalizers (a middle ground between the



two).<sup>15</sup> What they all have in common is the struggle to define an issue that occupies scholars of Russian foreign policy (and the minds of ordinary Russians themselves): what is the nation's role with respect to the West. Are Russians a part of Europe or not a part of Europe? Does Europe want to embrace Russia as one of its own and does Russia want to be embraced in turn?

The West has had a significant impact on Russia for centuries. Europe served as the model to rulers such as Peter the Great who sought to modernize his empire politically, economically and culturally and laid the foundation that allowed Russia to become a continental Great Power at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. James Billington, in his book *Russia in Search of Itself*, writes about the country's historical struggle to find its comfort level with regard to Western influence, sparking debate between Westernizers like Catherine the Great and Slavophiles, who attributed Russia's greatness to its Slavic roots, Orthodoxy, communal institutions and its rural nature, not a shared modernizing European culture.<sup>16</sup>

In modern discourse the nature of Russia's love-hate relationship with Europe is often characterized by Moscow's feeling that Europe does not appreciate all the sacrifices it has made and how many times it has been a martyr to Europe's greater good. Russians contend that it was their vast landmass served as the buffer zone, keeping the Mongol hordes at bay during the 13<sup>th</sup> century, while it subjugated its people to the Tatar yoke for over 200 years. It was the Russian army that defeated Napoleon in 1814, preserving the "pluralism of countries and peoples of Europe at the cost of absolutism in Russia."<sup>17</sup> In defense of its European Slav brothers, Russia suffered a painful defeat that plunged the country into civil war and spawned the Bolshevik revolution. Finally, Russia made tremendous human and material sacrifices in defeating Hitler's Germany and freeing Europe once again from tyranny. In turn, the fall of communism largely portrayed

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<sup>15</sup> Andrei Tsygankov, "Vladimir Putin's Vision of Russia as a Normal Great Power," *Post Soviet Affairs* 21, no. 2, (2005): 136-137. Tsygankov recognizes more hard-line factions, such as ultra nationalists and neo-imperialists that seek to reform the Soviet Union but argues that these have been marginalized in modern politics.

<sup>16</sup> James H. Billington, *Russia in Search of Itself* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2004), 12-15.

<sup>17</sup> Margot Light, "In Search of an Identity: Russian Foreign Policy and the End of Ideology," in *Ideology and National Identity in Post-Communist Foreign Policies*, ed. Rick Fawn (Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers, 2004) 54-55.

Russia as the vanquished party in the Cold War, versus recognizing it as “the side that simply ceased to play the Cold War game.”<sup>18</sup> Much to their disappointment, the fall of the Soviet Union did not result in Europe’s collective embrace of its Eastern cousin, but rather continued suspicion of its motives and fear of revanchism, evidenced by two rounds of NATO expansion and marginalization of Russia throughout the Kosovo conflict. These disappointments have served to discredit the liberal Russian establishment and its Integrationist agenda. Balancers on the other hand have capitalized on the country’s nagging feeling that Russia will never be accepted as an equal among the Europeans, a sentiment that keeps fanning the flames of other ideological orientations that counter Western integration.

The horrors of World War I and its disastrous aftermath for Russia led to an intellectual repudiation of the West and the formalization of the Eurasianist movement in the early 1920s by Russian émigrés. It called for Russia to forgo the trappings of overseas colonial empires like those of its French and British peers, and instead look inward and embrace its own “continental ocean” with its vast diversity of resources and riches.<sup>19</sup> Eurasianism touts Russia’s uniqueness as neither European nor Asian, but a distinct blend of the two and therefore calls for the country to pursue a different path, apart from both. It differs from ultra-nationalism however in that it embraces all of the different ethnic groups of the Russian landmass, as opposed to espousing a strict ethnically Russian chauvinism. Eurasianists would even argue that Mongol rule, rather than being the cause of Russia’s “slow-learning” and “late entry into a common European home” gave Russia its culture of strong, authoritarian rule, which allowed the unification of “quarreling principalities of medieval Russia and for building a land empire that Great Russia could grow to dominate.”<sup>20</sup>

In post-Soviet Russia, a more modern Eurasianist thinking was revived in response to the “Atlanticists” who were perceived to be pushing NATO membership into

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<sup>18</sup> Light.

<sup>19</sup> Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, “Asia through Russian Eyes,” in *Russia and Asia*, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972), 3-29.

<sup>20</sup> Billington, 71.

the heartland of the traditional Russian empire.<sup>21</sup> Disenchantment and frustration over stalled Western styled economic reforms, NATO's Kosovo campaign, criticism of Russia's operations in Chechnya and U.S. withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty all led to questioning of whether Russia really belonged in the Euro-Atlantic community. While 9/11 provided the prospect of a newfound cohesion between Russia and the West, it proved short-lived following the Bush administration's new global agenda of promoting democratization, especially in the former Soviet republics. Elements of this thinking have continued to color Moscow's perception of its role relative to other global powers, underpinning its belief that while Russia may no longer possess the formidable conventional military power of the Soviet era, it can and should exert geopolitical influence and diplomatic presence in Eurasia, a mandate that can not be discounted by the United States and Europe.

Respected scholar of Russian politics, Dmitri Trenin, argues that Eurasianism is a dead end for Russia, and that foreign policy has to "proceed from Russia's needs, not its elites' historical ambitions. Taking on the West, even in a token fashion, is detrimental to national interests."<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, he argues that the political instability of Russia's Muslim dominated southern flank, the rising regional influence of Iran and the growing economic power of China to the east, leaves Russia no option but to integrate with Europe and form an alliance with the United States. In order to balance against these forces, he sees Russia's geopolitical future lying with the West, and he predicts a retreat from Russia's perceptions of its unique Eurasian character toward a more liberal western tradition.<sup>23</sup> Other Integrationists like Sergei Kortunov argue that the "pragmatism of President Putin's course is only designed to cover up the obvious fact that the country's foreign policy is sporadic and based on a response-to-emergency formula."<sup>24</sup> In order to advance in a postindustrial society, he argues Russia must align its foreign policy "toward those states that have already embraced an innovative development model...as well as

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<sup>21</sup> Billington, 72.

<sup>22</sup> Dmitri Trenin, "Russia's Foreign and Security Policy Under Putin," (Carnegie Endowment, 2005)

<sup>23</sup> Dmitri Trenin, *The End of Eurasia: Russia on the Border Between Geopolitics and Globalization*, (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002).

<sup>24</sup> Sergei Kortunov, "Invigorating Russia's Foreign Policy," *Russia in Global Affairs* 4: October-December 2005.

countries sharing the same culture and other values, with Russia. These are primarily countries of Western Europe and the United States.”<sup>25</sup>

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia once again had to make a fundamental choice about its future. Would it embrace the West, like Peter the Great two centuries before, and reconcile with its European roots, or would it continue to stand apart and attempt to regain its Great Power status, refashioning itself as the heir to the Soviet legacy-- a global balancer to the West. While the Westernizer approach which was so discredited in the late 1990s seemed to be revived after 9/11, the tide appears to have turned back once again. In his annual address to the Federal Assembly in April 2005, President Putin stressed that “the civilizing mission of the Russian nation on the Eurasian continent should continue,” implying that Russia’s presence in the former Soviet republics will not wane, and heartening his Eurasianist constituency. It should be noted however that in the same speech, he also stated: “We are a major European nation; we have always been an integral part of Europe and share all its values and the ideals of freedom and democracy. But we will carry out this process ourselves, taking into account all our specific characteristics, and do not intend to report to anyone on the progress we make.” This dualistic approach is described by one analyst as “Western-oriented but Western-wary.”<sup>26</sup> It also allows Putin to play to different audiences and constituencies. He uses the “philosophical trappings of Eurasianism,” to shore up domestic support by echoing “the anti-American and ant globalization ethos of the Eurasianists” and reminding the world that neither Europe nor the U.S. have a patent on democracy.<sup>27</sup> On the other track, he champions integration with the economies of the Euro-Atlantic West, ensuring a satisfactory bottom line for Russia’s business elites. While Eurasianism may be a dead end for Russia, the West should be prepared for it to periodically dominate its dialogue with Moscow. Leaders like Putin will “continue to use it as a mantle because

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<sup>25</sup> Sergei Kortunov, “Invigorating Russia’s Foreign Policy,” *Russia in Global Affairs* 4: October-December 2005.Ibid

<sup>26</sup> Matthew Schmidt, “Is Russia Pursuing a Policy of Eurasianism,” *Demokratizatsiya*, 13, no. 1 (Winter 2005).

<sup>27</sup> Schmidt, 93.

they don't know where Russia's rightful place is. This means that inevitably Russia will go through periods of isolation, lack of modernization and confrontation with the West.”<sup>28</sup>

## B. PART TWO – TSYGANKOV'S MODEL

Tsygankov captures these disparate views on Russia's international strategy and formulates a model that compares the positions of the Integrationists, Normalizers and Balancers across three elements: state concentration, cooperation with the West, and projection of influence in the former Soviet republics. Tsygankov claims that Putin has adopted a foreign policy that occupies the middle ground, between Integrationists and Balancers, a pragmatic approach he terms Great Power Normalization, that seeks to maximize the benefits of both other approaches. This thesis analyzes the third element, Russian influence in its “near abroad,” by focusing on two regions, the Caucasus and Central Asia and, and determining whether Moscow's efforts align with Putin's Normalizer approach. The time frame of the analysis is the period 2003-2006 and reflects Russian response to key events such as the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the colored revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, significant developments frequently cited for the break down of the post 9/11 relationship between Russia and the West.

	<b>Integrationists</b>	<b>Great-Power Normalizers</b>	<b>Great-Power Balancers</b>
<b>Key Threats</b>	Isolation from the West	Economic weakness; terrorism	American unipolarity
<b>Central Goal</b>	Integration with the West	Great-Power normalization	Balancing American power
<b>Means Employed</b>	Liberal economic and political system; Pro-Western foreign policy; <b>Non-interference in CIS matters</b>	State-driven economic liberalization; Economic/security cooperation with the West; <b>Dominant influence in the former Soviet area</b>	Mercantilist modernization; Strategic alliances outside the US; <b>Re-integration of the former Soviet area</b>
<b>Supportive Coalitions</b>	Commercial elites and liberal media	Mixed coalition of commercial and security interests	Military industrialists and some security forces
<b>Main Intellectual Roots</b>	Western liberal philosophy of interdependence	Western geopolitical and geo-economic theories	Russian geopolitical theories

Table 1. Russia: Three Schools of Thought and their Grand Strategies (From Ref. 15).  
Emphases added.

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<sup>28</sup> Schmidt, 92.

Table 1 categorizes the key components of Tsygankov's model and explains how the different schools manifest themselves across different elements. Integrationists emphasize Russia's similarities with the West and believe that shared values such as human rights, democracy and market economy will create a "natural partnership".<sup>29</sup> Balancers see Russia as distinct from the West, motivated by its own Great Power interests that may conflict with those of the West. They view the international system from a realist perspective and seek to mold Russia into an "independent power in a multi-polar world," a counter-balance to the West, not a part of it.<sup>30</sup> Supporters of this approach, such as the military and security forces, argue that Moscow should enter into alliances with non-Western states such as China and India, modernize its economic infrastructure and strengthen "its ability to organize and control the post-Soviet space."<sup>31</sup> Tsygankov argues that under President Putin, Russian foreign policy has been one of Great Power Normalization which seeks a pragmatic middle road between the extremes of the Integrationists and the Balancers. In relations with the CIS, this approach argues that CIS integration is too costly, has generally not been successful and does not yield any benefits to Moscow. While Normalizers and Balancers share the vision of Moscow's dominant influence in post Soviet spaces, they disagree about the means for achieving this end, as well as in their characterization of what constitutes a threat to Russia. Unlike the balancers, pragmatists like President Putin see the key threat coming "not from the United States, but from falling behind in economic development."<sup>32</sup>

In order to analyze Russia's attempt to become the dominant influence in former Soviet areas, we make use of the DIME construct discussed in Chapter I to capture key diplomatic, information (culture), military and economic initiatives. These are compared against Tsygankov's observation that Putin's Great-Power Normalizer approach seeks to make Russia the dominant influence in the former area without appearing anti-Western and jeopardizing the economic and security ties that have developed between Russia and the West, which would reflect a Balancer approach. According to Tsygankov, with

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<sup>29</sup> Tsygankov, 2005.

<sup>30</sup> Tsygankov, 2005.

<sup>31</sup> Tsygankov, 2005.

<sup>32</sup> Tsygankov, 2005, 138.

respect to increasing influence in the former Soviet areas, Great-Power Normalizers differ from Balancers three significant ways:

- The CIS organization is no longer used as vehicle for reintegration; instead Putin has replaced it with “more flexible, issues-based coalitions” with informal mechanisms and bilateral negotiations of interests
- Russia welcomed limited military Western presence in Central Asia and the Caucasus
- Geo-economic interests took precedence over geopolitical interests

What Tsygankov is implying is that while Normalizers do not abandon security related mechanisms, they prefer to work with economic ones. For example, while maintaining bases in its backyard is still a feature of this new brand of Russian foreign policy, it is not for the purpose of seizing territorial control (the small size of Russia’s deployed forces is a testament to that.) Instead, it is intended to facilitate political and security related initiatives that Moscow is pursuing with its neighbors, such as regional stability, counterterrorism and border security. The effort is defensive, in that its intent is to protect Russia from regional and domestic instability (for example not providing Chechen rebels a permissive environment in Russia’s southern flank from which to launch raids into Russia proper.) Nor are full scale multilateral organizations such as the CIS being revitalized in an effort to expand Moscow’s authority over the former Soviet republics economically or politically; in fact the CIS has all but expired as a meaningful international entity, as will be discussed in the next chapter. In its place, Tsygankov argues, are a series of bilateral agreements, or “coalitions of the willing” formed around synergistic interests and means, both political and economic. The foundation of these however, are to be mutual interests and market incentives targeted at improving Russia’s (and hopefully its partners’) internal economic development.

One shortcoming of Tsygankov’s model however is that he limits his definition of revived imperialism, as advocated by the Balancers, to political reintegration through political mechanisms such as the CIS, military expansion and consistent articulation of an anti-Western international agenda. His model does not account for more modern neo-imperial efforts such as economic domination and exploitation of a less powerful country. Analysis of these efforts, especially as they pertain to the energy sector, will be noted during the case studies and discussed further in the Conclusion.

### C. PART THREE – A DIVIDED COMMONWEALTH

Although initially envisioned as a “neo-Soviet project,”<sup>33</sup> the Commonwealth of Independent States, formed in 1991, with membership of 11 of the former 15 Soviet republics, by the late 1990s was largely a symbolic union.<sup>34</sup> The Baltics opted out entirely; Ukraine waffled for a year, unsure of what form and purpose the new Commonwealth would take and Georgia finally joined in 1993 as a condition of Russian assistance in stabilizing the state following a secession related civil war. The former republics languished in a state of benign neglect for the first few years after the collapse of the Soviet Union as President Yeltsin looked west and focused his attention on building relations with the United States and Europe. As ethnic conflicts began to wrack Russia’s periphery however, frequently involving Russian military forces still stationed in former Soviet bases, Moscow began to refocus on its “near abroad.” While repairing economic linkages through regional trade blocs or customs unions and subsidized utility and energy resources were the initial focus of CIS activity, security in post-Soviet spaces and peacekeeping operations soon occupied many members.

With so many varied interests in play, the CIS was hardly a unified bloc however and has, since its inception, struggled with different perceptions of member states. Some member states have been unable to set aside concerns that Russia, the organization’s dominant partner, wanted to use the CIS as a vehicle for the preservation of Moscow’s influence in former Soviet space, while they saw membership as giving them access to the large Russian market, crucial to their foreign trade.<sup>35</sup> Their fears were not unjustified and were validated in 1995 when President Yeltsin articulated a Russian strategy for the CIS, defining its objective as “the creation of an integrated political and economic

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<sup>33</sup> Former Russian Foreign Affairs Minister from 1995-2002, Igor Ivanov writes in his book that when the CIS states signed the Agreement on the Establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States, they were announcing their intentions to “preserve and maintain a common space--socioeconomic, military and strategic, and in transportation—on the territory of the former USSR.” Igor S. Ivanov. *The New Russian Diplomacy* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2002), 82, 84.

<sup>34</sup> Oksana Antonenko, “Assessing the CIS,” *Russia Profile*, 14 Feb 06. Online at <http://www.russiaprofile.org/international/2006/2/14/3248.wbp> (accessed February 2006)

<sup>35</sup> Oleksandr Sushko, “The Dark Side of Integration: Ambitions of Domination in Russia’s Backyard,” *The Washington Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 120.



community of states” in which Russia should serve as the “leading force in the formation of a new system of inter-state political and economic relations on the territory of the post Union space.”<sup>36</sup>

Others were not as alarmed by this prospect, believing that their best chance for economic viability and security existed by maintaining extensive ties to Moscow. Thus cleavages among members were formed with “Unionists” such as Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan seeking closer integration while Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan were less committed.<sup>37</sup> This made the organization very ineffective at generating unified policies and while talk at annual summits boasted of economic and political integration, agreements among member states routinely went unimplemented. Discriminatory trade measures such as quotas and antidumping prohibitions were widespread.<sup>38</sup> Intra-CIS trade declined by over 70% during the 1990s and of the more than 1000 agreements drafted by the members, less than 10% were ever implemented.<sup>39</sup> Protectionist trade measures on Russia’s part, which included levying heavy excise and value added taxes on CIS-originated goods, doomed the customs union and as recently as 2000 derailed a proposed free trade zone. Disagreements over how to divide up the hydrocarbon resources of the Caspian littoral states, to which Russia initially staked an exclusive claim, further divided the group. A Russian commentator wryly observed that “implementing one CIS agreement is more difficult than signing 10 new ones.”<sup>40</sup>

For these reasons, while it still continued to use the CIS as a springboard for dialogue and joint collective efforts such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Single Economic Space and antiterrorism efforts, Moscow has had to rely upon historic mechanisms of influence that it can wield on either a multilateral or bilateral basis with greater effectiveness than the CIS offered. Traditionally the Kremlin has at its

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<sup>36</sup> F. Stephen Larrabee “Chapter 40: Russia and Its Neighbors: Integration or Disintegration?” National Defense University Globalization Study 2001. p. 860.

<sup>37</sup> Henry Hale, “Independence and Integration in the Caspian Basin,” SAIS Review 19, no.1 (1999)

<sup>38</sup> Sushko, 119.

<sup>39</sup> Larrabee.

<sup>40</sup> Liz Fuller. “CIS: Death Notices Serve to Revive Moribund Organization.” RFE-RL article dated 30 August 2005.

disposal four mechanisms of influence that it wields within the CIS: cultural, political, economic and military. These are components in the DIME construct, tools of Russian foreign policy, and will be analyzed in each case study to assess how successfully they have been applied in the Caucasus and Central Asia, with emphasis on Georgia and Uzbekistan respectively.

#### **D. PART FOUR - KEY IMPERATIVES IN RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY**

Since 2004 it has become clear that Russia has increasingly focused its foreign policy efforts on the CIS countries, which some analysts observe are “seen as a reserve to be tapped for economic development and security management as well as gradually and eventually achieving a more significant, great-power role for Russia internationally.”<sup>41</sup> In an ironic twist of fate, the tables have turned since the time of the Cold War, when Moscow “challenged the status quo while Washington defended it. Now, the United States is the challenger, with its doctrine of preemption and a policy of spreading global democracy, while Russia has become an advocate of state sovereignty, highly skeptical of military intervention for humanitarian or other causes.”<sup>42</sup> Russia’s pragmatic foreign policy path will need to navigate this new international environment, while attempting to meet three pressing needs: safeguarding itself and CIS members from the instability of political revolutions; exercising its economic imperative to expand Russian GDP; and protecting its security interests in its vulnerable southern flank.

##### **1. Political Security - Impact of the Colored Revolutions**

The wave of “colored revolutions” that swept the states of the former Soviet Union from late 2003 through 2005 were largely interpreted by the United States as a vindication of democratic and liberal ideals. The West has looked favorably on the trend of “colored revolutions” as evidence of populist mobilization as entrenched authoritarian regimes, comprised mainly of former communist elites, were swept from office by the popular tide of reform. The opposition forces that came to power in Georgia’s Rose, Ukraine’s Orange and Kyrgyzstan’s Tulip revolutions were seen as more Westward oriented, or at least more committed to the political and economic modernization and

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<sup>41</sup> Dmitri Trenin, “Russia and Global Security Norms,” *The Washington Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (Spring 2004), 72.

<sup>42</sup> Dmitri Trenin, “Russia and Global Security Norms,” *The Washington Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (Spring 2004), 76-77.

liberalization that would bring these regimes more in line with Western standards and institutions. But while Washington championed their revolutionary ideals, Moscow was shaken by their populist demonstrations and “unconstitutional” methods of challenging the status quo.<sup>43</sup> The Kremlin branded the revolutions as a “Western ploy to install pro-American regimes on Russia’s periphery and then to engineer a regime change in Russia itself.”<sup>44</sup>

Russia has become highly concerned about further “revolutionary” zeal and the implication it has for its own domestic political security as well as that of strong allies like Belarus and Armenia.<sup>45</sup> In a January 2006 article in the *Wall Street Journal*, Russian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sergei Ivanov talked about the implications of the “uncertainty factor” in global politics. While it includes unforeseen security threats, it also encompasses change in the “geopolitical reality in a region of Russia's strategic interest.” Ivanov specifically cites that Russia’s top concern in this regard is “the internal situation in some members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the club of former Soviet republics, and the regions around them.”<sup>46</sup> These references make clear the Kremlin’s level of concern with colored revolutions in the spaces of the former Soviet Union. Fear of the uncertainty they bring and Western involvement in the revolutions aside, Russian analysts also make a case that revolutionary change does not necessarily improve domestic conditions, citing Ukraine’s recent turnover in government and economic decline since its Orange revolution.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> All three revolutions were characterized by widespread, albeit mostly peaceful, popular protests organized by local civic movements following contested elections. In each case, popular opposition leaders were able to secure the resignations of incumbents or their designated successors, most of who were seen as authoritarian or corrupt.

<sup>44</sup> Dmitri Trenin. “Reading Russia Right”. Policy Brief #42 Special Edition. October 2005. Available online at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=17619&prog=zru> (accessed December 2005). Criticism of such “revolutions” usually centers on accusations that they are spearheaded not by internal civic forces but by outside agents serving Western interests. Frequently cited are the Soros Foundation and/or the United States government indirectly through organizations such as USAID, National Endowment for Democracy, the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs.

<sup>45</sup> Alexander A. Pikayev, “A Velvet Divorce,” PONARS Policy Memo 369, December 2005, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Online at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/pm\\_0369.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/pm_0369.pdf) (accessed February 2005).

<sup>46</sup> Sergei Ivanov, “Russia Must Be Strong,” *Wall Street Journal*. (Eastern edition). New York, N.Y.: Jan 11, 2006. p. A.14.

<sup>47</sup> “Revolution in Ukraine: One year on. Will CIS Turn Orange?” *RIA Novosti – Opinion and Analysis*, 22 Nov 05. Russian scholar cites Ukraine's GDP growth that declined from 12.1% in 2004 to 2.8% in 2005

So concerned are some of Russia's politicians about the infectious nature of the "colored revolutions," they have attempted to counter the threat by reigning in the Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs), both local and foreign-funded, they claim helped instigate the popular protests that served as the basis of the revolutions. The process began in July 2005 when President Putin announced he would not allow foreign countries to fund what he called "political activities" via nonprofit organizations. This was followed in November 2005 with three proposed amendments in the Duma (with backing from the pro-Kremlin Unified Russia party) which would require all NGOs to get approval from a special state commission within a year in order to be able to pursue their activities. Duma members explained that the proposed changes were "aimed chiefly at curtailing money laundering by NGOs" and would "enable the authorities to step up their fight against terrorism and extremism on Russian territory."<sup>48</sup> President Putin said the bill was needed to "safeguard the Russian political system against external interference and society from terrorist and misanthropic ideologies."<sup>49</sup>

NGOs operating in Russia fear the new law is an attempt by Moscow to curtail the activities of those organizations the Kremlin disapproves of.<sup>50</sup> Domestic and European criticism however, forced President Putin on 5 December 2005 to reassess the effort and look at modifying the language of the proposed law. Several days later the Kremlin proposed a "softer" version of the law, deleting the requirement for foreign NGOs to re-register with the state commission, allowing them to "operate through Russian branches and only inform authorities they exist."<sup>51</sup> The Duma approved the amended bill in late December and it was signed into law by President Putin on 10 January 2006. While the Kremlin cites the bill is necessary to counter terrorist activity and prevent NGOs from laundering money or promoting foreign political agendas,

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<sup>48</sup> RFE/RL article "Russia: NGOs Denounce Proposed Status Changes as Move to Curb Their Activities." Claire Bigg, dated 11 November 2005.

<sup>49</sup> RFE/RL article "Putin Tells Kremlin Administration to Amend NGO Bill." Dated 5 December 2005.

<sup>50</sup> Under the proposed amendments, foreign NGOs such as U.S.-based Human Rights Watch or U.K.-based Amnesty International would no longer be able to operate in Russia through a representative office as they do now. Instead, they would have to reregister as a financially independent structure -- a status many NGOs fear they might struggle to obtain.

<sup>51</sup> RFE/RL articles "Russia: Putin Backtracks on NGO Bill." Dated 6 Dec 05 and "Putin Proposes Softening Bill On NGOs." Dated 9 December 2005.

human rights groups disagree.<sup>52</sup> The Committee to Protect Journalists criticized the bill as “deeply flawed,” giving politicized bureaucrats “authority to interfere in the work of NGOs and derail democracy by denying citizens access to information about political and economic developments.”<sup>53</sup> The European Commission also criticized the passage of the bill, stating it placed unacceptable restrictions on one of the few sectors still outside direct government control in Russia.<sup>54</sup>

While the Kremlin might find the Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan developments domestically threatening, some Westernizers argue they could have just the opposite effect, reorienting the traditional focus of Russian foreign policy with regard to its smaller neighbors. Dmitri Trenin of the Carnegie Endowment for Peace argues that Moscow may begin approaching the new countries as “full-fledged states, rather than parts of the long-defunct whole.” In the process, “imperialistic illusions will be dropped (to the relief of the neighbors), together with the system of imperial preferences (to their dismay). Russian economic expansion will continue, but it will be because Russia is close to the major poles of international power—the United States, and driven by companies (some of them government-owned) pursuing concrete interests and so will not be territorial.”<sup>55</sup> Tsygankov’s model however would argue that this is not a trend likely to take place under a Great Power Normalizer policy. One of Russia’s goals in expanding its influence would be to counter the ability of the West to encourage such grass roots movements and give Moscow more influence to affect regime change in the CIS through its diplomacy and networking with former Soviet era elites in existing regimes. Former Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov observes that while Russia feels it is normal for CIS states to “diversify their international ties” Russia will not tolerate “attempts by

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<sup>52</sup> RFE/RL articles “Russia Defends NGO Bill As Meeting International Norms.” Dated 24 December 2005.

<sup>53</sup> “International HR Group Asks Russia’s Putin to Reject NGO Bill,” Moscow News Online, 29 Dec 05. Online at <http://www.mosnews.com/news/2005/12/29/groupasks.shtml> (accessed February 2006) and “Putin Signs Restrictive NGO Bill” posted by the Committee to Protect Journalists on 17 January 2006 on the website of the Global Policy Forum. Online at <http://www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/state/2006/0117putin.htm> (accessed February 2006).

<sup>54</sup> “EC Says It Regrets Passage Of Russian NGO Law,” RFE/RL article dated 23 December 2005.

<sup>55</sup> Dmitri Trenin. “Reading Russia Right.” Policy Brief #42 Special Edition. October 2005. Available online at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=17619&prog=zru> (accessed December 2005).

third-party states to act within the CIS in a way that undermines Russian interests, excludes Russia from participating, or in any way weakens Russia's position."<sup>56</sup>

With Russia more actively asserting its role in the former Soviet republics, what remains to be seen is whether Moscow and Washington can come to an understanding about their respective influence in post-Soviet spaces. While U.S. Secretary of State Rice remarked that Washington was not trying to damage Russia's interests in this zone, stating "we see this as not a zero-sum game, but one in which everybody has much to gain, when there are prosperous, democratic countries in the area of the neighboring states around Russia," Russian policy analysts believe the U.S. view is short-sighted and ill-informed. Conditions in post revolutionary states such as Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan in particular, are not ideal, and the revolutionary process often unleashes clan confrontation and ethnic antagonisms. The U.S. is not always best equipped to understand the regional nuances and power balances of some of these regimes. Some argue that the underlying post-Soviet social and economic structure merely means that with each revolution, one ruling oligarchic elite is replaced by another.<sup>57</sup> "In an attempt to provide assistance to the democratic opposition without knowing the regional specifics of the country, the U.S. inadvertently helped bolster the positions of radical Islamic circles [in the case of Kyrgyzstan], which is hardly in its interests. Therefore, it is certainly in the interests of both Washington and Moscow to conduct common and coordinated policies on post-Soviet territory."<sup>58</sup>

## **2. The Economic Imperative – Russia's Path to Great Power Status**

President Putin believes that Russia's path back to Great Power status is not based on military might or a strategic arsenal, but its economy. In May 2004 President Putin announced his goal of doubling Russia's GDP by the year 2010. His remarks also called for closer ties with the EU and stated that economic integration with the CIS was a

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<sup>56</sup> Ivanov, 87.

<sup>57</sup> Vlad Sobell, "The Re-Emerging Russian Superpower: Is it to be Feared or Welcomed?" #9 – JRL, 20 January 2006. Available online at <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/2006-18-9.cfm> (accessed March 2006).

<sup>58</sup> Alexander Konovalov, "President Faces Hard Work in Moscow," RIA Novosti, April 29, 2005. Online at <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/9134-5.cfm> (accessed March 2006)

priority.<sup>59</sup> The EU is Russia's largest trade partner, accounting for nearly 25% of Russia's imports and consuming 35% of its exports.<sup>60</sup> In addition, Europe is Russia's largest energy customer and with the world's largest proven gas reserves it supplies the EU approximately 40% of its natural gas needs.<sup>61</sup> The bottom line is that Russia needs stable relationships with the West to maximize trade, encourage investment and broaden market share for he believes is the country's greatest comparative advantage, its energy assets. That does not mean healthy competition is undesirable, but Russia cannot afford to return to the days of outright confrontation with its Western neighbors.

In order to maximize its energy industry, the primarily tool of its economic strategy, the Kremlin has allowed structural, liberalizing reforms to slow and the country has increasingly become more "statist," with greater government control of the economy, especially in energy sectors. Concerned that many oligarchs continued to siphon off profits and squander the engine of Russia's economic future, Putin believed that mixed public and private ownership, under the ultimate control of the state, was the optimal solution.<sup>62</sup> Many of today's Russian oligarchs purchased state enterprises at rock bottom prices and frequently stripped them of their assets, sending money abroad rather than reinvesting it back home to make the country's industrial infrastructure more competitive globally. Under President Putin, Moscow has been buying back into the oil and gas industry, beginning to regain control of some parts of this sector lost during privatization. When Russia's 3<sup>rd</sup> largest oil company, Yukos, was dismantled in 2004 following the trial and conviction of its owner, political activist Mikhail Khodorkovsky, portions of its assets were seized by the Kremlin and realigned under the state oil

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<sup>59</sup> Caroline McGregor, "A Safe, Comfortable and Stable Life," *Moscow Times*, May 27, 2004. Available online through JRL, #1 - RW 5-28-04, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/308-1.cfm> (accessed March 2006).

<sup>60</sup> EU-Russia Trade. Overview of EU-Russia relations. European Union webpage. [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/russia/intro/trade.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/russia/intro/trade.htm) (accessed March 2006)

<sup>61</sup> EU Green Paper, "Towards a European strategy for the security of energy supply," (2001), p 2, 24. Online at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy\\_transport/doc-principal/pubfinal\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy_transport/doc-principal/pubfinal_en.pdf) (accessed March 2006). Updated statistics available from "Energy and Transport in Figures 2005 at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/energy\\_transport/figures/pocketbook/doc/2005/etif\\_2005\\_energy\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/energy_transport/figures/pocketbook/doc/2005/etif_2005_energy_en.pdf) (accessed March 2006).

<sup>62</sup> Jeronim Perovic, "From Disengagement to Active Economic Competition: Russia's Return to the South Caucasus and Central Asia," *Demokratizatsiya* 13, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 66-68 and Vladimir Shlapentokh, "Russia as a Newborn Superpower: Putin as the Lord of Oil and Gas," #18 – *Johnson's Russia List*, 9 Feb 2006 <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/2006-39-18.cfm> (accessed February 2006)

company Rosneft.<sup>63</sup> The government has recently acquired ownership of 51% of Gazprom, the country's natural gas monopoly, but realizing that foreign capital is critical too, the Kremlin pushed through legislation allowing foreign investors full access to the remaining 49 percent.<sup>64</sup> Gazprom in turn purchased Russia's fifth-largest oil company, Sibneft, acquiring nearly 75 percent of its shares, making it effectively state owned.<sup>65</sup> The Russian news agency RIA Novosti now estimates that 57.4% of the energy sector is under state control.<sup>66</sup> This has allowed Gazprom to become a potent tool of Russian foreign policy.

Unable to prevent the spate of revolutions in its backyard, Russia has most clearly demonstrated its pragmatic foreign policy approach in its energy relationships with CIS states. "As Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova moved to challenge the Russia-controlled CIS, the Kremlin was determined to preserve its influence by refusing to subsidize their economies and moving to raise prices for its energy... Russia's leaders also pursued aggressive policies of acquiring control over the ex-republics' strategic property and energy transportation."<sup>67</sup> Tsygankov argues that Russia's recent effort to "correct a heavily-distorted price structure for energy" with respect to CIS states is not based on fear of marginalization or revenge, but pragmatism and a focus on internal modernization and normalization. "The reduction of subsidies, particularly for those who chose to orient their policies away from Russia, is a rational response of a growing and energy-rich nation in a world of skyrocketing energy prices."<sup>68</sup> What Tsygankov's model can not

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<sup>63</sup> Fred Weir, "Kremlin Reasserts Control of Oil, Gas," *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 28, 2005. Online at <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/1228/p01s01-woeu.html> (accessed March 2006).

<sup>64</sup> "Abolishing Gazprom's 'Ring Fence' and Russia's Big Bang," *RIA Novosti – Opinion and Analysis*, October 17, 2005. Online at <http://en.rian.ru/analysis/20051017/41800342.html> (accessed March 2006).

<sup>65</sup> "Update 3: Gazprom Buys 72.6% in Sibneft for \$13 bln - Press Release," *RIA Novosti – Business*, September 28, 2005. Online at <http://en.rian.ru/business/20050928/41535725.html> (accessed February 2006).

<sup>66</sup> Kim Murphy, "As Gazprom Grows, So Does Russia's Sway; Vladimir Putin is slowly but surely building a state-controlled energy behemoth that is continuing to expand," *Los Angeles Times*, October 16, 2005 Sunday Home Edition.

<sup>67</sup> Andrei Tsygankov, "Projecting Confidence, Not Fear: Russia Asserts Itself," 6 February 2006, #18 - JRL 2006-38 - JRL Home. Online at <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/2006-38-18.cfm> (accessed March 2006).

<sup>68</sup> Andrei Tsygankov, "Projecting Confidence, Not Fear: Russia Asserts Itself," 6 February 2006, #18 - JRL 2006-38 - JRL Home. Online at <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/2006-38-18.cfm> (accessed March 2006).



adequately explain is if that is the case, why not normalize prices across the CIS, rather than selectively? The relationship between the Kremlin and Gazprom makes it clear that Russia will not distinguish between economic and diplomatic means of influence; energy will continue to be used as a carrot and/or stick of Russian foreign policy, to be doled out at the Kremlin's discretion to those states which have earned Moscow's favor.

### **3. Russian Security Issues that Dominate the Region**

In general Russia's perceptions of its imperial and Soviet past have differed from those of the USSR's other constituent republics, especially in the Caucasus. Russians generally believe that during the tsarist and Soviet period they were a "civilizing force that had enriched the peoples who had been incorporated into the Russian empire" and the Soviet empire in turn had "exploited Russia rather more than it had ill used other parts of the country" and that "Russians had suffered disproportionately under Stalinism." This perception is largely at odds with that of other nationalities, for whom "Russia had become associated with Soviet power and with their own lack of freedom" setting the stage for inevitable misreading of each other's intentions.<sup>69</sup> Nowhere is this divergence clearer than on Russia's southern flank, the Caucasus and Central Asia, two regions that dominates Russia's security perceptions.

President Putin has referred repeatedly to an "arc of instability," where Islamic extremism threatens regional security, stretching from Southeast Asia to the Balkans, cutting through the republics on Russia's doorstep.<sup>70</sup> Current threats and challenges that emerge from this "arc of instability" include terrorism, militant separatism and religious extremism (read Chechnya), transnational crime and illegal drug trade.<sup>71</sup> On its southern flank, Russia's security concerns are focused on the spillover effect of regional instability and the desire to maintain a buffer zone with regard to Islamic radicalism. The complex ethnographic make up of the Caucasus in particular means that conflict in any part of the

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<sup>69</sup> Margot Light. "Chapter Two: Russia and Transcaucasia," in *Transcaucasian Boundaries*, eds. John Wright and Richard Schofield (London: UCL Pres, 1995).

<sup>70</sup> Hunter, Shireen. *Islam in Russia: the Politics of Identity and Security* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), 309.

<sup>71</sup> Cited by Ivanov as principle threats facing Russia today in the CIS region.

region, north or south, can easily “spill over or provoke conflict in another part of the region because of ethnic or cultural linkages.”<sup>72</sup> The primary sources of potential instability include the following:

- Internal conflicts in neighboring states (such as Georgia or Azerbaijan) which could produce substantial refugee flows that might destabilize neighboring Russian populations;
- Fear that economic collapse in weaker regional states could increase general migration to Russia at a rate that could not be supported;
- Regional terrorism;
- Rising Islamic extremism in Central Asia could potentially spark Islamic revival in Muslim areas of Russia.<sup>73</sup>

In addition, the imprint of Chechnya on Russian foreign and security policy can not be overstated. The siege by Chechen rebels of Moscow’s Dubrovka Theater on 23 October 2002, and the Beslan school on 1 September 2004 have had a profound impact on Russian domestic policy. Beyond the immediate crisis of two wars in Chechnya during the past ten years, President Putin also views the breakaway republic as the first piece in a string of dominos:

Should Chechnya fall, it will be followed by the rest of the Northern Caucasus. A major and strategically important border region from the Black Sea to the Caspian would be lost. Disintegration, however, would not stop there: other Muslim-populated areas of the Russian Federation, such as Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, would be at risk. Should they leave Russia, the country would effectively be split right down the middle, with direct communication between Moscow and Siberia becoming extremely difficult.<sup>74</sup>

The implication for foreign policy in the “near abroad” is that in order to prevent the string of dominos from toppling, Russia desires a “belt of friendly states” in the Southern Caucasus. Such a situation would enable Russia to operate military forces in a

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<sup>72</sup> Roy Allison, “The Military and Political Security Landscape in Russia and the South,” in *Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia: the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Security Environment*, ed. Rajan Menon, Yuri Fedorov and Ghia Nodia (New York: EastWest Institute, 1999), 28.

<sup>73</sup> S. Neil Macfarlane, “Russian Policy in the CIS under Putin,” in *Russia between East and West: Russian Foreign Policy on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Gabriel Gorodetsky (London: Frank Cass Publishers (2003), 128.

<sup>74</sup> Dmitri Trenin, “Russia’s Foreign and Security Policy Under Putin,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (2005), 3.

permissive environment beyond its borders and contribute to Russian defenses from the south against internal instabilities in the North Caucasus.<sup>75</sup>

In Central Asia, security interests in the last decade have focused on regional security and stopping the spread of Islamic fundamentalism as demonstrated by Russia's peacekeeping efforts in the Tajik civil war. In addition, since the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia had placed great emphasis in maintaining a good security relationship with Kazakhstan: first, because of the countries' long common border, second, because of its strategic geographic location as the transit point for all surface routes from Russia to Central Asia, and finally as a balancer to Uzbekistan's large population and military force and ambitions of hegemony in Central Asia.<sup>76</sup> Relations with Uzbekistan were also critical, first because of its tendency toward an independent foreign policy and second because its densely populated Ferghana Valley was where radical Islam established a stronghold in the region.<sup>77</sup>

While terrorism and the spread of Islamic radicalism gets much of the attention in Russia's security calculations, poverty in the CIS states, especially Central Asia, is really what could ignite a regional crisis. It is true that growth leaders such as Russia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine have contributed to a sharp drop in poverty in some parts of the CIS, but millions of others still subsist on only \$2 per day, and poverty remains particularly high in the three Caucasus countries and Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Moldova.<sup>78</sup> In Central Asia, the International Crisis Group notes that declining living standards and a demographic profile where half the region's population is under 30 years of age poses a significant threat to regional stability. The Soviet legacy of wide spread literacy and a high education standard has given way to an education system in crisis and a high probability of political instability.

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<sup>75</sup> Allison, 28.

<sup>76</sup> Allison, 30.

<sup>77</sup> Lena Jonson, "The Security Dimension of Russia's Policy in South Central Asia," in *Russia Between East and West: Russian Foreign Policy on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Gabriel Gorodetsky (London: Frank Cass Publishers (2003), 132-137.

<sup>78</sup> Robert McMahon, "CIS: New World Bank Report Shows Mixed Progress on Poverty," RFE/RL article dated 12 October 2005. Online at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/10/668005ce-4c03-4b4a-933d-3754c36a5fdc.html> (accessed March 2006).

In a world where many people expect progress with each generation, most of the young in this region are worse off than their parents. They have higher rates of illiteracy, unemployment, poor health, and drug use and are more likely to be victims or perpetrators of violence.<sup>79</sup>

Ahmed Rashid, in his book *Jihad, the Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia*, notes that despite its wealth of natural resources and the attention of major international powers, poverty remains the primary cause of radical Islam in the region. Wealth from western energy investors does not trickle down to the masses, but is concentrated in the hands of corrupt regimes, creating an extremely wealthy minority class and breeding social discontent due to ever increasing economic disparity.<sup>80</sup>

Whilst poverty and unemployment increase—and economic opportunities decrease—Central Asia's debt-ridden societies are ripe for any organization or party that offers hope for a better life. The regimes respond with increased repression, viewing not just Islamic militancy but all Islamic practice as a threat to their grip on power. Such shortsightedness has only fueled the support for the more radical Islamic groups.<sup>81</sup>

It remains to be seen whether Russia's resurgent role in the CIS, particularly in Central Asia, will address this key underpinning of its security strategy.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Russian foreign policy continues to be dominated by the issue of Russia's identity and its relationship with the West. President Putin's approach, described by Tsygankov as Great Power Normalization, tries to walk the line between integrating with the West and balancing against it. It asserts that economic development is the path to Russia's return to Great Power status and to this end Russia must maintain strategic relationships with the West in the areas of economics and security. It also asserts that Russia should be the dominant influence in the former Soviet republics, not through political and military reintegration but primarily through economic mechanisms of influence developed through bilateral relations. Finally, three key imperatives have emerged in Russian

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<sup>79</sup> "Youth in Central Asia: Losing the New Generation," Asia Report N°66, 31 October 2003. International Crisis Group. Online at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=2342&l=1> (accessed March 2006).

<sup>80</sup> Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad, the Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 237.

<sup>81</sup> Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad, the Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 228.

foreign policy in President Putin's term of office: a disdain for the populist based Color Revolutions and desire to curb any future occurrences both within Russia and in the CIS; the growth of a state controlled energy sector; and the vulnerability of Russia's southern flank in its security perceptions.

### **III. GEORGIA AND THE CAUCASUS – THORNY ISSUES FOLLOWING THE ‘ROSE REVOLUTION’**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

In testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 1, 2005, Gen. James Jones, head of U.S. European Command (EUCOM), discussed the strategic value of U.S. involvement in the Caucasus:

The Caucasus is increasingly important to our interests. Its air corridor has become a crucial lifeline between coalition forces in Afghanistan and our bases in Europe. Caspian oil, carried through the Caucasus, may constitute as much as 25 percent of the world’s growth in oil production over the next five years ... This region is a geographical pivot point in the spread of democracy and free market economies to the states of Central and Southwest Asia.<sup>82</sup>

Compared to Central Asia, where Western involvement has primarily been operationally focused on support to the Global War on Terrorism, U.S. commitment to the Caucasus runs deeper. On March 8, 2006, in testimony before the House International Relations Committee Subcommittee on Europe and Emerging Threats, Daniel Fried, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs delivered the following remarks:

Georgia has been called a success for our freedom agenda, though its work has just begun. Since the Rose Revolution, President Saakashvili’s government has taken Georgia from a failing state to a democratizing democratic nation with a growing market-economy. During President Bush’s May 2005 visit to Georgia, he promised the United States would do its utmost to help the people of Georgia consolidate these changes. Georgia’s future lies in the Euro-Atlantic community. The hard work of reform is Georgia’s, but the U.S. Government will do what we can to help Georgia help itself, working with our European allies, in NATO and the EU.<sup>83</sup>

Washington has continued its close work with European institutions to resolve conflicts in the Southern Caucasus and advocates empowering and strengthening multilateral

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<sup>82</sup> Jim Nichol, “Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia: Political Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests,” Congressional Research Service Issue Brief for Congress. Updated February 23, 2006.

<sup>83</sup> U.S. Department of State Home Page. Online at <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/62740.htm> (accessed March 2006).

institutions like NATO and the OSCE to achieve this end. In light of Russia's resurgent emphasis on becoming the dominant influence in the former Soviet Union, this involvement has the potential to conflict with Russian interests in the region, especially in the state of Georgia. This case study on the Caucasus and Georgia begins with a survey of Russia's strategic interests in the region and follows with analysis of Russia's efforts to increase its influence in Georgia using the DIME construct developed in Chapter II.

## **B. RUSSIAN STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN GEORGIA AND THE CAUCASUS**

Russia analysts observe that "Russia's new central battleground is in Chechnya and increasingly in the rest of the North Caucasus, where it fights Islamist terrorists, separatists, and bandits."<sup>84</sup> Lack of progress in implementing an effective strategy that addresses the corruption and poverty of Russia's southern rim breeds frustration, and leads to human rights abuses that only serve to attract new fighters to the cause. In the words of the Kremlin's Deputy Chief of Staff Vladislav Surkov, the "subterranean fire" of regional instability continues to rage unabated.<sup>85</sup> For this reason the Caucasus will continue to be an area of vital national interest to Russia. The old East-West axis that pinned NATO forces against a massive Soviet conventional army is gone and the new era of the Southern offensive has been ushered in. The after-effect of the disastrous first Chechen war was a shift in strategic focus. As Dmitri Trenin noted, "Central European plains were replaced by the Caucasus mountains (and potentially, the mountains and deserts of Central Asia); familiar peer enemies by primitive but deadly warriors; operations of groups of armies were replaced with a mixture of counter-insurgency operations, special forces engagements [and] police mopping up campaigns."<sup>86</sup>

With the longest border on Russia's unstable Southern rift zone, Georgia has figured prominently in Moscow's foreign and security strategy. Russia's key interests in Georgia are characterized by efforts to ensure regional stability, retain military influence, "protect" the Russian diaspora and increase economic ties. Each of these goals is

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<sup>84</sup> Dmitri Trenin. "Reading Russia Right," Policy Brief #42 Special Edition. October 2005. Available online at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=17619&prog=zru> (accessed December 2005).

<sup>85</sup> Ibid

<sup>86</sup> Dmitri Trenin. "Russia's Foreign and Security Policy under Putin," Carnegie Endowment (2005)

developed below to provide a glimpse of Russia's view of the Caucasus. The chapter then examines the cultural, diplomatic, economic and military means that Russia has used to advance its agenda in Georgia. Finally, these efforts are compared to the tenets of Tsygankov's Great Power Normalization model to determine whether they meet its criteria of a pragmatic Russian approach to foreign policy.

### **1. Regional Stability**

The Caucasus have historically served as a buffer between the Orthodox Christian empire and Muslim powers to Russia's south. That geopolitical reality has not changed. With what Russians generally refer to as "Wahhabi" (Salafi) influence growing in Uzbekistan and inside Russia itself, Moscow is deeply concerned about instability in its "soft underbelly." The source of the instability, Chechnya, is largely a secessionist crisis and the subject of Western criticism that Russia's heavy handed military operations in the region created an environment where militant Islam could get a foothold.<sup>87</sup> Russia has always been stung by this criticism and has sought to portray the Chechen conflict as part of the larger Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). Continued incidents of violence in the Northern Caucasus have spread eastward from Chechnya to Dagestan and westward to Ingushetia, North Ossetia, and most recently, Kabardino-Balkaria where coordinated attacks against assorted federal and security installations rocked the capital city of Nalchik in mid-October 2005.<sup>88</sup> To Russia's domestic audience such a spread of violence lends credibility to President Putin's "domino theory" about how the whole southern region of Russia can be destabilized, potentially causing Russia to lose control of the strategic border region from the Caspian to the Black Sea. If this happens, the Kremlin argues, energy supplies from the Caspian basin will be in danger, and terrorist access to weapons of mass destruction technology will expand.<sup>89</sup> Russians fear that with Islamic extremism no longer contained to Chechnya and the Northern Caucasus, but spreading to places like Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, successful secessionist movements

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<sup>87</sup> Chechen rebels, looking for external sources of support, tapped into the international jihad movement to further their cause but while elements of Islamic extremism now exist in the region, the crisis began, and still is, largely a separatist struggle.

<sup>88</sup> "Russia's hot spots: Caucasian dominoes," *The Economist*. 15 Oct 2005. p54.

<sup>89</sup> Ariel Cohen. "Competition over Eurasia: Are the U.S. and Russia on a Collision Course?" October 24, 2005. Heritage Lecture #901. Online at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/RussiaandEurasia/hl901.cfm>



in these regions could effectively split Russia down the middle, with lines of communication between Moscow and its resource rich Siberian environs extremely difficult.<sup>90</sup>

Regional stability also means that the Kremlin does not want to see pro-Western governments coming into power in the former Soviet republics. This means no more “colored revolutions” that disrupt the political status quo that Moscow has fostered since the breakup of the Soviet Union. The Kremlin publicly couches this concern by criticizing not regime change itself, but the manner in which it takes place – namely through what it considers unlawful and unconstitutional populist demonstrations. What makes Russia’s position on the “constitutionality” of these revolutions dubious, from a western perspective, is that the Kremlin does not apply the same standards to authoritarian regimes which violate their own laws and jail or kill their own citizens, such as Belarus, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

## **2. Military Influence**

Georgia, like Armenia and Azerbaijan, contained remnants of the Soviet Transcaucasian Military District after the break-up of the USSR. After 1991, Russia assumed control of all former Soviet forces in Georgia, including approximately 20,000 ground troops and numerous vessels and bases of the Black Sea Fleet and Border Guards. While many troops were subsequently withdrawn (troop strength from these units decreased from 20,000 to around 8500 by 1996) five bases and several strategically significant ports remained and Russia has been very reluctant to give up control of them over the past decade. In addition, while overall military strength was decreasing, the numbers of Russian soldiers in Georgia’s breakaway province of Abkhazia was increasing as Moscow supplied the bulk of peacekeepers that were mandated by the CIS to enforce the 1994 peace accords. Today, with the last two bases still in the process of closing and peacekeepers in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia, approximately 3000 Russian troops remain in Georgia.

## **3. “Protection” of the Russian Diaspora**

When the Soviet Union collapsed, it left approximately 25 million Russians living beyond the borders of their ethnic homeland. In many cases these Russians had migrated

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<sup>90</sup> Dmitri Trenin, “Russia's Foreign and Security Policy Under Putin” (Carnegie Endowment, 2005)

to the former republics as part of Moscow's nationalities strategy, a highly volatile policy whose divide and conquer methodology during the Soviet era spawned deep seated ethnic and political conflicts. Russian citizens now found themselves minorities in newly independent states without official safety lines to Moscow. Russia was therefore very "proprietary" over states where ethnic Russian minorities became "stranded" outside the motherland.<sup>91</sup>

In Georgia, while ethnic Russians are the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest minority group, they represented only 6 percent of the population in 1989. In Armenia and Azerbaijan ethnic Russians number under 3 percent.<sup>92</sup> Although this minority was not a target of anti-Russian policies, Moscow nevertheless has used the security and well-being of the diaspora at least as rhetorical justification to strengthen Russian presence. While Russians in Georgia did not represent a political threat to Tbilisi or a security problem for Moscow, the Kremlin feared the economic impact of an exodus of Russians to Russia and the effect a potential conflict in Georgia might have on the Russian population in the North Caucasus. Fundamentally, the Kremlin believed that it must stabilize any conflict within Georgia (whether it directly involved Russian minorities or not) which might worsen inter-ethnic disputes within Russia itself.<sup>93</sup>

#### **4. Increase in Economic Ties**

At the time of the break up of the Soviet Union, Georgia was one of wealthiest republics. Russian interests in Georgia included agriculture, especially in the semi-tropical Black Sea areas, coal mines, a major port in Sukhumi, railway links, and tourism, particularly in the resort areas of Abkhazia and Ajaria. Finally, Georgia was a significant transit point for Caspian oil and gas coming from Baku, Azerbaijan, as well as a source of hydroelectric power and minerals. Russia's current foreign policy continues to focus on securing favorable economic relations and agreements, especially with regard to natural resource transit rights.

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<sup>91</sup> This ethnic card however is played (or not played) in a highly discriminating manner, more as a leveraging tool in Russian foreign policy than an issue of genuine concern. For example it is frequently used in relations with the Baltic states but seldom in relations with Uzbekistan or Turkmenistan.

<sup>92</sup> Rajan Menon, "Introduction: the Security Environment in the South Caucasus and Central Asia," in *Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia: the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Security Environment*, ed. Rajan Menon, Yuri Fedorov and Ghia Nodia (New York: EastWest Institute, 1999), 11.

<sup>93</sup> Nicole J. Jackson. *Russian Foreign Policy and the CIS* (London: Routledge, 2003), 119

**C. RUSSIAN MECHANISMS OF INFLUENCE: EFFORTS TO USE DIPLOMACY, INFORMATION, SECURITY AND ECONOMICS TO ACHIEVE ITS INTERESTS IN THE CAUCASUS**

Western oriented, liberal leaders such as Yeltsin, in order to separate Russia economically from the rest of the republics for the purpose of pursuing radical market reforms, sought to dismantle the Soviet Union and create in its place the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).<sup>94</sup> Others, particularly the military and defense industrial establishment initially believed the formation of the CIS to be nothing more than a name change, a way to cast off the Soviet communist legacy without jeopardizing the fundamental political and institutional bureaucracy. Thus the CIS was created in 1991 amid much turmoil and its nature was hotly debated by liberal reformers on the one hand and anti-reform neo-imperialists on the other.<sup>95</sup> Apart from the Baltic States, Georgia and Azerbaijan were the only two of the remaining twelve Soviet republics that did not initially join the CIS during its first year of creation. Both had been experienced strong nationalist movements and Moscow's violent repression of political demonstrations during the Gorbachev era, and these crises discredited local communist efforts at forming any new "neo-Soviet" political unions.<sup>96</sup> Despite their initial reluctance, both Tbilisi and Baku were coerced into joining the organization two years later when internal instability forced them to turn to Moscow for security assistance in the management of civil wars.

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Given Georgia's stormy CIS initiation, and its orientation as one of the more independent minded members, Russia has frequently had stormy relations with the former republic, a trend that has deepened since the "Rose Revolution" that brought to power Western-leaning Mikhail Saakashvili. While Moscow appears to have gained an upper hand in Central Asia, successfully orchestrating US withdrawal from a strategic base in Uzbekistan, as well as signing a historic mutual defense treaty with Tashkent, it

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<sup>94</sup> Nicole J. Jackson. *Russian Foreign Policy and the CIS* (London: Routledge, 2003), 52

<sup>95</sup> William E. Odom and Robert Dujarric. *Commonwealth or Empire? Russia, Central Asia and the Transcaucasus* (Indiana: Hudson Institute, 1995), 11.

<sup>96</sup> In April 1989 Soviet forces violently broke up a peaceful demonstration in Tbilisi demanding Georgian independence. In January 1990 Soviet authorities retaliated violently against an Azerbaijani separatist group after it had conducted a wave of ethnic killings targeting Armenians. Henry Hale, "Independence and Integration in the Caspian Basin," SAIS Review 19, no.1 (1999)

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 12-13

does not appear to have made as significant inroads in the Caucasus and more specifically, its relations with Georgia appear to have become more combative since 2004.

### **1. Information / Cultural Mechanisms**

While a 2004 survey mapping the attitude of 1,472 Tbilisi residents toward different ethnic groups revealed a 64% positive rating for Russians, Moscow's cultural mechanisms, such as its imperial legacy, media and language, appear to be largely ineffective in maintaining its influence in Georgia.<sup>98</sup> When faced with their imperial legacy, Russians generally believe the "periphery" is ungrateful to Moscow for bringing it "civilization." Not only did Russia bear the bulk of the expense of industrialization, it defended the periphery from external threats such as the defense of the Georgians from the Ottoman Empire in the 18th century. In contrast, residents of the Caucasus no longer perceive these efforts as vital or important. Today, their real concern revolves around Moscow's continued support for separatism in regions like Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh. Business priorities, such as energy transit, oil, gas and electricity supply and migration, dictate attitudes towards Russia in the "near abroad" much more than historic memories do.<sup>99</sup> For the younger generation, the importance of Russia as a destination for education and employment is diminishing, being replaced by the lure of most Western influences of Europe and even Turkey. A brief history of independence (from 1918-1921), the small percentage of ethnic Russians in the Caucasus, and the violent Soviet crackdown against rebellion in 1986 all serve to minimize the cultural influence that Russia can bring to bear.<sup>100</sup>

Unlike Central Asia, where there is very little indigenous free press and many residents listen to Russian media, the Georgian press is largely considered to be free, and journalists regularly criticize government officials and their conduct. While Tbilisi

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<sup>98</sup> Statistical data reported in Eurasia Insight Study by Haroutiun Khachatrian entitled "Democracy still not Perceived as Priority in Caucasus" dated 23 November 2005. The study used data gathered by groups of public opinion pollsters in the three Caucasian capital cities in March 2004 under the direction of the Yerevan-based Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC), a non-profit research institution sponsored by the Eurasia Foundation.

<sup>99</sup> Cohen

<sup>100</sup> Rajan Menon, "Introduction: the Security Environment in the South Caucasus and Central Asia," in *Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia: the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Security Environment*, ed. Rajan Menon, Yuri Fedorov and Ghia Nodia (New York: EastWest Institute, 1999), 12-13.

authorities finance some publications and operate the national state TV and radio networks, Georgians have access to western press and approximately 200 privately-owned newspapers.<sup>101</sup> In addition, only about 10% of Georgians speak Russian, further strengthening Georgian identity and a sense of independence. In contrast, in Central Asia, the Russian language is still widely spoken, especially in academic, political and business circles, and serves as the common denominator in educated discourse.

In an effort to increase its “soft power” and counter perceptions that many Western NGOs in post-Soviet states promote national languages and the use of English as the new language of international communication, Russia has launched a new offensive consistent with a foreign policy of Great Power Normalization. The Kremlin has recently proposed that the free education quota for students from the CIS (currently set at 1%) should be increased, allowing more students from the Commonwealth of Independent States to get a free education in Russia's higher educational establishments. President Putin also spoke out against cutting the number of departments which Russian colleges and universities have in the CIS and announcing that Moscow State University is expanding its network of branches in the Commonwealth of Independent States, an effort the Russian leadership will facilitate.<sup>102</sup>

## **2. Diplomatic / Political Mechanisms**

While Russia's cultural influence in the Caucasus may be weak, Moscow has several geopolitical levers it can use to influence its smaller neighbors, the most effective of which are their internal secessionist conflicts. A March 2005 EU country report, drafted as part of its neighborhood action plans, described progress toward reform in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan and providing detailed overviews of their progress toward adopting EU values such as rule of law, democracy, and a market economy.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> BBC News online country profile on Georgia. Accessed on 6 December 2005. Available online at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country\\_profiles/1102477.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1102477.stm)

<sup>102</sup> FBIS article “Russian President Putin Calls for Closer Education Ties With CIS Countries.” CEP20051025027193 Moscow RIA-Novosti in Russian 1102 GMT 25 Oct 05. Also see RFE/RL article by Paul Goble, “Moscow Plans Linguistic Counterattack in CIS.”

The EU generally considers Georgia to be the most advanced of its Caucasian neighbors with relatively few problems identified in terms of domestic political reforms. Of note in the criticism of both Armenia and Azerbaijan are breaches of fundamental freedoms, a general lack of willingness to reform and “widespread Russian influence on decision-making in both Armenia and Azerbaijan.”<sup>104</sup>

Perhaps emboldened by the EU’s hesitation to become directly involved in helping resolve Georgia’s “frozen conflicts” in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, or assist in monitoring the border between Russia and Georgia, Moscow has continued to make the most of its political mechanisms. One includes its veto in the OSCE, an organization Georgia has sought to involve to a greater degree in its internal stability efforts. Since the establishment of a Georgian-South Ossetian ceasefire 1992, a four-party Mixed (or Joint) Control Commission has been responsible for monitoring and implementing the peace. The Commission is comprised of representatives from Georgia, Russia, South Ossetia, and Russia's oblast of North Ossetia, a composition that seems blatantly biased toward South Ossetia. Georgia has long lobbied that the Commission in its current format is “ineffective” and that the OSCE and other international organizations should take a more active part in developing and implementing a peace process.<sup>105</sup> In Georgia’s opinion, whenever Russia feels that the role of the Commission in the conflict resolution process is threatened, Moscow orchestrates a minor concession or position that demonstrates the Commission’s utility to outside observers and ensures Russia continued political leverage.

An even more potent lobbying tool is Moscow’s sponsorship of Georgia’s two breakaway republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (as well as those in Moldova and Azerbaijan). Both separatist regions are highly dependent on Moscow for support and

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<sup>103</sup> The three-year long Neighborhood Action Plan consists of two “baskets.” One is a set of conditions closely measured by the EU, aimed at strengthening the rule of law, democracy and respect for human rights and commitment to non-proliferation and counter-terrorism measures. The other “basket” contains the EU “offer”, such as participation in EU programs, policies and agencies, proposed legislation to make cooperation and trade easier, and opportunities for people-to-people contacts. The further countries go with reforms, the greater the degree of cooperation the EU will offer. RFE/RL article “Caucasus: Countries Move Toward Closer Alignment With The EU” by Ahto Lobjakas. Dated 02 Mar 05

<sup>104</sup> Ibid

<sup>105</sup> FBIS article “Georgian Official Calls South Ossetia Commission ‘Sect,’ Seeks ‘Transparency’”, Tbilisi Rezonansi in Georgian 04 Mar 06, CEP20060306020002 and “Georgian Minister Interviewed on Abkhazia, South Ossetia”, Moscow Nezavisimaya Gazeta in Russian 16 Jan 06, CEP20060201025001

therefore highly susceptible to Kremlin influence. Most South Ossetian citizens hold Russian passports and Russian laws provide the breakaway region with its legal code. The region's ties with Russia provide it with what little economic activity exists in the area. Several Russian officials have even been appointed to posts within the breakaway region's government, which provokes concern in Tbilisi. In an interview with RIA Novosti, Georgian President Saakashvili was quoted as saying "when the chief of the Federal Security Service (FSB) for [the Russian republic of] Mordovia is appointed as head of the South Ossetian ministry of security, and when the deputy chief of the Siberian military district is named as the South Ossetian government's chief military aide, then we're not talking about regular personnel changes."<sup>106</sup> Likewise in Abkhazia, many residents have Russian passports and the Russian ruble is also commonly used in trade. Russia maintains peacekeeping forces there that act as guarantors of each region's defacto separatism from Tbilisi. "Because of its unrecognized status Abkhazia has few ties apart from its link with Russia. The CIS peacekeeping force that patrols the ceasefire zone is made up entirely of Russian Federation soldiers. To many (though by no means all) in Abkhazia, Russia is perceived as the one source of military and economic security to which they can appeal." <sup>107</sup>

Georgian experts believe that these regions' continued dependence on Russia is a serious hindrance to the peace process. "Russian patronage permits regional leaders to adopt more radical positions than they would otherwise adopt," which leads Moscow to exercise influence that limits the choices Georgian politicians can make in negotiations with the separatist leaders. With Moscow subsidizing their de facto independence, separatist leaders do not have to enter into negotiations that would result in anything other than remaining a Russian protectorate. The Kremlin defends this position by pointing out the West's role as protector of separatist regions such as Kosovo, alluding to a double standard in how the international community views Moscow's support of the

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<sup>106</sup> Eurasia Insight article "Georgian President Unveils South Ossetia Peace Plan" by Molly Corso, dated 27 Jan 05, online at <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav012705.shtml> (accessed November 2005). See also Rick Fawn, "Russia's Reluctant Retreat from the Caucasus: Abkhazia, Georgia and the U.S. after 11 September 2001," in *Realignments in Russian Foreign Policy*, ed Rick Fawn (Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003), 135-136.

<sup>107</sup> Rachel Clogg, "The Rose Revolution and the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict: Light at the End of the Tunnel," JRL RAS (Research & Analytical Supplement) JRL 8226, Issue No. 24, May 2004. Online at

breakaway regions of the Commonwealth of Independent States. In addition, in Russia's eyes, the status quo of the frozen conflicts may be strategic. If Moscow were not the arbiter of a resolution to these internal conflicts, Georgia would be "free to maneuver itself, united, toward NATO membership. For Russia, defacto independence for the breakaway regions is better than nothing."<sup>108</sup> On the issue of NATO membership a Russian pundit observes: "No-one's going to be asking Georgia to join NATO in the foreseeable future...Because it has a territorial problem and because it isn't a democratic country...They don't want to be reconciled to their ethnic minorities but to bring them to their knees by using NATO's military support."<sup>109</sup>

While the Kremlin does not currently formally recognize either region's independence, it maintains close political ties with their leaders. In September 2005, Moscow hosted the "self-styled leaders" of Georgia's breakaway republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as Moldova's Transdniestria and Azerbaijan's Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh. The representatives pledged to pursue independence and Russian lawmaker Konstantin Zatulin, from the Kremlin-directed United Russia party, called the sovereignty of these entities a "reality that should be accepted."<sup>110</sup> Such behavior only serves to exacerbate the perception that Russia is anything but a "neutral" peacekeeper in Georgia's conflict zones. With President Saakashvili having made resolution of Georgia's frozen conflicts part of this campaign, his job security and political clout is tied to progress on that front. Russia on the other hand may be counting on the internal conflicts to lead to regime change, perhaps to a more accommodating, pro-Moscow leader, if voters become disillusioned about Saakashvili's ability to reach agreement with the Russian backed separatist regions.<sup>111</sup> As Georgia continues to edge closer to Western institutions, Moscow appears not to have backed away from political

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<sup>108</sup> Cory Welt, "Realism, Russia, and Conflict Resolution," PONARS Policy Memo 348, November 2004, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Online at [http://www.csis.org/component/option,com\\_csis\\_pubs/task,view/id,1976/](http://www.csis.org/component/option,com_csis_pubs/task,view/id,1976/) (accessed February 2005).

<sup>109</sup> FBIS article "Russia: Discussion Group Views Role of NATO, Collective Security Treaty Organization," Moscow Rossiya TV in Russian 1645 GMT 01 December 2005. CEP20051202027197

<sup>110</sup> RFE/RL article "Breakaway Regions Seek Closer Ties with Russia." 14 September 2005.

<sup>111</sup> Dmitri Trenin, "The Post-Imperial Project," printed in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, February 15, 2006 (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace). Online at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=18065&prog=zru> (accessed March 2006).



mechanisms as a means to keep Georgia off balance; however Georgia's proximity to Europe allows it to counter the Kremlin's influence with its own political levers such as the regional organizations GUAM and the Community of Democratic Choice.

In response to efforts by Russian hardliners to tighten up CIS integration in 1997, Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova banded together, with U.S. support, in a new geopolitical alignment called GUAM with the aim of fostering regional cooperation outside the boundaries of Russia and the CIS.<sup>112</sup> Like the CIS, GUAM was largely a paper tiger in its early years. The new Western orientation of post revolution Georgia and Ukraine, as well as the election of a pro-Western president in Moldova, seems to have sparked a common vision of European integration among the core members and the group may be revived. A 2005 GUAM summit (the first since the colored revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine) promised a higher profile as the group focused its attention on Moldova's separatist conflict in the Transdniester region and raised the possibility of GUAM troops under the aegis of OSCE as an alternative to Russian peacekeepers in Georgia and Moldova.<sup>113</sup>

In addition to participating in GUAM, Georgia and Ukraine are spearheading a new regional organization that could present another potential alternative to the CIS. The Community of Democratic Choice (CDC) is made up of the former Communist states Romania, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Macedonia, the Czech Republic and Hungary, together with GUAM members Moldova and Azerbaijan. Some Georgian officials have stated that the group would effectively become "an axis of democratic countries that do not wish to remain in Russia's orbit" but Ukraine has downplayed any anti-Russian implications. Georgian policy analysts liken the organization to something in between the EU and the Shanghai Cooperation Agreement,

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<sup>112</sup> Uzbekistan joined in 1999, most likely as a demonstration to Moscow that it does not consider itself within the Kremlin's sphere of influence and group name changed to GUUAM. Uzbekistan's authoritarian regime eschewed the more liberal inclinations of the others and had not been an active member for the past three years. As expected, President Karimov terminated Uzbekistan's membership in GUUAM in 2005, in the wake of Western criticism stemming from the violence against a public demonstration in Andijon.

<sup>113</sup> RFE/RL articles "GUUAM Summit Aims to Revitalize Regional Body" by Antoine Blua. Dated 21 April 2005 and "GUUAM Summit in Chisinau Focuses on Separatism, Regional Cooperation" by Gulnoza Saidazimova. Dated 22 April 2005.

an alternative to those FSU states caught short of realistic expectations of EU membership but whose political leanings are toward democracy and the West.<sup>114</sup>

While Moscow has a generally benign view of the EU's European Neighbourhood Policy, primarily because the EU has expressed its reluctance to get involved in the region's frozen conflicts, it feels much more challenged by the more proactive approach of the U.S. in the Caucasus. Moscow perceives the U.S. as having a "regime change" agenda, trying to bring former Soviet republics firmly into the Western camp.<sup>115</sup> Russia was not happy with President Bush's pro-democracy rhetoric and resented his 2004 Georgian tour, especially on the heels of what the Kremlin called 'US meddling' in the "revolutions" in Georgia and Ukraine.<sup>116</sup> Washington may exercise its diplomatic rhetoric to promote democracy abroad, but it still needs the Kremlin's cooperation on issues such as passing the revised treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe, and addressing nuclear proliferation in Iran and North Korea. While it continues to promote military and economic ties with Tbilisi, Washington will likely maintain a relatively low profile on the issue of Russian peacekeepers in Georgia. Ultimately, Tbilisi will have to work out its disagreements with Moscow without Washington's direct support, instead letting OSCE, EU and/or NATO field their calls for help.<sup>117</sup>

One of Tsygankov's key tenets of Great Power Normalization was its toleration of limited Western presence in the former Soviet republics. Nevertheless, Moscow still appears to try to balance any Western influence in what it perceives as its back yard. In the Caucasus this specifically applies to the U.S., NATO and to a lesser degree, the EU. The interplay of great powers on Russia's southern flank is still largely perceived by Russia's political elite as a zero-sum game. Russia has resisted attempts to

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<sup>114</sup> RFE/RL article "Eastern European Countries Pledge to Support Georgia" 9 Nov 2005 and "Leaders Meet in Ukraine to Create new Regional Alliance" by Jean-Christophe Peuch dated 1 Dec 2005.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 72-73

<sup>116</sup> Newsweek article "The Problem with Putin: Bush's Moscow visit will be a trip to Fortress Russia. 9 May 05. Available online <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/7693006/site/newsweek/#storyContinued>

<sup>117</sup> The U.S. permanent representative to the OSCE, Ambassador Julie Finley, in response to Georgia's call for withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers, stated that a pullout of the Russian peacekeepers before an alternative force is formed to replace them could further destabilize the situation. Finley called on Georgia to continue its participation in the current Joint Peace-Keeping Force, which includes Georgian, Russian and North and South Ossetian contingents and called on both Georgia and Russia to moderate their recent militant rhetoric on the issue. RFE/RL article "Georgia: Peacekeepers' Vote Creates Dilemma For Saakashvili" by Liz Fuller, dated 14 February 2006.

internationalize conflict zones in Georgia and Azerbaijan (as well as Moldova) beyond the modest roles currently played by OSCE and the UN. Their interpretation appears to be that a rise in U.S. or European influence necessarily means Russia's loss.<sup>118</sup> In the diplomatic dimension, Russian foreign policy actively seeks to balance Western influence in the region. In the context of the frozen conflicts, Russia could engage in what Tsygankov characterizes as "security cooperation with the West," one of the tenets of Great Power Normalization. Its reluctance to share the burden of managing and resolving these conflicts weakens its position as a pragmatic regional hegemon, causing its policies to be labeled more assertive than perhaps they are intended to be. Georgia and Azerbaijan's pursuit of different political alternatives for regional integration, options that do not include Russia (such as GUAM and CDC), further highlights their perception that Russia's attempts at influence are not constructive, but self-interested, intended to maintain Moscow's diplomatic mechanisms of influence.

### **3. Economic Mechanisms**

According to Energy Efficiency Center Georgia, a renewable energy consultancy sponsored by the European Union, Georgia's domestic oil, gas and coal supplies only meet 20% of its annual demand. Unlike its oil rich neighbor, Azerbaijan, Georgia produces mainly hydropower, which provides enough electricity for the spring, summer and autumn when water levels are high. When water levels are low in the winter months, energy resources must be imported from Russia, Armenia, Turkey and Azerbaijan.<sup>119</sup> Accordingly, one of Russia's strongest mechanisms of influence in Georgia is economic, specifically energy. Rising oil prices and a monopoly over pipelines have allowed Moscow to wield this tool very effectively.<sup>120</sup> Two distinct strategies have emerged: first, expansion of energy giants such as Gazprom through acquisition of shares in, or joint ventures with, foreign gas and energy related companies; second, control of energy

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<sup>118</sup> Andrei Zagorski, "Russia and the Shared Neighbourhood," *Chaillot Paper* #74. January 2005, p69-70

<sup>119</sup>Eurasia Insight article "Promises still power Georgia's electricity by Molly Corso 1/24/05

<sup>120</sup> A significant trend in the CIS is Russian attempts to acquire strategic energy assets in the FSU and Eastern Europe. Just recently Gazprom and Itera received ownership rights to the Armenian gas distribution network and pipeline system in exchange for cancellation of Armenian debts. Eurasia Insight article "Promises still power Georgia's electricity by Molly Corso 1/24/05

prices through monopoly of transportation mechanisms. Both of these efforts are consistent with Tsygankov's Great Power Normalization.

Through deals made in the summer of 2003, Russia's electricity monopoly, RAO UES, acquired 75% of the electrical distribution grid that feeds Tbilisi. It is now estimated that it controls 20% of Georgia's generating capacities and 35% of its electricity supplies to its consumers.<sup>121</sup> At the same time Gazprom made a "handshake deal" that would have given it a dominant position in Georgia's energy market.<sup>122</sup> The Gazprom deal was never ratified however, due to the change in political leadership following the Rose revolution. In addition, an influx of western aid, including money from the Bush administration's Millennium Challenge Fund, targeted rehabilitation of parts of the energy infrastructure. The issue will likely continue to draw debate however as competing Tbilisi ministries try to balance the need for economic reform and privatization against strategic and geopolitical economic interests.

Against this backdrop Moscow continues its efforts to increase its foothold in Georgia's energy sector. Early in 2005, talks with Gazprom about selling the country's gas distribution stations, a heating plant and a backline pipeline were scuttled. At a March 4 news conference, Energy Minister Nika Gilauri told reporters that the government will not sell state-owned energy-sector assets to Russian companies, citing the need to preserve the security of the country's energy network. Necessary funds for minimal pipeline repairs were allocated from the 2005 state budget as well as international donors and commercial credits.<sup>123</sup> These efforts clearly demonstrate that Georgia is distrustful of Russia's attempts to gain further economic leverage through its energy infrastructure.

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<sup>121</sup> Jeronim Perovic, "From Disengagement to Active Economic Competition: Russia's Return to the South Caucasus and Central Asia," *Demokratizatsiya* 13, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 67.

<sup>122</sup> When the financially weakened US firm, AES Corp could no longer support its Georgian operators, it put it up AES-Telasi, a joint US-Georgian venture, up for sale in 2003. RAO-UES then purchased a 75 percent stake in the enterprise. Eric A. Miller, "Russian Control Over Energy Raises Questions About Georgia's Direction," Eurasianet article dated 28 October 2003. Online at <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav102803b.shtml> (accessed November 2005) and Zeyno Baran, "Deals Give Russian Companies Influence over Georgia's Energy Infrastructure," Eurasianet article dated 18 August 2003. Online at <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav081803.shtml> (accessed November 2005).

<sup>123</sup> Eurasianet article "No Gas Pipeline Sale – For Now" by Diana Petriashvili 9 Mar 05

Under the Saakashvili regime Georgia has made tremendous strides to address the electricity shortages that plagued the state since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Power fluctuations in the capital drastically improved over the years with only periodic blackouts in the fall due to faulty transmission lines and general disrepair of the electricity infrastructure. Outside the capital however, home to approximately 68 percent of Georgia's population, areas would sometimes go several weeks or even months without power. Aged infrastructure, general disrepair, pervasive corruption and problems with bill collection have plagued the system. In December 2004, Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania pledged to spend \$70 million to secure reliable electricity supplies by late 2005, and the results have been very positive.<sup>124</sup> A large scale effort to install 10,000 communal electricity meters nationwide (each shared by 40-50 local consumers) was completed in only three months and provided a short term and more economical fix to chronic billing problems. In a recent interview Georgian Energy Minister Mika Gilauri announced that there is now a 24-hour electricity supply across the country (as long as consumers pay the bill).<sup>125</sup>

Despite progress on its energy issues, Georgia is still vulnerable to economic pressure from Moscow. Russia views itself correctly as the "economic engine" of the CIS. It has been pushing for higher prices for its energy, which it had continued to supply to its former republics at discount rates since the fall of the Soviet Union. In November 2005 Moscow announced it would begin charging the Baltic states, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia "world prices" for its natural gas. This would in effect nearly double the current Georgian rate of \$60 per 1000 cubic meters to \$110 beginning in January 2006. This move has been widely criticized as being 'political' versus market driven because only those "western leaning" countries that Russia is at odds with appear to be targeted. Armenia for example would still continue to receive Russian gas at a subsidized rate (or receive only a moderate token increase) and no mention has been made of increases for Central Asian countries which receive gas through Russian

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<sup>124</sup> Ironically Prime Minister Zhvania died early this year from carbon monoxide poisoning, likely from faulty heating in his home. He was outspoken in lamenting Georgia's energy dependence on Russia, seeing it as giving Moscow undue influence over his country's internal affairs.

<sup>125</sup> FBIS article "Georgian Energy Minister on Russia's 'Political' Decision to Raise Gas Tariff" 2 Dec 05. CEP2005120202004.

pipelines. Georgia countered the gas price hikes with agreements to purchase Kazakhstan natural gas at a discount, only to be thwarted by Russian transit fees that would bring the price back up to \$110. Moscow's stranglehold on gas pipelines from Central Asia leave Kazakhstan no mechanisms for direct export of natural gas outside of Russia's borders and therefore no realistic possibility of a bargain for discounted gas for Georgia.

While Ukraine and Georgia attempted to compensate for increased energy rates by countering with their own proposals for increased transit fees for Russian gas being transported beyond their borders, the impact of these efforts is likely to be minimal. In an effort to liberate Russian energy from being held hostage to transit fees, Moscow has embarked on numerous export diversification projects. In September 2005, President Putin and German Chancellor Schroeder signed an agreement to construct the trans-Baltic North European Gas Pipeline. Such a pipeline would allow Gazprom to bypass "sometimes unfriendly neighbors – Ukraine, Belarus and Poland" in order to reach its West European customers, especially Germany which imports 37% of its natural gas supply from Russia.<sup>126</sup> Some Western analysts have described the project as a "white elephant" being constructed purely for political purposes, allowing Moscow in the near future to be able to turn the energy screws on Germany the way it has on its former republics.<sup>127</sup>

Gazprom's winter 2005/2006 gas war not only secured it higher prices (albeit offset by higher transit fees for supplying Armenia via Georgia's pipeline) but also another toehold on Georgian gas infrastructure. While not successful in buying into Georgia's main north-south gas pipeline, Moscow came to an agreement with Tbilisi to create a 50-50 joint venture to provide maintenance of the pipeline and construct trunks to other cities and related infrastructure.<sup>128</sup> The prospect of a joint venture based on parity control has caused consternation with some observers who wonder why Gazprom

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<sup>126</sup> "Trans-Baltic Pipeline Moves Ahead" by Nina Kulikova. *Russia Profile*. Issue 10, Volume 11, December 2005

<sup>127</sup> RFE/RL "Russia: Tightening the Screws with Gazprom" by Roman Kupchinsky. 30 Aug 05

<sup>128</sup> FBIS article "Georgian Paper Reports Progress on Treaty with Russia, Agreement with Gazprom" CEP200512002003 dated 1 Dec 05 and FBIS article "Georgian Energy Minister on Russia's 'Political' Decision to Raise Gas Tariff" CEP 20051202020004 dated 2 Dec 05.

was able to secure such a large share. Similar ventures in other East European countries allow Gazprom much less control. Experts observe that “these shares make it clear where Russia controls the situation and which countries it can influence.”<sup>129</sup> In the meantime, Georgia will continue efforts to diversify its natural gas supply. In 2006 it plans to begin purchases of natural gas from neighboring Azerbaijan via the new Shah-Deniz pipeline that runs from Baku, Azerbaijan to Erzerum, Turkey via Tbilisi.<sup>130</sup> If Gazprom were to gain control over the pipelines intended to supply Turkey however, it could threaten the viability of the entire project and squash any hopes of energy diversification.

The Winter 2005/2006 gas war clearly demonstrate the ruthless nature of Russia’s energy agenda and added fuel to the accusation that efforts are politically motivated, targeting those countries the Kremlin has labeled as “disloyal,” those who eschew a pro-Moscow orientation.<sup>131</sup> In a closed door session with Kremlin politicians, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov made clear that gas, oil and electricity were the country’s principal diplomatic resources, and implying that the “whole diverse arsenal of economic pressure tools” were going to be applied to insufficiently loyal CIS neighbors.<sup>132</sup> The inconsistency in applying “market corrections” across the board to FSU customers without regard to political orientation undermines the pragmatic nature of Moscow’s policies. It is difficult to understand how economic liberalization and transparent bilateral arrangements (goals of Great Power Normalization) can be established when costly, imperial practices of subsidizing some select states’ energy needs still remain in place. The most effective demonstration of Moscow’s pragmatism would be a

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<sup>129</sup> Similar joint companies provide Gazprom the following shares: 37% in Estonia, 37% in Lithuania, 34% in Latvia, 36% in Ukraine. Only Moldova and Armenia have relegated such high shares to Gazprom, with 50% and 49% respectively. FBIS article “Georgian Paper: ‘Semi-Secret’ Deal with Gazprom ‘Raises Suspicion’ over Pipeline” CEP20051128020003 dated 26 Nov 05.

<sup>130</sup> Robert Parsons, “Caucasus: Georgia, Armenia Consider Options After Russia Pipeline Explosions,” RFE/RL article dated 1 February 2006. Online at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/02/d2074170-d820-4948-812e-69551d17c950.html> (accessed February 2006).

<sup>131</sup> Igor Torbakov, “Russia Adapts Policy to Address Rift within CIS,” Eurasia Insight article dated 12 September 2005.

<sup>132</sup> FBIS article “Russia’s Lavrov: Oil, Gas Chief Diplomatic Tools Against Disloyal CIS Partners,” Moscow Nezavisimaya Gazeta in Russian, 13 October 2005, CEP20051013379002.

comprehensive, equitable phased approach to energy cost adjustments that would be transparent and more in line with fair market practices, but such a plan has not yet been articulated.

#### **4. Military/Security Mechanisms**

At a 28 November 2005 meeting in Brussels with Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Noghaideli, NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer announced that “the door is open” for Georgia’s eventual membership in the Euro-Atlantic alliance and Georgia has expressed hope it might be among the next list of invitees expected to be announced in 2008.<sup>133</sup> Georgia has signaled its intentions to pursue NATO membership and move toward closer alignment with the EU. Aside from its economic mechanisms of influence, Russia continues its ability to sway Georgian policies by playing upon the states most significant weakness, its internal instability. Three primary sources of tension in the area of security exist between Moscow and Tbilisi: the issue of border monitoring along their common border; the continued presence of Russian military bases on Georgian territory; and the intractable secessionist conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. According to Tsygankov’s model, these types of issues should be secondary to economic interests, or at least should be characterized by cooperative bilateral or collective action oriented at tackling mutual security threats, but relations with Georgia do not resemble this paradigm.

##### ***a. Border Monitoring***

Separatist groups that use militant and terrorist tactics, such as the Chechens in the Caucasus, routinely finance their efforts through criminal activities such as drug trafficking and the underground economy. “The vast and deep-rooted shadow economy in Chechnya, and in the North Caucasus as a whole, is based primarily on large-scale illicit oil production and trade in oil products. In fact, more than narcotics, oil products, alcohol, and tobacco products are the main illicit goods smuggled through Russia’s borders with other Caucasian states.”<sup>134</sup> The trafficking of goods and people, to include Chechen fighters, makes border monitoring a high priority issue in Russia’s

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<sup>133</sup> RFE/RL Caucasus Report 3 Dec 2005, Vol 8, Number 43. “NATO Says ‘The Door is Open’ for Georgia”

<sup>134</sup> Ekaterina Stepanova, “Illicit Drug Trafficking and Islamic Terrorism as Threats to Russian Security: The Limits of the Linkage,” PONARS Policy Memo No. 393, December 2005.



relations with Georgia. Georgia in turn has made border security a priority and sought the assistance of the West in its efforts.

Tensions between Tbilisi and Moscow palpably increased when Moscow used its veto in the OSCE in December 2004 to terminate the organization's monitoring mission on the border between the two countries, arguing that it was ineffective. Russia has accused Georgia repeatedly of failing to safeguard against Chechen fighters who seek refuge in Georgia's rugged terrain. Moscow did agree to a new OSCE training mission of more than 800 Georgian border guards on modern methods of controlling rugged frontiers, a program which began in April 2005 and is scheduled to run through the end of the year. OSCE has made it clear however that the current training program "is not a replacement for the international force of OSCE monitors who previously patrolled Georgia's borders with Chechnya, Daghestan and Ingushetia."<sup>135</sup>

Tbilisi is dissatisfied with the limited scope of a training mission and has unsuccessfully lobbied the EU to take over the monitoring duties. Georgia feels the presence of an impartial political force on the ground provides verification that Georgia was securing its border, robbing Moscow of the opportunity to accuse Tbilisi of harboring extremists. "What is most important -- what was most important -- in this border-monitoring operation was this political [segment] which existed under the OSCE framework. A political [segment] where observers could declare that there was no violence on the borders, that there were no problems, because trainers and officers could not make some kind of political statement -- and that is why Russians are not against a training mission," explained Georgian parliament speaker Nino Burdjanadze during a visit to the EU. Of concern to Georgia is that Moscow could once again try to execute a pre-emptive strike against Chechen terrorists claimed to hide in Georgia's Pankisi Gorge.<sup>136</sup> Resistance to an EU monitoring effort (versus training) appears to be related to

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<sup>135</sup> RFE/RL article "Georgia: OSCE To Begin Training Georgian Border Guards Next Week" by Roland Eggleston dated 15 April 2005

<sup>136</sup> Following the Beslan school tragedy, Russia unsuccessfully lobbied the international community to approve unilateral military operations in Pankisi Gorge and have cited the U.S. strike against Iraq as precedent for such actions against terrorism. Valentinas Mite, "Russia: Moscow Joins Countries Advocating Preemptive Stance On Terror," RFE/RL article dated 09 September 2004.

a number of member states like France, Germany and Italy fearing that such an operation would harm their relations with Russia.<sup>137</sup>

***b. Russian Bases at Batumi and Akhalkalaki, Georgia***

Russian military goals in the countries of the Common Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the military bloc of the CIS, which includes Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, are clear: joint control of borders and air space; joint rapid reaction task forces to combat terrorism and trafficking; Russian bases in Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and no foreign bases.<sup>138</sup> Georgia however is not a CSTO member and has lobbied, since the 1999 OSCE summit in Istanbul, for closure of its former Soviet bases and withdrawal of Russian troops, a move that Russia long delayed with protests of budget shortfalls and logistical difficulties. Agreements to finally close the bases were signed on 31 May 2005 and withdrawals scheduled to be completed by 2008.

If completed successfully, the redeployment would represent a significant diplomatic victory for Georgia and significantly limit Russian military influence, in essence leaving only the CIS mandated peacekeepers in Abkhazia and South Ossetia as military leverage. Russia has attempted to mitigate these closures with vague language in the agreements calling for the creation of a Georgian-Russian Anti-Terrorism Center that would use some of the military personnel and material-technical facilities and infrastructure of Batumi. If so, Georgian critics argue, Tbilisi will have “traded the old bases for new [military] equipment and that will be even worse.”<sup>139</sup> Opposition party leaders suggest that if there is to be such a center, it be expanded to include an American and even European presence so as to limit Russian influence.

Russia’s stubborn attempt to maintain these bases was not consistent with Great Power Normalization. The number of personnel was small, equipment outdated,

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<sup>137</sup> RFE/RL article “Georgia: Tbilisi Lobbies EU for Border Monitors, Harder Stance on Russia” by Ahto Lobjakas dated 12 April 2005.

<sup>138</sup> Ariel Cohen. “Competition over Eurasia: Are the U.S. and Russia on a Collision Course?” October 24, 2005. Heritage Lecture #901. Online at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/RussiaandEurasia/hl901.cfm>

<sup>139</sup> Eurasia Insight article “Some in Georgia Worry that the Russian Base Withdrawal Deal Comes with a Catch” by Molly Corso dated 1 Jun 05.

and their presence was an irritant to Russian-Georgian relations.<sup>140</sup> Analysts argue that Russia's reluctance to close the bases represents a Cold War mentality that equates military bases with influence. According to this view "Georgia remained part of Russia's 'sphere of influence' as long as military bases remained there... [and] withdrawal of bases equals irrevocable 'loss' of a country."<sup>141</sup> A more contemporary view is that military bases are the result of influence, not an instrument of influence. Bases only have meaning "when the host country seeks security guarantees and wants military presence to solidify these guarantees and perhaps gain political and financial benefits. Bases established against the will of the host country are seen as a symbol of occupation and hostile control."<sup>142</sup> In this regard, Russia's policy more closely resembles a Balancer approach versus a pragmatic Great Power Normalizer approach.

***c. Peacekeeping Forces in Abkhazia and South Ossetia***

Part of Georgian President Saakashvili's mandate following the "Rose revolution" was to restore the nation's territorial integrity by bringing Georgia's three break-away regions, Ajaria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, back under Tbilisi's control. (For background information on the internal or "frozen conflicts" in Georgia see Annex A.) With Moscow's help, Saakashvili succeeded in wresting control from Ajaria's authoritarian leader in May of 2004, but his August 2004 effort to crack down on illegal activity in South Ossetia failed and peaceful settlements in Abkhazia and South Ossetia have eluded him. Despite repeated efforts to bring the two regions back in line with promises that they would be written into the constitution with "the broadest conceivable autonomy within a unitary Georgian state," progress has not been made and the President's offers have been repeatedly rejected. Georgia argues that this is due to Russia's tacit willingness to maintain the status quo in the republics.

Russia-Georgian relations since 2005 have been characterized by increasingly vitriolic rhetoric between Moscow and Tbilisi with Georgia seeking greater involvement of the international community in resolution of the conflicts. Russia's

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<sup>140</sup> Nikolai Sokov, "The Withdrawal of Russian Military Bases from Georgia: Not Solving Anything," PONARS Policy Memo 363, June 2005, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Online at [http://www.csis.org/component/option,com\\_csis\\_pubs/task,view/id,1946/](http://www.csis.org/component/option,com_csis_pubs/task,view/id,1946/) (accessed February 2005).

<sup>141</sup> Sokov, 2005

<sup>142</sup> Sokov, 2005

position on the issue has largely been viewed as obstructionist and characterized by Great Power Balancer thinking. In late 2004, despite Moscow's financial backing and involvement of Russian spin doctors, the candidate supported by the Kremlin suffered a humiliating electoral defeat in Abkhazia's presidential election and Sergei Bagapsh, seen as pro-Georgian, won the office.<sup>143</sup> Russia then orchestrated a new election that saddled Bagapsh with his former opponent, now listed as Vice President, on a joint ticket.<sup>144</sup>

On the heels of Ukraine's "Orange Revolution," this clumsy effort to "manage" an election was seen as another Kremlin orchestrated foreign policy disaster. Russian critics cited Moscow's old-school approach to diplomacy within the former Soviet Union-- one where Kremlin pundits automatically back the ruling clans in elections without account for the nuances of local conditions -- as the source of failure. In the case of Abkhazia, Moscow's preferred candidate was from one of the region's toughest anti-Georgian clans and was unlikely to cooperate in any meaningful future attempts at political settlement.<sup>145</sup> A brief rapprochement with Tbilisi followed, and Tbilisi unveiled a peace plan, only to be set back by numerous security issues in the breakaway region during 2005.<sup>146</sup> A Georgian foreign ministry statement followed, criticizing Russian peacekeeping forces in the territory for allegedly ignoring violence targeted at Abkhazia's ethnic Georgian community.

In South Ossetia, a new "demilitarization" policy was instituted in November 2004, despite continued allegations by Georgian officials that Russia was

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<sup>143</sup> Steven Eke, "Russia twice shy in Abkhazia." BBC News article, Wednesday, 12 January 2005, 12:00 GMT. Available online at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4167539.stm> (accessed December 2005) and "New Leader Announced in Abkhazia," BBC News article, Thursday, 13 January, 2005, 14:09 GMT. Available online at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4171153.stm> (accessed December 2005).

<sup>144</sup> Cory Welt, "Realism, Russia, and Conflict Resolution," PONARS Policy Memo 348, November 2004, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Online at [http://www.csis.org/component/option,com\\_csis\\_pubs/task,view/id,1976/](http://www.csis.org/component/option,com_csis_pubs/task,view/id,1976/) (accessed February 2005).

<sup>145</sup> Mikhail Delyagin, "From Global Controversies to Regional Conflicts," *Russia in Global Affairs* no.1 (January-March 2005).

<sup>146</sup> In late 2005, Abkhazia announced it would no longer defer draft eligible Georgian men living within separatist-controlled territory from military service, a measure which led to the beating death of a Georgian resident of the Gali district after he refused to be conscripted into the Abkhazian army. The incident was followed only a few days later by the kidnapping of 68-year-old Georgian resident of Gali. Source: Liz Fuller, "Georgia: Can Moves Toward Abkhaz-Georgian Rapprochement Continue?" RFE/RL article dated 14 August 2005. Online at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/08/4babf231-a1e4-4da8-81f0-337461a28ac3.html> (accessed December 2005).

providing arms and munitions to South Ossetian militia forces, who in turn were conducting raids on Georgian settlements. The peace plan proposed by Tbilisi called for a three-phase approach to the conflict: demilitarization, economic development and then negotiation about the region's political status. South Ossetians claim they do not hold much promise in Georgia's offers of "autonomy," citing how the Georgian parliament in late 1990 "abolished with one stroke of the pen South Ossetia's status as an autonomous oblast within Georgia, in direct violation of a pre-election pledge by then Georgian leader Gamsakhurdia."<sup>147</sup> Complicating matters, Abkhaz President Sergei Bagapsh has stated that Abkhazia will withdraw from its own peace process with Georgia, and possibly provide aid to Tskhinvali, if war breaks out in South Ossetia.<sup>148</sup> Despite the sharp rhetoric however, both sides continued to destroy trenches and fortifications throughout 2005 as specified by the demilitarization accord.

In October of 2005, Tbilisi stepped up its efforts to gain international visibility and involvement in the conflicts. In mid 2005, the promise of implementing a resolution to the conflicts seemed to gain momentum. The new U.S. ambassador to Georgia, John Tefft, presented his credentials to President Saakashvili in late August 2005, and expressed dissatisfaction with the existing mediation platform, implying that the Russia led negotiating format did not seem to be working and hinted that Washington was "interested in providing Russia with assistance in dealing with the many challenges it faces throughout the Caucasus region."<sup>149</sup> While still pressing forward with the peace plans presented to the separatist regions, Georgia met the issue of Russian peacekeepers head on.

On 11 October 2005 the Georgian parliament passed a unanimous resolution instructing the government to "take measures for the withdrawal of Russian peacekeeping forces," in essence, have them declared illegal, "if their performance in South Ossetia and Abkhazia did not improve before February and July 2006,

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<sup>147</sup> RFE/RL Caucasus Report "Is Georgia gearing up for Armed Intervention in South Ossetia?" 29 Jul 2005, volume 8, number 25.

<sup>148</sup> FBIS article "Georgia: Abkhazian Leader to Abandon Talks in Event of War in South Ossetia." CEP20051216027170 dated 16 Dec 05.

<sup>149</sup> Eurasia Insight article "US Diplomacy Strives to Keep South Ossetia Conflict in Check" by Mark David Simakovsky, dated 30 Sep 05 and Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst article "Russia out of Peacekeeping? Georgia Challenges the Status Quo" by Khatuna Salukvadze, dated 19 Oct 05.

respectively.”<sup>150</sup> In late October, Georgia’s ambassador to the UN formally requested the Security Council to approve a full-fledged UN peacekeeping mission for Abkhazia, arguing that the Russian peacekeeping force deployed under the auspices of the CIS is ineffective and accusing Russia of defacto "military annexation" of a part of its territory.<sup>151</sup> The request is an unlikely prospect however, considering Russia’s Security Council veto power. Criticism was further levied at Abkhazia’s refusal to grant the use of Georgian as the language of instruction in schools in Abkhazia's predominantly Georgian-populated Gali region.<sup>152</sup>

On 27 October 2005, at a meeting of the OSCE in Vienna, Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Noghaideli unveiled a new three-part peace plan for the region. The new plan calls for: OSCE, EU and US representatives to join Russia, Georgia and the Ossetians in mediating a settlement; further demilitarization of the conflict zone; and a donor-sponsored fund to rehabilitate the area. The U.S. has welcomed the Georgian proposals, saying it is ready to help implement them and while the Georgian Foreign Minister Gela Bezhuashvili has denied that the plan seeks to sideline Russia, it is clear that Tbilisi would like more transparency and a breath of fresh air in the JCC. Georgia was unable to “pitch” the peace plan at the 17 November 2005 CIS summit in St Petersburg however, because parliament speaker Nino Burjanadze boycotted the event as a result of Moscow failing to grant an entry visa to the Chairman of the parliament’s Defense and Security Committee in an apparent “blacklisting” move which could spark retaliation from Tbilisi.”<sup>153</sup>

On 19 November, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan visited Georgia for the first time and President Saakashvili told journalists that Georgia was “extremely frustrated with the situation in Abkhazia,” citing the sale of property owned by former

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<sup>150</sup> Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst article “Russia out of Peacekeeping? Georgia Challenges the Status Quo” by Khatuna Salukvadze, dated 19 Oct 05.

<sup>151</sup> “Georgia Asks UN for Full-fledged Peacekeeping Force,” *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, 29 October 2005. Online at [http://www.cacianalyst.org/view\\_article.php?articleid=3800](http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=3800) (accessed November 2005)

<sup>152</sup> Gali is not formally a part of Abkhazia but after Abkhazian forces seized the area during the civil war it became a defacto buffer zone between Abkhaz and Georgian forces following the 1994 ceasefire.

<sup>153</sup> RFE/RL article “CIS: Georgia Says Visa Dispute with Russia Affects South Ossetia Peace Plan” by Jean-Christophe Peuch dated 16 Nov 05 and Eurasia Insight article “Georgia: Parliamentarians Prepare Blacklist of Russian Politicians” dated 19 Nov 05.

Georgian residents, alleged daily violence against Georgians who have returned to Abkhazia, a reported build-up in arms in the breakaway territory and a refusal by Sokhumi to allow the opening of a UN / OSCE human rights office in the Gali district.<sup>154</sup> The visit was followed up on 6 December 2005 with a UN chaired a meeting in Abkhazia between Abkhaz and Georgian government officials, foreign ambassadors, and representatives of the European Commission and the UN's Development Program. The group met to discuss the first stage of a joint two-three year UN-EC program to rehabilitate the Abkhaz conflict zone and repatriate Georgians into the Gali district.

On 30 November the Georgian Defense Ministry posted a new military strategy on its website which listed Russian peacekeeping troops in Abkhazia and South Ossetia as threats to Georgia's national security and cited the two remaining bases scheduled for closure as destabilizing elements. The Russian Foreign Ministry responded by describing the claims as absurd, saying they were politically motivated in an attempt to shore up domestic support, identify a scapegoat for "Georgia's political and economic failures," and justify its "ever-increasing purchases of weapons and military equipment."<sup>155</sup>

The most surprising move related to the conflicts, and a strong signal that a thaw might have been at hand, at least in South Ossetia, was the announcement on 13 December 2005 that the region's self-styled President, Eduard Kokoiti, had submitted to President Saakashvili, President Putin and the OSCE Chairman, his own three phased peace plan that very closely resembles Tbilisi's. While still wanting to keep negotiations within the JCC format, Kokoiti acknowledged greater OSCE participation and visibility into the negotiations. The Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Noghaideli credited Russian diplomacy and Moscow envoy Valeriy Kenyakin for the unexpected breakthrough. The Georgian Minister of State for Regulation of Conflicts described Kokoiti's initiative as a "brave step" and observed that it was the "first time that we have heard a 'yes' from

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<sup>154</sup> The United Nations has maintained a cease-fire observer mission, UNOMIG, in Abkhazia since 1993. A November 7 statement from this mission commented on the "deteriorating situation" in the region and called on both sides to convene a high level security meeting "as soon as possible." Source: John Mackdon, "Kofi Annan Makes Surprise Visit to Georgia." *Eurasia Insight* article by dated 21 November 2005

<sup>155</sup> RFE/RL article "Russia Questions Aspects of Georgia's National Military Doctrine" dated 1 December 2005.

Tskhinvali to a project which we have elaborated in connection with the conflict.”<sup>156</sup> The Russian envoy reiterated that there was no need to broaden the JCC format as Tbilisi had suggested, citing that “the settlement of the conflict depends on the sides’ political will, not their number.”<sup>157</sup>

The forward momentum Georgia seemed to have been building throughout 2005 came to an abrupt halt in 2006. On the heels of the gas war at the turn of the year, Georgia suffered nearly a week long energy blackout when Russian gas supplies were interrupted by damaged pipelines Moscow claimed were caused by terrorist attacks. Twin blasts in North Ossetia, across the Russian border from South Ossetia, effectively shut down the main pipeline that supplied Georgia with Russian gas during a brutal cold spell. The same day, electricity supplies to Georgia were interrupted following an explosion at a transmission tower on Russian territory.<sup>158</sup> Incensed over what they perceived as slow response to fix the pipeline or route gas to Georgia via an alternate pipeline running through Azerbaijan, Georgian officials went so far as to accuse Russia of “engineering the explosions as a means of triggering a political crisis in Georgia,” statements the Russian Foreign Ministry dismissed as “hysterical.”<sup>159</sup> On 15 February 2005, the Georgian parliaments unanimously passed a resolution calling for the removal of Russian peacekeepers from South Ossetia.<sup>160</sup> A planned 20-21 February 2006 meeting of the MCC to discuss details of the ongoing demilitarization process in South Ossetia, scheduled to take place in Vienna, was effectively cancelled when Russia at the last minute insisted the meeting be held in Moscow instead.

With the withdrawal of regular military forces from the two remaining Soviet era bases all but inevitable, Russian peacekeepers remain Moscow’s only military mechanism of influence in Georgia and Russia will likely resist attempts to evict them or

<sup>156</sup> FBIS article “Georgian Ministers, Pundits, Cited on S. Ossetian Leader’s ‘Surprise’ Peace Plan,” 14 December 2005. CEP20051214020002

<sup>157</sup> Ibid

<sup>158</sup> Victor Yasmann , “Russia: Is Georgian Gas Crisis Evidence Of Moscow's New Energy Strategy?” RFE/RL article dated 23 January 2006 and “Energy crisis as Georgia freezes,” BBC News, Thursday, 26 January 2006, 14:42 GMT. Online at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4650876.stm> (accessed January 2006).

<sup>159</sup> Ibid

<sup>160</sup> FBIS article “Georgian Speaker Praises MPs Unanimity on Russian Peacekeepers,” Tbilisi Imedi TV in Georgian 1500 GMT 15 Feb 06. CEP20060215027056.



change their composition. Georgia will probably continue to work toward this goal by continuing with efforts to increase international visibility into the “frozen conflicts,” a tactic that has generated success as evidenced by President Bush’s and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan’s recent visits, as well as an EU pledge to provide 2 million euros (\$2.4 million) in aid to the victims of conflict in Abkhazia.<sup>161</sup> Russia in turn will likely continue pulling the strings behind the scenes, at least in South Ossetia, but may find that it has less influence in Abkhazia, especially if the West and UN continue to maintain a higher profile and Abkhazia sees the potential to gain financially by adopting a more accommodating attitude in discussions with Tbilisi.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Because Russia’s cultural influence on the Caucasus is weak, Moscow has to maximize its other mechanisms to achieve its desired outcomes in the region. Efforts in the economic realm have yielded significant ties to the energy infrastructure of the Caucasian states but lack a real sense of cooperation and joint effort. Georgia has been successful at diversifying its energy relationships through its cooperation with the Western backed Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline and Baku-Erzurum gas pipeline. Such joint efforts with Russia however have not materialized, despite opportunities. One potential project involved a proposed pipeline that would pass from the Russian port of Novorossiisk, along the Black Sea Coast, to Georgia via Abkhazia. Such a venture would not only have alleviated the need to ship Russian oil via tanker through the congested Bosphorus Straits taken but would have taken advantage of the excess capacity in the BTC pipeline as well – a win-win situation. In addition, a lucrative economic development project such as a pipeline running through Abkhazia would have brought economic incentives to the peace process.<sup>162</sup>

Russia’s most visible means of influence in Georgia continue to be manipulation of the frozen conflicts that lie within its borders. In Georgia, Moscow’s patronage of the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia gives the Kremlin significant sway

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<sup>161</sup> The funding will go towards food, job creation projects, healthcare, and reconstruction (another 6 million Euros was also pledged for Chechnya). RFE/RL article “EU to Compensate Victims of Caucasus Crises,” 13 Dec 05.

<sup>162</sup> George Anjaparidze and Cory Welt, “A Georgian-Russian Pipeline: for Peace or Profit?” *EurasiaNet* article dated 9 March 2004. Online at <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav030904.shtml> (accessed November 2005).

during peace negotiations. Tbilisi attempted to alter the equation by launching a diplomatic offensive in 2005, gaining greater visibility on the world scene with its attempts to internationalize its frozen conflicts. In order not to damage its relations with the West, Russia may realize that it needs to show some forward progress or face the embarrassment of a Georgian campaign to evict its remaining military forces from their peacekeeping roles, which, were it ever to succeed, would eliminate a powerful mechanism of Russian influence in the region. The process however, would likely be quite lengthy and in the meantime Moscow scuttle any progress in peace talks through its close ties with the leaders of the secessionist regions, leaving Georgia vulnerable to pressure from the Kremlin to be receptive to its policies.

Georgia must remain realistic about its expectations concerning the peacekeepers. While the West may be willing to shed more light and transparency on fledgling peace processes, it will not likely commit to augmenting or replacing Russian peacekeeping troops. OSCE or UN peacekeepers are a long shot, requiring Russia to withhold a veto. Tbilisi's best chance of neutralizing this critical mechanism of Russian influence, is with a pledge from Ukraine and its friends in the GUAM and/or Community of Democratic Choice to replace evicted Russian peacekeepers with its own troops. But first Georgia has to successfully engineer Russian removal of its peacekeeping forces. Some analysts argue that if Georgia unilaterally withdraws from the 1992 bilateral treaty between Moscow and Tbilisi that established the joint peacekeeping force, then the legal foundation for Russian troops in the breakaway province disappears. Russia would be obligated by international law to withdraw its forces or be accused of aggression against Georgia.<sup>163</sup>

Russia may have intended Georgia to become the 2005 poster child for how Moscow's Great Normalization policy treats those former republics who choose to break ties with it. Unlike a Balancer approach, which Tsygankov argues would result in sanctions, boycotts or even the risk of military conflict between Georgian and Russian forces in the conflict zones, Great Power Normalization behavior would simply freeze

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<sup>163</sup> "Russia Profile Weekly Experts' Panel: Are Russia and Georgia Headed for a Major Conflict over South Ossetia?" *Russia Profile*, 24 February 2006. Online at <http://www.russiaprofile.org/politics/2006/2/24/3304.wbp> (accessed March 2006).

Tbilisi out of Moscow's circle of influence, for example through "indifference and market-based trade relations (including prices on oil, gas and energy) as well as a full-scale visa regime (hurting Georgians who seek jobs in Russia.)"<sup>164</sup> While those elements are present, Russia's relations with Georgia are generally more characterized by conflict and distrust and Moscow frequently does not appear willing or able to alter their volatile nature. Russia's cooperation on significant movement forward toward resolution of the conflicts would make Moscow a hero and gain the Kremlin far more mileage with Tbilisi. Pragmatism in this case should be pushing Russia to improve its relations with Georgia and form a partnership in energy and security. Instead, Moscow's relations with Tbilisi appear combative and mired in old school thinking. A Russian foreign policy analyst points out that Russia may be overstepping the line on imperial behavior. "Despite its drive to become the world's energy superpower, Putin's government, in the eyes of many Western observers, has exceeded the acceptable limit of authoritarianism and imperial foreign policy in the former Soviet Union."<sup>165</sup> If Moscow proceeds along this path it may risk damaging the major tenet of its pragmatic foreign policy: cooperative economic and security relations with the West. While the issue of Russian peacekeepers seems to particularly bring out Moscow's worst tendency of looking at its Caucasus policies through a Great Power Balancer prism, one must also consider that its defensiveness on this issue is not entirely without merit when noting the advances the U.S. military has made in the region.

Aside from its military presence through the Georgia Train and Equip program, a program whose limited duration seems to keep being extended, the U.S. has also made significant inroads in establishing military relations with Azerbaijan. "Given the complicated situation in Iraq and Turkey's cooling relations with the United States," some Russian analysts predict that Azerbaijan could "hypothetically become an important base for a future operation against Iran."<sup>166</sup> A post 9/11 Department of Defense strategy

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<sup>164</sup> Nikolai Sokov, "The Withdrawal of Russian Military Bases from Georgia: Not Solving Anything," PONARS Policy Memo 363, June 2005, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Online at [http://www.csis.org/component/option.com\\_csis\\_pubs/task.view/id,1946/](http://www.csis.org/component/option.com_csis_pubs/task.view/id,1946/) (accessed February 2005).

<sup>165</sup> "Russia Profile Weekly Experts' Panel: Are Russia and Georgia Headed for a Major Conflict over South Ossetia?" *Russia Profile*, 24 February 2006. Online at <http://www.russiaprofile.org/politics/2006/2/24/3304.wbp> (accessed March 2006).

<sup>166</sup> Sergei Markedonov, "All Calm on the Horizon," *Russia Profile*, 10 October 2005.

has been to move away from large formal bases that require a heavy logistical footprint, toward smaller forward operating locations known as “lily pads.” These “cooperative security locations,” are tactical facilities with pre-positioned stocks for quick access in support of contingency operations.<sup>167</sup> With expansion of the U.S. - Azerbaijan military to military relationship, and three visits by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, the most recent in April 2005, Russia may be wondering whether Azerbaijan will become such an outpost. Baku is already cooperating with Washington on another U.S. initiative that began in 2003, the Caspian Guard, a joint military effort that focuses on hydrocarbon security through maritime and border surveillance and patrol in the Caspian Sea region.<sup>168</sup>

Moscow has attempted to counter these Western inroads, trying to draw Azerbaijan back into its orbit. President Putin visited the state in February 2006, during which Russia “offered to act as a guarantor of peace in the event that Azerbaijan and Armenia reach a compromise over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.”<sup>169</sup> Earlier in January 2005, during a trip to Azerbaijan, Minister of Defense Sergey Ivanov called for the creation of a Caspian naval force made up of forces from the five Caspian Sea littoral states (Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Turkmenistan) to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and other regional threats and challenges.<sup>170</sup> In an ironic twist, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, during a working group meeting with Caspian states on regional problems, warned of the dangers of introducing foreign military forces to the area. “We will lose a lot if we open doors to

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<sup>167</sup> Richard Giragosian, “Nagorno-Karabakh: Peace May Depend On Military Situation,” RFE/RL article dated 10 February 2006. Online at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/02/b1317838-a67a-47d8-8f24-61dba3680448.html> (accessed February 2006).

<sup>168</sup> Baku Sun, “Rumsfeld Baku visit leaves questions behind,” *BakuTODAY.net*, 18 April 2005. Online at <http://www.bakutoday.net/view.php?d=13143> (accessed March 2006)

<sup>169</sup> Robert Parsons, “Analysis: Putin Seeks to Draw Azerbaijan Back to Russian Orbit,” RFE/RL article dated 21 February 2006.

<sup>170</sup> FBIS article “Russia: Minister of Defense Calls for Creation of Caspian Military Coalition,” *Moscow Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye* in Russian, 27 January 2006, CEP20060203436004.

someone else's military presence in the Caspian region. Experience shows that it is easy to let foreign forces in while it is much more difficult to make them go out afterwards.”

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Even seemingly unrelated events such as Moscow's invitation to host Hamas leadership following their election to office in Palestine have regional repercussions. Russia's willingness to Hamas must not be looked at solely from an East-West perspective, as evidence that Russia is trying to undermine or counterbalance the positions of the U.S. and EU. Russia's decision to establish a dialogue with Hamas stands to benefit its internal security with respect to militant Islamic groups in Chechnya. Already dissatisfied by the willingness of Hamas to accept Russia's invitation for talks, the separatist Chechen government was further outraged following a press conference given by Hamas political director Khaled Mashaal in Moscow on 3 March 2006. When asked by Russian journalists to address the situation in Chechnya, Mashaal replied, "This is an internal issue for the Russian Federation. We do not involve ourselves in the internal affairs of other nations." <sup>172</sup>

The failure of Hamas to acknowledge the Chechen conflict as part of the greater Islamic struggle against oppression was a victory for Moscow and a slap in the face of the separatist government, whose information agency responded with harsh words. An editorial stated "it was certainly worth it for the butchers of the Chechen nation to extend a hand to Hamas, given how readily they seized it, ran off to Moscow, and kissed the drunken faces of our murderers. What lower scum could there be than a Muslim who refuses to recognize the genocide of the Chechen people?" Negative views such as this demonstrate fissures among elements of the global jihad that Russia can exploit. Chechen solidarity with Palestinian militant groups (including Hamas) has been a fixture of the separatist government's policy since its creation in 1997, and plays a key role in its radical Islam propaganda, international recruitment, and funding efforts. A break in unity with other jihadist movements could undermine efforts of Chechen radicals trying to

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<sup>171</sup> FBIS article "Russian Minister Warns Against Foreign Military Presence in Caspian Region," Moscow Rossiya TV in Russian 0900 GMT 14 March 2006, CEP20060315950006.

<sup>172</sup> "Hamas Visit to Moscow Provokes Fundamental Shift in Chechen Militant Radical Islamic Rhetoric," *Global Issues Report (GIR)*, DoD Contracted Research, 20 March 2006.

"transform regional dissatisfaction with Moscow into the political and theological basis for jihad against Russian federal authorities throughout the North Caucasus."<sup>173</sup>

Viewed in isolation, Russia's courting of Azerbaijan in an attempt to shore up relations in the Caucasus is a perfect example of Great Power Normalization. Despite the fact that Baku has generally been wary of Russia due to its role as Armenia's security ally, and Azerbaijan has reached out to the West with energy projects such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the Baku-Erzerum gas pipeline, relations with Moscow have been fairly good, compared with Georgia. Trade between the two countries has reached an all-time high and President Putin made a point to congratulate President Aliyev on his country's recent successful parliamentary elections which resulted in pro-government force taking nearly half the legislative seats (a pointed divergence from OSCE and EU criticism over voting irregularities and the use of police force to break up an approved demonstration staged by the opposition.)<sup>174</sup> When viewed in the larger context of the Caucasus, it begins to take on some Great Power Balancing elements. Absent is evidence of cooperation with the West on economic and security issues, despite a plethora of opportunities such as a Russian oil pipeline through Georgia that feeds into the BTC, a Russian led effort to break through the morass of Georgia's frozen conflicts, and a joint effort in security of the Caspian basin. Instead, Moscow's approach to the region gives a sense that Russia is more or less trying to counter Western military and economic presence with its own initiatives such as the Caspian force and a relentless effort at maintaining the status quo of Georgia's internal conflicts.

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<sup>173</sup> " Hamas Visit to Moscow Provokes Fundamental Shift in Chechen Militant Radical Islamic Rhetoric," *Global Issues Report (GIR)*, DoD Contracted Research, 20 March 2006. Ibid

<sup>174</sup> "OSCE, EU Question Azerbaijani Vote," RFE/RL article dated 07 November 2005. Online at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/11/180B495E-0761-4040-9EED-616085473ECF.html> (accessed March 2006) and "EU Urges Action Against Baku Police After Weekend Violence," RFE/RL article dated 1 December 2005. Online at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/12/646AF6C8-98F6-4B06-A655-ADEE3649D067.html> (accessed March 2006)

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## **IV. UZBEKISTAN AND CENTRAL ASIA - ROAD TO REGIONAL INTEGRATION OR SHADES OF NEO-IMPERIALISM?**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

On 2 February 2006, U.S. National Intelligence Director John Negroponte briefed the Senate Intelligence Committee on the vulnerability of Central Asia. He warned that "Central Asia remains plagued by political stagnation and repression, rampant corruption, widespread poverty and widening socioeconomic inequalities, and other problems that nurture nascent radical sentiment and terrorism."<sup>175</sup> The strategic importance of Central Asia, not only for efforts to combat global terrorism, but also for ensuring the uninterrupted flow of natural resources that drive Western economies, requires us to understand the dynamics that drive the region, especially the role that an increasingly assertive Russia plays.

This region was selected as a case study because of its strategic importance to Russia, not just as a source of energy, but also a source of concern. Moscow fears the region's capacity to breed Islamic extremism and recognizes that its highly permeable borders make Russia vulnerable to drug traffickers and terrorists transiting from Central and South Asia. Within the region, Uzbekistan is highlighted for emphasis because of its post Soviet attempt to distance itself from Moscow and pursue a more independent and multi-vectored foreign policy, making it a good litmus test for the effectiveness of Russia's mechanisms of influence. The case study begins with a survey of Russia's strategic interests in Central Asia followed by the diplomatic, information/cultural, military and economic (DIME) analysis developed in Chapter II.

While Russia's relationship with westward-leaning neighbors such as Ukraine and Georgia grew increasingly tense in 2005, Moscow appeared to be consolidating its position and influence in Central Asia, particularly in historically neutral Uzbekistan. Analysis of Russia's informational and cultural impact on Central Asia finds that Russian cultural resources play a far more significant role there than in the Caucasus. A review of

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<sup>175</sup> "Annual Threat Assessment of the Director of National Intelligence for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence," 2 February 2006. Online at <http://www.dni.gov/WWT%20Oral%20Statement%20UNCLASSIFIED%201%20February%20FINAL%20VERSION.pdf> (accessed February 2006).



Russia's diplomacy in the region finds Russia distancing itself from Western criticism of the region's authoritarian regimes and instead actively offering political support and promoting a status quo. Moscow has an aggressive energy agenda and has increased emphasis on military mechanisms of influence, seeking to intensify coalition-based efforts to respond to regional threats. The year 2005 was not just significant for the expulsion of U.S. military forces from Uzbekistan but also for Moscow's new security pact with Tashkent, and more solidified military postures in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Analysis of all four of these factors--cultural, diplomatic-political, military-security, and economic--reveals that Russia has been extremely successful in waging a multi-dimensional geopolitical offensive in Central Asia. While its initiatives largely meet the tenets of Great Power Normalization, the depth and breadth of its penetration of the region's energy infrastructure is disconcerting and suggests that Russia may be able to exert undue influence on the countries' policy making processes by using energy as a lever. Evidence of such a potential includes Tajikistan's announcement of a formalized military base deal with Russia following an influx of Russian investment and Uzbekistan's announcement of a strategic alliance following similar investment initiatives by Moscow. How much influence is too much to accord with a policy of Great Power Normalization rather than a policy of balancing the United States or neo-imperialism?

## **B. RUSSIAN STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA**

In the late 1990s three armed conflicts took place in the region. The Taliban regime had consolidated its position in most of Afghanistan and was fighting an ethnically and religiously disparate group of rebels (the Northern Alliance) for control of remaining Afghan territory. Second, Islamist rebels based in Afghanistan had been trying to overthrow the government of Uzbekistan, and armed incursions frequently spilled over into neighboring Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Third, while the peace process between Islamic rebels and Tajikistan's communist regime had largely been completed, some armed groups continued the rebellion from rebel-controlled parts of the country or border regions of Uzbekistan.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> "Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map," Asia Report N°20, 4 July 2001. International Crisis Group. Online at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/text/index.cfm?id=1437&lang=ru> (accessed March 2006).

Such instability on Russia's doorstep is one of Moscow's worst nightmares. Its strategic interests in Central Asia are aimed at mitigating and containing it, not just to protect the southern flank, but also to create conditions favorable to economic growth, especially in the energy sector. What Russia wants is access to the region's energy resources, and what it needs is regional stability to get them. These mutually supporting interests are explained below to provide a contextual understanding of what motivates Russia in its foreign policy in Central Asia. The case study then turns to the DIME analysis evaluating specific elements of influence at work in the region.

### **1. Controlling and Mitigating Regional Instability**

A new Russian security doctrine began evolving in the mid-1990s that reflected less of a preoccupation with "traditional" Cold War threats and more with regional threats rooted in instability and turmoil along Russia's southern border. Former Defense Minister Igor Sergeev in 1998 noted that the possible escalation of armed conflicts aimed at strengthening the position of Islamic extremism in the Caucasus and Central Asia were a very real and serious threat to Russia.<sup>177</sup> Moscow's "domino theory" holds that Islamic extremism could spread from Central Asia to the Caucasus or vice versa and into Russian Muslim regions such as Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. It is this type of alarmist thinking that contributed to Russian military efforts to prop up Tajikistan's communist government in the wake of a civil war with Islamic political factions in the mid- to late 1990s, a regional precedent that could be repeated.

Unlike the dubious and overstated claims that Islamic extremism is at the root of Russia's problems in Chechnya, Central Asia has been victim to militant Islam, namely at the hands of the groups such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT) and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). While a relatively short historical tradition of secular governance exists, Central Asia is facing a rising Islamic extremist element, largely fueled by the abject poverty of all but the ruling elite in the region. Existing authoritarian regimes repress any Islamist elements. Regional experts caution that these efforts to control political Islam could eventually backfire, as lack of political freedoms drive people to join radical groups. "The enormous repression of the Central Asian regimes and the lack

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<sup>177</sup> Roy Allison, "The Military and Political Security Landscape in Russia and the South," in *Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia: the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Security Environment*, ed. Rajan Menon, Yuri Fedorov and Ghia Nodia (New York: EastWest Institute, 1999), 43.

of any kind of political expression naturally forces politically oriented people to go underground and to become radicalized, and then join these Islamist groups".<sup>178</sup>

Another critical component of regional stability is curbing the operations of criminal networks engaged in drug, arms and human trafficking. Like Russia's earlier shift in threat perception from the Western to the South, Moscow has also begun to define its security threats in a broader manner, rather than in strictly in conventional military terms. As Gail Lapidus noted in 2001,

increasingly, the flows of weapons, of drugs, of refugees, and of Islamist radicalism and terrorism came to be viewed as major new threats to security. The drug trade took on particular importance because of its role in financing civil wars and insurgencies across the entire region, beginning with the civil war in Tajikistan and extending to the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan.<sup>179</sup>

In Central Asia links can be drawn between Islamic terrorism and the illicit drug trade, and the region comprises the main transit corridor for illicit drugs from Afghanistan to Russia.

As a result, during the 1990s Russia had hopes of maintaining key installations and military facilities throughout the former Soviet republics in order to maintain an outer defense of CIS borders, sharing this task with other CIS member-states to form a "forward security zone," and outer perimeter that would act as a security buffer for Russia. The fiscal realities of the late 1990s made this impossible as Russia lacked the personnel to occupy the bases, and the financial means to support the requirements of joint operational tasks with the CIS states.<sup>180</sup> For the most part, Central Asian states, as well as Russia, are limited in the resources they can put toward this problem and the best approach appears to be regional cooperation. The most significant contribution Moscow can make, now that it no longer provides border guards along Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan, is "increased access to Russian security agencies" and diversification of

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<sup>178</sup> Ahmad Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia*,

<sup>179</sup> Gail W. Lapidus, "Central Asia in Russian and American Foreign Policy after September 11, 2001," Presentation from "Central Asia and Russia: Responses to the 'War on Terrorism,'" a panel discussion held at the University of California, Berkeley on October 29, 2001. Online at [http://ist-socrates.berkeley.edu/~bsp/caucasus/articles/lapidus\\_2001-1029.pdf](http://ist-socrates.berkeley.edu/~bsp/caucasus/articles/lapidus_2001-1029.pdf) (accessed March 2006)

<sup>180</sup> Allison, 49-50.

“existing anti-drug security structures on a CIS scale.”<sup>181</sup> Such measures are cheap and reliable alternative to deeper regional involvement with Western countries or Western multilateral security organizations.

## **2. Economic Presence and Expansion**

The mainstay of President Putin’s Global Power Normalization foreign policy was Russia’s economic expansion. For Central Asia this meant that the Russian ruble and business community, particularly its energy sector, would play a dominant role in the region. Under President Putin there is now a “growing recognition in the Foreign Ministry and in the Economic Development and trade ministry that they need to support Russian businesses abroad.”<sup>182</sup> Upon taking office in 2000, in his first Security Council speech, Putin declared the Caspian Sea region a “zone of vital interest.” He blamed increased Western and Turkish presence on Russian “inactivity” and urged Russian companies to “engage in more competition.”<sup>183</sup>

While Russia may not possess the most advanced technology in the global energy market, the existing Soviet infrastructure still in place gives Russia a significant comparative advantage in its relations with the Central Asian states due to “dependency linkages” that Russia can exploit. The region under Soviet control was primarily a source of raw materials and few states have the processing or manufacturing infrastructure to produce finished goods, which were usually produced in Russia.<sup>184</sup> It is far cheaper to repair these industrial links by exporting raw materials to Russia than to construct them domestically. In addition, Soviet era pipelines were all constructed to run back to Russia rather than export oil and gas directly to destinations beyond the USSR.

Owing to President Putin’s efforts to regain an element of control over the state’s energy monopolies, there now exists a much greater level of coherence and coordination in Russian foreign economic engagement in Central Asia and the Caucasus, with overlapping interests between the state and “big business.” This enables Moscow to exercise a foreign policy where “the states of the region remain dependent on Russian

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<sup>181</sup> Roger McDermott, “Russia Offers Help Combating Drugs in Central Asia,” *Eurasia Insight*, Tuesday, December 6, 2005

<sup>182</sup> Perovic, 65.

<sup>183</sup> Perovic, 64.

<sup>184</sup> Hale, 1999.

energy imports or on the Russian pipeline system... [and] remain within the sphere of influence of the Russian state and Russian energy companies.”<sup>185</sup>

Between the security and economic imperatives described above, a symbiotic relationship seems to be taking place where investment in energy resources and infrastructure naturally leads to a need to protect that infrastructure. This facilitates bilateral or coalition-based efforts to secure the Caspian Sea basin from perceived threats. Another example of symbiosis concerns Russia’s arms trade with the region. Central Asian states are highly dependent on Russian military hardware and its spare parts supply chain for their legacy equipment, a need Russian arms manufacturers are happy to meet.<sup>186</sup> Great Power Normalizers seek to maximize these types of linkages, stressing their mutual benefit.

**C. RUSSIAN MECHANISMS OF INFLUENCE: EFFORTS TO USE DIPLOMACY, INFORMATION, SECURITY AND ECONOMICS TO ACHIEVE ITS INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA.**

When the Soviet Union dissolved and Russian President Yeltsin proposed the hastily created Commonwealth of Independent States, he originally intended the new union to only be composed of the Slavic republics of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus—the original signatories who formed the CIS during a meeting near Minsk 7-8 December 1991. Central Asian leaders however, most notably Kazakhstan’s Nursultan Nazarbayev, were furious at being excluded and a subsequent treaty that added eight additional republics was concluded in Alma Ata on 21 December 1991.<sup>187</sup> Uzbekistan pursued an independent foreign policy and Turkmenistan one of isolation. However, the other three former Soviet republics, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, formed the nucleus of the “unionist” group within the CIS, seeking closer economic and military integration with Russia.

Sharing more of a kinship with the Middle East than its Central Asian neighbors, Uzbekistan, under the leadership of Islam Karimov, has long harbored its own aspirations as a regional hegemon. Uzbekistan is the most populous of the Central Asia states and

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<sup>185</sup> Perovic, 66.

<sup>186</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, “The Great Powers in Central Asia.” *Current History*. October 2005, p334.

<sup>187</sup> William E. Odom and Robert Dujarric. *Commonwealth or Empire? Russia, Central Asia and the Transcaucasus* (Indiana: Hudson Institute, 1995), 10.

home of the region's largest ethnic group, the Uzbeks. The country is unique among its neighbors because its titular ethnic majority bears a strong cultural identity that dates back to the Turkic-Mongol empire and the sophisticated Silk Road cities of Bokhara, Samarkand and Khiva.<sup>188</sup> Upon first gaining its independence, Uzbekistan, which had largely been a natural gas producer for the Soviet Union, had not yet discovered its own substantial oil reserves. President Karimov embarked on a vigorous program to build the infrastructure necessary to process his own oil and by 1996 the country was self-sufficient in energy.<sup>189</sup> This is one of the primary factors that allowed Tashkent to pursue an independent foreign policy not limited by Moscow's influence.

### **1. Information / Cultural Mechanisms of Russian Influence**

In general Russia's perceptions of its imperial and Soviet past have differed from those of the USSR's other constituent republics. Russians generally believe that during the tsarist and Soviet period they were a civilizing force that enriched the people who were incorporated (willingly or unwillingly) into the Russian empire. In turn they feel the Soviet empire exploited Russia, in essence robbing from the rich center and giving to the poor periphery. This perception is largely at odds with that of other nationalities, for whom Russia was inextricably associated with Soviet power and with their own lack of freedom.

In Central Asia, although the popular consensus on the benefits of Russian imperialism is mixed, the imprint left by Moscow is deep. While Russia is seen as an oppressor, especially with regard to its role in suppressing Islam, it is also seen as a protector and benefactor. Many Central Asians feel that without Russian/Soviet involvement, they would be another Afghanistan, a political and economic basket case.<sup>190</sup> Insulated from much of the Western world due to geography and then Soviet oppression, Central Asia in the last century seems to have grown up in a vacuum, with its

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<sup>188</sup> William E. Odom and Robert Dujarric. *Commonwealth or Empire? Russia, Central Asia and the Transcaucasus* (Indiana: Hudson Institute, 1995) Ibid, 53

<sup>189</sup> Henry Hale, "Independence and Integration in the Caspian Basin," SAIS Review 19, no.1 (1999).

<sup>190</sup> 6 March 2006 interview with Colin Lober, Research Associate, National Security Affairs Department, Naval Postgraduate School and returned Peace Corps Volunteer, Kyrgyzstan 2002-2004; and Robert Kaiser, "U.S. Plants Shaky Footprint in Central Asia," #11 – JRL 6408 dated 27 August 2002. Online at <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/6408-11.cfm> (accessed October 2005).

primary cultural exposure being Soviet/Russian. Pre-Soviet and indigenous conceptions of identity (with some exceptions, such as the Uzbeks) is generally less well formed than in the Caucasus.<sup>191</sup>

The magnitude of this imperial legacy has been perpetuated by the fact that so little outside light was shed on the region even after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The urban intelligentsia tended to be more “Russified” than in the Caucasus and played a greater role in intellectual and cultural life.<sup>192</sup> State actors who exercised power after the collapse were the same ones who wielded it before; because they were able to “maintain or expand their power base after independence through their privileged access to scarce resources and control over distribution networks,” very little turnover occurred that challenged the status quo.<sup>193</sup> Compounding the lack of well-developed national identities or even the unifying force of Islam, which had been driven underground, Central Asian states have not had the opportunity to even begin developing a strong civil society.<sup>194</sup> With the exception of Kyrgyzstan, existing “legacy” regimes in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were able to consolidate their authoritarian hold on the instruments of state power, leaving no autonomous sphere where opposition could be voiced or societal interests articulated.

Unlike in most other former Soviet republics, in Central Asia, there is very little indigenous free press and many residents listen to government-controlled or Russian media, making their view of regional politics somewhat “Moscow-centric.”<sup>195</sup> In the 2005 Reporters without Borders Press Freedom Index, out of 167 countries surveyed,

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<sup>191</sup> Rajan Menon, “Introduction: the Security Environment in the South Caucasus and Central Asia,” in *Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia: the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Security Environment*, ed. Rajan Menon, Yuri Fedorov and Ghia Nodia (New York: EastWest Institute, 1999), 13.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid

<sup>193</sup> Pauline Jones Luong “Central Asia’s Contribution to Theories of the State” in *The Transformation of Central Asia*, ed. Pauline Jones Luong, p273

<sup>194</sup> The effort to strengthen national identity has been a focus of several of the Central Asian states and has primarily taken the form of official adoption of titular languages or been superficial such as Tajikistan’s state sponsored campaign to promote the Tajiks as an “Aryan” nation, going so far as to adopt a stylized swastika as a symbol of national unity (see REF/RL article “Tajikistan: Officials Say Swastika Part Of Their Aryan Heritage” dated 23 Dec 05).

<sup>195</sup> Henry Hale, “Independence and Integration in the Caspian Basin,” SAIS Review 19, no.1 (1999). and Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index for 2005 and Robert Kaiser, “U.S. Plants Shaky Footprint in Central Asia,” #11 – JRL 6408 dated 27 August 2002. Online at <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/6408-11.cfm> (accessed October 2005).

none of the Central Asia states appeared in the top 100. Kyrgyzstan ranked highest at 111th, followed by Tajikistan at 113, Kazakhstan at 119 and Uzbekistan at 155, with Turkmenistan ranking 165. Only Eritrea and North Korea ranked lower.

The Russian language is still widely spoken, especially in academic, political and business circles, and serves as the common denominator in educated discourse, further impeding a sense of independence from Moscow.<sup>196</sup> This is the case not just for the states like Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan which have significant ethnic Russian minorities, but even in those where Russians make up only 5-10% of the population. Like their borders, the Central Asian republics' titular languages were artificial creations, and with constantly changing alphabets, were in essence dysfunctional. In comparison, even in ethnically diverse states like Georgia, in the Caucasus, only about 10% of residents speak Russian. In addition, significant Russia minorities still live in several of the Central Asian republics and millions of Central Asians live and work in Russia, perpetuating a social milieu in which it is easier to navigate in the Russian language.<sup>197</sup>

Perhaps realizing what an advantage this gives it, Russia is tapping into its soft power to counter perceived Western NGOs efforts to promote national languages and the use of English as the new language of international communication in post-Soviet states. In January 2005, Foreign Minister Lavrov called for Russian NGOs to play a greater role in improving the country's image in the world and went so far as to offer NGOs the use of 43 Russian cultural centers functioning in 38 countries around the globe. With regard to the Commonwealth of Independent States he stated that, "Russian non-government organizations in the CIS can engage in versatile activities from monitoring elections and assisting conflict prevention using people's diplomacy to protecting the rights of ethnic Russians and helping CIS immigrants adapt to a life in Russia."<sup>198</sup> An expanded dialogue with CIS countries through NGOs, he continued, would "prop up the commonwealth, promote the implementation of numerous CIS agreements, and still more

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<sup>196</sup> Bhavna Dave "A Shrinking Reach of the State? Language Policy and Implementation in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan" in *The Transformation of Central Asia*, ed. Pauline Jones Luong, p121

<sup>197</sup> Central Asia has been the source for about half of all migrants to Russia, the three Transcaucasus states 15 percent, and the Baltics only 4 percent. Source: Timothy Heleniak, "Migration and Restructuring in Post-Soviet Russia," *Demokratizatsiya*, 9, no. 4 (Fall 2001).

<sup>198</sup> FBIS article, "NGOS Can Improve Russia's Image Abroad," Moscow Interfax in English, 18 Jan 05, CEP20050119000025.



important, it would disrupt attempts to drive a wedge between Russia and its closest neighbors.”<sup>199</sup> In addition, the Kremlin has recently proposed that the free education quota for students from the CIS (currently set at 1%) should be increased, allowing more students from the CIS to get a free education in Russia's higher educational establishments. President Putin also spoke out against cutting the number of departments which Russian colleges and universities have in the CIS and announcing that Moscow State University is expanding its network of branches in the CIS, an effort the Russian leadership will facilitate.<sup>200</sup>

Efforts such as these are consistent with Tsygankov's Great Power Normalization model in that through soft power, Russia is trying to make itself better understood and more influential among its neighbors. It is likely that Russia would not be nearly as successful in wielding its diplomatic, economic and military mechanisms of influence in Central Asia without sharing some common cultural foundations with the region.

## **2. Political Mechanisms of Russian Influence**

Despite being the dominant actor in the region for much of the 1990s, Russia was challenged at the turn of the millennium by the shake up in global affairs that followed the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States. The U.S. courted regional leaders (with Russia's pragmatic consent) and obtained a territorial foothold that Russia continued to watch with a wary eye. In addition, Moscow was faced with managing newfound Chinese economic interests in the region as well. The dual-track strategy of diplomatic support of the political status quo and political efforts to mitigate United States goals of democracy-promotion has been Russia's most potent political mechanism in the region.

### ***a. Support for a Non-Democratic Political Status Quo***

Among the region's authoritarian regimes, where “revolution” phobia is perhaps at its peak, Russia's tolerance of regional human rights abuses and authoritarian measures makes it highly attractive as an ally. The republics share suspicion of efforts of

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<sup>199</sup> FBIS article, “NGOS Can Improve Russia's Image Abroad,” Moscow Interfax in English, 18 Jan 05, CEP20050119000025.Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> FBIS article, “Russian President Putin Calls for Closer Education Ties With CIS Countries.” CEP20051025027193 Moscow RIA-Novosti in Russian 1102 GMT 25 Oct 05. Also see RFE-RL article by Paul Goble, “Moscow Plans Linguistic Counterattack in CIS.

IGOs and NGOs to build democracy, frequently telling the West that there are *different* paths to democracy, and “democracy” in one country can be different from another. Many Central Asian officials believe that the Bush administration’s aggressive democratization policies have helped foment political upheaval in the former Soviet Union, leading to regime change in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. Incumbents throughout Central Asia are now intent on preventing the revolutionary turmoil that engulfed Kyrgyzstan in the Tulip revolution from spreading to its neighbors. This acceptance of the status quo gives Russia an edge in its efforts to appeal to Central Asian regimes. “The US cannot compete with Russia and China in that kind of a Great Game because its domestic political culture and circumstances require it to pay attention to human rights and economic transparency in a way that Russia and China don’t have to do.”<sup>201</sup> Following the U.S. led Iraqi war, Moscow was able to capitalize on the region’s concern over President Bush’s crusade for democracy and its relative disappointment with what they expected to be a post-9/11 financial windfall.

Overall the Central Asian republics expected more from their support of the US-led global war on terrorism (GWOT) in Afghanistan. For example, the United States kept its involvement with Uzbekistan limited to the security realm and GWOT, concentrating its efforts at Karshi-Khanabad airbase, which it used for American operations in Afghanistan. No significant economic involvement tied the countries closer together, making the President of Uzbekistan’s decision to expel American forces relatively simple.<sup>202</sup> Overall, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan expected far greater increases in foreign assistance packages and “fast track” upgrades of military and security forces, while Washington envisioned incremental reforms with local funding.<sup>203</sup> In

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<sup>201</sup> RFE/RL Reports 31 October 2005, Volume 5, Number 32; “Russia, US Vie for Influence in Central Asia” by Robert McMahon. Available online at <http://www.rferl.org/reports/rpw/2005/10/32-311005.asp>

<sup>202</sup> Erich Marquardt, Yevgeny Bendersky, “Uzbekistan's New Foreign Policy Strategy,” dated 23 Nov 05. *The Power and Interest News Report*. Online at [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=404](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=404) (accessed February 2006).

<sup>203</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, “The Great Powers in Central Asia.” *Current History*. October 2005, 331 and Yekaterina Kuznetsova, “The Near Abroad: Increasingly Far Away from Russia,” *Russia in Global Affairs*, January - March 2005. Available online at <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/numbers/10/809.html> (accessed March 2006).

addition, as the strategic importance of Central Asian bases waned in light of the Iraq war, the US could afford to be more diplomatically standoffish.

Neither Russia nor the Central Asian states were prepared for the U.S. ousting of Saddam Hussein. The Bush administration's rhetoric about supporting democracy around the globe and "freeing the world's citizens from tyranny" hit a little too close to home for many of their authoritarian regimes. During his second inaugural address President Bush announced that democracy was the country's central principle with respect to foreign policy. This was reinforced by statements from Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and the Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia Daniel Fried: state security and U.S. interests in democracy are indivisible.<sup>204</sup> The implication was that no longer would the U.S. turn a blind eye to civil rights abuses in the interest of joint counterterrorism activities.

One week after Condoleezza Rice left Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan conspicuously absent from her 10-13 October 2005 tour of Afghanistan and Central Asia, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov visited both countries on 21 October 2005. Lavrov's efforts can be interpreted as "mop-up" operations, a clear sign of Russian willingness to side with Central Asian regimes and to reject U.S. efforts to stigmatize them on the basis of their democratic credentials. After meeting with Uzbek President Islam Karimov and Foreign Minister Elyur Ganiev in Tashkent, Lavrov announced that the two countries were "united by the need to fight the threats of extremism and terrorism" and said they have good prospects for developing bilateral and multilateral cooperation.<sup>205</sup> The visit was on the heels of a stop in Ashgabat. There Russia's Foreign Minister discussed with Turkmenistan President Saparmurat Niyazov the formation of a joint naval force to patrol the Caspian Sea (despite the fact that Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Iran all claim shares of the resource-rich Caspian and have not yet agreed on a final settlement that would delineate their shares and rights).

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<sup>204</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, "The Great Powers in Central Asia." *Current History*. October 2005, 331. and Press Conference of Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Daniel Fried, U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan. 27 September 2005. Online at <http://www.usembassy.uz/home/index.aspx?&mid=429&overview=1346> (accessed November 2005).

<sup>205</sup> Sergei Blagov, "Russia Seeks to Keep Pressure on United States in Central Asia," *Eurasianet* article, 25 September 2005.

In the wake of the Andijon massacre in Uzbekistan, Russia demonstrated that it is more than happy to come to the aid of the Karimov regime, standing by it in the wake of Western criticism, in order to further Russian foreign policy objectives. Senior Russian officials, including Defense Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov went so far as to defend Karimov's government and blame the Andijon violence on "external sources," implying that Islamic extremists were responsible for agitating the situation in hopes of bringing down the government. Another important benefit for Russia of maintaining the status quo in Central Asia is preservation of Moscow's business ties, frequently based on clannish relationships among political elites, discussed next.

### **3. Economic Mechanisms of Russian Influence**

Rather than fostering greater integration, the end of the Cold War and the forces of globalization, have had a destabilizing impact in the former Soviet republics. As described earlier, economic integration among the former Soviet republics failed due to ideological cleavages, differing levels of economic development among its members and protectionist trade policies. Ironically, Russia was one of the worst offenders. Early on it refused to maintain the Russian ruble as the currency in use among CIS members. Its protectionist stance toward CIS imports in some cases pushed CIS states into the global economy rather than deeper into a Russian-dominated trade bloc in which Russia would only trade on favorable terms. Despite difficulties within the CIS, Russia initially did not want to see alternative regional sub-groups emerge, for fear they would cut Moscow out of the picture. In recent years however, as long as Russia can be a part of smaller sub-groups and ensure that they do not undermine Moscow policies, they have been encouraged and are a major characteristic of a policy of Great Power Normalization.

Many of the new states are still too weak economically and institutionally to effectively integrate into highly competitive global markets. They are therefore highly dependent on close economic ties to Moscow, especially in the energy sector and this makes regional integration (even under Moscow's leadership) still desirable to some. This makes them more amenable to Moscow's leadership role. The two primary trends in the area of economics that have emerged under President Putin's Normalizer foreign policy are regional integration efforts and the dominance of energy politics.

**a. Regional Economic Integration**

Integration efforts among CIS states generally can be categorized as either broad-based and sub-regional. Broad-based integration usually included a political component while sub-regional efforts were targeted to specific projects. Russia, on one hand has “consistently sought to transform the CIS into a full-fledged military and political group under its leadership.”<sup>206</sup> Most of the smaller members favored sub-regional groupings that allowed those with like needs and interests to work toward common goals. It is therefore with some surprise that Russia policy experts have noted Moscow’s newfound interest in forming regional clubs:

Generally, Moscow has little enthusiasm for international organizations, particularly for European fora like the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe, and is quite content with the unreformed United Nations Security Council. In Central Asia, however, Putin finds it important to formalize his personal networks with regional leaders, which he has been cultivating incessantly, into organizational frameworks.<sup>207</sup>

One such organizational framework is the Eurasian Economic Community (EEC or Eurasec). The troubled integration efforts of the CIS led “unionist” countries to band together in smaller groups that had more similar goals.

Eurasec was formalized in 2000 and championed by Kazakhstan’s President Nazarbaev who became chairman in 2001. The group was actually a club within a club, uniting together the CIS “unionists” from the original Customs Union (Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) with a new pledge to simply observe the provisions of the CIS agreements already in place. Nazarbaev’s brainchild, the group was intended to move toward ASEAN- or NAFTA-style agreements. It was also designed to gain recognition at the UN as an international organization and therefore have some negotiating power in respect to other international organizations. In addition, it differed from the CIS Customs Union in that it had greater enforcement powers and the ability to exclude members from the union for failing to

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<sup>206</sup> Igor Burakovsky, “Economic Integration and Security in Post-Soviet Space,” in *Swords and Sustenance: the Economics of Security in Belarus and Ukraine* eds. Robert Legvold and Celeste Wallander (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004) 167.

<sup>207</sup> Pavel K. Baev. “Russia’s Counterrevolutionary Offensive in Central Asia.” PONARS Policy Memo No. 399. Available online at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/pm\\_0399.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/pm_0399.pdf).

abide by its rules. It had a weighted-voting and financing scheme with Russia picking up 40% of the operating budget and a corresponding 40% of voting rights. Agreement of 2/3 of the membership was required on major policy issues which meant that Russia had to secure the votes of at least 2 other states to pass a policy, but it also meant sole Russian veto power.<sup>208</sup>

Another major regional organization was the Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO). Formed in 1994 as an economic organization it was expanded in 2001 to include political and security matters as well. It was significant in that it included four of the five Central Asian states (minus Turkmenistan) but not Russia. While intended to improve broader regional cooperation in areas such as trade, the environment and transportation, common threats of insurgency and terrorism actually aggravated the members' mutual distrust.<sup>209</sup> Within the group cleavages formed between the countries closer to Russia, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, and more independent minded Uzbekistan, which the others perceived as trying to impose its own hegemony on the region. Relations were further strained in 1999 and 2000 by internal instability in the Ferghana Valley. This led to mutual military incursions among the neighboring countries, as well as their tightening and mining of borders. Despite these tensions, summits continued and a forum for dialogue on integration was maintained.

The United States was a proponent of this regional integration, believing that the more the Central Asian states could leverage each other for cooperation, the less they would depend on Moscow. Russia on the other hand never publicly encouraged the effort, and contributed to the lack of cohesion in the members' goals and outlooks.<sup>210</sup> The invitation extended to Russia to join the group in 2004 was likely the harbinger of events to come as Russia signaled its renewed interest in Central Asia. Russian membership changed the dynamics of the organization significantly. No longer was it a "Central Asian club" where members were more or less on an equal footing. Some even

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<sup>208</sup> Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst article "Eurasian Economic Community Comes into Being" by Roza Zhalimbetova and Gregory Gleason. 20 Jun 01

<sup>209</sup> Farkhad Tolipov, "CACO Merges with EEC: the Third Strike on Central Asia's Independence," Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, 19 October 2005.

<sup>210</sup> Farkhad Tolipov, "CACO Merges with EEC: the Third Strike on Central Asia's Independence," Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, 19 October 2005.

argue that Moscow's membership "distorted the geographic configuration and natural political composition of Central Asia's attempts at regional organization."<sup>211</sup>

During the 6 October 2005 CACO summit in St Petersburg, Russia, the group announced that it would merge with Eurasec. Because of the overlapping nature of the organizations, the net effect of the merger was that Uzbekistan joined Eurasec, since the other CACO states were already members. Significantly, this brought the previously independent-minded Uzbekistan into the "unionist" fold--a likely response to Tashkent's feeling of international isolation following Western pressure in the wake of the Andijon crisis. The leaders cited common objective between the organizations and elimination duplication of effort, time and money, as the reasons for the merger.<sup>212</sup> Russian policy analysts observe that the event signals three main Russia intentions: to increase its influence in Central Asia, to improve cooperation in regional security, and to improve its position in channeling Russian direct investment into Central Asia, especially into the energy sector. Overall, Western observers characterize the merger as the "third strike" for Central Asian independence and the ability of these states to mitigate Russian influence by coordinating a united front on issues of mutual interest.<sup>213</sup>

#### ***b. Trade***

Aside from combating terrorism, the primary interest of the United States government in Central Asia has been democracy promotion through cultural exchange and educational activities. Russia on the other hand has clearly asserted an economic presence. Perhaps realizing that it should not be perceived as solely an energy exporter from the region, Moscow is also trying to tap into the burgeoning trade that is finally taking root in parts of the region. The dismal statistics of the first post Soviet decade,

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<sup>211</sup> Farkhad Tolipov, "CACO Merges with EEC: the Third Strike on Central Asia's Independence," Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, 19 October 2005. Ibid

<sup>212</sup> RFE/RL article "Post Soviet Groupings Unite" by Claire Bigg, dated 8 Oct 05 and FBIS article "CIS Leaders Hail Merger Of Central Asian Organizations", CEP20051007027157 dated 06 Oct 05.

<sup>213</sup> The first strike being Russia's membership in CACO, the second was the Russian and Chinese engineered SCO ultimatum for Western withdrawal from K2 and the third being the formerly neutral Uzbekistan joining the Russian dominated Eurasec. More information on regional CIS entities is available at <http://www.cagateway.org/index.php?search=&lng=1&page=59&topic=0&subtopic=0&country=265> (accessed December 2005).

which saw CIS trade drop by 70%, have been halted. Trade among the Eurasec bloc members in 2004 totaled \$28 billion, up roughly 40% over the previous year.<sup>214</sup>

Kazakhstan, which has the region's strongest economy, has been Russia's main focus. One of the efforts to strengthen ties among them is the creation of a regional investment bank with an initial capital supply of \$1.5 billion, the bulk of it to be supplied by Russia. The bank will be headquartered in Almaty, Kazakhstan and is scheduled to open in December 2005.<sup>215</sup> Kazakhstan's share of Russian investment in the CIS has been increasing steadily, up from 2.6% in 2002, 5% in 2003 and 11.8 in 2004. While other countries, such as Belarus, receive more Russian investment, their percentage of total investment has steadily declined, down from 58.9% in 2000 to 44.7% in 2003 and 39% in 2004. Also notable is Uzbekistan, which between 2000 and 2003 received less than 1% of the total investment Russia made in the CIS but in 2004 its share increased to 19%, the highest of all the Central Asian states that year.<sup>216</sup> While Russia used to be the dominant trading partner of most Central Asian states, the percentage of trade with outside partners like the United States, Turkey, China and the EU have grown, and in some cases even replaced Russia as the leading trade partner and provider of technical assistance.<sup>217</sup> Moscow's newfound interest in regional economic organizations may be an attempt to recoup some of its trade losses with CIS partners, especially in Central Asia..

Efforts to stimulate Central Asian trade will be limited however by Russia's most fundamental economic challenge: aging or insufficient infrastructure, a problem that grow more acute the farther east one travels. Analysts observe that shortfalls in "tying together eastern, central and western Russia means that goods and services that go north-south to and from Russia and Central Asia, cannot easily be marketed in or shipped to Russia's borders. Russia's overall trade with Central Asia is

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<sup>214</sup> Eurasia Insight article "Geopolitical balance in Central Asia Tilts Toward Russia"

<sup>215</sup> Ibid

<sup>216</sup> Table 23.15 INVESTMENTS OF RUSSIA IN THE ECONOMY OF THE CIS COUNTRIES. Source: Russia's Federal State Statistics Service. Available online at <http://www.gks.ru/wps/portal/english>

<sup>217</sup> Perovic, 76.



severely wounded from the outset.”<sup>218</sup> The Putin administration has placed increased emphasis on developing Russia’s far eastern energy provinces in Siberia and Sakhalin and has visions of integrating them with transportation networks consisting of Sino–Russian–American maritime transport projects, to include “tunnels from Japan to Sakhalin and then to Russia, or tunnels tying together Japan, South Korea and then the major Eurasian railways, projects with Southeast Asia, even discussions of Alaskan–Russian tunnels that would connect with the tunnels to Southeast Asia.”<sup>219</sup> Such grandiose plans seek to take advantage of Russia’s geographic bridge between Europe and Central, South and East Asia and attempt to compete with modern interpretations of the historic Great Silk Road(s) such as the EU’s TRACECA project that bypasses Russia.<sup>220</sup> Only if Russia is successful in offering an alternative trade route will it successfully compete with the other rising powers that court Central Asian markets.

*c. Energy*

Analysts have observed Russia’s growing use of economic mechanisms to manifest its influence in the “near abroad” for some time; in 2003 they noted that Russian business executives were “acting as shock troops in the Kremlin’s latest bid to reestablish its controlling influence over former Soviet republics, confirming that economic considerations are exerting increasing influence over the policy-making establishment in Russia.”<sup>221</sup> That analysis was made in response to Russian policy in the Caucasus, but it predicted that if the strategy was successful, it would likely be used in Central Asia as well, an observation that has proved correct.<sup>222</sup>

Two years later, it appears that Russia is pursuing economic dominance in Central Asia via gas and hydroelectric power in particular. Three trends have emerged in

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<sup>218</sup> Stephen Blank, “Infrastructural Policy in Central Asia.” *Central Asian Survey*. December 2004. p10.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid

<sup>220</sup> Ibid, 11. For clarification, TRACECA is an EU sponsored project that seeks to promote sustainable regional development along a southern transportation corridor that links Europe to the Caucasus and Central Asia.

<sup>221</sup> Eurasia Insight article “Russia Seeks to Use Energy Abundance to Increase” by Igor Rokbakov, dated 19 Nov 03

<sup>222</sup> Russia’s electricity giant RAO – UES, in which, like Gazprom, the government has a controlling share, was able to secure large stakes in energy sectors in Armenia and Georgia (controlling 80% and 75% respectively of those states energy generating capacity). Ibid.

Russia's energy expansion strategy: monopoly over energy transportation systems that transit the region; acquisition of key energy infrastructure; and more active participation in resource extraction projects through direct financial investment.<sup>223</sup> In pursuit of these efforts, one of Russia's most effective tools is the large amount of debt owed to Moscow by most of the CIS countries, totaling nearly \$5B.<sup>224</sup> Offering debt for equity swaps presents an attractive alternative to the poorest countries or those that owe the most. The following section will examine Russia's use of this strategy in the natural gas and electricity sectors.

(1). Natural Gas: While Caspian oil has received most of the energy attention in the region, its natural gas potential is generally more noteworthy. Regional proven natural gas reserves are estimated at 232 trillion cubic feet (Tcf), comparable to those in Saudi Arabia, while production in 2004 was approximately 5 Tcf, comparable to the combined production of South America, Central America, and Mexico.<sup>225</sup> Because greater capital investment is necessary to finance new natural gas projects however, and the limitations of the existing infrastructure, oil has been the focus of most new foreign ventures. Because Russia's own natural gas production has flat lined in the past several years, with major fields yielding less than they have in the past, Gazprom has turned to Central Asian supplies to make up the difference it needs for export (a cheaper short-term option than investing in the development of its own untapped Arctic fields).

Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> largest natural gas producers on the Eurasian continent (Russia is the largest) but their large gas reserves are constrained by the lack of natural gas transport infrastructure, which forces them to rely on the Central Asia Center (CAC) main gas pipeline, which is where Russia enters the picture. The CAC is the only major natural gas pipeline that connects to a larger distribution network, namely Russia's, through which gas is transported to European customers.

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<sup>223</sup> Perovic, 67

<sup>224</sup> FBIS article "Russia's Lavrov: Oil, Gas Chief Diplomatic Tools Against Disloyal CIS Partners", CEP20051013379002, dated 13 Oct 05.

<sup>225</sup> US Dept of Energy Caspian Sea Country Analysis Brief. Available online at <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Caspian/NaturalGas.html>



Figure 1. Central Asia Pipelines. (Energy Information Administration, US Dept. of Energy)

Turkmenistan, Central Asia's primary gas exporter signed a deal with Gazprom in 2003, agreeing to a 25-year contract to sell all the gas it produces at discount price to Russia for export. Russia uses part of the Turkmen gas domestically and sells the excess to Eastern Europe and CIS countries at a mark up. Just over a year later however, volatile Turkmenistan leader Saparmurat Niyazov cut off supplies and tried to renegotiate more favorable terms.<sup>226</sup> When Moscow balked, Ukraine tried to cut the same deal, and capture the European market for itself, versus being merely a transit conduit for Gazprom's export. Newly elected President Viktor Yushchenko arranged a long term contract for Turkmenistan gas to be exported through Ukraine to Europe but Gazprom responded with a counter offer to Turkmenistan. It insisted it would still pay the previously agreed upon discount price, but offered full payment in cash instead of a 50% barter / cash split. While Niyazov appeared eager to cash in on the European gas mark ups through higher purchase prices from Ukraine, he was forced to acknowledge that he first needed to consult with Russia. Turkmenistan's bargaining position with respect to securing higher prices for its gas is fundamentally weakened by its lack of export options. Except for one pipeline connecting Turkmenistan and Iran, the CAC that

<sup>226</sup> Eurasia Daily Monitor article "Russian Foreign Policy Experts Debate Interaction with America in Greater Central Asia" by Igor Torbakov, dated 21 Oct 05

runs through Russia is the country's only way to export its natural gas, a point Niyazov was forced to concede when he stated that any deals with Ukraine can only be signed "when Russia gives its consent to pump the gas through its pipelines."<sup>227</sup>

While it is clear that Turkmenistan needs Russia, the relationship goes both ways. Moscow has to make shoring up relations with Turkmenistan a priority for several reasons. First, in order to maintain its export levels, it intends to keep its long-term gas contracts with Turkmenistan in order. Second, it needs a cooperative Turkmenistan to help repair its reputation following the messy winter 2005 / 2006 energy standoff with Ukraine. The inability of the countries to come to an agreement on 2006 gas rates resulted in a reduced volume of gas reaching Europe as Russia twice cut off its gas supply to Ukraine. The disruption caused by the "gas war" has given the EU reason to question its heavy reliance on Russia as an energy supplier.<sup>228</sup> Furthermore, Moscow's game of hard-ball with Ukraine could have the inadvertent affect of causing Europe to seriously consider the financial viability of building of a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan that by-passes Russia and runs under the Caspian Sea and then through Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey and into Europe," a venture that the US has long supported.<sup>229</sup> The prospects of negotiating with the West on such a venture gives Niyazov a considerable bargaining chip with respect to any negotiations with Russia. Turkmenistan has demonstrated its shopping around for other transit options as well, to include a pipeline through Iran to Turkey or through Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>230</sup>

Finally, Russia needs Turkmenistan on its side and not venturing westward (or becoming vulnerable to the revolution bug) in order to wrap up lingering

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<sup>227</sup> FBIS article "Turkmenistan Wants To Raise Price for Gas It Sells to Russia," CEP20051021027107, 20 Oct 05, and Energy Bulletin article "Ukraine, Russia Spar Over Turkmen Gas" by Roman Kupchinsky dated 20 Apr 05

<sup>228</sup> Ahto Lobjakas, "EU: Brussels Worries About Dependence On Russian Energy," RFE/RL article dated 18 January 2006. Online at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/01/5B17540F-2FE5-45F4-857F-9ED229E4B8EB.html> (accessed January 2006).

<sup>229</sup> A new gas pipeline that largely parallels the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline is scheduled to open in 2007. It was built to transport gas from the newly developed Shah Deniz fields off Azerbaijan in the Caspian Sea through Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey and on to Europe and the US. Excess capacity in the pipeline could easily accommodate gas from Central Asia if a pipeline under the Caspian were constructed.

<sup>230</sup> A 30 Jan 06 meeting in Ashgabat between Niyazov, Turkish Ambassador Hakki Akil and U.S. Ambassador Tracey Ann Jacobson to discuss energy cooperation added validity to the prospect. RFE/RL article "Analysis: Turkmen Government Steps Up Gas Diplomacy" by Daniel Kimmage, dated 2 Feb 06.

negotiations between the Caspian littoral states on the status of the seas' energy resources.<sup>231</sup> While Russia and Kazakhstan have already delineated their interests and national as well as joint development zones, final adjudication between the remaining littoral states is hung up on the legal issue of whether the body of water is a lake or sea. That definition determines how maritime law is applied in dividing up Caspian Sea resources and determining transit rights. A clear legal definition of such issues is critical for countries that want to traverse the Caspian with new pipelines, diversify their markets and liberate themselves from Russia's existing, but aged energy transport infrastructure.<sup>232</sup>

Russia is further solidifying its bargaining position with respect to Turkmenistan by launching joint gas ventures with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in an apparent envelopment maneuver. On 27 January 2006, Kyrgyz Prime Minister Kulov and Gazprom CEO Aleksei Miller announced that Russia would assist Kyrgyzstan in developing its energy potential and modernizing its production facilities through joint ventures that would invest "hundreds of millions of dollars to help Kyrgyzstan explore its oil and gas reserves."<sup>233</sup> Several months earlier, in November 2005, Gazprom signed a five year contract with Kazakhstan for gas transit. The deal left Gazprom the sole operator for natural gas transport from Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan via Kazakhstan and into Russia for sale to Europe. In addition, a 2002 deal with Kazakhstan created a joint venture exporting Kazakhstan's modest but growing natural

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<sup>231</sup> The rights to the Caspian were originally negotiated by two bilateral treaties (signed in 1921 and 1940) between Iran and the Soviet Union. With the breakup of the USSR, the newly independent states of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan all claimed sovereignty over oil fields in the Caspian. The region left in Russia's control is largely devoid of oil reserves. Brent Griffith, "Back Yard Politics: Russia's Foreign Policy Toward the Caspian Basin", *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*. Volume 6, Number 2 (Spring 1998) Online at <http://www.demokratizatsiya.org/Dem%20Archives/DEM%2006-02%20griffith.pdf>

<sup>232</sup> Russia claims the Caspian is an inland lake and therefore not subject to the Law of the Sea. Based on this, exploitation of Caspian resources must be based on agreement among all five littoral states, a process Russia can influence through veto or bilateral agreements. Other states maintain the Caspian is a Sea and based on international law, can be divided into national sectors for exploration without agreement among neighboring states. <http://www.demokratizatsiya.org/Dem%20Archives/DEM%2006-02%20griffith.pdf>

<sup>233</sup> RFE/RL article "Russia's Gazprom To Help Kyrgyzstan Explore Oil, Gas" dated 27 Jan 06.

gas production northward to Russia.<sup>234</sup> The implication of the 2005 deal is that “not a single meter of gas will be sold” on the European continent without Gazprom’s (and therefore Moscow’s) consent.<sup>235</sup>

Uzbekistan, which had previously focused on its domestic market and export to its neighbors, is now beginning to focus on development of more fields and improving its export infrastructure through cooperation with Gazprom. It intends to supply Russia with 350 billion cubic feet per year by 2006. On 20 October 2004, the economic adviser at the Russian Embassy in Uzbekistan announced that Russian companies would invest \$2.099 billion in 37 projects in Uzbekistan; more than \$2 billion of it was expected to go to the oil and gas complex. This proclamation reflected the June 2004 signing of 35-year production-sharing agreements between Uzbekistan and the Russian oil conglomerate LUKoil, worth \$1 billion. The effort will develop Uzbek natural gas deposits in the Bukhara-Khiva region. LUKoil obtained a 90 percent share in the venture, with Uzbekneftegaz – an Uzbek state entity -- holding the remaining 10 percent. Gazprom announced in 2005 that it will start developing a \$1.2 billion gas field in the Ustyurt region in Uzbekistan. and \$15 million to extend the life of the Shakhpakhty gas field.<sup>236</sup> Overall, through Gazprom, Russia will spend approximately \$1.5 billion to modernize natural gas pipelines in Central Asian states to boost natural gas exports from the region.<sup>237</sup>

Russia’s growing presence in Central Asia’s gas market will enable it to exert more pressure on Turkmenistan, forcing the enigmatic, “neutral” Niyazov to surrender more control over the marketing and development of his country’s gas industry to Moscow, especially as his isolation from the West grows and the

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<sup>234</sup> Previously a natural gas importer, in 2004 Kazakhstan reached import/domestic consumption parity and has been steadily increasing its export volume ever since.

<sup>235</sup> Kommersant – Russia’s Daily Online article “Russia to Control the Flow of Central Asian Gas to Europe” by Nataliya Grib and Oleg Gavrish, dated 14 Nov 05.

<sup>236</sup> REF/RL article “Gazprom To Invest \$1.5 Billion In Uzbek Gas Sector” dated 24 January 2006 (accessed January 2006) and US Dept of Energy Central Asia Country Analysis Brief. Available online at <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Centasia/NaturalGas.html#CAC> (accessed December 2005).

<sup>237</sup> REF/RL article “Gazprom To Invest \$1.5 Billion In Uzbek Gas Sector” dated 24 Jan 06 and US Dept of Energy Central Asia Country Analysis Brief. Available online at <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Centasia/NaturalGas.html#CAC>

necessary foreign capital to develop alternate transshipment routes decreases due to Turkmenistan's growing instability.

(2) Electricity: Just as Russia's electricity giant RAO-UES was able to secure controlling interest in the state electricity sectors of several Caucasus countries several years ago, it has been aggressively following Gazprom's lead in Central Asia (Gazprom owns a 10% share in the company). Intent on using the region's electricity to service its European markets, UES has targeted Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan's hydroelectric industries. Given that it has been managing the region's Soviet era unified electrical grid, moving into production would be more efficient than building a new hydroelectric infrastructure in Siberia.<sup>238</sup>

Notable recent efforts in Tajikistan apparently resulted from President Putin's visit to Dushanbe in October 2004 which yielded a "comprehensive agreement involving a Russian exchange of Tajik sovereign debt for a surveillance facility, the establishment of a permanent Russian military base in Tajikistan, and a RusAl [Russian Aluminum] commitment to undertake a multibillion-dollar project to build hydropower stations and aluminum-production facilities."<sup>239</sup> Tajikistan has 4.4 gigawatts (GWe) of generating capacity, about 90% of which is hydroelectric and a major portion of this hydroelectric capacity is used in aluminum production, which consumes 40% of all the country's electric power.<sup>240</sup> To put the scale of this venture in perspective, RusAl's proposed investment to modernize Tajikistan's primary aluminum production plant (which ranges from \$1.6B to \$2B) is roughly half of Tajikistan's GDP.<sup>241</sup> Such a huge investment in so poor a country will have tremendous political effects.

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<sup>238</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, "The Great Powers in Central Asia." *Current History*. October 2005.

<sup>239</sup> Eurasia Insight article "Central Asia: the Mechanics of Russian Influence" by Daniel Kimmage, dated 16 Sep 05

<sup>240</sup> US Dept of Energy, "Energy Overview of the Republic of Tajikistan". Reflects 2001 figures. Available online at [http://www.fe.doe.gov/international/Russia\\_and\\_Central\\_Asia/tajkover.html](http://www.fe.doe.gov/international/Russia_and_Central_Asia/tajkover.html)

<sup>241</sup> Central Asia Insight article "Central Asia: Is Russian Aluminum Forsaking Tajikistan For Uzbekistan?" by Julie A. Corwin, dated 7 Dec 2005. Note: figures for Tajikistan's GDP vary among different sources, ranging from a high of approximately \$8B to a low of \$1.4B.



Russia would gain great influence in the republic with Kremlin-connected RusAl controlling Tajik aluminum-production facilities, power-generation facilities and access to a large pool of cheap labor.<sup>242</sup>

Russian newspaper accounts in September 2005 speculated on a “grand plan” for increasing Russian influence in Kyrgyzstan, to include details such as the “gradual transfer of the Kyrgyz energy sector to Russian companies” and electricity giant RAO UES building two hydropower stations, “possibly with help from Russian Aluminum, which is seeking a convenient source of power for aluminum-production facilities it hopes to construct in Kyrgyzstan.”<sup>243</sup> In return Moscow would “write off half of Kyrgyzstan's \$180 million Soviet-era debt and pass legislation to ease conditions for an estimated 300,000 Kyrgyz migrant workers in Russia.” No official confirmation of such a deal had been released by the end of the year, however, during a visit to Moscow in January 2006, President Akaev told a Russian newspaper that Moscow plans to invest \$2 billion in the Kyrgyz economy.

Begging the question of whether the investment is a payoff for other Russian equities, the announcement was followed in February 2006 with Russian Air Force reports that Moscow planned to double the amount of equipment and personnel, at Kant Air Base (currently personnel levels are 500) by the end of the year. Another announcement followed stating “after consultations with the CSTO and Shanghai Cooperation Organization [Kyrgyzstan] has decided against the deployment of U.S. AWACS surveillance aircraft at Manas.”<sup>244</sup> A side effect of these efforts is that with control of hydroelectric power, Russia will gain a voice in the management of the region’s water resources, which are still doled out through a Soviet era reservoir system

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<sup>242</sup> Central Asia Insight article “Central Asia: Is Russian Aluminum Forsaking Tajikistan For Uzbekistan?” by Julie A. Corwin, dated 7 Dec 2005. Note: figures for Tajikistan’s GDP vary among different sources, ranging from a high of approximately \$8B to a low of \$1.4B.

<sup>243</sup> Eurasia Insight article “Central Asia: the Mechanics of Russian Influence” by Daniel Kimmage, dated 16 Sep 05. The source of this speculation was likely the August 2004 visit by RAO-UES chief Anatoly Chubais to negotiate investment in two power plants (Kambar-Ata stations # 1 and # 2) originally planned for exploitation during the Soviet period but abandoned following the collapse due to lack of funding. Russia at the time proposed trading Kyrgyz debt for a stake in the facilities and offering to bring Kambar-Ata on line by 2007. Source: Eurasia Daily Monitor article “Russian Companies Propose Debt-Equity Swaps in Central Asia,” by Gregory Gleason, 12 Oct 04

<sup>244</sup> Johnson’s Russia List article “Central Asia Provides Window on Russia-US Relations” by Daniel Kimmage, dated 24 Feb 05. Available online at <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/9068-28.cfm>



and managed through negotiated agreements.<sup>245</sup> Having a tighter Russian led regional bloc with significant energy resources at its disposal will give Russia more say in this process, further leaving the Central Asian republics vulnerable to Moscow's influence.

***d. Implications of Russia's Economic Initiatives***

What are the implications of these economic initiatives in Central Asia? There can be no doubt that Russia has indeed made significant strides in increasing its influence in Central Asia through economic ties and initiatives. Its efforts in this arena outpace any other efforts, including military, to establish influence. In that regard Russia's foreign policy complies with the tenets of Great Power Normalization. Moscow has played to its advantages in the region. Its Soviet era energy infrastructure has served to increase Kazakhstan's, Uzbekistan's and Turkmenistan's dependence on Russian transit routes to reach external markets and Moscow has ensured long term cooperation through massive investment in their energy sectors. Most importantly, unlike the United States and other Western countries, Russian investment will not be affected by irregularities or the absence of a Western-style tax structure and court system in the Central Asia states. "Russian businesses and investment companies are familiar with the relative lawlessness in the former Soviet sphere, and are ready to enhance the Uzbek economy along with establishing a major Russian presence that will be extremely difficult to extract." <sup>246</sup>

However, Russia must rely primarily on its export of raw materials and energy as mechanisms of economic influence in Central Asia for the foreseeable future, despite the small improvements in Central Asian economic integration and trade. Russia still faces significant challenges to its ability to use other economic resources to influence the region. These challenges arise from Russia's own problems in completing domestic economic reforms. Central among them are anticorruption and judicial reform. Both are key in encouraging the domestic and foreign investment necessary to modernize Russia's

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<sup>245</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, "The Great Powers in Central Asia." *Current History*. October 2005, p334 and "Central Asia: Water and Conflict," International Crisis Group report, 30 May 2002. Online at <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/ACOS-64DF44?OpenDocument> (accessed November 2005).

<sup>246</sup> Erich Marquardt, Yevgeny Bendersky, "Uzbekistan's New Foreign Policy Strategy," dated 23 Nov 05. *The Power and Interest News Report*. Online at [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=404](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=404)

infrastructure and allow Russian businesses to compete effectively in a climate of high speed, information technology-driven globalization.

#### **4. Security Mechanisms**

Russia's most significant security means of influence in Central Asia has been its renewed military presence and commitment to regional security, accomplished through use of multilateral forums like the Collective Security Treaty Organization and bilateral security relationships with Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and most recently Uzbekistan. In dealing with its security concerns, "Moscow is advocating the strengthening of collective security, and the creation through joint efforts of a reliable barrier on the path of the southern threats."<sup>247</sup>

##### ***a. Regional Security Integration***

Western experts generally perceive that the intent of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), formalized in 2003, is to serve as an alliance with a bloc structure and charter like NATO's article V, which invokes mutual aid in the event of an attack on an alliance member. While seen in the West as Russia's attempt to prevent NATO's further eastward expansion and keep some CIS countries under Russia's military protection, Moscow emphasized that the CSTO has an "open character and does not mean a military bloc of any kind." Nevertheless, "member states cannot join [other] military unions or take part in any kind of activity directed against another member state" according to former Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov.<sup>248</sup>

The organization is based on the Collective Security Treaty signed in May 1992 by former Soviet states seeking closer integration with Russia. For Central Asia the implication was that these "unionists" were trying to surround wayward

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<sup>247</sup> "Islamic Extremism in Central Asia, Russian-CSTO Role in Maintaining Security," Moscow Krasnaya Zvezda in Russian 13 Feb 06, CEP20060213436001

<sup>248</sup> The CSTO evolved from the CIS' Collective Security Treaty, which was signed in 1992 and came into force in 1994. Moldova and Ukraine were observers. Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Uzbekistan withdrew in 1999. Source: "Factbox: Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)," *RIA Novosti*, 11 January 2006 and "Premier Kasyanov on Ratification of the CST," Pravda Online, 3 April 2003. Online at <http://newsfromrussia.com/politics/2003/04/03/45515.html> (accessed March 2006)

Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to better keep them in line.<sup>249</sup> As with other CIS initiatives however, collective security efforts under the treaty suffered from the same incoherence and lack of follow through, despite being formed by “unionists” who were generally more favorably disposed to integration efforts. Military integration among CIS states, like parallel economic efforts, was largely determined through bilateral versus multilateral efforts. “Most CIS defense agreements have simply not been realized. The numerous bilateral treaties Russia has signed with individual CIS states much better express common interests” than their multilateral commitments.<sup>250</sup> Operationally, the only peacekeeping mission in the region which represented a broad, joint coalition with united interests took place in Tajikistan in 1992. By 1998, Russia was effectively the only military contributor to the “collective” CIS peacekeeping forces in Tajikistan.<sup>251</sup> Organizationally, while it favored the *concept* of collective peacekeeping forces and sharing resources, the Russian Ministry of Defense routinely “rejected CIS staff proposals for supranational collective security bodies which might constrain Russian policy-making and prove costly for Russia.”<sup>252</sup>

The Collective Security Treaty Organization, established in 2003, was envisioned as a reinvigorated effort at joint security. Its official objectives include ensuring peace, preserving the territorial integrity of member states countries, coordinating activities in the fight against international terrorism, drug trafficking, and organized international crime, and providing immediate military assistance to a CSTO

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<sup>249</sup> Uzbekistan joined the westward leaning GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova) organization in 1999, most likely as a demonstration to Moscow that it did not consider itself within the Kremlin’s sphere of influence. Despite its security cooperation with the United States in the wake of 9/11, Uzbekistan’s authoritarian regime has eschewed the more liberal inclinations of the other members and has not been active in the group for the past three years. It is expected that President Karimov will likely terminate Uzbekistan’s membership in the wake of Western criticism stemming from recent violence in Andijon.

<sup>250</sup> Roy Allison, “The Military and Political Security Landscape in Russia and the South,” in *Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia: the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Security Environment*, ed. Rajan Menon, Yuri Fedorov and Ghia Nodia (New York: EastWest Institute, 1999), 40.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid

<sup>252</sup> Dov Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS: The Cases of Moldova, Georgia and Tajikistan* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2000) p102.

member in the event of a military threat.<sup>253</sup> While the previous Collective Security Treaty was regarded as a paper tiger, the CSTO's formalization in 2003 signaled a commitment by members to put teeth to the entity by creating permanent institutions responsible for budget management and strategic military planning, with Russian officers taking the lead on the newly created CSTO staff.<sup>254</sup>

While the EEC/Eurasec organization gave Russia a lead in regional economic efforts, the CSTO tied Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan together under Russian leadership in the security realm.<sup>255</sup> Both organizations attempt to reassert Moscow's influence in Central Asia. Both are headquartered in Russia and headed by retired Russian generals. However unlike the EEC/Eurasec, where Moscow has an advantage in voting, CSTO decision-making is by consensus. In addition, the Secretary General of the CSTO is a rotating three year position that will be vacated by Russia in 2006.

Even without a Russian Secretary General, Moscow's influence in the CSTO will still be dominant. Russia provides about 50% of the organization's budget and acts as the CSTO's backbone, having the strongest military industrial complex and personnel reserve. Just like the U.S. in NATO, Russia is expected to do the heavy lifting as a primary force provider. While each country member has only one vote, CSTO spokesmen admit that Russia's voice is most significant. In addition, spokesmen point out that "all of the best personnel in the CSTO were trained in Moscow [and] some of the most powerful industrial weapons plants are on Russian territory."<sup>256</sup> Another benefit extended to CSTO members is discounted military equipment from Russia, a significant incentive for those dependent on Russian military hardware and spare parts for legacy

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<sup>253</sup>CSTO Background. Available online through Eurasian Home website, an analytic tool of the Russian NGO Eurasia Heritage Foundation.

<http://www.eurasianhome.org/en/?/en//databases/reginalagreement/csto/index>.

<sup>254</sup> Ibragim Alibekov Eurasia Insight article "New Security Organization Could Help Expand Russia's Reach in Central Asia," by, dated 29 Apr 03.

<sup>255</sup> Armenia is the only non-Eurasec member in CSTO. Uzbekistan, now a member of Eurasec (since its merger CACO) is still not represented in the CSTO (it withdrew from the Collective Security Treaty in 1999).

<sup>256</sup> Moscownews.com article "CIS Security Chief Supports Closer Ties With NATO." Dated 6 Aug 05

equipment. The effort also has geopolitical consequences, making any integration with NATO, which usually involves extensive modernization, a costly alternative.<sup>257</sup>

In a June 2005 summit (held in conjunction with this year's EEC summit) CSTO members signed agreements providing for the deployment of a unified air defense system and the establishment of rapid reaction forces in Central Asia that could be used for peacekeeping operations.<sup>258</sup> The recent summit also announced plans to improve military-economic cooperation by promoting closer ties among member states' defense industries. In addition, Russia has offered financial incentives for active participation to include the sale of Russian military equipment to members at domestic versus export prices and eligibility of cadets and junior officers from the CSTO states for education in military academies, also at reduced prices.<sup>259</sup> While such a move seems to be a clear attempt to counteract the influence of Western programs such as Partnership for Peace, it is also very pragmatic. Offering discounted military hardware provides the Russian defense industry, dependent on exports for the capital necessary for modernization, with much needed revenue. In addition, further integrating the CSTO officer corps into Russia's military training process strengthens cultural ties between Russia and the members. It also helps to institutionalize military doctrine compatible with Russian operational norms and standards.

Expansion of the alliance has also not been ruled out. Russia stated that the organization plans to "invite other countries to participate in CSTO activities as observers, and also foresees the admission of new members in the future."<sup>260</sup> The statement could have been alluding to the new Russian-Uzbek security pact that was announced in November 2005, a move that may signal Uzbekistan's willingness to join the Russian led military alliance in the future. Finally, President Putin used the summit to criticize the US-led anti-terrorist coalition in Afghanistan, characterizing it as "very

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<sup>257</sup> FBIS article "Russia: Discussion Group Views Role of NATO, Collective Security Treaty Organization," Moscow Rossiya TV in Russian 1645 GMT 01 Dec 05. CEP20051202027197

<sup>258</sup> Eurasia Insight article "Geopolitical Balance in Central Asia Tilts Toward Russia" by Sergei Blagov, 6 Jul 05

<sup>259</sup> JH Saat. "The Collective Security Treaty Organization". *Central Asian Series 05/09*. Conflict Studies Research Centre. February 2005. Available online at [http://www.da.mod.uk/CSRC/documents/CentralAsia/05\(09\)-JHS.pdf/file\\_view](http://www.da.mod.uk/CSRC/documents/CentralAsia/05(09)-JHS.pdf/file_view)

<sup>260</sup> Ibid

ineffective,” pointing out the renewed Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan and the resumption of significant drug-trafficking. Again, the statement was probably groundwork for the July 2005 request, made by the SCO, for the US to establish time frame for withdrawal from Central Asia, a move followed the next month by Uzbekistan’s six-month evacuation notice.

Two years after its rebirth, Russia is considering the CSTO its most efficient organization in the CIS, largely because CSTO’s resolutions are binding on all members and have produced some tangible results. For example, the group’s annual “Channel” operations, joint coordinated anticrime actions conducted by all members, have met with success. According to the Russian Federal Drug Control Service, Channel 2005 resulted in more than 11 metric tons of drugs, including 550 kilograms of heroin and more than one ton of hashish being confiscated, mostly on the Tajik-Afghan border, and 9,300 drug-related crimes being solved during this year’s operation.<sup>261</sup>

The growing security concerns and common revolutionary phobia among leaders of the Central Asian states--spawned by events in Kyrgyzstan and more recently in Uzbekistan--only encourage greater multilateral and bilateral security cooperation with Russia. Russia is sweetening the pot still further with its most recent financial incentive: discussions of providing Russian gas at discount prices to the most active CSTO members. The organization is certainly becoming more vocal and more visible. It is continuing to strengthen regional collective security forces and conduct more robust military exercises, two trends which will be discussed below. In addition, the group appears to be reaching out for international validation, working with the UN on anti-

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<sup>261</sup> Rusnet article “CSTO wants to cooperate with NATO” by Viktor Litovkin, dated 28 Sep 05. Available online at [http://www.rusnet.nl/info/2005\\_09/28\\_06.shtml](http://www.rusnet.nl/info/2005_09/28_06.shtml) (accessed December 2005) and “U.S. to observe CSTO-led anti-drug operation in 2006,” RIA Novosti, 28 December 2005. Online at <http://en.rian.ru/world/20051228/42763064.html> (accessed March 2006). See also International Narcotics Control Strategy Report -2006, Released by the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs March 2006. Online at <http://www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2006/vol1/html/62111.htm> (accessed March 2006).

terrorism measures and trying to establish cooperation with NATO.<sup>262</sup> Most recently, the success of the Channel 2004 and 2005 anti-drug operations resulted in the U.S. signing on to observe Channel 2006.<sup>263</sup> These efforts also represent Normalization efforts in that they attempt to create more transparency in security policy and foster increased cooperation with the West.

***b. Regional Collective Security Forces***

While the concept of joint rapid reaction forces is not a new development, it has recently grown in size and scope. Under the aegis of the CIS Collective Security Treaty (CSTO predecessor) an agreement was signed in October 2000, to form a joint rapid reaction force: a “small compact group, consisting of four battalions contributed by the partner states” of Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan that would be used to respond to regional crises across Central Asia and to fortify porous border areas against terrorist attacks and incursions.<sup>264</sup> While the initial Collective Rapid Reaction Force (CRRF or sometimes referred to as JRRF) consisted of approximately 1,500 military personnel deployed in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, it has grown in the last year to approximately 4,000 personnel and the number of battalions have increased from four to nine with Tajikistan contributing two new battalions and

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<sup>262</sup> At an international seminar held in Moscow on November 28-30, 2005, under the auspices of the UN, the OSCE and CSTO, the organization urged implementation of universal instruments on, and international cooperation against, terrorism. CSTO officials also said the organization was working to compile a consolidated list of terrorist organizations to create a harmonized legal framework. It also urged its member states joining international conferences and protocols regulating the fight against terrorism, and favored the early ratification and implementation of 12 UN conventions and protocols on the fight against terrorism. RIA Novosti article online “CIS security organization backs UN draft terrorism convention” dated 1 Dec 05. With regard to NATO, after a June 2004 CSTO overture for cooperation was rebuffed, according to Russian sources in December 2005 NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer invited his CSTO “counterpart” Nikolai Bordyuzha to Brussels to discuss joint efforts against international terrorism and drug trafficking in Central Asia. Rusnet article “CSTO wants to cooperate with NATO” by Viktor Litovkin, dated 28 Sep05. Available online at [http://www.rusnet.nl/info/2005\\_09/28\\_06.shtml](http://www.rusnet.nl/info/2005_09/28_06.shtml) and RFE/RL article “NATO: Foreign Ministers Meet To Discuss New Missions, Possible Expansion” by Ahto Lobjakas, dated 7 Dec 05.

<sup>263</sup> According to RIA Novosti, in the fall of 2005, the Russian Federal Drug Control Service signed an agreement with the corresponding U.S. agency, stipulating the participation of U.S. representatives in special operations as well as the exchange of information and experience between the agencies. “U.S. to observe CSTO-led anti-drug operation in 2006,” RIA Novosti, 28 December 2005. Online at <http://en.rian.ru/world/20051228/42763064.html> (accessed March 2006).

<sup>264</sup> Eurasia Insight article “Central Asian Rapid Reaction Force Support Gathered” by Lt Col James DeTemple, dated 3 May 01

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia one each.<sup>265</sup> Another new element of the rapid reaction concept is planned development of a joint peacekeeping force that can be deployed within CIS territory (for example in Moldova or Georgia) or to other peacekeeping operations around the world. A November 2005 meeting of the Foreign Ministers' Council of the CSTO focused on the subject. The group wanted to ensure that the organization's 2006 budget would pay special attention to the topic, leading to speculation that since the Russian MOD vowed that Moscow would not move into the recently vacated K2 base in Uzbekistan, the installation could instead operate under the CSTO aegis.<sup>266</sup> These pledges have produced more successful military exercises among the members of the CSTO.

*c. Military Exercises*

Since the standup of CSTO and its dedicated headquarters staff at Russia's Kant Air Base in Kyrgyzstan, one of the most significant improvements that has been made is the greater integration and better training of forces. Prior to 2004, "Frontier" exercises designed to test regional collective security forces were mostly conducted by units and regiments of the national armies of the member-states which were assigned to a joint command for a short period of time. Units permanently assigned to CSTO's new Rapid Deployment Force are already part of one organizational entity, which should contribute to more efficient and increased anti-terrorism capabilities.<sup>267</sup> Improved training and integration of these forces were, evident in the Frontier 2004 exercise. The scenario for the 2004 exercise was the first that tested a pre-emptive strike concept, compared to previous years which focused on responsive and defensive operations. Specifically the 2004 was aimed at improving procedures to stop terrorist organizations' attempts to establish a radical Islamic state in the Ferghana valley. Military analyst JH Saat, of the British Ministry of Defense Conflict Studies Research Centre, provides an

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<sup>265</sup> Aziz Soltobaev, "Collective Security Exercises in Central Asia: Wrong Medicine?" *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, 19 May 2004 and Ivan Safronov, "Bishkek from the Time of Frunze: Military of CIS using Kyrgyz example to teach anti-revolutionary combat," *Kommersant Daily*, 4 April 2005.

<sup>266</sup> "Russia Creates Own NATO," *Kommersant Daily*, 30 November 2005.

<sup>267</sup> JH Saat. "The Collective Security Treaty Organization," *Central Asian Series 05/09*. Conflict Studies Research Centre. February 2005, p3. Available online at [http://www.da.mod.uk/CSRC/documents/CentralAsia/05\(09\)-JHS.pdf/file\\_view](http://www.da.mod.uk/CSRC/documents/CentralAsia/05(09)-JHS.pdf/file_view)



excellent analysis of the exercise and the structure and effectiveness of the CSTO. He observed that the Frontier 2003 scenario was based on real security concerns that the CSTO member-states face.

The political-military situation in this region - and more specifically in Central Asia - is not very stable and there is a real possibility of the emergence of armed conflicts between the states in Central Asia and separatist movements. Furthermore, terrorist organizations remain active in the region and their training camps are still functioning. With this in mind exercise Rubezh-2004 [Frontier 2004] aimed at improving procedures to stop terrorist organizations' attempts to establish a radical Islamic state in the Ferghana valley, a highly undesirable development that would affect all states in the region.<sup>268</sup>

The Frontier 2005 exercise, held in April, was scheduled to be conducted in Kyrgyzstan but due to the unrest of the Tulip “revolution” was moved to Tajikistan. It was also scripted (or perhaps re-scripted?) to reflect events similar to those that took place in Kyrgyzstan: namely that “Blue Forces” would use the popular unrest unleashed by the results of an election to try to seize power. “Red Forces” would plan “to practice decision-taking measures on the use of force and options of collective security measures to protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Tajikistan, planning and preparation of joint operations, organization of coordination, provision of total support and directions.”<sup>269</sup>

As to the effectiveness of these exercises however in achieving their stated objectives, military and regional experts noted with interest that scenarios such as these, involving large scale and direct insurgencies on the part of terrorist organizations such as the IMU, have not been seen since the Batken incursions of 1999 and 2000. Insurgent groups appear to be changing tactics from geographically large-scale actions to small injections of terrorist attacks across vast territory.<sup>270</sup> If that is the case, the Frontier

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<sup>268</sup>JH Saat. “The Collective Security Treaty Organization,” *Central Asian Series 05/09*. Conflict Studies Research Centre. February 2005, p4. Available online at [http://www.da.mod.uk/CSRC/documents/CentralAsia/05\(09\)-JHS.pdf/file\\_view](http://www.da.mod.uk/CSRC/documents/CentralAsia/05(09)-JHS.pdf/file_view).

<sup>269</sup> Kommersant Daily online article “Bishkek from the time of Frunze: Military of CIS using Kyrgyz example to teach anti-revolutionary combat” by Ivan Safronov, dated 4 Apr 05

<sup>270</sup> Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst article “Collective Security Exercises in Central Asia: Wrong Medicine?” by Aziz Soltobaev, dated 19 May 04

exercise scenarios may not be an effective way of training to counter the Islamic insurgent threat (but may be effective for countering organized mass movements.)

Regional integration efforts such as exercise and combined forces signal a newfound emphasis that common transnational threats and border defense need to be worked jointly, not just militarily but through cooperation with internal security services, joint intelligence databases and a strengthened joint anti-terrorism centers such as the one in Kyrgyzstan. While the U.S. may have missed the boat on these opportunities, the Russians will likely be more successful at forging closer cooperation with local intelligence apparatus than the United States would have been anyway. Despite the lingering issue of trust regarding Russian intentions, the intelligence apparatuses of Central Asian states share with Moscow a common heritage, operational style and training. The main forum for intelligence cooperation is the annual conference hosted by the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB), an event attended by representatives of all Central Asian internal security organizations. In addition, Russian intelligence forces appear willing to assist locals in protecting regimes from political opposition forces – a service that would never be offered by the West. Finally, Russia has been footing 50% of the cost of the joint anti-terrorism center in Bishkek and the center has been tasked with planning joint operations and holding anti-terrorism exercises. Some success stories have apparently taken place in the area of joint intelligence efforts, including reports of Russia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan cooperating in an operation to block Middle East funds from getting to the Chechen rebels.<sup>271</sup> Efforts such as these are also indicative of Great Power Normalization in that they comprise of multilateral coordinated efforts to combat mutual security threats..

***d. Bilateral Security Efforts***

In addition to standing up a dedicated rapid reaction force, Moscow has been reinforcing its military presence at two existing bases in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and forging a new security alliance with Uzbekistan.

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<sup>271</sup> Denis Trifonov, "Russian Intelligence Presence in the CIS," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, 17 December 2003. Online at [http://www.cacianalyst.org/view\\_article.php?articleid=1975&SMSESSION=NO](http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=1975&SMSESSION=NO) (accessed March 2006)

The foothold Russia gained supporting Dushanbe's communist regime during the Tajik civil war has recently been formally translated into a permanent military presence. With approximately 5000-7000 soldiers, the 201st Division's headquarters in Tajikistan would be Russia's largest military base on foreign soil. "Our military presence in Tajikistan will not only guarantee our investment but will also guarantee stability in the region," Putin said after talks with Tajikistan President Rakhmonov.<sup>272</sup> Of interest is that formalization of the base came on the heels of the announcement of Russia's \$2B investment package and debt relief (discussed in the Economic section). In addition, the fact that Russia is withdrawing its border guard forces (at least from border guard duty if not the country) and leaving this critical effort in the hands of weak Tajik security institutions, ensures that Dushanbe will continue to rely on Russian assistance in the absence of significant international assistance.

With solidification of its presence in Tajikistan, and expansion of its air base in Kyrgyzstan to include CSTO's Rapid Deployment Force headquarters elements and the anti-terrorism center, Russia had its most significant bilateral success with the October 2005 announcement of an unprecedented security alliance with Uzbekistan. With bilateral agreements to participate in air defense and a successful first-ever bilateral military exercise in September 2005, Uzbekistan, appears on its way to "becoming the Kremlin's full-blown strategic partner, now that it finds itself under severe pressure from the United States and the European Union."<sup>273</sup>

The process of rapprochement began in 2004, when Russia moved aggressively to develop stronger economic ties with Uzbekistan as noted in the economic section above. In September 2005, Russia and Uzbekistan conducted their first joint antiterrorist military exercise, with both countries' defense ministers in attendance. It

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<sup>272</sup> Moscownews.com article "Russian Military Base in Tajikistan to Ensure Regional Security" dated 10 Oct 04. Available online at <http://www.mosnews.com/news/2004/10/18/tajbasrus.shtml>

<sup>273</sup> Eurasia Daily Monitor article "Russian Foreign Policy Experts Debate Interaction with America in Greater Central Asia" by Igor Torbakov, dated 21 Oct 05

involved 200 Uzbek and 200 Russian troops with air support and artillery, and featured Special Forces conducting joint operations, practicing counter-terrorist tactics in village and mountain areas.<sup>274</sup>

The Russian-Uzbek security pact, formally referred to as the Treaty on Allied Relations, states that "in case of aggression against one of the parties by a third state, it will be viewed as an act of aggression against both countries." The agreement also allows the mutual use of each other's military bases and installations and is largely seen as an insurance policy to limit Western attempts to weaken Karimov's regime.<sup>275</sup> Upon signing the agreement, Karimov announced "I would say [Washington's] main goal is to discredit Uzbekistan's independent policy, disrupt peace and stability in the country, and make Uzbekistan obey."<sup>276</sup>

For Russia, the alliance with Uzbekistan is important since it reasserts Moscow's traditional influence in its "near abroad," and gives it the ability to limit U.S. and EU influence in Central Asia. It also provides the Kremlin the opportunity to work on improving relations with other former republics in the region that have drifted toward the West. While this may appear to be more characteristic of a Balancer foreign policy, it has Normalizer connotations as well. In order to become the dominant influence in former Soviet republics, by definition Russia has to limit Western influence. A Russian Great Power Balancing approach to Central Asia would result not just in efforts to close one base (K2) but close all. As of early 2006 this has not taken place and neither Russia, not the SCO has attempted to alter the status of U.S. presence at Manas Air Base in Kyrgyzstan, although discussions concerning increased financial remuneration to Kyrgyzstan have occurred. For Uzbekistan, the treaty provides a new security partner against terrorist threats, but more importantly, one that will not question Tashkent's methods at suppressing anti-government sentiments.

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<sup>274</sup> Vladimir Socor, "Unprecedented Uzbek-Russian Joint Military Exercise Held." *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 2, Issue 179 (September 27, 2005). Online at [http://www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=407&issue\\_id=3473&article\\_id=2370269](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=407&issue_id=3473&article_id=2370269) and RIA Novosti. Online at <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20050923/41484583.html>

<sup>275</sup> Erich Marquardt, Yevgeny Bendersky, "Uzbekistan's New Foreign Policy Strategy," dated 23 Nov 05. *The Power and Interest News Report*. Online at [http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=404](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=404)

<sup>276</sup> Ibid

Having successfully combined cultural, economic, political and military mechanisms of influence to turn its relationship with Uzbekistan around, can it be long before Russia persuades Tashkent to return fully to the fold and join the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) as well? <sup>277</sup> If it does, the former Soviet base at K2, occupied by U.S. troops following September 11, 2001, may soon be hosting a CIS peacekeeping contingent, bringing full circle the base's colorful history. <sup>278</sup> Uzbekistan however, has been reserved on the issue of bases, announcing in February 2006 that it was not planning to join the CSTO in the near term, but leaving open the option of joining in the future.<sup>279</sup> In the meantime, bilateral military cooperation will continue and possibly expand into the defense industrial sector with talk of a debt-for-assets swap, in which Russia would forgive Uzbekistan's roughly \$500 million debt in exchange for control over two strategic aircraft factories. <sup>280</sup>

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Russia appears to have been extremely successful in reasserting its influence in Central Asia and Uzbekistan, especially in light of the historically independent path that Tashkent has pursued in its foreign policy. Russia has made use of the full complement of its diplomatic-political, informational-cultural, military and economic resources in Central Asia and made progress in strengthening each one.

Diplomatically, Moscow has capitalized on the region's fears that Western forces would try to undermine the government's authoritative hold on power. A political mechanism that Russia has been able to wield very effectively in Central Asia is promotion of the political status quo. Russia's success at tapping into the shared concern of political revolution enabled it to secure its newfound status among its Central Asian neighbors. Nowhere has this approach been so successful as Uzbekistan, as demonstrated by Tashkent's break with the West and subsequent alliance with Russia. By taking a

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<sup>277</sup> Formed in 2003, CSTO is the Russian led military arm of the CIS and CSTO aims to deepen military cooperation between its six members: Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. It is headquartered in Moscow by retired Russian general Nikolai Bordyuzha with Russia providing 50% of the organization's budget.

<sup>278</sup> RFE/RL article "Russia, Uzbekistan To Sign New Accord" by Claire Bigg, dated 14 Nov 05

<sup>279</sup> <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/2/FC31D430-BA98-4B11-A65E-97AB54F96A07.html>

<sup>280</sup> Igor Torbakov, "Uzbekistan Emerges as Russia's New "Strategic Bridgehead in Central Asia," *Eurasia Insight*, dated 14 Dec 05. Online at <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav121415.shtml>

position on the Andijon massacre that was so diametrically opposed to Western democratic values however, Russia could run the risk of alienating the constituency it needs to support its economic development. Europe is still Russia's number one trading partner and a major importer of its energy resources. The perception of divergent values between Russia and the West could provoke a European backlash that would speed Europe's efforts at energy diversification.

In addition, Moscow has revived regional groupings like Eurasec and the CSTO that allow it the opportunity to significantly influence economic and security efforts in the region. The utility and efficiency of past multilateral efforts under the aegis of the CIS are questionable, mainly because in most forums their resolutions were non-binding. However, multilateral efforts nevertheless mitigate Moscow's heavy hand in the region. In today's global environment of coalitions and inter-governmental organizations, Great Powers can gain more legitimacy with the appearance of regional consensus and cooperative multilateral engagement. Nowhere is this more the norm than in military operations. By couching its policy goals in the language of collective action, Moscow has sought to avoid the label of imperialism.

In the information realm, a shared culture of Soviet bureaucratic and establishment ties gives Moscow an edge in dealing with the regional political and business elite. Soviet habits still survive. "There's still a lot Soviet in us -- Soviet mentality, Soviet methods for reaching decisions," said Joomart Otorbayev, deputy prime minister of Kyrgyzstan. "The Soviet system of management that buried the Soviet Union is still with us -- and, unlike Moses, there was no chance to take everyone into the desert for 40 years to shed the slave's mentality." <sup>281</sup>

Militarily, the Kremlin has tapped into mutual concerns over Islamic fundamentalism and used its position as a regional military power to bolster security ties. The CSTO Secretary General explained the organization's approach to making it attractive to members:

You know, we not planning to try and persuade anyone to join the CSTO. There are some agreements within the CSTO and the states do have preferences which

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<sup>281</sup> Robert Kaiser, "U.S. Plants Shaky Footprint in Central Asia," #11 – JRL 6408 dated 27 August 2002. Online at <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/6408-11.cfm> (accessed October 2005).

they present to one another - preferential terms for military-technical cooperation, for example, free or concessionary staff training, military aid, assistance in enhancing the anti-terrorist and anti-drugs potential of the special forces of the states' law-enforcement agencies. There's a whole set of measures that I think are of great interest to states but I repeat, everything depends on the political line taken by the country, by a specific country. If it's interested in guaranteeing collective security from the point of view of being part of the CSTO, it'll say so.<sup>282</sup>

Several components of the economic analysis of this case study are striking. First, the depth and breadth of Russia's penetration of the energy market in Central Asia creates dependency on Russia; Russian efforts cover oil, natural gas and electricity, with each spearheaded by state-controlled monopoly firms. Second, the nature of Russia's economic acquisitions in the region suggest that Russia seeks to take advantage of the weakness of the republics to help itself, relying on equity swaps of strategic infrastructure to clear the Central Asian republics debts with Russia. Third, these efforts seem to be linked to a great extent to political and military goals of force projection. Energy deals in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan each have resulted in a military quid pro quo for Moscow, be it fortification of its own security forces in the country or expulsion of a competitors.

While there is nothing uncommon about powerful states creating these types of linkages in their foreign policy, the concern is motivation. A strategy of Great Power Normalization is characterized by bilateral and coalition-based agreements that are economically focused and mutually beneficial, based on shared expectations, positive returns and a level of transparency in transactions. Such efforts are consistent with tenets of economic liberalization that Normalizers espouse and the foundation of maintaining cooperative relations with the West. Some experts however, question whether all of the economic and integration initiatives introduced by Moscow really are mutually beneficial or do they unfairly benefit Russia and promote its monopoly position in the region's energy sector. As Jerom Perovic noted,

The creation of energy partnerships with the Central Asian states, which have been accompanied by an aggressive expansion of Russian energy companies into these markets is the clearest indication of Russia's desire

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<sup>282</sup> FBIS article "Russia: Discussion Group Views Role of NATO, Collective Security Treaty Organization," Moscow Rossiya TV in Russian 1645 GMT 01 December 2005. CEP20051202027197

to control the flow, and if possible, production of energy throughout the entire post-Soviet space. A major economic reason behind the creation of such partnerships is to reduce, or ideally eliminate, potential competition.<sup>283</sup>

Moscow's heart never seemed to be in the earlier economic integration efforts within the CIS, as its protectionist practices demonstrated. In this regard, Russia's efforts to revive regional integration projects or create new ones that focus on establishing common markets and free trade zones at first seem puzzling. However, having seen the evidence of how an influx in Western capital (such as the BTC pipeline) can alter the geopolitical balance, Moscow may have realized that establishing such arrangements with Caspian Basin states would secure it preferential treatment over foreign companies trying to enter the same market.<sup>284</sup> With regard to WTO accession, it is also in Russia's interest to urge a coordinate approach to WTO membership. Failure to do so could result in "substantial losses for Russia, if, once in the WTO, these countries demand an opening of Russia's markets, as Kyrgyzstan [a WTO member] has already done."<sup>285</sup>

While Russia's efforts to influence Central Asia through economic mechanisms meets the tenets of Great Power Normalization, it bears signs of neo-imperialism, a relationship characterized by a strong country trading territorial and political domination for economic domination and diplomatic influence. Such efforts are used to perpetuate dependencies and asymmetric relationships with weaker states. One must not assume however that just because they are smaller and have fewer resources that the Central Asian states are automatically vulnerable to Russian neo-imperialist advances. Under President Putin's Great Power Normalization policy, Central Asian states have found they can receive "both economic and political benefits from cooperation with Russia by using Russia – and other external powers- as allies in their counterterrorism efforts and to stabilize their domestic power against Islamic opposition movements."<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Perovic, 71

<sup>284</sup> Perovic, 72

<sup>285</sup> Igor Buraakovsky, "Economic Integration and Security in Post-Soviet Space," in *Swords and Sustenance: the Economics of Security in Belarus and Ukraine* eds. Robert Legvold and Celeste Wallander (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004) 170.

<sup>286</sup> Perovic, 65



There are elements of Balancing behavior in the security aspects of Russia's foreign policy in Central Asia, namely the expulsion of U.S. forces from Uzbekistan and the quid pro quo of fortifying Russia's military presence in exchange for economic investment. Overall however, Moscow's approach does resemble Normalization, particularly in its economically focused agenda and emphasis on multilateral approaches to regional security via the CSTO. .

There are factors that naturally draw Russia and Central Asian states together and mitigate what appears as overly aggressive Russian initiatives. Politically and in terms of transportation infrastructure, Russia is more accessible than the lucrative markets of Europe and Asia, making trade less expensive than with other countries. A shared "Soviet" mentality, particularly among the elite, makes commercial dealings easier. While the Caucasus share the same history, they also have a close "other" such as Turkey and Europe with which they can culturally identify. For Central Asia, Europe is a continent too far. "Fearing domestic upheavals that would jeopardize their tenuous hold on power, regimes are reluctant to undertake the dramatic structural reforms necessary to make their economies more attractive to foreign investment" and their governments more acceptable to the West.<sup>287</sup> None of the former Soviet republics was prepared for independence in 1991. "The republics lacked the most basic tools of nationhood -- a banking system, for example, or a defense ministry, or a postal service."<sup>288</sup> In Central Asia, most republics even lacked an indigenous national identity and language.

In this regard Russia was far better equipped to assume its independence. As the successor to the Soviet Union and tsarist Russia, it cannot seem to help acting like a "big brother" to its smaller neighbors. While it does not want to assume financial responsibility for them, a "big brother" mentality makes it that much easier for Russia's relations with the Central Asian states to begin assuming the trappings of a neo-imperial relationship. Certainly the potential--if not yet the full-blown reality--for such a relationship exists in Central Asia.

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<sup>287</sup> Hale

<sup>288</sup> Ibid

## **V. FINAL ANALYSIS - WHAT KIND OF REGIONAL HEGEMON IS RUSSIA STRIVING TO BE IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION?**

Russian foreign policy has undergone a significant change in the last several years. The year 2004 was a low point for Moscow. The initial sense of a unity with the West following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States had evaporated and once again Russia was being criticized for its human rights violations in Chechnya and its retreat from democracy at home. “Colored Revolutions” in Georgia and Ukraine seemed to repudiate the Soviet political order that still dominated many of the former Soviet states. The spark that had characterized President Bush and President Putin’s personal relationship was absent during their 2005 summit meeting in Bratislava. Then, the “inexorable rise in oil prices” seemed to give Russia a new lease on life. With the European Union’s troubling performance in the constitutional referendums and the United States preoccupied by Iraq and natural disasters at home, Moscow’s international standing strongly recovered.<sup>289</sup> Scheduled to host the July 2006 summit of the G-8 countries, and fresh off of geopolitical victories such as the expulsion of U.S. military forces from Uzbekistan and the subsequent security alliance between Tashkent and Moscow, Russia appears to have “finally left the Western orbit and set out in free flight.”<sup>290</sup>

What does this bode for Russia’s policy toward the former Soviet republics? Is Russia merely pursuing a pragmatic policy, normal for any regional great power? Is it motivated by a desire to countermand U.S. power at every turn, particularly through a neo-Soviet reintegration of the former Soviet Union? Andrei Tsygankov characterizes these options as either Great Power Normalization or Great Power Balancing. Russia’s behavior in the Caucasus and Central Asia most closely resembles a policy of Great Power Normalization. The pragmatic foreign policy model that President Putin advocates and Andrei Tsygankov describes as Great Power Normalization is based on three primary

<sup>289</sup> Pavel Baev, “Chairing the G8: Russian Energy and Great Power Aspirations,” PONARS memo #382. December 2005.

<sup>290</sup> By Dmitri Trenin, “The Post-Imperial Project,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, February 15, 2006. Online at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=18065&prog=zru> (accessed March 2006).

tenets: a renewed focus on pragmatism and economic interests versus traditional security related ones; cooperative economic and security relations with the West; and revival of Russia's historically dominant position of influence in the former Soviet republics. The focus of this thesis was analysis of the third tenet in an effort to answer three related questions.

**A. WHAT ARE THE MECHANISMS RUSSIA HAS USED IN ITS EFFORTS TO REESTABLISH A PRESENCE IN THE FORMER SOVIET REPUBLICS?**

Analysis of this question was conducted using a framework that addressed Russia's diplomatic, information/cultural, military and economic (DIME) efforts to gain influence in the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union. The major findings for each region are summarized below.

**1. Georgia and the Caucasus**

Russia has fewer effective mechanisms of influence in Georgia than in most states of Central Asia, but what it has is potent. Russia has lost ground in its ability to manifest its interests in Georgia and the Caucasus. The attractiveness and utility of its cultural legacy is low and the region is increasingly looking westward to Turkey and the European Union. The "Rose Revolution" has given Tbilisi much more visibility on the international scene, allowing it to look westward for political support and financial assistance as its relations with Russia grow increasingly strained. Politically, bilateral relations between Moscow and its neighbors in the Caucasus are stymied by the existence of internal conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh and between Tbilisi and the separatist enclaves of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

While Georgia has successfully negotiated the withdrawal of Russia's two remaining Soviet-era bases, Tbilisi cannot afford to become too emboldened in its efforts to resolve the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia without Russian cooperation. It has few options available for replacing the existing Russian-dominated peacekeeping forces in those regions. Until such time as alternatives become available and a way out of the bilateral peace agreement that created the joint peacekeeping force is found, Russia will maintain a very significant lever of influence over Georgia.

Economically, while making significant inroads into Georgia's energy infrastructure, Moscow's economic leverages are threatened by the existence of the new BTC oil pipeline and the soon to be completed Shaw-Deniz gas pipeline – Western backed projects that will significantly free Georgia from its current reliance on Russian energy and provide much needed revenue from transit fees.

## **2. Uzbekistan and Central Asia**

There can be no doubt that Russia is significantly increasing its influence in Central Asia through the successful implementation of numerous cultural, political, economic and military mechanisms. The region's political and business elite still share a cultural affinity with Russia. Moscow has very effectively played on the fears of the region's authoritarian regimes with regard to their domestic stability. Leaders such as Uzbekistan's Islam Karimov generally perceive that the U.S. presence in the region is temporary, whereas Russia is there "for good." It remains to be seen whether the renewed ties between Tashkent and Moscow represent more than just President Karimov's knee-jerk reaction to Western criticism of his regime's brutal crackdown in Andijon in May 2005. On the surface the new Russian-Uzbek security treaty is unquestionably a diplomatic nod to Moscow, a reward for its political support and economic investment; however, President Karimov has proved to be a very pragmatic leader, who does not appear to be willing to play to anyone's interests but his own.

Most significant in this case study is the substantial depth and breadth of Moscow's penetration of the region's energy industry. Russia has very successfully used economic leverage, such as debt for equity swaps and pipeline politics, to ensure the region's continued dependence on Russia for modernization of its energy infrastructure and transportation of its raw materials to external energy markets.

### **B. HOW SUCCESSFUL HAVE MOSCOW'S EFFORTS IN INCREASING ITS INFLUENCE BEEN?**

To answer this question, Russia's mechanisms of influence were evaluated against a set of criteria that Tsygankov argued differentiated Great Power Normalizers and Great Power Balancers in their methods of relating to their former Soviet republics. The criteria for Normalization predicted that Russia would:

- Not use the CIS organization as a vehicle for reintegration; instead Putin would replace it with “more flexible, issues-based coalitions” with informal mechanisms and bilateral negotiations of interests
- Welcome limited military Western presence in Central Asia and the Caucasus
- Place geo-economic interests over geopolitical interests

Overall, Russian efforts generally meet Tsygankov’s criteria regarding integration and geo-economics, but not regarding Western military presence.

Reinvigorated efforts at regional integration have characterized Russian policy in Central Asia, both in economics and the security sphere, with Eurasec/EEC organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization playing leading roles. The CSTO has produced some substantive successes, namely in the realm of anti-terrorism exercises and counter-drug operations. However, it remains to be seen whether these organizations will remain viable, actively multilateral forums or whether Moscow’s strategic interests will dominate their agendas.

Russia has not demonstrated much willingness to tolerate U.S. military presence on its doorstep. It attempted to match Western basing with introduction of its own military facilities in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Russia’s role in orchestrating the eviction of coalition forces from Uzbekistan, and its attempts to counter the U.S. Caspian Guard operations with its own Caspian naval flotilla are further evidence of this trend.

Regarding the final criteria, Russia has clearly made economic initiatives a major component of its foreign policy, particularly in Central Asia. “The fusion of the Russian government, the large Russian oil and gas companies, the Russian electric power utilities, and the newly emergent Russian banking sector has created a forceful new dynamic in the Central Asian region.”<sup>291</sup> Analysts point out that Russia would not have been able to “mount an efficient defense against the revolutionary forces [in Central Asia] if the rise of world oil prices had not massively increased the resource base available for its foreign policy.”<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Gregory Gleason, “Financing Central Asian Expansion,” *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, 3 November 2004.

<sup>292</sup> Pavel Baev, “Russia’s Counterrevolutionary Offensive in Central Asia,” PONARS memo #399, December 2005.

It remains to be seen whether this economic offensive will remain viable in the long run. Great Power Normalization is characterized by pragmatic decision making based on liberal economic models; if it is motivating Russian policy, then it should in theory reflect sound financial practices. Critics point out however that state monopolies such as Rosneft and Gazprom both engage in non-transparent deals and carry enormous debt.<sup>293</sup> If economic initiatives, such as the widespread purchase of energy assets, are a ruse for a political agenda, the cost could be significant and undermine Russia's long-term economic development. As one analyst noted, "there are reasons that the Central Asia and Caucasus power enterprises have not attracted commercial investment. Taking over assets that have been passed over by commercial investors implies taking on the responsibility for low-producing or even loss-generating enterprises."<sup>294</sup> Such activity is indicative of Soviet economic models dominated by subsidies and inefficiencies for political benefit, policy more in line with Great Power Balancer thinking. If the gamble pays off however, and Russia is able to modernize these assets and maximize their efficiency, it could be strategically placed to take advantage of the burgeoning energy markets in China, Afghanistan and South Asia.

### **C. WHAT MOTIVATES RUSSIAN POLICY IN THE FORMER SOVIET REPUBLICS?**

Does Russian policy reflect the tenets of Great Power Normalization, Great Power Balancing, or a third alternative, Liberal Imperialism, currently popular among the Russian political elite? If motivated by Tsygankov's Great Power Normalization, Moscow's behavior in the former Soviet republics of the Caucasus and Central is simply that of a regional hegemon, characteristic of United States behavior with respect to Latin America. What if Russian policy is not driven by pragmatism and economic considerations, but is characterized by efforts to re-integrate, with an emphasis on military and security relationships? Then Russian foreign policy seems to take its cure from Great Power Balancers, proponents of a foreign policy that seeks formal re-creation of the Soviet empire.

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<sup>293</sup> Vladimir Milov of the Institute for Energy Policy in a speech for a meeting entitled "How Sustainable is Russia's Future as an Energy Superpower?" Sponsored by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 16 March 2006. Summary available online at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/events/index.cfm?fa=eventDetail&id=860&&prog=zru> (accessed March 2006).

<sup>294</sup> Gleason, 2004.

Tsygankov argues that Russia has not manifested the “traditional” patterns of imperialism, namely where one country formally assumes control over another’s sovereignty through military force and subsequently imposes colonial economic and social subordination (the Soviet model). While Moscow still uses a “sticks and carrots” approach to secure its own interests, those sticks no longer comprise of brute force but “informal diplomatic influences and soft power.”<sup>295</sup> This definition however seems outdated in a post-Cold War and post-colonial era where the principle of national sovereignty is supreme and international organizations like the U.N. act as global policemen defending a code of global norms. Instead, one must consider the possibility that Russia may be acting in a neo-imperialistic manner, pursuing a foreign policy in which a strong country trades in territorial and political domination for economic domination and diplomatic influence. In a neo-imperialist policy, major powers use economic and political means to perpetuate or extend their influence over weaker states in a way that undermines their sovereignty.

Analysis of the case studies revealed that while military and security issues seemed to dominate Russia’s foreign policy in the Caucasus, economic mechanisms, specifically the energy sector, were most prominent in Central Asia. This is where Russia has made its most forceful efforts at renewing a position of dominance. Tsygankov describes the projection of Russia’s economic power as “crucial for increasing Russian influence in Eurasia” and acknowledges that the Kremlin has “aggressively asserted control over the ex-republics’ strategic property and transportation.”

Tsygankov’s model fails to recognize that these actions themselves could be perceived as *too* aggressive, or neo-imperial, by the West. Other, less aggressive options for cooperative engagement exist, such as a potential Russia-Georgia oil pipeline from its port in the Black Sea down to Georgia’s hub on the BTC, but they are not acted upon. When Russia forgoes efforts such as these in favor of “corporate raiding” of former Soviet republics’ energy infrastructure, it raises legitimate concern in the West.

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<sup>295</sup> Andrei Tsygankov, “Vladimir Putin’s Vision of Russia as a Normal Great Power,” *Post Soviet Affairs* 21, no. 2, (2005): 133.

The repercussions of such behavior might threaten Russian President Putin's attempts to maintain the economic and security cooperation with the West he claims is critical to Russia's development as a Great Power. The perception that Russia is pursuing a neo-imperialist policy, hijacking the energy infrastructure of weaker states that do not possess the capacity to modernize their energy sectors, could generate a regional and international backlash. After January 2006, following Russia's much publicized gas war with Georgia and Ukraine, Russia's energy politics has cast doubts among some critics as to whether Moscow should host the G-8 summit in July 2006, and whether it should even be a member of the international organization.<sup>296</sup> While still affirming Russia's G-8 membership, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice remarked that, "that kind of behavior is going to continue to draw comment about the distance between Russian behavior in something like this and what would be expected of a responsible member of the G8."

Russia has so far downplayed accusations of heavy-handedness in its energy policies. At a 31 January press conference President Putin dismissed the possibility that the country's G-8 status could be re-evaluated, downplaying the significance of diplomatic rhetoric by telling the audience, "the dog barks, the caravan rolls on."<sup>297</sup> Accusations of neo-imperialism are also answered with accusations of a Western double standard. Anatol Lieven notes that Russians ask,

Why castigate Moscow for working with dictatorships when Washington has long done the same thing, routinely accommodating any dictatorship possessed of sufficient oil? Why lecture Russia on the need to adopt 'universal market practices' and then howl when it raises its prices for supplying energy to its neighbors to market levels? Why give huge amounts of U.S. aid to one Georgian leader after another just because they are anti-Russian, even after they become corrupt potentates?<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Mark Medish, "Russia: Odd Man Out in the G-8," *Globalist*, 24 February 2006. Online at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=18063&prog=zru> (accessed March 2006) and Gregory Feifer, "Russia Takes Reins of G-8 Amid Criticism of Putin," National Public Radio Broadcast, 30 December 2005. Online at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5076739> (accessed March 2006).

<sup>297</sup> Pavel K. Baev, "Moscow Counts the Pros and Cons of 'Selective Cooperation,'" *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 13 March 2006. Online at [http://jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article\\_id=2370862](http://jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2370862) (accessed March 2006).

<sup>298</sup> Anatol Lieven, "Why are We Trying to Reheat the Cold War?" *Los Angeles Times*, 19 March 2006. Online at <http://www.newamerica.net/index.cfm?pg=article&DocID=2942> (Accessed March 2006).



From a Russian perspective, its behavior is that of any normal great power.

#### **D. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

In light of Russia's renewed presence in the former Soviet Union, the West should not disengage from the Caucasus or Central Asia. It should however attempt to mitigate Russian perceptions of its actions in the region through greater engagement with Russia, solicitation of its cooperation in multilateral security and economic ventures, and transparency in any bilateral endeavors with the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia. Russia in turn must reconcile its pragmatic foreign policy goals in the region with its zero-sum mentality concerning Western presence. The two approaches are not compatible and lead to an incoherent and reactive foreign policy. Former U.S. Ambassador to Russia, Alexander Vershbow emphasized this point during his tenure in Moscow. In 2004 he noted that,

America's relations with the countries of the CIS do not represent a zero-sum game, in which a gain for the United States represents a loss for Russia, or vice versa. The United States has no interest in crowding Russia out of areas in which it has historical interests. However, we do have an interest - an interest that we share with Russia - in promoting stability and prosperity among Russia's neighbors. The resolution of "frozen" conflicts in Georgia and Moldova, and encouraging economic and political reform in Belarus, the Caucasus and Central Asia, will help ensure that Russia's neighbors become stable and prosperous countries, rather than exporters of instability, crime and extremism. Failing to see this only sets back Russia's own development and hurts Russia's interests.<sup>299</sup>

A weak Russia is not in the West's best interest, but neither is a Russia that perpetuates weakness and stifles reform in the former Soviet republics for the sake of the political status quo. If Moscow's pragmatic "Normalization" foreign policy is its best chance of ensuring economic development and regional stability, then it would seem logical to encourage its neighbors to adopt some of its tenets, such as market-liberalization and economic and security cooperation with the West. This could be accomplished through trilateral ventures that allow Russia a substantive role. Both partners bring different strengths to the table; the West has more resources and technical expertise but Moscow has the experience of a shared business and political culture, as

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<sup>299</sup> Alexander Vershbow, "U.S.-Russian Relations: Taking Relations to a Higher Level," U.S. Ambassador to Russia in a speech to the Moscow State Institute for International Relations, 9 April 2004. Available online through JRL at <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/8163-2.cfm> (accessed October 2005).

well as an understanding of the operating environment, from infrastructure to finance. This would eliminate the need for states in Central Asia and the Caucasus to choose between Washington or Moscow.

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## **VI. ANNEX**

### **A. BACKGROUND ON GEORGIAN INTERNAL CONFLICTS**

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, ethnic populations in autonomous oblasts that had historically chafed under Stalin's perverse nationalities policy, now found themselves adrift in someone else's homeland as 15 union republics became independent states. Moscow, realizing that former Soviet bases would eventually have to be withdrawn from some of the new states (given the problematic nature of some of their relations), took advantage of several ethnic conflicts to formalize its continued military presence in these former republic as "peacekeepers" and guarantors of the status quo. For the Georgians this meant territorial integrity, for the separatists, ceasefires on favorable terms. The West, observing the events of the early 1990s unfold was hesitant that interference would derail Russia's nascent efforts to establish democracy and a market economy. The international community, occupied with larger crises in states such as Cambodia, Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda and Liberia were unable to garner much support for conflicts in Russia's periphery. The West recognized Russia's unique role in the region and, cultivating its newfound political reconciliation with the Kremlin, largely left the management of these crises to Moscow.<sup>300</sup>

#### **1. Background on South Ossetia Conflict**

Alarmed by Georgia's increasingly nationalist rhetoric, ethnic Russians in South Ossetia unilaterally declared the district a "republic" in 1991, a move the Georgian parliament rejected and followed with revocation of the district's "autonomous" status. Unable to secure their own liberty and hesitant to remain "guests" within Georgia, ethnic Russians in South Ossetia turned to Moscow for assistance. Armed conflict began in late 1991/early 1992, between Georgian paramilitary forces and Ossetian rebels considerably assisted by their Russian neighbors in North Ossetia, as well as former Soviet military forces stationed in the region. Moscow used its local military forces to advance the cause of the rebels before calling for ceasefires and forging the peace on terms relatively

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<sup>300</sup> Kevin O'Prey, "Keeping the Peace in the Borderlands of Russia," in *UN Peacekeeping, American Politics and the Uncivil Wars of the 1990s*, ed. William J. Durch (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), and Roy Allison, "Peacekeeping in the Soviet Successor States," Chaillot Paper #18, November 1994, Institute for Security Studies of WEU. Online at <http://www.iss-eu.org/chaillot/chail18e.html> (accessed May 2005)

favorable to the separatists and Moscow. A mixed peacekeeping force was deployed, consisting of approximately 1000 North Ossetian, Russian and Georgian troops. The original peacekeeping "mandate" agreed on between Georgia and Russia was for two months, but because political leaders were unable to reach an agreement concerning South Ossetia's status, it was extended indefinitely.<sup>301</sup> The situation today remains no closer to a political settlement.

## **2. Background on Abkhazia Conflict**

Likewise alarmed by resurgent Georgian nationalism, the Abkhaz minority in the former autonomous oblast of Abkhazia led the call for independence, which Georgia opposed militarily. Units of the Russian Army, quartered in Abkhazia, provided equipment and expertise to the Abkhazians, as well as support from the Russian Air Force. It is not clear whether they were acting independently or following orders from Moscow. Russian veterans living in Abkhazia also provided their services, as did Russian Cossacks and mercenaries. Breakdowns in several ceasefires and the civil war that followed contributed to the ability of rebels to consolidate their position and clear all Georgian forces from the region. In addition, the majority Georgian population of the neighboring Gali region was driven from their homes and Gali subsequently became a buffer zone. President Shevardnadze, desperate to contain the rising civil war, capitulated to pressure from Moscow and agreed to join the CIS and grant Russia basing rights in return for security assistance. Russian military intervened to put down the rebellion and interposed peacekeepers, followed by a ceasefire agreement in May 1994.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Background compiled from Sagramoso, Domitilla. "Chapter I: Russian Peacekeeping Policies." in *Regional Peacekeepers: The Paradox of Russian Peacekeeping*, ed. John Mackinlay and Peter Cross (New York: United Nations University, 2003) p13-33, Dmitry Trenin, "Chapter 4: Russia" in *Challenges for the New Peacekeepers* (SIPRI Research Report No.12), ed. Trevor Findlay (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) p68-84

<sup>302</sup> Background compiled from Edward Walker, "No War, Peace in the Caucasus" in *Crossroads and Conflict*, eds. Bertsch et al (Routledge, 2000), 158-168 and Dov Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS: The Cases of Moldova, Georgia and Tajikistan* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2000) p127-149

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