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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
Monterey, California

THESIS

RUSSIA'S PLACE IN CENTRAL ASIA

by

Jonathan M. Edwards

June 2001

Thesis Advisor:	Mikhail Tsypkin
Second Reader:	Lyman Miller

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This thesis assesses the need for U.S.-Russian cooperation in Central Asia to create a stronger, more reliable long-term stability in the region. Current United States policy toward Russia in Central Asia is tailored to isolate and minimize Russian influence due, in great part to a perception that Russian "heavy-handedness" is restricting political and economic development in Central Asia. Reforming Central Asia to be less dependent on Russia has been a centerpiece of U.S. policy in the region.

This thesis provides U.S. foreign policy makers with an alternative view on Russia. This view supports a new policy that encourages a more sustainable multi-lateral approach to stability in the region and more accurately takes into account the real threats to the region. An isolated Russia in Central Asia will complicate U.S. policy in the region and provide opportunities for other regional players antagonistic to a U.S. presence.

The lack of well established nation states in Central Asia, the judgment that Russia's approach is cooperative, and a clear understanding of the intentions of other regional players bring this thesis to the conclusion that improved U.S.-Russian cooperation can only enhance stability in Central Asia.

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RUSSIA'S PLACE IN CENTRAL ASIA

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

This thesis assesses the need for U.S.-Russian cooperation in Central Asia to create a stronger, more reliable long-term stability in the region. Current United States policy toward Russia in Central Asia is tailored to isolate and minimize Russian influence due, in great part to a perception that Russian "heavy-handedness" is restricting political and economic development in Central Asia. Reforming Central Asia to be less dependent on Russia has been a centerpiece of U.S. policy in the region.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This thesis assesses the need for U.S.-Russian cooperation in Central Asia to create a stronger, more reliable long-term stability in the region. Current United States policy toward Russia in Central Asia is tailored to isolate and minimize Russian influence due, in great part to a perception that Russian "heavy-handedness" is restricting political and economic development in Central Asia. Reforming Central Asia to be less dependent on Russia has been a centerpiece of U.S. policy as recently as the fiscal year 2001 foreign policy funding debate.[1]

This thesis provides U.S. foreign policy makers with an alternative view on Russia. This view supports a new policy that encourages a more sustainable multi-lateral approach to stability in the region and more accurately assesses the real threats to the region.

Chapter II demonstrates that Central Asia's history does not provide a basis for the five separate nation-states, as they exist today. In Central Asia, the nation-state did not exist before or after Russian colonialism reached the region in the 18th century.

This examination of Central Asia's history and present struggles with building democracy portray a region unprepared to develop and implement independent foreign policies in the international arena. Weak nation-states have little option but to look toward other powers for protection. Stephen M. Walt points out that as nations become weaker and their alternatives lessen, they are more likely to enter an alliance of necessity

[1] Chapter III addresses this issue in more detail the reference is from the Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, Fiscal Year 2001, U.S. Department of State, March 15, 2000

rather than desire. Walt states, "If weak states see no possibility of outside assistance…they may be forced to accommodate the most imminent threat."[2]

Chapter III defines Russia as the dominant power in Central Asia. Up until 1991 and the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia enjoyed its position as the strongest player in the region. Through political, economic and military dominance, Russia was able to sustain Central Asian dependence.

However, today Russia's economic collapse, growing isolation from the Western economies, and loss of superpower status have dramatically reduced Russian influence in Central Asia and, most importantly the necessity for Central Asian countries to depend on Russia for security as well as political and economic stability.

While the requirements have been lessened, Central Asia's needs to retain, strong political and economic ties with Russia continue. Russia and other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States are Central Asia's largest economic partners. The dramatic economic challenges of the region have reduced Western investment and, while Chinese investment continues to rise, it remains a small fraction of the economic relationship with Russia.

Chapter III reveals that much of Russia's actions in Central Asia are indeed heavy handed. However, Russia has "generally responded to the efforts of other powers to establish standards of appropriate behavior, has worked within the new institutional

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[2] Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*,(Cornell Studies in Security Affairs, New Jersey, 1990) 30.

arrangements, like the OSCE in Europe, and has internalized many of the new norms of international community."[3]

Chapter IV analyzes the other regional players in Central Asia. It points out that the other regional players as part of this "great game" have influence on regional stability than Russia. It provides a background of the major characteristics of the region from which to redirect failing U.S. antagonistic policies of the past.

Today the region is no different, as Central Asia's neighbor-- China, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Turkey-- are vying for increasing influence in the region. This chapter explores the role each country has in Central Asia by analyzing the positive and negative effects of each country. This analysis reaches the following conclusions:

- At some level, Central Asia must address the fundamentalist Islamic threat as real. The Pakistani and Afghani roles in perpetuating the Islamic threat are very evident.
- Turkey's limited near-term economic potential significantly reduces its ability to promote greater economic growth in Central Asia.
- Iran is too isolated from the international community to provide any meaningful advantage for increased multi-lateral cooperation.
- Chinese intentions are questionable and potentially destabilizing.

Chapter IV further establishes that if a new "great game" is afoot in Central Asia, the options for stability other than through Russia's involvement are negligible. The competition between Turkey and Iran to define a historical purpose for their presence is constrained by the small political and economic potential each has in the region. With economics playing the lead role in achieving stability in the region, Turkish and/or

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[3] Rajan Menon & Yuri E. Fedorov & Ghia Nodia, *Russia, The Caucuses and Central Asia: The 21st Century Security Environment, Volume 2* (EastWest Institute, M.E. Sharpe, 1999) 173

Iranian leadership in the region could only further destabilize the economic potential and result in greater political instability, opening the door for more fundamentalist threats.

With weakening Western influence, Russian economic troubles, and crumbling economies, the countries of Central Asia could turn to Iran, China or even the Taliban for assistance. The consequences of these strengthening relations are hard to fathom, but it is clear that it can only lessen the influence of Western policies in the region. With Russia's economy potentially on the rise, it provides a far better alternative for the West and a more predictable future for Central Asia. This thesis contends that Russia -- by history, economic and political linkage -- can play a positive role in developing and sustaining stability in the region.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This thesis assesses the need for U.S.-Russian cooperation in Central Asia to create a stronger, more reliable long-term stability in the region. Current United States policy toward Russia in Central Asia is tailored to isolate and minimize Russian influence, due in great part to a perception that Russian "heavy-handedness" is restricting political and economic development in Central Asia. Reforming Central Asia to be less dependent on Russia has been a centerpiece of U.S. policy as recently as the fiscal year 2001 foreign policy funding debate.[4]

This thesis provides U.S. foreign policy makers with an alternative view on Russia. This view supports a new policy that encourages a more sustainable multi-lateral approach to stability in the region and more accurately assesses the real threats to the region. Isolating Russia from its sensitive southern tier could lead to unforeseen consequences in Russian foreign policy. Anatol Lieven points out:

> … if Russia were in fact forced to abandon her present very weak and qualified 'imperial' identity, it might swing to something very much worse. This would be especially true if Russia were to be simultaneously excluded from Western institutions and surrounded by a ring of Western-backed states with strong and strongly anti-Russian official national identities and programs.[5]

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[4] Chapter III addresses this issue in more detail the reference is from the Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, Fiscal Year 2001, U.S. Department of State, March 15, 2000

[5] Anatol Lieven, Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1998), 382

The conclusion that a participatory Russia in Central Asia is far better than an isolated one follows from an analysis of the historical development of the Central Asian nation-states down to today; from analysis of the positive and negative activities of Russia in Central Asia, and from an examination of the activities of other regional players.

This thesis argues that individual nations as defined by Ernest Renan may not exist in Central Asia:

> A nation is a soul, a mental principle. Two things that are in fact one and the same constitute this principle. One of them is a store of memories, the other is the currently valid agreement, the wish to live together…A nation, then, is an extended community with a peculiar sense of kinship sustained by an awareness of the sacrifices that have been made in the past, and the sacrifices the nation is prepared to make in the future. A nation presumes a past, but the past is summed up in one tangible fact: the agreement, the desire to continue a life in common.[6]

Without shared interests, efforts by the Central Asian states' to create a more favorable attitude toward cooperation may require external assistance. The West was quick to provide assistance and promote the development of more liberal forms of government. This thesis will argue that the West's approach to Central Asia has achieved little. In fact, Russian approaches to Central Asia have provided some limited successes, and Russian foreign policy positions, while constantly changing and at times ill defined, have promoted greater cooperation and reliable short-term solutions.

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6 Ernest Renan quoted in the book by Hagen Schulze, translated by William E. Yuill: *States, Nations and Nationalism* (Blackwell Publisher, Mass, 1996), 97

What makes Central Asia's most appealing to the world is the large deposits of oil and natural gas in the area. Although not as large as the deposits in the Middle East, they are far larger than those in Europe and much of the region's potential is unexplored.[7] A number of pipeline projects are in the works, supported by that include Europe, China, the United States, Iran, and Pakistan. Getting these pipelines built has become a new "great game" in Central Asia.

This thesis further argues that the other regional players in this "great game" have less influence on behalf of regional stability than Russia

This thesis assesses the major characteristics of the region in order to evaluate U.S. policies of the past. This thesis does not delve into the argument over whether Central Asia is worth U.S. and Western attention or the level it deserves. What is most important is the relationship between the United States and the West toward Russia in the region. The result of this analysis is that the relationship should be far more cooperative than it is today.

7 Zanny Minton Beddoes: "A Caspian Gamble: A survey of Central Asia," Economist, Feb 1998, p. 7

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II. CENTRAL ASIA'S ILL-DEFINED NATION-STATES

A. INTRODUCTION

On April 17, 2000 Madeline Albright, United States Secretary of State, told the leaders of Central Asia:

> A democratic and open society will provide the best defense against extremism and terrorism and the most hospitable environment for the transition to a prosperous, modern market economy.[8]

Secretary Albright was responding to the growing trend in Central Asia away from the democratic principles that by the United States and the West support and toward regimes that are more authoritarian. Secretary Albright was also encouraging the Central Asian states to re-energize the move toward a more modern, Western-leaning society. By linking stability with democratic reform and stronger relations with the West, Secretary Albright was re-iterating the held belief in the West that Central Asia's reliance on Russia inhibits development and in turn only guarantees greater instability or at a minimum the continuing state of instability today.

For the nations of Central Asia, creating a more stabile region is not as easy as Secretary Albright assumes. Only three months later President Emomali Rahmonov of Tajikistan noted, "The policy of consolidating strategic partnership relations with Russia has always been and remains invariable."[9] President Rahmonov was discussing the

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[8] Agence France Presse, 17 April 2000.

[9] British Brodcasting Corporation, 25 July 2000.

importance of retaining Russian military presence in Tajikistan to help control separatist movements from Afghanistan.

A common belief is that instability on the Russian periphery is due in part to the repressive nature of the Soviet Union during the 20th century. Under Soviet rule, once independent nations were unable to sustain or promote any sense of national identity. The Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union diluted cultures through Russian immigration, emphasis on Russian over native languages and destroyed national movements as they developed. Yugoslavia, Azerbaijan, and the Central Asian Republics have become unstable because ethnic groups have re-emerged, challenging the authority and legitimacy of the governments in power.

B. HISTORY'S UNDEFINING LESSON

This chapter demonstrates that Central Asia's history does not provide a basis for the five separate nation-states that exist today. In Central Asia there was little in the way of national identity before Russian Colonialism beginning in the 18th century. In Central Asia, the nation-state did not exist.

1. Pre-Soviet History

Central Asia was a center of great power competition for many centuries. A "great game" took place between Great Britain and Russia for Central Asia during the 18th and 19th centuries. However, this great game was not for some grand prize in Central Asia. Rather, it was for a larger prize – India and control of South Asia. As early as the reign of Peter the Great, the Russians hoped to develop land routes to transport riches from India that by sea could take more than a year. The nomadic people of the Central Asian region were easy pickings for developed nations to conquer. The competition for

and continual occupation of the region by the great powers would prevent Central Asians from ever developing a national sense, whether as individual nations or a collection of separate nations. [10]

Samuel Huntington states that in Central Asia, "national identities did not exist" and that "loyalty was to the tribe, clan, and extended family, not to the state."[11] Huntington goes on to portray Central Asia as being a part of a greater Islamic civilization and that the de-colonization or breakup of the Soviet Union has created a commonality among the peoples of Central Asia. For supporters of Huntington's view, this may provide a potential for future cooperation and a greater link to neighboring Islamic countries like Turkey or Iran. However, others argue that the Islamic connection in Central Asia may only be skin deep.

Some scholars go even farther to discredit even the notion that Central Asia has a shared Islamic tradition. Discounting the two primary characteristics of a nation, language and religion, Rajan Menon states:

---

[10] Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia* (Kodansha International, New York, 1990), 16.

[11] Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (Simon and Schuster), New York, 1996), 175.

> Those Western analysts who believed that the linguistic ties among the Turkic-speaking peoples might unify them or create an affinity with the Turks of Anatolia failed to note that the languages of Central Asia are different enough from Anatolian Turkish that "identity" is merely an intellectual conceit. Not only are linguistic linkages weak but also how they view the character of their religion is quite different from neighboring Islamic countries. "Muslim" which became the ubiquitous title for Central Asian native peoples does not necessarily refer to a religious conviction. Rather, it includes cultural and even geographic identity "that is something akin to "European" for many westerners. To identify oneself as "Muslim" in Central Asia is far more complex and may represent a very loosely formed, weakly committed identity.[12]

Whether one believes there is a loosely shared culture somewhere in Central Asia's history or not is debatable. However, by examining the history of each of the five countries of Central Asia it will become more abundantly clear that history only dims the a sense of national identity.

Kazakhstan is the largest country geographically and has the second largest economy of Central Asia (after Uzbekistan). The word Kazakh has evolved from its original Turkic meaning of renegade or outlaw to the Russian word Kazaky or Cossacks, which describes Russian peasants who live on the frontier. During the 15th-18th centuries an empire made up of peoples descended from the tribes of East Central Asia "Golden Horde" existed in the Central Asian region. This empire, like others in the region, was an association of separate tribes of people. As the Russians migrated into the region the three great tribes, "Little Horde," "Middle Horde" and "Great Horde" looked to Russia for protection against stronger tribes to the east. Russian protection came with a price,

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[12] Rajan Menon, Yuri E. Fedorov & Ghia Nodia, Russia, *The Caucasus and Central Asia: The 21st Century Security Environment, Volume 2* (EastWest Institute, M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 161-165.

the creation of Russian military bases and suppression of tribal leaders. Russians began to populate the region in increasing numbers, which has resulted in the present day large number of Russian's residing in northern Kazakhstan.

Uzbekistan today is one of the most repressive regimes in Central Asia. Despite this fact, Uzbekistan is and has been one the highest recipients of economic aid from the West and even as recently as June 2000 was applauded during Congressional hearings in Washington, DC. However, the basis for the existence of Uzbekistan as a nation can be questioned, in fact possibly more so than any other nation in Central Asia.

It is unknown exactly when and how many Uzbek speaking tribes migrated to Central Asia. Uzbek tribes arrived in Central Asia sometime during the 15th century. The territory which is now Uzbekistan has a far richer history than the Uzbeki people, dating back to the Persian Empire as well as Alexander the Great. The Uzbeks remained nomadic tribes up until the Russians began migrating into the region in the 19th century.

Similar to the two countries just mentioned, Turkmenistan's existence as a nation began with the creation of the Turkmen Republic under the Soviet Union. Before this, Turkmens were nomadic farmers who have more in common with Ottoman Turks and Azerbaijanis than their neighbors in Central Asia.

Today, Turkmenistan's increasing ties with Iran betrays another reality of Turkmen history, Turkmens' claim to be Moslem by heritage. However, there is little proof that the tribes of the Turkmen region were any less secular than Moslems during the Soviet period.

Tajikistan today is the country with the highest level of internal instability and problems of national identity. The country's history is one of continual assimilation. Whether during the reign of Alexander the Great or Afghanistan's rule in the eighteenth century, Tajiks have always failed to come together under any semblance of a Tajik state. Isolated by severe mountainous terrain, the Tajiks spent more time fighting each other (as they do today) than challenging invading powers. In fact, the Soviet Union found so little potential in the Tajik's ability to govern that they always sent outsiders in to fill the primary positions of leadership.

The Kyrgyz, nomadic as well, lived in the Tien Shan Mountains since the 16th Century. They did not develop a written form of the Kyrgyz language until very late. Therefore, it is difficult to know the precise nature and history of their language and culture. During the middle of the 19th century, Russian colonization found little resistance from these nomadic tribes, which became part of Russian and then Soviet Turkistan. Kyrgyzstan became a separate autonomous Soviet Republic in 1936.

2. Soviet Central Asia – Redefining Nationhood

The nomadic history of Pre-Soviet Central Asia gives little hope to finding a shared history to help spur cooperation and a sense of commonality among Central Asian countries. Central Asia's existence under Soviet control for over 70 years provides even less.

Soviet rule reduced what semblance of national or regional identity existed with a concentrated policy to stamp out the potential for national feelings to develop. The national delimitation of Central Asia, carried out by the Bolsheviks in 1924-1925, resulted in the creation of five territorial-administrative units. These new formations

were multi-ethnic. Geographic boundaries further weakened national aspirations. Ethnic diversity greatly increased in the following decades.

During the period from 1925 into the early 1940s hundreds of thousands of immigrants, mostly from the western (Slav) republics moved into the Central Asian republics. They included Communist Party activists, administrators, military, security, and law enforcement personnel; professional and skilled technicians; also political exiles and disinherited kulaks (the wealthier members of society, especially prosperous peasants).

During the Second World War, there was another wave of immigration. Many of these worked in industrial enterprises relocated from the endangered western republics to Central Asia. The largest group of new arrivals, however, was the so-called "punished peoples" (those accused of treason by the Soviet Union). The Soviet Union exiled nearly 3 million members of such groups during the period 1936-1952 to Central Asia.

A third period of immigration occurred the Stalin period. This was mainly Slav and connected to the grandiose development projects such as the plowing up of the virgin lands of Kazakhstan under Khrushchev. Thus, by the last decades of the Soviet period Central Asia had over 100 ethnic minorities. This created a central historical and cultural divide between the "immigrant" and the "indigenous" communities.[13]

The Soviet Union also created arbitrary borders to further reduce the potential for nationalist feelings that could challenge Soviet rule. The Soviet definition of nation reached its fruition under Josef Stalin when they were "characterized by a common

[13] Minority Rights Group International, "Central Asia: Conflict or Stability and Development", 1997.

language, territory, psychological makeup and historical experience."[14] In Central Asia, territory fit within Stalin's model. However, the Soviets would need to develop the other characteristics from scratch. For example, in 1920 the Russians incorporated the Uzbeks into an area the Russians declared Russian Turkestan and further assimilated Uzbeks into the autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Turkestan. As part of the Soviet program to divide Central Asia republics along ethnic lines, the Soviets created the Uzbekistan Soviet Socialist Republic in 1924. This included Tajikistan, which the Soviet Union later awarded autonomy as a Soviet republic in 1929. As a result, during Soviet rule there was little in the way of nationalist movements in Uzbekistan, and it was not until Gorbachev's perestroika that any such movements developed.

This suggests that there existed little in the way of national identity before the Soviet Union's existence, yet it would not be fair to say that no nationalist movements existed or attempted to gain power before the Soviet collapse. In Kazakhstan, a number of "national" movements did occur during the early 20th century, one of which led to the creation of a Kazakh national government, which occupying Red Army forces eliminated during the Russian Civil War in 1919-1920.

3. Soviet Union's Diminishing Days

The last days of Gorbachev and the Soviet Union's rule provided a grand opportunity for the leaders of today to emerge and for the modern day character of each country to appear.

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[14] Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, revised edition (Cambridge Press, Mass., 1964), 21-41.

During Gorbachev's perestroika, national parties began to emerge in the republics of Central Asia. These parties evolved from the older, more restrictive communist parties that avoided or even repressed the movements for change under perestroika. Some of these developments even led to riots, as in the case of Kyrgyzstan in 1990. These movements were more anti-Soviet than nationalist. What materialized from these changes under Soviet rule was not as much a group of leaders backed by ethnic and/or national pride but leaders who as part of the Soviet elite would work to sustain their own power. The personalization of power under certain charismatic leaders first played itself out during the coup against Gorbachev and has remained a primary characteristic for the governments of Central Asia today.

As the coup materialized, some leaders in the Central Asian republics took a wait-and-see approach to determine which side would prevail before making a move. The importance was not national self-determination; rather it was the ruling elite's attempts to nourish power. For example, the leader of the Uzbek Communist Party, Islam Karimov – who many leaders in Moscow at the time considered a survivor of the old communist regime, said little until the coup failed. However, once the failure was complete, he moved quickly to condemn and ban those communist elements in Uzbekistan who had supported the coup. He reconstituted the Communist Party as the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan and stated, "The experiment of communism has failed." However, Karimov continued to ban public meetings, under the guise of preventing inter-ethnic strife, and said that the main slogan of the new party was discipline and order. [15]

[15] The Independent (London), 18 September 1991.

Karimov and the other leaders of Central Asia transitioned from leaders of a Soviet Republic to newly independent states.

The coup allowed the leaders of Central Asia to align themselves with the forces of change and independence. Those in power identified those who had supported the coup as repressive and foreign. Soviet leaders in Central Asia became overnight the liberators and protectors of their republics. As protectors, they could eliminate opposition and begin the process of redefining government institutions to support their hold on power. The euphoria shared by many in the West for a new beginning and a hope for the spread of democracy throughout Central Asia should have been severely dampened by the reality that the leaders still in power were those installed by the Soviet Regime they had supposedly separated from. These were not leaders of any reform or independence movements within their countries. They were opportunists, who because their countries lacked a defined history or lack traditions of being a nation-state in the past, could move very quickly to define the character of their new independent state not on any sense of shared cultural values, but on their own personal character of leadership.

C. PRESENT DAY CENTRAL ASIA – DEMOCRACY'S FAILURE

Central Asia today resembles much of what it has been for its entire history – nations struggling to find an identity, playing geopolitical hot potato with neighboring powers, and facing instability caused by those who do not want to be a part of these newly created countries. Military capabilities are reaching ever-deeper lows. Big powers are competing to create pipelines that move energy by routes that avoid avoiding the other big powers. Russian troops patrol many of the border regions. The countries themselves are enmeshed in multiple security arrangements led and exploited by bigger

countries. A potential Islamic threat, while not fully defined, looms as a threat in the future.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the West saw an opportunity to create new democracies, first in Russia, and then along its periphery. The Clinton Administration's program of enlargement and engagement placed democracy as a central element in promoting a greater political, economic and military independence throughout Russia's near abroad. Secretary Albright's statement cited in the previous section reiterated the Clinton Administration's frustration in its waning days over democracy's utter failure to take hold in Central Asia.

The five countries of Central Asia today are not democracies. With the fall of the Soviet Union, Western democratic countries moved quickly to provide government assistance, sponsor non-governmental organizations, and supervise the conduct of elections and the creation of democratic institutions in Central Asia. However, these countries made little progress toward a commitment to democratic principles. While each has had at some point a contested election, their rather predictable results created more questions of legitimacy than answers.

Table 1 below shows how Freedom House rates the levels of democracy in Central Asia. As is evident, aside from initial elections immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union, all five countries quickly slid down the democratic scale and have reached or are nearing the same level of freedom and protection of rights that China now enjoys.

Table 1: Freedom House Freedom Ratings

Yr	Kyrgyzstan	Turkmen	Kazakhstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan	Russia	China
1991	5,4	6,5	5,4	3,3	6,5	3,3	7,7
1996	4,4	7,7	6,5	7,7	7,7	3,4	7,7
1997	4,4	7,7	6,5	7,7	7,6	3,4	7,7
1998	4,4	7,7	6,5	6,6	7,6	3,4	7,7
1999	5,5	7,7	6,5	6,6	7,6	4,4	7,6
2000	5,5	7,7	6,5	6,6	7,6	4,5	7,7
Political Rights / Civil Liberties[16] 1.0 – 2.5 Free 3.0 – 5.5 Partly Free 5.5 – 7.0 Not Free							

Larry Diamond provides an even better tool for clearly understanding how far the countries of Central Asia are from a "western" style democracy. Diamond identifies three characteristics that are present in illiberal democracies[17]:

- Highly delegative and mainly electoral in nature.
- Political institutions that constrain the executive branch are weak.
- Rule of law is tenuous and human rights are violated.

In March 2001, the U.S. State Department issued a human rights report that was severely critical of Kazakhstan. The report addresses each of the three characteristics outlined by Diamond. The report noted that government corruption was pervasive, that the authorities limited the right of citizens to change their government and harassed opposition media.

However, the Central Asian governments are quick to discount Western criticism of their forms of government. Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister Yerlan Idrisov stated that

16 Taken from Freedom House Country Ratings, http://www.freedomhouse.org/ratings/index.htm, viewed 22 March 2001

17 Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy, Toward Consolidation* (The John Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 45-47.

his country "was not prepared to accept fabrications in such an important sphere for Kazakhstan as democracy."[18] Kazakhstan's failure to address these real concerns is once again another example of the failure of democracy to take hold.

As noted earlier the governments of Central Asia moved quickly to consolidate executive power. While relations with the West increased, the development of institutions supportive of democratic ideals did not materialize. The relationships the regimes in power have with Western governments and non-government organizations tend to only legitimize the illiberal forms of government in place (chapter IV will explore further).

Some in the West see little choice for these countries. S. Frederick Starr, Chairman of the Central Asia Institute at John Hopkins University believes that "whichever path" these countries chose, they all "feel the need to strengthen state authority in the face of what they fear could become divisive and destructive internal forces."

With democracy's failure in Central Asia self-evident, the countries must find alternative approaches to short-term stability. During her visit, Secretary Albright did not mention the need to promote cooperation with Russia. For the West, since 1994, closer relations with Russia and democratic development have decoupled. [19] The result has

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[18] Agence France Presse, 23 March 2001

[19] In February 1994, the United States switched its policy toward Russia from one of economic aid designed to help the legitimacy of the Yeltsin Regime, to one focused on the periphery of Russia. This will be addressed in Chapter 2.

been little cooperation with regarding its near abroad. U.S. officials stated publicly that providing aide to former Soviet Republics would assist these Republics in "weaning themselves of their dependence on Moscow, and create opportunities for Russian imperialism will be decreased".[20] In diplomacy, the mighty dollar was trumping Russian influence, and Russian incoherence in its policies abroad gave little option for the former Soviet Republics.

D. CONCLUSION

With a lack of identity and little hope for achieving democracy in the future, Central Asia is ill prepared to reduce its predominant relationship with Russia.

Central Asia's history, as shown briefly here, provided an incubational environment for strong authoritarian rule. The result is leadership in each of the five Central Asian states assuming the characteristics of "personalist rule". Stephen Blank notes:

> It (personalism) encourages disaffected mutineers, ethnic or otherwise, to plot with foreign elements who are all too willing to support these plots for their own gains. Personalism also discourages political institutionalization and the rule of law.[21]

This examination of Central Asia's history and present struggles with building democracy portray a region unprepared to develop and implement independent foreign policies in the international arena. Weakly defined nation-states have little option but to look toward other powers for protection. Stephen M. Walt points out that as nations

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[20] Associated Press, 9 Mar 1994.

[21] Stephen J. Blank, U.S. Military Engagement with Tanscaucasia and Central Asia (U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 1998) 18

become weaker and their alternatives lessen, they are more likely to enter an alliance of necessity rather than desire. Walt states, "If weak states see no possibility of outside assistance…they may be forced to accommodate the most imminent threat."[22]

This chapter has described Central Asia as a region of weak states. Chapter III will demonstrate that Russia is the best option for accommodation. The fourth chapter will show that Russia is not an imminent threat and will actually provide a better option than Walt's last option.

[22] Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*,(Cornell Studies in Security Affairs, New Jersey, 1990), p. 30.

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III. A COOPERATIVE RUSSIA'S PLACE IN CENTRAL ASIA

A. INTRODUCTION

Russia is the dominant power in Central Asia. The previous chapter assessed Russia's historical relationship with Central Asia. Until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia enjoyed its position as the strongest player in the region. Through political, economic and military dominance, Russia was able to assure Central Asian dependence.

Today Russia's economic collapse, growing isolation from Western economies and loss of superpower status have dramatically reduced Russian influence in Central Asia and, most importantly, Central Asian countries' dependence on Russia for security as well as political and economic stability.

Despite this lessening, Central Asia's need for strong political and economic ties with Russia continues. Russia and other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States are the largest economic partners with Central Asia. The dramatic economic challenges of the region have reduced Western investment and while Chinese investment continues to rise, it remains a small fraction of the economic relationship with Russia.

The West has encouraged Central Asia since the collapse of the Soviet Union to increase political, military and economic ties with the West, thereby lessening its dependence on Russia. The United States most recent statement of its national interest with regard to Kyrgyzstan underscores this point:

> A democratic, secure and prosperous Kyrgyzstan would be less vulnerable to Chinese and Iranian economic influence, less dependent on Russia, more capable of preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), better able to protect human rights, better prepared to halt environmental degradation, and more effective in combating transnational terrorism, narcotics trafficking and financial crime.[23]

What is most evident in this statement is the inclusion of dependence on Russia among other far more dramatic threats to stability in the region. In fact, Western policy has continued to limit potential Russian cooperation in the region, to the point of attempting to develop energy pipelines that avoid Russian territory.

This chapter will address the potential for Russian cooperation in Central Asia. Examples of how Russia is willing to cooperate with other nations in promoting stability in the region will clarify Russia's degree of cooperativeness. The chapter will also demonstrate that, while Russian stated security and foreign policy objectives and its military doctrine have become more belligerent, Russian actions over the last few years have demonstrated a greater willingness to cooperate than the political hyperbole spewing from Moscow. This chapter will demonstrate that Russian policy toward Central Asia lacks clarity, due in great part to Russia's own political and economic challenges. "The lack of such a clear, coherent, widely accepted national identity remains at the core of Russia's lack of clarity in Foreign policy."[24]

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[23] Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, Fiscal Year 2001, U.S. Department of State, March 15, 2000

[24] Rajan Menon, Yuri E. Fedorov and Ghia Nodia, *Russia, The Caucuses and Central Asia: The 21st Century Security Environment, Volume 2* (EastWest Institute, M.E. Sharpe, 1999), p. 173

Russia actually shares many of the concerns that Central Asian states have regarding identity and national purpose. Russia is in the process of discovering its place in the international arena, as are the states of Central Asia. Russia's weakening in the region could bring greater threats to Central Asian stability, as will be noted in Chapter III. Those that say "Russian heavy-handedness" [25] is a major component of Central Asian instability may assume a more consistent Russian policy toward the region exists.

B. RUSSIA'S HEAVY-HANDEDNESS, THE UNCOOPERATIVE RUSSIA ARGUMENT

The preceding chapter illuminated Russia's historical presence in Central Asia. Since Russia colonized the region in the early 19th century, it has continued to be the major player, politically, militarily, and most importantly economically. Exploiting Central Asia's dependence has been a staple of Russian policy in the region. In the mid 1990s, Russia used transportation routes to blackmail Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, which include nearly shutting down Kazakhstan's oil economy in 1994.[26]

Russia's pressure on Central Asian states, particularly Kazakhstan, to hold the line on CIS participation is in line with one of the principal tasks of their new National Security Doctrine, which seeks "to create a single economic domain with the members of the CIS." The National Security Document as well as the Foreign Policy Doctrine is even more important for Central Asia in so far as they lack any emphasis on assisting former Soviet Republics in economic and political reform. The document implies that

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25 Stephen J. Blank, "Russia and China in Central Asia", *Imperial Decline: Russia's Changing Role in Asia*, edited by Stephen J. Blank and Alvin Z. Rubinstein, (Duke University Press, Durham, 1997), p. 47

26 Stephen J. Blank & Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Russia's Changing Role in Asia*, (Duke University Press, 1997), p. 45

Russia cares only for promoting stability and the status quo along its borders, rather for creating independent states that can orient themselves away from CIS and Russian influence.

A major factor in Russia maintaining its strong presence is the large numbers of Russians living in the region. At the end of the Soviet era, Central Asia was home to nearly 10 million Russians and other Slavs. Two-thirds of these lived in Kazakhstan, where they nearly outnumbered the Kazakhs. While Russians have continued to emigrate out of Central Asia in search of greater economic opportunity, they still amount to a large minority. Russian statements have made it clear that protection of Russians abroad is a major element of their national security policy.

Central Asia is also important for Russian communications with its eastern regions, since communication lines cross Kazakh territory. In addition, Russia imports an abundance of minerals from Kazakhstan that are of economic importance. While these are important, they do not warrant the attention that energy resources do.

After a CIS military structure failed to develop, Russia's new strategy of emphasizing bilateral relations first, as they do with NATO and the European Union, has led each Central Asian country to create bilateral military agreements with Russia. Russia has retained the right to maintain and operate military installations in the territories of all five states. However, the actual number of Russian military personnel is small except in Tajikistan.

C. THE COOPERATIVE RUSSIA

While Russia appears to be playing a heavy hand today in Central Asia, in February of 1992 the new Russia, just after the collapse of the Soviet Union, was far

more accommodating toward the West. Their document "On Basic Principles of Russian Federation Foreign Policy" promoted Russian national security by eliminating its military presence abroad, strengthening the "belt of good-neighborliness" along the entire Russian perimeter, and reducing the need for military intervention in the world. The document also encouraged closer ties with the United States and the West in developing global and regional security frameworks.[27]

In 1993, Russia published a security concept that redefined its relationship with the West in terms that were more cordial. Russian security focused on developing a closer relationship with the West while conducting massive reforms politically, economically and militarily. For the leading countries of the West, the new atmosphere affirmed that Western ideals had triumphed over the Soviet Union, and now Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union were enhancing their military-to-military cooperation, accepting Western political and economic assistance, and conducting foreign policy programs predicated on accommodation rather than Soviet agitation. Unfortunately for the West, this "love affair" lasted only a few years. In the fall of 1998, the Russian economy collapsed, resulting in high inflation, ruble devaluation and the possibility of defaulting on the numerous loans granted earlier in the decade. Russia was reduced to an international beggar, and was forced to renegotiate International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans as it tried to gain new financial assistance while attempting to control

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[27] George Ginsburgs, Alvin Z. Rubinstein, and Oles M. Smolansky, *Russia and America, From Rivalry to Reconciliation*,(M.E. Sharpe, Inc.,1993) 278.

its failing economy. The financial collapse coincided with NATO expansion, followed 6 months later with NATO action in Kosovo.

NATO conducted its campaign in Kosovo only 2 years after admitting three new member nations, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. Russian political leaders had been warning against NATO expansion, but had come to accept the addition of its new members.

With all these events occurring in such a short time, Russian hardliners seized the opportunity to push for a stronger security policy that defined the West not as its future partner, but as a possible danger. By the fall of 1999, Russia published a new security concept bringing renewed fears in the West that Russia was returning to its old Soviet strategic thinking. Russian politicians, including presumably Western-oriented thinking ones, became more and more anti-Western in their approach to security issues, blaming the West not only for Russia's economic state of affairs but also for the rapid decline in the quality and quantity of their armed forces. The concept also defined Russia's international role as a "facilitator" of a new multi-polar world that would question NATO expansion in Europe and U.S. dominance in the world. Russia also declared to the world that it was a significant power. The new concept emphasized the need for greater Russian participation in the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as well as for strengthening the Commonwealth of Independent States

(CIS), but the concept made little mention of Russia's security issues or its position in other regions of the world, including Asia. [28]

The limited reference to Asia in the new concept underscores Russia's inability to understand and therefore define its role in Asia. Since the demise of the Soviet Union, Russia has continued each year to reach new lows in its political, economic and military influence in Asia. While Russians continue to say publicly that they should be treated as an equal on the world stage and likewise as a major player in Asia, Russia has failed at the same time to put in place any policy that clearly defines how Russia plans to become a respected power in Asia.

More specifically, regarding Central Asia, Vladimir Putin on April 21, 2000 in the Russian Security Council noted, "We must understand that the interest of our partners in other countries—Turkey, Great Britain, and the United States—toward the Caspian Sea is not accidental. This is because we are not active. We must not turn the Caspian Sea into yet another area of confrontation, no way. We just have to understand that nothing will fall into our lap out of the blue, like manna from heaven. This is a matter of competition and we must be competitive."[29] Further the Russian foreign policy concept states:

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[28] Russia's National Security Concept, translated by the U.S. Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), http://www.armscontrol.org/ACT/janfeb00/docjf00.htm, viewed 23 February 2001

[29] Russian Public Television, Moscow, 21 April 2000 from BBC Monitoring.

> Serious emphasis will be made on the development of economic cooperation, including the creation of a free-trade zone and implementation of programs for joint, rational use of natural resources. Specifically, Russia will work for such a zone in the Caspian Sea, enabling the littoral states to develop mutually advantageous cooperation. Caspian states would use the region's resources on a fair basis by taking into account the legitimate interests of one another.[30]

Russia feels the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC)[31] is proper. As Yevgeny Primakov stated, "Russia viewed the construction through Russian territory as an important state task, the solution of which would both give certain economic benefit and serve for consolidation of relations with CIS countries, first of all with Kazakhstan."[32]

The abundance of energy pipelines on the drawing board could potentially transform Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan's economies (the two with the greatest energy deposits) and create real economic powers. However, Caspian oil production is high-cost, compared to world standards, so much so that its narrow profit margins available imperil its very development. These costs and unreliable estimates give Russia an even greater foothold in pipeline development.

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[30] "The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation," approved by the President of the Russian Federation, V. Putin, 28 June 2000.

[31] Caspian Pipeline Consortium, a Russian led group, runs from the huge Tengiz oil field in Western Kazakhstan to the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiysk and has an initial capacity of 560,000 barrels a day.

[32] Oksana Polishuk, "Primakov and Chevron President discuss Caspion oil main, " ITAR-TASS, 24 January 1998.

For Russia, the economic linkages are far more clearly defined than the security issues in Central Asia. A feasible strategic defense policy is dependent on its definition of the primary threat. The security concept identifies the following threats[33]:

- The desire of some states and international associations to diminish the role of existing mechanisms for ensuring international security, above all the United Nations and the OSCE;
- The danger of a weakening of Russia's political, economic and military influence in the world;
- The strengthening of military-political blocs and alliances, above all NATO's eastward expansion;
- The possible emergence of foreign military bases and major military presences in the immediate proximity of Russian borders;
- Proliferation of mass destruction weapons and their delivery vehicles;
- Territorial claims on Russia.
- Threats to the Russian Federation's national security in the international sphere can be seen in attempts by other states to oppose a strengthening of Russia as one of the influential centers of a multi-polar world, to hinder the exercise of its national interests and to weaken its position in Europe, the Middle East, Transcaucasus, Central Asia and the Asia-Pacific Region. Terrorism represents a serious threat to the national security of the Russian Federation. International terrorism is waging an open campaign to destabilize Russia.

Russia continues to view NATO expansion as a direct threat to its security. Russia feels NATO is expanding in order to counter a perceived Russian threat. Russia also believes NATO's actions in Kosovo, without U.N. support, demonstrates that NATO will not hesitate to move on the offensive when its interests are in danger.

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[33] Russia's National Security Concept, translated by the U.S. Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), http://www.armscontrol.org/ACT/janfeb00/docjf00.htm

Defining the NATO threat has always been a central debate with the Russian federation and Soviet Union before. In the late 1980s, reformers within the Gorbachev regime were frustrated with the Russian General Staff's view of an imperialist NATO and a requirement for more military spending to offset the threat, despite the improving international situation and decrease in tensions. One of these reformers, Anatolii Chernyaev, felt that Soviet military reforms were a requirement no matter what the perceived threat of NATO was real or not.[34]

The NATO debate continued even after Gorbachev announced a unilateral reduction of Soviet forces in 1988, only to be followed by Soviet military analysis that NATO was continuing to develop offensive strategies designed against the Soviet Union.[35] In 1997, two years prior to the new security concept, General Rodionov and other top military leaders resisted military reforms, due in great part to their continued obsession with the NATO threat. [36]

For Russia, the burden of identifying the West as a potential threat can have devastating economic consequences. Russia's conventional forces today are simply too large for the economic resources available, which, "against the background of drastic decline in budgetary resources, the size of the armed forces seems completely out of

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[34] William Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military*, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1998), p. 95

[35] Andrei Kokoshin, *Soviet Strategic Thought*, (MIT Press, Cambridge, 1998), p. 143.

[36] Antol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, (Yale University Press, Newhaven, 1999), p. 194

proportion."[37] In fact, these conventional force allocations are so low, Russia finds itself unable to dismantle the numerous ships in its fleet inventories, relying on Japanese and Western assistance to pay for their destruction, among other problems. Russian forces stationed in outer regions have also begun to rely on regional government funding in addition to selling equipment and even manpower to pay for basic subsistence. Russia's new military doctrine points out the need to take into account the country's economic potential when determining force structure and placement.

Russia's continuing actions in Tajikistan help highlight the problems Russia faces in projecting its presence when economics do not support it. Ironically, the civil war in Tajikistan did not begin with a radical Islamic attempt to seize power, but rather with a loose alignment of Western-style democrats and moderate Islamists, primarily from the eastern provinces of Garm and Pamir, ousting an old-line Communist leader. When the Communists came back into power with the help of Uzbek and Soviet military forces, many Islamists fled across the border into Afghanistan, where they became radicalized, and then mounted attacks back across the border into Tajikistan. In the process they killed some Russian soldiers guarding the Tajik border and drew Moscow into the fighting, posing a serious problem for Russian leaders who had no desire to get too deeply involved in another Afghanistan-type war in Central Asia. Under these circumstances, a diplomatic settlement of the war in Tajikistan became an important

[37] Alexei Arbatov, "Military Reform in Russia", International Security Volume 22:4, p.98

objective for Yeltsin, though some elements in the Russian Defense Ministry appeared to prefer fighting there to revenge Russia's defeat by Islamists in Afghanistan. [38]

Russia's national security concept defines Russia as "a great power and as one of the influential centers of a multi-polar world". Russia's military doctrine defines one main external threat as foreign governments' "attempts to ignore (infringe) the Russian Federation's interests in resolving international security problems, and to oppose its strengthening as one influential center in a multi-polar world."[39] The later is a direct reference to NATO actions in Kosovo. The military doctrine also goes farther to define the expansion of some present military blocs and alliances as detrimental to Russian military security.

A Russian attempt to solidify the CIS in Central Asia is partly in response to NATO/Western inroads along the Russian periphery. The ambiguity of NATO policies as they pertain to potential membership and participation in its Partnership for Peace (PFP) increase Russian discomfort in the Caucuses and Central Asia. Russia identifies "the weakening of integrational processes in the Commonwealth of Independent States; and the outbreak and escalation of conflicts near the state border of the Russian Federation and the external borders of CIS member states"[40] as potential results of ill-defined or cleverly disguised PFP programs in Central Asia. Russia's near-abroad policy has

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[38] Interfax, 19 November 1993

[39] Russia's Military Doctrine, translated by the U.S. Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) http://www.armscontrol.org/ACT/may2000/dc3ma00.htm, viewed 11 February 2001

[40] Russia's National Security Concept http://www.armscontrol.org/ACT/janfeb00/docjf00.htm, viewed 11 February 2001

centered much on trying to encourage countries of the former Soviet Union to develop more integrated political, economic and military policies

D. THE POTENTIAL FOR RUSSIAN COOPERATION, RUSSIAN-U.S. RELATIONSHIP

An ambition of this thesis is to provide information that can help U.S. foreign policy makers more clearly understand Russia's role in Central Asia. Therefore, this section will explore specifically the damage U.S.-Russian competition in Central Asia and how this can affect stability in the region. This section will address the state of U.S.-Russian relations following the collapse of the Soviet Union and its present direction.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States helped secure and provide much of the initial aid to the new Russian government. U.S. policy originally provided the aid in hopes of sustaining Boris Yeltsin position in power and helping to influence the internal changes required to transition the Russian economy and society to more democratic, free market society. In 1994, U.S. policy changed because of the ongoing conflict in Chechnya, gains by communists and nationalists in the Russian Duma, growing American concern regarding Russian suspicious peacekeeping activities in Georgia and other issues revolving around the pullout of Russian troops in former Soviet republics such as Latvia and Moldova. U.S. policy took on a "wait-and-see" attitude that was far more cautious toward Russia than before. The U.S. also began to increase funding to other former Soviet Republics.[41]

Since the change in its policy in 1994, the U.S. has continued to look toward creating greater stability in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. In fact, U.S.

[41] Washington Post, 5 February 1994.

security assistance programs have at times been the leading activity in U.S. bilateral relations with the former soviet republics, including Central Asia. Table 2 demonstrates the gradual increase in U.S. International Military Education and Training dollars spent since fiscal year 1993.

The dollars spent on Central Asia as compared to Russia have been continually increasing since 1994 with sudden jumps immediately following changes in the U.S.-Russian relationship. As noted the change in U.S. policy toward Russia in 1994 would explain the significant increase in dollars to Central Asia in 1996.[42] The enormous increase in 1998 likewise may relate to growing apprehension in the U.S. Congress and Administration frustration with political changes in Moscow. The result is an increase in money to promote military reform through education without any substantive results (as noted in table 1 in Chapter I) in democratic or military reform.

[42] The delay in fiscal budgeting may explain the 1 year delay in the actually increase.

Table 2: International Military Education and Training Funding[43] (thousands)

Country	Fy93	FY94	FY95	FY96	FY97	FY98	FY99	FY00 Estimate	FY01 Projected
Kazakhstan	50	90	100	388	389	587	383	550	600
Kyrgyzstan	0	50	50	231	257	336	383	350	400
Tajikistan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Turkmenistan	0	50	50	213	262	336	261	300	325
Uzbekistan	0	0	50	293	286	457	526	500	550
Total Central Asia	**50**	**190**	**250**	**1125**	**1194**	**1715**	**1553**	**1700**	**1875**
Russia	700	471	700	760	842	732	228	800	800

Almost in-step with the U.S. IMET program, NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) has expanded its scope in Central Asia. PfP has as a main objective the institutionalization of civilian democratic control over the military. NATO Secretary General Solana said:

> The postwar experience in Western Europe suggests that political and economic progress and security integration are closely linked. A responsible military, firmly embedded in our democratic societies and under civil control, is part and parcel of that civic space, as are the military structures that are transparent, defensive, and multinational.[44]

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[43] Congressional Presentations for Foreign Operations, U.S. Department of State, Fiscal Years 1993-2001.

[44] Stephen J. Blank, *U.S. Military Engagement with Tanscaucasia and Central Asia* (U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 1998), p. 2

Unfortunately, PfP and other programs promoting democratic reform as a step toward integration into Western security organizations have been simply legitimizing the non-democratic governments in power. These programs create a superficial relationship from above that never works its way beyond the personal relationships of leaders and diplomats to create supporting domestic institutions. Henry Kissinger notes that PfP is essentially therapeutic, aimed at psychological reassurance, "far removed from the basic NATO mission, which waters down the function of the alliance."[45]

While Russia and the United States seem further apart on the question of NATO's role, Russia continues to support the most dominant security organization in Central Asia today, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The OSCE is a major component of Russian security and foreign policy goals in Europe. This past June, Russian State Duma Speaker Gennady Seleznyov summed up the Russian position on the OSCE: "If we enhance the role of the OSCE in proper measure, it can become the main organization for Europe in the 21st Century." He goes on to note that the 1999 Istanbul Charter of European Security makes it clear that European Security should be built not on NATO's deterring factor but on the OSCE "which must become the guarantor security and cooperation on the continent."[46]

Russia's push to enhance the role of the OSCE in Central Asia is important as it points out Russia's willingness to accept international security organizations along its periphery and accept OSCE observers in Chechnya, demonstrating a Russian willingness

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[45] Henry A. Kissinger, "The End of NATO as We Know it?" Washington Post, 15 August 1999.

[46] ITAR-TASS News Agency, 27 June 2000.

to participate more deeply in international cooperative efforts than many Western thinkers admit. Russia's willingness to promote OSCE has bumped up against what Russia perceives as U.S. policy goals. Russia perceives a three-pronged U.S. security concept for Europe.

- NATO is to play a main role as to what concerns security.
- The EU (economic cooperation) and the OSCE will address problems of human rights, democratic development, and averting conflicts.
- Heighten the OSCE's interference in internal affairs of states.[47]

Russian tends to see the United States using the OSCE and Russia's desire to enhance the OSCE standing as a route to influence the events in Chechnya, remove Russian forces from Georgia, and expose the Russian southern flank to future NATO presence. It is therefore not surprising to the Russians that Georgia would apply for future NATO membership and continue high level talks with NATO at the same time the OSCE is present in Georgia.

The consequence of NATO's enlargement for Russian-U.S. relations is a necessity in Europe for sustaining European security. The geopolitical criteria that should be emphasized in Europe – such as, commitment to democracy and shared values, an absence of ethnic or territorial disputes with neighbors, territorial contiguity with other NATO members[48]—are not as important in Central Asia. Russia's concerns with NATO crossing "the red line" of the border of the former Soviet Union can only be addressed

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[47] Russian Press Digest, 13 Nov 1999.

[48] Zbigniew Brzezinski is quoted in Gerald B. Solomon, *The NATO Enlargement Debate, 1990-1997* (Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, 1998.

through the promotion of an alternative security organization that places Russia in a pivotal position and provides a hierarchical structure for decision making, thus allowing the larger countries to take a leading role. Russia's bullying tactics regarding the CIS simply do not fit with an organization like NATO that provides equal powers to all members.

An organization similar to the OSCE in Central Asia would work initially as the cultural clarity within these nations is far less than it is in Europe. However, if specific events occur that require decisive action, similar to those in the Balkans, it is unlikely that this organization could act effectively. Member countries must have a deep-rooted trust in an overarching security organization that only common shared values will bring. Fostering those values can initially fall on an OSCE-like organization, but in the end must develop into an organizational structure more similar to NATO.

As previously noted any organizations that rely on shared values may have serious trouble in Central Asia. Yet, the constant friction between U.S. and Russian policy goals in Europe has continued to play a major part in reducing the effectiveness of U.S.-Russian relations in the other regions bordering Russia. Regarding Central Asia, there does not exist a security organization that threatens Russian security. While a weakening of Russian influence in the Caucasus has led some to state that a new oasis is developing for NATO on Russian borders, there is no talk of such danger to Russia in Central Asia. In fact, it is the development of other threats such as the Taliban and other forms of Islamic extremism (chapter IV) that create some shared interests between the United States and Russia in Central Asia.

E. CONCLUSION

Russia no longer seeks to take on the global, much less ideological, tasks of a superpower. However, Russians believe that "Russia's place in the world stems from its status as not only a European country, but also a great Eurasian power that is responsible for maintaining world security on both global and regional levels."[49]

This chapter has described how many of Russia's actions in Central Asia are indeed heavy handed. However, Russia has "generally responded to the efforts of other powers to establish standards of appropriate behavior, has worked within the new institutional arrangements, like the OSCE in Europe, and has internalized many of the new norms of international community."[50]

NATO and the OSCE are the only organizations that have the institutions in place, which are real alternatives to the CIS in Central Asia. Democracy's failure to materialize in Central Asia has led the states to join separate multi-lateral associations that meet the specific needs of certain countries.

A stable Russian economy with an ever more liberal government is also in the best U.S. interests. To continue economic and political reform, Russia must be confident in its security. No matter how false that sense of security maybe and no matter how inadequately Russia continues to assess its real threats (considering NATO as a major threat), Russia must not become so fearful of the West that it begins to return to the

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[49] Rossiiskaya gazeta, 8 Aug 2000.

[50] Menon, Rajan & Yuri E. Fedorov & Ghia Nodia, *Russia, The Caucuses and Central Asia: The 21st Century Security Environment, Volume 2* (EastWest Institute, M.E. Sharpe, 1999) 173

"besieged fortress" approach to security that was developed by Frunze in 1922 and remained a centerpiece of Soviet strategic thinking until well into the 1980s. A secure Russia will be less agitating and more accommodating, as it perceives the United States as less of a threat to its own sovereignty, regardless of how far NATO expands. To achieve this In Central Asia, policy must promote Russian cooperation in the region rather than isolate it. Russia needs to be a major player in Central Asia for the region to attain political and economic stability.

IV. THE REGIONAL PLAYERS OF CENTRAL ASIA

A. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters emphasized that Central Asian countries lack the common values required to develop unique and independent approaches to security and stability. The chapters also showed that Russia can play a positive role in assisting Central Asia develop appropriate confidence building measures or cooperative efforts needed to attain stability. This chapter will analyze the other regional players in Central Asia.

Central Asia has been the center of a number of "great games" between competing regional powers. Today the region is no different as Central Asia's neighbors, China, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Turkey, are vying for increasing influence in the region. This chapter explores the role each country has in Central Asia, analyzing the positive and negative effects of each country's approach. This analysis reaches the following conclusions:

- At some level, Central Asia must address the fundamentalist Islamic threat. The Pakistani and Afghan roles in perpetuating the Islamic threat are very evident.
- Turkey's limited near-term economic potential significantly reduces its ability to promote greater economic growth in Central Asia.
- Iran is too isolated from the international community to provide any meaningful advantage for increased multi-lateral cooperation.
- Chinese intentions are questionable and potentially destabilizing.

After examination of the role of each of these countries in Central Asia, the conclusion is that Russian cooperation with the United States in the region provides the most long-term solution to stability in the region.

B. AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN AND THE ISLAMIC THREAT

Russia, China, the West and other regional powers in Central Asia have continually identified the Islamic threat as one of the more significant threats to stability in the region. Those who believe the threat is exaggerated tend to support the thesis, as put forward in Chapter I, that Central Asian Islamic beliefs are more secular and less accommodating to fundamentalism and that powers such as Russia and China use the threat to force their own agendas on Central Asia. A leading international human rights organization summarizes the argument:

> There is a schizophrenic attitude towards Islam in Post-Soviet Central Asia. On the one hand, there is general agreement that Islam is an integral part of the national culture; on the other, there is widespread fear of the rise of so-called 'fundamentalism'. This dichotomy is born of a lack of genuine familiarity with the religion. Islamic variations exist. Pockets of devout believers are in the Ferghana Valley (where Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan converge), particularly near Namangan. This region is the heartland of the Islamic Revival Party and smaller groups such as Adolat ('Justice'). The total membership of these groups is about 50,000. Elsewhere in Central Asia, active adherence to Islam is much less in evidence."[51]

This thesis extends the debate by focusing on the primary source of a real Islamic fundamentalist threat in Central Asia, the ruling Taliban movement in Afghanistan. A movement based on strict adherence to a southern Afghan interpretation of Islam. The Taliban persecutes opposition, tortures non-believers and restricts the rights of education and development to almost all women in their society. The Taliban, which experts perceived as a short-term threat, has increased its hold on Afghanistan. The Taliban's

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51 Minority Rights Group International, "Central Asia: Conflict or Stability and Development", 1997. p. 14

support of Islamic fundamentalist movements throughout the world, including support for Osama Bin Laden, has isolated it from the international community.

Pakistan, which shares a border with Afghanistan, has encouraged the countries of Central Asia to open a dialogue with the Taliban. Pakistan is supportive of the Taliban regime and hopes that dialogue can eventually lead to substantive discussions on developing a pipeline from the gas fields of Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan. In November 2000, the military ruler of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, visited Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan and received positive responses from both leaders regarding dialogue with the Taliban.[52]

Pakistan's support for greater acceptance of the Taliban in Central Asia is more than just political recognition. Pakistan has supported Islamic movements in China's Xinjiang region, provided assistance to Mujahedeen forces in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, and been a player in other Islamic movements along the Russian southern tier. It is reported that the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan's main security service, has been deeply involved in training and coordinating efforts in Chechnya, Tajikistan, Bosnia and Afghanistan, including training Chechen field commander Shamil Basayev in Pakistan in 1994.[53]

While Russia recently increased dialogue with Pakistan, it has seldom reserved comment on its perceptions that Pakistan is supporting Islamic insurgents in Central Asia.

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[52] British Broadcasting Corporation, 7 November 2000

[53] The Gazette, Montreal, 26 October 1999.

Sergei Ivanov, then head of the Russian Security Council, associated the "Pakistan-backed Taliban" with "the scourge of terrorism" that has infected the region. Mr. Ivanov's comments came during a visit to India during which India and Russia pledged to increase their strategic relationship and "expand interaction between security specialists."[54] A byproduct of Pakistani involvement with the Taliban and cross-border terrorism into Central Asia could be a growth in Indian influence in the region.

The Central Asian countries' increasing dialogue with and Russian overtures toward Pakistan are awakening Pakistan to the destabilizing impact their policies are having. Zamir Akram, minister and deputy chief of mission at the Pakistani embassy in Washington D.C., has said, "The Taliban is now a hurdle in Pakistan's relationship with the United States. Furthermore, the situation in Afghanistan prevents Pakistan from enjoying an important economic relationship with Central Asia."[55] Akram followed by stating that much of the perceived Islamic threat in Central Asia is due to a number of governments attempting to exercise influence in the region.

Even if the Taliban does not pose a significant religious threat, it does pose an even greater threat in tolerating the pervasive drug trafficking in Central Asia. The United Nations organization claims that Afghanistan produces nearly 75% of the world's opium.[56] Pino Arlacchi, UN Under-Secretary General notes that "the spread of drugs

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54 The Hindu (India), distributed by the Financial Times, London, 28 April 2000

55 The Times of India, 19 February 2001.

56 The Afghanistan government has recently implemented regulatory policies designed to stem the production of opium. However, as of the completion date of this theis, June 2001, there exist no measurable results of these policies.

from Afghanistan and other types of criminal and terrorist actions give rise to great difficulties for the region (Central Asia)."[57] The drug trade in Central Asia in terms of dollar value is now greater than that of the Golden Triangle of Southeast Asia. One-third of the Tajik gross domestic product is drug related. The illegal drug industry now implicates Central Asian government officials, diplomats, and Russian units that patrol the border regions.[58]

One argument against the Islamic threat is the Taliban's survivability. Professor Peter Tomsen stated before a Senate Foreign Relations committee in July 2000, "There are reasons for hope. The Taliban is in decline. It will probably be driven from Kabul by the end of this year."[59] To the contrary, Russian claims that the Taliban is actually increasing in strength, is supported by fact that the larger regions in Afghanistan are now controlled by the Taliban, including those bordering Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

The Islamic threat to Central Asia is real. One can question the level of the threat and its ability to gain a long-term foothold in government institutions. However, this analysis suggests that at a minimum the presence of the Taliban to the south is providing an opportunity for other illegal activity that can be even more devastating to Central Asia's weak economic and political environment.

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[57] British Broadcasting Corporation, 19 October 2000.

[58] The Christian Science Monitor, 8 January 2001.

[59] Foreign News Service, 20 July 2000.

C. CHINA

China has had long standing territorial claims in Central Asia since. During the Sino-Soviet conflict, Chinese maps showed parts of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan within the border of China. In the 1950s, China accepted a number of humiliating geopolitical compromises with the Soviet Union, by surrendering territory and complete sovereignty over its own provinces, including the prohibition of foreign investment in Xinjiang.[60] China continually viewed Central Asia under Soviet rule as a relatively stable region. The Soviets could quell any religious discontent that had the potential to spill over into neighboring Chinese regions.

In the 1980s as the Soviet Union began to collapse, Chinese fears of instability led them to move quickly to suppress separatism in the neighboring Xinjiang province, deploying more than 200,000 troops. China has continued to use the potential Islamic threat of Central Asia and the ongoing support by Pakistan and Afghanistan of Islamic separatists as a reason to maintain a large troop presence in Xinjiang.

The vast energy resources of the region are extremely important to China, particularly since it just recently became a net importer of oil. The China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) has made significant inroads toward obtaining the rights to some of Kazakhstan's richest oilfields, to include the Aktyubinnsk field.

One result is that Kazakhstan finds itself as a buffer between competing Chinese and Russian interests. Shanghai is Kazakhstan's most used port and the Chinese have

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60 Andrew J. Nathan and Robert S. Ross, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress*, (Norton and Company, New York, 1997), p.38

been quick to gain concessions from Kazakhstan and other neighboring Central Asian states in cracking down on Islamic separatists transiting the borders.

Uncertainties fill Russian-Chinese relations within an ever-changing security environment. Vladimir Putin and President Jiang Zemin met in July 2000. They were quick to accuse the United States of seeking unilateral military and security advantages throughout the world. They also issued a "Beijing Declaration," in which each country pledged not to interfere in the "internal affairs" of other, a reference to both countries concerns over international feelings on Chechnya and separatist movements in China.[61]

For the short term, Russia and China have common interests in reducing Islamic separatists and nationalist movements in Central Asia. These good relations are very likely to return to confrontation, especially in the economic sphere. China in the near future will replace Russia as the main supplier of light-industrial goods in the region. Moreover, the potential for greater economic cooperation between neighboring Chinese provinces and Central Asia is growing.[62]

Russian-Chinese mutual security objectives can be the most damaging to stability in the region. As noted earlier, the potential for democratic reform in Central Asia has declined. Stephen Blank, testifying before the United States Congress, noted that Russia and China have used external threats to justify repressing reform elements within their own countries. A new state with personalistic leadership will see in Russia and China a model for controlling domestic opposition. Fears of an Asian Serbia allow Russia and

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61 The Daily Telegraph (London), 19 July 2000.

62 Nathan and Ross, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress*, p. 51

China to question Western intentions in other regions experiencing economic and political instability.[63]

For China, the need to keep in line domestic challenges is even more apparent in the Xinjiang province. The current regime in power in China requires strong People's Liberation Army support to retain its power.[64] As stated earlier the strong presence of the PLA in Xinjiang could elevate security concerns in Chinese relations with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, in particular, increasing China's demands for Central Asian concessions on controlling support for ethnic separatists in China.

A Russian overture toward China to respond to NATO enlargement ignores historical reality. Only 10 years ago, many in the Russian government were pointing out that Beijing supported the pro-communist coup d'etat in Moscow in August 1991 and that China has since been either opposed or showed little support for democratization and reform in Russia. It has even led some liberals like Peter Kapitza to note their distrust of Chinese intentions. "Don't worry about the NATO expansion, in the near future the NATO zone will become our rear in an unprecedented confrontation with the Chinese giant."[65] However, to demonstrate the great fissure between liberal reformers[66] and those

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63 Federal News Service, 19 July 2000.

64 Andrew J. Nathan and Robert S. Ross in their book *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress* point out level of weak institutional support for the current regime in power and the requirement to satisfy competing interests with the leading interests. *Pp. 229-231.*

65Jonathan D. Pollack and Richard H. Yang, In China's Shadow,(Rand Corporation, 1998) 71.

who promote strengthening ties with China, the latter point out that "only by joining forces Russia and China could withstand the growing pressure from the West in its bid to destroy two great powers and civilizations, Russian and Chinese."[67]

If China continues to have problems with separatist movements in its outlying provinces, it may not hesitate to conduct incursions into neighboring countries. The Chinese have also proven that emigration into neighboring regions, as in the Russian Far East, can increase Chinese influence and economic potential.

One of the few bright spots in Chinese efforts in Central Asia is its participation in the " Shanghai Five." In April 1996 at the "Shanghai Five" Summit, China signed an agreement with Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan on confidence building measures in the border zone. This agreement provided a basis for continued peace and stability between Russian and China and reaffirmed their leadership in Central Asia.[68] Unfortunately, Russia and China are using this group as a pulpit more to castigate U.S. and Western policies than to promote real security cooperation. The three countries of Central Asia simply find themselves more as backbenchers in agreements that the two great powers dominate.

Nathan and Ross identify one reason for China's inability to promote sustainable multi-lateral cooperative efforts:

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[66] Many Russian liberals are still pro-Western, however with the current consolidation of power by President Vladimir Putin, liberals have lost a significant portion of their power base and thus influence in Russian foreign policy.

[67] Communist leader Valentin Kuptzov, from Pravda, 10 Oct 1995.

[68] Pollack and Yang, *In China's Shadow*, p.82.

> Some of China's conflicts with Western nations have been exacerbated by the central government's inability to enforce international commitments on local authorities. Weak Chinese leadership and institutions will continue to plague international cooperation on a wide range of issues.[69]

As a net importer of energy, China 's economic role in Central Asia will increase, as Central Asia's "need for investment and trade far surpasses Russia's ability to furnish the resources"[70] required to further develop the region. For Central Asia, China's weak domestic institutions and troubles with separatist regions like Xinjiang make China's role uncertain. China's attempts to maintain the status quo could further stunt Central Asia's economic reform and development. China may exploit the current Sino-Russian to gradually wean Central Asia from Russian dependence toward a policy even more isolated from the West. The Chinese requirement to maintain the status quo in Central Asia so that it can concentrate its resources on its own economic development and political consolidation provide an unreliable long-term solution for Central Asia.

D. IRAN

Chapter I of this thesis argued that the lack of common history in Central Asia is a central in assessing the potential for stability in the region. A counter-argument to this thesis is that Persian and Turkic traditions go back in Central Asia for over a millennium. Russian, European expansion in the 18th Century repressed it. This tradition at its peak reached an area "stretching from Anatolia to southern India, from Iraq to Xinjiang."[71]

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[69] Nathan and Ross, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress*, p. 230

[70] Blank, *Russia's Changing Role in Asia*, p. 55

[71] Daniel Pipes, "The Event of Our Era", *Central Asia and the World*, edited by Michael Mandelbaum (Council of Foreign Relations Press, New York, 1994), p. 79

This historical linkage between Iran and Central Asia was acknowledged by Kazakhstan's Minister of Culture Yerkegeliy Rahkmadiyev in 1993 when he stated: "We consider Iran as our home".[72]

However, Chapter I pointed out is that the history of Central Asia is not so easily defined. Iranian officials bristle at the mention that Turkic tradition may be more prevalent in Central Asia. Iran's deputy foreign minister, when confronted with the possibility that Iranian interests in Central Asia may clash with Turkic aspiration, asked, "What rivalry? Turks have nothing in the area but local idioms close to Turkish. History, civilization, culture, literature, science—everything is Iranian."[73] This debate further illustrates how the use of ill defined cultural traditions help to legitimize the presence of other regional powers.

Iran has vital interests in maintaining peace and stability in the Central Asian region. Its policy has been cautious, primarily strengthening its ties through bilateral accords on pipelines (with Turkmenistan) and the construction of communications infrastructure.[74]

For Russia, the relationship with Iran has an added bonus. Iran among the countries bordering Afghanistan that see the Taliban more as a threat than a promoter of Islamic revival in the region. While the potential for Russian cooperation with Iran in direct military intervention in Afghanistan is unlikely, it does provide a potential addition

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[72] Ibid., 81

[73] Ibid., 82.

to the anti-Taliban front. This in turn could potentially lessen Russia's military responsibilities in Tajikistan.

On 15 March 2001, Russian President Putin and Iranian President Mohammad Khatami met to discuss potential Russian-Iranian cooperation regarding energy pipelines in the region. They both stated their opposition to the U.S.-backed plans to create lines whose purpose is to deny Iranian and Russian participation.[75]

As it seems with all relations in Central Asia, the positive elements of cultural ties and anti-Taliban feelings are countered by Iran's proclivity to export its ideology elsewhere along the Russian periphery. In addition, its potentially damaging record on proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and its potential to act militarily in the Caucasus and Central Asia provide a greater threat to stability in Central Asia and Russia.[76]

It is these last elements of Iran's role in Central Asia that reduce Iran's potential to play a positive role in creating long term stability in the region. Steven Sestanovich, the former United States Ambassador-at-large and special adviser to the Secretary of State for the newly independent states, believed that the Central Asian countries "fear an expansion of Iranian influence and the rise of violent extremism in their countries."[77]

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74 Stephen J. Blank, *Energy, Economics, and Security in Central Asia*(U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 1995), p. 20

75 Agence France Presse, 15 March 2001.

76 Andrei V. Zagorski, "Traditional Russian Security Interests in the Caucusus and Central Asia," *Russia, the Caucusus, and Central Asia*, edited by Rajan Menon, Yuri E. Federov, and Ghia Nodia(M.E. Sharpe, New York, 1999), p. 79

77 Federal News Service, 17 March 1999.

Further clarifying the point, he added that Iranian position in Central Asia is anything but stabilizing.

E. TURKEY

This thesis addresses the debate concerning Turkey's historical linkages with Central Asia. The result is a relationship significantly weakened by stronger economic and geopolitical factors. While Russia continues to view Turkey as one of its strongest competitors in the region, Russia's history of competing with Turkey and its analysis that Turkey's membership in NATO provides additional advantage in Central Asia exaggerate Turkey's position in the region.

Turkey's most pronounced influence along the periphery of Russia is in the Caucasus, where its relations with Georgia and Azerbaijan, in particular, conflict with Russia's interests in the region. Turkey's aspirations in the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline effort run counter to Russia's CPC efforts. These challenges in Russian-Turkic relations provide little hope for cooperation in Central Asia.

Turkey continues to press for closer relations with the nations of Central Asia. Domestic pressures on the Turkish government of President Ahmet Necdet Sezer are pushing the regime to reach out to the east, particularly in light of luke-warm acceptance in Europe's developing economic institutions. Ankara has continued to warn the Central Asian governments against the danger of continuing their economic dependence on Russia. Turkey viewed Turkmenistan's agreement to sell 50 billion cubic meters of natural gas to Russia as seriously damaging Turkey's credibility in the region. The Turkmeni-Russian agreement led one leading former Turkish government official to state:

> Turkey, which was deemed a leader in the early 1990s, has now turned out to be just another country in the region. While we started energy projects as transporter and investor, we ended as just being an ordinary market.[78]

This agreement also accelerated a visit by President Sezer to Central Asia to improve relations and re-energize Turkish energy projects. The result was increased military assistance to Kyrgyzstan to fight Islamic separatists and the Central Asian nations supporting a summit of Turkic-language states in 2001.

The economic challenges Turkey faces today have been developing over the course of the past decade. Table 3 and table 4 show a gradual decline in Turkey's economic potential to the point that in 1999 Turkey fell to a level of negative growth. Russia, following the economic collapse of 1998, rebounded in 1999 to post strong growth figures. The economic sphere poses the greatest challenge for Turkey's position in Central Asia and limits its capability far below Russian estimates.

Table 3. Country Gross Domestic Product at Market Prices

Country	1995	1998	1999
China	700.2	946.3	989.5
Iran	87.4	112.8	110.8
Pakistan	61.2	62.2	58.2
Russia	337.9	277.8	401.4
Turkey	170.0	201.2	185.7

[78] The Turkish Daily News, 23 May 2000

Table 4. Country Gross Domestic Product Growth Rate[79]

Country	1995	1998	1999
China	10.5	7.8	7.1
Iran	2.9	2.2	2.5
Pakistan	5.1	2.5	4.0
Russia	-4.1	-4.9	3.2
Turkey	7.3	3.1	-5.1

F. CONCLUSION

This chapter has demonstrated that if a new "great game" is afoot in Central Asia, the options for stability other than through Russia's involvement are negligible. The competition between Turkey and Iran to define a historical rationale for their presence ignores the small political and economic potential each has in the region. With economics playing the lead role in achieving stability in the region, Turkic and/or Iranian leadership in the region could only further destabilize the economic potential and result in greater political instability, opening the door for more fundamentalist threats.

The competition among neighboring powers to secure access to Central Asia's energy sources only reduces the potential for real security cooperation. The push to strengthen bilateral negotiations for energy rights does not promote multilateral cooperation. Energy is an economic plus in the short term, but in the long term, it may be a significant factor in deterring the development of multi-lateral security cooperation in the region.

With weakening Western influence, Russian economic troubles, and crumbling economies, the countries of Central Asia could turn to Iran, China or even the Taliban for assistance. The consequences of these strengthening relations are hard to fathom, but it is

[79] World Bank Figures, http://www.worldbank.org, viewed 14 May 2001

clear that it can only lessen the influence of Western policies in the region. With Russia's economy potentially on the rise, it provides a far better alternative for the West and a more predictable future for Central Asia.

By failing to develop alternative options for cooperation with Russia, the United States and the West have only helped bring Russia and China closer together in perpetuating the status quo in Central Asia.

V. CONCLUSION

This thesis has argued that stability in Central Asia has made little progress since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The instinct to compete in a new "great game" has lessened cooperation and only increased distrust among the regional players. U.S. policy is no exception as it has focused more on isolating Russia than promoting regional multi-lateral cooperation.

Democracy's failures to take hold in Central Asia and the increasing influence of Iran, Pakistan and China have reduced the potential for a real NATO presence in Central Asia. Russia's debilitated economy and changing foreign policy doctrine continue to reduce CIS influence in the region. Other attempts at incorporating Central Asia into a multi-lateral framework, as in the case of the "Shanghai Five," provide forums more for exploitation of Central Asia than stability.

Creating a multi-lateral security framework in Central Asia that incorporates all five Central Asian countries as well as Russia, China, Iran, Europe, the United States, the countries of South Asia and even other Asian countries is not possible if the countries of Central Asia have no shared purpose for doing so. This thesis has shown that a soft history, Russia's dominating presence, the failure of Western reform policies and neighbors with questionable intentions further prevent Central Asia from locating a basis for multi-lateral security cooperation. With so many competing interests in the region, short and long-term stability is in serious jeopardy.

Democracy's short-term failure requires that the West look for alternative policies that promote sound economic and political programs that encourage reform but accept the

fact that the regimes in power will probably remain so for some time to come. If the West cannot do so, the countries of Central Asia must look to more stable partners that can provide potential for economic growth, while guaranteeing internal stability. This thesis argues that Russia is now the best alternative. Institutional reform cannot take place without a stable economy in place. The economic necessity to retain the current relationship with Russia may be at this time the only way to achieve economic stability.

United States policy makers should not ignore Russia's "heavy handedness" and antagonistic tendencies. Yet, in Central Asia, the best solution is a united U.S.-Russian policy that maximizes the most affordable and economically sound energy exploration and transportation policies while incorporating programs that build domestic institutions that support political and economic reform. Policies built on cooperation that emphasize long-term stability will help China and other regional powers feel less threatened in the region.

Unfortunately for Central Asia, the United States does not have a specific policy in Central Asia. As Stephen Blank notes, U.S. defense policy needs to address the region. "For now U.S. Central Command lacks an adequate engagement strategy for Central Asia, which comes a poor third after the Middle East and the Gulf in its official statements." [80] This paper does not argue that Central Asia should be a priority on any country's overall national security strategy. However, it does demonstrate that no policy

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[80] Stephen J. Blank, *U.S. Military Engagement with Tanscaucasia and Central Asia* (U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 1998), p. 32

or policies that exclude others without working to build multi-lateral cooperation will create a vacuum that fierce competition that works to no one's advantage may fill.

Central Asia can be the third, fourth or fifth priority on a country's list, yet it needs to be a policy not dependent on higher priorities. Central Asian policy must be taken in its own context and promote participation of all the countries along its borders. Most of all they must deal with Russia, which by geographic proximity, economic and political linkages, and willingness to accept multilateral approaches to Central Asia must be the primary player in defining and implementing measures to attain stability in the region.

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