



Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests

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Summary

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States recognized the independence of all the former Central Asian republics, supported their admission into Western organizations, and elicited regional support to counter Iranian influence in the region. Congress was at the forefront in urging the formation of coherent U.S. policies for aiding these and other Eurasian states of the former Soviet Union.

Soon after the terrorist attacks on America on September 11, 2001, all the Central Asian states offered overflight and other support for coalition anti-terrorism efforts in Afghanistan. Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan hosted coalition troops and provided access to airbases. In 2003, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan also endorsed coalition military action in Iraq. About two dozen Kazakhstani troops served in Iraq until late 2008. Uzbekistan rescinded U.S. basing rights in 2005 after the United States criticized the reported killing of civilians in the town of Andijon. In early 2009, Kyrgyzstan ordered a U.S. base in that country to close, allegedly because of Russian inducements and U.S. reluctance to meet Kyrgyz requests for greatly increased lease payments. An agreement on continued U.S. use of the “transit center” was reached in June 2009. U.S. policy has emphasized obtaining the assistance of the Central Asian “front-line” states in U.S. and NATO stabilization efforts in Afghanistan and in helping them combat terrorism, proliferation, and arms and drug trafficking. Other U.S. objectives have included promoting free markets, democratization, human rights, energy development, and the forging of east-west and Central Asia-South Asia trade links. Such policies aim to help the states become what various U.S. Administrations have considered to be responsible members of the international community rather than to degenerate into xenophobic, extremist, and anti-Western regimes that contribute to wider regional conflict and instability.

Policymakers have tailored U.S. policy in Central Asia to the varying characteristics of these states. U.S. interests in Kazakhstan have included securing and eliminating Soviet-era nuclear and biological weapons materials and facilities. U.S. energy firms have invested in oil and natural gas development in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, and successive Administrations have backed diverse export routes to the West for these resources. Economic and democratic reforms have been among U.S. concerns in Kyrgyzstan. In Tajikistan, U.S. aid has focused on economic reconstruction following that country’s 1992-1997 civil war. U.S. relations with Uzbekistan—the most populous state in the heart of the region—were cool after 2005, but have recently begun to improve.

The 111th Congress is likely to continue to be at the forefront in advocating increased U.S. ties with Central Asia, and in providing backing for the region for the transit of equipment and supplies for U.S.-led stabilization efforts in Afghanistan. Congress is likely to pursue these goals through hearings and legislation on humanitarian, economic, and democratization assistance, security issues, and human rights. Ongoing congressional interests are likely to include boosting regional border and customs controls and other safeguards to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), combat trafficking in persons and drugs, encourage regional integration with South Asia and Europe, advance energy security, and counter terrorism. Support for these goals also contributes to stabilization and reconstruction operations by the United States and NATO in Afghanistan. Congress will continue to consider whether and how to balance these interests against its concerns about human rights abuses and lagging democratization in the regional states.

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Most Recent Developments

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State George Krol and the Senior Advisor to the U.S. Special Envoy for Eurasian Energy Daniel Stein visited Turkmenistan on November 16-17. Stein reportedly stated that the United States offered to mediate the Azerbaijan-Turkmenistan dispute over the ownership of oil and gas fields in the Caspian Sea to facilitate a settlement that would permit the construction of trans-Caspian oil and gas pipelines. Krol visited Uzbekistan on November 18-19 to reportedly discuss regional security issues and military-technical cooperation. Just a few days earlier, Assistant Secretary Robert Blake visited Uzbekistan. He stated that his visit was “a reflection of the determination of President Obama and Secretary Clinton to strengthen ties between the United States and Uzbekistan.” He proposed that the two countries set up high-level annual consultations to “build our partnership across a wide range of areas. These include trade and development, border security, cooperation on narcotics, the development of civil society, and individual rights.”¹

On November 13, 2009, Kazakhstan’s President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, asserted that his country would represent the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS; group of former Soviet republics headed by Russia) during its 2010 presidency of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). He appeared to warn that during its presidency, Kazakhstan would urge that the OSCE end its “over the top” criticism of human rights conditions in some CIS states, and that Kazakhstan would propose that the OSCE instead take the “mentality of the people” and a “nation’s path” into account in assessing progress in democratization and respect for human rights. He also stated that Kazakhstan will urge the OSCE to play a greater role in addressing security threats, including in regard to Afghanistan.²

According to the U.S.-based publication *Eurasia Insight*, in early November 2009, the Embassy of Kazakhstan in Washington, DC, issued a statement that a congressional condition that Kazakhstan make progress in democratization and respect for human rights in order to receive government-to-government foreign assistance was “arbitrary and unfair” and should be dropped.³

Uzbekistan’s People’s Democratic Party, founded by President Islam Karimov and which has 31 members in its faction in the Legislative Chamber (the lower legislative chamber), declared in November 2009 that it is the “minority opposition” party, and that the Liberal Democratic Party (which is also pro-Karimov and has 39 members in its faction) is the chamber’s majority party. The latter party is the leader of a “majority democratic bloc” in the legislature that includes two other pro-Karimov parties. New legislative elections are scheduled to be held on December 27, 2009.

The Collective Security Treaty Organization’s new rapid reaction force held a counter-terrorism exercise in Kazakhstan in mid-October 2009 with the participation of military units from six member-states (Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan; Uzbekistan

¹ U.S. Embassy in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. *Press Conference of Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Robert Blake*, October 14, 2009.

² “Kazakh Economy Can Withstand Crisis – President,” BBC Monitoring Central Asia, November 14, 2009; Joanna Lillis, “Kazakhstan: Nazarbayev Dodges President-For-Life Question Ahead of Astana’s OSCE Chairmanship,” *Eurasia Insight*, November 16, 2009.

³ Joshua Kucera, “Kazakhstan: Astana Hires DC Lobbyists to Work on Softening Aid Requirements,” *Eurasia Insight*, November 13, 2009.

did not participate). The exercise involved neutralizing a terrorist group that had occupied a town and taken hostages. The Russian Defense Ministry reported that the troops from the other countries were in “shock and awe” of the fighting of the Russian troops and were “amazed” by their equipment. On October 28, 2009, a Russian official urged that Tajikistan request the services of the rapid reaction forces to combat drug trafficking and stated that he considered that Russia’s border security assistance to Tajikistan should become like that provided by the European Union.

Historical Background

Central Asia consists of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan; it borders Russia, China, the Middle East, and South Asia. The major peoples of all but Tajikistan speak Turkic languages (the Tajiks speak an Iranian language), and most are Sunni Muslims (some Tajiks are Shia Muslims). Most are closely related historically and culturally. By the late 19th century, Russian tsars had conquered the last independent khanates and nomadic lands of Central Asia. By the early 1920s, Soviet power had been imposed; by 1936, five “Soviet Socialist Republics” had been created. Upon the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, they gained independence.⁴

Overview of U.S. Policy Concerns

After the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, then-President George H.W. Bush sent the “FREEDOM Support Act” (FSA) aid authorization to Congress, which was amended and signed into law in October 1992 (P.L. 102-511). In 1999, congressional concerns led to passage of the “Silk Road Strategy Act” (P.L. 106-113), which authorized 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.

U.S. policymakers and others hold various views on the appropriate types and levels of U.S. involvement in the region. Some have argued that ties with “energy behemoth” Kazakhstan are crucial to U.S. interests.⁵ Others have argued that Uzbekistan is the “linchpin” of the region (it is

Central Asia: Basic Facts

Total Area: 1.6 million sq. mi., larger than India; Kazakhstan: 1.1 m. sq. mi.; Kyrgyzstan: 77,000 sq. mi.; Tajikistan: 55,800 sq. mi.; Turkmenistan: 190,000 sq. mi.; Uzbekistan: 174,500 sq. mi.

Total Population: 60.6 million, slightly less than France; Kazakhstan: 15.4 m.; Kyrgyzstan: 5.4 m.; Tajikistan: 7.3 m.; Turkmenistan: 4.9 m.; Uzbekistan: 27.6 m. (July 2009 est., *The World Factbook*).

Total Gross Domestic Product: \$305 billion in 2008; per capita GDP is about \$5,000, but there are large income disparities and relatively large percentages of people in each country are in poverty. Kazakhstan: \$176.9 b.; Kyrgyzstan: \$11.4 b.; Tajikistan: \$15.4 b.; Turkmenistan: \$29.7 b.; Uzbekistan: \$71.6 b. (*The World Factbook*, purchasing power parity).

⁴ See CRS Report 97-1058, *Kazakhstan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol; CRS Report 97-690, *Kyrgyzstan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol; CRS Report 98-594, *Tajikistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol; CRS Report 97-1055, *Turkmenistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol, and CRS Report RS21238, *Uzbekistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol.

⁵ U.S. Department of State. Office of the Spokesman. *Remarks: Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice At Eurasian National University*, October 13, 2005. Perhaps indicative of the boosted emphasis on U.S. interests in Kazakhstan, former Secretary Rice argued that the country had the potential to be the “engine for growth” in Central Asia.

the most populous regional state and is centrally located, shaping the range and scope of regional cooperation) and should receive the most U.S. attention.

In general, U.S. aid and investment have been viewed as strengthening the independence of the Central Asian states and forestalling Russian, Chinese, Iranian, or other efforts to subvert them. Advocates of such ties have argued that political turmoil and the growth of terrorist enclaves in Central Asia could produce spillover effects both in nearby states, including U.S. allies and friends such as Turkey, and worldwide. They also have argued that the United States has a major interest in preventing terrorist regimes or groups from illicitly acquiring Soviet-era technology for making weapons of mass destruction (WMD). They have maintained that U.S. interests do not perfectly coincide with those of its allies and friends, that Turkey and other actors possess limited aid resources, and that the United States is in the strongest position as the sole superpower to influence democratization and respect for human rights. They have stressed that such U.S. influence will help alleviate social tensions exploited by Islamic extremist groups to gain adherents. They also have argued that for all these reasons, the United States should maintain military access to the region even when Afghanistan becomes more stable. At least some of these views seemed to be reflected in the former Bush Administration's 2006 *National Security Strategy of the United States*, which proclaimed that "Central Asia is an enduring priority for our foreign policy."⁶

Some views of policymakers and academics who previously objected to a more forward U.S. policy toward Central Asia appeared less salient after September 11, 2001, when the United States came to stress counter-terrorism operations in Afghanistan, but aspects of these views could again come to the fore in debates over U.S. security policy in Afghanistan and Central Asia. These observers argued that the United States historically had few interests in Central Asia and that developments there remained largely marginal to U.S. interests. They discounted fears that anti-Western Islamic extremism would make enough headway to threaten secular regimes or otherwise harm U.S. interests in Central Asia. They also argued that the United States should not try to foster democratization among cultures they claimed are historically attuned to authoritarianism. Some observers rejected arguments that U.S. interests in anti-terrorism, non-proliferation, regional cooperation, and trade outweighed concerns over democratization and human rights, and urged reducing or cutting off most aid to repressive Central Asian states. A few observers pointed to instability in the region as a reason to eschew deeper U.S. involvement such as military access that could needlessly place more U.S. personnel and citizens in danger.

The Obama Administration's request for foreign assistance for FY2010 terms Central Asia an "alarmingly fragile" region vulnerable to corruption, drug trafficking, and terrorism. The Administration stresses that good relations with the states of the region are important to Afghanistan's stabilization. The request prioritizes foreign assistance to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The regional request is in keeping with President Obama's call in March 2009 for forming a new contact group on Afghanistan that includes the Central Asian states.⁷ During his April 2009 visit to Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, then-Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher pledged that the Obama Administration would work "with countries in [Central Asia] ... to protect borders, work together to stop narcotics, and work together to develop the economic opportunities of an open Afghanistan that trades with its neighbors." He dismissed the view that

⁶ The White House. *National Security Strategy of the United States*, March 16, 2006, p. 40.

⁷ The White House. *Remarks By President Barack Obama on a Comprehensive Strategy For Afghanistan and Pakistan*, March 27, 2009.

the United States was competing against Russia and China for regional influence, stating that the Central Asian states need many outside states for “education, trade, exports, [and] partners.” He also rejected the view that the Obama Administration was boosting relations with the region only because of U.S. interests in Afghanistan, stating that the United States has had a long-time relationship with the countries of Central Asia.⁸

Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair warned in testimony on March 10, 2009, that growing challenges to Central Asia’s stability ultimately “could threaten the security of critical U.S. and NATO lines of communication to Afghanistan through Central Asia.” He stated that the “highly personalized politics, weak institutions, and growing inequalities” in the Central Asian countries make them “ill-equipped to deal with the challenges posed by Islamic violent extremism, poor economic development, and problems associated with energy, water, and food distribution.” Although Kazakhstan’s energy revenues had made it a regional economic power, he cautioned that “any sustained decline in oil prices would affect revenues, could lead to societal discontent, and will derail the momentum for domestic reforms.” Similarly, he counseled that the global economic downturn will severely affect Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, because they are “heavily depend[ent] on migrant worker remittances from both Russia and Kazakhstan for a significant portion of their gross domestic product (up to 45% in the case of Tajikistan). Tajikistan, in particular, faces increased threats to internal stability from the loss of these critical revenue streams.”⁹

Post-September 11 and Afghanistan

After the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, then-Deputy Assistant Secretary of State B. Lynn Pascoe testified that the former Bush Administration realized that “it was critical to the national interests of the United States that we greatly enhance our relations with the five Central Asian countries” to prevent them from becoming harbors for terrorism.¹⁰ All the Central Asian states soon offered overflight and other assistance to U.S.-led anti-terrorism coalition operations in Afghanistan. The states were predisposed to welcome such operations. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan had long supported the Afghan Northern Alliance’s combat against the Taliban, and all the Central Asian states feared Afghanistan as a base for terrorism, crime, and drug trafficking (even Turkmenistan, which tried to reach some accommodation with the Taliban). In 2005, however, Uzbekistan rescinded its basing agreement with the United States. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have maintained their basing support for NATO peacekeeping operations—and Kyrgyzstan until recently for U.S. operations—in Afghanistan. In 2009, most Central Asian states agreed to facilitate the air and land transport of U.S. and NATO non-lethal and lethal supplies to Afghanistan as an alternative to land transport via increasingly volatile Pakistan (see also below, “Security and Arms Control”).

⁸ U.S. Department of State. *Tajikistan-U.S. Relations*, April 20, 2009; *U.S.-Turkmen Relations*, April 20, 2009.

⁹ U.S. Senate. Committee on Armed Services. Hearing on National Security Threats. *Statement of Dennis C. Blair, Director of National Intelligence*, March 10, 2009.

¹⁰ U.S. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. Subcommittee on Central Asia and the South Caucasus. The U.S. Role in Central Asia. *Testimony of B. Lynn Pascoe, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs*, June 27, 2002.

Support for Operation Iraqi Freedom

Uzbekistan was the only Central Asian state that joined the “coalition of the willing” in February-March 2003 that endorsed prospective U.S.-led coalition military operations in Iraq (Kazakhstan joined later). Uzbekistan subsequently decided not to send troops to Iraq, but Kazakhstan deployed some two dozen troops to Iraq who reportedly did not take part in combat operations. They pulled out in late 2008.

Fostering Pro-Western Orientations

The United States has encouraged the Central Asian states to become responsible members of the international community, supporting integrative goals through bilateral aid and through coordination with other aid donors. The stated policy goal is to discourage radical anti-democratic regimes and terrorist groups from gaining influence. All the Central Asian leaders publicly embrace Islam but display hostility toward Islamic fundamentalism. At the same time, they have established some trade and aid ties with Iran. Although they have had greater success in attracting development aid from the West than from the East, some observers argue that, in the longer run, their foreign policies may not be anti-Western but may more closely reflect some concerns of other Islamic states. Some Western organizational ties with the region have suffered in recent years, in particular those of the OSCE, which has been criticized by some Central Asian governments for advocating democratization and respect for human rights.¹¹ Despite this criticism, President Nazarbayev successfully pushed for Kazakhstan to hold the presidency of the OSCE (see below).

The State Department in 2006 included Central Asia in a revamped Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs. According to former Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Steven Mann, “institutions such as NATO and the OSCE will continue to draw the nations of Central Asia closer to Europe and the United States,” but the United States also will encourage the states to develop “new ties and synergies with nations to the south,” such as Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan.¹² In May 2007, Defense Secretary Robert Gates urged Asian countries to provide Central Asia with road and rail, telecommunications, and electricity generation and distribution aid to link the region with Asia; to help it combat terrorism and narcotics trafficking; to send technical advisors to ministries to promote political and economic reforms; to offer more military trainers, peacekeepers, and advisors for defense reforms; and to more actively integrate the regional states into “the Asian security structure.”¹³ (See also below, “Trade and Investment.”)

The European Union (EU) has become more interested in Central Asia in recent years as the region has become more of a security threat as an originator and transit zone for drugs, weapons of mass destruction, refugees, and persons smuggled for prostitution or labor. Russia’s cutoff of

¹¹ See also CRS Report RL30294, *Central Asia’s Security: Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol.

¹² U.S. House of Representatives. Committee on International Relations. Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia. Assessing Energy and Security Issues in Central Asia. *Testimony of Steven Mann, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs*, July 25, 2006. The State Department appointed a Senior Advisor on Regional Integration in the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, Robert Deutsch, who focused on bolstering trade and transport ties between South and Central Asia.

¹³ U.S. Department of Defense. Department of Defense Documents. International Institute for Strategic Studies - Remarks as Delivered by Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Singapore, June 1, 2007.

gas supplies to Ukraine in early 2006 also bolstered EU interest in Central Asia as an alternative supplier of oil and gas. Such interests contributed to the launch of a Strategy Paper for assistance for 2002-2006 and a follow-on for 2007-2013 (see below), and the EU's appointment of a Special Representative to the region. The EU has implemented Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs, which set forth political, economic, and trade relations) with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. An existing Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe (INOGATE) program was supplemented in 2004 and 2006 by a Baku Energy Initiative to diversify energy supplies. One project involves the proposed Nabucco pipeline, which could transport Caspian region gas to Austria.¹⁴

In June 2007, the EU approved a new "Central Asian strategy" for enhanced aid and relations for 2007-2013. It calls for establishing offices in each regional state and assistance of \$1 billion over the next five years. The strategy argues that the EU ties with the region need to be enhanced because EU enlargement and EU relations with the South Caucasus and Black Sea states bring it to Central Asia's borders. The strategy also stresses that "the dependency of the EU on external energy sources and the need for a diversified energy supply policy in order to increase energy security open further perspectives for cooperation between the EU and Central Asia," and that the "EU will conduct an enhanced regular energy dialogue" with the states.¹⁵ Under the strategy, the EU holds dozens of meetings and seminars each year with the Central Asian states on such issues as human rights, civil society development, foreign policy and assistance, trade and investment, environmental and energy cooperation, and other issues.

Russia's Role

During most of the 1990s, successive U.S. administrations generally viewed a democratizing Russia as serving as a role model in Central Asia. Despite growing authoritarian tendencies in Russia during the presidency of Vladimir Putin (2000-2008), the former Bush Administration emphasized that Russia's counter-terrorism efforts in the region broadly supported U.S. interests. At the same time, successive administrations have stressed to Russia that it should not seek to dominate the region or exclude Western and other involvement. Virtually all U.S. analysts agree that Russia's actions should be monitored to ensure that the independence of the Central Asian states is not vitiated.

Soon after the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, Russia acquiesced to increased U.S. and coalition presence in the region for operations against Al Qaeda and its supporters in Afghanistan. Besides Russia's own concerns about Islamic extremism in Afghanistan and Central Asia, it was interested in boosting its economic and other ties to the West and regaining some influence in Afghanistan. More recently, however, Russia has appeared to step up efforts to counter U.S. influence in Central Asia by advocating that the states increase economic and strategic ties with Russia and limit such ties with the United States. Such a stance

¹⁴ For details, see CRS Report RL33636, *The European Union's Energy Security Challenges*, by Paul Belkin. See also European Union. "The EU and the Countries of the Black Sea and Caspian Sea Regions Agree on a Common Energy Strategy," *Press Release*, November 30, 2006.

¹⁵ European Commission. *Regional Strategy Paper for Assistance to Central Asia for the Period 2007-2013*, June 2007; Council of the European Union. *Presidency Conclusions*, 11177/07, June 23, 2007, p. 12; European Commission. External Relations. *Joint Progress Report by the Council and the European Commission to the European Council on the implementation of the EU Central Asia Strategy*, June 24, 2008.

appears paradoxical to some observers, since Russia (and China) benefit from anti-terrorism operations carried out by U.S. (and NATO) forces in Afghanistan.

During the 1990s, Russia's economic decline and demands by Central Asia caused it to reduce its security presence, a trend that Vladimir Putin appeared determined to reverse during his presidency (2000-2008). In 1999, Russian border guards were largely phased out in Kyrgyzstan, the last Russian military advisors left Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan withdrew from the Collective Security Treaty (CST; see below) of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), in part because the treaty members failed to help Uzbekistan meet the growing Taliban threat in Afghanistan, according to Uzbek President Islam Karimov. However, Russia has appeared determined to maintain a military presence in Tajikistan. It long retained about 14,500 Federal Border Guards in Tajikistan, most of whom were Tajik conscripts, and 7,800 Russian troops of the 201st motorized rifle division.¹⁶

Russia's efforts to formalize a basing agreement with Tajikistan dragged on for years, as Tajikistan endeavored to charge rent and assert its sovereignty. In October 2004, the basing agreement was signed, formalizing Russia's largest military presence abroad, besides its Black Sea Fleet. At the same time, Tajikistan demanded full control over border policing. Russia announced in June 2005 that it had handed over the last guard-house along the Afghan-Tajik border to Tajik troops. Reportedly, some Russian "advisory" border troops remain.

In a seeming shift toward a more activist role in Central Asia, in April 2000, Russia called for the signatories of the CST to approve the creation of rapid reaction forces to combat terrorism and hinted that such forces might launch pre-emptive strikes on Afghan terrorist bases. These hints elicited U.S. calls for Russia to exercise restraint and consult the U.N. Presidents Clinton and Putin agreed in 2000 to set up a working group to examine Afghan-related terrorism (this working group later discussed counter-terrorism). CST members agreed in 2001 to set up the Central Asian rapid reaction force headquartered in Kyrgyzstan, with Russia's troops in Tajikistan comprising most of the force. CIS members in 2001 also approved setting up an Anti-Terrorism Center (ATC) in Moscow, with a branch in Kyrgyzstan, giving Russia influence over regional intelligence gathering.

Perhaps as a result of the establishment of a U.S. airbase in Kyrgyzstan after the September 11, 2001, attacks (see "The Manas Airbase" below), Russia in September 2003 signed a 15-year military basing accord with Kyrgyzstan providing access to the Kant airfield, near Kyrgyzstan's capital of Bishkek. The base is a few miles from the U.S.-led coalition's airbase. After Kyrgyzstan agreed to continued U.S. use of the airbase in mid-2009 (see "The "Transit Center" Agreement" below), Russia requested that Kyrgyzstan grant Moscow rights to another airbase. Besides Russia's military presence in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, it has also asserted its maritime dominance in the Caspian Sea. Russia's Caspian Sea Flotilla has been bolstered by troops and equipment in recent years.

Taking advantage of Uzbekistan's souring relations with many Western countries in 2005 (see below), Russia signed a Treaty on Allied Relations with Uzbekistan in November 2005 that calls for mutual defense consultations in the event of a threat to either party (similar to language in the CST). Uzbekistan re-joined the CST Organization (CSTO; see below) in June 2006 at a meeting where the member-states also agreed that basing agreements by any member with a third party

¹⁶ *The Military Balance 2005-2006*. London: International Institute of Strategic Studies, 2005.

had to be approved by all members, in effect providing supreme veto power to Russia over future basing arrangements.

Despite rejoining the CSTO, Uzbekistan has appeared wary of Russian intentions in the organization, including by insisting that Tashkent will not participate in rapid reaction forces established in June 2009 unless they pledge to not become involved in disputes within the CIS. Following a Kyrgyzstan-Russia agreement in August 2009 to enhance Russia's military presence in Kyrgyzstan—which was widely expected to include the creation of an airbase near the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border—the Uzbek Foreign Ministry strongly warned that “the implementation of such projects ... where the borders of three Central Asian republics directly converge may give impetus to the strengthening of militarization processes and initiate all kinds of nationalistic confrontations,” as well as serve as a lightning rod for militant attacks.¹⁷

Many observers suggest that the appreciative attitude of Central Asian states toward the United States in the early 2000s—for their added security accomplished through U.S.-led actions in Afghanistan—has declined over time. Reasons may include perceptions that the United States has not provided adequate security or economic assistance. Also, Russia and China are pledging security support to the states to get them to forget their pre-September 11, 2001, dissatisfaction with Russian and Chinese efforts. Russia also encourages the leaders to believe that the United States backs democratic “revolutions” to replace them. Lastly, Russia has claimed that it can ensure regional security in the face of the recently deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan.

As Russia's economy improved in the 2000s—as a result of increases in oil and gas prices—Russia reasserted its economic interests in Central Asia. Russia endeavored to counter Western business and gain substantial influence over energy resources through participation in joint ventures and by insisting that pipelines cross Russian territory. After an Energy Cooperation Statement was signed at the May 2002 U.S.-Russia summit, it appeared that Russia would accept a Western role in the Caspian region, including the construction of oil and gas pipelines from Azerbaijan to Turkey. Subsequently, however, Russian officials have urged the Central Asian states to rely on Russian-controlled export routes (see below, “Energy Resources”).

As Russia's economic growth has slowed in 2008-2009—as a result of decreasing oil and gas prices and other shocks associated with the global economic downturn—it has appeared that Russia has tried to maintain economic leverage, including by extending stabilization loans to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In other areas, such as commodity trade and the remittances from Russia by migrant workers, Russian economic influence has been lessened, although it is still significant. In contrast, China has appeared to be stepping up its aid and trade activities in the region.¹⁸

Obstacles to Peace and Independence: Regional Tensions and Conflicts

The legacies of co-mingled ethnic groups, convoluted borders, and emerging national identities pose challenges to stability in all the Central Asian states. Emerging national identities accentuate

¹⁷ CEDR, August 3, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950224.

¹⁸ Matt Siegel, “Crisis.... What Crisis? China Spends Big in Central Asia,” *Agence France Presse*, May 24, 2009.

clan, family, regional, and Islamic self-identifications. Central Asia's convoluted borders fail to accurately reflect ethnic distributions and are hard to police, hence contributing to regional tensions. Ethnic Uzbeks make up sizeable minorities in the other Central Asian countries and Afghanistan. In Tajikistan, they make up almost a quarter of the population. More ethnic Turkmen reside in Iran and Afghanistan—over three million—than in Turkmenistan. Sizeable numbers of ethnic Tajiks reside in Uzbekistan, and seven million in Afghanistan. Many Kyrgyz and Tajiks live in China's Xinjiang province. The fertile Ferghana Valley is shared by Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. The central governments have struggled to gain control over administrative subunits. Most observers agree that the term "Central Asia" currently denotes a geographic area more than a region of shared identities and aspirations, although it is clear that the land-locked, poverty-stricken, and sparsely populated region will need more integration in order to develop.

Regional cooperation remains stymied by tensions among the states. Such tensions continue to exist despite the membership of the states in various cooperation groups such as the CST Organization (CSTO), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and NATO's Partnership for Peace (PFP). The CST was signed by Russia, Belarus, the South Caucasus countries, and the Central Asian states (except Turkmenistan) in May 1992 and called for military cooperation and joint consultations in the event of security threats to any member. At the time to renew the treaty in 1999, Uzbekistan, Georgia, and Azerbaijan formally withdrew. The remaining members formed the CSTO in late 2002, and a secretariat opened in Moscow at the beginning of 2004. Through the CSTO, Russia has attempted to involve the members in joint efforts to combat international terrorism and drug trafficking.¹⁹ Former Kyrgyz President Akayev apparently did not call for the aid of the CSTO during the coup that overthrew him in 2005 (see below), and the CSTO has appeared inactive during other crises in the region. In September 2008, its members agreed to condemn Georgia's "aggression" against its breakaway South Ossetia region but refused a request by Russia to extend diplomatic recognition to South Ossetia and Georgia's breakaway region of Abkhazia. In February 2009, the largely moribund CSTO Central Asian rapid reaction forces were formally disbanded with the creation of CSTO rapid reaction forces, which Russia proclaimed would be comparable to NATO forces. Uzbekistan announced, however, that it would participate in the new forces only on a case-by-case basis.

In 1996, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan signed the "Shanghai treaty" with China pledging the sanctity and substantial demilitarization of mutual borders, and in 1997 they signed a follow-on treaty demilitarizing the 4,300 mile former Soviet-Chinese border. China has used the treaty to pressure the Central Asian states to deter their ethnic Uighur minorities from supporting separatism in China's Xinjiang province, and to get them to extradite Uighurs fleeing China. In 2001, Uzbekistan joined the group, re-named the SCO, and in 2003 the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) was set up there. Military exercises have become a major form of cooperation. According to some observers, a major aim of these "anti-terrorism" exercises is to convince the Central Asian states that Russia and China are able to supplant the United States in helping the region to combat terrorism. China also has stressed economic cooperation with the region to build east-west transport routes, and these efforts may facilitate progress toward regional integration.²⁰

¹⁹ Roger McDermott, *Eurasia Insight*, August 28, 2002.

²⁰ Roger McDermott, *The Rising Dragon: SCO Peace Mission 2007*, Occasional Paper, The Jamestown Foundation, October 2007; S. Frederick Starr, ed., *The New Silk Roads: Transport and Trade in Greater Central Asia* (Washington DC: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, 2007).

The 1992-1997 Civil War in Tajikistan

Tajikistan was among the Central Asian republics least prepared and inclined toward independence when the Soviet Union broke up. In September 1992, a loose coalition of nationalist, Islamic, and democratic parties and groups tried to take power. Kulyabi and Khojenti regional elites, assisted by Uzbekistan and Russia, launched a successful counteroffensive that by the end of 1992 had resulted in 20,000-40,000 casualties and up to 800,000 refugees or displaced persons, about 80,000 of whom fled to Afghanistan. After the two sides agreed to a cease-fire, the U.N. Security Council established a small U.N. Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT) in December 1994. In June 1997, Tajik President Rahmon and the late rebel leader Seyed Abdullo Nuri signed a *comprehensive peace agreement*. Benchmarks of the peace process were largely met, and UNMOT pulled out in May 2000. To encourage the peace process, the United States initially pledged to help Tajikistan rebuild. Some observers point to events in the city of Andijon in Uzbekistan (see “The 2005 Violence in Andijon, Uzbekistan” below) as indicating that conflicts similar to the Tajik civil war could engulf other regional states where large numbers of people are disenfranchised and poverty-stricken.

The Incursions into Kyrgyzstan

Several hundred Islamic extremists and others first invaded Kyrgyzstan in July-August 1999. Jama Namanganiy, the co-leader of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU; see below), headed the largest guerrilla group. They seized hostages and several villages, allegedly seeking to create an Islamic state in south Kyrgyzstan as a springboard for a jihad in Uzbekistan.²¹ With Uzbek and Kazakh air and other support, Kyrgyz forces forced the guerrillas out in October 1999. Dozens of IMU and other insurgents again invaded Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in August 2000. Uzbekistan provided air and other support, but Kyrgyz forces were largely responsible for defeating the insurgents by late October 2000. The IMU did not invade the region in the summer before September 11, 2001, in part because Osama bin Laden had secured its aid for a Taliban offensive against the Afghan Northern Alliance.

About a dozen alleged IMU members invaded from Tajikistan in May 2006 but soon were defeated (some escaped). After this, the Kyrgyz defense minister claimed that the IMU, HT, and other such groups increasingly menaced national security.

Attacks in Uzbekistan

A series of explosions in Tashkent in February 1999 were among early signs that the Uzbek government was vulnerable to terrorism. By various reports, the explosions killed 16 to 28 and wounded 100 to 351 people. The aftermath involved wide-scale arrests of political dissidents and others deemed by some observers as unlikely conspirators. Karimov in April 1999 accused Mohammad Solikh (former Uzbek presidential candidate and head of the banned Erk Party) of masterminding what he termed an assassination plot, along with Tohir Yuldashev (co-leader of the IMU) and the Taliban. The first trial of 22 suspects in June resulted in six receiving death sentences. The suspects said in court that they received terrorist training in Afghanistan,

²¹ According to Zeyno Baran, S. Frederick Starr, and Svante Cornell, the incursions of the IMU into Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and 2000 were largely driven by efforts to secure drug trafficking routes. *Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia and the Caucasus: Implications for the EU*, Silk Road Paper, July 2006.

Tajikistan, Pakistan, and Russia and were led by Solikh, Yuldashev and Namanganiy. In 2000, Yuldashev and Namanganiy received death sentences in absentia, and Solikh received a 15.5 year prison sentence. Solikh denied membership in IMU, and he and Yuldashev denied involvement in the bombings.

On March 28 through April 1, 2004, a series of suicide bombings and other attacks were launched in Uzbekistan, reportedly killing 47. An obscure Islamic Jihad Group of Uzbekistan (IJG; Jama'at al-Jihad al-Islami, a breakaway part of the IMU) claimed responsibility.²² In subsequent trials, the alleged attackers were accused of being members of IJG or of Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT; an Islamic fundamentalist movement ostensibly pledged to peace but banned in Uzbekistan) and of attempting to overthrow the government. Some defendants testified that they were trained by Arabs and others at camps in Kazakhstan and Pakistan. They testified that Najmiddin Kamolitdinovich Jalolov (convicted in absentia in 2000) was the leader of IJG, and linked him to Taliban head Mohammad Omar, Uighur extremist Abu Mohammad, and Osama bin Laden. On July 30, 2004, explosions occurred at the U.S. and Israeli embassies and the Uzbek Prosecutor-General's Office in Tashkent. The IMU and IJG claimed responsibility and stated that the suicide bombings were aimed against Uzbek and other "apostate" governments.²³

The 2005 Violence in Andijon, Uzbekistan

Dozens or perhaps hundreds of civilians were killed or wounded on May 13, 2005, after Uzbek troops fired on demonstrators in the eastern town of Andijon. The protestors had gathered to demand the end of a trial of local businessmen charged with belonging to an Islamic terrorist group. The night before, a group stormed a prison where those on trial were held and released hundreds of inmates.²⁴ Many freed inmates then joined others in storming government buildings. President Karimov flew to the city to direct operations, and reportedly had restored order by late on May 13.²⁵ On July 29, 439 people who had fled from Uzbekistan to Kyrgyzstan were airlifted to Romania for resettlement processing, after the United States and others raised concerns that they might be tortured if returned to Uzbekistan.²⁶

The United States and others in the international community repeatedly called for an international inquiry into events in Andijon, which the Uzbek government rejected as violating its sovereignty. In November 2005, the EU Council approved a visa ban on 12 Uzbek officials it stated were "directly responsible for the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force in Andijon and for the obstruction of an independent inquiry." The Council also embargoed exports of "arms,

²² The IJG changed its name to the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) in 2005.

²³ See also CRS Report RS21818, *The 2004 Attacks in Uzbekistan: Context and Implications for U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol.

²⁴ There is a great deal of controversy about whether this group contained foreign-trained terrorists or was composed mainly of the friends and families of the accused. See U.S. Congress. Commission on Security and Cooperation In Europe. Briefing: The Uzbekistan Crisis. *Testimony of Galima Bukharbayeva, Correspondent. Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, June 29, 2005. For a contrasting assessment, see Shirin Akiner, *Violence in Andijon, 13 May 2005: An Independent Assessment*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, July 2005; and AbduMannob Polat, *Reassessing Andijan: The Road to Restoring U.S.-Uzbek Relations*, Jamestown Foundation, June 2007.

²⁵ Analyst Adeeb Khalid draws a parallel between the Uzbek government's actions at Andijon and at a large student demonstration in Tashkent in January 1992. In the latter case, Karimov allegedly ordered troops to fire on the marchers, resulting in up to six deaths and two dozen or more injuries. *Islam After Communism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), p. 155. See also Reuters, January 17, 1992.

²⁶ See also CRS Report RS22161, *Unrest in Andijon, Uzbekistan: Context and Implications*, by Jim Nichol.

military equipment, and other equipment that might be used for internal repression.”²⁷ In October 2007 and April 2008, the EU Council suspended the visa ban for six months but left the arms embargo in place. In October 2008, the EU Council praised what it viewed as some positive trends in human rights in Uzbekistan and lifted the visa ban, although it left the arms embargo in place.²⁸ In October 2009, it lifted the arms embargo.

At the first major trial of fifteen alleged perpetrators of the Andijon unrest in late 2005, the accused all confessed and asked for death penalties. They testified that they were members of Akramiya, a branch of HT launched in 1994 by Akram Yuldashev that allegedly aimed to use force to create a caliphate in the area of the Fergana Valley located in Uzbekistan. Besides receiving assistance from HT, Akramiya was alleged to receive financial aid and arms training from the IMU. The defendants also claimed that the U.S. and Kyrgyz governments helped finance and support their effort to overthrow the government, and that international media colluded with local human rights groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in this effort. The U.S. and Kyrgyz governments denied involvement, and many observers criticized the trial as appearing stage-managed. Reportedly, 100 or more individuals were arrested and sentenced, including some Uzbek opposition party members and media and NGO representatives. Partly in response, Congress tightened conditions on aid to Uzbekistan.²⁹

The Summer 2009 Suicide Bombings and Attacks in Uzbekistan

On May 25-26, 2009, a police checkpoint was attacked on the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border, attacks took place in the border town of Khanabad, and four bombings occurred in Andijon in the commercial district, including at least one by suicide bombers. Several deaths and injuries were alleged, although reporting was suppressed. Uzbek officials blamed the IMU, although the IJU allegedly claimed responsibility. President Karimov flew to Andijon on May 31. In late August 2009, shooting took place in Tashkent that resulted in the deaths of three alleged IMU members and the apprehension of other group members. The Uzbek government alleged that the group had been involved in the 1999 explosions and in recent assassinations in Tashkent.

Actions of the IMU and IJU in Pakistan and Afghanistan

Pakistan reported in November 2006 that it had arrested IJU members who had placed rockets near presidential offices, the legislature, and the headquarters of military intelligence in Islamabad. Reportedly, the IJU was targeting the government because of its support for the United States.³⁰ Pakistani media reported in March-April 2007 that dozens of IMU members had

²⁷ Council of the European Union. *Uzbekistan: Council Adopts Restrictive Measures*, Press Release 14392/05, November 14, 2005. U.S. officials argued that the United States already had been limiting military assistance—at congressional request—because of human rights abuses.

²⁸ Council of the European Union. 2824th General Affairs Council Meeting. *Press Release*, October 15-16, 2007; 2864th and 2865th General Affairs and External Relations Council Meetings. *Press Release*, April 29, 2008; 2897th General Affairs and External Relations Council Meeting. *Press Release*, October 13, 2008. Some international human rights groups protested against a visit by the head of the Uzbek state security service—who had been subject to the visa ban lifted by the COE—to Germany in late October 2008. He reportedly advised German officials on IJU activities in Central Asia.

²⁹ OSCE. Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). *Report from the OSCE/ODIHR Trial Monitoring in Uzbekistan*, April 21, 2006; Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Republic of Uzbekistan. *Comments on the Report Prepared by the OSCE ODIHR*, April 19, 2006.

³⁰ BBC Monitoring South Asia, November 4, 2006.

been killed in northern Pakistan when local tribes turned against them, possibly reducing their strength or forcing them to move into Afghanistan and Central Asia. More alleged IMU and IJU members were reported killed by Pakistani forces during fighting in North Waziristan in October 2007. Indicating a widening of the IMU's focus, Tohir Yuldashev called in January 2008 for creating a Shariah state in Pakistan.

Among other incidents:

- In January 2008, an IJU website seemed to indicate that Abu Laith al-Libi—an al Qaeda official who had been killed by the United States in Pakistan—had been one of the leaders of the IJU.³¹
- In March 2008, an IJU website claimed that one of its members—the German-born Cunyt Ciftci (alias Saad Abu Fourkan)—had assisted Taliban forces in Afghanistan by carrying out a suicide bombing that killed two Afghan and two U.S. troops and wounded several others.³² According to the IJU website and other sources, IJU is playing a more significant role in fighting in Afghanistan.
- In June 2008, an IJU video claimed that one Uzbek IJU member had taken part in the 1999 attack in Kyrgyzstan, and later had fought in Afghanistan against the Northern Alliance and then against U.S. and NATO forces. Another Uzbek member had been trained in Chechnya by Khattab in 1998 and also had fought against U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan.³³
- In July and September 2009, ISAF and the Afghan military reportedly carried out operations in the northern Konduz province against IMU terrorists who supposedly had moved into the province after being forced out of Pakistan.
- Tohir Yuldashev allegedly was killed in Pakistan by a U.S. predator missile on September 26, 2009.
- On October 11, 2009, 10 terrorists attacked the army headquarters in Rawalpindi, resulting in 20 deaths. The government alleges that three of the attackers belonged to the IMU.
- In late October 2009, Pakistani armed forces reportedly were attacking an IMU base in the town of Kaniguram in South Waziristan.

Some officials in Central Asia have warned that the crackdown on the IMU and IJU in Pakistan and Afghanistan may be forcing some of the terrorists to return to Central Asia. Other officials have stated that a large-scale influx has not yet occurred.

Actions of the IMU and IJU in Germany and Elsewhere

Officials in Germany arrested four individuals on September 5, 2007, on charges of planning explosions at the U.S. airbase at Ramstein, at U.S. and Uzbek diplomatic offices, and other targets

³¹ Guido Steinberg, *A Turkish al-Qaeda: The Islamic Jihad Union and the Internationalization of Uzbek Jihadism*, Center for Contemporary Conflict, 2008; U.S. Senate. Select Committee on Intelligence. *Prepared Testimony of Director of National Intelligence Michael McConnell: The Annual Threat Assessment*, February 5, 2008.

³² Guido Steinberg, *A Turkish al-Qaeda*; *UPI*, March 17, 2008.

³³ *CEDR*, August 4, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-318001.

in Germany. The IJU claimed responsibility and stated that it was targeting U.S. and Uzbek interests because of these countries' "brutal policies towards Muslims," and targeting Germany because it has a small military base in Termez, Uzbekistan, which is used to support NATO operations in Afghanistan. Reportedly, the suspects had received their orders from Gofir Salimov (not apprehended), who is wanted in Uzbekistan in connection with the 2004 bombings. The suspects were part of a larger IJU branch in Germany. In U.S. congressional testimony on September 10, 2007, the then-Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, John Redd, and the then-Director of National Intelligence, Mike McConnell, stated that U.S. communications intercepts shared with Germany had facilitated foiling the plot. In July 2009, German media reported that the suspects had confessed that they were trained at an IJU terrorist training camp in Afghanistan. The leader of the IJU was identified as Najmiddin Jalolov (mentioned above), a.k.a. "commander Ahmad." In testimony in September 2009, two of the defendants admitted that while in Afghanistan in 2006, they had launched attacks against two U.S. military camps.³⁴

Among other incidents:

- In May 2008, French, German, and Dutch authorities reported that they had detained 10 individuals for suspicion of running a network to funnel money to the IMU in Uzbekistan.
- In late September 2008, German authorities reported the arrest of two suspected members of IJU and issued wanted posters for two other suspected members. The four allegedly had received terrorist training in Pakistani IJU camps. German authorities also arrested two people allegedly attempting to leave the country to undergo terrorism training in Pakistan by the IJU (they later were released on the grounds of inconclusive evidence).³⁵
- A video released by the IJU in late October 2008 stated that as long as Germany supports NATO operations in Afghanistan, and uses a base in Uzbekistan to support these operations, it is subject to IJU attacks.
- A video was released by the IJU in January 2009 that threatened German "occupation" troops in Afghanistan.
- Turkish authorities arrested over three dozen alleged IJU members in April 2009.
- German media reported in June 2009 that a video released by the IJU provided more evidence that the terrorist organization was linked to al Qaeda.³⁶

U.S. Designation of the IMU and IJU as Terrorist Organizations

In September 2000, the State Department designated the IMU as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, stating that the IMU, aided by Afghanistan's Taliban and by Osama bin Laden, resorts to terrorism, actively threatens U.S. interests, and attacks American citizens. The "main goal of the

³⁴ Guido Steinberg has argued that several dozen recruits of various ethnic groups have travelled from Germany to Pakistan for training in IMU and IJU camps. Open Source Center. *Europe: Daily Report*, August 10, 2009, Doc. No. EUP-72003.

³⁵ Simon Sturdee, "German Commandos Arrest Two Terror Suspects on Aircraft," *Agence France Presse*, September 26, 2008; Craig Whitlock, "Germany Pulls Two Suspected Terrorism Trainees from Plane," *Washington Post*, September 27, 2008, p. A14.

³⁶ Open Source Center. *Europe: Daily Report* (hereafter *EDR*), June 5, 2009, Doc. No. EUP-85023.

IMU is to topple the current government in Uzbekistan,” the State Department warned, and it linked the IMU to bombings and attacks on Uzbekistan in 1999-2000. IMU forces assisting the Taliban and Al Qaeda suffered major losses during coalition actions in Afghanistan, and Namanganiy was probably killed.³⁷

Former CIA Director Porter Goss testified in March 2005 that the IJG/IJU “has become a more virulent threat to U.S. interests and local governments.”³⁸ In May 2005, the State Department designated the IJG/IJU as a Foreign Terrorist Organization and Specially Designated Global Terrorist, and in June, the U.N. Security Council added the IJG/IJU to its terrorism list.³⁹ In June 2008, Jalolov and his associate Suhayl Fatilloevich Buranov were added to the U.N. 1267 Sanctions Committee’s Consolidated List of individuals and entities associated with bin Laden, al Qaeda, and the Taliban. Also, the U.S. Treasury Department ordered that any of their assets under U.S. jurisdiction be frozen and prohibited U.S. citizens from financial dealings with the terrorists.⁴⁰

Democratization and Human Rights

A major goal of U.S. policy in Central Asia has been to foster the long-term development of democratic institutions and respect for human rights. Particularly since September 11, 2001, the United States has attempted to harmonize its concerns about democratization and human rights in the region with its interests in regional support for counter-terrorism. According to some allegations, the former Bush Administration may have sent suspected terrorists in its custody to Uzbekistan for questioning, a process termed “extraordinary rendition.”⁴¹ Although not verifying such transfers specifically to Uzbekistan, the former Bush Administration stated that it received diplomatic assurances that transferees would not be tortured. Several citizens of Central Asian states who were held in U.S. custody at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base have been returned to their home countries.⁴²

Several of the Central Asian leaders have declared that they are committed to democratization. Despite such pledges, the states have made little progress, according to the State Department.⁴³

³⁷ U.S. Department of State. *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2003*, April 2004.

³⁸ U.S. Senate. Committee on Armed Services. Testimony of the Director of Central Intelligence, The Honorable Porter J. Goss, March 17, 2005.

³⁹ U.S. Department of State. Press Statement: U.S. Department of State Designates the Islamic Jihad Group Under Executive Order 13224, May 26, 2005; U.N. Security Council. The Al-Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee. Press Release: Security Council Committee Adds One Entity to Al-Qaida Section of Consolidated List, SC/8405, June 3, 2005.

⁴⁰ U.S. Department of the Treasury. Press Release: Treasury Designates Leadership of the IJU Terrorist Group, June 18, 2008.

⁴¹ *The New Yorker*, February 14, 2005; *New York Times*, May 1, 2005; *New York Times*, December 31, 2005; Representative Edward Markey, *Congressional Record*, December 13, 2005, p. H11337; European Parliament. Temporary Committee on the Alleged Use of European Countries by the CIA for the Transport And Illegal Detention of Prisoners, *Draft Interim Report*, 2006/2027(INI), April 24, 2006; and *On the Testimony by Craig Murray, Former British Ambassador*, Working Document No. 5, June 1, 2006.

⁴² House Committee on Foreign Affairs. Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight. Hearing: City on the Hill or Prison on the Bay? The Mistakes of Guantanamo and the Decline of America’s Image, May 6, 2008; Hearing: Rendition and the Department of State, June 10, 2008. At least three Tajiks returned to Tajikistan from Guantanamo were then tried and imprisoned on charges of belonging to al Qaeda or the IMU.

⁴³ U.S. Department of State. Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007.

During Nazarbayev's 1994 U.S. visit, he and then-President Clinton signed a Charter on Democratic Partnership that recognized Kazakhstan's commitments to the rule of law, respect for human rights, and economic reform. During his December 2001 and September 2006 visits, Nazarbayev repeated these pledges in joint statements with then-President Bush. In March 2002, a U.S.-Uzbek Strategic Partnership Declaration was signed pledging Uzbekistan to "intensify the democratic transformation" and improve freedom of the press. During his December 2002 U.S. visit, Tajikistan's President Rahmon pledged to "expand fundamental freedoms and human rights."

During the 1990s and early 2000s, almost all the leaders in Central Asia held onto power by orchestrating extensions of their terms, holding suspect elections, eliminating possible contenders, and providing emoluments to supporters and relatives (the exception was the leader of Tajikistan, who had been ousted in the early 1990s during a civil war). After this long period of leadership stability, President Askar Akayev of Kyrgyzstan was toppled in a coup in 2005, and President Niyazov of Turkmenistan died in late 2006, marking the passing of three out of five Soviet-era regional leaders from the scene.

Possible scenarios of political futures in Central Asia have ranged from continued rule in most of the states by elite groups that became ensconced during the Soviet era to violent transitions to Islamic fundamentalist rule. Relatively peaceful transitions to more or less democratic and Western-oriented political systems have been considered decreasingly likely by many observers. While some observers warn that Islamic extremism could increase dramatically in the region, others discount the risk that the existing secular governments soon will be overthrown by Islamic extremists.⁴⁴

In the case of the three succession transitions so far, Tajikistan's resulted in a shift in the Soviet-era regional/clan elite configuration and some limited inclusion of the Islamic Renaissance Party. Perhaps worrisome, Tajik President Rahmon has written a "spiritual guide" reminiscent of the one penned by Turkmenistan's late authoritarian president, and has given orders on how citizens should live and dress. Kyrgyzstan's transition appears to involve power-sharing by Soviet-era regional/clan elites. The Kyrgyz government appears recently to be backsliding on democratization. In Turkmenistan, it appears that Soviet-era elites have retained power following Niyazov's death and have eschewed meaningful democratization.

Recent Developments in Kazakhstan

In May 2007, President Nazarbayev proposed changes to the constitution that he claimed would increase legislative power and boost democratization. He explained that after Kazakhstan gained independence, "the need to build Kazakh statehood and a market economy from scratch demanded [that] I assume all the responsibility.... But today, when the process of modernization of the country is irreversible ... the time has come [for] a new system of checks and balances." The legislature approved the changes the next day. The changes included increasing the number of deputies in both legislative chambers, decreasing the president's term in office from seven to five years, and requiring a court order in case of detention or arrest. Seemingly non-reformist

⁴⁴ Analyst Adeeb Khalid argues that the elites and populations of the regional states still hold many attitudes and follow many practices imposed during the Soviet period of rule. This "Sovietism" makes it difficult for either Islamic extremism or democratization to make headway, he suggests. Khalid, p. 193. For a perhaps more troubling view of the threat of Islamic extremism, see above, "Overview of U.S. Policy Concerns."

changes included a requirement for a two-thirds vote in each legislative chamber to override presidential alterations to approved bills, a provision that nine deputies of the Majilis (the lower legislative chamber) are appointed by the People's Assembly, and a change "initiated" by the legislature excluding Nazarbayev from term limits. Visiting U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher stated in June 2007 that "these constitutional amendments go in the right direction.... [and] point the way to a stable, democratic system."⁴⁵

Similar to the events of late 1993, deputies in Kazakhstan's Majilis (the lower legislative chamber) in June 2007 ostensibly requested that President Nursultan Nazarbayev cut short their terms and hold early elections. He acceded to the request the next day and the election was scheduled for August 18, 2007. As per constitutional amendments and election law changes, the size of the Majilis increased from 77 to 107 members. Ninety-eight members are elected by party lists and nine by the People's Assembly (which is headed by the president). Seven parties were registered for the election, six of which were pro-government and one of which was an opposition party. The main pro-government party, Nur-Otan (Fatherland's Ray of Light), reportedly received 88.05% of 8.87 million votes cast and won all 98 seats. The other six parties running were unable to clear a 7% threshold needed to win seats. Observers from the OSCE praised some positive aspects of the vote, but judged it as falling short of a free and fair race. They were critical of irregularities in counting ballots, a high vote hurdle for parties to win seats, the appointment of nine deputies, and no provision for candidates who were not party-affiliated to run. U.S. analyst Ariel Cohen hailed "a relatively clean election that demonstrates high popular support."⁴⁶

Although Kazakhstan lobbied extensively for holding the presidency of the OSCE in 2009, the 15th Ministerial Meeting of the OSCE in Madrid in late November 2007 decided that Greece would hold the OSCE presidency in 2009, followed in 2010 by Kazakhstan. This positive decision was made despite the appearance in early November of the final report of the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), which assessed Kazakhstan's August legislative election as not meeting OSCE commitments (although the election was considered improved over previous races). Kazakhstan was among several CIS members that called in 2007 for restricting the scope of election observation by ODIHR. Also in late October 2007, Kazakh authorities were alleged to have closed down several independent newspapers and Internet sites.

Foreign Minister Tazhin pledged at the Ministerial Meeting that suggestions made by ODIHR for changes to media, electoral, and political party laws would be submitted for consideration by the Kazakh legislature by the end of 2008. He stated that amendments to the media law would include reducing criminal penalties for libel by the media, setting up "media self-regulation mechanisms" to address libel issues, and easing the registration process for media. He also promised that the Kazakh government would soon move to increase local self-government. He assured the OSCE that Kazakhstan "consider[s] the human dimension to be one of the most important directions of the OSCE activity," and that in chairing the OSCE, Kazakhstan would ensure that NGOs are able to participate in OSCE events and that ODIHR's mandate is preserved. He argued that Kazakhstan's chairmanship would be "a powerful catalyst of the reform process

⁴⁵ U.S. Embassy, Astana, Kazakhstan. *Interview by ... Richard A. Boucher with Aybek Aldabergenov of Era TV*, June 6, 2007.

⁴⁶ OSCE. Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. Republic of Kazakhstan Parliamentary Elections, 18 August 2007: OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report, October 30, 2007; CEDR, August 22, 2007, Doc. No. CEP-950376; Ariel Cohen, "Kazakh Vote: A Step Forward," *Washington Times*, August 21, 2007.

[in Kazakhstan] and an additional confirmation of the rightly chosen path of further liberalization and openness.”⁴⁷ Addressing the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE in Astana on June 29, 2008, President Nazarbayev stated that his country’s preparations for holding the chairmanship included the elaboration of a blueprint he termed “the path to Europe,” which envisages Kazakhstan’s integration into Europe in the areas of energy, transport, technology transfers, education, culture, and democratization.

In early February 2009, President Nazarbayev approved changes to laws on the media, elections, and political parties. Political parties that did not gain at least 7% of votes cast in an Majlis election were accorded the right to participate in some legislative affairs, the number of signatures necessary for registering a party for a Majlis election was reduced from 50,000 to 40,000, and requirements for registering media were eased. Critics termed the changes minor.⁴⁸ One positive sign was an action by the constitutional court in February 2009 to strike down a proposed law that would have tightened restrictions on religious freedom. In April 2009, ODIHR criticized proposed further amendments to the media law that would restrict access to the Internet. Other changes would bar media reporting that “interfere[s] with election campaigns,” takes place during times when campaign news is not allowed, tries to influence election results, or influences participation in strikes. Further amendments would bar foreign broadcasts from “complicat[ing] or support[ing] the nomination or election” of candidates or parties. The changes were signed into law in July 2009.⁴⁹

In May 2009, Human Rights Watch, a non-governmental organization, suggested that while “Kazakhstan has made a number of modest improvements in [human rights in] the past several months ... it should be doing a lot more to show that it is ready to lead an organization that works to make sure human rights are respected.”⁵⁰

Recent Developments in Kyrgyzstan

In late September 2007, the Kyrgyz constitutional court, heavily influenced by President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, invalidated all constitutional changes since the adoption of the 2003 constitution. Bakiyev announced a few days later that he was setting up and supporting a new political party, the Ak Jol People’s Party. He then pushed through a snap referendum in October 2007 on a draft constitution he unveiled that set forth strong presidential powers.⁵¹ A day after the referendum, he dissolved the legislature and set new elections for December 2007, a move many observers viewed as preventing opposition parties from carrying out effective campaigns during

⁴⁷ OSCE. 15th Ministerial Council Meeting. *Address of Marat Tazhin, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan*, November 29, 2007.

⁴⁸ Human Rights Watch. *An Atmosphere of Quiet Repression: Freedom of Religion, Assembly and Expression in Kazakhstan*, December 2008.

⁴⁹ Human Rights Watch. *Human Rights in Kazakhstan: Seven Months before the OSCE Chairmanship*, Human Rights Watch Memorandum, May 20, 2009.

⁵⁰ Human Rights Watch. “Holly Cartner, Europe and Central Asia Director: Changes Needed for Upcoming OSCE Leadership Role,” *Press Release*, May 20, 2009; “Human Rights in Kazakhstan: Seven Months before the OSCE Chairmanship,” *Human Rights Watch Memorandum*, May 20, 2009.

⁵¹ The Venice Commission concluded that the draft constitution placed an “excessive concentration of power in the hands of the president,” so that “the powers of the president are almost unrestricted.” European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission). *Opinion on the Constitutional Situation in the Kyrgyz Republic*, Opinion No. 457/2007, December 17, 2007.

the short period of time.⁵² Some of those who observed the vote on the new constitution alleged that many irregularities took place.

Twelve parties were registered for the December 2007 election. The new constitution established a 90-seat legislature elected by party lists. A new election law stated that a party could not win seats unless it received 5% or more of the vote of all registered voters. Another provision stated that a party could not win seats unless it gained at least 0.5% of the vote in each region. This provision did not specify how the percentage was to be calculated, leading to controversy that was eventually settled by a Supreme Court decision. On election day, initial results appeared to indicate that only Ak Jol and Ata Mekan had surpassed the 5% hurdle. The CEC later disqualified Ata Mekan because it had not received 0.5% of the vote in one region and announced that Ak Jol had won 71 legislative seats, the Social Democrats 11 seats, and the Communists 8 seats. In its final report on the election, observers from the OSCE assessed the race as “fail[ing] to meet a number of OSCE commitments.” Although the observers fell short in declaring the results invalid, they stated that there were “serious irregularities and inconsistencies” in vote-counting, and that there was “questionable consistency” between reported preliminary and final results.⁵³

Kyrgyzstan’s legislature voted in late March 2009 to hold an early presidential election on July 23, 2009. The CEC declared that six candidates, including Bakiyev, had met the requirements to run. Several opposition party leaders refused to run in what they considered a hastily called election. Two candidates were considered to be true opposition figures, the main one of which was Almazbek Atambayev. He was a former prime minister and was backed by the United Popular Movement, a bloc of opposition parties. According to the CEC, Bakiyev received 76.43% of 2.25 million votes cast, followed by Atambayev with 8.9%. Almost as many people checked a box “against all candidates” as voted for Atambayev. OSCE election monitors stated that despite some positive aspects of the election, such as real choices among candidates and the involvement of civil society, the election “was marred by ... evidence of ballot box stuffing, inaccuracies in the voter lists and some evidence of multiple voting. The process further deteriorated during the counting and tabulation.” The observers also criticized the bias of state-owned media toward Bakiyev, the use of government resources by Bakiyev’s campaign, pressure and intimidation by Bakiyev’s supporters against other candidates, and irregularities in forming electoral commissions.⁵⁴ Several opposition parties denounced the election as fraudulent (even before voting was over) and launched protests, which resulted in hundreds of detentions and arrests by the police.

Recent Developments in Turkmenistan

A constitutional commission unveiled a draft constitution in July 2008 that after public debate was approved by the Halk Maslahaty (HM or People’s Council, a supreme legislative-executive-regional conclave) on September 26, 2008. The new constitution abolishes the HM and divides its

⁵² In a perhaps telling move, the Ak Dzhol Party placed Cholpon Bayekova, the chairwoman of the Constitutional Court and a relative of Bakiyev, at the head of its party list.

⁵³ OSCE. Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. *Kyrgyz Republic Pre-Term Parliamentary Elections, 16 December 2007, OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report*, April 24, 2008. Referring to the OSCE preliminary assessment, the State Department evinced “serious concerns” about the conduct of the election and called for reforms. U.S. Department of State. *Press Release*, December 21, 2007.

⁵⁴ OSCE. *Election Observation Mission, Kyrgyz Republic—Presidential Election 23 July 2009: Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions*, July 24, 2009. See also *CEDR*, July 28, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-6005.

powers between the Mejlis and the president. It calls for enlarging the Mejlis from 65 to 125 members. An early legislative election was held on December 14, 2008. An OSCE pre-election needs assessment mission raised concerns that “a lack of distinction between civil society organizations, the party, and the State,” had resulted in only government-approved candidates running for seats.⁵⁵ The Turkmen Central Electoral Commission reported that almost 94% of the electorate voted on December 14. At least two approved candidates ran in each district. President Berdimuhamedow hailed the election as advancing Turkmen democracy.⁵⁶

Recent Developments in Uzbekistan

The Uzbek CEC in mid-November 2007 approved four candidates to run in the prospective December 23, 2007, presidential election. Three of the candidates were nominated by pro-government political parties and one by a supposedly independent citizens’ initiative committee. Although the Uzbek constitution bars a president from more than two terms, the Uzbek CEC argued that since the most recent constitution was approved in 1992, Karimov’s “first term” should be considered as following his election in January 2000, and that he is eligible to run for a “second term” in December 2007.

Karimov won with 88% of 14.8 million votes with a 90.6% turnout.⁵⁷ A small election observation mission sponsored by OSCE ODIHR assessed the election as “generally fail[ing] to meet many OSCE commitments for democratic elections.” OSCE ODIHR reported that there were no campaign debates or open public meetings, and that media coverage was minimal. Each “opposing” candidate used similar language to laud the policies of the incumbent president. State-owned media urged the electorate to vote for the incumbent.⁵⁸ In his inaugural address on January 16, 2008, Karimov stated that the “historic election” might be remembered for centuries and thanked the citizenry “who gave me a massive vote of confidence by freely expressing their will [in an] election which was held in full compliance with our constitution and laws, international legal norms, and universally recognized democratic standards.”⁵⁹

Human Rights

The NGO Freedom House has included Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan among countries such as Cuba, Myanmar, North Korea, and Sudan that have the lowest possible ratings on political rights and civil liberties.⁶⁰ In all the Central Asian states, adherents of non-favored faiths, missionaries, and pious Muslims face religious rights abuses, and unfair elections increase political alienation and violence aimed against the regimes.

⁵⁵ OSCE. ODIHR. *Turkmenistan, Early Parliamentary Elections: OSCE/ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Report*, October 20, 2008.

⁵⁶ *CEDR*, December 19, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950107.

⁵⁷ The final vote turnout was reported two hours after the polls closed. Results that were termed “preliminary” were reported the next day (December 24), which were identical to “final” results reported on December 28.

⁵⁸ OSCE. ODIHR. *Final Report on the 23 December 2007 Presidential Election in Uzbekistan*, April 23, 2008.

⁵⁹ *CEDR*, January 16, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950404.

⁶⁰ Freedom House. *The Worst of the Worst: The World's Most Repressive Societies*, September 6, 2006; May 9, 2007; May 6, 2008; and March 9, 2009.

Since 2001, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has recommended that the Secretary of State designate Uzbekistan a “country of particular concern” (CPC), where severe human rights violations could lead to U.S. sanctions. In November 2006, then-Secretary Rice designated Uzbekistan a CPC. In its most recent report in 2009, USCIRF reported that Uzbekistan had made scant efforts to address religious freedom abuses and should retain its CPC designation. In the case of religious freedom in Turkmenistan, USCIRF recommended in its 2009 annual report—as it had since 2000—that Turkmenistan be designated a CPC.⁶¹

On human trafficking, the State Department downgraded Uzbekistan in mid-2006 to “Tier 3” (designating a source country for human trafficking that did not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and was not making significant efforts to do so). No U.S. aid sanctions were reported as a direct result of the Tier 3 designation. In June 2008, Uzbekistan was found to have made some modest progress in addressing human trafficking problems, and was upgraded to the “Tier 2 Watch List.” According to the State Department, Uzbekistan in 2008 adopted an anti-trafficking law and demonstrated modest improvement in its victim assistance and protection efforts. In June 2009, the State Department reported that Uzbekistan would remain on its “Tier 2 Watch List” because the country had not made progress in ending forced child labor. In regard to other Central Asian countries, Tajikistan was downgraded from “Tier 2” to the “Tier 2 Watch List” in 2008 and remained on the watch list in 2009 because “the government did not demonstrate progress in prosecuting and convicting officials complicit in trafficking and ensuring that victims have access to protection.” The State Department has averred that coerced child laborers are used to pick cotton in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, as well as in Uzbekistan.⁶²

Among U.N. actions, the General Assembly in 2003 and 2004 approved resolutions expressing “grave concern” about human rights abuses in Turkmenistan and urging reforms. The U.N. Rapporteur on Torture in early 2003 completed a report that concluded that police and prison officials in Uzbekistan “systematically” employed torture.⁶³ In late 2005, the U.N. General Assembly’s Third Committee approved resolutions critical of human rights violations in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The resolution on Turkmenistan expressed “grave concern” about political repression, media censorship, religious minority group harassment, and detainee torture. The resolution on Uzbekistan expressed “grave concern” about violence against civilians in Andijon and called on the government to permit an international investigation. The Uzbek representative asserted that the resolution contained no credible facts and ignored Uzbekistan’s right to defend its constitutional order against terrorists.⁶⁴ In late 2007, the U.N. Committee

⁶¹ U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. *Annual Report*, May 1, 2007; *Annual Report*, May 1, 2008; and *Annual Report*, May 1, 2009. USCIRF first urged that Uzbekistan be designated a CPC in its 2005 *Annual Report*.

⁶² U.S. Department of State. *Trafficking in Persons Report*, June 2006, June 2007, June 2008, and June 2009. On Uzbekistan, see also *Invisible To The World? The Dynamics of Forced Child Labor in the Cotton Sector of Uzbekistan*, The School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2009.

⁶³ U.N. General Assembly. *Resolution: Situation of Human Rights in Turkmenistan*, 58/194, December 22, 2003; *Resolution: Situation of Human Rights in Turkmenistan*, 59/206, December 20, 2004. U.N. Economic and Social Council. Commission on Human Rights. Special Rapporteur on the Question of Torture, Theo van Boven. *Report of the Special Rapporteur Submitted in Accordance with Commission Resolution 2002/38. Addendum: Mission to Uzbekistan*, E/CN.4/2003/68/Add.2, annex, February 3, 2003. U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Question of Torture, Manfred Nowak. *Report by the Special Rapporteur. Addendum: Follow-up to the Recommendations Made by the Special Rapporteur*, E/CN.4/2006/6/Add.2, March 21, 2006.

⁶⁴ U.N. General Assembly. Third Committee. Draft Resolution: Situation of Human Rights in Turkmenistan, A/C.3/60/L.46, November 2, 2005; Draft Resolution: Situation of Human Rights in Uzbekistan, A/C.3/60/L.51, (continued...)

Against Torture stated that it “remained concerned that [in Uzbekistan] there were numerous reports of abuses in custody, and many deaths, some of which were alleged to have followed torture or ill-treatment.”⁶⁵

Amnesty International was among NGOs that submitted petitions to the December 2008 session of the revamped U.N. Human Rights Council (UNHRC) alleging ongoing Uzbek human rights abuses.⁶⁶ UNHRC also examined human rights in Turkmenistan at this session. On Uzbekistan, the UNHRC agreed to a report by its working group that called for the government to give accreditation to major international human rights organizations, adopt legislation to promote gender equality, modify the criminal code to establish a definition of torture, take measures to prevent torture, and eliminate forced child labor, among other recommendations. On Turkmenistan, the UNHRC agreed to a report by its working group that called for the government to eliminate the use of torture, protect the human rights of journalists and human rights defenders, ensure greater independence of the judiciary, and ensure that opposition parties are permitted to participate freely, among other recommendations.⁶⁷

In recent years, several reporters, human rights activists, and opposition politicians in Kazakhstan have been killed by motor vehicles under allegedly mysterious conditions. In a new twist, prominent reporter Tokhniyaz Kuchukov and activist Yevgeniy Zhovtis were given four-year prison sentences for separate instances in July 2009 of hitting and killing pedestrians. Both argued that there were extenuating or suspicious circumstances surrounding their accidents and that their trials were not fair.

Security and Arms Control

The U.S.-led coalition’s overthrow of the Taliban and routing of Al Qaeda and IMU terrorists in Afghanistan (termed Operation Enduring Freedom or OEF) increased the security of Central Asia. According to then-Assistant Secretary of Defense J. D. Crouch in testimony in June 2002, “our military relationships with each [Central Asian] nation have matured on a scale not imaginable prior to September 11th.” Crouch averred that “for the foreseeable future, U.S. defense and security cooperation in Central Asia must continue to support actions to deter or defeat terrorist threats” and to build effective armed forces under civilian control.

According to Crouch:

(...continued)

November 2, 2005; Press Release: Third Committee ... Approves Text Expressing Deep Concern over Human Rights Situation in Uzbekistan, GA/SHC/3843, November 22, 2005.

⁶⁵ U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Committee Against Torture. *Press Release: Committee Against Torture Concludes Thirty-ninth Session*, November 23, 2007.

⁶⁶ Amnesty International. Uzbekistan: Submission to the U.N. Universal Periodic Review Working Group, U.N. Human Rights Council, July 21, 2008.

⁶⁷ U.N. General Assembly. UNHRC. *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Uzbekistan*, A/HRC/10/83, March 11, 2009; *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Turkmenistan*, A/HRC/10/79, January 6, 2009; *Draft Report of the Human Rights Council on its Tenth Session*, A/HRC/10/L.11, March 31, 2009.

- Kyrgyzstan became a “critical regional partner” in OEF, providing basing for U.S. and coalition forces at Manas (in late 2009, U.S. troops and contract personnel reportedly numbered about 1,550).
- Uzbekistan provided a base for U.S. operations at Karshi-Khanabad (K2; just before the 2005 pullout, U.S. troops reportedly numbered less than 900), a base for German units at Termez (in early 2009, German troops reportedly numbered about 163), and a land corridor to Afghanistan for humanitarian aid via the Friendship Bridge at Termez.
- Tajikistan permitted use of its international airport in Dushanbe for refueling (“gas-and-go”) and hosted a French force (in late 2009, French troops reportedly numbered 240).
- Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan provided overflight and other support.⁶⁸

To obtain Uzbekistan’s approval for basing, the 2002 U.S.-Uzbek Strategic Partnership Declaration included a nonspecific security guarantee. The United States affirmed that “it would regard with grave concern any external threat” to Uzbekistan’s security and would consult with Uzbekistan “on an urgent basis” regarding a response. The two states pledged to intensify military cooperation, including “re-equipping the Armed Forces” of Uzbekistan, a pledge that appeared to be repudiated by Uzbekistan following events in Andijon. Bilateral military ties appeared boosted when Commander of the U.S. Central Command, Gen. David Petraeus, visited Tashkent on August 18 and signed an accord on military exchanges and training.

Although U.S. security assistance to the region was boosted in the aftermath of 9/11, such aid has lessened since then as a percentage of all such aid to Eurasia, particularly after aid to Uzbekistan was cut in FY2004 and subsequent years (see below). Security and law enforcement aid to Central Asia was 31% (\$188 million) of all such aid to Eurasia in FY2002, but had declined to 14% (\$203 million) in FY2007. Of all budgeted assistance to Central Asia over the period from FY1992-FY2007, security and law enforcement aid accounted for a little over one-fifth. Security and law enforcement aid includes Foreign Military Financing (FMF), International Military Education and Training (IMET), Excess Defense Articles (EDA) programs, and border security aid to combat trafficking in drugs, humans, and WMD. A new Defense Department counter-terrorism train and equip program (created under Section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2006; P.L. 109-163) provided \$20 million to Kazakhstan in FY2006, \$19.3 million in FY2007, and \$12.5 million in FY2008. It also provided \$12 million to Kyrgyzstan in FY2008. Another new Defense Department program for defense articles, services, training or other support for reconstruction, stabilization, and security activities (created under Section 1207 of P.L. 109-163) provided \$9.9 million to Tajikistan in FY2008.⁶⁹

To help counter burgeoning drug trafficking from Afghanistan, war supplementals for FY2005 (P.L. 109-13), FY2006 (P.L. 109-234), FY2008 (P.L. 110-252), and FY2009 (P.L. 111-32) have

⁶⁸ Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Subcommittee on Central Asia and the South Caucasus. *Statement of J.D. Crouch II, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy*, June 27, 2002.

⁶⁹ For background, see CRS Report RS22855, *Section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2006: A Fact Sheet on Department of Defense Authority to Train and Equip Foreign Military Forces*, by Nina M. Serafino, and CRS Report RS22871, *Department of Defense “Section 1207” Security and Stabilization Assistance: Background and Congressional Concerns*, by Nina M. Serafino.

provided some assistance to Central Asia. The Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2009 (P.L. 111-32) provided \$52.89 million for combating drug-trafficking in Central Asia.

In addition to the aid reported by the Coordinator's Office, the Defense Department provides coalition support payments to Kyrgyzstan, including base lease payments and landing and overflight fees (see below). Uzbekistan received a payment of \$15.7 million for use of K2 and associated services. On October 5, 2005, an amendment to Defense Appropriations for FY2006 (H.R. 2863) was approved in the Senate to place a one-year hold on Defense Department plans to pay another \$23 million. Despite this congressional concern, the Defense Department transferred the payment in November 2005. The conferees on H.R. 2863 later dropped the amendment (H.Rept. 109-360; P.L. 109-163).

U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) in 1999 became responsible for U.S. military engagement in Central Asia. It cooperates with the European Command (USEUCOM), on the Caspian Maritime Security Cooperation program (similar to the former Caspian [Sea] Guard program). Gen. Bantz Craddock, Commander of USEUCOM, testified in 2008 that the Caspian Maritime Security Cooperation program coordinates security assistance provided by U.S. agencies to Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. He stated that U.S. Naval Forces Europe cooperates with U.S. Naval Forces Central Command "to promote maritime safety and security and maritime domain awareness in the Caspian Sea."⁷⁰ Russia objects to the involvement of non-littoral countries in Caspian maritime security and has appeared to counter U.S. maritime security aid by boosting the capabilities of its Caspian Sea Flotilla and by urging the littoral states to coordinate their naval activities exclusively with Russia.

All the Central Asian states except Tajikistan joined NATO's PFP by mid-1994 (Tajikistan joined in 2002). Central Asian troops have participated in periodic PFP (or "PFP-style") exercises in the United States since 1995, and U.S. troops have participated in exercises in Central Asia since 1997. A June 2004 NATO summit communique pledged enhanced Alliance attention to the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia, and the NATO Secretary General appointed a Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia. Uzbekistan sharply reduced its participation in PFP after NATO raised concerns that Uzbek security forces had used excessive and disproportionate force in Andijon (however, it continued to permit Germany to use a base at Termez). Relations with NATO appeared to improve in 2008-2009 (see below).

Kazakhstan's progress in military reform enabled NATO in January 2006 to elevate it to participation in an Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP). Kazakhstan has stated that it does not plan to join NATO but wants to modernize its armed forces. According to analyst Roger McDermott, despite Kazakhstan's cooperation with NATO, "the defense relationship between Kazakhstan and Russia has, in fact, substantially deepened."⁷¹ The Kazakh defense ministry has reported, for instance, that "1,259 Kazakh servicemen are now studying at Russian military educational establishments," constituting a substantial boost over previous years.⁷²

⁷⁰ House of Representatives. Armed Services Committee. *Statement of General Bantz J. Craddock, Commander, United States European Command*, March 13, 2008. Caspian Sea Maritime Proliferation Prevention aid to Kazakhstan was \$4 million in FY2005, \$5 million in FY2006, and \$7 million in FY2007, and \$8 million was requested for each of FY2008 and FY2009. U.S. Department of Defense. Defense Threat Reduction Agency. *FY2008-FY2009 Budget Estimates: Former Soviet Union Threat Reduction*, February 2007.

⁷¹ Roger McDermott, *Kazakhstan's Defense Policy: An Assessment Of The Trends*, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, February 2009.

⁷² CEDR, April 14, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950316.

According to some reports, during the former Bush Administration the Defense Department was considering possibly setting up long-term military facilities in Central Asia termed Cooperative Security Locations (CSLs; they contain pre-positioned equipment and are managed by private contractors, and few if any U.S. military personnel are present). The Overseas Basing Commission in 2005 acknowledged that U.S. national security might be enhanced by future CSLs in Central Asia but urged Congress to seek inter-agency answers to “what constitutes vital U.S. interests in the area that would require long-term U.S. presence.”⁷³ According to former USCENTCOM Commander Admiral William Fallon, the Bagram airbase in Afghanistan is the Forward Operating Site (basing intended for rotational use by operating forces with limited U.S. military support presence and possibly pre-positioned equipment) for access to and operations in Central Asia. USCENTCOM’s FY2008 Master Plan for infrastructure requirements at its U.S. overseas military facilities reportedly placed a high priority on sustaining long-term access to locations across its area of responsibility.⁷⁴

Closure of the Karshi-Khanabad Airbase

On July 5, 2005, the presidents of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan signed a declaration issued during a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO; see above, “Obstacles to Peace and Independence: Regional Tensions and Conflicts”) that stated that “as large-scale military operations against terrorism have come to an end in Afghanistan, the SCO member states maintain that the relevant parties to the anti-terrorist coalition should set a deadline for the temporary use of ... infrastructure facilities of the SCO member states and for their military presence in these countries.”⁷⁵ Despite this declaration, none of the Central Asian leaders immediately called for closing the coalition bases. However, after the United States and others interceded so that refugees who fled from Andijon to Kyrgyzstan could fly to Romania, Uzbekistan on July 29 demanded that the United States vacate K2 within six months. On November 21, 2005, the United States officially ceased operations to support Afghanistan at K2. Perhaps indicative of the reversal of U.S. military-to-military and other ties, former pro-U.S. defense minister Qodir Gulomov was convicted of treason and received seven years in prison, later suspended. Many K2 activities shifted to the Manas airbase in Kyrgyzstan. Some observers viewed the closure of K2 and souring U.S.-Uzbek relations as setbacks to U.S. influence in the region and as gains for Russian and Chinese influence. Others suggested that U.S. ties with other regional states provided continuing influence and that U.S. criticism of human rights abuses might pay future dividends among regional populations.⁷⁶

Possibly a sign of improving U.S.-Uzbek relations, in early 2008 Uzbekistan reportedly permitted U.S. military personnel under NATO command, on a case-by-case basis, to transit through an

⁷³ Commission on Review of the Overseas Military Facility Structure of the United States. *Interim Report*, May 9, 2005.

⁷⁴ House of Representatives. Appropriations Committee. Subcommittee on Military Construction. *Statement of Admiral William J. Fallon, Commander, U.S. Central Command, on Military Construction in U.S. Central Command*, April 17, 2007; General Accountability Office. *Defense Infrastructure: Overseas Master Plans Are Improving, but DOD Needs to Provide Congress Additional Information about the Military Buildup on Guam*, GAO Report No. GAO-07-1015, September 12, 2007.

⁷⁵ *CEDR*, July 5, 2005, Doc. No. CPP-249.

⁷⁶ On growing Chinese regional influence, see Michael Mihalka, “Counter-insurgency, Counter-terrorism, State-Building and Security Cooperation in Central Asia,” *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, May 2006.

airbase near the town of Termez that it has permitted Germany to operate.⁷⁷ President Karimov attended the NATO Summit in Bucharest, Romania, in early April 2008 and stated that Uzbekistan was ready to discuss the transit of non-lethal goods and equipment by NATO through Uzbekistan to Afghanistan. This issue was part of the agenda during Assistant Secretary Boucher's May 30-June 3, 2008, visit to Uzbekistan. He praised some recent progress by the government in respecting human rights. President Karimov reportedly told Boucher that he was "pleased" about "positive changes in bilateral relations." President Karimov announced in May 2009 that the United States and NATO had been permitted to use the Navoi airport (located between Samarkand and Bukhara in east-central Uzbekistan) for transporting non-lethal supplies to Afghanistan. Representing the Obama Administration, Undersecretary of State William Burns visited Uzbekistan in early July 2009, and President Karimov assessed his talks with Burns as "positive." In August 2009, Gen. Petraus traveled to Uzbekistan and signed an accord on boosting military educational exchanges and training. Reportedly, these visits also resulted in permission by Uzbekistan for lethal air shipments to Afghanistan.

The Manas Airbase

The Manas airbase became operational in December 2001 and uses some facilities of the international airport near Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. According to a fact sheet prepared by the 376th Air Expeditionary Wing of the U.S. Air Force, the Manas airbase serves as the "premier air mobility hub" for operations in Afghanistan. Missions include support for personnel and cargo transiting in and out of the theater, aerial refueling, airlift and airdrop, and medical evacuation. The fact sheet reports that 170,000 troops transited through the base to Afghanistan in 2008, as well as 5,000 tons of cargo, and that KC-135 Stratotankers had refueled over 11,400 aircraft over Afghanistan. About 1,000 military personnel from the United States, France, and Spain are stationed at the base. They are assisted by 650 contract personnel, of which the majority are Kyrgyz citizens. The base contributed \$64 million to the local economy in FY2008, which included \$17.4 million in rent for use of the base, \$22.5 million for airport operations and land lease fees, nearly \$500,000 for upgrading Kyrgyz Air Navigation operations, and about \$24 million for local contracts and humanitarian aid.⁷⁸

In early 2006, Kyrgyz President Bakiyev reportedly requested that lease payments for use of the Manas airbase be increased to more than \$200 million per year but at the same time re-affirmed Russia's free use of its nearby base.⁷⁹ By mid-July 2006, however, the United States and Kyrgyzstan announced that they had reached a settlement for the continued U.S. use of the airbase. Although not specifically mentioning U.S. basing payments, it was announced that the United States would provide \$150 million in "total assistance and compensation over the next year," subject to congressional approval.

⁷⁷ "U.S. Military Returns to Ex-Soviet Uzbekistan," *Agence France Presse*, March 6, 2008; "Only Germany Can Use Uzbek Bases Now," *United Press International*, December 13, 2005.

⁷⁸ U.S. Air Force. 376th Air Expeditionary Wing. *Fact Sheet: 376th Air Expeditionary Wing, Manas Air Base, Kyrgyzstan*, February 2009, at <http://preview.afnews.af.mil/manas/library/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=12682>.

⁷⁹ For background, see CRS Report RS22295, *Uzbekistan's Closure of the Airbase at Karshi-Khanabad: Context and Implications*, by Jim Nichol. Perhaps indicating Kyrgyz pressure on Russia to compensate for use of the base, Russia in October 2006 pledged grant military assistance to Kyrgyzstan.

In September 2007, a U.S. military officer stated that the Manas airbase was moving toward “a sustainment posture,” with the replacement of most tents and the building of aircraft maintenance, medical, and other facilities.⁸⁰

On February 3, 2009, President Bakiyev announced during a visit to Moscow that he intended to close the Manas airbase. Many observers speculated that the decision was spurred by Russia, which offered Bakiyev a \$300 million loan for economic development and a \$150 million grant for budget stabilization in the wake of the world economic downturn. Russia also stated that it would write off most of a \$180 million debt. The United States was notified on February 19, 2009, that under the terms of the status of forces agreement it had 180 days to vacate the airbase.

The “Transit Center” Agreement

The Defense Department announced on June 24, 2009, that an agreement of “mutual benefit” had been concluded with the Kyrgyz government “to continu[e] to work, with them, to supply our troops in Afghanistan, so that we can help with the overall security situation in the region.”⁸¹ The agreement was approved by the legislature and signed into law by President Bakiyev, to take effect on July 14, 2009. According to Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Kadyrbek Sarbayev, the government decided to conclude the annually renewable “intergovernmental agreement with the United States on cooperation and the formation of a transit center at Manas airport,” because of growing alarm about “the worrying situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan.” A yearly rent payment for use of land and facilities at the Manas airport would be increased from \$17.4 million to \$60 million per year and the United States had pledged more than \$36 million for infrastructure improvements and \$30 million for air traffic control system upgrades for the airport. Sarbayev also stated that the United States had pledged \$20 million dollars for economic development, \$21 million for counter-narcotics efforts, and \$10 million for counter-terrorism efforts.⁸² All except the increased rent have already been appropriated or requested (see below, *Congressional Concerns*). The agreement also reportedly includes stricter host-country conditions on U.S. military personnel. One Kyrgyz legislator claimed that the agreement was not a *volte-face* for Kyrgyzstan because Russia and other Central Asian states had signed agreements with NATO to permit the transit of supplies to Afghanistan (see below).⁸³

Undersecretary William Burns visited Kyrgyzstan in early July 2009 and reportedly stated that “we welcome a new decision of President Bakiyev regarding the set up of a transport and logistics hub in Manas Airport.... [The agreement] is an important contribution into our common goals in Afghanistan.” He also stated that “the new administration believes that we should expand and deepen the level and scope of our bilateral relations” with Kyrgyzstan, and he announced that a U.S.-Kyrgyzstan bilateral commission on trade and investment would be set up.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Lt. Col. Michael Borgert, “Liberandos: Thank You for a Job Well Done,” 376th Expeditionary Services Squadron Public Affairs, September 9, 2007.

⁸¹ U.S. Department of Defense. *DoD News Briefing*, June 24, 2009. See also U.S. Department of State. *Daily Press Briefing*, June 25, 2009.

⁸² Tolkun Namatbayeva, “Kyrgyzstan Allows U.S. to Keep Using Base,” *Agence France Presse*, June 23, 2009.

⁸³ See also CRS Report R40564, *Kyrgyzstan and the Status of the U.S. Manas Airbase: Context and Implications*, by Jim Nichol.

⁸⁴ “U.S. Welcomes Decision of Kyrgyzstan to Set Up Transport and Logistics Hub,” *AKIpress News Agency*, July 13, 2009.

Kyrgyzstan had also requested that French and Spanish troops who were deployed at Manas had to leave, and they had pulled out by October 2009. The French detachment (reportedly 35 troops and a tanker aircraft) moved temporarily to Dushanbe. The Spanish unit (reportedly 60 troops and two transport aircraft) moved temporarily to Herat, west Afghanistan, and Dushanbe is being used temporarily as a stopover for troop relief flights. France and Spain are negotiating with Kyrgyzstan on their return to Manas.

The Northern Distribution Route to Afghanistan

Because supply routes through Pakistan frequently were being attacked, Gen. David Petraeus, the Commander of the U.S. Central Command, visited Kazakhstan and Tajikistan in late January 2009 to negotiate alternative routes for supplies for NATO and U.S. operations in Afghanistan (he also visited Kyrgyzstan to discuss airbase issues; see below). In testimony to Congress in March 2009, Gen. Petraeus reported that USCENTCOM, with the support of the U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM), had “established a Northern Distribution Network through several Central Asian States to help reduce costs of transporting non-military supplies to support NATO, U.S., and Afghan security operations, while decreasing our exposure to risks associated with our supply lines running through Pakistan.”⁸⁵ To encourage a positive response, the U.S. embassies in the region announced that the United States hoped to purchase many non-military goods locally to transport to the troops in Afghanistan. A first rail shipment of non-lethal supplies entered Afghanistan in late March 2009 after transiting Russia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan.⁸⁶ Uzbekistan’s Navoi airport also reportedly is being used to transport lethal and non-lethal supplies to Afghanistan. At the July 2009 U.S.-Russia summit, Russia agreed to permit NATO overflights of lethal weapons and personnel to Afghanistan (it already was permitting land transport of nonlethal supplies). Some observers suggested that the commitment was linked to the assertion of some Russian officials that such transport could substitute for U.S. and NATO use of Manas and other Central Asian airbases.

Weapons of Mass Destruction

Major U.S. security interests have included elimination of nuclear weapons remaining in Kazakhstan after the breakup of the Soviet Union and other efforts to control nuclear proliferation in Central Asia. The United States has tendered aid aimed at bolstering their export and physical controls over nuclear technology and materials, in part because of concerns that Iran is targeting these countries.⁸⁷

After the Soviet breakup, Kazakhstan was on paper a major nuclear weapons power (in reality Russia controlled these weapons). In December 1993, the United States and Kazakhstan signed a Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) umbrella agreement for the “safe and secure” dismantling of 104 SS-18s, the destruction of silos, and related purposes. All bombers and their air-launched

⁸⁵ U.S. Senate. Committee on Armed Services. Hearing on U.S. Policy on Afghanistan and Pakistan. *Statement of David H. Petraeus Commander U.S. Central Command*, April 1, 2009.

⁸⁶ *ITAR-TASS*, February 10, 2009; *CEDR*, April 16, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950025.

⁸⁷ A Treaty on the Central Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone entered into force in January 2009. All five Central Asian states are signatories. The Treaty prohibits the development, manufacture, stockpiling, acquisition, or possession of nuclear explosive devices within the zone. See CRS Report RL31559, *Proliferation Control Regimes: Background and Status*, coordinated by Mary Beth Nikitin.

cruise missiles were removed by late February 1994 (except seven bombers destroyed with U.S. aid in 1998). The SS-18s were eliminated by late 1994. On April 21, 1995, the last of about 1,040 nuclear warheads had been removed from SS-18 missiles and transferred to Russia, and Kazakhstan announced that it was nuclear weapons-free. The United States reported that 147 silos had been destroyed by September 1999. A U.S.-Kazakh Nuclear Risk Reduction Center in Almaty was set up to facilitate verification and compliance with arms control agreements to prevent the proliferation of WMD.

Besides the Kazakh nuclear weapons, there are active research reactors, uranium mines, milling facilities, and dozens of radioactive tailing and waste dumps in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Many of these reportedly remain inadequately protected against theft. Kazakhstan is reported to possess one-fourth of the world's uranium reserves, and Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have been among the world's top producers of low-enriched uranium. Kazakhstan had a fast breeder reactor at Aktau that was the world's only nuclear desalinization facility. In 1997 and 1999, U.S.-Kazakh accords were signed on decommissioning the Aktau reactor. Shut down in 1999, it had nearly 300 metric tons of uranium (some highly enriched) and plutonium (some weapons-grade) spent fuel in storage pools. CTR aid has been used to safeguard the 300 metric tons of spent fuel.

CTR aid was used to facilitate transporting 600 kg of weapons-grade uranium from Kazakhstan to the United States in 1994, 2,900 kg of up to 26% enriched nuclear fuel from Aktau to Kazakhstan's Ulba facility in 2001 (which Ulba converted into less-enriched fuel), eleven kg of uranium in fuel rods from Uzbekistan to Russia in 2004, and 63 kg of uranium from Uzbekistan to Russia in April 2006. On May 19, 2009, the U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration announced that CTR funds had been used to remove 162.5 lb. of highly enriched uranium "spent" fuel from Kazakhstan. The material originally had been provided by Russia to Kazakhstan, and was returned to Russia by rail for storage in a series of four shipments between December 2008 and May 2009.

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan hosted major chemical and biological warfare (CBW) facilities during the Soviet era. CTR and Energy Department (DOE) funds have been used in Kazakhstan to dismantle a former anthrax production facility in Stepnogorsk, to remove some strains to the United States, to secure two other BW sites, and to retrain scientists. CTR funding was used to dismantle Uzbekistan's Nukus chemical weapons research facility. CTR aid also was used to eliminate active anthrax spores at a former CBW test site on an island in the Aral Sea. These latter two projects were completed in 2002. Other CTR aid helps keep former Uzbek CBW scientists employed in peaceful research. Uzbekistan has continued to cooperate with DOD and DOE—even after it restricted other ties with the United States in 2005—to receive portal and hand-held radiation monitoring equipment and training.

Trade and Investment

Successive U.S. administrations have endorsed free market reforms in Central Asia, since these directly serve U.S. national interests by opening new markets for U.S. goods and services and sources of energy and minerals. U.S. private investment committed to Central Asia has greatly exceeded that provided to Russia or most other Eurasian states except Azerbaijan. U.S. trade agreements have been signed and entered into force with all the Central Asian states, but bilateral investment treaties are in force only with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In line with Kyrgyzstan's accession to the World Trade Organization, the United States established permanent normal trade

relations with Kyrgyzstan by law in June 2000, so that “Jackson-Vanik” trade provisions no longer apply that call for presidential reports and waivers concerning freedom of emigration.

In June 2004, The U.S. Trade Representative signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) with ambassadors of the regional states to establish a U.S.-Central Asia Council on Trade and Investment. The Council has met yearly to address intellectual property, labor, environmental protection, and other issues that impede trade and private investment flows between the United States and Central Asia. The United States also has called for greater intra-regional cooperation on trade and encouraged the development of regional trade and transport ties with Afghanistan and South Asia. The reorganization of the State Department in 2006 to create the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs facilitated this emphasis.⁸⁸ At the fifth annual meeting of the Council on Trade and Investment in October 2009 in Washington, DC, U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk and Commerce Secretary Gary Locke stressed that the Obama Administration was making a “broad-based commitment ... to deepen U.S. relationships in the region.” Kirk announced that mid-year meetings of a TIFA working group would be initiated “to maintain consistent dialogue on TIFA issues,” and that bilateral meetings would be held on the sidelines of the TIFA session to deal with country-specific issues. Officials from the U.S. Defense Department and other agencies participated in the TIFA session to discuss how the Central Asian states might provide goods and services for U.S. stabilization operations in Afghanistan.⁸⁹

All the states of the region possess large-scale resources that could contribute to the region becoming a “new silk road” of trade and commerce. The Kazakh and Turkmen economies are mostly geared to energy exports but need added foreign investment for production and transport. Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are major cotton producers, a legacy of central economic planning during the Soviet period. Uzbekistan’s cotton and gold production rank among the highest in the world and much is exported. It has moderate gas reserves but needs investment to upgrade infrastructure. Kyrgyzstan has major gold mines and strategic mineral reserves, is a major wool producer, and could benefit from tourism. Tajikistan has one of the world’s largest aluminum processing plants. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan possess the bulk of the region’s water resources, but in recent years both countries have suffered from droughts.

Despite the region’s development potential, the challenges of corruption, inadequate transport infrastructure, punitive tariffs, border tensions, and uncertain respect for contracts discourage major foreign investment (except for some investment in the energy sector). Cotton-growing has contributed to environmental pollution and water shortages, leading some observers to argue that cotton-growing is not suited to the largely arid region.

The global economic downturn has depressed prices for Tajik commodity exports (mainly aluminum and cotton) and reduced worker remittances. The Tajik currency, the somoni, has lost over one-quarter of its value against the dollar in recent months, which has greatly increased the costs of imported food and other goods. In late June 2009, Rahmon boosted salaries for various government workers to counteract their declining purchasing power. The Economist Intelligence

⁸⁸ *Remarks at Eurasian National University*, October 13, 2005; and U.S. Congress. House International Relations Committee. Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia. *Testimony by Steven R. Mann, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary*, July 25, 2006. See also U.S. Embassy Kazakhstan. *Kazakhstan and the United States in a Changed World*, August 23, 2006.

⁸⁹ U.S. Chamber of Commerce. *United States Trade Representative Kirk Hosts Meeting of US-Central Asia Trade & Investment Framework Council*, October 7, 2009; *Remarks by Ambassador Demetrios Marantis at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce*, October 7, 2009.

Unit (EIU) warns that a decline of industrial production and commodity export prices, along with the return of many migrant workers, may result in a 3% contraction of GDP in 2009. The EIU views the Rahmon regime as moving to head off possible instability posed by these trends by cracking down on perceived Islamic fundamentalism, urging the opposition to focus on the upcoming 2010 legislative election, and being prepared to use force to quell social unrest.⁹⁰ The NGO International Crisis Group (ICG) similarly has warned that increasingly serious economic problems will condemn the “desperately poor population ... to yet more deprivation.... To address the situation, the international community ... should ensure any assistance reaches those who truly need it, place issues of governance and corruption at the centre of all contacts with the Tajik government, and initiate an energetic dialogue with President Rahmon on democratization.”⁹¹

Other regional states also reported economic setbacks as a result of the world economic downturn. Kazakhstan announced that it was withdrawing \$10 billion from its sovereign wealth fund for welfare and other needs and was setting up a Toxic Assets Fund. Kyrgyz authorities reported that citizens working abroad had sent home nearly \$900 million in 2008 (an important part of the country’s GDP), almost double the previous year’s remittances. However, such remittances reportedly had declined somewhat in 2009.

Energy Resources

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 U.S. private investment, 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. The encouragement of regional electricity, oil, and gas exports to South Asia and security for Caspian region pipelines and energy resources also have been recent interests.

Until 2004, the Bush Administration retained a Clinton-era position, Special Advisor on Caspian Energy Diplomacy, to help further U.S. policy and counter the efforts of Russia’s Viktor Kaluzhny, deputy foreign minister and Special Presidential Representative for Energy Matters in the Caspian. After abolishing this post, its responsibilities were shifted at least in part to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs along with responsibilities of the former Special Negotiator for Nagorno-Karabakh and Eurasian Conflicts.⁹² Some critics juxtaposed Russia’s close interest in securing Caspian energy resources to what they termed halting U.S. efforts.⁹³ A post of Special Envoy for Eurasian Energy issues was (re-)created in March 2008, with the former Bush Administration stating that it had realized that there were “new opportunities” for the export of Caspian oil and gas. In April 2009, Secretary of State Clinton appointed Richard Morningstar as Special Envoy for Eurasian Energy.

⁹⁰ Economist Intelligence Unit. *Tajikistan Country Report*, June 15, 2009.

⁹¹ ICG. *Tajikistan: On the Road to Failure*, February 12, 2009.

⁹² In 2004, the Department of State’s Inspector General recommended that the post of Special Advisor on Caspian Energy Diplomacy might “now be phased out, with residual responsibilities folded into other units,” because the purpose for which it was created was achieved. Office of the Inspector General. *Semiannual Report to the Congress*, October 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004. The Special Advisor’s duties included “realizing the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline, in the launch of the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) line, and a range of other Eurasian energy issues.” Office of the Spokesman. *Press Release*, April 16, 2004.

⁹³ *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, May 31, 2007.

The Caspian region is emerging as a notable source of oil and gas for world markets, although many experts emphasize that regional exports will constitute only a small fraction of world supplies. According to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), the region's proven natural gas reserves are estimated at 232 trillion cubic feet (tcf), comparable to Saudi Arabia.⁹⁴ The region's proven oil reserves are estimated to be between 17-49 billion barrels, comparable to Qatar on the low end and Libya on the high end. Kazakhstan possesses the region's largest proven oil reserves at 9-40 billion barrels, according to DOE, and also possesses 100tcf of natural gas. Kazakhstan's oil exports currently are about 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd).⁹⁵ Some U.S. energy firms and other private foreign investors have become discouraged in recent months by harsher Kazakh government terms, taxes, and fines that some allege reflect corruption within the ruling elite.⁹⁶ Turkmenistan possesses about 100tcf and Uzbekistan about 65tcf of proven gas reserves, according to DOE.⁹⁷

Especially since Russia's temporary cutoff of gas to Ukraine in January 2006 (and again in January 2009) highlighted European vulnerability, the United States has supported EU efforts to reduce its overall reliance on Russian oil and gas by increasing the number of possible alternative suppliers. Part of this policy has involved encouraging Central Asian countries to transport their energy exports to Europe through pipelines that cross the Caspian Sea, thereby bypassing Russian (and Iranian) territory, although these amounts are expected at most to satisfy only a tiny fraction of EU needs.⁹⁸

The Central Asian states have been pressured by Russia to yield large portions of their energy wealth to Russia, in part because Russia controls most existing export pipelines.⁹⁹ Russia attempted to strengthen this control over export routes for Central Asian energy in May 2007 when visiting former President Putin reached agreement in Kazakhstan on supplying more Kazakh oil to Russia. Putin also reached agreement with the presidents of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan on the construction of a new pipeline to transport Turkmen and Kazakh gas to Russia. The first agreement appeared to compete with U.S. and Turkish efforts to foster more oil exports through the BTC. The latter agreement appeared to compete with U.S. and EU efforts to foster building a trans-Caspian gas pipeline to link to the SCP to Turkey. The latter also appeared to

⁹⁴ Including the countries of Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

⁹⁵ U.S. Department of Energy. Energy Information Administration. *Kazakhstan Country Analysis Brief*, February 2008.

⁹⁶ A perhaps troubling case concerns Kazakhstan's August 2007 suspension of the activities of the international consortium developing the Kashagan offshore oilfield. Kazakhstan and the consortium of companies developing Kashagan reached an agreement that permitted Kazakhstan to pay a below market price to increase its share to about 17% (making it the largest shareholder) and levied several billion dollars in fines against the consortium for delays. The shares of U.S. firms ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips were among those reduced. Economist Intelligence Unit, January 21, 2008. In July 2008, ExxonMobil CEO Rex Tillerson stated that the Kazakh government should stop interfering in the project. *International Oil Daily*, July 2, 2008. In October 2008, a new management system for the project was worked out. Production is planned to begin in late 2012 and to initially reach 300,000 bpd. "New Kashagan Deal Signed," *International Petroleum Finance*, November 10, 2008. In April 2009, Kazakh police announced that Eni and the U.S. firm Parker Drilling were being investigated for tax evasion.

⁹⁷ U.S. Department of Energy. Energy Information Administration. *Central Asia Country Analysis Brief*, February 2008.

⁹⁸ For details, see CRS Report RL33636, *The European Union's Energy Security Challenges*, by Paul Belkin. See also International Crisis Group. *Central Asia's Energy Risks*, May 24, 2007.

⁹⁹ According to a plan published by Russia's Institute of Energy Strategy covering the period 2007-2030, "Russian control over a large share of Central Asian gas needs to be maintained." See Minpromenergo (Ministry of Industry and Energy), Institut energeticheskoi strategii, *Kontseptsiya energeticheskoi strategii Rossii na period do 2030g.*, 2007. As reported by Philip Hanson, "How Sustainable Is Russia's Energy Power?" *Russian Analytical Digest*, No. 38 (2008).

compete with U.S. and EU efforts to foster building a pipeline from Turkey through Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary to Austria (the so-called Nabucco pipeline). Seeming to indicate a direct challenge to these plans by Russia and the West, China signed an agreement in August 2007 with Kazakhstan on completing the last section of an oil pipeline from the Caspian seacoast to China, and signed an agreement with Turkmenistan on building a gas pipeline to China (see also below).¹⁰⁰

On March 11, 2008, the heads of the national gas companies of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan announced that their countries would raise the gas export price to the European level in 2009. They signed a memorandum of understanding on the price with Russia's Gazprom state-controlled gas firm, which controls most export pipelines. According to analyst Martha Olcott, "the increased bargaining power of the Central Asian states owes more to the entry of China into the market than to the opening of [the BTC pipeline and the SCP]. Russia's offer to pay higher purchase prices for Central Asian gas in 2008 and 2009 came only after China signed a long-term purchase agreement for Turkmen gas at a base price that was higher than what Moscow was offering."¹⁰¹

Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Iran export electricity to Afghanistan. Major foci of the U.S. Trade and Development Agency's (TDA's) Central Asian Infrastructure Integration Initiative (launched in 2005) and USAID's Regional Energy Market Assistance Program (launched in 2006) include encouraging energy, transportation, and communications projects, including the development of electrical power infrastructure and power sharing between Central Asia, Afghanistan, and eventually Pakistan and India.¹⁰² The Asian Development Bank (ADB) launched a Central Asia-South Asia Regional Electricity Market (CASAREM) project in 2006 and approved \$3 million for feasibility and project design studies of the potential for Pakistan to import electricity from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. As part of the CASAREM project, ADB supports a Regional Power Transmission Interconnection Project to build a 220-kilovolt twin-circuit power transmission line by 2010 from hydropower plants on the River Vakhsh in Tajikistan to the Afghan border town of Sher Khan Bandar. Construction of this line reportedly began in July 2009. In May 2009, Uzbekistan inaugurated a 220-kilovolt transmission line to Kabul, Afghanistan.

On August 4, 2008, an inter-governmental agreement was signed by Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan to build a 500-kilovolt electric power transmission line from Central Asia through Afghanistan to Pakistan. The project cost is estimated to be \$935 million to be provided by the ADB, World Bank, and the Islamic Development Bank. About two-thirds of the electricity would be provided to Pakistan and one-third to Afghanistan. The power line is planned to be completed by 2013.

While the Central Asian states have cooperated on some electric power projects, they have failed to cooperate on others.¹⁰³ For instance, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are in a dispute over the latter's

¹⁰⁰ An oil and gas conference involving Kazakh, Chinese, and Russian energy ministries and firms has met annually since 2004 to "exchange views" on possible regional cooperation. *ITAR-TASS*, December 5, 2007.

¹⁰¹ Martha Olcott, "A New Direction for U.S. Policy in the Caspian Region."

¹⁰² U.S. Trade and Development Agency. *Press Release: USTDA Launches Central Asian Infrastructure Integration Initiative*, October 14, 2005; Joshua Kucera, "Washington Seeks to Steer Central Asian States Toward South Asian Allies," *Eurasia Insight*, April 28, 2006; Joshua Kucera, "USAID Official Outlines Plan to Build Central-South Asian Electricity Links," *Eurasia Insight*, May 4, 2006.

¹⁰³ Diana Bayzakova, "Gauging Integration Of Electricity Markets In Central Asia," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, (continued...)

construction of the Rogun hydro-electric power dam on a tributary of the Amu Darya River. Uzbekistan claims that the dam will limit water flows downstream to its territory. The Tajik government viewed as unfriendly a statement by Russian President Dmitriy Medvedev in January 2009 that all the Central Asian states should agree before dams are built on trans-border rivers.¹⁰⁴ During a visit by President Rahmon to Moscow on October 22, 2009, the two countries agreed that certain Tajik assets would be transferred to the Sangtuda-1 hydropower plant, in which Russia is the major stockholder, to settle a \$30 million debt. However, on November 13 the plant warned that it would cut off power if the debt was not paid by December 1. Three days later, Tajikistan transferred the first of several planned payments. In October 2009, Tajikistan admitted that it had taken electricity from Kazakhstan via the Soviet-era Central Asian Unified Energy System without payment. Both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have threatened to cut their links to the Unified Energy System. Such cutoffs would sever Kyrgyzstan's supply of electricity to its southern regions (since the lines cross Uzbekistan) and would prevent Tajikistan from importing electricity from Turkmenistan to address winter weather. Uzbek officials admitted in mid-October 2009 that Uzbekistan did not seek to leave the Unified Energy System but to force Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to pay fees for electricity transmission to Kyrgyzstan through Uzbekistan's territory.

Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan's main oil export route has been a 930-mile pipeline—owned by the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC), in which Russian shareholders have a controlling interest—that carries 234.56 million barrels per year of oil from Kazakhstan to Russia's Black Sea port of Novorossiysk. Lengthy Russian resistance to increasing the pumping capacity of the pipeline and demands for higher transit and other fees, along with the necessity of offloading the oil into tankers at Novorossiysk to transit the clogged Turkish Straits, spurred Kazakh President Nazarbayev to sign a treaty with visiting Azerbaijani President Aliyev in June 2006 to barge Kazakh oil across the Caspian Sea to Baku to the BTC pipeline. Kazakhstan began shipping about 70,000 bpd of oil through the BTC pipeline at the end of October 2008. Another accord resulted from a visit by President Nazarbayev to Azerbaijan in September 2009 that provides that up to 500,000 bpd of oil will be barged across the Caspian to enter the BTC or the Baku-Supsa pipeline. When the volumes exceed 500,000 bpd, a trans-Caspian pipeline may be built.

Apparently to counter Kazakh's export plans via Azerbaijan, then-President Putin's May 2007 agreement with Nazarbayev (see above) envisaged boosting the capacity of the CPC pipeline. Despite this Russian pledge to increase the capacity of the CPC, Kazakhstan has proceeded to upgrade its Caspian Sea port facilities and in May 2008, the Kazakh legislature ratified the 2006 treaty. Kazakhstan also barges some oil to Baku to ship by rail to Georgia's Black Sea oil terminal at Batumi, of which Kazakhstan became the sole owner in early 2008. Kazakhstan began barging oil from Batumi to the Romanian port of Constantza in late 2008 for processing at two refineries it purchased. Some Kazakh oil arriving in Baku also could be transported through small pipelines

(...continued)

January 28, 2009.

¹⁰⁴ Perhaps ironically, President Medvedev had agreed during his visit by Kyrgyz President Bakiyev in early February 2009 to finance the construction of the Kambar-Ata 1 hydroelectric power station, which down-stream Uzbekistan also opposes. Financing for the project, however, reportedly had not been provided as of late 2009.

to Georgia's Black Sea port of Supsa or to Russia's Black Sea port of Novorossiisk, although in the latter case Kazakhstan might be faced with high transit charges by Russia.¹⁰⁵

In addition to these oil export routes to Europe not controlled by Russia, Kazakhstan and China have completed an oil pipeline from Atasu in central Kazakhstan to the Xinjiang region of China (a distance of about 597 miles). Kazakhstan began delivering oil through the pipeline in mid-2006. As of the end of 2008, the pipeline reportedly had delivered about 92 million barrels (well below initial capacity of 146.6 million barrels per year). At Atasu, it links to another pipeline from the town of Kumkol, also in central Kazakhstan. On Kazakhstan's Caspian Sea border, China has finished construction of an oil pipeline from the port city of Atyrau eastward to the town of Kerkiyak. The last section of the route from the Caspian Sea to China, a link between the towns of Kerkiyak and Kumkol, was completed in October 2009. Now that all sections of the pipeline have been completed, it is expected to carry 200,000 bpd to China.

In November 2007, Russia and Kazakhstan signed an agreement permitting Russia to export 10.6 million barrels of oil per year from Atasu through the pipeline to China. According to Chinese sources, Russia had exported about 5.5 million barrels of oil through this pipeline in 2008. This is the first Russian oil to be transported by pipeline to China.

At the end of October 2008, China and Kazakhstan signed a framework agreement on constructing a gas pipeline from western Kazakhstan (near the Caspian Sea) to China that is planned initially to supply 176.6 bcf to southern Kazakhstan and 176.6 bcf to China. Plans call for pipeline construction to begin in 2010 and to be completed by 2015, but financing remains uncertain.

Although Kazakhstan's Deputy Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Aset Magaulov stated at a Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council Security Forum in June 2009 that Kazakhstan would not have a surplus of gas that it could send through the Nabucco pipeline, Kazakhstan's ambassador to Azerbaijan, Serik Primbetov, stated in August 2009 that his country supported Nabucco as a means to increase the diversity of export routes.¹⁰⁶ President Nazarbayev appeared to support the possible transit of Kazakh gas through Turkey when he stated on October 22, 2009, during a visit to Turkey, that "Turkey ... will become a transit country. And if Kazakhstan's oil and gas are transported via this corridor then this will be advantageous to both Turkey and Kazakhstan."¹⁰⁷

In late October 2009, however, another official at the Kazakh Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources stated that "the main problem for our country [regarding the supply of natural gas to Nabucco] is the limited availability of gas" because of existing contracts for projected gas production. He stated that Kazakhstan might be a potential supplier of natural gas for Nabucco if gas production exceeds expectations, but he reportedly warned that Kazakhstan could not transport any natural gas via Nabucco until the legal status of the Caspian Sea is resolved, which would permit building a connection to Nabucco.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ *ITAR-TASS*, May 29, 2008; *CEDR*, December 11, 2007, Doc. No. CEP-950096; April 26, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950045.

¹⁰⁶ "New Nabucco backer: Astana," *FSU: Oil and Gas Monitor*, September 2, 2009; *ITAR-TASS*, June 25, 2009.

¹⁰⁷ *CEDR*, October 22, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950337.

¹⁰⁸ *ITAR-TASS*, October 31, 2009.

Turkmenistan

The late President Niyazov signed a 25-year accord with then-President Putin in 2003 on supplying Russia up to 211.9 billion cubic feet (bcf) of gas in 2004 (about 12% of production), rising up to 2.83 trillion cubic feet (tcf) in 2009-2028 (perhaps then constituting an even larger percentage of production). Turkmenistan halted gas shipments to Russia at the end of 2004 in an attempt to get a higher gas price but settled for all-cash rather than partial barter payments. Turkmenistan and Russia continued in clash in subsequent years over gas prices and finally agreed in late 2007 that gas prices based on “market principles” would be established in 2009.

Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Russia signed accords in May and December 2007 on building a new gas pipeline that is planned to carry 353 bcf of Turkmen and 353 bcf of Kazakh gas to Russia. However, the Turkmen government appeared to have reservations about building another pipeline to Russia. In late 2009, it indicated greater willingness to build this pipeline during negotiations on the renewal of Turkmen gas exports to Russia (see below).

Although appearing to continue to rely mainly on pipeline export routes to or traversing Russia, Berdimuhamedow has declared that “adherence to diverse fuel export schemes will remain as a basic principle of [Turkmenistan’s] economic development strategy.”¹⁰⁹ In 2007, Berdimuhamedow signaled Turkmen interest in building a trans-Caspian gas pipeline. The United States has advocated building trans-Caspian oil and gas pipelines, because Central Asia could transport some of its energy through routes not controlled by Russia and Iran. The United States also has endorsed his proposal to build a gas pipeline through Afghanistan to Pakistan and India, but investment remains elusive.

Seeking alternatives to pipeline routes through Russia, in December 1997 Turkmenistan opened the first pipeline from Central Asia to the outside world beyond Russia, a 125-mile gas pipeline linkage to Iran. Turkmenistan provided 282.5 bcf of gas to Iran in 2006 and reportedly a larger amount in 2007. At the end of 2007, however, Turkmenistan suddenly suspended gas shipments, causing hardship in northern Iran. Turkmen demands for higher payments were the main reason for the cut-off. Gas shipments resumed in late April 2008 after Iran agreed to a price boost. In mid-2009, Turkmenistan reportedly agreed to increase gas supplies to up to 706 bcf per year.¹¹⁰ In July 2009, Turkmenistan announced that a new gas pipeline—from a field that until April 2009 had supplied gas to Russia (see below)—would be completed by the end of 2009 to more than double Turkmenistan’s export capacity to Iran.

As another alternative to pipelines through Russia, in April 2006, Turkmenistan and China signed a framework agreement calling for Chinese investment in developing gas fields in Turkmenistan and in building a gas pipeline with a capacity of about 1.0 tcf per year through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to China. All three Central Asian states will send gas through this pipeline to China. Construction of the Turkmen section of the gas pipeline reportedly began in August 2007. Construction of Uzbek section started in June 2008, and construction of the Kazakh section began in July 2008. In late October 2009, Turkmenistan announced that it had completed the building of its section and that all sections would be completed by the end of the year.

¹⁰⁹ *CEDR*, February 9, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950154.

¹¹⁰ *Iran: Daily Report*, January 21, 2008, Doc. No. IAP-11017; January 24, 2008, Doc. No. IAP-950014; April 26, 2008, Doc. No. IAP-950049; and May 6, 2008, Doc. No. IAP-950052.; *CEDR*, July 12, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950097.

Perhaps a further effort to diversify export routes, Turkmenistan signed a memorandum of understanding in April 2008 with the EU to supply 353.1 bcf of gas per year starting in 2009, presumably through a trans-Caspian pipeline that might at first link to the SCP and later to the proposed Nabucco pipeline.

On the night of April 8-9, 2009, a section of a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Russia exploded, halting Turkmen gas shipments. Each side blamed the other for the explosion.¹¹¹ About two weeks previously, visiting Turkmenistani President Gurbanguli Berdimuhammedow had failed to reach agreement with Russian President Dmitriy Medvedev on Moscow's financing for an east-west gas pipeline across Turkmenistan, to be linked to a proposed pipeline to Russia. Turkmenistan had then announced an international tender for the east-west pipeline to ensure "reliable and safe supplies of energy resources to world markets," and hinted that the pipeline could link to a possible trans-Caspian pipeline to Azerbaijan and European markets.

At a late April 2009 Turkmen energy conference, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State George Krol reportedly stressed that Turkmenistan and other states should diversify their energy export routes.¹¹² Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow also called for such diversification and for closer European-Turkmen ties. At an EU energy summit in Prague in early May 2009, U.S. Special Envoy for Eurasian Energy Richard Morningstar endorsed further development of the "southern corridor" for the shipment of gas and oil to Western markets. However, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan balked at signing a communique pledging the states to back the Nabucco pipeline. Despite this move, Berdimuhamedow asserted on July 10, 2009, that there are "immense volumes of natural gas in Turkmenistan [that] make it possible for us to carry out certain work related to the implementation of various [gas export] projects, including the Nabucco project."¹¹³ In September 2009, he further suggested that Turkmenistan could provide even more gas than previously mentioned in 2008 for Nabucco—1.1 tcf per year—because an audit indicated that the South Yoloten-Osman and Yaslar gas fields held vast reserves. Russia and Iran remain opposed to trans-Caspian pipelines, ostensibly on the grounds that they could pose environmental hazards to the littoral states.

In October 2009, Russia announced that it had reached a memorandum of understanding with Turkmenistan on the resumption of Turkmen gas supplies, pending the resolution of some "technical details." Turkmenistan's Deputy Prime Minister, Baimurat Hojamammedov, stated that the country was requesting that its gas not be re-exported, to ensure that Turkmenistan has direct access to customers even if its gas is transported through Russian pipelines. Russia reportedly has offered Turkmenistan at least some direct access to customers—a reversal of its previous policy—including by permitting gas transit through the proposed ECGP to the proposed South Stream pipeline to European customers. These possible pipelines and direct access reduce Turkmenistan's interest in a trans-Caspian pipeline to link to Nabucco, according to some observers. They also argue that Turkmenistan's construction of gas pipelines to Iran and China indicates that it does not envisage a trans-Caspian pipeline to supply gas to Nabucco. Even in the event that Iran eventually becomes a supplier to Nabucco, these observers maintain, it probably

¹¹¹ Open Source Center. *OSC Feature*, April 14, 2009, Doc. No. FEA-844966; *CEDR*, April 14, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950339; *ITAR-TASS*, April 3, 2009; Sergey Blagov, "Turkmenistan: Ashgabat Wonders Whether Russia Still Has Deep Pockets," *Eurasia Insight*, March 26, 2009.

¹¹² Alexander Vershinin, "U.S. Urges Central Asia to Boost Gas Export Routes," *Associated Press*, April 24, 2009.

¹¹³ *CEDR*, July 11, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950124.

would not follow Russia's example and permit Turkmenistan to have direct access to European customers via its pipelines.¹¹⁴

U.S. Aid Overview

For much of the 1990s and until September 11, 2001, the United States provided much more aid each year to Russia and Ukraine than to any Central Asian state (most such aid was funded from the FSA account in Foreign Operations Appropriations, but some derived from other program and agency budgets). Cumulative foreign aid budgeted to Central Asia for FY1992 through FY2007 amounted to \$4.3 billion, 14% of the amount budgeted to all the Eurasian states, reflecting the lesser priority given to these states prior to September 11.¹¹⁵ Budgeted spending for FY2002 for Central Asia, during OEF, was greatly boosted in absolute amounts (\$584 million) and as a share of total aid to Eurasia (about one-quarter of such aid). The former Bush Administration since then requested smaller amounts of aid, although the Administration continued to stress that there were important U.S. interests in the region. The former Bush Administration highlighted the phase-out of economic aid to Kazakhstan and restrictions on aid to Uzbekistan (see below) as among the reasons for declining aid requests. In April 2008, Assistant Secretary of State Boucher stated that another reason for declining U.S. aid to the region was a more constrained U.S. budgetary situation. Aid to Central Asia in recent years has been about the same or less in absolute and percentage terms than that provided to the South Caucasian region. (See **Table 1**).

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), created in 2004 to provide U.S. aid to countries with promising development records, announced in late 2005 that Kyrgyzstan was eligible to apply for assistance as a country on the "threshold" of meeting the criteria for full-scale development aid. On March 14, 2008, the MCC signed an agreement with Kyrgyzstan to provide \$16 million over the next two years to help the country combat corruption and bolster the rule of law.¹¹⁶

Congressional Conditions on Kazakh and Uzbek Aid

In Congress, Omnibus Appropriations for FY2003 (P.L. 108-7) forbade FREEDOM Support Act (FSA) assistance to the government of Uzbekistan unless the Secretary of State determined and reported that it was making substantial progress in meeting commitments under the Strategic Partnership Declaration to democratize and respect human rights. The conference report (H.Rept. 108-10) also introduced language that forbade assistance to the Kazakh government unless the Secretary of State determined and reported that it significantly had improved its human rights record during the preceding six months. However, the legislation permitted the Secretary to waive

¹¹⁴ Igor Naumov, "Turkmenistan No Longer Sees Russia as Reliable Partner," *Bizekon-Russica Izvestia*, November 16, 2009; "Energy Agreement between Turkey and Iran Changes Essence of Nabucco Project: Chairman of CSS of Turkey," *Trend News Agency* (Azerbaijan), November 13, 2009.

¹¹⁵ In comparison, the EU has reported that it has provided approximately 1.39 billion euros (\$2.13 billion at current exchange rates) in assistance to the region since 1991. Its planned aid of about \$1 billion in 2007-2013 may prove to be more than projected U.S. aid to the region. European Community. *Regional Strategy Paper for Assistance to Central Asia for the period 2007-2013*, June 2007; Council of the European Union. *Presidency Conclusions*, 11177/07, June 23, 2007, p. 12.

¹¹⁶ *ITAR-TASS*, March 18, 2008.

the requirement on national security grounds.¹¹⁷ The Secretary reported in May 2003, that Uzbekistan was making such progress (by late 2003, the former Bush Administration had decided that it could no longer make this claim). In July 2003, the Secretary reported that Kazakhstan was making progress. Some in Congress were critical of these findings.

Consolidated Appropriations for FY2004, including foreign operations (P.L. 108-199) and for FY2005 (P.L. 108-447), and Foreign Operations Appropriations for FY2006 (P.L. 109-102) retained these conditions, while clarifying that the prohibition on aid to Uzbekistan pertained to the *central* government and that conditions included respecting human rights, establishing a “genuine” multi-party system, and ensuring free and fair elections and freedom of expression and media. These conditions remained in place under the continuing resolution for FY2007 (P.L. 109-289, as amended). In appropriations for FY2008 (Consolidated Appropriations; P.L. 110-161), another condition was added blocking the admission of Uzbek officials to the United States if the Secretary of State determines that they were involved in abuses in Andijon. Omnibus Appropriations for FY2009 (P.L. 111-8, Secs. 7075 [Kazakhstan] and 7076 [Uzbekistan]) reiterate these conditions on assistance to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

Among recent determinations and reports:

- Then-Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte reported to Congress in February 2008 that Kazakhstan had failed to significantly improve its human rights record but that he had waived aid restrictions on national security grounds. He did not determine and report to Congress that Uzbekistan was making significant progress in respecting human rights, so aid restrictions remained in place (IMET and FMF programs were among the affected programs that did not receive funding).
- Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg reported to Congress in February 2009 that Kazakhstan had taken steps forward, but had fallen short in meeting reform commitments agreed to at the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Madrid in November 2007 on media, political parties, and elections, and on the preservation of the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). A national security waiver was issued. He did not determine and report to Congress that Uzbekistan was making significant progress in respecting human rights, so aid restrictions remained in place (IMET and FMF programs were among the affected programs that did not receive funding).

Besides bilateral and regional aid, the United States contributes to international financial institutions that aid Central Asia. Recurrent policy issues regarding U.S. aid include what it should be used for, who should receive it, and whether it is effective.

¹¹⁷ The language calling for “substantial progress” in respecting human rights differs from the grounds of ineligibility for assistance under Section 498(b) of Part I of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (P.L. 87-195), which includes as grounds a presidential determination that a Soviet successor state has “engaged in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights.” The Administration has stated annually that the president has not determined that Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have engaged in “gross violations” of human rights.

Legislation

P.L. 111-8 (H.R. 1105) (FY2009)

Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009. Introduced on February 23, 2009. Signed into law on March 11, 2009. The Explanatory Statement calls for \$13.5 million in FREEDOM Support Act aid to Kazakhstan, \$24.4 million to Kyrgyzstan, \$25.233 million to Tajikistan, \$7 million to Turkmenistan, and \$7 million to Uzbekistan. The act continues prior-year language conditioning aid to the government of Kazakhstan on progress in democratization and respect for human rights, including obligations to the OSCE to implement reforms in elections, media freedom, freedom of assembly, and minority rights, and in meeting the commitments it made in connection with its assumption of the chairmanship of the OSCE in 2010. The Secretary of State is permitted a waiver on national security grounds. Aid to the government of Uzbekistan is conditioned on its meeting commitments put forth in the U.S.-Uzbek Declaration on Strategic Partnership and on prosecuting the individuals responsible for killings of civilians in Andijon. If the Secretary of State has evidence of persons responsible for the killings of civilians in Andijon, that person is to be deemed ineligible for admission to the United States. The condition may be lifted if the Secretary reports that Uzbekistan has taken concrete and measureable steps to respect human rights. The Secretary may issue a waiver if admission is necessary for U.N. activities or to further law enforcement.

H.R. 3081 (Lowey)/S. 1434 (Leahy) (FY2010)

Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2010. H.R. 3081 was passed by the House on July 9, 2009. It does not place conditions on assistance to Kazakhstan but does place conditions on assistance to Uzbekistan. These provisions are similar to House language in previous years. S. 1434 was introduced in the Senate on July 9, 2009. It contains conditions on assistance to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, and blocks admission to Uzbek officials deemed culpable for events in Andijon or other abuses. These provisions are similar to Senate language in previous years.

**Table I. U.S. Foreign Assistance to Central Asia,
FY1992 to FY2009**

(millions of dollars)

Central Asian Country	FY1992 thru FY2007 Budgeted ^a	FY2008 Actual ^b	FY2009 Estimate ^b	FY2010 Request ^b
Kazakhstan	1,470.88	21.1	19.3	17.3
Kyrgyzstan	905.01	29.96	29.1	48.2
Tajikistan	747.36	31.3	29.9	52.3
Turkmenistan	276.82	7.2	8.9	16.7
Uzbekistan	833.08	9.5	8.6	10.8
Regional	87.15	2.98	3.0	12.0
Total	4,320.3	102.04	98.8	157.3
Percent	14	24	25	31

Sources: State Department, *Office of the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia*, information as of November 1, 2008; *Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, FY2009: South and Central Asia*.

- a. FSA and Agency funds. Excludes some classified coalition support funding. Includes \$19.3 million in Defense Department Section 1206 train and equip funds for Kazakhstan in FY2007.
- b. FSA and other Function 150 funds. Does not include Defense or Energy Department funds, funding for exchanges, or Millennium Challenge Corporation aid to Kyrgyzstan.

Figure 1. Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan



Source: Map Resources adapted by CRS (08/02 M. Chin).

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