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**NAVAL  
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**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

**THESIS**

**UNITED STATES MILITARY PRESENCE IN CENTRAL ASIA:  
IMPLICATIONS OF UNITED STATES BASING FOR  
CENTRAL ASIAN STABILITY**

by

Leon W. Dockery, Jr.

June 2006

Thesis Advisor:  
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Thomas H. Johnson  
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**UNITED STATES MILITARY PRESENCE IN CENTRAL ASIA:  
IMPLICATIONS OF UNITED STATES BASING FOR CENTRAL ASIAN  
STABILITY**

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from the

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the United States policy for establishing overseas military bases, particularly in Central Asia. The major transformational trends in improving United States military capabilities over the past two decades, and the changing international security environment, have shaped the way American leaders focus on their global military posture strategy. Immediately following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack, the United States moved quickly to establish a presence in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, and after the defeat of the Taliban, several bases became available in Afghanistan. Soviet military influence in Central Asia will be examined and compared to current United States policies and procedures. While military bases still maintain several strategic advantages in terms of response times and maneuver, there needs to be an equally sized effort to explore how these bases can provide stability. Achieving stability in Central Asia will require the United States to move away from the conventional ideology of basing, which it has used for many years, and to embrace policies and procedures that can meet the military mission and gain the trust of the host country.



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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. THESIS OBJECTIVE

This thesis will examine both the domestic and international policy implications associated with the establishment of long-term United States (U.S.) military presence in Central Asia. Specifically, this thesis will focus on the implications of United States basing in the Central Asian region. The strategic and tactical advantages of military installations in Central Asia were explicitly proven during Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).

This thesis will assess the policy implications of *permanent* United States presence in this region. United States presence in Central Asia has the potential to either cultivate stability in the region or aggravate an already volatile situation. Past experiences in countries such as Germany and Japan after their defeat in World War II offer seemingly little direction as to the ultimate implications of United States military basing in Central Asia, in part, because the region presents unique challenges. Central Asian challenges include: a legacy of corrupt and authoritarian regimes, intense Russian interest and influence in the areas, ethnic, tribal and religious societal tensions, and the emerging geopolitical importance of an area that is part of the so-called “arc of crisis.”<sup>1</sup> This thesis will systematically examine these challenges and, in so doing, offer policy prescriptions relative to Central Asian basing.

## B. THESIS RELEVANCE

The presence of United States military in areas of the former Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries is a dynamic that will gain policy salience in the coming years. The fact that the United States was asked to leave Karshi-Kanabad Air Base, Uzbekistan, underscores the importance of an in-depth understanding of the unique challenges faced by the United States in the pursuit of bases in such countries.

Prior to September 11, 2001, the United States had approximately a quarter-million troops abroad. More than 100,000 were stationed in Europe: the majority of these were in Germany (75,000 troops total, almost 60,000 of them Army soldiers);

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<sup>1</sup> Term first used by Jimmy Carter in 1980 State of the Union address, but created by his National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski.

another 13,000 were in Italy, almost 12,000 in the United Kingdom, and smaller numbers elsewhere. Nearly 100,000 American military personnel were in East Asia, divided between Japan, South Korea and the waters of the western Pacific. About 25,000 were ashore and afloat in the Persian Gulf; smaller numbers were in Latin America and Africa.<sup>2</sup> The policy prior to this date was to reduce overseas installations.

During George W. Bush's second presidential campaign, instead of closing locations in Europe, the discussion of U.S. overseas military presence focused on the restructuring of troops in Europe and reducing the number of military personnel by 40,000 to 60,000. According to United States Air Force General Charles Wald, there are currently "110,000 troops in Europe, mostly in and around Germany" and with the proposed reductions most would still be based in Germany.<sup>3</sup> Most of the discussion to this point has centered on major base facilities, but currently there are "860 sites in foreign countries, including 305 in Germany, 158 in Japan, and 105 in South Korea."<sup>4</sup> President Bush also acknowledged a desire to expand presence into Eastern Europe. Central Asia and Eastern Europe share a history replete with former Soviet Union influence. United States' attention to Russia in the execution of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) suggests that any actions by the United States in the former Soviet sphere of influence will face a number of daunting policy issues. Issues such as authoritarian regimes, deep-seated corruption, ethnic fragmentation, human right violations, underdeveloped economies, as well as a host of other issues need to be considered when assessing the implications of American basing. While some would argue that United States basing can have positive implications for such ills that plague Central Asia, others would argue that United States basing can contribute to these problems. A major objective of this thesis is to address the positive as well as negative repercussions of United States basing on both the Central Asian domestic situations as well as United States foreign policy concerns.

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<sup>2</sup> United States Department of Defense. 1994. *Report on Overseas Basing*, by Gary D. Vest. Report to the Senate and House Armed Services Committees. Washington, DC, March.

<sup>3</sup> Vince Crawley, Bush re-election may signal smaller European Command. *Air Force Times*, 22 November 2004, 33.

<sup>4</sup> Agence France Press. "Pentagon to recommend base closures in U.S., Europe," 12 May 2005.

### C. RELEVANT LITERATURE

The majority of the literature focusing on United States military basing discusses the strategic implications of basing abroad and the accepted benefits and potential costs. The five primary considerations of the United States military for potential basing opportunities, according to much of this literature, are: the nature of relevant regional threats; geographical location of installation; number and types of forces stationed at location; existing facility inventory; and existing host nation agreements. Noticeably absent from much of this literature is the base's impact on the surrounding community—it is certainly a factor, but is not often the significant consideration to United States basing strategies. Aside from the discussion of strategic significance and security there is ample literature that discusses overseas basing as evidence of United States hegemony and empire-building.

The Department of Defense has been tasked to develop a basing strategy that includes planning a redeployment of armed forces that will enable a military response to the threats of terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, wherever they may occur. The watchwords are “capabilities,” rather than specific threats, and “flexibility,” a clear statement that the intended targets for the use of United States military forces are not necessarily known in advance. Dr. Gordon Adams, who currently teaches international affairs and national security at the Elliot School of International Affairs at Washington's George Washington University and has written extensively on defense resource and planning issues suggests that the military has been strapped with a formidable task because all of the unknown parameters. In an interview about military presence in Iraq, he said, “There's a huge advantage to land-based infrastructure. At the level of strategy it makes total sense.”<sup>5</sup>

The impact on the surrounding community is a concern raised by authors such as C.T. Sandars and Chalmers Johnson. Sandars' work analyzed the terms and conditions under which American forces have been stationed in other countries since 1945, and highlights the wide range of bilateral relationships created as a result. The most well-known of these bilateral relationships were with postwar Germany and Japan, in which

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<sup>5</sup> Charles J. Hanley, “Elaborate U.S. bases raise long-term questions,” *Daily News Headlines Digest*, 21 March 2006. <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article12427.htm> accessed 27 March 2006.



long-lasting political, military and economic ties have been created for decades.<sup>6</sup> The United States was not establishing bases through conquest, but by securing basing rights through negotiation with independent sovereign states. He also suggests that the reason the United States was so successful in basing rights following World War II was simply due to its economic strength.<sup>7</sup> Johnson states that the “...vast network of American bases on every continent except Antarctica actually constitutes a new form of empire.”<sup>8</sup> Empires are defined as major political units that possess a territory of great extent, a number of territories or peoples under a single sovereign authority. Johnson’s premise is that bases have taken the place of colonies and that bases translate into militarism, which ultimately lends itself to imperialism. The end result is that the spread of bases will bring about financial insolvency and severely damage republican institutions, or the establishment of republican institutions in the host country. The relationships between United States basing and such arguments will be examined by this thesis.

Other areas of relevant literature cover a wide range of concerns and ideas. The strategic significance of basing abroad is widely debated with pros and cons from both sides. Before the terrorist attacks on 9/11, the push in the United States government was to bring more troops home from overseas citing lack of threat and surplus of costs as the primary drivers. The Bush Administration’s proposal was the result of a review of United States global military basing arrangements that began in mid-2001, preceding the attack of September 11. Origins of the review can be traced to the 2001 Report of the statutory Quadrennial Defense Review, as well as the National Security Strategy of 2002. This review also led to the establishment of the Overseas Basing Commission.<sup>9</sup> The primary concern was that basing arrangements are pre-dominantly a legacy of the United

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<sup>6</sup> Christopher T. Sandars, *America’s Overseas Garrisons: The Leasehold Empire*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 38.

<sup>7</sup> Sandars, 90.

<sup>8</sup> Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic*. (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004), 152.

<sup>9</sup> The Overseas Basing Commission, formally known as the Commission on the Review of Overseas Military Facility Structure of the United States, was established by the FY2004 Military Construction Appropriations Act (H.R. 2559/P.L. 108-132 of November 22, 2003). The commission is tasked to independently assess whether the current overseas basing structure is adequate to execute current missions, and to assess the feasibility of closures, realignments, or establishment of new installations overseas to meet emerging defense requirements. It has been active since May 2004.

States involvement in World War II and the Korean War, and that these basing arrangements are not optimal for responding to future military challenges in other geographical regions.<sup>10</sup>

The fact that there was United States military presence in the Middle East was touted as one of the reasons by Osama bin Laden for the 9/11 attacks. As the number of unstable situations continue to rise, the security for United States troops in increasingly hostile environments, to include bases, becomes harder to maintain. Regions and nations that had been at the periphery of concern have taken on new importance because of their relationship to terrorists and the states that sponsor them.<sup>11</sup>

A number of strategists believe there are also inherent risks in setting up bases in non-democratic states. Basing agreements made with mature democracies involve far fewer risks. Such deals come at no cost to U.S. legitimacy, and they tend to be more reliable since security commitments approved and validated by democratic institutions are made to last. In non-democratic states, the mostly short-term benefits, rarely promotes liberalization, and sometimes even endangers United States security. Engaging authoritarian leaders by striking basing deals with them has done little for democratization in those states because these leaders know that, ultimately, United States military planners care more about the bases' utility than about local political trends.<sup>12</sup> The practice can also jeopardize strategic interests. Even as authoritarian leaders flout calls for liberalization, they often manipulate basing agreements to strengthen their personal standing at home, and when one of these autocrats is eventually ousted, the democratic successor sometimes challenges the validity of the deals the former regime had struck.

#### **D. KEY THESIS ASSUMPTIONS**

Can United States basing in Central Asia satisfy strategic objectives and simultaneously meet an important political goal of improved stability in the region? The

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<sup>10</sup> Jon D. Klaus, U.S. Military Overseas Basing: Background and Oversight Issues for Congress, (CRS Report for Congress, 17 November 2004), 5.

<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Wishnick, *Growing U.S. Security Interests in Central Asia*, (Honolulu, Hawaii: University Press of the Pacific, 2004), 16.

<sup>12</sup> Alexander Cooley, "Base Politics," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2005, 2.

Bush Administration's official position is "security and democracy are indivisible"<sup>13</sup>, placing the promotion of democracy as a cornerstone of present United States foreign policy. Yet in regions such as Central Asia, the governing regimes have been much more interested in the pursuit of stability at the expense of democracy, freedom, and human dignity. The United States must realize that democracy does not automatically translate to stability, especially in Central Asia. Security and democracy may not be indivisible, but they need to be connected with a chain of generous length. Central Asian regimes understand the tenets of money and power, while the idea of democracy (as defined by the United States) may not be embraced. The Central Asian experience following the collapse of the Soviet Union was one of reluctant independence with populations that experienced an overall decline in their quality of life. Given the entrenched corruption of the authoritarian regimes in Central Asia, money and power alone are not enough to ensure lasting relationships. Russia does not have the fiscal depth of the United States, but it enjoys a long (politically friendly) history with the region and has available instruments of power for use (geographic proximity, personnel, weapons, etc.) China has less historical significance, but its future energy requirements have led to very significant financial investment in the region.

#### **E. THESIS METHODOLOGY AND KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The primary methodology of this thesis will center on case studies of military presence of the Soviet Union/Russia and the United States in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan. Special emphasis will be placed on Karshi-Khanabad (K2) Air Base, Manas Air Base and Bagram Air Base respectively. The case studies will zero in on the countries' past relationship with the former Soviet Union (and current Russian government) and indicators that might predict success or failure. Was the base presence a result of cooperation or occupation? How critical are bases in Central Asia to Russia? How critical are bases in Central Asia to the United States? Can the United States military presence help provide stability in the region? How critical are bases to the host countries? The last three questions will provide answers upon which to build future policy implications. This set of questions will be asked with the Soviet regime and the

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<sup>13</sup> The Honorable Daniel Fried, Assistant United States Secretary of State, public address following talks in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 27 September, 2005.

United States being the interchangeable variable. There will also be a discussion of the reactions of Russia and China to having these United States bases in their “backyard.” Sources will include United States State Department, Department of Defense and other official government sources, as well as statements by Central Asian governments and scholars. News sources will also be referenced to document impact at the local level, as well as national and international levels. K2 will present an interesting case study since the United States has recently decided to honor Uzbekistan’s wishes and has relinquished the base.

## **F. THESIS CONTENT**

This chapter introduced the most critical research questions and the methodology to be used in answering those questions. **Chapter II** will examine United States interests in Central Asia with emphasis on its instant transformation into independent states. Also addressed is interest of external entities in the natural resources of the region and the ever-increasing influence of the Shanghai Corporation Organization. Soviet and Russian interest in Central Asia will be chartered from imperial times to current administration in **Chapter III**. **Chapter IV** will look at Soviet-era and current Russian military presence and their impact in Central Asia’s historical and current political landscape, with an emphasis on Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan. Inherent in this discussion is the fact that the United States and Russia have simultaneous military presence in Central Asia within the respective countries. This comparison will hold even greater significance due to the discontinued presence of the United States at Karshi-Kanabad (K2) Air Base. The establishment of United States military presence at K2, Manas AB, Kyrgyzstan and Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan will be the primary focus of **Chapter V**. The occupation versus invitation dynamic will be examined as it pertains to the specific challenges for the country in relation to United States objectives. **Chapter VI** will outline the merits and challenges of military presence in Central Asia with specific recommendations for sustained presence in the region as well as considerations for future basing opportunities.

## **G. CONCLUSION**

Central Asia is an interesting region with a number of dynamic aspects that were unknown to the United States for many years. Instability, however, is one category that

is very familiar and combating sources of instability in Central Asia will require unconventional methods and strategies. As the United States military finds itself waging a war against an unconventional foe; it is once again learning how difficult counterinsurgency operations actually are but continues to frame unconventional conflicts incorrectly. This is telling since the enemy we face is likely to become more unconventional rather than more conventional. Indeed, there is every reason to expect that the threat will become even more complex and more dispersed. That transnational terrorists, localized insurgents, and transnational crime networks will become more intertwined is not only possible, but likely. The fact that these kinds of threats are on the horizon is not a particularly newfound realization. Sam Sarkesian, in his 1993 book, *Unconventional Conflicts in a New Security Era*, wrote:

The United States remains best prepared to fight the least likely wars (conventional European-style) and least prepared to fight the most likely wars (unconventional).<sup>14</sup>

Military presence has used the conventional base to project an image of security and power. True stability will come from unconventional use of the bases and their personnel.

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<sup>14</sup> Sam Sarkesian, *Unconventional Conflicts in a New Security Era, Lessons form Malaya and Vietnam* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 1.

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

### A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will be an examination of U.S. interests in Central Asia since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Unlike Eastern Europe, the countries of Central Asia were easier to envelope into the Soviet fold due to tribal culture and lack of political aspirations. This is not to say that the respective peoples enjoyed the Soviet influence, but their ability to handle their oppressive reality created a culture that is much more different than previously dealt with. This chapter will also discuss the interest of external entities in the natural resources of the region.

The only thing certain in today's international environment is uncertainty. This dynamic looms large in the restructuring of U.S. policy in a variety of areas—from homeland defense to overseas military basing. The terrorist attack on September 11, 2001 in the United States forced a new way of thinking about and combating a now dangerously lethal enemy. As suspects were named and ties to Osama bin Laden and the Al Qaeda organization were verified, decisive military action against Al Qaeda's base of operations was just a matter of time. Central Asia took center stage. Every potential conflict has an operations plan associated with it to help guide the forces in obtaining objectives, but even these well thought-out plans did not envision United States military presence in countries such as Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

September 11 galvanized the United States against terrorism, but relevant information involving the attacks and their implications were unclear. The *New York Times* reported in October 2001 that the countries of Central Asia “are unknown to most Americans but are now being urgently courted as the United States seeks to destroy terror bases in nearby Afghanistan.”<sup>15</sup> While it is true that most Americans were ignorant about Central Asia (and many still are) there were some organizations in the United States that were paying close attention to the developments there. During the 1990s,

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<sup>15</sup> Stephen Kinzer, “Ex-Soviet Asian Republics Are Now Courted by the U.S.,” *New York Times*, 10 October 2001, sec B, p. 7 (F).

United States policy toward Central Asia included many diverse interests—denuclearization, economic reform, democracy, and energy utilization to name a few.

In assessing U.S. involvement in Central Asia, this thesis will focus on three major objective areas: U.S. political, economic, and strategic interests.

## **B. U.S. POLITICAL INTERESTS**

Central Asian political dynamics are critical for United States economic and strategic interests. Central Asian history is critical for an understanding of U.S. interests in the region. The people, tribal customs, and tough terrain are legendary. This history became even more interesting as the emerging world superpowers, Great Britain and Russia attempted to control this part of the world to further their foreign policy ambitions. In what became known as the “Great Game” these countries sent numerous spies and emissaries into Central Asia to map out territory and woo various leaders to side with them for economic and security purposes. Eventually a succession of “ambitious Tsars and ruthless generals crushed the Muslim peoples” of Central Asia and occupied their lands.<sup>16</sup> Great Britain, who had established a solid foothold in India became concerned that Russia would not stop until India was theirs. This resulted in Great Britain’s infiltration of Central Asia in order to track and monitor Russian interests and maneuvers.

President George H. W. Bush, who learned his foreign policy under the détente of Nixon, presided over the end of the Cold War, the demise of the Soviet Union. He directed a foreign policy success in the Gulf by masterfully putting together the largest and most successful war coalition since the Second World War. Financially speaking, the Gulf War cost the United States very little and Bush refused to expand the war beyond the limits set by United Nations resolutions and the United States Congress.<sup>17</sup>

Many United States policy makers in the 1990s asserted that the United States was on the verge of becoming the unchallenged superpower. President George H. W. Bush had announced a “New World Order” in 1990. In 1991, the “evil empire” of the Soviet Union had formally dissolved. The globe was open to the neo-liberal policies of

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<sup>16</sup> Peter Hopkirk. *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia*. (New York: Kondansha International, 1994), xv.

<sup>17</sup> Cliff Staten, “U.S. Foreign Policy Since World War II: An Essay on Reality’s Corrective Qualities,” [http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/item/2005/0709/stat/staten\\_reality.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/item/2005/0709/stat/staten_reality.html), accessed 5 November 2005.

privatization, de-regulation and market supremacy administered by new economic pacts such as North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Free Trade Area of the Americas, (FTAA) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) and it was believed that these organizations would help spread democracy and U.S. capitalism to the entire globe.<sup>18</sup> In a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) document produced in 1992 about United States interpretation of the NIS, democracy was defined as:

Democracy combines the right of citizens to exercise power by selecting their government through periodic, secret ballot, multiparty elections, and rule of law that limits government, guarantees freedom of speech, and protects the person, property, and civil rights of the population through an independent judiciary and other protective institutions.<sup>19</sup>

After the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, the United States recognized the independence of all the former Central Asian republics and offered diplomatic relations to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, which were viewed as following responsible security and democratic policies. Citing the dangers the Central Asian states faced from Iranian-sponsored Islamic fundamentalism, United States diplomatic relations were quickly established with the remainder of the region by mid-March 1992. Faced with calls in Congress and elsewhere to formulate a policy on aiding the New Independent States (NIS), former President George H. W. Bush sent the Freedom Support Act to Congress, which was signed into law on October 24, 1992. This law directed the President to designate a responsible agent to coordinate assistance to the independent states of the former Soviet Union and report an overall assistance and economic strategy.<sup>20</sup> The incoming Clinton Administration in 1993 soon pledged to focus on close ties with the NIS as a top foreign policy priority.

The major goals of former Clinton Administration policy toward the NIS, including Central Asia, entailed fostering stability, democratization, free market economies and trade, denuclearization in the non-Russian states, and adherence to international human rights standards. These positive policy goals were supported by

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<sup>18</sup> Contemporary Social Issues: Analyzing Critically, Arguing Persuasively, <http://academic.evergreen.edu/curricular/contemporarysocialissues/>, accessed 8 November 2005.

<sup>19</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, *Russia Over the Next Four Years: The Prospects for Democratization and Marketization*, Published 1 May 1992, Released 21 May 2001.

<sup>20</sup> *Freedom for Russia and Emerging Eurasian Democracies and Open Markets Support Act of 1992 or FREEDOM Support Act*, Public Law 102-511.



another priority—to discourage attempts by radical regimes and groups to block or subvert progress toward these goals or otherwise threaten regional peace and stability. While a consensus appeared to exist among most United States policymakers and other government and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) on the general desirability of these goals, there were various views on the types and levels of United States involvement.

Many of those who endorsed continued or enhanced United States support for Central Asia, including Ambassador Lynn Pascoe, argued that political instability in Central Asia could produce spillover effects in important nearby states, including United States allies and friends such as Turkey.<sup>21</sup> They also argued that the United States had a major interest in preventing terrorist regimes or groups from illicitly acquiring nuclear weapons-related materials and technology in the region. They maintained that United States interests do not perfectly coincide with those of its allies and friends, that Turkey and other actors possessed limited aid resources, and that the United States was in the strongest position as a superpower to influence democratization and respect for human rights. They stressed that United States leadership in world efforts to provide humanitarian and economic reform aid would help alleviate the high levels of social distress that were exploited by anti-Western Islamic extremist groups seeking new members. Although many United States policymakers acknowledged a role for a democratizing Russia in the region, they stressed that United States and other Western aid and investment strengthen the independence of the states and forestall Russian attempts to re-subjugate the region.

Daniel Rosenblum, Deputy Coordinator, U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia, Department of State, objected to aspects of past policy toward Central Asia and argued that the United States has historically had few interests in this region and that developments there remained marginal to United States interests. He advocated limited United States contacts undertaken with Turkey and other friends and allies to ensure

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<sup>21</sup> Brookings Roundtable Series Transcripts, “United States Foreign Policy in the States of Central Asia,” with Ambassador Lynn Pascoe, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs; James MacDougall, Principal Director, International Security Policy for Eurasia, Office of the Secretary of Defense; Daniel Rosenblum, Deputy Coordinator, U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia, Department of State; and Matthew Bryza, Director for Europe and Eurasia, National Security Council, 12 November 2002. <http://www.brookings.edu/comm/events/hill20021112.htm> accessed 11 December 2005.

United States interests.<sup>22</sup> Many discounted fears that an anti-Western Islamic extremism, such as that fostered by Iran or Afghanistan's Taliban group, would make headway, or that Russia would seek or be able to re-subjugate the region. They questioned whether the oil and other natural resources in these new states were vital to United States security and point out that oil resources were, in any event, unlikely to be fully available to Western markets for many years. Some also criticized aid for democratization among cultures they view as historically attuned to authoritarianism. Others, such as Jeanne Kirkpatrick, former Ambassador to the United Nations under Ronald Reagan, urged reducing or cutting off most aid to repressive governments that widely violate human rights, arguing that such aid provides tacit support for these regimes, and may even unwittingly encourage the rise of Islamic fundamentalism as an alternative channel of dissent.<sup>23</sup> Some pointed to lingering instability in Tajikistan and elsewhere in the region as another reason for the United States to steer clear of major involvement that might place more United States personnel and citizens in danger.<sup>24</sup>

The United States encouraged the Central Asian states to become responsible members of the international community, and supported their admission to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), NATO bodies, and other Western organizations. The Clinton Administration supported these integrative goals through bilateral aid and through coordination with other aid donors, including regional powers such as Turkey. This and other means were used to discourage radical regimes, groups, and Islamic fundamentalists—who used repression or violence to oppose democratization—from attempts to gain influence. With declarations of independence, all the Central Asian states professed desires for good relations with both East and West as a means of demonstrating independence, and certain opportunism has been evident in the quest for relations with aid donors. All of the Central Asian leaders publicly embraced Islam, but displayed hostility toward Islamic fundamentalism. At the same time, they established some trade and aid ties with Iran. While they had greater success

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<sup>22</sup> Brookings Roundtable Series Transcripts, "United States Foreign Policy in the States of Central Asia".

<sup>23</sup> Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, *Dictatorships and Double Standards: Rationalism and Reason in Politics* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1982), 98.

<sup>24</sup> Jim Nichol, Central Asia's New States: Political Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, 18 May 2001, 2.

in attracting development aid from the West than from the East, many observers argued that, in the long run, their foreign policies will probably not be anti-Western, but may be more oriented toward Islamic states and interests.<sup>25</sup>

In congressional testimony on March 17, 1999, then-Ambassador-at-Large for the NIS Steve Sestanovich stated that the over-arching goal of United States policy in Central Asia was to secure the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the states. This goal was being pursued by advocating democratization (because it is “the long-term guarantor of stability and prosperity”), free markets, cooperation within the region (including on building east-west pipelines and on defense) and its integration into the Euro-Atlantic community, and responsible security policies (including nonproliferation, counter-terrorism, and counter-narcotics). Although the states were making halting progress in some areas, he stated, the Administration was committed to continue working with them. In testimony in May 1998, Sestanovich stated that the United States had a “big stake” in assisting the peaceful and historic integration of Central Asia and the South Caucasus into the world community, interests that were seen as “strategic” and “vital.”<sup>26</sup>

During immediate Central Asian independence U.S. diplomatic and other ties have greatly increased in all the Central Asian states. A U.S.-Kazakh Joint Commission held its first meeting in November 1994, chaired by Vice President Gore and President Nazarbayev. A U.S.-Uzbekistan Joint Commission, highlighting the Administration’s view that “in geopolitical terms [and] commercially, [Uzbekistan] is a very important country for the United States,” held its first meeting in February 1998. Although these commissions were not retained by President George W. Bush’s Administration, some of their working groups and other forums continued to address bilateral issues of concern.<sup>27</sup>

While bilateral issues were being addressed, leaders in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan grew increasingly alarmed that Central Asian radical Islamic movements were receiving safe haven in Afghanistan. In 1996, several of these states banded together with Russia and China into a regional grouping called the Shanghai Cooperation

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<sup>25</sup> Nichol, 4.

<sup>26</sup> On the record briefing of Stephen Sestanovich, NIS Ambassador-at-Large, Testimony Delivered on U.S. Policy Toward Russia, 20 May 1998, Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on European Affairs. [http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/congress/1998\\_h/98052003\\_wpo.html](http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/congress/1998_h/98052003_wpo.html)

<sup>27</sup> Nichol, 2.

Organization (SCO). Initial discussions centered on the potential threats emanating from Afghanistan's Taliban regime and how to address these threats. Of the Central Asian states that border Afghanistan, two of them—Uzbekistan and Tajikistan—had seen themselves as particularly vulnerable to militant factions harbored by the Taliban.<sup>28</sup>

Former National Security Adviser for President Jimmy Carter, Zbigniew Brzezinski published a book in which he portrays the Eurasian landmass as the key to world power, and Central Asia with its vast oil reserves as the key to domination of Eurasia. He states that for the United States to maintain its global primacy, it must prevent any possible adversary from controlling that region. He predicts that because of popular resistance to United States military expansionism, his ambitious Central Asian strategy can not be implemented “except in the circumstance of a truly massive and widely perceived direct external threat.”<sup>29</sup>

### **C. U.S. ECONOMIC INTERESTS**

The Central Asian states, the poorest part of the former Soviet Union, witnessed steep declines in gross domestic product (GDP) after they gained independence. Average per capita income in the region, according to the World Bank, was less than \$800 in 1999, with Tajikistan described by the Asian Development Bank as one of the poorest countries in the world. The declines in GDP appeared to reverse in the late 1990s in all the states, but their economies remain fragile. The Kazakh and Turkmen economies are dependent on energy exports; if export revenues decline, the regimes may collapse. Economic growth was increasingly threatened by corruption, the deteriorating health of the populations, and crime, including that linked to drug trafficking and production. Except for Kazakhstan, the Central Asian states were unlikely soon to gain substantial revenues from oil, gas, or other development, suggesting that they may be vulnerable to popular discontent and instability for several years. Lagging economic reform in Uzbekistan led the IMF to suspend lending to Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is levied more conditions on its economic reform lending to Turkmenistan.

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<sup>28</sup> Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Current Issues and U.S. Policy*. Congressional Research Service, Report for Congress, 1 August 2003, 21.

<sup>29</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Great Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*. (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 210-11.

The United States defines a market economy as one that:

allows private ownership and entrepreneurship, a free price mechanism, a predominant private sector, openness to foreign participation, and limited government regulation.<sup>30</sup>

Support for private sector development had been a major component of United States aid efforts in the NIS. Technical assistance and training programs supporting the creation of market economies have included those dealing with entrepreneurship, agribusiness, small business development, telecommunications, banking, defense conversion, tax policy, bankruptcy, and labor management. A Central Asian-American Enterprise Fund (CAAEEF) was set up in 1994, with Congressional authorization to lend up to \$150 million. The Fund's regional offices had obligated \$111 million in loans to over 400 small- and medium-size private enterprises. CAAEEF reports a difficult small-business climate and wrote off losses of about \$30.5 million. A memorandum on United States advice for Kazakh defense industrial conversion was signed during Nazarbayev's 1994 United States visit. Joint committees for defense conversion were set up with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan planned United States aid in converting state enterprises to privately held, non-defense firms. Peace Corps volunteers taught small business development and English language and served in all of the Central Asian states except Tajikistan.

The United Nations World Food Program reported in February 2001 that it was hard-pressed to meet urgent food needs by up to three million or more people in drought-stricken Tajikistan. Uzbekistan again appealed to the U.N. in January for urgent food aid for up to one million people because of drought in its Karakalpakstan and Khorezm regions (a UN mission in December 2000 assessed urgent food needs for 45,000 people). Responding to Uzbekistan's food needs, the United States Department of Agriculture in early 2001 announced a \$20 million Food for Progress concessional sale of soybeans, rice, and other grains.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, *Russia Over the Next Four Years: The Prospects for Democratization and Marketization*, Published 1 May 1992, Released 21 May 2001.

<sup>31</sup> UN World Food Programme, [http://www.wfp.org/country\\_brief/indexcountry.asp?region=6&section=9&sub\\_section=6&country=762](http://www.wfp.org/country_brief/indexcountry.asp?region=6&section=9&sub_section=6&country=762), accessed 21 November 2005.

The Clinton Administration stressed that United States support for free market reforms directly served United States national interests by opening new markets for United States goods and services, and sources of energy and minerals. United States private investment committed to Central Asia has greatly exceeded that provided to Russia or most other NIS except Azerbaijan, although the region is relatively isolated and the states lag behind Russia in accommodating commercial ties. United States energy companies have committed to invest billions of dollars in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.<sup>32</sup> United States trade agreements have been signed and entered into force with all the Central Asian states. Duty-free access to United States markets under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) is in effect for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. Kyrgyzstan has received normal trade relations status and Jackson-Vanik trade provisions calling for presidential reports and waivers no longer apply.

The Export-Import Bank (Eximbank) has obligated funds for short-term insurance, loans, or guarantees for export sales of industrial and agricultural equipment and bulk agricultural commodities to all the states except Tajikistan. The Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) has signed agreements with all the Central Asian states on ensuring United States private investments overseas, and has obligated funds for financing or insurance in all the states except Tajikistan. The United States Commerce Department has set up a Business Development Committee with Kazakhstan to facilitate official discussions on trade and economic issues.

The Foreign Commercial Service (FCS) opened offices in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in 1993, and co-located American Business Centers were opened in 1994.

Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have large oil and natural gas reserves, and the other states of the region possess potential sources of export earnings, but major investments are needed to revamp, develop, or market these resources in most cases. Uzbekistan's cotton and gold production rank among the highest in the world and much is exported. It also has moderate oil and gas reserves. Kyrgyzstan owns major gold mines and strategic mineral reserves, and is a major wool producer. Tajikistan has one of the world's largest aluminum processing plants (exporting over \$300 million worth in 1999) and is a major cotton grower.

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<sup>32</sup> Nichol, 8.

Cotton, however, is not the only thing that comes out of the ground in Central Asia—a land locked, 1.5 million square miles of primarily mountainous terrain and deserts. The United States Department of Energy (DOE) reports estimates of 10-17.6 billion barrels of proven oil reserves and 53-83 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in Kazakhstan, and 98-155 trillion cubic feet of proven gas reserves in Turkmenistan. Kazakhstan's Tengiz oil field began to be exploited by Chevron and Kazakhstan in a joint venture during 1993 (U.S. Mobil Oil and Russia's LUKoil later joined). In April 2001, the joint venture announced that Tengiz reserves were much higher than previously thought. Kazakhstan announced in May 2000 that a consortium (including United States firms Exxon-Mobil and Phillips Petroleum) had found "big deposits of oil" in the Kashagan field in the north Caspian Sea. Another successful test well in early 2001 strengthened prospects of a major oil find.

The Clinton Administration viewed the oil find as “a tremendously important boost” to plans for a pipeline from Baku, Azerbaijan to Ceyhan, Turkey, though some experts questioned whether it would be economical to barge this oil to Baku or build a connecting pipeline. Russia's restrictions on Tengiz oil exports to Europe were eased slightly in 1996 after the consortium admitted LUKoil, and after Gazprom was admitted to another consortium.<sup>33</sup> Russia easily agreed to Kazakhstan's requested oil transit quotas for 2001, however, in order to persuade it that the planned Baku-Ceyhan pipeline was not needed. The Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC; formed in 1992 but restructured in 1996) protocol grants Russian interests the largest share, 44%, with the remainder held by U.S., other Western, and Omani partners. Initial construction was completed in November 2000 on a 930-mile oil pipeline from Kazakhstan to Russia's Black Sea port of Novorossiisk, to initially carry up to one million barrels per day when fully operational in late 2001. This is the region's first new large-capacity pipeline.

For FY1998, the Clinton Administration called for added civil society assistance for the NIS, particularly for Russia and Central Asia. However, Congressional earmarks fenced off much of the NIS aid, so Central Asia benefited little. Increased appropriations in FY1999 permitted a 26% increase for Central Asia to \$136.9 million, but in FY2000, earmarks and priorities led to an allocation of \$112 million. Estimated spending in

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<sup>33</sup> Nichol, 11.

FY2001 was \$115.95 million. For FY2002, the Administration requested slightly less for Central Asia, \$110 million, as part of its \$808 million NIS request.

U.S. policy goals regarding energy resources in the Central Asian and South Caucasian states have included supporting their sovereignty and ties to the West, supporting United States private investment, breaking Russia's monopoly over oil and gas transport routes by encouraging the building of pipelines that do not traverse Russia, promoting Western energy security through diversified suppliers, assisting ally Turkey, and opposing the building of pipelines that transit "energy competitor" Iran or otherwise give it undue influence over the region. To carry out these goals, the Clinton Administration endorsed building trans-Caucasus oil and gas pipelines to Turkey, with trans-Caspian links to Central Asia, as part of a "Eurasian Transport Corridor" plan given impetus in 1997. In 1998, a Special Advisor to the President and the Secretary of State for Caspian Basin Energy Diplomacy was appointed to coordinate TDA, OPIC, Eximbank and other agency programs to ensure the "development of the Caspian and open commercial access to its energy" (this post was retained in the new Bush Administration). In 1999, TDA, OPIC, and Eximbank opened a Caspian Finance Center in Turkey.

The policy of the Bush Administration regarding Caspian energy development was explicated by Ambassador Elizabeth Jones, Senior Advisor on Caspian Basin Energy diplomacy. In a State Department televised interview with residents of the region on April 12, 2001, she stated that the United States would continue to support the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline and other approaches of the previous administration. She also stated that the United States would not intervene with force to halt incursions by Islamic terrorists into the region, but would help regional states to defend themselves through NATO's Partnership for Peace and by providing counter-terrorism aid. The Central Asian states have been pressured by Russia to yield portions of their energy wealth to Russia, in part because Russia controls most existing pipelines to export markets.

Among the NIS, Russia, Ukraine, Armenia, and Georgia ranked highest in cumulative United States government aid obligated as of September 30, 2000, with most Central Asian states receiving much less (including food, medical, and technical aid, and aid for nuclear weapons disarmament and safeguards for Kazakhstan). Kazakhstan and



Kyrgyzstan were exceptions, with Kazakhstan ranked fifth (\$684.22 million, slightly less than aid to Georgia) and Kyrgyzstan sixth (\$484.23 million). In per capita terms, Kyrgyzstan has ranked in the top five aid recipients among the NIS. Humanitarian and health care aid for Tajikistan has been a special concern since FY1994, but Tajiks have said that the United States government has failed to provide aid promised for rebuilding after the Tajik civil war. The World Bank held a third consultative group meeting of international donors in Tokyo, Japan, on May 15, 2001, to focus on rebuilding assistance for post-war Tajikistan for 2001-2002. Six countries, including Japan and Switzerland, and international lenders pledged \$430 million in aid. The United States, an observer of the Tajik peace process, pledged no added aid.<sup>34</sup>

The value of Defense Department excess commodities and privately donated aid transported at United States expense are not included in the cumulative obligations in the table, but were \$166.54 million for Kazakhstan, \$121.47 million for Kyrgyzstan, \$38.25 million for Tajikistan, \$39.94 million for Turkmenistan, and \$114.46 million for Uzbekistan.

Consolidated Appropriations for fiscal year 2000 included the “Silk Road Strategy Act” authorizing language calling for enhanced policy and aid to support conflict amelioration, humanitarian needs, economic development, transport and communications, border controls, democracy, and the creation of civil societies in the South Caucasus and Central Asia.<sup>35</sup>

Besides bilateral and regional aid, the United States contributes to international financial institutions and nongovernmental organizations that aid Central Asia. Policy issues regarding United States aid include whether the states are properly using it, what it should be used for, and who should receive it.

#### **D. U.S. STRATEGIC INTERESTS**

The might of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was the primary concern of United States military strategist for over forty years. Although not in direct confrontation, wars in Korea and Vietnam cemented the opposing ideologies. As the

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<sup>34</sup> Nichol, 14-16.

<sup>35</sup> U.S. Government Assistance to and Cooperative Activities with Eurasia, Annex C: Assessments Required by the Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999.

Western world recovered from the surprise of a collapsed Soviet Union, the regimes of Central Asia were recovering from shock of sudden independence. This sudden independence forced the existing regimes to scramble to establish strong ties with Russia in some cases (Tajikistan) and a more independent stance with others, such as Kazakhstan. As the Warsaw Pact disintegrated, attention turned to security concerns. Since it gained independence from the Soviet Union, the military actually sent teams into these new countries to survey airfields and itemize potential uses for strategic uses, but no official political interest was expressed until the GWOT.

Immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the level of nuclear threat confronting the United States was significantly reduced; however, an estimated 30,000 nuclear warheads were spread among the former Soviet Republics<sup>36</sup>. The dangers posed by this situation were evident—primarily diversion or unauthorized use of weapons, materials, or knowledge. In 1991, Congress initiated the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program to reduce the threat to the United States from these weapons and promote denuclearization, demilitarization, and reduce weapons proliferation in the CIS.<sup>37</sup> This was a very successful program. In 1998 there was a United States-Uzbekistan Joint Commission to discuss the dismantling and decontamination of a biological weapons facility, and this was completed in 1999. Another hugely successful venture.

Because of the harsh terrain Central Asia is sparsely populated with the majority of the populations residing within or near the Ferghana Valley—a stretch of fertile land. It has the natural boundary of the coast of the Caspian Sea in the west; the Hindu Kush and Pamir mountain ranges (roof of the world) in the south; and the Tian Shan mountains in the west. The neighbors include Iran and Afghanistan to the south; China to the east; and Russia to north and west. There are no clear geographical boundaries in the north with Russia. This area has other colorful names such as “backyard” or “underbelly” in description of Russia’s security concerns. As independence moved throughout the region, civil war erupted in Tajikistan.

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<sup>36</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, *The Deepening Crisis in the USSR: Prospects for the Next Year*, Published 1 November 1990, Released 19 June 2000, 18.

<sup>37</sup> 1995 Annual Defense Report, Cooperative Threat Reduction.

The American perspective on the Tajik civil war (1992-96) was that it was a power struggle involving clans or regional cliques, and was engineered by Russia with a view to justifying its military presence in Central Asia. But, its reasoning was seriously flawed - that there were no Islamist elements in Afghanistan interested in a spillover into Central Asia; the Taliban was an indigenous Afghan phenomenon who did not have any regional agenda; Afghan fratricidal strife was purely about capturing power in Kabul; and that the Taliban would be ultimately a factor of regional stability. Americans were not alone living in a different intellectual universe. “French scholar Olivier Roy laughed off the very thought that there could be ‘revolution-exporting Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan.’”<sup>38</sup> Although this may not have been a serious concern, the Central Asian Economic Community (CAEC) did want to address military and security cooperation in the area.

The Central Asian Peacekeeping Battalion exercise CENTRASBAT is a series of exercises designed to improve interaction with the Central Asian states by focusing on peacekeeping/humanitarian operations and exercising command, control, and logistics within a multinational framework. Focused on strengthening military-to-military relationships and regional security between Central Asian and other regional militaries, the first exercise took place in 1995. Military units from the national peacekeeping battalions of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, as well as a United States battalion, used this exercise as a tool to increase interoperability and improve the participating forces' abilities to conduct basic peacekeeping and humanitarian operations.<sup>39</sup> The exercises have a practical significance for NATO countries, which have on repeated occasions since 1997 been able to test in practice their theoretical calculations on getting their units to the Central Asian region by air, and to study and work out in practice methods of making assault landings in various sectors, taking into account the local conditions and the terrain and, have been able to make adjustments to training.

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<sup>38</sup> M.K. Bhadrakumar, “The ‘Talibanization’ of Central Asia”, *Asia Times*, 12 May 2005.

<sup>39</sup> CENTRASBAT, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/centrasbat.htm>, accessed 15 November 2005.

Beginning in 1998, if not before, Uzbekistan and the United States conducted joint covert operations against Afghanistan's Taliban regime and bin Laden.<sup>40</sup> By the start of the year 2000, this year, the United States had already begun “to quietly build influence” in Central Asia. The United States has established significant military-to-military relationships with Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. Americans have trained soldiers from those countries. The militaries of all three have an ongoing relationship with the National Guard of a United States state—Kazakhstan with Arizona, Kyrgyzstan with Montana, and Uzbekistan with Louisiana. The countries also participate in NATO's Partnership for Peace program.<sup>41</sup>

Central Asia Border Security Initiative appropriated \$70m for customs and border guard training, anti-terrorism assistance and communication, observation, and detection equipment.<sup>42</sup> General Tommy Franks, then United States Central Command Commander, tours Central Asia in 2000 in an attempt to build military aid relationships with nations there, but was unsuccessful. Russia's power in the region appeared to be on the upswing instead. Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeyev writes, “The actions of Islamic extremists in Central Asia give Russia the chance to strengthen its position in the region.”<sup>43</sup> General Franks, later to head the United States occupation of Afghanistan, visits the capital of Tajikistan. He says the Bush Administration considers Tajikistan “a strategically significant country” and offers military aid.<sup>44</sup> As in most strategic situations, the military has, at the very least, compiled a list of potential locations in which to perform future operations, so it is not hard to believe that discussions about future cooperation would have taken place in the 90s. These plans were then put on the shelf for the “if and when” something happens.

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<sup>40</sup> Thomas E. Ricks and Susan B. Glasser, “U.S. Operated Secret Alliance with Uzbekistan,” *The Washington Post*, 14 October 2001, p. A01.

<sup>41</sup> Robert G. Kaiser, “U.S. Plants Footprint in Shaky Central Asia,” *The Washington Post*, 27 August 2002, p. A01.

<sup>42</sup> **A. Elizabeth Jones, Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs** Testimony Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on Central Asia and the Caucasus, Washington, DC, 13 December 2001. U.S.-Central Asian Cooperation

<sup>43</sup> Ian Traynor, War In Afghanistan: Russia Edgy at America's Military Build-Up in Region,” *The Guardian*, 10 January 2002.

<sup>44</sup> David Leigh, “Attack and Counter-attack,” *The Guardian*, 26 September 2001.

The Clinton Administration's approach to the regions was ad hoc. It tackled a laundry list of initiatives in response to crises and shifting policy priorities. Issues such as oil and gas pipelines, conflict resolution, and human rights were targeted at different junctures, but an overall strategy—which was essential, given limited government resources for the regions—was never fully articulated. As a result, United States priorities were not communicated clearly to local leaders, resulting in frequent misinterpretations of intentions. Domestic constituencies in the United States undermined leverage in regional conflicts.<sup>45</sup> Incompatible government structures and conflicting legislation fostered competition among agencies and encouraged a proliferation of parallel initiatives, while congressional mandates limited areas in which scarce funds could be applied and thus reduced flexibility.

In fairness to the administrations, it is important to note that while the relatively peaceful collapse of the Soviet Union was welcomed, and the generation of more than a dozen independent states was exciting (especially to a democratic nation such as the United States), there were other world events competing for its attention. Operation Desert Storm began and ended; Operation Northern Watch and Operation Southern Watch became a fixture in United States deployments. There were now new bases in the Middle East (Saudi Arabia) and a large military presence in the former Yugoslavia. This military presence beyond normal allied soil was a foreshadowing of what would become the norm. Given the enormous amount of change in the decade of the 90s, the United States managed to create some relationships in a region where it had NO influence prior. Hindsight is 20/20, but most of the initiatives into this region were positive.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Anything effecting United States policy can now be divided into pre- and post-September 11. At the heart of the current defense strategy is the Pentagon's desire to have the option to strike first in a post-September 11 world, where future threats are unpredictable. The uncertainty is highlighted by the fact that the threats are emerging from lawless or less developed regions. This is especially true when discussing United States basing abroad. During his 2000 presidential election campaign, then presidential

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<sup>45</sup> Fiona Hill, "The Caucasus and Central Asia: How the United States and its Allies can Stave Off a Crisis," *The Brookings Institution*, May 2001, <http://www.brookings.edu/comm/policybriefs/pb80.htm>, accessed 26 October 2005.

candidate Bush vehemently defended bringing more troops back to the United States as he criticized the Clinton Administration for allowing the military to be spread too thin.<sup>46</sup> The terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, caused a reversal in this mindset as troops deployed to new locations throughout the world to conduct the Global War on Terror (GWOT). Although terrorism is not new, the lethality and reach has pushed it to the front for policy considerations.

Current world situations dictate that the United States pursue expanding allied roles and building new partnerships. Uncertainty is the only known and it is important to develop policies that include flexibility to deal with that uncertainty. During the Cold War, it was standard to believe that you would fight where you were based, but the last 15 years have proven that that is no longer the case. Taking advantage of existing partnerships is the logical course to take.

There are some inherent risks associated with this concept. One of these risks in Central Asia is operating in a location that has a long history with Russia. In fact, actually sharing the same resources and airspace is a new experience. As can be expected, Russia looks at United States military presence with wary eyes.

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<sup>46</sup> Eric Schmitt and James Dao, "U.S. is building up its military bases in Afghan region," *New York Times*, 8 January 2002, sec A, p. 1.

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### **III. SOVIET/RUSSIAN INTEREST IN CENTRAL ASIA**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will focus on historical Soviet interest and policies in Central Asia, with a heavy emphasis on Russian interest following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. While it is known that the Soviets did not have a documented military strategy, it did have a political objective of presence that was meant to be a visible reminder of the might of the Soviet Union. This extensive presence was extended into Central Asia through its satellite, or backyard, countries to include extensive nuclear capabilities. After invading Afghanistan, the establishment of numerous bases in that country represented the first openly consistent military presence outside of the Soviet Union (other than Cuba) in decades. Russia is now faced with re-establishing military presence by negotiation and compromise in a region it all but abandoned in 1991 as other countries, namely the United States and China, take a decidedly stronger interest.

#### **B. BACKGROUND**

Historically, the states of Central Asia have been shaped by a number of factors and personalities that include Islam, the great Mongol invasion, isolation, Russian imperialism, and Sovietization. Silk Road cities, such as Bukhara and Samarkand, were important to the Muslim world long before political boundaries were drawn. The region experienced another period of isolation after the discovery of a sea route from Europe to China that made the Silk Road less traveled. Russian tsars of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries continued to slowly move into Central Asia bringing new political and economic subordination with them.

In addition, Central Asia has always had an interesting history. The people, tribal customs, and tough terrain are legendary. This history became even more interesting as the emerging world superpowers, Great Britain and Russia attempted to control this part of the world for various reasons. In what became known as the “Great Game” these countries sent numerous spies and emissaries into Central Asia to map out territory and woo various leaders to side with them for economic and security purposes. Eventually a succession of “ambitious Tsars and ruthless generals crushed the Muslim peoples” of



Central Asia and occupied their lands.<sup>47</sup> Great Britain, who had established a solid foothold in India became concerned that Russia would not stop until India was theirs began to infiltrate North to keep an eye on the Russians. Following the Bolshevik Revolution, the courtship of Central Asia was not very extensive. While the newly created Soviet states of Central Asia experienced similar beginnings, a brief history of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan will be provided because they the primary topics of this essay.

### **1. Uzbekistan**

Uzbekistan is the most populous of the five Central Asian states and the only one that shares a border with the other four. Under the weight of Moscow's quota-driven central planners, cotton came to dominate other agricultural and industrial endeavors resulting in a severely degraded environment.<sup>48</sup> While the Bolsheviks encouraged a certain level of cultural awareness in Uzbekistan, Stalin replaced the Uzbeki leaders with his own loyalist. These systematic replacements would ensure Soviet dominance for many years, as well as establish the basis for corruption in government.

Located in the heart of Central Asia between the Amu Darya and Syr Darya Rivers, Uzbekistan has a long and interesting heritage. The leading cities of the famous Silk Road—Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva—are located in Uzbekistan, and many well-known conquerors passed through the land. Alexander the Great stopped near Samarkand on his way to India in 327 B.C. and married Roxanna, daughter of a local chieftain. Conquered by Muslim Arabs in the eight century A.D., the indigenous Samanid dynasty established an empire in the ninth century. Genghis Khan and his Mongols overran its territory in 1220. In the 1300s, Timur, known in the west as Tamerlane, built an empire with its capital at Samarkand. Uzbekistan's most noted tourist sites date from the Timurid dynasty. Later, separate Muslim city-states emerged with strong ties to Persia. In 1865, Russia occupied Tashkent and by the end of the nineteenth century, Russia had conquered all of Central Asia. In 1876, the Russians dissolved the Khanate of Kokand, while allowing the Khanates of Khiva and Bukhara to remain as direct

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<sup>47</sup> Hopkirk, Peter. *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia*. (New York: Kondansha International, 1994), xv.

<sup>48</sup> Daniel C. Diller. *Russia and the Independent States* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1993), 263.

protectorates. Russia placed the rest of Central Asia under colonial administration, and invested in the development of Central Asia's infrastructure, promoting cotton growing and encouraging settlement by Russian colonists.

In 1924, following the establishment of Soviet power, the Soviet Socialist Republic of Uzbekistan was founded from the territories including the Khanates of Bukhara and Khiva and portions of the Fergana Valley that had constituted the Khanate of Kokand. During the Soviet era, Moscow used Uzbekistan for its tremendous cotton growing and natural resource potential. The extensive and inefficient irrigation used to support the former has been the main cause of shrinkage of the Aral Sea to less than a third of its original volume, making this one of the world's worst environmental disasters. Uzbekistan declared independence on September 1, 1991. Islam Karimov, former First Secretary of the Communist Party, was elected President in December 1991 with 88 percent of the vote; however, the election was not viewed as free or fair by foreign observers.

Uzbekistan possesses the largest and most competent military forces in the Central Asian region, having around 65,000 people in uniform. Its structure is inherited from the Soviet armed forces, although it is moving rapidly toward a fully restructured organization, which will eventually be built around light and Special Forces. The Uzbek Armed Forces' equipment is not modern, and training, while improving, is neither uniform nor adequate yet for its new mission of territorial security. The government has accepted the arms control obligations of the former Soviet Union, acceded to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (as a non-nuclear state), and has supported an active program by the U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) in western Uzbekistan (Nukus and Vozrozhdeniye Island). The Government of Uzbekistan spends about 3.7 percent of GDP on the military but has received a growing infusion of Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and other security assistance funds since 1998.<sup>49</sup>

## **2. Kyrgyzstan**

According to recent findings of Kyrgyz and Chinese historians, Kyrgyz history dates back to 201 B.C. The earliest descendents of the Kyrgyz people, who are believed to be of Turkic descent, lived in the northeastern part of what is currently Mongolia.

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<sup>49</sup> United States Department of State, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (July 2005) <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2924.htm> accessed 15 March 2006.

Later, some of their tribes migrated to the region that is currently southern Siberia and settled along the Yenisey River, where they lived from the sixth until the eighth centuries. They spread across what is now the Tuva region of the Russian Federation, remaining in that area until the rise of the Mongol Empire in the 13th century, when the Kyrgyz began migrating south. In the twelfth century, Islam became the predominant religion in the region. Most Kyrgyz are Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi school.

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Kyrgyz people settled in the territory currently known as the Kyrgyz Republic. In the early nineteenth century, the southern territory of the Kyrgyz Republic came under the control of the Khanate of Kokand, and the territory was formally incorporated into the Russian Empire in 1876. The Russian takeover instigated numerous revolts against tsarist authority, and many Kyrgyz opted to move into the Pamir mountains or to Afghanistan. The suppression of the 1916 rebellion in Central Asia caused many Kyrgyz to migrate to China.

Soviet power was initially established in the region in 1918, and in 1924, the Kara-Kyrgyz Autonomous Oblast was created within the Russian Federal Socialist Republic. (The term Kara-Kyrgyz was used until the mid-1920s by the Russians to distinguish them from the Kazakhs, who were also referred to as Kyrgyz.) In 1926, it became the Kyrgyz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. On December 5, 1936, the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) was established as a full Union Republic of the U.S.S.R.

During the 1920s, the Kyrgyz Republic saw considerable cultural, educational, and social change. Economic and social development also was notable. Literacy increased, and a standard literary language was introduced. The Kyrgyz language belongs to the Southern Turkic group of languages. In 1924, an Arabic-based Kyrgyz alphabet was introduced, which was replaced by Latin script in 1928. In 1941 Cyrillic script was adopted. Many aspects of the Kyrgyz national culture were retained despite suppression of nationalist activity under Joseph Stalin, who controlled the Soviet Union from the late 1920s until 1953. Kyrgyzstan bore the brunt of Stalin's efforts to russify Central Asia in the late 1920s and early 1930s. His repressive program resettled substantial portions of

the native population. Native leaders were replaced by Russian loyalist who assumed control of the government and the economy. Kyrgyzstan became a dependable source of cheap raw materials.<sup>50</sup>

The early years of glasnost in the late 1980s had little effect on the political climate in the Kyrgyz Republic. However, the republic's press was permitted to adopt a more liberal stance and to establish a new publication, Literaturny Kirghizstan, by the Union of Writers. Unofficial political groups were forbidden, but several groups that emerged in 1989 to deal with an acute housing crisis were permitted to function. In June 1990, ethnic tensions between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz surfaced in an area of the Osh Oblast, where Uzbeks form a majority of the population. Violent confrontations ensued, and a state of emergency and curfew were introduced.<sup>51</sup>

### **C. SOVIET UNION**

The re-conquest of the region by the Soviets brought increased development, as well as new administrative divisions responsible for that development in the Union Republics. The separate Soviet administrative districts provided not only the boundaries for the new states but a comprehensive plan for creating a subordinate administrative structure.

The Soviet purpose was not to create new nations but to manage a multinational empire. They wanted to deepen divisions in this Islamic region, while rewarding those that furthered the Soviet cause in their respective regions. Soviet authorities drew borders designed to leave significant minority populations stranded in each republic—division in order to rule. As a result, by the time the Soviet Union broke up, nearly 30 percent of the residents of Uzbekistan were not ethnic Uzbeks, while approximately 25 percent of Tajikistan was Uzbek.<sup>52</sup>

### **D. YELTSIN YEARS (1991–2000)**

Yeltsin forfeited a solid bond with the “near abroad” to pursue stronger ties with the west, namely the United States. Generally, he did not want to risk the new Russian

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<sup>50</sup> Diller., 255.

<sup>51</sup> United States Department of State, Bureau of south and Central Asian Affairs (April 2006) <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5755.htm> accessed 6 April 2006.

<sup>52</sup> Garnett, Sherman W., Alexander Rahr and Koji Watanabe. *The New Central Asia: In Search of Stability*. (New York: The Trilateral Commission, 2000), 3.

Federation's well-being on the struggling economy of Central Asia.<sup>53</sup> His government did attempt to retain some influence in the region through frail alliances and multi-lateral agreements. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Collective Security Treaty (CST) established weak alliances with the former states of the Soviet Union.

The new independent states of the former Soviet Union formed the CIS to ensure cooperation after the dissolution of the Soviet Union; however, many of its goals were never achieved. Yeltsin pushed for the CIS because he, like a lot of the world, felt that the Central Asian states were not capable of creating independent policy and were susceptible to foreign governments. The former republics rushed into the league without much thought of the CIS's basic principles other than the full independence of each member.<sup>54</sup> The CIS was simply an "instrument of civilized divorce" and not a binding organization.<sup>55</sup> Early after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it seemed as if Russia might assume the hegemonic role in Central Asia through the CIS. Russia signed a multitude of agreements and pacts with the individual Central Asian states, but most of them were never implemented. These bilateral agreements that did become operational weakened the CIS by not involving the whole Commonwealth. By the mid 1990s Central Asian expectations of Russian partnership dropped when the agreements and treaties weren't implemented due to a weak Russian economy. In the spring of 1994, Yeltsin announced the opening of thirty new military bases in the CIS; however, in reality Russia gained very little access to any of those.<sup>56</sup> The "far abroad," especially Europe and North America, enticed Russia's interest and investments rather than the "near abroad" which didn't seem to offer the country immediate benefits.

Signed in Tashkent in 1992, the CST looked to be another avenue for strengthening Russian military influence in the region, but it only amounted to a paper organization. Russia stressed the CST because it would ensure close military and security relations between Russia and the CIS countries. In other words, it would ensure Russia's leading role in the organization as the strongest military. The treaty mainly

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<sup>53</sup> Syroezhkin, "Central Asia Between the Gravitational Poles of Russia and China," in *Central Asia, A Gathering Storm?* 170.

<sup>54</sup> Fuller, *Central Asia: The New Geopolitics*, 9.

<sup>55</sup> Medvedev, *Rethinking The National Interest: Putin's Turn in Russian Foreign Policy*, 39.

<sup>56</sup> Allison and Jonson, *Central Asian Security*, 2.

dealt with external threats but also outlawed the use of force against partnering countries. All the Central Asian states except Turkmenistan signed the treaty. The CST never met its expectations because it never led to the creation of joint forces or policy. Councils convened to discuss security, but most of the signatories refused to integrate militarily. In 1999, Uzbekistan, the strongest military force in Central Asia, withdrew from the CST weakening it even more.<sup>57</sup> The attempted compromise between security requirements and state autonomy failed to strengthen Russia's role in Central Asia.

The post-Soviet regime was also concerned about what it believed to be the Turkish Government's Pan-Turkic policy in Central Asia. Concerning the convening of the second Turkic Summit in Istanbul in October 1994, Mikhail Demurin, spokesman of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs commented, "It is unthinkable that a summit based on the principle of nationality will not disturb Russia."<sup>58</sup> There were a number of initial meetings that were viewed as aggressive as well as grassroots contacts in the region; however it became clear that Turkey's influence in Central Asia was limited. After this realization trade between Turkey and Russia actually increased. This increase in commerce caused some rifts in Central Asia, primarily with Turkmenistan.

Yeltsin did not assert a clear policy toward Central Asia and was torn between strengthening relations in the near abroad or the west. His government lacked clear objectives and focused on maintaining status quo. However, the status quo didn't fulfill the Central Asian's states' needs and they looked west for military assistance. Joint training, exercises and programs like NATO's Partnership for Peace developed in the 1990s. Yeltsin recognized the growth of western influence and in a 1996 speech to the Russian Parliament, he called, "actions by states and their alliances...to undermine Russia's relations with former Soviet republics' a threat to national security."<sup>59</sup> Even so said, Russia did not take action in the 1990s to counteract western influence in Central Asia. Yeltsin wanted to stay cozy with the west to keep the potential economic progress that a relationship with them might provide. Central Asia, the soft underbelly of Russia,

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<sup>57</sup> Jonson, "Russia and Central Asia" in *Central Asian Security*, 104-108.

<sup>58</sup> Trenin, Dmitri. "Russia—NATO Relations: Time to Pick up the Pieces", *NATO Review*, vol. 48 (spring/summer 2000).

<sup>59</sup> Jonson, "The Security Dimension of Russia's Policy in South Central Asia" in *Russia Between East and West*, 139.

was a financial liability, but Yeltsin desired continued influence in its “backyard.” After the collapse, military spending decreased and Yeltsin was distracted by conflict in Chechnya. The fighting in Chechnya and Russia’s hard stance on the breakaway region gave rise to a new character, Vladimir Putin. Putin’s reputation was rising at the end of the 1990s as Russian influence in Central Asia was waning.

#### **E. PUTIN YEARS (2000–PRESENT)**

In August of 1999, Yeltsin appointed Vladimir Putin as Prime Minister and he quickly rose to power. He succeeded Yeltsin on December 31, 1999. With Putin in control, Russia would change its attitude toward the near abroad. Initially, Putin’s Russia bided its time and maintained the status quo. However, after the September 11 attacks on the United States and with the growing geostrategic importance of Central Asia, Putin began to step up Russian military presence in the region.

Putin added emphasis to Central Asia from the beginning. His first trips as Prime Minister in 1999 were to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan where he signed new bilateral agreements after Uzbekistan left the CST. In a speech to the Federation Council in 1999 he described Uzbek-Russian relations as a “strategic partnership” and placed all the Central Asian countries high on the foreign policy list.<sup>60</sup> Even though Putin visited Central Asia often and spoke about it to parliament, when Yeltsin stepped down and Putin became President, Yeltsin’s unwritten policy of no clear policy remained. There were no military additions to Central Asia or any significant military pacts. In 1999, when Uzbek Islamists took hostages in Kyrgyzstan, Russia offered supplies, but no troops to help Kyrgyzstan even though it asked for help. In fact, Defense Minister Sergeev stated that Central Asian states had to play the leading role in eradicating terrorist groups. Uzbekistan soldiers eliminated the terrorists since there were no Russian troops to help Kyrgyzstan.<sup>61</sup> In 2000, Putin approved a national security concept very similar to Yeltsin’s speech of 1996 that warned foreign countries about meddling in Central Asia. The concept “termed foreign efforts to ‘weaken’ Russia’s ‘position’ in

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<sup>60</sup> Jonson, “The Security Dimension of Russia’s Policy in South Central Asia” in *Russia Between East and West*, 133.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

Central Asia a security threat.”<sup>62</sup> The Russian liberals began to get upset at foreign policy for its lack of action. Putin withdrew troops from Cuba and Vietnam, strategically insignificant, yet symbolic bases. He acquiesced to the United States when it withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972 in 2000. Everything changed after September 11, 2001.

Putin assigned tasks in Central Asia to a number of security and defense savvy officials. Putin’s representative to the CIS states is the former head of the Foreign Intelligence Service. Former heads of the Federal Security Service and of the Foreign Intelligence Service have taken on roles in the private sector that deal mostly in Central Asia.<sup>63</sup> Putin seems to be making an effort to unify and concentrate his policy toward Central Asia with a focus on security and border protection. Russia considers Central Asia to be its southern border. Drugs and radical Islamic movements migrating from Afghanistan provide significant concern for Putin and the Russian government. Their goal appears to be to shore up the borders of Central Asia and to provide stability against the growth of radical Islamic movements. It seems easy to deduce from these appointments of security officials to the region that Putin has a unified plan; however, there is still no evidence of a written strategy toward Central Asia.

After September 11, 2001, the United States extended political courtesy to Russia in asking permission to have military presence in Central Asia. Noting the potential benefits of its internal struggle with Chechnya, Russia gave its blessing to use former Soviet bases as launching pads for attacks in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The United States established a base in Uzbekistan at Karshi-Khanabad and another in Kyrgyzstan at Manas. The other countries of Central Asia allowed over flight privileges to the United States. This marked the first time that the United States had a military base in the former Soviet Union. As the major United States campaign in Afghanistan slowed up, the Russians began to question why the United States was still in the region. The growing United States influence in the area became evident to Putin and he began to take action.

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<sup>62</sup> Nichol, “Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests,” CRS issue brief for Congress, 4.

<sup>63</sup> Allison, “Strategic Reassertion in Russia’s Central Asia Policy”, *International Affairs*, 282.



Russia updated the CST in September 2003 with the creation of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The members include Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Belarus, and Armenia. Turkmenistan still maintains neutrality and Uzbekistan did not join. The organization aims to combat terrorism and drug trafficking. It also seeks to create coordinated border security and an air defense system. Similar to the CST and the CIS, Russia is the largest and most powerful member which makes it the guarantor of security in the region. The organization allows Russia access to bases in all the signatory states. The absence of Uzbekistan created a weakness in the organization, as they have the largest military forces in Central Asia and are the dominant country. In 2004, Uzbekistan joined the organization, which will be discussed more in depth in Chapter IV.

In 2003, a new defense and security doctrine appeared in Russian policy. Sergei Ivanov, the Russian Defense minister and former KGB member, announced that Russia reserves the right to make preemptive strikes anywhere in the world, and specifically in Central Asia.<sup>64</sup> Russia's fear of extremist Muslims traveling through the porous borders into Central Asia and spreading to Russia prompted the new policy. The doctrine follows a tenant of the 2002 Bush Doctrine of preemptive attack to stop enemy aggression before it happens. Reading into this, it seems that Russia thinks of Central Asia as its southern border and assumes to still be the guarantor of security in Central Asia. Russia began to take a more aggressive stance in Central Asia in 2002.

Learning from Ukraine, where it threw in its lot with the ruling regime and lost, in Kyrgyzstan Moscow for the first time gave audience to opposition leaders well ahead of the riots that brought down the Akayev regime, while maintaining close ties with Mr. Akayev and giving him shelter in Russia after his overthrow. Mr. Putin swiftly accepted the change of guard in Kyrgyzstan, took the initiative in mediating to ensure smooth transition of power, and offered economic aid to Kyrgyzstan. The new Kyrgyz leaders in turn vowed to maintain close strategic ties with Russia.

Russian authors, such as Vladimir Radyuhin, claim the United States-orchestrated coup in Kyrgyzstan on March 24, 2005, posed a direct threat to Russia's "soft underbelly" – volatile Central Asia. The overthrow of President Askar Akayev, who ruled

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<sup>64</sup> Allison, "Strategic Reassertion of Russian Military Policy," *International Affairs*, 280.

Kyrgyzstan for the past fifteen years, has upset a precarious balance of ethnic and clan-based forces in Kyrgyzstan. The revolt has set on edge the big Uzbek minority in the south, which fears that the new nationalist Kyrgyz leadership may re-ignite ethnic tension in the hugely overpopulated and impoverished Fergana Valley where hundreds died in anti-Uzbek massacres in 1990.<sup>65</sup>

The revolution has presented a potentially frightening scenario of Kyrgyzstan splitting into two states divided by the high Tian Shan Mountains if its northern and southern clans fail to agree on power-sharing. This would turn southern Kyrgyzstan with its big Uzbek, Tajik and Uighur minorities into a focal point of regional rivalries involving China, which shares a 1,100-km border with Kyrgyzstan, as well as Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The region is yet to learn to live with the arbitrary borders drawn when the Soviet republics were set up in the 1920s in what was Tsarist Russia's Turkestan province. Stalin assigned the Uzbek cities of Osh and Jalalabad to Kyrgyzstan, and handed over the Tajik cities of Bukhara and Samarkand to Uzbekistan. It was in Osh and Jalalabad that the demonstrations began.

Any turmoil in Kyrgyzstan will benefit Islamism. In recent years southern Kyrgyzstan, where most people survive on \$4 a month, has emerged as a hotbed of Islamic militancy and a "Silk Road" for drug trafficking from Afghanistan to Russia and Europe. It was in southern Kyrgyzstan that Osama bin Laden's close associate, Juma Namangani, an ethnic Uzbeki, mounted armed attacks twice—in 1999 and 2000—in an effort to set up base for building a Central Asian Khalifat.

Radyuhin suggests that in order to counter United States influence Russia will have to do much more than engage Opposition leaders—it will have to drastically upgrade its informal presence in the former Soviet states.<sup>66</sup> Russia's Ambassador to Bishkek complained that Moscow's ideological and political resources in Kyrgyzstan were limited to twelve diplomats, whereas the U.S. was represented by scores of non-government organizations and foundations, such as the Freedom House, the National Democratic Institute, and the Soros Foundation. In a sign of a sweeping review of its

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<sup>65</sup> Vlaskimir Radyuhin. "Russia's Neighbors," *The Hindu* (7 April 2005). <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=5531> accessed 13 June 2005.

<sup>66</sup> Radyuhin, 2.

priorities in the former Soviet Union, Putin publicly admitted that the CIS failed to provide a mechanism for integration among former Soviet states by stating that "The CIS was created for civilized divorce."<sup>67</sup>

Russia's goals are four-fold. First, Russia wants to secure the borders of Central Asia, which it practically considers its southern border. The protection of the borders helps secure its next two goals which are stopping the spread of radicalism and stopping the flow of illegal drugs. Its last goal appears to be counteracting foreign influence in the region. The Soviets have always had a military presence in Central Asia in the form of bases and recruiting outposts. The bases were manned with personnel from other parts of the empire, with the mindset that if civil unrest ever became a reality, the decision to fire on the local population would be met with much less resistance. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the majority of these posts were abandoned with the most prized possessions (e.g., working vehicles, equipment, and furniture) being taken back to "mainland" Russia—except for the nuclear facilities which existed primarily in Kazakhstan. Over the years, the relations were built back up again, but certainly the door was left ajar for other influences in the area of military presence—as long as there was economic string attached to it. Noting the vacuum created by the collapse, China not only purchased military items from Russia for its own use, but it created an organization to address security in the region.

#### **F. SHANGHAI CORPORATION ORGANIZATION**

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is an intergovernmental organization founded in Shanghai on June 15, 2001, by six nations: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Its member states cover an area of over 30 million square kilometers, or about three fifths of Eurasia, with a population of 1,455 billion—about a quarter of the world's total population. As the principal architect of the SCO, China plays a leading role in its functioning, and aids the crystallization of the common interests that brought the six countries together in order to form the SCO.

The United States-led war on terror is generally deemed to be the beginning of a new alliance against terrorism, the fact that is overlooked in most quarters is that regional cooperation such as the SCO had proclaimed their union against terror well before the al-

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<sup>67</sup> Radyuhin, 3.

Qaeda-led attack on the United States. Indeed, such multilateral collaboration against terrorism cannot be said to be the result of the events of September 11, 2001—in all probability, it was perhaps mooted much earlier, in order to keep the United States from decisively entering the region. Led by the Peoples' Republic of China, the SCO has been able to ably address not only the question of terrorism, but has hammered out a coalition of states that have common security and economic concerns. However, criticism about the effectiveness of the SCO has been voiced in certain quarters because of the non-inclusion of important nations such as India in the coalition. Such criticism gains in degree when one considers the fact that India is a country that has been a victim of cross-border terror for a relatively longer period than most of the present SCO members. Moreover, the reported Sino-Russian concern that it would be difficult to keep Pakistan out of the SCO were India to be admitted meets skepticism because of the recognized sponsorship of not only anti India terror provided by Pakistan, but also because of the Islamic Republic's emergence as a fountainhead of Islamist terror in the region.

The earlier incarnation of the SCO was the Shanghai Five, a mechanism that originated and grew as a result of an endeavor by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, and Tajikistan. The primary goal of the apparatus was to strengthen confidence building and disarmament in the border regions. In 1996 and 1997, the heads of state of the five aforementioned nations met in Shanghai and Moscow respectively and signed the "Treaty on Deepening Military Trust in Border Regions and the Treaty on Reduction of Military Forces in Border Regions". Thereafter, the annual meetings became a customary practice and were held alternately in the five member states. The issues that were raised and discussed in the meeting gradually extended from building up trust in the border regions to mutually beneficial cooperation from building up trust in the border regions to mutually beneficial cooperation in the arena of politics, security, diplomacy, economics, trade, and other such areas.

On the fifth anniversary of the Shanghai Five, on June 15, 2001, the heads of state of its members and the President of Uzbekistan met in Shanghai, the place of birth of the mechanism. The convening heads of state signed a declaration admitting Uzbekistan as the sixth member of the Shanghai Five apparatus and jointly issued a "Declaration on the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization". The document announced that

for the purpose of upgrading the level of cooperation more effectively, to seize opportunities, and to deal with new challenges and threats, the six nations had decided to establish the SCO on the basis of the Shanghai Five mechanism.

In June 2002, the heads of SCO member states met in St. Petersburg, Russia, and signed the "SCO Charter," which clearly expounded the purposes and principles of the mechanism, its organizational structure, form of operation, cooperation orientation, and external relations, marking a tangible institution of this new organization within the limits of international law. According to the "SCO Charter" and the "Declaration on establishment of the SCO," the main purposes of SCO are:

- Strengthening mutual trust and good-neighborliness and friendship among member states.
- Developing their effective cooperation in political affairs, economy and trade, science and technology, culture, education, energy, transportation, environmental protection, and other fields.
- Working together to maintain regional peace, security, and stability, and
- Promoting the creation of a new international political and economic order featuring democracy, justice, and rationality.<sup>68</sup>

The SCO also abides by the following basic principles:

- Adherence to the purposes and principles of the "Charter of United Nations."
- Respect for each other's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, mutual non-use or threat of use of force.
- Equality among all member states.
- Settlement of all questions through consultations.
- Non-alignment and no directing against any other country or organization, and
- Opening to the outside world and willingness to carry all forms of dialogues, exchanges, and cooperation with other countries and relevant international or regional organizations.<sup>69</sup>

The SCO stands for and acts on a new security concept secured on mutual trust, disarmament, and cooperative security; a new state-to-state relationship with partnership instead of alignment at its core, and a new model of regional cooperation featuring

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<sup>68</sup> Guihong, Zhang AND Jaideep Saikia: "India-China and The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation" in PRC, Indian Perspectives on Competition, Cooperation in Central Asia (SAP20051103386005 New Delhi Aakrosh in English 01 Jan 05 Vol 8, No 26, pp 42-59)

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 50.

concerted effort by countries of all sizes, and mutually beneficial cooperation. In the course of development, a "Shanghai spirit" gradually took shape, a spirit characterized by mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, cooperation, respect for diversity, and common development.<sup>70</sup> It is important to understand what the tenets of the SCO are because as will be seen in Chapters IV and V, the statements issued by this group begin to carry more weight as the years pass, and especially in the case of Uzbekistan.

## **G. CONCLUSION**

Soviet interest in Central Asia was primarily restricted to natural resources and manpower pools. While the interest in natural resources may be the same for the current Russian administration, there is a significant interest in regional security. This concern about security has brought about increased pressure on the United States in the form of directives from the SCO, as well as a vested interest in strengthening military presence in these countries. The next chapter will outline Soviet and Russian military presence in Central Asia and the significance it holds for United States interests in the same region.

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<sup>70</sup> Guihong, Zhang AND Jaideep Saikia: 44.

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## IV. SOVIET/RUSSIAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN CENTRAL ASIA

### A. INTRODUCTION

The lack of geographical boundaries with Russia was just the beginning of boundary issues with its northern neighbor. Once the Great Game was complete, Central Asia was firmly in the control of Russia and ultimately the Soviet Union following the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. In order to create a buffer zone in the south, Stalin set about creating artificial republics in Central Asia. Created by a series of decrees from 1924-36, artificial boundaries were created for the five countries that did not reflect historical realities, ethnic groups or languages. The republics were not supposed to be viable independent entities. As Stalin was establishing in Eastern Europe, Soviet nationalities policies were aimed at breaking existing nationalities, or the fusion of people into a *homo sovieticus*. This Soviet social engineering was to be accomplished through declaring Russian the official language; breaking up large linguistic and cultural groups (e.g. Turkic) and religion (e.g. Islam); transforming minorities into majorities and vice-versa.

For many years following World War II and even after Stalin's death, the decision to publish Soviet strategy was not a primary concern. Eventually however, the relationship between policy and military strategy was analyzed in a book entitled *Military Strategy* written by a team of authors appointed by Krushchev. This book was published in three editions, 1962, 1963, and 1968. With a primary goal of causing concern in the West, this book did not provide in-depth analysis of policy or doctrine. It included statements such as:

The recognition of war as a means of policy defines the relationship between military strategy and policy which is based on the principle of complete subordination of the former to the latter...[and] the goals and tasks of strategy are defined by and directly stem from the aims and goals of state policy, of which military strategy is one means.<sup>71</sup>

The Soviet engineered "top-down" approach to building a state would have serious implications in the future of Central Asia. The Soviet system of institutions,

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<sup>71</sup> Voennaya strategiya (Military Strategy), 2d ed. (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1963), 24. in Soviet Strategic Thought, 1917-91 by Andrei A. Kokoshin (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), 50.



administrations, and ideologies were forced onto an area where it was previously unknown. Ironically, *milli*, the Turkic word for “national,” referred to a religious and cultural community which had not territory or state of its own, describes Central Asia perfectly.

## **B. UZBEKISTAN**

Uzbekistan has been more influenced by the west than Russia in the recent past, but that is changing rapidly. It is the Central Asian state that Russia has tried to influence the most militarily. Uzbeks are the most populous race in the region and the country is the most powerful force among the Central Asian states. Russia overlooks Uzbekistan’s awful human rights record and appreciates the state’s hard line actions on radical Islamists. Uzbekistan’s reentry into the CSTO and new agreements with Russia show Russia’s growing military influence in Central Asia. Uzbekistan will be a key ally to Russia.

Uzbekistan’s pull-out of the CST showed Russia’s forfeiture of influence in the 1990’s. Uzbekistan sought military aid and benefits from the west as Russia showed no clear strategy or willingness to help. After it left the CST, Uzbekistan joined GUUAM, an alliance between Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova. GUUAM members lean toward the west and actively participate with NATO and the Partnership for Peace program.<sup>72</sup> Russia attempted to keep Uzbekistan close and included them in a military exercise with the members of the CSTO. CIS Southern Shield 1999, in late fall 1999, was a command and staff exercise based on the Islamic incursion into Kyrgyzstan earlier that year. CIS Southern Shield 2000, another exercise, put troops from all the CSTO states plus Uzbekistan in joint combat training for the first time.<sup>73</sup> When Russia lost Uzbekistan’s partnership in the CSTO, they seemed to step up influence with the country.

After September 11, Uzbekistan allowed the United States to use Karshi-Khanabad air base for operations in Afghanistan. Russia allied itself with America in the global war on terror, but couldn’t have been very content with the United States’ growing

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<sup>72</sup> Jonson, “Security Policy in South Central Asia, in *Russia Between the East and West*, 134.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

influence. Uzbekistan was involved with NATO and the Partnership for Peace and received military aid from the United States. Recently, Uzbekistan has switched allies and has begun to side with Russia.

Russia has won back Uzbekistan's interest and their partnership is growing. Uzbekistan fears Islamic insurgents as much as Russia and fears the growing calls from the United States for democratic revolution. Uzbekistan's President Karimov called for the United States to leave the base at Karshi-Khanabad by January 2006; the United States finished operations and moved out the last week of November 2005. In September, Russia and Uzbekistan held joint military exercises. The Russian 76<sup>th</sup> Airborne and several Special Forces groups participated along with equal numbers of Uzbek troops. On November 14, 2005, Karimov and Putin signed a military treaty at the Kremlin that calls for each country to provide military aid to the other in the event of aggression.

With the United States departure from Uzbekistan, Russia has the opportunity to move its own forces in. Russia will take over the airbase at Karshi-Khanabad within the next year as soon as Uzbekistan is officially a member of the CSTO.<sup>74</sup> However, General Yuri Baluyevsky, the Russian chief of the General Staff, said "Russia sees no need to deploy troops to Uzbekistan, even though an alliance treaty signed last month allows that." He also stated that Russia reserves the right to defend its interests in the former Soviet sphere of influence.<sup>75</sup> Only the future can tell what Russia will do, but it seems that Russia will take Karshi-Khanabad with its expanding military role in Central Asia.

### **C. KYRGYZSTAN**

In 2003, Russia signed a 15 year lease and established an airbase at Kant, 30 kilometers from the United States airbase at Manas. Russia's first foreign military base to be established since the breakup of the Soviet Union, Kant seems to be a deliberate attempt to detract the United State's growing influence. The lease of Kant along with the growing number of military exercises in Kyrgyzstan suggests Russia's military influence is increasing.

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<sup>74</sup> Soloviev, Safronov and Zuverink, "The Change of Guards," *Kommersant, Russia's Daily Online*, 24 November 2005.

<sup>75</sup> Isachenk, "U.S. Presence in Asia Concerns Russia," Associated Press, 1 Dec 2005.

Russia began to add training operations in Kyrgyzstan in 2002. South Anti-terror 2002 was a series of operational-tactical exercises that took place in Kyrgyzstan in April 2002. The regional Antiterrorist Center based in Bishkek was involved in the exercises, as well as ground forces, combat aircraft and air defense systems.<sup>76</sup> The exercises build interdependence on each other for security. In 2003, Russia found another avenue of military influence in Kyrgyzstan.

Russia used Kant in the 1990's until contentions arose about Kyrgyzstan's debt to Russia. Kyrgyzstan wanted to charge Russia rent for use of the base, but Russia only wanted to provide military training in exchange. In late 2002, Russian Frontal Aviation and Military Transport planes deployed to Kant in support of the Collective Rapid Deployment Force of the CSTO.<sup>77</sup> Soon afterwards, in October 2003, Russia officially opened the base at Kant. President Putin claimed that the former President of Kyrgyzstan, Akeev, initiated the idea, but there are no sources to confirm this. Russia has spent 3.3 million dollars in reconstruction, and will spend another 10 million dollars to modernize it.<sup>78</sup> The base currently maintains five SU-27's, five SU-25's, seven Il-76 and An-26's, five L-39's and two Mi-8 helicopters, and around 900 troops in a land component.<sup>79</sup> In 2004, Russia used its new base to launch joint exercises with the members of the CSTO. Frontier 2004 included over 2000 troops from Russia and the Central Asian members of the organization. Russian aircraft, both jets and helicopters, struck targets with live munitions in Kyrgyzstan for the first time.<sup>80</sup> In March, Russia announced that it planned to increase the number of aircraft and the capability of Kant. They plan to enlarge the runway, modernize equipment and increase the number of combat aircraft, according to Russia's 5<sup>th</sup> Air and Air Defense Commander.<sup>81</sup>

Russia may be looking to expand its presence in Kyrgyzstan. The new President of Kyrgyzstan, Kurmanbek Saliyevich Bakiyev, has suggested that Russia establish a

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<sup>76</sup>McDermott and O'Malley, "The Russian Air Force in Kyrgyzstan: The Security Dynamics, *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute*, May 2005, 36.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Escobar, "Silk Road Roving: Touching Base," *Central Asia Times Online*, 15 November 2003.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Blagov, "Russia Unfazed by U.S. plan," *Central Asia Times Online*, 20 August 2004.

<sup>81</sup> "Russia To Beef Up Air Fleet at Kant Base in Kyrgyzstan," *Moscow News*, *Mosnews.com*, 7 Mar 2005.

base in the Osh region. However, in November, the Kyrgyzstan defense minister stated that Russia has no intention of moving into the Osh region. He also mentioned that the Russian base in Kant is a powerful stabilizer in the region.<sup>82</sup> Although Russia is expanding militarily in the region, it would be surprising to see them establish operations in Osh. They already have Kant in Kyrgyzstan, and it would make more sense for Russia to establish operations in Uzbekistan where the United States left behind a useful infrastructure.

#### **D. BORDER DISPUTES**

The ongoing squabbles over unresolved border issues constitute another factor contributing to the instability in the region. This problem directly emanates directly from Stalin's decision to re-draw the borders of the Central Asian republics in the 1920s. The borders were drawn with no apparent rhyme or reason other than the Soviet leader's attempts to keep these republics in constant turmoil and dependent on Moscow for security and stability.

The majority of the border issues are centered in the Ferghana Valley region of Central Asia. This region is considered the heart of Central Asia because it is where the majority of the population is located. Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan share common borders within this region. The borders between these three nations in the Ferghana Valley are complex and bewildering. The Soviet re-drawing of the borders left thousands of people of various ethnic minorities stranded in enclaves in each of the three nations.

Two examples are the problematic Sukh and Vorukh enclaves in Kyrgyzstan. "The Sukh Enclave, with a population of 43,000 people and an area the size of the Gaza Strip, is part of Uzbekistan, stranded in and surrounded on all sides by Kyrgyzstan...The enclave is predominantly populated by Tajiks."<sup>83</sup> The Vorukh enclave, also within Kyrgyzstan, is actually part of the territory of Tajikistan, with the majority of the population consisting of Tajiks.

The difficulties which these borders create have only been exacerbated by the governments of these Central Asian states. Strict border policies (and, in the case of

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<sup>82</sup> "Kyrgyzstan not planning to host new Russian airbase – minister," Interfax, 11 November 2005.

<sup>83</sup> Rashid, 159.

Uzbekistan, mining of the border areas) continue to create tension among the three states. Uzbekistan mined its borders with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in an attempt to stop IMU incursions.

The strict border regulations have taken their toll on the poverty-stricken population. “The new borders have divided villages, farms, and families. For farmers to visit their relatives in the next village across the border, they now need a passport that costs the equivalent of a hundred dollars and a visa costing ten.”<sup>84</sup>

Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in Kyrgyzstan on October 22, 2003 to attend the official opening of a Russian air base in Kant, near the capital, Bishkek. The new Russian air base is in a country that is already hosting other military visitors -- part of the U.S.-led antiterrorism coalition engaged in Afghanistan. Kyrgyz Defense Minister Esen Topoev has ensured that Russia's air base will have a "sobering effect" on terrorist groups planning to destabilize the region. The agreement will be in force for at least 15 years, but may then be extended by five-year terms. More than 500 military and civilian personnel and about 20 aircraft—including attack planes, fighter planes, transport planes, and helicopters—will be based in Kant. Four trainer planes will also be transferred from Kyrgyzstan's armed forces.

## **E. AFGHANISTAN**

The underlying reason for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan is summed up in what became known as the Brezhnev Doctrine which stated, “once a communist state always a communist state”, which in essence means that the Soviet Union possessed the right and duty to intervene in neighboring countries if and when an existing socialist regime was threatened. In April 1978, the Soviets helped establish Nur M. Taraki and his Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) as the ruling regime. In 1979, there were a number of trips by Soviet leadership to ascertain the stability of this new regime, but by September, Taraki had been assassinated and the Soviet Politburo decided to put the Brezhnev Doctrine to the test. The strategy in Afghanistan centered around the following political and military objectives: 1) transforming the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan into an effective and legitimate ruling party 2) winning the population’s

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<sup>84</sup> Rashid, 161.

support or at least to have subdued acceptance of the regime 3) building up the armed forces of the DRA to make it capable of defending the regime and 4) eliminating the resistance.<sup>85</sup>

Military failure is often the result of a flawed strategy and in the case of the Soviet-Afghan War, the Soviet strategy was flawed “in terms of ends, ways, and means, including execution.”<sup>86</sup> Although the Soviet strategy in Afghanistan proved to be flawed after the engagement began, it did have a thought out plan with specific objectives for its military leaders to reach for. Chechnya however, is a classic case of exacting revenge without clear-cut objectives. Removing bandits from the mountains of Chechnya is a police responsibility and the lack of a clear objective also means that it will be very hard to determine when the fighting will end.

Soviet operations in Afghanistan can be divided up into four phases: invasion and initial occupation, occupation, counterinsurgency, and turning point. Four months after a general staff team visited Afghanistan, another team consisting of over 50 officers from the Soviet Ground Forces made a similar visit. In September 1979, several divisions in the Central Asian military district began to mobilize, followed in October with similar movements in Turkestan. Repositioning of aircraft and logistical stockpiles were moved to the Soviet border. These were all in preparation for phase one. Phase two, which began in January 1980, included 50,000 personnel that were a part of the Limited Contingent of Soviet Forces in Afghanistan (LCSFA). The LCSFA’s primary responsibility was to provide a base of stability so that the DRA Armed Force could go out and capture and/or neutralize insurgents, ensuring that the Soviet forces would have minimal contact with the local population. Ultimately the plan was for the LCSFA to be withdrawn within two years time.

After three years of war, however, the LCSFA had made little progress toward achieving its objectives, the DRA Armed Forces continued to be ill-trained and non-trustworthy. Meanwhile the Mujahideen increased in strength, numbers and amount of territory controlled. Based on these facts and the unwillingness to send in the more than 500,000 troops it would take to achieve its objectives, phase three turned to

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<sup>85</sup> Scott McMichael, “The Soviet-Afghan War,” in *The Military History of the Soviet Union*, edited by Robin Higham and Frederick W. Kagan (New York: PALGRAVE, 2002), 270.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, 261.

counterinsurgency methods to include replacing leadership, establishing Soviet schools for the population, undermine the religious leaders, and most damaging—destroying agricultural necessities. Having failed to crush the insurgents by 1987, the Soviet High Command realized that victory was out of reach, and in 1988 Gorbachev's regime began the withdrawal process.

The Mujahideen had a different perspective, but also divided the war into four phases. Their first phase was the initial nationwide resistance to the invading Soviets and Afghan communists. Their second phase was a reorganization phase in which the Mujahideen structured their headquarters, organized for the receipt and distribution of arms and material, and began training their forces for the prolonged war to drive the Soviets out. Their third phase was surviving the more technologically advanced Soviet military. Phase four was also the turning point for the Mujahideen who increased attacks to speed up the withdrawal of the Soviets.<sup>87</sup>

By 1994, the Mujahideen had been replaced by the Chechens as the target of military operations. In November 1994, the bulk of the operations in Chechnya were clandestine using special Soviet forces to stir unrest, even attempt to take out elements of Dudayev's regime.<sup>88</sup> By December, the clandestine operations were abandoned and the military openly sought to unseat Dudayev. The result, however, was a long series of military operations bungled by the Russians and stymied by the traditionally rugged guerrilla forces of the Chechen separatists. The initial Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a great tactical success. On December 24, 1979 they conducted an air-landing assault at Kabul and Bagram airports to link up with pre-existing forces that were put in place covertly. Within days a special strike force had killed President Amin. In addition, five Soviet motorized rifle divisions (MRDs) with air support advanced from the north and soundly defeated the remaining DRA troops. This was a fine example of great military execution. Unfortunately, the conventional belief that taking the capital and killing the leader signaled victory would haunt the Soviet forces for many years and lives to come.

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<sup>87</sup> The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost*, translated and edited by Lester W. Grau and Micheal A. Gress (Lawrence, KS: Kansas University Press, 2002), xiv.

<sup>88</sup> The Russian General Staff, 113.

Once the counterinsurgency phase was enacted, the tactics for carrying out the operation went from bad to worse. In an effort to wage economic warfare, the Soviets used whatever they could to destroy agriculture and villages that were thought to be sympathetic to the Mujahideen.

Bombers, artillery, rockets, anti-personnel mines and chemical munitions were all used to bombard villages, destroy agricultural infrastructure, burn crops, contaminate food stocks and water, and kill livestock.<sup>89</sup>

The decision to allow these gangster tactics were beyond the scope of what the military exists for and it only served to strengthen the resolve of the opposition and the hatred against the occupiers. The unfair tactics and senseless killings also opened the door for the British and United States to engage via supplying anti-aircraft weaponry. This support greatly shifted the balance in favor of the Mujahideen.

## **F. CONCLUSION**

Despite the events in the early 1990s, including the Tajik civil war and the incident in the Namangan province of Uzbekistan, radical Islam was not considered a major problem in Central Asia until 1996 when the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan. The Taliban victory in Afghanistan ensured a secure place for the training, coordination and economic backing of radical Islamic groups throughout the world, including the Islamic Movement Uzbekistan (IMU). Although the rise of the Taliban united the Central Asian governments in cooperation to fight militant Islam, it was not until 1999 that “a shift took place from only talking about regional cooperation to taking real measures against Islamists.”<sup>90</sup>

Two events in 1999 caused the shift: the attempted assassination of Uzbek President Islam Karimov in a series of car bombings in Tashkent in February and the incursion by Islamists into the Batken region of Kyrgyzstan in August. The incursions resulted in the kidnapping of several hostages. These two events illustrated the extreme threat posed by radical Islamic groups which now confronted the governments of the Central Asian states.

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<sup>89</sup> McMichael, 266.

<sup>90</sup> Alexie Malashenko, “Islam in Central Asia,” in *Central Asian Security*, ed. by Roy Allison and Lena Johnson (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 55.



Since the U.S.-led war against the Taliban regime and the Al Qaeda terrorist network in Afghanistan began in October 2001, the threat posed by the IMU in Central Asia has significantly decreased but has not disappeared. A large number of IMU fighters were either killed or scattered while fighting alongside Taliban and al Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan. According to the State Department's *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001*, the military leader of the IMU, Juma Namangani, was killed during an air strike at the battle of Konduz in November 2001.<sup>91</sup>

Members of the Russian Duma and Russian military officials have been the most outspoken critics of United States policy in the Central Asian region. They contend that the presence of the United States and NATO in Central Asia is an attempt to force Russia out of the region, gain control of the region's energy resources, and force a wedge between Russia and China in the SCO. In January 2002 the Speaker of Russia's lower house of parliament, the Duma, Gennadii Seleznev, voiced his opposition to the presence of United States forces in the region. During his visit to Tajikistan, Seleznev stated that "The long-term military presence of the United States in the region is not in Russia's interests."<sup>114</sup> In February 2002 the Director of the Russian Federal Border Guard Service, Konstantine Totskiy, also commented on the establishment of United States bases in the Central Asian region. "If the United States and other countries intend to stay here [i.e., in Central Asia] for good, we cannot agree to that."<sup>92</sup>

Despite the views of some leaders of the Russian Duma and Russian military, Putin evidently understands that if Russia is to grow into a "superpower" once again, Russia must cooperate with the West and with the United States in particular. Putin's government also views the presence of NATO and United States forces in the Central Asian region as an added measure of security and stability that will allow him more time to re-build Russia's deteriorating military. Putin's foreign minister, Igor Ivanov, expressed this positive view of United States and NATO forces in the region during his

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<sup>91</sup> *Patterns of Global Terrorism, 2001*. The U.S. Department of State website available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/10291.pdf>

<sup>92</sup> Totskiy in British Broadcasting Corporation Summary of World Broadcasts, SU/4422, 7 February 2002, quoted in Mark A. Smith, *Russia, the USA & Central Asia*, F77 (Camberley, England: Conflict Studies Research Center, May 2002), p. 3. Available at <http://www.csrc.ac.uk>

interview with the Russian newspaper *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* in December 2002. When questioned about U.S.-Russia relations, Ivanov spoke about the positive factor of United States forces in the Central Asian region:

We had constantly been indicating that the threat to our interests, a real threat at that, was coming from the south, primarily from the territory of Afghanistan. It is clear that Russia could hardly have tackled the task of eliminating the seat of terrorism in Afghanistan on its own, single-handedly. It had been accomplished by the efforts of the international coalition. Have our southern borders become more secure as a result? Absolutely...Yes, we have to make compromises, one of them has been the appearance in this region of U.S., and not only U.S., servicemen who are solving the task connected with the international operation in Afghanistan.<sup>93</sup>

Russia recently has begun to counteract United States presence in the area. The new base at Kant, Kyrgyzstan is only 20 kilometers from the United States airbase at Manas. Russia maintains membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a partnership with China and all of the Central Asian states except Turkmenistan. In the summer of 2005, the SCO expressed its displeasure with United States military bases in Central Asia. This coupled with the incident at Andijon, Uzbekistan forced the United States to commit to leaving Uzbekistan within six months. Uzbekistan's unfriendly action toward the United States was surely backed by Russia and spurred by Uzbekistan's disgruntlement with the United States' new disdain with Uzbekistan's poor human rights record. In particular relations became severely strained over Uzbek troops' suppression of an uprising in May in the city of Andijan. In July, the Uzbek government gave United States forces six months to leave. Some argue that without the backing of Russia, and the possibility of new military accords, Uzbekistan never would have forced the United States out. Russia is attempting to reestablish itself as the main military influence, and is experiencing success.

On November 14, 2005, the presidents of Russia and Uzbekistan signed a military treaty forging an alliance that reasserts Moscow's influence in the former Soviet republic. The deal, which could foreshadow the establishment of a Russian military base there,

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<sup>93</sup> Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Igor Ivanov, interview with the newspaper *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 30 December 2002. From the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Information and Press Department.

allows each country the use of military installations on the other's territory. The agreement also calls for them to provide military aid to each other in the event either is facing "aggression."<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Peter Finn. "Russia-Uzbek Military Pact Allows Mutual Use of Bases: Alliance Reasserts Moscow's Influence in Ex-Soviet Republic," *Washington Post*, November 15, 2005, 15.

## **V. UNITED STATES MILITARY PRESENCE IN CENTRAL ASIA**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The attack on United States soil rallied public support for decisive military action even stronger than the first Gulf War. As suspects were named and ties to Al Qaeda were verified, that decisive military action was just a matter of time. As with all military actions there are contingency plans to help guide the forces in obtaining objectives. President Bush told the country that terrorists would be pursued and brought to justice no matter where they were or no matter how long it would take. This open-ended declaration will be important in examining the military presence situation. Part of a successful operation is being able to supply and sustain forces to carry out the mission in the field. As plans became reality a new partnership arose in the form of agreements between the United States and many of the Central Asian countries. The objective of this chapter is to discuss the negotiations and permissions needed to secure United States military presence in Central Asia—from the bandwaggoning war on terror to the inward look of each regime for sustained relationships.

Since September 11, 2001, the United States has fought two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In these wars, the United States has sustained forces in Central Asia and the Caucasus over an extended period by sea and air for the first time in history. Thus, American leaders and commanders revealed that United States forces would and could be optimized for global power projection capabilities, and that new theaters like Central Asia were of considerable strategic importance to Washington. Their actions reflected the importance of that area as a potential theater of strategic operations.

The challenge is that these zones are epicenters of domestic instability and great power rivalry. Moreover, the United States concept of foreign access is changing dramatically due to the new Global Posture Review. Therefore, our future access to these areas will not resemble that of the past with sprawling bases, but will remain relatively austere pending future contingencies. To secure and maintain that access, it is not enough to have a purely contractual military relationship with these states when a crisis arises. Instead, we need a holistic and strategically conceived program of interaction with them

to help them ward off challenges to domestic security and threats from nearby great powers who would like to subordinate these new and fragile states to their own quasi-imperial designs. Thus the United States has to help strengthen our partners not only against terrorism, but also against threats that could lead to it if state order breaks down. In other words, our presence must become one that is regarded by local governments as not being a purely contractual or one-shot deal, but rather as having a legitimacy acquired by an overall improvement of domestic and foreign security.

Since the United States cannot count on direct unmediated access to battlefields, even in less distant and remote regions than Afghanistan, it must pioneer in creating new joint, expeditionary fighting organizations that can project power to distant theaters and gain access to them in peacetime and wartime.<sup>95</sup> And, if possible, it must urgently find a basis for operating in new areas as well. As Robert Harkavy has written, planners can no longer count on anything close to such access. A large portion of the troops and aircraft once in Europe have since returned to the continental United States. Access to, and transit rights over, such states as Morocco, Egypt, Turkey, and even Saudi Arabia are problematic, depending much more than before on the nature of the crisis, despite a much larger “permanent” presence in several of the Gulf Cooperation Council states. Even Europe could be in question if the political divide between the United States and the European Union over Middle Eastern policies should widen. Hence, worst-case scenarios have envisioned the United States in a tough situation, attempting to intervene in the Gulf area mostly from bases in the continental United States and from carrier battle groups and amphibious formations.<sup>96</sup>

Thus the importance of theaters like Central Asia, United States strategic access to them, and the need for joint war fighting and power projection entities are linked and increasingly important, if not vital issues. But that linkage also mandates working with partners and allies to create enduring coalitions enabling us and them to achieve common strategic goals.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> “Air Force Lacks Basing Options for Airstrikes on Afghanistan,” *Inside the Air Force*, October 12, 2001, p. 1.

<sup>96</sup> Robert Harkavy, “Strategic Geography and the Greater Middle East,” *Naval War College Review*, Vol. LIV, No. 4, Autumn 2001, 45.

<sup>97</sup> Blank, Stephen J. *After Two Wars: Reflections on the American Strategic Revolution in Central Asia*. (Strategic Studies Institute: July 2005),

Following the September 11 attacks on the United States, it took planners nearly three weeks to forge alliances, prepare plans against the Taliban and Al Qaeda, and put in place the over flight, basing, and special-access agreements essential for Operation Enduring Freedom. In the new era of combating terrorism and terrorist, three weekends could literally be an eternity for this new threat. Ramstein Air Base, Germany served as the principal strategic hub for all airlift operations supporting Operation Enduring Freedom. Armenia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Pakistan granted over flight privileges.

## **B. UZBEKISTAN**

In preparation for the war in Afghanistan, USCENTCOM and the USAF completed site surveys of many Central Asian airfields, entered agreements with three of the countries, and negotiated limited use of airfields in the other two.<sup>98</sup> Uzbekistan was the first country to offer access rights to United States military forces for operations in Afghanistan. It offered Khanabad for all but offensive combat operations, serving as a logistics hub in support of ground forces in Afghanistan, search and rescue operations, and Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) launch and recovery. In exchange for use of airfields, the United States signed an agreement with Uzbekistan on 12 March 2002 for future cooperation and security arrangements.<sup>99</sup> A secret agreement was reached with Uzbekistan to move United States troops into the country to secure bases to airlift supplies to the Northern Alliance.

The United States recognized the independence of Uzbekistan on December 25, 1991, and opened an embassy in Tashkent in March 1992. The United States believes that its own interests will best be served by the development of an independent, stable, prosperous, and democratic Central Asia. As the most populous country in Central Asia and the geographic and strategic center of Central Asia, Uzbekistan plays a pivotal role in the region. The United States accordingly has developed a broad relationship covering political, military, nonproliferation, economic, trade, assistance, and related issues. This

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<sup>98</sup> William D. O'Malley, *Central Asia and South Caucasus as an Area of Operations: Challenges and Constraints*, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2003), 249.

<sup>99</sup> O'Malley, 249.

has been institutionalized through the establishment of the U.S.-Uzbekistan Joint Commission, which held its first meeting in February 1998.

The United States has consulted closely with Uzbekistan on regional security problems, and Uzbekistan has been a close ally of the United States at the United Nations. Uzbekistan has been a strong partner of the United States on foreign policy and security issues ranging from Iraq to Cuba, nuclear proliferation to narcotics trafficking. It has sought active participation in Western security initiatives under the Partnership for Peace, OSCE, and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. Uzbekistan views its American ties as balancing regional influences, helping Uzbekistan assert its own regional role, and encouraging foreign investment. Uzbekistan was an ardent supporter of United States military actions in Afghanistan and of the war against terror overall.

The Karimov regime had begun rethinking the notion that friendship with the United States could make good relations with Russia unnecessary. In the meantime, the Uzbek regime did not appear to have become less repressive, and popular disaffection in the country also seemed to be on the rise, driven not just by the limited capacity for political expression but increasingly by the economic hardships caused by border closings. Prices rose, and corrupt officials continued to take their share of proceeds. Protests grew, including in rural farming areas.<sup>100</sup> Such a situation is particularly worrisome in a repressive environment where there are few mechanisms for nonviolent resolution of conflict. In such cases it becomes increasingly likely that the government will respond with violence to any unrest that does occur.

In May 2005 in Uzbekistan's Andijan province, there was a jailbreak, followed by a public political demonstration, which resulted in bloodshed. On the night of May 12–13, a number of prisoners, many of them reportedly held on charges of Islamic radical activism (which they denied) were freed from the local jail by a group of armed men. The armed men took hostages, and, according to Uzbek officials, killed at least some of them. They seized the main municipal building and attempted to capture the national security service headquarters, but failed in the attempt. They then led a street protest in the square in front of the seized municipal building. Local residents joined in complaint against

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<sup>100</sup> Olga Oliker and David A. Shlapak, *U.S. Interest in Central Asia*, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2005), 27.

Andijan and Uzbek authorities. Security forces fired into the growing crowd, which included both the armed men who carried out the jailbreak and unarmed civilians.

Authorities eventually blocked off and stormed the square, according to eyewitness reports. Uzbek officials report that 187 people died, including Uzbek security personnel. Some human rights groups have cited much higher numbers of dead, in the thousands.<sup>101</sup>

The Andijan events heightened Uzbek tension with the United States. Tashkent refused an independent international investigation into the incident, although it did invite the United States and the UK to send representatives to a commission it was forming. Both countries declined. Russia, on the other hand, expressed support for Uzbekistan, as did China, which Uzbek President Islam Karimov visited on the heels of the crisis.

In late July 2005, Uzbekistan formally terminated an agreement allowing the United States to use the Karshi-Kanabad (K2) Airbase in support of its military operations in Afghanistan. The Armed Forces Press Service reported that the United States had been given 180 days to vacate the facility which it had used since October 2001 and reportedly housed approximately 800 personnel.<sup>102</sup> The termination of the agreement followed criticism increased restrictions on the use of the base by the Uzbek government as well as rising tensions between the two countries, specifically criticism from the United States and its calls for an independent inquiry into the May 2005 clashes between Uzbek security forces and civilians in the city of Andijan.

On August 26, 2005, Uzbekistan's Senate approved the Uzbek government's order calling for the withdrawal of United States military forces from the country and the Karshi-Kanabad Airbase. Additionally, some senators demanded compensation for environmental damages caused by the United States at the facility.

### **C. KYRGYZSTAN**

In December 2001, America signed a one-year lease/access agreement with Kyrgyzstan for use of the Manas International Airport near the capital of Bishkek. The United States military built a 37-acre base extension to the airport with an administration

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<sup>101</sup> Olga Olikier and David A. Shlapak 28.

<sup>102</sup> Jim Garamone, "Uzbeks ask U.S. to leave Karshi-khanabad," American Forces Press Service, 1 August 2005. [http://www.af.mil/news/story\\_print.asp?storyID=123011198](http://www.af.mil/news/story_print.asp?storyID=123011198) accessed 2 August 2005.



headquarters, housing, warehouses, munitions bunkers, fuel tanks, etc. It was clearly the best operational base that United States forces had for direct access into the region. This facility supported a variety of missions and was a strategic logistics, refueling, and operational hub for air forces supporting operations over Afghanistan. It was used to transport troops and cargo to bases in the Afghan cities of Kandahar, Bagram, and Mazar-i-Sharif; stage tactical fighter operations over Afghanistan; and launch unmanned UAVs. Unlike the agreements with other nations, the agreement with Kyrgyzstan did not limit the type of aircraft or missions that allies could perform from Manas. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan both provided critical over flight rights and limited access to their airfields. It cannot be overemphasized that these countries provided critical staging bases on the perimeter of

Kyrgyzstan favors close relations with the United States and would like to deepen bilateral relations. Kyrgyzstan has advanced quickly in the area of democratic reform; however, recent setbacks in democratization have caused serious concern IIN the United States and make it difficult to expand relations to areas outside of security and the economy. The United States is disturbed by the deregistration of political parties, the pursuit of criminal charges, and the arrests of political figures by the Kyrgyz Government in order to pressure opposition. Because of the threat posed by insurgents and their ties to foreign terrorist organizations, security remains a top concern of the United States. The United States Government provides humanitarian assistance, non-lethal military assistance, and assistance to support economic and political reforms. It also has supported Kyrgyzstan's requests for assistance from international organizations. The United States helped Kyrgyzstan accede to the WTO in December 1998, and United States assistance has aided Kyrgyzstan to implement necessary economic reforms, support the Ferghana Valley, and fund important health programs.

Manas, the international airport at Bishkek (named after the mythical national hero), was modernized in 1988 to make it the most modern commercial airport in Central Asia. Manas has a 13,800-foot long runway, built for Soviet bombers. There is room for four C-17 or C-5 cargo planes to park along the taxiway. The base lies about 1,500 kilometers from Kandahar, a three-hour flight.

The facility covers 37 acres. It is fenced off by a concrete wall at the top of which coiled razor wire has been placed. Four watchtowers overlook the facility which holds roughly 300 tents, a fitness room, a chapel, a post office, a recreation room as well as a \$5 million, 60-bed military hospital which opened in April 2002, and is manned by South Korean troops.

The facility was unofficially renamed Ganci Air Base, after Chief Peter J. Ganci Jr., chief of the New York City Fire Department who gave his life Sept. 11 during the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. Although the United States Air Force is renowned for providing for the comfort of its troops, American airmen here say Ganci is setting a new standard for comfortable deployments downrange.

The Air Force's 376th Air Expeditionary Wing was been tasked with operating the facility which also houses troops from South Korea, the Netherlands, Denmark, Australia, Norway and Spain. The 786th Security Forces Squadron is part of the 86th Contingency Response Group from Ramstein Air Base, Germany, and its mission is to ensure the safety of coalition forces setting up the Manas airfield. As of June 2002, the 822nd Security Forces out of Moody Air Force Base in Valdosta, GA, was also deployed at Manas.

On February 15, 2006, the Russian newspaper *Kommersant* reported that Kyrgyzstan would be charging the United States \$207 million in rent for the use of the base; an increase from the \$2 million that the United States was being charged yearly until January 2006 when new terms for the use of the base were given.

Further searching of global sources revealed that the Kyrgyz government would receive \$7,000 for each landing and take-off and that the one year agreement had an option for extension. One of the most telling articles was written and published in Kyrgyzstan. In March 2002, the title of the article suggested that the Taliban was a “convenient reason” for the United States to enter Central Asia and it expressed concern that the United States was simply “establishing a unitary order based on American values.”<sup>103</sup> The extension was agreed to in April 2002, and by 2003 over \$150 million

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<sup>103</sup> Yekaterina Tvorogova, “A Military Base is a National Issue,” *Delovaya Nedelya* (Bishkek), 8 March 2002.

had been invested. This report will be completed in May 2005, and Manas Air Base has over 3,000 personnel and permanent structures in-place.<sup>104</sup>

#### **D. AFGHANISTAN**

While peacekeeping efforts are ongoing, the United States and its allies were able to destroy Taliban forces and remove the enemy from power in Afghanistan in a mere 49 days. This is significant because the original military estimate for success was thought to be six months. This remarkable feat was achievable only when the United States rallied a coalition of nations to fight the Taliban in less than three weeks after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack in the United States. Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan demonstrated that it is difficult to rapidly deploy forces into a distant theater without standing operations orders, assured access to regional airfields/airspace, and the supporting infrastructure.

Ramstein Air Base, Germany served as the principal strategic hub for all airlift operations supporting Operation Enduring Freedom. Armenia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Pakistan granted over flight privileges. Bulgaria also allowed the United States military use of a Black Sea base for KC-135 tanker operations.<sup>105</sup> In accordance with Article 5 of the NATO Treaty, an attack on any one signatory is taken as an attack on all. The United States invoked this article and the NATO governments agreed. The British contributed Special Forces units, warships, and aircraft flying out of Oman, including an AWACS aircraft. Most other nations provided peacekeeping forces after the new government had been installed at Kabul. The Russians and Chinese also supported the war on terrorism. Russia helped arm the Northern Alliance.<sup>106</sup>

Bagram Air Base is located in the Parvan Province approximately 11 kilometers (7 miles) southeast of the city of Charikar and 47 Kilometers (27 miles) north of Kabul. The Airfield is served by a 10,000 foot runway built in 1976 capable of serving large cargo and bomber aircraft.

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<sup>104</sup> Ann Scott Tyson, "New U.S. strategy: 'lily pad' bases," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 10 August 2004, p. 6.

<sup>105</sup> William D. O'Malley, *Central Asia and South Caucasus as an Area of Operations: Challenges and Constraints*, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2003), 249.

<sup>106</sup> Norman Friedman, *Terrorism, Afghanistan, and America's New Way of War*, (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2003), 137.

Bagram Air Base has three large hangars, a control tower, and numerous support buildings. There are over 32 acres of ramp space. There are five aircraft dispersal areas with a total of over 110 revetments. Many support buildings and base housing built by the Soviets, have been destroyed by years of fighting between the various warring Afghan factions.

It played a key role during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, serving as a base of operations for troops and supplies and Aircraft based at Bagram provided close air support for Soviet and Afghan troops in the field. Some of the Soviet forces based out of Bagram included the elite 105th Guards Airborne Division. It also has three camps on the base property operated by Army and Marine units.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Another issue for United States policy that has taken center stage since the collapse of the SU is the size of military personnel and bases. The number and locations of United States bases were justified during the Cold War, but the level of threat has decreased and technological advances have called into question what the true requirement is.

The New York Times provided daily updates following the terrorist attack under the heading “A Nation Challenged” and the first report concerning basing in Kyrgyzstan with a comprehensive description of the current leaders and lack of diplomatic interest. “The focus on military cooperation rather than promotion of democracy proved a success, with none of the five Central Asian leaders—almost all of them holdovers from the Soviet era—displaying much interest in Jeffersonian ideals.”<sup>107</sup>

By January 8, 2002 the tone in the next article to appear in the New York Times, had changed. “Even as the air war in Afghanistan wanes...the United States is preparing a military presence in Central Asia that could last for years” the article begins. The Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz is quoted as saying United States presence “...may be more political than actually military” and that President Bush after criticizing the Clinton Administration for spreading the military too thin in overseas deployments during the 2000 campaign now had a “broader shift” versus just being a reversal of

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107 Kinzer, sec B, p. 7.

policy.<sup>108</sup> As expected, by January the use of names and positions appears, but surprisingly the purpose and duration shifted without much fanfare.

This is a good place to look at global reports. The French Press Agency reported ten days after the New York Times article that Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was quoted saying it would be “premature to think about where one might have permanent bases or something like that, something physical.” The press release then went on to point out the contradiction between the Defense Secretary and his deputy.<sup>109</sup> There were also interviews of United States civilian strategic experts, professors and a Russian military officer—all with varying opinions on United States intentions. The New York Times article only used United States government officials and military officers. Interestingly, the French Press Agency noted the New York Times article.

On February 9, The Washington Post provided a more in-depth look citing the one year Status of Forces agreement negotiated with the Kyrgyz government and the inclusion of landing fees and costs. This article also pointed out potential problems by noting that “maintaining bases in largely Muslim Central and southwestern Asia could backfire” not unlike the situation with Osama bin Laden and United States presence in Saudi Arabia.<sup>110</sup> The contradictions continue. The Federal Information and News Dispatch, Inc. on behalf of the State Department released text and meeting minutes from the Assistant Secretary of State Elizabeth Jones on February 11, following her trip to Central Asia. “We are not looking for, we don’t want, United States bases in Central Asia. We don’t want a United States base anywhere,” Jones said.<sup>111</sup> This document is forwarded to all media outlets, and no articles from the papers that originally covered the story.

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108 Eric Schmitt and James Dao, “U.S. is building up its military bases in Afghan region,” New York Times, 8 January 2002, sec A, p. 1.

109 Jean-Michel Stoullig “U.S. consolidates its military presence in Central Asia,” Agence France Presse, 19 January 2002.

110 Venon Loeb, “Footprints in Steppes of Central Asia; New bases indicate U.S. presence will be felt after Afghan War,” The Washington Post, 9 February 2002, sec A, p. 1.

111 On the record briefing by Assistant Secretary of State Elizabeth Jones, 11 February 2002.

America needed external coalition partners for two key reasons. One was operational—the United States needed intelligence on the Taliban and Pakistan and Saudi Arabia had information. The other reason was that the United States required access to airspace and bases.

By mid-October 2001, 44 countries had provided over flight permission and 33 had provided landing rights. In addition, 36 offered military forces or equipment for raids against the Taliban, and 14 had accepted United States forces on their territory. Special Forces were deployed to Afghanistan by Britain, Australia, and Canada. All these countries were helpful in the cause against the Taliban; however, none were absolutely essential in that they did not hold veto power over American action. This was a key because countries may have felt pressured to veto American activity based on Muslim/Arab ties. As it turned out, American sea power provided mobile bases near Afghanistan in international waters, and the United States conducted the initial phase of the war prior to completing assembly of the coalition. Since the United States demonstrated it would conduct the war on its own if necessary, it freed many countries into feeling less pressure to join the cause.

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## VI. CONCLUSION

### A. INTRODUCTION

While it may be true that access issues have never stopped an operation in which the United States was seriously committed, without access, the operation becomes more difficult and more costly. Access may be afforded by various methods; however, there is no such thing as assured access.<sup>112</sup> If we wish to avoid being either surprised or overextended, we need extensive peacetime engagement with likeminded foreign militaries and governments, so that in wartime we can fight with them and gain access to those theaters. This effort must be seen as a critical factor of our strategy.

The Air Force is heavily dependent on overseas bases for its wartime effectiveness. But the number of foreign bases to which that service has access has declined over 80 percent since the height of the Cold War, and all of the 30 or so bases that remain are subject to political constraints on their use. In many areas of the world, such as Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, and southern Africa, the Air Force does not have assured access to a single nearby base. The base-access issue is likely to grow worse in the future as the interests of the United States and its allies diverge. Indeed, experience suggests the prepackaged presence of United States forces at foreign bases can contribute to such a divergence by becoming a political embarrassment for the host government.<sup>113</sup> Additionally, the costs associated with establishing and running a base are very significant in the early stages, although historically the host country provides some financial incentives to maintain presence in the form of paying local national

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<sup>112</sup> The various methods of access include the following: permanent bases in allied countries that the United States is bound by treaty to defend; substantial presence to support ongoing military operations; and country visits for education, training, exercises, or contingency operations. At permanent bases overseas, host nation approval is required for operations that are not directly linked to the defense of the host nation and approval is not guaranteed, as was the case when Turkey did not allow American forces in Turkey to engage in operations against Iraq. In places like Saudi Arabia where we have ongoing operations the troops are expected to depart after the mission objective is complete; yet even in these circumstances the host nation can deny the United States use of its facilities to launch against objectives it does not support. Country visits are subject to host nation invitation or approval. See David Shlapak, "Providing Adequate Access for Expeditionary Aerospace Forces," in Zalmay Khalilzad and Jeremy Shapiro's *Strategic Appraisal: United States Air and Space Power in the 21st Century*, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2002), 351.

<sup>113</sup> Christopher J. Bowie, Robert P. Haffa Jr., and Robert E. Mullins, "Trends in Future Warfare," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, No. 35, 2004, pp. 129-133.



salaries, reduced lease for land, and agreements to pay for significant repairs of the assets used to support their country. The potential for these benefits to come to fruition in Central Asia is next to none.

Unlike the Cold War, the United States focus is on the ability to move to the fight not fight in place. The September 11 attacks clarified that the key security challenges that will be faced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are: the nexus among terrorist organizations, their state supporters and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; ungoverned and under-governed areas within states; and asymmetric warfare that adversaries will use to counter conventional military superiority. The United States Global Defense Posture has five key policy themes: strengthened allied roles; flexibility to contend with uncertainty; focus within and across regions; develop rapidly deployable capabilities; and to focus on capabilities, not numbers.

In August 2004, President George Bush announced plans to reposition approximately 70,000 United States troops from overseas bases. The president stated that American forces are more agile, more lethal, and more capable of striking anywhere around the globe on short notice. Some of these troops would be withdrawn, others positioned in other areas around the world to be able to quickly respond to unexpected threats. United States administration officials noted that America is attempting to portray the strength of its commitment to its allies in terms of capabilities, not in the number of troops. The technological prowess of the United States military in terms of its ability to project power over great distances, supports such troop withdrawals.<sup>114</sup>

The broader plan includes eliminating a number of large United States bases from overseas, bringing some troops home and repositioning others abroad, while constructing skeletal outposts and dispersing critical equipment in regions that portend potential hotspots of trouble.<sup>115</sup> The aim is to create flexible, small units that could be moved quickly to temporary bases. Global threat requires a global presence. With the terrorist threat based in some of the most remote locations on earth, the United States seeks to establish a military presence everywhere the terrorists are congregating. The United States military cannot be satisfied with fighting and winning the nation's wars, it must

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<sup>114</sup> Susan V. Lawrence, and David Lague, "Marching Out of Asia," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 26 August 2004, 1-2.

<sup>115</sup> Bradley Graham, "U.S. May Halve Forces in Germany," *The Washington Post*, 25 March 2004, 1.

also discourage military competition and prevent wars from starting; therefore, according to Vice Admiral Arthur Cebrowski, it must be positioned around the world.<sup>116</sup>

Confirming this global presence initiative, the United States has bases or shares military installations in Turkey, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. These sites can serve as forward outposts that are lightly garrisoned with rapidly deployable units, but that can also serve as surge points for greater United States force build-up as required to respond to a contingency. A larger majority of bases will become forward operating sites and small support staffs will maintain them.

The smaller sites in remote regions will be designated as cooperative security locations and will not have a permanent military presence but will serve as staging areas for troops requiring quick access for training or for engaging a threat. The major United States-led conflicts since the end of the Cold War reflect similar themes in terms of the keys to their success. The United States built coalitions, gaining the necessary access into the regions of interests and providing legitimacy for its cause; and America demonstrated overmatching military capability based on technological prowess, precision weapons, joint integration, and strategic logistics, including pre-positioned materiel in the region.

The United States military's strategic and logistical advantages of basing in Central Asia are known and are currently being used in the Global War on Terror. United States military presence in the form of bases coupled with lessons learned from previous Soviet Union occupations and political relationships can not only provide "bread and bullets" to our troops in harm's way, but will also lead to increased stability for all of Central Asia. As stated earlier, the military advantages of these overseas bases are underlined daily in the on-going Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom campaigns. Furthermore, the respective governments have received significant financial support for the right of access. The success of the bases can be narrowly defined in terms of operations support, but lasting impact in Central Asia will also include positive local impact, improved bilateral relations between countries, and longevity (i.e., The United States invitation to remain is, for the moment, open-ended for

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<sup>116</sup> Mark Mazzetti, "Pax Americana: Dispatched to Distant Outposts, U.S. Forces Confront the Perils of an Unruly World," *U.S. News and World Report*, 6 October 2003, 2.

Manas Air Base). The successful combination of these four areas will ensure long term benefits for United States and Central Asian interests.

Clausewitz noted that war is an extension of politics. Therefore, the manager of violence, the military, is a tool of politics as well. Overseas basing provides an extension of United States policy. But flexibility is the key to the survival of these relatively new independent states of Central Asia. Calling for democracy in these countries, while commendable, is potentially destabilizing. Democracy may not answer the need for “effective” and “responsive” governance, which can deliver the domestic security, social and economic goods the populations of these countries seek and require. Responsive and effective governance, let alone democratic, has been hard to establish from Eastern Europe, through the Middle East, Central and South Asia and Southeast Asia. This is not to say that democracy was impossible, because it has certainly been fruitful in many of these areas, but the authoritarian governance and entrenched corruption common in Central Asia as a result of the Soviet system may be the rule for some time to come. The United States has to exercise wisdom and patience to deal with this very real probability.

## **B. THREATS TO STABILITY**

Severe poverty, repression, narcotics smuggling, corruption among key leaders, and a continuing rise in radical Islamic fundamentalism have led to growing instability in the region. Most of the region’s problems can be traced back to the pre-independence period, when the Soviet Union still controlled these states.

The Soviet policies of closed borders, forced cotton agriculture, farm collectivization, population relocation, and-most significant-Stalin’s redrawing of the map of Central Asia to create five incongruous states had left the region economically hard-pressed, ethnically and politically divided, and forced to practice its majority religion-Islam-in secret.<sup>117</sup>

Most of these problems persist today. The leaders of the Central Asian states, who for the most part came to power via the Soviet communist party, still run authoritarian regimes in which corruption is widespread, with obvious religious persecution. The region is also one of the poorest in the world, despite the abundance of revenue-producing energy resources. Central Asia has also become a major “highway”

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<sup>117</sup> Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002) 57.

for narcotics gangs to get their products from Afghanistan to European and Asian markets. These persistent problems have led to the widespread increase in radical Islam, which has been perhaps the primary cause of instability in Central Asia. The weak national governments of the former Soviet republics have neither the military nor the economic resources needed to combat these growing security problems.

The narcotics trade in Central Asia is also a primary source of funding for militant Islamic groups. The IMU reportedly has been using its militants to move opium and heroin through the region into Russia and to their contacts in Chechnya and eventually onto the European market. The revenue earned from moving just a kilogram of heroin through Central Asia is well worth the risk in a region fraught with poverty. According to retired United States Ambassador Grant Smith, “profit from moving a kilogram of heroin across Tajikistan, ranges from \$4000 if the destination is neighboring countries, to \$14,000 if the destination is Moscow.”<sup>118</sup>

The issue of narcotics is important to discuss because insurgents and/or terrorists need capital in order to sustain operations. They also need capital to gain the most important resource—people. Without some type of popular support, these type of threats will eventually shrivel up and die. American military presence can play a significant role in combating the grassroots campaigning that usually targets the United States as the source of all ills, thereby gaining significant popular support.

Dr. John Hamre, former Deputy Secretary of Defense and now president of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, stated, “It appears to me that the kinds of changes to United States military posture that DOD is contemplating today are driven by operational expediency, rather than strategy. The problem with this is that, to be sustainable over the long-term, United States bases overseas must be part of an overall political, diplomatic, and strategic framework.”<sup>119</sup> Taking the initiative to extend assistance created an atmosphere where the regimes of Central Asia responded in

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<sup>118</sup> Niklas Swanstrom, “The Prospects for Multilateral Conflict Prevention and Regional Cooperation in Central Asia,” *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. XXIII, No. 1, March 2004, pp. 41-53

<sup>119</sup> Chris Strohm, “Effort to Realign Military Bases Abroad Seen as Short-sighted,” <http://www.govexec.com/news/index.cfm> accessed 13 September 2005.

overwhelming support of United States efforts. Current and future administrations, however, have to adjust United States policy to ensure stronger relationships if there is a desire to maintain an influence.

### **C. REGIONAL LESSONS LEARNED**

The list of de-stabilizing factors also includes human rights violations, ethnic tensions, water rights, and the competing efforts of Russia and China. All of these factors can be negatively or positively impacted by American military presence in the region. Each country researched for this study provided insightful information that highlights other ways to conduct stability operations, while still being able to accomplish strategic objectives.

#### **1. Uzbekistan**

As stated earlier, the Bush Administration made it clear that security and democracy are indivisible and the tenet of human rights under the umbrella of democracy was put to the test with the Andijan incident. Before approaching the Uzbek regime about basing rights, there was already an understanding that Uzbekistan was not a democracy and there were known human rights violations committed by the regime. The United States had a responsibility to ask itself, “How critical is this location to my overall strategic plan?” It is ideological haughtiness (or foolishness) to expect a regime to change just because the United States is present.

The government of Uzbekistan evicted U.S. personnel from the Karshi-Khanabad air base, which Washington had used as a staging ground for combat, reconnaissance, and humanitarian missions in Afghanistan since late 2001. The government in Tashkent gave no official reason for the expulsion, but the order was issued soon after the UN airlifted 439 Uzbek refugees from Kyrgyzstan to Romania—a move that Washington supported and Tashkent opposed. (The Uzbek government wanted the refugees to return home, but the international community did not, fearing that they would be detained and tortured by Uzbek security personnel.) The showdown was the latest in a series of confrontations since a much-criticized crackdown on antigovernment demonstrators in the eastern city of Andijon last May. These events illustrate the enduring problem that U.S. defense officials face as they try to promote democratic values abroad while maintaining U.S. military bases in non-democratic countries. Although some in Washington acknowledge

this tension, they generally argue that the strategic benefits of having U.S. bases close to important theaters such as Afghanistan outweigh the political costs of supporting unsavory host regimes. With the Pentagon now redefining the role of the U.S. military in the twenty-first century, moreover, its officials insist even more on the importance of developing a vast network of U.S. bases to confront cross-border terrorism and other regional threats. Some of them also turn the objections of pro-democracy critics around. They claim that a U.S. military presence in repressive countries gives Washington additional leverage to press them to liberalize. And, they argue, relying on democratic hosts for military cooperation can present problems of its own—such as the 2003 parliamentary vote in Turkey that denied the United States the chance to launch its invasion of Iraq from there.<sup>120</sup>

By making formal statements condemning the existing government, the subsequent termination of basing privileges was a logical outcome. Can the United States stand by and not address human rights violations with a country that it has diplomatic relations with? Certainly not! However, there is a way to address the issues without putting the regime on the defensive. Germany has a military presence in Uzbekistan and it did not issue any formal statements concerning Andijan, and they are still operating there. Does that make Germany any less a democracy? Addressing Andijan, the way we did, pushed Karimov into the arms of Russia, and the resulting treaty is even stronger than relations since 1991. Uzbekistan, the most populated, and arguably the most influential in the region may be lost to the United States for a long time to come. The point is that battles have to be selected carefully and the level of engagement even more so.

## **2. Kyrgyzstan**

Manas Air Base survived the Tulip Revolution and the United States was guaranteed continued access despite the recommendation of the SCO. The latest obstacle for the United States to negotiate is the demand on behalf of Kyrgyz President Bayev that the United States pay 100 percent the amount it paid to the previous regime, claiming that Akayev was corrupt and the money is not accounted for. A great example of the

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<sup>120</sup> Cooley, 3.

corruptness imbedded within Central Asia's regimes. This situation will be dealt with in a much more thought out manner since this is the last base the United States has in this part of the region.

The bulk of the operations conducted at K2 Air Base have moved to Manas Air Base and currently, the relationship between the base and the local population is agreeable. As noted in Chapter Four, Russia has opened Kant Air Base not more than ten miles away and the desire for the United States to leave altogether is no secret.

### **3. Afghanistan**

United States military presence in Afghanistan follows the rapid defeat of the Taliban and the scattering of Al Qaeda operatives. Similar to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the conventional defeat was very impressive. While the initial success is to be lauded, the real work now begins and the United States has to steer clear of the impressions and patterns established by the Soviets just decades before.

The battle for Bagram Air Base was one of the fiercest in Operation Enduring Freedom, and it is now the busiest military hub in Afghanistan. Continued fighting in Afghanistan has the potential to place Bagram in the same position the Soviets were in—a great operational location where personnel were generally safe inside the perimeter of the base and excursions outside of the base were limited to patrols and convoys from one base to the other. While the United States forces have made excursions to orphanages, this show of good will is limited and does more for public relations for United States citizens than actually building relationships with the local population.

## **D. POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

During the occupation of Germany following World War II, the American forces were provided with a *Pocket Guide to Germany* to help educate and guide the military personnel's behavior. The guide included many points of interest, but namely excerpts from the occupation directive, JCS 1067, which spoke directly to the banning of fraternization. For military officials the fraternization bias served as a security measure and a form of punishment for the German people.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Petra Goedde, *GIs and Germans: Culture, Gender, and Foreign Relations, 1945-1949* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 43.

As with any base on foreign soil, whether by occupation or invitation, there is a segment of the population that views an American installation as a target. Seeking out locations where potential problems may arise multiplies this factor. Stability of the regime is also an area to be regarded seriously because some of these locations will have weak democracies (or may not be a democracy at all). Careful consideration also has to be given to the interaction of the base population with the local community. The government has a responsibility to ensure the security of its citizens, but also be good stewards of the resources at its disposal.

U.S. armed forces, both in wartime and in peacetime, must help assure security in areas like Central Asia. Any concept of United States victory in America's current wars that does not also insist that those forces dominate not only the combat, but also post-combat phases of operations to achieve strategic victory, is intrinsically wrong. For example, if future contingencies necessitate the presence of United States combat forces in former Soviet republics, their peacetime and wartime missions could include engagement in protracted peace and support operations due to the strategic nature of the mission and the theater's socio-political configuration. Or, if these governments do not succumb to insurgencies, United States forces there can perform missions to help them modernize their armed forces and render them increasingly interoperable with those of NATO. These tasks and goals include military missions to help achieve this interoperability and to conduct priority operations such as anti-terrorist operations, peace support operations, counter drug, counter proliferation operations, and border security.

Security professionals active in these areas already embrace this expanded mission. They know that security includes the entire range of activities necessary to reconstruct viable states and societies. Language, tour duration/rotations and overall asset coordination are three important areas that these security professionals (military and civilian) need to focus on in order to recognize success in this region. All three are interconnected in the unconventional process of establishing relationships.

### **1. Language Proficiency**

The Department of Defense has long recognized the importance of language proficiency in the intelligence field, and has already begun the process to expand the base number of personnel that are conversant in many languages. As with many things, the



push for learning Arabic languages got a stronger push following Operation Desert Storm, as it was reinvigorated following the attacks of 9/11.

As in the Great Game, the representatives from Great Britain, Russia and other countries that mastered the local languages of Central Asia found much better success. In an effort to establish relationships and trust with a local population, to have interaction with the population that speaks English is only scratching at the surface. Insurgents and terrorist usually have the advantage when it comes to communication. Essentially those that are trying to stabilize and those trying to de-stabilize are competing for the same population. Each can only be fully successful by, with and through the people.

The United States Air Force is now making mandatory that junior officers become proficient in another language, it has the danger of becoming another square-filler for promotion without targeted languages for targeted purposes. There is a monetary threshold that would encourage military members to become proficient and then know that their training would be used directly in the country or countries that need it.

## **2. Tour Duration/Rotation**

Tours of duty in undesirable locations are usually short, six months to one year, with the service member trying hard not to go back. If they do, in fact, go back, it is usually not to the same unit, and most certainly not with the same personnel. The majority of the personnel that report to Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan are on a six to nine months rotation schedule with some senior leadership pulling one year tours.

To break the conventional mindset would mean that the tours would be longer and that the same individuals would rotate back to the same unit and location. With the exponential element of language proficiency, there is a very real opportunity to establish relationships. First, with those that work on or service the base and this net widens as relationships grow. The local that continues to meet different people all of the time has loyalty that goes as deep as the money earned.

The traditional military mindset of having to make an impact will also have to take a backseat to furthering the ongoing effort to gain the trust of the people. This is another aspect that is at odds with the conventional mindset that determines success,

which in turn determines promotion. The personnel that do rotate through these locations will be responsible for actively coordinating and participating in areas that are not the norm.

### **3. Coordination with Others**

Most stability operations plans speak to the importance of working with other government organizations and at the least establishing liaisons with the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other tenant countries as well. Stephen Blank of the RAND Corporation suggests that:

...using all the instruments of power, America, either alone or as a part of a coalition, will help these states expand their governing capacities and make them more capable of defending themselves against threats, as well as fostering an end to their isolation from the West.<sup>122</sup>

The idea that America can do it alone is a dangerous assumption, especially in Central Asia. Unfortunately, this is too often the case and true partnership just receives lip service.

Part of the blame goes to the operations tempo at the location, but a large part goes to the fact that military organizations prefer not to work with other organizations. One of the successful “take-aways” of Great Britain’s successful counterinsurgency in Malaysia was the coordination of all resources (military and civilian) in the overall execution of the strategy.<sup>123</sup> If security and stability are truly the end states, there are some great insights and connections that a Colin Lober who is in Kyrgyzstan working for the Peace Corp can provide a military unit. Each organization, from the embassy to the American Red Cross has a piece of the overall picture that if truly coordinated, could make a big difference.

In considering how to approach local regimes, we must take care to tailor United States programs to the needs of each country. At the same time, those programs should reinforce each other as part of a coordinated larger regional strategy. For instance, we must avoid future situations such as has occurred with Uzbekistan where the United States State Department was legally obligated to suspend aid to the military—one of the

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<sup>122</sup> Stephen J. Blank, *After 2 Wars: Reflections on the American Strategic Revolution in Central Asia* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2005), 22.

<sup>123</sup> R.W. Komer, *The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect: Organization of A Successful Counterinsurgency Effort* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1972), 60.

more Westernizing institutions there—because of the government’s antidemocratic policies. But shortly thereafter, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Myers (USAF) visited Uzbekistan, praised the government as an American ally, and transferred weapons to it.<sup>124</sup>

While one can defend each of these actions on its own merits, they create an impression that our policies are incoherent, not truly interested in Uzbekistan’s democratization, and that the Uzbek regime can disregard calls for democratization because of our alliance with it, leading Uzbeks to think that we were not serious and can therefore be played.

Hence, the need for well-conceived interagency and multidimensional strategy of engagement becomes apparent. That strategy should assign priorities to our engagement with local governments and make them known to avoid such embarrassments.

#### **E. OVERALL CONCLUSION OF POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The United States will have to move outside of its conventional paradigm concerning military presence if it is to have longevity in Central Asia. The desire for security, or stability, in the region has to be stronger than the push for democracy. Security is cemented in control. Control has three distinct requirements: 1) having the capability to see everything 2) having the capability to reach out and touch everything seen, and 3) possessing the will to do what is necessary to maintain control. The level of control realized is in direct correlation to stability. Clearly, the United States has very little control in Central Asia, but the potential to gain access is an important first step. This thesis presented some unconventional proposals for military presence—not necessarily new, but rarely part of the military presence strategy. Clearly, Russia is gaining military influence in Central Asia. The addition of two new bases and the promise of more, and the strengthening of the CST with the CSTO show this to be true.

Foreign to conventional thought, the presence of Russia adds stability to the region which supports our security goals. Russia’s support of the regimes in power lowers the chance of a violent regime change. The presence of Russian military forces also lowers the chance of radical Islamic violence. Its assistance to border patrolling

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<sup>124</sup> Blank, 21.

limits drug trafficking and illegal immigration. The Russian military currently has a low budget and its operational capability may be limited, but any help benefits the Central Asian countries.

While not all of us may be able to grow a beard, get tanned and blend in with the peoples of Central Asia like Professor Tom Johnson, a concerted effort to invest the funding and unconventional thought can produce positive changes. All of the suggestions presented here require time—a commodity that is very precious and current United States administrations and military policies don't allow for. Again, as in the Malaysian success story, the counterinsurgency took twelve years to complete. How critical is United States military presence in Central Asia? Time will certainly tell.

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