

U.S. FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD CENTRAL ASIA: 1991-2003

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis analyzes the U.S. foreign policy in Central Asia from 1991 until 2003. The U.S. has been involved in the process of democratization and economic reforms in the Central Asian countries since the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, prior to September 11, 2001 events, the U.S. policies toward the five newly independent states, had not been as assertive as in the aftermath of the tragic events. The thesis will argue that the U.S. foreign policy toward Central Asia has steadily developed over time due to geopolitical and geo-economic factors. The U.S. policy culminated in the new strategic cooperation between the U.S. and the Central Asian states on the issue of terrorism. The thesis will demonstrate how the U.S. moved away from being almost a benign observer in the mid-1990s, to an assertive state interested in exercising its influence in the region after 2000.

Keywords: the U.S., Central Asia, Foreign Policy

ÖZ

ABD’NİN ORTA ASYA’YA YÖNELİK DIŞ POLİTİKASI: 1991-2003

Samanchina, Jarkyn

Yüksek Lisans, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü

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Bu alıřma, ABD’nin 1991-2003 dneminde Orta Asya’ya ynelik dıř politikasını incelemiřtir. ABD, Sovyet Birliđi’nin yıkılmasından sonra, Orta Asya lkelerinin demokrasi ve ekonomik reformlarının nasıl geliřtiđine ilgi gstermiřtir. Ancak, 11 Eyll 2001 olaylarından nce, ABD’nin beř yeni bađımsız lkeye dnk politikası, bu trajik olaylar sonrası dnemdeki kadar net olmamıřtır. Bu alıřma, ABD’nin Orta Asya’daki politikasının zaman ierisinde jeopolitik ve jeo-ekonomik faktrlerin etkisiyle evrimini ve giderek daha aktif olmasını tartıřmıřtır. ABD politikası terrizm nedeniyle bu lkenin teykkuz durumuna gemesine kořut olarak ABD ve Orta Asya lkeleri arasında bir stratejik iřbirliđi hedefine ynelmeyle sonulanmıřtır. Bu alıřma ABD’nin 1990lar ortasında fazla ilgili olmayan bir gzlemci roln benimserken, 2000ler bařlarında nasıl kararlı ve nufuzunu kullanmak konusunda istekli bir lkeye dndđn gstermeye alıřmıřtır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: ABD, Orta Asya, Dıř Politika

To My Dearest Tadesse

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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Date: 09.06.2004

Signature:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ÖZ.....	iv
DEDICATION.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 The Role of the U.S. in Current World Affairs	1
1.1.1 The Unipolar World and the Democratist School of Thought	2
1.1.2 Zbigniew Brzezinski and ‘The Grand Chessboard’	3
1.1.3 The Neo-conservatives	4
1.2 The Status of Central Asia.....	5
1.2.1 Scholars Who Argue Against Central Asia’s Importance	5
1.2.2 Scholars Who Argue in Favor of Central Asia’s Importance.....	7
1.3 Post-September 11 Schools of Thought	11
1.4 Eurasia – Source of Instability.....	13
2. CENTRAL ASIA – ‘THE GRAND CHESSBOARD’	16
2.1 Historical Background.....	16
2.1.1 Central Asia under the Tsarist and Soviet Russia	17
2.1.2 Central Asia’s Post-Independence Challenges	19
2.1.3 The Role of Iran.....	20
2.2 The Importance of Eurasia.....	21
2.3 Conclusion	26
3. CHANGES IN THE U.S. FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD CENTRAL ASIA	27
3.1 U.S. Foreign Policy Prior to September 11 Events	27
3.1.1 U.S. Policy in the Early 1990s.....	28
3.1.2 U.S. Policy in the Late 1990s	34
3.2 The Impact of September 11 Events on the U.S.-Central Asian Relations	37
3.3 Potential Challenges for Greater U.S. Involvement in Central Asia	39
3.4 Conclusion	41

4. THE RECEPTIVITY OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN STATES TOWARD INCREASED AMERICAN PRESENCE IN THE REGION	43
4.1 The U.S.-Central Asian Relations Prior to September 11 Events	44
4.1.1 The U.S.-Kazakh Relations	44
4.1.2 The U.S.-Uzbek Relations	47
4.1.3 The U.S.-Turkmen Relations	50
4.1.4 The U.S.-Kyrgyz Relations	53
4.1.5 The U.S.-Tajik Relations	54
4.2. The U.S.-Central Asian Relations Post-September 11 Events	56
4.2.1 Post-September 11 Developments in Kazakhstan	57
4.2.2 Post-September 11 Developments in Uzbekistan	59
4.2.3 Post-September 11 Developments in Turkmenistan	62
4.2.4 Post-September 11 Developments in Kyrgyzstan	63
4.2.5 Post-September 11 Developments in Tajikistan	66
4.3 Human Rights in Central Asia	69
4.4 American Presence and the Regional Elite	71
4.5 Conclusion	72
5. THE RECEPTIVITY OF RUSSIA, CHINA AND AFGHANISTAN TOWARD INCREASED AMERICAN PRESENCE IN THE REGION	74
5.1 Overview of Russia's Relations with the Central Asian States Post- Independence ..	74
5.1.1 A Decade of Russia's Vacillating Policy toward Central Asia	79
5.1.2 Russia's Post-September 11 Policy	85
5.1.3 Russian Scholars' Perspectives	88
5.2 The Role of China	90
5.2.1 China's Geopolitical and Geo-economic Interests in Central Asia	91
5.2.2 China's Post-September 11 Policy	93
5.3 The Afghan Issue	95
5.3.1 Islam in Central Asia and the Threat of Islamic Extremism	98
5.3.2 Narcotics Trafficking	103
5.4 Conclusion	107
6. CONCLUSIONS	108
BIBLIOGRAPHY	113

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The title of this thesis is *U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Central Asia: 1991-2003*. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the U.S. involvement in Central Asia since the collapse of the Soviet Union until the year of 2003. The U.S. has been involved in the process of democratization and economic reforms in the countries of the region from the very beginning. However, prior to September 11, 2001 events, the U.S. policies in the five newly independent states, had not been as assertive as in the aftermath of the tragic events. The thesis will argue that the U.S. foreign policy toward Central Asia has steadily developed over time due to geopolitical and geo-economic factors and culminated in the new strategic cooperation between the U.S. and the Central Asian states on the issue of terrorism, demonstrating America's serious and long-term intentions about the Central Asian region.

I would like to start with the discussion of the literature review. In the course of research, I have divided my sources into several categories. While the arguments made in all of these sources will be presented throughout the thesis, I would like to provide here some of the major categories with summaries of their arguments.

1.1 The Role of the U.S. in Current World Affairs

The first category serves as a theoretical framework of the thesis. In this part, I would like to provide a summary of Charles Krauthammer's argument about the U.S. leadership in the world and John C. Hulsman's discussion of the Democratist school, some of the arguments provided in Zbigniew Brzezinski's famous book *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, and arguments made by the so-called neo-conservatives, which is a group of thinkers and politicians dominating the present U.S.

government. The uniting argument of these three sub-categories is that currently there are no rivals to the U.S. power around the globe.

1.1.1 The Unipolar World and the Democratist School of Thought

Krauthammer argues that the post-Cold War world is not multipolar. The U.S. supported by its Western allies represents the center of world power or the unchallenged superpower.¹ This unipolar world was born during the Kohl-Gorbachev summit in Stavropol in July 1990. During this meeting, Gorbachev gave away East Germany, the most important country in the Soviet Union's European Empire, to NATO. This act signified the end of the Cold War and changed the world's structure.²

The reason why the U.S. can be a decisive player in any conflict and anywhere in the world it decides to get engaged is that it is the only country that possesses ample military, economic, political, and diplomatic assets.³ The representatives of the Democratist school of thought believe that the U.S. is the world's only state that possesses multidimensionality of power. They also believe that the American policy will basically determine the type of the emerging world order.⁴

Unlike Institutionalists, who believe in the power of the UN and multilateral approach, Democratists find their institutional outcome in NATO. This organization is the Democratists' favorite because it is composed of democratic states and it has had a long history of success. Furthermore, NATO is basically the U.S. creature. America's domination of NATO is demonstrated by the fact that the organization's supreme military commander has always been an American.⁵

According to Schurman's classification system, Democratists also classify as imperialists and nationalists. They are imperialists because of their interventionist view of

¹ Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," in Graham Allison and Gregory F. Treverton, eds., *Rethinking America's Security: Beyond Cold War to New World Order*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1992), p. 296.

² Ibid., p. 297.

³ Ibid.

⁴ John C. Hulsman, *A Paradigm for the New World Order: A Schools-of-Thought Analysis of American Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era*, (London: MacMillan Press, Ltd., 1997), p. 26.

⁵ Ibid., p. 27.

the U.S. They are nationalists because of their missionary pursuit to spread and protect American values around the world.⁶

1.1.2 Zbigniew Brzezinski and ‘The Grand Chessboard’

According to Brzezinski, between the western and eastern extremities, there is a vast middle space formerly occupied by America’s rival that was committed to push the U.S. out of Eurasia. To the south of this large central Eurasian territory, there is region rich in energy resources, which has a great importance to both western and eastern Eurasian countries.⁷

Brzezinski argues that today the scope of American global power is unique. In addition to controlling the worlds’ oceans and seas, it has also developed an amphibious shore control capability, which allows it to project its power inland in significant ways. The U.S. military controls the western and eastern extremities of Eurasia, as well as the Persian Gulf. The U.S. has been able to use the latest scientific achievements for military purposes, which allowed it to create a rival-free military establishment of global reach.⁸

He believes that there are four major factors that make the U.S. the only comprehensive global power these days. First, the U.S. military has an unmatched global reach. Second, American economy continues to be the main engine of global growth, despite the challenges presented in some areas by Germany and Japan. Third, the U.S. technology is a leader in the cutting-edge innovations. Finally, American culture has an unrivaled appeal, especially among young people.⁹ India and China could also be considered as countries presenting challenge to the U.S. global dominance.

Brzezinski argues that at the present time, the U.S. is the world’s only superpower and Eurasia is the world’s central arena.¹⁰ America’s immediate task is to make sure that no state or group of states becomes capable of pushing it out of Eurasia or decrease its arbitrating role.¹¹

⁶ Ibid., p. 28.

⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, (New York: Basic Books, 1997), p. 35.

⁸ Ibid., p. 23.

⁹ Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 194.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 198.

1.1.3 The Neo-conservatives

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, American foreign policy elites have developed a strong faith in the U.S. military invincibility. This faith is based on the idea that the U.S. global power is limited primarily by its own political scruples and humanitarian self-restraint. The belief that the U.S. possesses enormous power instills a powerful sense of responsibility in American leaders. The faith in their own strength places them in the uneasy moral position of an 'omnipotent god', forced to decide: "If there is evil in the universe, it is America's fault for not removing it."¹² This elevated perception of national duty creates a comparative advantage for America's ruling neo-conservatives, who believe that the U.S. power is not only invincible, but also uniquely just.¹³

In 1997, the group called the Project for the New American Century, or PNAC, was established. Three former officials from the Republican Party who were not part of the Democratic administration of Bill Clinton, including Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney and Paul Wolfowitz were among the supporters of this group. This organization called for 'the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime from power' and a more assertive U.S. policy in Middle East, which would include the use of force, if necessary.¹⁴

In 2000, when President George W. Bush came to power, the group believed that the course of the U.S. foreign policy would change only slowly unless 'some catastrophic and catalyzing event, like a new Pearl Harbor' took place.¹⁵ Such event did occur on September 11, 2001. By then, Cheney had become Vice President, Rumsfeld – Secretary of Defense, and Wolfowitz – Deputy Secretary of Defense. The idea that started as a theory in 1997 now acquired an opportunity to become an official U.S. foreign policy.¹⁶

U.S. Military Historian and self-described neo-conservative (neo-con) Max Boot said that the emergence of neo-conservative thinking placed its imprint on the second Bush

¹² David P. Calleo, "Power, Wealth and Wisdom," *National Interest*, (Issue No. 72, 2003), p. 5.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ "The Plan: Were Neo-Conservatives' 1998 Memos a Blueprint for Iraq War?" Accessed November 21, 2003 at http://abcnews.go.com/sections/nightline/DailyNews/pnac_030310.html

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

administration. According to Boot, neo-cons basically combine the best of the two dominant tendencies in the U.S. foreign policy thinking – that is Wilsonian idealism and Kissingerian realpolitik. They agree with Wilson’s dedication to promoting democracy. However, they also recognize, which Wilson did not, that promotion of democracy often requires force and that the U.S. cannot rely on international treaties alone.¹⁷

Boot thinks that at the present time the U.S. is acting like a liberal empire by getting involved in the internal problems of Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq, and other countries. He says that most Americans understand that national security would suffer if they do not address sources of terrorism, ethnic cleansing, instability, and nuclear proliferation, and that they will pay a big price, as they already did on September 11.¹⁸

1.2 The Status of Central Asia

The second category includes two sub-categories of arguments. The first sub-category presents opinions of scholars who argue that Central Asia has not presented strategic interest for the U.S. I would like to note here that most of the arguments included in this category were made in the 1990s, long before September 11 events. In the second category, I present arguments of those scholars who believe that Central Asia does have strategic value to the U.S. interests. This category will include a special set of arguments made by scholars who compare the current political and economic rivalry in Central Asia among the super and regional powers to the ‘Great Game’, which took place in the 19th century, and arguments in favor of Central Asia’s importance made both prior and post-September 11 events. The two categories presented below do not aim to contradict each other but rather demonstrate how the U.S. priorities and policies changed over time.

1.2.1 Scholars Who Argue Against Central Asia’s Importance

In 1994, Rosemary Hollis wrote that compared to the scope of the U.S. involvement in the Gulf region, there was no indication of America’s direct engagement in Central Asia.

¹⁷ “Q&A: Neocon Power Examined,” Accessed November 21, 2003 at <http://www.csmonitor.com/specials/neocon/boot.html>

¹⁸ Ibid.

She believed so despite the fact that by the mid-1993 Washington had become more actively involved in the region.¹⁹

In 1995, Jed C. Snyder argued that while the U.S. certainly considered countries adjacent to the region (Russia, China, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan) important to the U.S. strategic objectives, America's interests in Central Asia could not be described as 'vital'. He wrote that unless the region would experience some anticipated shocks, the U.S. involvement in Central Asia would remain limited.²⁰

In 1997, Gregory Gleason wrote that it was difficult to determine long-term U.S. interests in Central Asia. He argued, that, although, it did have some interest in oil and other commodities, yet its overall commercial interests in the area were negligible. According to Gleason, from the point of U.S. foreign policy priorities concern, the Central Asian states ranked somewhere close to Venezuela.²¹

In 1998, Sergei Lounev and Gleryi Shirokov stated that Central Asia did not occupy a priority place in the interests of major powers. They argued that the U.S. and other Western countries were mainly interested in political stability of the region and cooperation with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan in oil and gas explorations.²²

In his overview of the U.S. policy toward Central Asia prior to September 11 events, Boris Rumer wrote that initially the U.S. adopted a 'wait-and-see' policy toward the Central Asian states. Since the U.S. was involved in the number of other global problems, it did not view the region as a priority in terms of America's fundamental interests. This situation started to change when the U.S. realized that China could assume the leadership role.²³

Rustam Burnashev expressed an interesting opinion on the U.S. policies in Central Asia after September 11 events had taken place. He said that while the U.S. was interested

¹⁹ Rosemary Hollis, "Western Strategy in South West Asia," in Anoushiravan Ehteshami, ed., *From the Gulf to Central Asia: Players in the New Great Game*, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1994), p. 191.

²⁰ Jed C. Snyder, "Introduction," in Jed C. Snyder, ed., *After Empire: The Emerging Geopolitics of Central Asia*, (Honolulu, Hawaii: University Press of the Pacific, 1995), pp. XXV-XXVI.

²¹ Gregory Gleason, *The Central Asian States: Discoveries of Independence*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), p. 155.

²² Sergei Lounev and Gleryi Shirokov, "Central Asia and the World: Foreign Policy and Strategic Issues," in Yongjin Zhang and Rouben Azizian, eds., *Ethnic Challenges Beyond Borders: Chinese and Russian Perspectives of the Central Asian Conundrum*, (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1998), pp. 224-226.

²³ Boris Rumer, "The Search for Stability in Central Asia," in Boris Rumer, ed., *Central Asia: A Gathering Storm?* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 2002), pp. 56-57.

in exploiting Central Asia's natural resources and preventing any single power from dominating the region; while it had some military and political interests in the region, such as controlling issues related to nuclear weapons; and it had devoted much effort into drawing the Central Asian states into the Western military sphere, in the long term, it would not be willing to make great sacrifices to defend these states or to guarantee their security.²⁴ However, I will show further in the thesis that the U.S. officials, in fact, did make promises to guarantee the security situation in the region.

1.2.2 Scholars Who Argue in Favor of Central Asia's Importance

Early in the twentieth century, Halford Mackinder discussed the Eurasian 'pivot area' that was said to include all of Siberia and most of Central Asia and, later, about the Central-East-European 'heartland' as the vital springboards for gaining domination over the continent.²⁵

'The Great Game'

In 1995, Snyder wrote that a remnant of the early 19th century 'Great Game', which found Tsarist Russia competing with the British Empire, would be replayed in Central Asia, although under different circumstances.²⁶

Six years later, Nazar Alaolmolki argued that the U.S., Russia, Iran, Turkey, and China were the major competitors over energy in the region and their rivalries had turned the region into a modern version of the 19th century 'Great Game'. While Washington's official position was to support cooperation in the region, it actually was against Iran's gaining benefit from the development in the region.²⁷

In 2002, Sultan Akimbekov wrote that 'great political game', which involved the U.S. and the major regional powers, was all about transportation corridors. While the U.S. officials stated that the U.S. wished to ensure that no single country would have a monopoly

²⁴ Rustam Bournashev, "Regional Security in Central Asia: Military Aspects," in Boris Rumer, ed., *Central Asia: A Gathering Storm?* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 2002), pp. 116-117.

²⁵ Brzezinski, p. 38.

²⁶ Snyder, p. XVII.

²⁷ Nazar Alaolmolki, *Life After the Soviet Union: The Newly Independent Republics of the Transcaucasus and Central Asia*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001), p. 36.

over oil shipments, in reality, the U.S. wanted to establish such corridors that would bypass Russia and Iran.²⁸

Arguments Made Prior to September 11

In 1994, Valeria Piacentini argued that geopolitical, geo-economic and geostrategic factors had made Central Asia an important part of international security arrangements. She wrote that external powers that intervened in Central Asia had more or less similar interests, such as oil, Islam, and power politics, in the Gulf area. These factors contributed to a close geo-economic and geostrategic correlation between these two regions.²⁹

In the same year, Mikhail Konarovsky wrote that even though American specialists predicted that the U.S. presence in Central Asia would be limited, by 1994, the U.S. identified it as the region of great strategic importance to the U.S. Initially, Washington was concerned about the potential of nuclear instability, but later on it became attracted to its unique geographical location, as well as vast energy and human resources. The U.S. did not want to loose in the global competition to other countries.³⁰

Also in 1994, Eric Hoogland stated that the U.S. was very much afraid of the spread of the Islamic fundamentalist influence in Central Asia by Iran, so the West had to undertake some measures to contain this regional threat. This fear led to the U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's visit to Central Asia as early as February 1992, where he proclaimed that the region would be saved from the threat of Islamic fundamentalism.³¹

Nancy Lubin wrote in 1994 that such issues as narcotics trafficking and organized crime, control of nuclear weapons, environmental devastation and regional instability would directly affect American security interests. She argued that it would be easier and cheaper for the U.S. to help the Central Asian states with creating new systems and finding new

²⁸ Sultan Akimbekov, "The Conflict in Afghanistan: Conditions, Problems, and Prospects," in Boris Rumer, ed., *Central Asia: A Gathering Storm?* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 2002), pp. 76-77.

²⁹ Valeria Piacentini, "Islam: Iranian and Saudi Arabian Regional and Geopolitical Competition," in Anoushiravan Ehteshami, ed., *From the Gulf to Central Asia: Players in the New Great Game*, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1994), p. 35.

³⁰ Mikhail Konarovsky, "Russia and the Emerging Geopolitical Order in Central Asia," in Ali Banuazizi and Myron Weiner, eds., *The New Geopolitics of Central Asia and Its Borderlands*, (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1994), p. 256.

³¹ Eric Hoogland, "Iran and Central Asia," in Anoushiravan Ehteshami, ed., *From the Gulf to Central Asia: Players in the New Great Game*, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1994), p. 115.

priorities, than to wait until their problems would have grown out of proportion and become difficult to control.³²

In 1998, Xing Guancheng argued that Central Asia was of special strategic interest to the U.S. for several reasons. First of all it was important from the point of national security considerations. The U.S. was determined to stop the spread of Islamic fundamentalist influence in the Central Asian states. If this were to happen, then the U.S. and the West as a whole would face a serious threat problem both in Central Asia and Middle East. There was fear that a large region of 'Islamic storms' from Central Asia to Middle East and to North Africa would be established. For this reason, the U.S. supported Turkey's influence in the region that would stop penetration of the Islamic fundamentalism. The important element here was Turkey's being a NATO member.³³

On the other hand, uranium resources and the capacity to produce weapon-grade uranium for nuclear weapons production, as well as Kazakhstan's possession of control of some nuclear weapons for some time, presented a security challenge for the West. Furthermore, the U.S. was interested in Central Asia's strategic location and wanted to secure influence that would always be favorable for the U.S. and its allies. The U.S. domination would influence Russia in the north, contain Iran and Afghanistan in the south, balance China in the east, and command the Caucasus in the west. The U.S. did not want to lose the Central Asian region, which had great economic potential, to other rivals.³⁴

In 2001, Stephen Blank wrote that since the Central Asian countries became independent, American economic, political and military interests had continuously grown. The U.S. has used all instruments of power to establish itself as the major player in the region, as well as across the entire Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Blank stated that the U.S. had pursued three important issues in the Transcaspian: first, increasing the energy supply to consumers; second, excluding Iran from all aspects related to energy products; and third, preventing any single state from gaining monopoly over the local energy

³² Nancy Lubin, "Central Asia: Issues and Challenges for United States Policy," in Ali Banuazizi and Myron Weiner, eds., *The New Geopolitics of Central Asia and Its Borderlands*, (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1994), pp. 271-272.

³³ Xing Guancheng, "Security Issues in China's Relations with Central Asian States," in Yongjin Zhang and Rouben Azizian, eds., *Ethnic Challenges Beyond Borders: Chinese and Russian Perspectives of the Central Asian Conundrum*, (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1998), p. 40.

³⁴ Ibid.

supply.³⁵ Furthermore, Blank argued that the increasing participation of the U.S. military in bilateral relations with the Central Asian militaries, as well as their cooperation through NATO's Partnership for Peace program, were part of America's global strategy to shape the global security environment.³⁶

Arguments Made After September 11

In 2002, Akimbekov pointed out the possibility that the U.S. was afraid of the domino effect in Central Asia under which the existing regimes in the region would collapse in case of Taliban's total victory. This would lead to even stronger authoritarian and radical tendencies in the Central Asian states, which would create chaos due to the proximity of the Afghan conflict.³⁷

According to Rumer, because of the tragic events of September 11, the geopolitical situation in the region had changed significantly. Since fall 2001, the U.S. has come to dominate the region as the main donor and security manager.³⁸

Robert Legvold wrote that post-September 11 concern over terrorism created need in the Central Asian states. Military bases in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan turned Central Asia overnight into part of America's global security structure.³⁹ According to Legvold, Central Asia is located at the core of a strategically important arena that could determine the course of international relations within both Asia and Eurasia.⁴⁰

Elizabeth Jones, in her statement about the U.S. intentions to develop relations with the Central Asian states, said that stable and prosperous Central Asia would mean more secure world for the Americans and more prosperous future for the peoples in the region. She confirmed the long-term interest of the U.S. in this important region of the world. Jones

³⁵ Stephen Blank, "The United States and Central Asia," in Roy Allison and Lena Jonson, eds., *Central Asian Security: The New International Context*, (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs and Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), p. 133

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

³⁸ Boris Rumer, "Preface," in Boris Rumer, ed., *Central Asia: A Gathering Storm?* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 2002), p. XI.

³⁹ Robert Legvold, "Introduction: Great Powers in Central Asia," in Robert Legvold, ed., *Thinking Strategically: The Major Powers, Kazakhstan, and the Central Asian Nexus*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), p. 32.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

said that cooperation would lead to a win-win situation, that such situation was possible and the U.S. would aspire to achieve it.⁴¹

1.3 Post-September 11 Schools of Thought

According to Bobo Lo, after September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C., USA, two schools of thought have emerged. The first one, which is popular in Washington and London, argued that the terrorist attacks in the U.S. became transforming events not only for America but for the whole world. The character of international politics had changed in the sense that there were no longer strategic competition and traditional security priorities, but rather cooperative security and cooperation to develop common responses to the dangers threatening civilization as a whole.⁴² Arguments made in favor of this school follow below.

According to Legvold, starting from 2002, Putin's foreign policy signified a change in the U.S.-Russian relationship, which decreased the possibilities of competitive rivalry. However, he notes that this could change should Putin be absent or should there be an unexpected turn in the relations between the two countries.⁴³

Guancheng wrote that China was very supportive of the U.S. military effort to eliminate the Taliban. It expressed its deep sympathy within hours of the tragic events and shared intelligence on terrorist activities. The two countries agreed to create middle-term and long-term mechanisms of cooperation on the issue of combating terrorism.⁴⁴ Yet he stressed that China did not want to see America's long-term military presence in Central Asia. It would not be in China's interest to have Americans so close to its border.⁴⁵

The second school of thought, which became popular in non-Anglo-Saxon world, stated that there had been very little change. International politics had not become more

⁴¹ "Jones Confirmed USA's Intentions to Develop Relations with Central Asian States," Accessed August 26, 2003 at <http://usinfo.stat.gov/ruski/>

⁴² Bobo Lo, *Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy*, (The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Russia and Eurasia Program: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), p. 115.

⁴³ Legvold, pp. 7-8.

⁴⁴ Xing Guancheng, "China's Foreign Policy Toward Kazakhstan," in Robert Legvold, ed., *Thinking Strategically: The Major Powers, Kazakhstan, and the Central Asian Nexus*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), p. 113.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

inclusive and integrated. On the contrary, the U.S., being the sole superpower, started acting in even more hegemonistic and unilateral way.⁴⁶ I would like to note that in this category, arguments in support of the second school of thought significantly outnumber those in favor of the first one.

Winfred Snider-Deters, Coordinator of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Transcaucasus and Central Asia, argued that September 11 events were advantageous for the American neo-imperialists. While the world was still under the shock caused by the terrorist crimes, they were able to legitimize their hegemonistic policy. He stated that without September 11, such policy would have definitely met strong resistance from the world community.⁴⁷

According to Konstantin Syroezhkin, the terrorist attack on September 11 started not only the beginning of a new period in world politics, but also a new stage of competition for political domination of Central Asia. He thinks that although it is too early to predict the long-term chances in the balance of power and in the regional security system, neither Russia nor China would like to see an increased American military presence in the region.⁴⁸

Alexei Fenenko thought that the U.S. operation in Afghanistan became the first independent action of the U.S. after the breakup of the bipolar world. For the first time since the Vietnam War, the U.S. administration made a choice of direct projection of its military might to destroy its enemy. Thus, the U.S. actions changed the concept of the modern war itself: The 'strategy of influence' or imposing certain political conditions was replaced by a new 'strategy of defeat', which involves liquidation of the opposite party as political subject.⁴⁹ One British critic described America's propensity to military action in the following way: "When you have hammer, all problems start looking like nails."⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Lo, p. 115.

⁴⁷ Winfred Snider-Deters, "Voennoe prisutstvie SShA v Centralnoi Azii i ego vozdeistvie na vnutripoliticheskie processy v stranah regiona," in E. Karin, ed., *Politika SShA v Centralnoi Azii*, (Almaty: Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Kazakhstan, 2003), p. 83.

⁴⁸ Konstantin Syroezhkin, "Central Asia Between the Gravitational Poles of Russia and China," in Boris Rumer, ed., *Central Asia: A Gathering Storm?* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 2002), p. 203.

⁴⁹ Aleksei Fenenko, "'Strategia porazheniya' v afganskoi operatsii Vashingtona," *Centralnaya Azia i Kavkaz: zhurnal sotsialnyh i politicheskikh issledovanii*, (Sweden: Information and Analytical Center, No. 6, 2001), p. 7.

⁵⁰ Robert Kagan, *Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, (London: Atlantic Books, 2003), p. 27.

In his book *Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, Robert Kagan wrote that September 11 events had led the U.S. to engage in a new strategic expansion. He argued that just like the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor led to a lasting American presence in East Asia and Europe, so September 11 would likely lead to an enduring military presence of the U.S. in the Persian Gulf and Central Asia.⁵¹

1.4 Eurasia – Source of Instability

This category presents opinions of some of the scholars who argue that Eurasia presents a threat to itself and to the world community.

According to Snyder, many scholars believe that the heart of Eurasia still has a potential to explode into a series of inter-state wars, which could be caused by rivalries between the leaders of the Central Asian countries. Consequently, instability could encourage neighboring powers to get involved in a new cycle of competition for political influence in the region and access to potentially enormous resources.⁵²

Brzezinski argues that there is a need for a large-scale international investment in the Caspian-Central Asian region. It would generate wealth, stability, and security, possibly reducing a threat of Balkan-type conflicts.⁵³

Legvold believes that the war in Afghanistan turned Central Asia into both a vital strategic resource because of the air bases, as well as a new object of concern because of the region's vulnerability to problems that could be generated by neighboring Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran.⁵⁴

In order to understand the U.S. interests and determine what developments are likely to take place with regards to the U.S. policies in Central Asia, I will take a look at several issues. In Chapter 2, I will provide some historical background about the Central Asian region. In this chapter, I will include brief information ranging from ancient times to the conquest of Central Asia by Russia, and from the Soviet Union's domination until the formation of the independent Central Asian states. I will also discuss the role of Iran in

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 95-96.

⁵² Snyder, p. XVII.

⁵³ Brzezinski, p. 203.

⁵⁴ Legvold, p. 67.

Central Asia and its aspirations in the region. Finally, I will examine the importance of Eurasia, reasons making this region attractive to competing regional and super powers, as well as the role that Central Asia plays in this crucial geo-economic and geopolitical area.

In Chapter 3, I will discuss the U.S. policy toward Central Asia. I will examine the U.S. policies prior to September 11, 2001 events and post-September 11 events. The discussion of pre-September 11 policies will be divided into two parts: the U.S. policies in the early 1990s and the U.S. policies in the late 1990s. The post-September 11 part will discuss the effect of these tragic events on the U.S.-Central Asian relations, as well as possible challenges that could arise in case of further greater American involvement in the region.

In Chapter 4, I will take a look at the receptivity of the Central Asian states toward increasing American involvement in Central Asia. First, I will analyze the U.S. relations with each of the five Central Asian states before September 11 events. Next, I will talk about the U.S.-Central Asian relations post-September 11 and the role of each Central Asian state in the operation 'Enduring Freedom'. In this chapter, I will also provide the discussion of current state of human rights in Central Asia and the effect of the American presence on the regional elite.

In Chapter 5, I will discuss the receptivity of Russia, China, and Afghanistan toward growing American presence in Central Asia. I will start with the examination of the Russian-Central Asian relations from post-independence until post-September 11, and the opinions of some of the Russian scholars and politicians with regards to current status of Russia in Central Asia. Next, I will discuss China's role in Central Asia, its interests in the region, as well as its post-September 11 policies. In this chapter, I will also provide an overview of Afghanistan's problems, which is a neighbor of the Central Asian states and primary target of the U.S. security policies. The emphasis will be made on the problem of Islamic extremism and drug trafficking, which present challenges both to the region and the international community as a whole.

Throughout the thesis, the following questions will be raised. The U.S. has declared the region as a sphere of its vital interests. What are these interests? Is it gaining control over Central Asia's oil and gas reserves? Is it weakening Russia's influence in the region? Is it providing stability and security? The thesis will also make an effort to analyze advantages and disadvantages for the long-term U.S. engagement in Central Asia both for America and the Central Asian states. It will also try to analyze what possible effect these relations are

likely to have on the geopolitical situation in the region, taking into consideration other regional players. In Chapter 6, which is the concluding part of the thesis, the prospects for the increasing U.S. presence in the region and the prospects for Central Asia's economic and political development will be discussed.

The author hopes that this thesis will be useful to everyone who wishes to learn more about the region and understand its role in the world politics. The author also hopes that this work will be interesting to all who are interested in the U.S. policy in Central Asia. This thesis is certainly not the first one written on the subject. However, its strong point is that it is based on extensive research and attempt to create a comprehensive review of the evolution of American attitudes and policies in the Central Asian states from the moment of recognizing their independence to the latest developments concerning the establishment of the U.S. military bases in the region.

CHAPTER 2

CENTRAL ASIA – ‘THE GRAND CHESSBOARD’

Before the sea lanes to India, China and the Americas were opened, Central Asia was the home of the ‘Great Silk Road’. Here, the great Timurids and Moguls rose and left their significant imprints on the history of this vast area. The two great powers of the 19th century, Russia and Great Britain, played their now famous ‘Great Game’ in this region.⁵⁵ Some scholars argue that this competition will be replayed in Central Asia, though under very different circumstances.⁵⁶

2.1 Historical Background

The territory of modern Central Asia was populated by mainly people of Iranian stock, who have been displaced or mixed with different invading peoples, such as Greeks under Alexander, Persians, Arab Muslims, various Turkic tribes, and Mongols under Chinghiz Khan. All these peoples left behind a rich heritage of races, languages, and culture.⁵⁷

Due to its pivotal geographical position, Central Asia was able to play a key role in relations among the tribes and peoples populating Eurasia. Its importance was symbolized by the ancient idea of the ‘Gordian Knot’, which meant that the power controlling Central Asia would also have control over the passages to the wealth of the East and the markets of

⁵⁵ Ehsan Ahrari, “The Strategic Future of Central Asia: A View from Washington,” *Journal of International Affairs*, (Vol. 56, Issue No. 2, 2003), p. 157.

⁵⁶ Snyder, p. XVII.

⁵⁷ Alaolmolki, pp. 16-17.

the West.⁵⁸ The region was also ‘central’ in the sense that it was located between two distinct civilizations: the Slavic Christendom in the north and the Islamic world in the south.⁵⁹

2.1.1 Central Asia under the Tsarist and Soviet Russia

Throughout its history, Russia made attempts to include the Caspian and Central Asian regions into its sphere of influence and create access to Iran, India, and China.⁶⁰ From the early 17th century, Russia started its expansion across the Siberian plain to the shores of the Pacific Ocean. In the early 18th century, Czar Peter the Great sent several military expeditions to establish Russian presence on the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea and the northern steppes of present-day Kazakhstan. Russians were able to build and defend a fort on the steppe at the mouth of the Om River, which is today the city of Omsk near the current Russian-Kazakh border. It became the first forward base for the coming assault on Central Asia. In 1718, they built another fort called Semipalatinsk, which is in present-day north-eastern Kazakhstan. In the 20th century, Semipalatinsk became known as a place where the Soviet Union conducted hundreds of nuclear tests. By the end of the 18th century, Russia controlled the majority of the Kazakh steppe.⁶¹

In response to the European powers, the Russian Empire stated that its security in Central Asia would be achieved when it reached the borders of Persia, Afghanistan, and China. Using security as a justification for its expansion, the Russian government ordered an attack on the Central Asian khanates. In 1868, the ancient city of Samarkant (ancient Afrasiab) was taken over and the Khanates of Kokand and Bukhara were conquered. In 1873, Khiva was conquered as well. In 1884, Russia took over the district of Marv. Now Russia’s territories on the eastern shores of the Caspian expanded all the way to Persia and Afghanistan. The United Kingdom was afraid that Russia wanted to expand into India. In

⁵⁸ Gleason, p. 136.

⁵⁹ Michael Mandelbaum, “Introduction,” in Michael Mandelbaum, ed., *Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and the World*, (Washington, D.C.: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1993), p. 2.

⁶⁰ Alaolmolki, p. 18.

⁶¹ Michael Kort, *Central Asian Republics*, (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), pp. 33-34.

1891, Russian military established itself in the Pamir mountain ranges, in present eastern Tajikistan, within very short distance from India.⁶²

Before 1917 revolution, the Central Asian region became known as Russian ‘Turkistan’, which means the land of Turks. In April 1918, the Turkistan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was proclaimed.⁶³ However, the Soviet Union was afraid that Central Asia’s Muslim community would be drawn to outside Islamic influences. In order to prevent such developments, two things were done. First, the region was divided into five ethnic units: Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Kyrgyz and Tajiks. Thus, in 1924, the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic and the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic were created. The Kazakhs and Kyrgyz received status of autonomous republics within the Russian Soviet Federalist Socialist Republic (RSFSR), and Tajiks received status of autonomous republic within the Uzbek SSR. In 1929, the Tajik autonomous republic was elevated to the status of a union republic. Kazakhs and Kyrgyz received this status in 1936. Second, the borders were drawn in such fashion that left pockets of one ethnic group within the borders of another ethnic group’s unit. This was done in order to create problem areas and prevent unification of these units against the Communist Party of Moscow, which became the capital of the Soviet Union in 1918.⁶⁴

The Soviets regulated Central Asians’ use of their languages. Before the 20th century, different Turkic dialects, that tended to blend into one another, were spoken in Central Asia. The Tajiks spoke a Persian dialect and used classical Persian in their literary language. Starting from the 1920s, the Soviet government started to design language policies that would cut off the Central Asians from outside influences and divide them from each other at the same time. The Arabic alphabet was replaced by the Latin alphabet, which actually better suited to both the Turkic and Iranian languages of Central Asia. The goal was to separate Central Asians from their Islamic and Turkic or Iranian traditions. In 1940, the alphabet was changed from Latin to Cyrillic alphabet used to write Russian and other Slavic languages. This measure was taken to make Central Asia’s ties with Russia stronger. Russian became the official language of all Central Asian republics. The Soviet Union aimed to make Central Asia’s Muslim population more Russian. This policy was called

⁶² Alaolmolki, p. 19.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 21.

⁶⁴ Kort, p. 50.

Russification. Names of many local places were changed to Russian ones.⁶⁵ At the same time, the Soviet government started a strong anti-religious campaign. It purposefully tried to cut off all Islamic linkages by prohibiting religious activities and practices throughout the Soviet Union.⁶⁶

2.1.2 Central Asia's Post-Independence Challenges

The long history of Soviet domination created a national identity problem for the peoples of Central Asia. One Turkmen scientist stated: «Our memory has been emptied and our history was taught in an imperial way, leaving a blank spot on Iranian and Turanian influences. The origins of our people were not studied, and nomads were considered second-class citizens.»⁶⁷ Central Asian scholars and intellectuals believe that people in the region suffered from being subjects of a colonial rule: “Across Central Asia, the Uzbeks and Tajiks, the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, the heirs of the ‘Mongols’, Turks and Persians who conquered the world many times over, are rediscovering a heroic past that Communism had tried but clearly failed to destroy.”⁶⁸

Although there are some common culture and identity traits shared by the Central Asian people, their leaders are in the process of constructing distinct national features that would make them different from their neighbors and create a sense of common identity. This process involves revival, re-writing and even creation of a ‘national’ history, symbols and myths.⁶⁹ The Kyrgyz incorporated the national epic hero Manas into their constitution. The Uzbeks decided to choose Teymur Lang as their national hero. Kazakhstan moved its capital to the center of the country to be within equal distance from the two main ethnic groups, Kazak and Russian, making up its population. The Tajiks chose to embrace the Samanid dynasty as the cultural symbol of the Tajik civilization.⁷⁰ In Turkmenistan, the local mass

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 51-52.

⁶⁶ Alaolmolki, pp. 22-23.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 23.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 23-24.

⁶⁹ Paul Kubicek, “Regionalism, Nationalism, and Realpolitik in Central Asia,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, (Vol. 49, Issue No. 4, 1997), p. 644.

⁷⁰ William O. Beeman, “The Struggle for Identity in Post-Soviet Tajikistan,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA) Journal*, (Vol. 3, Issue No. 4, 1999), pp. 100-101, 104.

media constantly portrays President Niyazov as the symbol, father, defender, guide and teacher of the nation.⁷¹ In many ways, this process of nation-building is very much similar to processes most post-colonial peoples went through earlier.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian economy and life conditions have declined drastically.⁷² Independence has not brought financial benefits to the ordinary people in the region. Few people were able to get rich very quickly, including the elite of the Central Asian societies who have become the primary beneficiaries of independence. While in Central Asian republics natural resources and oil, natural gas, and coal are seen as keys to prosperity, the underdeveloped economies continue to be the main obstacles on the way to growth and development.⁷³

2.1.3 The Role of Iran

In 500 B.C. the Persian Empire included the territory of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, as well as Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Israel.⁷⁴ Even during the Soviet times, Iran played a significant role of spreading Islamic religious propaganda in Central Asia. This was facilitated by geographical proximity, as well as common linguistic and historical-cultural links. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, religious and cultural propaganda became integrated into economic, financial and commercial initiatives through bilateral agreements and such multilateral organs as the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).⁷⁵

Brzezinski argues that although Iran is currently interested mostly in Azerbaijan and Afghanistan, the entire Muslim population in the region, including that within Russia, is the object of Iran's religious interest, and Islamic revival in Central Asia is partly due to aspirations of Iran's present rulers.⁷⁶ Hoogland, on the other hand, argues that Iran's role in

⁷¹ Michael Ochs, "Turkmenistan: The Quest for Stability and Control," in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrot, eds., *Conflict, Cleavage, and Change in Central Asia and Caucasus*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 330.

⁷² Alaolmolki, p. 27.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

⁷⁴ Brzezinski, p. 137.

⁷⁵ Piacentini, p. 37.

⁷⁶ Brzezinski, p. 137.

Central Asia and Transcaucasia is focused not on spreading religious activism, but on developing mutually beneficial economic relations. Iranian officials view Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan as natural trade partners due to common borders with these states. They also think that Turkmenistan could serve as a bridge with the four Central Asian states with which Iran does not share borders. Iran sees all of these states as markets for its consumer exports, such as consumer appliances, chemicals, shoes and textiles.⁷⁷

Tehran is interested in political stability in the region because regional peace would lead to prosperity and benefit both Iran and its neighbors. However, it is concerned about Russia's and the U.S. intentions with regards to the region. Iran seems to understand Russia's desire to re-establish its influence in the region that it dominated for more than a century. It is not as certain about the U.S. motives to creating an image of Iran and Islam as major threat to stability in Central Asia. Perhaps by its geographic proximity, Iran is viewed as a competitor to the U.S. desire to control the natural resources of Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. Another view is that because of its relative weakness in comparison to the superpower, Iran was chosen to replace the Soviet Union as the new enemy.⁷⁸

2.2 The Importance of Eurasia

Early in the twentieth century, Mackinder started a discussion about the Eurasian 'pivot area' that was said to include all of Siberia and most of Central Asia and, later, about the Central-East-European 'heartland' as the vital springboards for gaining domination over the continent. This heartland concept was expressed in the famous dictum: "Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; Who rules the World-Island commands the world."⁷⁹

Brzezinski also stresses the geopolitical importance of Eurasia. He says that its western periphery, which is Europe, is the place of serious economic and political power. At the same time, its eastern region, which is Asia, is increasingly becoming a vital center of economic growth and political importance. Brzezinski refers to Eurasia as the 'chessboard' where the struggle for global dominance will continue to take place. He claims that the U.S.

⁷⁷ Hoogland, pp. 117-118.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 124-125.

⁷⁹ Brzezinski, p. 38.

should remain concerned with the situation in the region and act as the political arbiter. The ultimate goal of the U.S. policy should be to make sure that no Eurasian challenger emerges, which would be able to dominate Eurasia and present a challenge to America.⁸⁰

Eurasia is the world's largest continent and it is inhabited by approximately 75 percent of the world's population.⁸¹ It includes Western and Eastern European countries (including the former Soviet republics of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova), Turkey, the countries of Persian Gulf and Middle East, the Russian Federation, the Caucasus (including the former Soviet republics of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan), Central Asia (including the former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan), Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, China, Mongolia, North and South Korea, and countries of South Asia.⁸² Eurasia also holds most of the world's physical wealth, both in its enterprises, as well as in the form of natural resources.⁸³

All of the potential political and/or economic rivals to American dominance come from Eurasia.⁸⁴ France, Germany, Russia, China, and India are major and active players on Eurasia's political map. Ukraine, Azerbaijan, South Korea, Turkey, and Iran are critically important from a geopolitical perspective.⁸⁵ Eurasia is the main geopolitical prize for the U.S. Brzezinski believes that America's world dominance is directly linked to how long and how effectively its presence on the continent of Eurasia will be. The duration and the consequences of this presence will be crucial both for America's well-being, as well as to the international peace in general.⁸⁶

In Europe, the word 'Balkans' often brings to mind images of ethnic conflicts and regional competitions by great powers. According to Brzezinski, Eurasia also has its 'Balkans', which are much larger, more populous, and religiously and ethnically more

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. XIII.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 31.

⁸² Based on the map of Eurasia, in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrot, *Russia and The New States of Eurasia: The Politics of Upheaval*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. XII-XIII.

⁸³ Brzezinski, p. 31.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 41.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 30.

heterogeneous. They are politically unstable and they attract the intrusion of more powerful states. The 'Eurasian Balkans' includes Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, and Afghanistan. Turkey and Iran, which are much more politically and economically developed and play an important geopolitical role in the region, could also be added to the list due to their potential vulnerability to ethnic conflicts.⁸⁷

These states are also greatly important from an economic perspective: there is an enormous concentration of gas and oil reserves, as well as other valuable minerals in this region. The U.S. Department of Energy reported that the world demand would increase by more than 50 percent between 1993 and 2015. The Central Asian region and the Caspian Sea basin are said to contain natural gas and oil reserves that exceed the reserves of Kuwait, the Gulf of Mexico, or the North Sea.⁸⁸

Brzezinski argues that at the present time, the U.S. is the world's only superpower and Eurasia is one of the world's major areas of strategic importance.⁸⁹ America's immediate task is to make sure that no state or group of states becomes capable of pushing the U.S. out of Eurasia or decrease its arbitrating role.⁹⁰ Large-scale international investment in the Caspian-Central Asian region would not only promote independence of the new countries, but it would also be useful for democratic Russia. The development of the region's resources would generate wealth, stability, and security, possibly reducing a threat of Balkan-type conflicts.⁹¹

The U.S. Under-Secretary of State Strobe Talbott expressed similar views in his major 1997 speech,

If reform in the nations of the Caucasus and Central Asia continues and ultimately succeeds, it will encourage similar progress in the other newly independent states of the former Soviet Union, including Russia and Ukraine. It will contribute to stability in a strategically vital region that borders China, Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan, and that has growing economic and social ties with Pakistan and India. The consolidation of free societies, at peace with themselves and each other, stretching from the Black Sea to the Pamir mountains, will open up a valuable trade and transport corridor along the Silk Road, between Europe and Asia. (On the other hand)...If economic and political reform ...does not succeed, if internal and cross-border conflicts simmer and flare, the region could become a breeding ground of terrorism, a

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 123-125.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 194.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 198.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 203.

hotbed of religious and political extremism, and a battleground for outright war. It would matter profoundly to the United States if that were to happen in an area that sits on as much as 200 billion barrels of oil.⁹²

By its increased engagement in the region, the U.S. has demonstrated that it is not only interested in the resources, but also in preventing Russian exclusive dominance in the region. The U.S. is not only pursuing its greater geostrategic goals in Eurasia, but is also demonstrating its own growing economic interest in gaining full access to the area that was closed before.⁹³

The U.S. is too far from this part of Eurasia to dominate it, yet it is too powerful not to be involved. Furthermore, all of the states in the region see America's involvement as important to their survival. Russia is too weak to reestablish its former domination or prevent others from doing so; however it is too close and too strong not to be taken into consideration. Russia's exclusion from the region is neither desirable nor possible.⁹⁴ In the language of ancient empires, America's Eurasia geostrategy should be based on the three main imperatives of imperial geostrategy: "to prevent collusion and maintain security dependence among the vassals, to keep tributaries pliant and protected, and to keep the barbarians from coming together."⁹⁵

As Russia and Great Britain competed for dominance in the 19th century's 'Great Game', today, there is competition over oil, natural gas, and the pipeline routes. One American diplomat stated: "This is where we prove we're – Americans – still the big boy on the block. China, Europe, Iran, Russia, and all of our so-called enemies want control of this region."⁹⁶ Thus, geopolitical, geo-economic and geostrategic factors and considerations have placed Central Asia in the center of the international system of states and made it an important element of international security arrangements.⁹⁷

According to Legvold, the stakes for the U.S. in Central Asia are much greater than commonly perceived. He thinks that Central Asia is at the center of a strategically important arena that will determine the character of international relations within both Asia and

⁹² Blank, "The United States and Central Asia," p. 130.

⁹³ Brzezinski, p. 139.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 148-149.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁹⁶ Alaolmolki, p. 36.

⁹⁷ Piacentini, p. 35.

Eurasia. He calls it Inner Asia, which is the territory stretching from Russia's lower Volga region to its far eastern provinces, through the border regions of China, including Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet, across Central Asia, to Afghanistan. The area is rich in energy and other natural resources. At the same time, it has tendencies for interstate conflicts. Thus, there is great potential to have influence over positive or negative outcomes throughout Asia and the post-Soviet space.⁹⁸

Snyder also thinks that series of inter-state wars that could lead to rivalries between states whose leaders still have not figured out who their friends and enemies are might take place in the heart of Eurasia. Such an atmosphere of instability could attract neighboring powers to engage in a new cycle of competition for political influence in the region and access to its potentially rich resources.⁹⁹

Blank believes that the new states of Central Asia deserve peaceful and unimpeded development. He thinks that Russia's attempts to undermine their sovereignty and continue with a neo-colonialist relationship are largely responsible for bringing American power into the region. Blank asks a question: "Can America cheaply forge a lasting, stable, and legitimate order in an area that has never known such an order except by conquest?"¹⁰⁰ He then says that the fact that this question remains unanswered proves that the U.S. aspiration to hegemony in the region is a drive blinded by black gold and dreams of liberal internationalism. He then warns: "But not all that glitters, including oil, is gold. Indeed, it may turn out to be a fool's gold. And Central Asia may once again, as it has been since Alexander the Great, be the place where empires meet the natural limits of their power and where emperors go to die."¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Robert Legvold, "U.S. Policy Toward Kazakhstan," in Robert Legvold ed., *Thinking Strategically: The Major Powers, Kazakhstan, and the Central Asian Nexus*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), pp. 69-70.

⁹⁹ Snyder, p. XVII.

¹⁰⁰ Stephen Blank, "American Grand Strategy and the Transcaspian Region," *World Affairs*, (Vol. 163, Issue No. 2, 2000), p. 68.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

2.3 Conclusion

Central Asia has the largest gold mines in the world. It has huge reserves of copper and other non-ferrous metals and some of the world's largest reserves of oil and gas. For instance, Uzbekistan is the world's eighth largest gold producer and the fourth largest cotton producer. Turkmenistan is potentially the third largest producer of natural gas in the world. According to some sources, Kazakhstan's rich oil and gas reserves could make it 'another Kuwait.'¹⁰² In addition to being rich in petroleum, natural gas and gold, Central Asia is rich in natural resources of strategic importance such as uranium, which is crucial in nuclear weapons production. That is why Central Asia is strategically important from both geopolitical, as well as geo-economic perspectives.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Lubin, "Central Asia: Issues and Challenges for United States Policy," p. 261.

¹⁰³ Xing Guancheng, "China and Central Asia: Toward New Relationship," in Yongjin Zhang and Rouben Azizian, eds., *Ethnic Challenges Beyond Borders: Chinese and Russian Perspectives of the Central Asian Conundrum*, (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1998), p. 38.

CHAPTER 3

CHANGES IN THE U.S. FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD CENTRAL ASIA

Until 1994, the U.S. seemed not to be very interested in Central Asia. Soon after the Central Asian states gained their independence, American specialists predicted that the U.S. involvement in the region would be 'relatively modest' and advised that the U.S. be restrained in its relations with Central Asia. However, the growing conflict between the North and the South, a phenomenon, which might finally take the form of a conflict between the West and the Muslim world, had eventually changed Washington's view of the region.¹⁰⁴

3.1 U.S. Foreign Policy Prior to September 11 Events

One of the major factors for the change in the U.S. foreign policy toward Central Asia had been the dynamism of the Central Asian states, which started quickly establishing formal ties with the world. In order to revive their economies, they intended to build up relations not only with their southern neighbors and the Pacific Rim, but also with the West. By the mid-1990s, the U.S. became concerned that these newly independent states might become involved in a regional arms race, given Kazakhstan's possession of nuclear weapons and strategically important resources such as uranium in others. There was also fear of nuclear instability that could emerge if Iran or Pakistan would gain access to the Central Asian uranium mines.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Konarovsky, p. 255.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 256.

3.1.1 U.S. Policy in the Early 1990s

The U.S. supported the Gorbachev's administration as the legitimate government of the USSR until the declaration of Russia's independence and the August 1991 coup. After these events, the U.S. basically was free to make its decisions as to who legally represented the peoples of the Soviet republics. The U.S. took a careful approach of recognizing the republics' declarations of independence but continuing to require the Soviet government to abide by the terms of international agreements and create conditions for a peaceful devolution of authority.¹⁰⁶

The U.S. Secretary of State James Baker III met with the leaders of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in Almaty on 21 December 1991. During this meeting, the end of the USSR was formally declared and the U.S. intentions and capabilities with this regard were stated. After the meeting, Baker sent the Central Asian presidents a letter stating the major diplomatic points. The U.S. stated that diplomatic recognition was pending upon observance of human rights, adoption of market-oriented economic reforms, and establishment of democratic institutions. Within a short period, the U.S. recognized Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan as independent post-Soviet states.¹⁰⁷ Washington did not establish diplomatic relations with Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan until they would demonstrate their commitment to democratic values, human rights, market-economy and arms control.¹⁰⁸

However, due to several factors, the U.S. had to quickly recognize all of the Central Asian states. First, other states expressed their disagreement with their being singled out. Second, the U.S. sympathized with the Russian population that seemed to be trapped in these new countries. Finally, and most importantly, the U.S. was extremely concerned about the threat posed by Iran and Pakistan to Central Asian states. Thus, by mid-spring 1992, the U.S. had consulates in all of the Central Asian republics, which soon turned into embassies.¹⁰⁹

The next step was the U.S. shift from moral and ideological considerations to security issues. The presence of nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, and strategic bombers in Kazakhstan, as well as nuclear weapons technology in some of the other Central Asian

¹⁰⁶ Gleason, p. 150.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 151.

¹⁰⁸ C.A. Robbins and L. Robinson, "Diplomatic About-Face," *U.S. News & World Report*, (Vol.112, Issue No. 7, 1992), p. 51.

¹⁰⁹ Gleason, p. 151.

states were seen as threats to America's security interests. The U.S. was also concerned that these states or some independent actors within these states could provide the weapons of mass destruction or technology related to these weapons to third parties, especially given political, ethnic and religious links with neighboring states in the West Asia and Middle East. There was also fear that Central Asians could be indoctrinated by revolutionary ideas of terrorist organizations in Middle East or such states as Libya and Iraq.¹¹⁰

In February 1992, during his visit to Central Asia, James Baker stated that the U.S. intended to save the region from the threat of Islamic fundamentalism. He called upon Turkey to take on the role of the West's representative in Central Asia. Since then, media in the U.S., Europe and Turkey has been stressing the Islamic threat.¹¹¹

During Suleyman Demirel's visit to the U.S. in February 1992, one of the main topics was co-ordination of Washington and Ankara's policies towards the 'southern belt' of the former Soviet Union. This issue was included in the priorities of the countries' strategic partnership. The U.S. believed that Ankara would help the U.S. to expand into 'Russia's soft belly' and strengthen its position there. Turkey's role was to prevent restoration of socialism in the region and block Russia's influence if it were to act unfriendly towards the U.S. Turkey was seen as a tool of the American policy in its penetration of the Muslim states of the former Soviet Union. In its turn, Ankara received political, financial, economic, and moral support of the U.S. to carry out these policies.¹¹²

In the same year, the U.S. and Israel started a joint program in Central Asia. Under this program, the U.S. provided \$5 million in aid to the Central Asian states plus Azerbaijan and Armenia for medical and agricultural purposes. In its turn, Israel provided technical expertise and support for the distribution and use of aid. Washington believed that extensive Israeli involvement in the region's economies would help to establish Western, rather than Islamic orientation for the political systems of these states.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Hoogland, p. 115.

¹¹² Alexei Vassiliev, "Turkey and Iran in Transcaucasia and Central Asia," in Anoushiravan Ehteshami, ed., *From the Gulf to Central Asia: Players in the New Great Game*, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1994), p. 133.

¹¹³ Anoushiravan Ehteshami, "New Frontiers: Iran, the GCC and CCARs," in Anoushiravan Ehteshami, ed., *From the Gulf to Central Asia: Players in the New Great Game*, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1994), pp. 96-97.

The USAID became one of the first foreign organizations, which established a permanent office in Central Asia in September 1992. Its first office in Almaty became the USAID Mission for Central Asia with field representation in the other four Central Asian states. The projects provided humanitarian aid to Tajikistan and areas affected by the desiccation of the Aral Sea. At first, most of the U.S. aid was given in the form of technical assistance bringing American consultants and advisers for both governmental and non-governmental organizations in the region. A large number of the U.S. non-governmental organizations carried out projects designed and financed by the USAID.¹¹⁴

Iran's image of the potential center of a hostile Islamic empire was taken very seriously in the U.S. During winter and spring of 1993, America's highly paid national security analysts were developing projections for the year 2000. In their maps of Asia, the entire Central Asian region, Transcaucasia, and the majority of southwest Asia were colored in green. Tehran was represented by a red dot on the green area, symbolizing the capital of the new Islamic megastate. Many highly educated national security specialists believed that unless the West undertook preventive measures to contain Iran, it would spread Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia and Middle East.¹¹⁵

In June 1993, Clinton's administration managed to stabilize the foreign affairs crisis that it inherited and was about to establish its own, distinctive foreign policy. According to Warren Christopher, the most important feature of the 'Clinton Doctrine' was the U.S. intention to become a leader in international affairs. As Christopher said, "We must lead in every respect. When we're protecting our own vital interests, we'll lead unilaterally if we need to."¹¹⁶ The second important feature of this doctrine was maintaining America's economic strength both at home and abroad by supporting American business and trade.¹¹⁷

The Clinton administration was initially restrained toward Central Asia. Although by 1993, the U.S. started talking of becoming a mediator in conflicts involving Russia and former Soviet states in order to counteract the partiality of Russian troops carrying out peacekeeping operations, it did not indicate a desire for direct engagement in Central Asia.¹¹⁸ The policy toward Central Asia was formulated by departments that previously

¹¹⁴ Gleason, p. 153.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Hollis, p. 189.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 191.

handled relations with the Soviet Union and, for this reason the U.S. attention remained focused on Moscow. The U.S. observed the decrease of Russia's formal powers to the limits of the Russian Federation and realized the emergence of a power vacuum in Central Asia.¹¹⁹

However, by the mid-1993 it became clear that neither Turkey nor Iran could replace the remnants of Russian influence in Central Asia. Many politicians in Russia believed in Russia's 'manifest destiny' to project its major influence in the 'near abroad' or the former Soviet states.¹²⁰ Russia was the only country directly affected by events in all of the newly independent states and it continued to cast a large shadow over all of the former Soviet republics. Despite the seeming decline of its influence, Russia still united the post-Soviet territories as no other power. This is why it was important to take into account the Russian factor, which was a driving dynamic within former Soviet Union.¹²¹

During this time, the broad outlines of the U.S. security policy in Central Asia were about containment of instability. In this regard, it seemed as if the U.S. and Russia had common interests. However, since the formulators of Western policy on Central Asia and the one on Russia were the same people, they had to take into consideration policy effects on Russia and its power. As a result, there was a mixed policy of supporting reforms in Russia and at the same time limiting its influence over its neighbors.¹²²

Graham Fuller argued that American interests in the future of Russia were definitely more serious than its interests in Central Asia. This did not necessarily mean that the U.S. would sacrifice the interests of the Central Asian states to the interests of Russia. To a certain extent, American geopolitical interests in Central Asia did not significantly contradict interests of the liberal-democratic Russia. However, he argued, if Russia gave up its membership in the *liberal-democratic* community, then the U.S. interests could become less agreeing with any aspects of Russian interests. As long as basic shared political values

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 192.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Legvold, "Introduction: Great Powers in Central Asia," p. 5.

¹²² Hollis, p. 195.

existed, there would be no serious contradictions between Russian and American interests in Central Asia.¹²³

The Clinton administration, the U.S. and its NATO partners envisaged building of a new security structure for Europe and creating a multilateral umbrella for peacekeeping operations. Within this framework, the Western powers were to promote the norms and rules of international peacekeeping procedures, teach methods of democratic control of defense policy and armed forces to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia.¹²⁴

During NATO summit in Brussels, in January 1994, Bill Clinton initiated a launch of a program called 'Partnership for Peace' (PfP). This program was designed in order to establish new relations with the former Warsaw Pact countries without provoking Russia. The PfP objectives for participating countries include facilitation of national defense planning and budgeting transparency, democratic control of armed forces, capability to contribute to UN and/or Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) operations, development of cooperative military relations with NATO, among others.¹²⁵

Along with Russia, Central and Eastern European states, and most former Soviet states, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have taken part in the PfP. Thus, one can say that NATO penetrated both Russia and Central Asia and reached China's frontiers at the northwest and northeast. Although it is argued that China does not perceive participation of Central Asian states in NATO's PfP as unfriendly to China, it could become concerned about the possible long-term effects of such cooperation on China's security.¹²⁶

European experts also believe that countries of the Caspian region should be seen within the context of NATO interests. In 1997, the Council of Euro-Atlantic Partnership (CEAP) was formed. The task of this institution was to prepare NATO and the Caspian states to work together in crisis situations. NATO planned to send a special mission to the Caspian region that would strengthen the organization's influence in shaping both political and military decisions.¹²⁷

¹²³ Graham E. Fuller, "Russia and Central Asia: Federation or Fault Line?" in Michael Mandelbaum, ed., *Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and the World*, (Washington, D.C.: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1993), pp. 126-127.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Guancheng, "Security Issues in China's Relations with Central Asian States," pp. 216-217.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Murat Laumulin, "Central Asia and the European Union," in Boris Rumer, ed., *Central Asia: A Gathering Storm?* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 2002), p. 214.

By mid-1994, the U.S. had formulated its goals in the region, which now was considered to be of great strategic importance to the U.S. Its unique geographical location, as a bridge connecting the Far and the Near East, Russia and the Muslim south, and its great natural and human resources, were viewed as important qualities. The main U.S. goal for Central Asia became the development of market democracy there by encouraging American trade and investments. This was done in order not to lose new opportunities in the global competition with other Western, Pacific and Muslim countries.¹²⁸

As Acting Secretary Talbott in his address at the U.S.-Central Asia Business Conference stated:

Central Asia is a gateway to three regions that are of great strategic importance to the United States: To the east lie China and the rest of Asia; to the south lie Iran, Afghanistan, and the Islamic world; to the west and north lie Russia and Europe. Moreover, in its own right, Central Asia is a region of vast natural and human resources offering the potential for the prosperity of its own people and benefits for American entrepreneurs with the foresight to do business there...The Administration wants to be sure that American business is competitive in Central Asia – that we don't lose in the global competition with Japan, Germany, South Korea, the People's Republic of China, Turkey, Pakistan, and Iran – all of whom have begun serious efforts to develop business ties to the region.¹²⁹

In 1994, the U.S. established the Central Asian-American Enterprise Fund that would provide loans and technical expertise promoting private sector growth in Central Asian countries.¹³⁰ Martha Brill Olcott argued that by supporting democracy and free enterprise, the U.S. should concentrate its efforts on the educated strata in order to prevent emergence of anti-American feelings. Such policy would make sure that young people, scholars, and cultural strata of the population would embrace American values. She also emphasized that the U.S. should help the new states to become truly independent because this would serve America's interests in Central Asia the best.¹³¹

By the mid-1990s, the U.S. became the main investor in Central Asia. American companies took control over the most promising enterprises, as well as a large part of the budget revenues (as it is the case in Kazakhstan). Kyrgyzstan became completely dependent on the International Monetary Fund (IMF). It is now unable to develop independently. In

¹²⁸ Konarovsky, pp. 255-256.

¹²⁹ Strobe Talbott, "Promoting Democracy and Prosperity in Central Asia," *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, (Vol. 5, Issue No. 19, 1994), p. 280.

¹³⁰ Muriel Atkin, "Tajikistan," *Country Studies*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), p. 262.

¹³¹ Syroezhkin, p. 173.

October 1999, Central Asian states were included in the zone of the U.S. Central Command.¹³²

3.1.2 U.S. Policy in the Late 1990s

Initially, Central Asia seemed not so important in terms of America's fundamental interests, so the U.S. adopted a cautious approach of wait-and-see policy. Being involved in a number of other global problems, the U.S. did not want to find itself in a potentially explosive situation with Russia, China, and threats presented by Islamic extremism. The U.S. promoted friendly relations with the Central Asian states, supported various NGOs, funded projects through the USAID, and pretended not to see the mismanagement of funds. It criticized the regimes but did not take concrete measures to improve the situation.¹³³

However, the U.S. could not ignore the increasing competition between China and Russia for dominance in Central Asia. While it was clear that Russia did not have necessary economic and military capabilities to re-establish itself in the region, it was not the case with China. For this reason, the U.S. either had to dominate the region or accept the possibility of Chinese hegemony in Central Asia.¹³⁴

Ambassador Stephen Sestanovich, a special advisor to the U.S. secretary of state on the former Soviet republics, in his address to the members of the Congress on March 17, 1999, said that "the cornerstone of American policy in Central Asia is securing the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of the states."¹³⁵ In order to advance these objectives, the U.S. diplomacy focused on four main issues:

1. the formation of democratic political institutions, as they are the long-term guarantors of stability and prosperity;
2. promotion of market economic reform;
3. cooperation and greater integration of these countries into the Euro-Atlantic and international communities;
4. advancement of responsible security policies, including weapons nonproliferation, antiterrorism, and drug trafficking.¹³⁶

¹³² Ibid., p. 174.

¹³³ Rumer, "The Search for Stability in Central Asia," p. 57.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Alaolmolki, p. 10.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

According to Ambassador Sestanovich, developing democracy in the region was one of the most difficult challenges. He also pointed out: “Throughout Central Asia, leaders are on edge about instability in Afghanistan and Tajikistan. They fear an expansion of Iranian influence and the rise of violent extremism in their countries. They are wary of reliance on Russia.”¹³⁷ Sestanovich concluded by saying “much work remains before we can safely leave the legacy of the Soviet Union behind us in Central Asia.”¹³⁸

By the end of 1990s, the U.S. had achieved a certain degree of influence and it could use all possible economic and political leverage to put pressure on a state if there were threat to its national interests. Russia’s growing involvement in Central Asia was against the U.S. interests. So, as soon as the Clinton administration felt that almost a decade of efforts to bring Central Asian states into the U.S. orbit could be wasted, it began to put strong political pressure on the regimes in these states. The U.S. press started publishing highly critical materials about corruption. Furthermore, the head of the CIA George Tenet and the head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation Louis Freech, as well as Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, traveled to Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. They tried to find out how the Central Asian leaders felt about strengthening ties with Russia, which created concern for the U.S. The visit made by such high-ranking officials demonstrated Washington’s potential influence in case any of these countries decided to ignore American strategic interests in the region.¹³⁹

According to Blank, the U.S. was strongly against Russian efforts to gain monopoly or exclusive sphere of influence over politics, economies, conflict resolution, military and energy issues in Central Asia (and the Caucasus). However, the official U.S. position was that it simply did not want any monopoly in Central Asia and that it did not view the region as an area of its competition with Russia.¹⁴⁰

Nevertheless, Blank believes that there is an ‘arc or crisis’ stretching from the Balkans to China and even though Russia’s post-cold war military capabilities are not as

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 11.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Syroezhkin, p. 191.

¹⁴⁰ Blank, “The United States and Central Asia,” p. 133.

they used to be, the assessment made by Richard Betts in the late 1980s is still useful. There are great dangers in the areas where:

- 1) the potential for serious instability is high;
- 2) both superpowers perceive as vital interests;
- 3) neither recognizes that the other's perceived interest or commitment is as great as its own;
- 4) both have the capability to inject conventional forces; and
- 5) neither has willing proxies of settling the situation.¹⁴¹

Roy Allison argued that while the U.S. was much less affected by non-traditional sources of threat, such as economic and social problems, in the region, it lacked the different ties between Russia and the Central Asian republics that derived from the Soviet period. These included continued infrastructural and cultural connections.¹⁴²

Along the lines of its policy in other parts of the world, the U.S. officially promoted basic values of democratization, market economic development and human rights in Central Asia. Although the Central Asian leaders had won America's favor by supporting Central Asian policies of diversification of trade, energy and security policies away from Moscow-focused structures, the U.S. policy makers had a difficult time to identify core security interests in common with them. While drugs and arms trafficking, arms proliferation and terrorism became increasingly present in bilateral discussions between the U.S. and the Central Asian states, American interests in the region were more defined by energy and trade, and by the U.S. policy towards regional powers such as Iran and Russia, than by efforts to bring the Central Asian states behind a common agenda of security issues.¹⁴³

Between the late 1990s and 2001, several changes took place, which altered the situation in Central Asia and the world as a whole. First, Russia decided to pursue assertive politics, which resulted in confrontation between Russia and the U.S., in Central Asia as well. The defense of Russian national interests became priority.¹⁴⁴

Second, NATO's bombing in Yugoslavia demonstrated America's foreign policy ambitions and changed international security system that had emerged after World War II.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 143.

¹⁴² Roy Allison, "Conclusion: Central Asian Security in the Regional and International Context," in Roy Allison and Lena Jonson, eds., *Central Asian Security: The New International Context*, (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs and Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), p. 249.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Syroezhkin, p. 187.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

The U.S. did have a moral interest in stopping genocide and ethnic cleansing in Europe. However, American realist theorists argued that the U.S. did not have ‘national interest’ at stake in the Balkans. Just like during the Cold war, America’s involvement in the Balkans was based on the goal to preserve ‘the West’.¹⁴⁶ It showed that multilateral action could not be successful without an important element of American unilateralism and America’s willingness to use its enormous power to dominate war and diplomacy when its weaker allies are doubtful.¹⁴⁷

Third, Anti-American sentiment arose throughout the world, including some of Washington’s European allies. Fourth, Clinton administration reevaluated its foreign policy, including its policy in Central Asia. Fifth, George W. Bush brought more pragmatic policy and a new set of foreign policy objectives. Finally, the Central Asian states demonstrated a tendency to shift from democracy to authoritarianism and the U.S. attempted to make them to observe democratic norms. The region faced a growing threat from international terrorism, drug trafficking, intensified corruption, as well as possible refugee problem. The important aspect here was that the Central Asian states could not deal with these problems on their own.¹⁴⁸

3.2 The Impact of September 11 Events on the U.S.-Central Asian Relations

September 11 events radically changed the situation in Central Asia and led to an increased military involvement in all Central Asian states, with an exception of Turkmenistan, which due to its status of neutrality since 1992, remained unaffected.¹⁴⁹ Some political analysts believe that the current struggle for leadership in the region represents the new ‘Great Game’ in Central Asia between Russia and the U.S. and compare it with the struggle for influence between Russian and British empires that took place in this region in the 19th century.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Kagan, p. 50.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁴⁸ Syroezhkin, p. 187.

¹⁴⁹ Viktor Korgun, “Afghanistan on the Threshold of Peace,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus Journal of Social and Political Studies*, (Sweden: Information and Analytical Center, No. 1, 2002), p. 10.

¹⁵⁰ Mansur Rakhmani, “Gosudarstva Centralnoi Azii: na chashe vesov vozmozhnosti i vyzovy,” *Centralnaya Azia i Kavkaz: zhurnal sotsialnyh i politicheskikh issledovaniy*, (Sweden: Information Analytical Center, No. 2, 2003), p. 15.

After September 11, 2001, Central Asia became the center of attention for the world's media. Before September 11, there was not much information regarding Central Asia's geography, peoples, and conflicts. Very quickly these issues became the subject of various publications and television programs. As Eugene Rumer was quoted:

The world once again cares about the region. This is not just because Central Asia has nuclear weapons left over from the Soviet Union, as it did in the early 1990s, or because it has oil and gas, as it did in the mid-1990s, or because it has become a place about which a handful of human rights non-governmental organizations have made a lot of noise, as it did in the late 1990s. The world cares – or at least seems to care – about Central Asia for two reasons: the place matters because of its geography – next door to Afghanistan and Pakistan, which have become the hottest 'stans' of them all, and because politicians and bureaucrats have come to recognize after September 11 that nasty places far away cannot be left to their own devices indefinitely.¹⁵¹

According to Boris Rumer, after the tragic events, the geopolitical situation in the region has changed significantly. The U.S., Russia and China's interest and involvement in the region increased. Prior to September 11, the U.S. saw the Central Asian states at the periphery of American geostrategic interest. However, since fall 2001, the U.S. have come to dominate the region as the main donor and security manager.¹⁵²

There is a possibility that the U.S. feared the domino effect in Central Asia under which the existing fragile regimes in the region would collapse in case of Taliban's total victory. This could lead to even stronger authoritarian and radical tendencies among the current ruling elites in the Central Asian states, which would create chaos due to the proximity of the Afghan conflict. There was also fear that the Afghan conflict would spill over into Central Asia. Furthermore, the domino effect would provide China, Iran, and Russia with an opportunity to take responsibility for restoring order in the region into their hands.¹⁵³

September 11 events provided the U.S. policy with a firm belief, which previously had been missing. The Bush administration declared Central Asia's new geopolitical significance. Uzbekistan and Tajikistan were announced as 'front-line states' in the war on terrorism, which became the supreme concern of the U.S. foreign policy. The war in Afghanistan and the battle against global terrorism turned Central Asia into both a vital strategic resource and a new object of concern. It became a vital strategic resource because

¹⁵¹ Rumer, "Preface," p. X.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. XI.

¹⁵³ Akimbekov, p. 90.

the U.S. and its allies needed air bases. It became a new object of concern because the region was sensitive to disorder given the proximity of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran. The U.S. did not just secure staging facilities in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, but also promised to ensure security in Central Asia from this time on.¹⁵⁴

3.3 Potential Challenges for Greater U.S. Involvement in Central Asia

In the past few years, Central Asia has become a place where tyrants and ruthless dictators rule. It is also suffering from severe economic underdevelopment. The popularity of religious radicalism is, hence, reported to be growing and this attracts much of the U.S. attention in the context of America's global war on terrorism. During the Cold War era, 'defeating communism at any cost' was the goal of many U.S. foreign policy decisions. At the present time, the Bush administration demonstrates a similar determination to defeat terrorism.¹⁵⁵

Is the U.S. going in the direction of repeating some of the mistakes of the past and supporting dictators to serve its agenda? Ehsan Ahrari says that in order to avoid the errors of the past, the U. S. would have to develop a wide-ranging policy to win the global war on terrorism by encouraging the development of both political and economic pluralism in all Central Asian countries. Otherwise, Central Asia might turn into a fertile ground for transnational terrorism, political instability and chaos.¹⁵⁶

Many observers in and outside of Central Asia believe that the five newly independent states do not have the capability to provide for their own security and stability. The region is in dire need for external stabilizing presence and economic support. The economic assistance to the Central Asian region is the major instrument in the U.S. foreign policy arsenal. Due to the financial constraints of the U.S. foreign aid programs, American assistance to the region is likely to be limited. But Central Asia's underdeveloped economy, weak socioeconomic infrastructure, and poverty could benefit significantly even if investments are limited.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Legvold, "U.S. Policy Toward Kazakhstan," pp. 67-68.

¹⁵⁵ Ahrari, p. 157.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Eugene B. Rumer, "Russia and Central Asia After the Soviet Union," in Jed C. Snyder, ed., *After Empire: The Emerging Geopolitics of Central Asia*, (Honolulu, Hawaii: University Press of the Pacific, 1995), pp. 63-65.

Boris Rumer thinks that there is no need for the U.S. to become a 'hegemon' in Central Asia and becoming responsible for its stability and economic growth. It would be more reasonable to cooperate with Russia to assist socio-economic development in the region and stop the spread of radical Islam. While Russia does not have enough resources to help the Central Asian states economically and cannot provide credits and loans, it plays an important role in some aspects of their existence. For example, Russia provides these states with goods and fuel at prices below the market-level. The major share of their trade with the West is carried out by the means of Russian transport links and at favorable tariffs. The Central Asian states would also be more comfortable if they could maintain ties with Russia, while accepting stronger U.S. presence. It would be more practical for the U.S. to establish leadership in Central Asia in partnership with Russia.¹⁵⁸

The U.S. policy of war on terrorism and the fact that the new U.S. military bases started mushrooming across Central Asia suggest that September 11 events caused the U.S. to accept the new challenge. With the new Central Asian commitments the number of overseas U.S. military bases around the world has gone well beyond 200. It is not clear in what new forms and new commitments the war on terrorism will be fought.¹⁵⁹ Martin Walker thinks that the new Central Asian bases for the Afghan war may become temporary utilities, but they may also become the means of a long-term and more intrusive occupation.¹⁶⁰

The Central Asian region has become important to the Bush administration for obvious reasons. It offers potential oil and gas sources in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. It offers homes for soldiers assigned to Afghanistan. It could also turn into a sphere of influence in the war against Islamic extremism. Each Central Asian state has explicitly declared religious terrorism as its top concern.¹⁶¹

However, there are several potential complications that the U.S. might encounter in its engagement in Central Asia. First, if the U.S. gets deeply involved with the Central Asian affairs, then there is risk that it might be identified with the local corrupt and repressive

¹⁵⁸ Rumer, "The Search for Stability in Central Asia," p. 62.

¹⁵⁹ Martin Walker, "America's Virtual Empire," *World Policy Journal*, (Vol. 19, Issue No. 2, 2002), p. 20.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Benjamin T. Brake, "American Attitude on Bases Threatens Central Asian Peace," Accessed November 11, 2003 at <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav102303.shtml>

regimes. Second, by taking the responsibility of guaranteeing the regional stability, in effect, of the political *status quo*, the U.S. might spark anti-American sentiment and aggravate rather than alleviate Islamic radicalism, not only in Central Asia but throughout the Islamic world. Third, American soldiers and diplomats, who embody the U.S. presence, might become targets of those who find that presence offensive. Fourth, the U.S. military establishment, which is already complaining of being overstretched and over-worked will have to do even more. The problem will be people, not money. A growing size of the empire will require even more soldiers. Fifth, an administration engaged in Central Asia will also face demands from its citizens to ‘do something’ on behalf of religious freedom or the environment. The disregard of these demands will cause their displeasure expressed at the polls. However, making concession to their concerns would mean being drawn further into the whirlpool of the Central Asian affairs than actual U.S. interests could possibly justify.¹⁶²

Furthermore, Russia will perceive any long-term U.S. presence in Central Asia as yet another American intrusion into its sphere of influence. One has to keep in mind that resentful Russia could present a source of potential threat and diplomatic enervation. China will also translate the U.S. military presence in the region as evidence that the U.S. is engaged in a purposeful effort to encircle China.¹⁶³

3.4 Conclusion

If the U.S. decides to play the role of the security manager in the region, it would become a very expensive undertaking. It would have to provide subsidies for the declining economies and support authoritarian regimes, which have ruled the Central Asian states since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Some do not believe that America has serious and long-term interests in Central Asia. For example, former Assistant Secretary of State Morton Abramowitz said that the U.S. would not need Uzbekistan in just six months. However, it seems that for the next several years the U.S. will maintain strong presence in the region. First, the situation in Afghanistan will most likely remain unstable for quite some time. Second, Washington’s foreign policy formulators could be tempted by the idea of being present in China’s backyard.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Andrew J. Bacevich, “Steppes to Empire,” *National Interest*, (Issue No. 68, 2002), p. 39.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Rumer, “Preface,” p. XI.

The U.S. faces both advantages and disadvantages of dominating Central Asia. The advantages would mean short-term stability, access to energy resources, and being close to Afghanistan. However, there are also disadvantages. The U.S. support to local regimes could promote stability but it is only a matter of time when the problems would start to surface. Economic development in Central Asia would only become possible if local institutions are formed.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Rumer, "The Search for Stability in Central Asia," p. 62.

CHAPTER 4

THE RECEPTIVITY OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN STATES TOWARD INCREASED AMERICAN PRESENCE IN THE REGION

The foreign policy basis in all of the Central Asian states is multilateralism, which means that they do not exclude any country from their foreign policy relations. Neither Iran nor Turkey have been able to make serious breakthroughs. Russia's influence seems to be in decline. The major strategic issues in the region are energy and the competition for different pipeline routes. In order to be able to come out of their geographical isolation and to free themselves from the Russian sphere of influence, the Central Asian states have been looking to Western countries, especially the U.S., both in order to establish new transportation routes, as well as to guarantee old ones.¹⁶⁶

The main expansion of influence in Central Asia has probably been made by the Americans. It has been primarily based on oil and gas interests. Such companies as Chevron and Unocal act as political players and talk with presidents of the Central Asian states on one-to-one basis. It is likely that the oil companies will end up playing an increasingly important role in the region. The U.S. endorsement of the trans-Caspian Baku-Ceyhan pipeline in November 1997 serves as an indication of the U.S. strategic plan to bypass both Russia and Iran.¹⁶⁷

The September 11 events brought the U.S. and Central Asia much more closer. The U.S., which is one of the world's richest and most powerful countries, whose military and economic reach seems to know no limits, began to express serious concern over developments in one of the world's most remote and strategically marginal places.

¹⁶⁶ Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations*, (New York: New York University Press, 2000), p. 190.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Certainly, America's heightened interest is understandable. The U.S. is afraid that if the Central Asian countries follow the wrong path, they might willingly or unwillingly provide refuge to the kinds of terrorists that attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.¹⁶⁸

4.1 The U.S.-Central Asian Relations Prior to September 11 Events

There have been several serious aims in the U.S. policy towards Central Asia. The political aim was to support political stability and contain spread of Islamic fundamentalism. The strategic aim was to dismantle Central Asia's nuclear capabilities, curtail the growth of the military and industrial complex, especially in Kazakhstan, prevent expansion of Iranian and Chinese influence, and criticize Russia's 'imperial policy' towards the region. The economic aim was to support Western oil companies and help the Central Asian countries in their transition to market economy. Other policy issues also included such global problems as drug trafficking and ecological deterioration.¹⁶⁹

4.1.1 The U.S.-Kazakh Relations

The U.S. representation was established on 3 February 1992. Shortly afterwards, the U.S. embassy was opened in Almaty.¹⁷⁰ From the very beginning the U.S. had several goals with regards to Kazakhstan. First, it wanted to eliminate all Soviet weapons of mass destruction from the territory of Kazakhstan. Second, it was very interested in developing Kazakhstan's hydrocarbon resources, which were very valuable for the U.S. corporations. Third, the U.S. wanted to export the country's resources over routes, which were more suitable to Washington.¹⁷¹

Kazakhstan's becoming a non-nuclear state, its strict adherence to IMF's prescription for the transition to market economy, approved by Washington, as well as relative liberalism of the country's regime in comparison to authoritarian regimes of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, made the relations between the two countries especially warm. The U.S. assigned Kazakhstan the key role in Central Asia and sent one of its best

¹⁶⁸ Charles William Maynes, "America Discovers Central Asia," *Foreign Affairs*, (Vol. 82, Issue No. 2, 2003), p. 120.

¹⁶⁹ Lounev and Shirokov, p. 231.

¹⁷⁰ Gleason, p. 151.

¹⁷¹ Rumer, "The Search for Stability in Central Asia," pp. 43-45.

diplomats, William Courtney, to serve as ambassador. In its turn, Kazakhstan was attracted by promises of political and financial assistance from Washington.¹⁷²

On 18 May 1992, Kazakhstan's government signed an agreement with the Chevron Corporation. This agreement provided for a fifty-fifty partnership in developing one of the largest oil fields in the world, the Tengiz oil field, which is about as rich as Prudhoe Bay in Alaska. It became the property of the joint-venture Tengizchevroil company that was established in January 1993. Chevron became the first large Western oil company to start a project in Central Asia. In 1999, the Tengiz field produced 215,000 barrels per day and is expected to reach 700,000 barrels a day. Chevron agreed to invest \$750 million during the first three years and \$10 billion in the course of the twenty-five-year life of the agreement. Kazakhstan agreed to invest the same amount.¹⁷³

Since Russia was in control of Kazakhstan's both outgoing and incoming oil, it clearly had a dominating role in this regard. Chevron thus faced a challenge of exporting oil to the consumer. On the other hand, the White House policy of limiting the pipeline route options has been a major obstacle to the transportation of the regional resources. As of mid-1998, the only pipeline to the Western market went through Russia and it sets a limit on Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan's access to the market.¹⁷⁴ The Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC), which carries oil from the Tengiz field to the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiisk, was completed in 2003.¹⁷⁵ Russia does not want to give away its role of arbiter for the Caspian and Central Asian energy flows to the U.S. Tengiz-Novorossiisk pipeline serves as the major means that Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan have to deliver their oil to market and Russia plans to keep it that way.¹⁷⁶

Another alternative is to have pipelines go through Iran, which is target of the U.S. sanctions and investment limitations. The official position of the U.S. is to encourage cooperation in the region, however it does not want Iran to benefit from oil. The other two possibilities include war-torn Afghanistan and the 'East route' through China.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Alaolmolki, p. 30.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 30-31, 34.

¹⁷⁵ Kort, p. 92.

¹⁷⁶ Legvold, "Introduction: Great Powers in Central Asia," p. 26.

¹⁷⁷ Alaolmolki, p. 36.

The White House's lobby on a pipeline route from Baku via Georgia to the Turkish port of Ceyhan and on to Mediterranean was successful. On 18 November 1999, the presidents of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey signed agreements creating a legal framework for the construction and operation of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline. Oil companies argued that it was too expensive and the route across Georgia to the Black Sea would cost more than half. Another group of American oil, gas, and pipeline company executives thought that the best way would be a pipeline through Iran. However, they did not have a choice but to wait that the sanctions against Iran would be lifted. The Baku-Ceyhan project would cost less if it were to go through Iran. However, the Clinton administration wanted to limit dependence on Russia and undermine Iran's competition for an alternative route.¹⁷⁸

The construction work started in September 2002. The pipeline will be 1,754-km long and run from the western Caspian Sea coast through Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey to the Turkish port of Ceyhan on the Mediterranean coast. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline is expected to cost \$2.9 billion and be completed in 2008.¹⁷⁹

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan became one of the four new nuclear powers on the territory of the former USSR. On 24 October 1993, President Nazarbaev told the former U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher that Kazakhstan would dismantle the nuclear weapons. He requested \$140 million of aid and a full signing ceremony with President Clinton. President Nazarbaev went for an official visit to the U.S. on 13 February 1994. At that time, the White House announced the decision to increase the U.S. aid to Kazakhstan from \$91 million to more than \$311 million. Furthermore, President Clinton reaffirmed an earlier promise to provide \$85 million to cover the dismantling of the nuclear weapons. President Nazarbaev also met with the U.S. economic and financial officials. Kazakhstan's delegation also expressed its security concern with regards to the developments on the Tajik-Afghan border, which create a "real threat to the entire Central Asian region."¹⁸⁰

In February 1994, it joined the Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear state and handed to Russia the last four of the 40 heavy bombers. In March 1994, Kazakhstan handed the U.S. more than half-a-ton highly enriched weapon-grade uranium. In May 1995,

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 36-38.

¹⁷⁹ Kort, p. 92.

¹⁸⁰ Alaolmolki, p. 69.

Kazakhstan transferred to Russia all of the nuclear warheads. On 24 May Kazakhstan declared that all nuclear weapons had been either handed to Russia or destroyed.¹⁸¹

In the late 1990s, the relations between the two countries cooled down due to Kazakhstan's poor economic performance, skepticism regarding the real value of unexplored hydrocarbon reserves, and, most importantly, failure of liberalization process. Intervention of Kazakhstan's executive branch and falsification of voting returns in the October 1999 parliamentary elections and January 1999 presidential elections also had a negative impact on the U.S.-Kazakh relations. Another serious damage to the bilateral relations was done in the summer of 1999, when Kazakhstan sold MiG-21s to North Korea for eight million dollars and became subject to the U.S. sanctions. However, Kazakhstan was hopeful to improve its status in Washington's eyes. During the European summit meeting in Istanbul in November 1999, President Nazarbaev signed an agreement along with presidents of Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan to construct a pipeline through Turkey. This was a sign that Kazakhstan chose the U.S. over Russia and thus deserved gratitude of the U.S. administration.¹⁸²

During a press conference in Almaty on 7 December 1999, the U.S. Ambassador, Richard Jones, described Kazakh-American relations as 'very important' and that "such issues as arms trade, democratic reforms and economic freedom in Kazakhstan had to be taken into account by the Kazakh politicians."¹⁸³ Ambassador Jones also informed that the U.S. military officials and the Kazakh defense minister signed a program of the U.S.-Kazakh military cooperation for 2000. Under this agreement, a joint peace keeping military maneuvers 'Centrazbat-2000 were to take place in Kazakhstan in 2000.¹⁸⁴

4.1.2 The U.S.-Uzbek Relations

On 25 December 1991, the U.S. recognized Uzbekistan's independence and in March 1992 established diplomatic relations. Despite the fact that Uzbekistan and the U.S. had signed a number of treaties, protocols, and agreements regarding cultural and trade issues, bilateral relations did not reach positive developments until 1995. At first, the Uzbek

¹⁸¹ Guancheng, "Security Issues in China's Relations with Central Asian States," pp. 206-207.

¹⁸² Rumer, "The Search for Stability in Central Asia," pp. 43-45.

¹⁸³ Alaolmolki, p. 69.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

government was very suspicious of the U.S. foreign policy and interests towards both Uzbekistan and Central Asia as a whole. In September 1993, during the U.S. special Ambassador for the CIS, Strobe Talbott's visit to Uzbekistan, President Karimov declared that Washington should mind its own business and let the people in the region handle things in the fashion that they thought was appropriate to them.¹⁸⁵

The U.S. administration had several objectives with regards to Uzbekistan. It was determined to increase its influence over the extraction and transportation of Central Asia's natural resources and defend the interests of American companies investing in the region. It wanted to contain the spread of radical Islam to help contain Iran. It also wanted to draw Uzbekistan into the Western security and economic system, and foster democracy and human rights. Finally, the U.S. believed that Uzbekistan could become a strategic regional core capable to act as a regional bulwark against Russia and Iran.¹⁸⁶

The U.S. granted Uzbekistan the most-favored-nation trade status in 1993 and it went into effect in 1994. Uzbekistan was slow to undertake fundamental economic reforms. For this reason, the U.S. assistance was mainly focused on programs supporting building of democratic institutions and market reform.¹⁸⁷

During his meeting with Vice-President Al Gore in Washington in October 1995, President Karimov emphasized his readiness to increase his cooperation with the U.S. There were several reasons behind this decision. First, Russia started to insist on playing a bigger role in Uzbekistan and the region. Second, the ultra-nationalists and former communists started to gain leverage in the Russian parliament. Third, military came to play an increasingly important role in determining Russia's policy in the near abroad and it seemed serious about re-establishing Russia's control in the former Soviet territories. Fourth, Uzbekistan desperately needed Western aid in order to overcome its economic problems. Fifth, Uzbekistan wanted to have American support in settling the Afghanistan and Tajikistan problems.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Resul Yalcin, *The Rebirth of Uzbekistan: Politics, Economy and Society in the Post-Soviet Era*, (Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing, Ltd., 2002), p. 284.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Nancy Lubin, "Uzbekistan," *Country Studies*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), p. 460.

¹⁸⁸ Yalcin, p. 285.

As a result of this meeting, during his visit to Washington in June 1996, President Karimov signed several agreements on economic cooperation between Uzbekistan and the U.S. The U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) agreed to provide \$400 million in credits to a joint venture between Uzbekneftgaz and the Enron Oil and Gas Company to develop natural gas deposits in Uzbekistan. The OPIC also agreed to provide assistance to Uzbekneftgaz to produce lubricants under a license from Texaco. The U.S. Trade and Development Agency granted \$1 million loan to conduct a feasibility study for the joint production of civil aircraft in Tashkent. The Secretary of Defense William Perry described Uzbekistan as an ‘important strategic partner of the United States’.¹⁸⁹ President Karimov also opened the new Uzbek Embassy in Washington during this visit. These steps certainly led to the improvement of the Uzbek-U.S. relations and by late 1997 approximately 199 American companies were doing business in the republic.¹⁹⁰

As it has been mentioned earlier, some U.S. defense officials had high regards for Uzbekistan’s geostrategic importance saying that it could become the Central Asian link in a southern chain of the former Soviet republic brought together to contain Russia. The economic and political importance of the region for the U.S. is great. The emerging commercial opportunities in the whole Central Asia could be beneficial to the U.S. and Uzbekistan could play a leading role in these relations.¹⁹¹

The World Bank provided Uzbekistan with a loan in the amount of \$28 million to continue the privatization process. The International Finance Corporation provided \$60 million in credits for agricultural purposes. The country also signed an agreement with Elf-Aquitaine of France and Chevron of the U.S. for the development of its oil fields.¹⁹²

President Karimov decided to give relations with the U.S. top priority and establish close ties with NATO. In 1999, Uzbekistan became a member of the pro-Washington GUUAM bloc, which is a regional association consisting of Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova. It also opened a mission in NATO headquarters and supported the U.S. in all of its actions, including the Kosovo operation and the war in Afghanistan. In addition to supporting American policy in the Middle East, Uzbekistan has also developed

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p. 286.

¹⁹² Alaolmolki, p. 82.

close political and economic relations with Israel. This particular policy has not been welcomed in many Muslim states.¹⁹³

If Kazakhstan was Washington's key state in Central Asia in early 1990s, then starting from 1997, Uzbekistan became its favorite. Both the U.S. and its Western partners have been reluctant to pay attention to the absence of democracy in Uzbekistan, pretended to believe its attempts to liberalize the regime, and assigned it a status of the main strategic partner for pursuing American interests the region.¹⁹⁴

The U.S. views Uzbekistan as an emerging regional power in Central Asia due to its large population, abundant resources, and political prominence. The U.S. wants Uzbekistan to play a stabilizing and responsible role in the region. Ambassador Sestanovich stated that the U.S. has a great interest in Uzbekistan and wants it to carry out democratic and economic reforms, promote human rights and play a 'key' cooperative and stabilizing role in strengthening security and independence of the Central Asian countries. The U.S. plans to develop military cooperation in order to "orient Uzbekistan's sizable military toward cooperation with NATO, the U.S., and Uzbekistan's own neighbors," and to support "U.S. global and security objectives."¹⁹⁵ Between 1992-1999, the U.S. provided Uzbekistan with a total of \$173.84 million in humanitarian and technical assistance.¹⁹⁶

4.1.3 The U.S.-Turkmen Relations

Regardless of official discouragement of economic activity due to human rights violations in Turkmenistan, American businessmen were attracted by the republic's stability. In the early 1990s, the U.S. companies became interested in oil and gas industry and invested in a number of major projects. Former U.S. Secretaries of State Alexander Haig and James Baker provided consultative aid in investment agreements.¹⁹⁷ Alexander Haig

¹⁹³ Rumer, "The Search for Stability in Central Asia," p. 45.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ James P. Nichol, "Uzbekistan: Current Developments and U.S. Interests," in A. J. Armanini, ed., *Politics and Economics of Central Asia*, (New York: Novinka Books, 2002), pp. 43-44.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Larry Clark, Michael Thurman and David Tyson, "Turkmenistan," *Country Studies*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), p. 346.

acted as consultant to President Niyazov and played an important role in Turkmenistan's gaining the most-favored-nation status in 1993.¹⁹⁸

In September 1992, the U.S. Senator Alan Cranston met with President Niyazov in Turkmenistan. During this meeting, President Niyazov told Senator Cranston that there was no political opposition to the government, and those opponents that did exist did not have real influence in the country. Senator Cranston stated that two key elements in establishing relations between the U.S. and Turkmenistan were development of a legal basis for opposition parties and attraction of foreign investment. He emphasized that these two elements were closely connected because without demonstrating its commitment to pluralism, Turkmenistan could not hope to attract the U.S. investment into the country.¹⁹⁹

The U.S. delayed recognition of Turkmenistan's independence until February 1992 because of the country's human right policy. Around that time, the U.S. became worried about Iran's engagement in Central Asia and decided to reevaluate its policy. In 1993, the U.S.-Turkmenistan relations declined due to the arrest of four human rights activists and the U.S. cut trade credits to Turkmenistan.²⁰⁰ President Niyazov was not afforded a meeting with President Clinton during his visit to Washington in March 1993 due to Turkmenistan's poor human rights record.²⁰¹

Many American corporations want to see the sanctions against Iran lifted. This would allow for more resources of Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan to be transported via Iran, which is the most direct and cheapest route. On 26 July 1997, the U.S. decided not to oppose to the \$1.6 billion natural gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Europe, via Iran and Turkey. The White House decided not to challenge the Western European countries, which were interested in investing in Iran and Central Asia. The U.S. Export-Import Bank provided a \$96 million loan to Turkmenistan in order to modernize its pipelines.²⁰²

In July 1997, Turkmenistan and Pakistan's officials and representatives of Unocal and Saudi Arabia's Delta Oil signed an agreement to build a pipeline from Turkmenistan to

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 361.

¹⁹⁹ Gleason, p. 117.

²⁰⁰ Clark, Thurman and Tyson, p. 361.

²⁰¹ Hollis, p. 194.

²⁰² Alaolmolki, p. 103.

Pakistan through Afghanistan. The project would cost between \$2 billion and \$2.7 billion and would have a capacity to carry approximately 700 billion cubic feet of gas. The construction was to begin in 1998 but due to lack of funding and the continuing civil war in Afghanistan, Unocal suspended the project.²⁰³

During his speech in the U.S., which was sponsored by the Eurasia Group and the Council on Foreign Relations, President Niyazov noted on the impatience of the U.S. officials in their encouragement of the implementation of democratic reforms in the former Soviet republics. President Niyazov stated that in order for the former Soviet republics to make their transition to democratic political systems, it was necessary for the Western countries to take into consideration the political, economic, and social conditions in these states.²⁰⁴

According to Ambassador Sestanovich, American interests in Turkmenistan are aimed at developing its potential as a source of prosperity and stability for Central Asia and as a source of energy resources for Western markets. Development of oil and gas sources will lead to diversification of world supplies and provide possibilities for the U.S. trade and investment.²⁰⁵

The U.S. aid was mainly focused on security assistance. This included training of law enforcement and customs personnel, as well as border guards. The aid also helped Turkmenistan to fight against drug trafficking and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The U.S. also supported Turkmenistan's participation in NATO's PfP program.²⁰⁶

The U.S. opposed Russia and Iran's attempts to take control over Turkmenistan's oil and gas industry. As part of the 'Eurasian Transport Corridor' initiative, the U.S. endorsed construction of a trans-Caucasus gas pipeline to Turkey with a trans-Caspian link to Turkmenistan. During his visit to the U.S. in 1998, President Niyazov signed accords with American companies on energy exploration and production. He disregarded Administration's concerns about democratization by saying that there was no organized opposition to his rule in Turkmenistan. In FY1992-1999, the U.S. aid to Turkmenistan was

²⁰³ Ibid., p. 104.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 101.

²⁰⁵ James P. Nichol, "Turkmenistan: Current Developments and U.S. Interests," in A. J. Armanini, ed., *Politics and Economics of Central Asia*, (New York: Novinka Books, 2002), p. 88.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

\$170.36 million. Most of this aid included food aid, training and exchanges. In FY2000, under the Excess Defense Articles program, the U.S. provided Turkmenistan with a coastal patrol vessel.²⁰⁷

4.1.4 The U.S.-Kyrgyz Relations

In February 1992, the U.S. opened its embassy in Bishkek. Later in the same year, Kyrgyzstan opened its embassy in Washington, D.C. Kyrgyzstan became a member of the majority of international organizations, including the UN, OSCE, World Bank, IMF, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). It also became a member of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the ECO and the Islamic Bank.²⁰⁸

On 19 May 1993, the U.S. signed a bilateral agreement with Kyrgyzstan. The agreement pledged cooperation and assistance and demonstrated the U.S. support for Kyrgyzstan as a model to the rest of the Central Asian countries because of its policy of macroeconomic stabilization and democratic reforms.²⁰⁹

There have been two major factors in Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy. First, the country is too small and too poor to be economically viable without strong outside support. Second, it is located in the unstable part of the world, vulnerable to many unpleasant possibilities.²¹⁰

In 1994, Kyrgyzstan agreed on the Russian Army border troops to guard Kyrgyzstan's border with China. However, Russia made complaints that desertions of the Kyrgyz border troops were leaving the former Soviet border, which Russia still viewed as its proper border, unprotected. President Akaev requested even more military presence from Russia, hinting that if Russia lost its interest in the Soviet airbases in Kyrgyzstan, then the U.S. or NATO could be.²¹¹

Kyrgyzstan became the first Central Asian state to join the PFP in summer of 1994. While some of the Kyrgyzstan's officials stressed that they did not have intentions to join NATO, others said that membership in PFP was a waiting room for full membership.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 88-89.

²⁰⁸ Martha B. Olcott, "Kyrgyzstan," *Country Studies*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), p. 179.

²⁰⁹ Hollis, p. 194.

²¹⁰ Olcott, "Kyrgyzstan," p. 178.

²¹¹ Ibid., pp. 185-186.

NATO, for its part, has not expressed any interest in granting membership to the Central Asian states.²¹²

By 1997, some thirty-six American firms were present in Kyrgyzstan. The U.S. Morrison-Knudsen Corporation was among the large-scale foreign investors in the gold-industry along with Canada's Cameco.²¹³

The World Bank provided assistance to Kyrgyzstan in helping it to reduce the poverty rate, develop growing private sector, and promote efficient management of its public finances. The International Development Association (IDA) provided Kyrgyzstan with money for various projects, including the development of telecommunications. It also assisted Kyrgyzstan in its transition to a market economy and offered a farmers' credit program.²¹⁴

In 1998, with the support of the U.S. Congress, Kyrgyzstan became the first country among the Newly Independent States (NIS) to be admitted to the World Trade Organization (WTO).²¹⁵ In 1999, the IMF delegation made a decision to increase its aid to Kyrgyzstan from \$15 million to \$28 in order to ease the effect of the 1998 Russian financial crisis. The same year, President Akaev met with the visiting U.S. delegation and discussed strengthening of bilateral economic ties.²¹⁶

4.1.5 The U.S.-Tajik Relations

In Tajikistan, the desire of the Neo-Soviets to restore their monopoly of power and destroy opposition by violent means on the one hand, and the inability of the opposition to find a political solution to this challenge and to the country's problems, resulted in a civil

²¹² Shireen T. Hunter, *Central Asia Since Independence*, (Washington, D.C.: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1996), pp. 153-154.

²¹³ Olcott, "Kyrgyzstan," p. 163.

²¹⁴ Alaolmolki, p. 90.

²¹⁵ B. K. Urzhanova, "O nekotoryh aspektah Kyrgyzsko-Amerikanskogo sotrudnichestva," in E. Karin, ed., *Politika SShA v Centralnoi Azii*, (Almaty: Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Kazakhstan, 2003), p. 14.

²¹⁶ Alaolmolki, pp. 90-91.

war in 1992.²¹⁷ The conflict was settled in 1993 and provided for sharing the power between the ‘government’ and the ‘opposition’ but fighting continued until the summer of 1998.²¹⁸

The U.S. was the second country to open its embassy in Dushanbe. However, it was evacuated in October 1992 due to the escalation of the civil war and did not open again until March 1993. In February 1992, Secretary of State James Baker visited Tajikistan and opposition viewed this trip as the U.S. support of Nabyev’s political repression. However, relations with the opposition were improved several months later, when the U.S. Congress delegation met with some of the opposition leaders.²¹⁹

In March 1992, Tajikistan became a member of the UN. The following month, Tajikistan was granted membership in the World Bank and IMF. In 1992, Tajikistan was also admitted to Conference on Security and Cooperation of Europe (CSCE) and North Atlantic Cooperation Council. This happened partly because of America’s and its Western allies’ desire to counter Iranian influence. It also became a member of the EBRD.²²⁰

In 1992, Tajikistan and the U.S. decided to develop their trade relations. President Nabyev asked the U.S. Congress delegation for development assistance, especially in natural resource use. Tajikistan made a barter trade agreement with an American company to exchange Tajikistan’s dried fruit for bricks, greenhouse equipment and consumer goods from the U.S. The U.S. offered credits for purchasing food. The U.S. OPIC agreed to provide loans and assistance for the U.S. investment promotion.²²¹ Tajikistan concluded an agreement with the U.S. for investment in the fur and leather products manufacture.²²² In 1995, the U.S. firm established a US\$40 million textile mill in Tajikistan.²²³

Ambassador Sestanovich stated that American interests in Tajikistan were based on its ‘critical strategic’ proximity to Iran and Afghanistan, as well as threats posed by

²¹⁷ Muriel Atkin, “Thwarted Democratization in Tajikistan,” in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrot, eds., *Conflict, Cleavage, and Change in Central Asia and Caucasus*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 290.

²¹⁸ Beeman, pp. 100-101, 102.

²¹⁹ Atkin, “Tajikistan,” p. 82.

²²⁰ Kenneth Katzman, “Tajikistan”, in A. J. Armanini, ed., *Politics and Economics of Central Asia*, (New York: Novinka Books, 2002), p. 57.

²²¹ Atkin, “Tajikistan,” p. 262.

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 261.

²²³ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

instability to democratic and economic reforms, arms control, narcotics trafficking, and terrorism. The U.S. Ambassador to Tajikistan Robert Finn also said that Tajikistan was a ‘conduit for fundamentalism’ to find its way to Central Asia from Afghanistan. The U.S. was the major humanitarian and developmental aid donor and facilitator of the Tajik peace accord. In 1992-1999, the U.S. provided \$250.34 million in aid to Tajikistan.²²⁴

The U.S. observed the U.N.-sponsored inter-Tajik peace talks. The U.S. also supported the sending of the U.N. observers to Tajikistan and urged the CIS ‘peacekeeping’ forces to cooperate with them. In addition to bilateral aid, the U.S. also contributed \$8 million to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) mission to Tajikistan, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).²²⁵

In 1997, after several false starts and broken cease-fires, the government and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) signed an agreement, which put official end to the civil war.²²⁶ As a result of the civil war in Tajikistan, about 100,000 persons lost their lives, 900,000 became refugees and forced migrants, more than 150,000 houses became destroyed, the majority of the intellectual elite have emigrated, the total damage is estimated at US\$7 billion and the external debt has exceeded US\$800,000 million.²²⁷

4.2. The U.S.-Central Asian Relations Post-September 11 Events

The five Central Asian countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan became involved in a major diplomatic and military international struggle against terrorism. The different types of assistance offered by each Central Asian regime are explained by geopolitics. Three of the five states share common border with Afghanistan: Uzbekistan shares with it a 137-km, Tajikistan shares a 1,206-km, and Turkmenistan – a 744-km border. In December 2001, Uzbekistan was the first to welcome the US-led coalition

²²⁴ James P. Nichol, “Tajikistan: Current Developments and U.S. Interests,” in A. J. Armanini, ed., *Politics and Economics of Central Asia*, (New York: Novinka Books, 2002), p. 62.

²²⁵ James P. Nichol, “Tajik Civil War: Recent Developments and U.S. Policy Concerns,” in A. J. Armanini, ed., *Politics and Economics of Central Asia*, (New York: Novinka Books, 2002), p. 77.

²²⁶ Kort, p. 174.

²²⁷ Aziz Niyazi, “Tajikistan I: The Regional Dimension of Conflict,” in M. Walker, B. Coppieters, and A. Malashenko, eds., *Conflicting Loyalties and the State in Post-Soviet Russia and Eurasia*, (London: Frank Cass, 1998), p. 145.

on its territory. Shortly after, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan allowed foreign troops from the international coalition against terrorism to use air bases on their territories. Kazakhstan provided air space only. Given its relatively remote location, it was able not to be too closely involved. Consistent with Turkmenistan's policy of 'positive neutrality', foreign troops were not granted access to Turkmen military facilities.²²⁸

4.2.1 Post-September 11 Developments in Kazakhstan

After September 11 events, serious changes took place in the social and political life of Kazakhstan. Security, economic advantage and strengthening of the current leadership became priority issues for President Nazarbaev, pushing back numerous violations of international norms and requirements of international organizations. A new stage started in the history of Kazakhstan, which was signified by deterioration of human rights and freedom of expression. Harassment of political opponents of the president became harsher. A number of significant changes happened in Kazakhstan's foreign policy.²²⁹

By summer 2001, President Nazarbaev's image at the international arena and in Kazakhstan became negative due to his, his family's and his government's efforts to strengthen their control over political, economic and social life of the country. In addition to these, it was found out that president Nazarbaev and his government officials held secret multi-million accounts in Swiss banks.²³⁰

After September 11, Nazarbaev expressed his desire to cooperate with the U.S. in the anti-terrorist campaign.²³¹ Marzhan Kalpykova, Kazakh political analyst, believes that favorable relations with the U.S. were necessary to Nazarbaev for two reasons: first, Kazakhstan needed foreign investment; second, it would help Nazarbaev to improve his image spoiled by a number of political scandals. As a result, the U.S. Senate, which seriously criticized Kazakhstan's leadership for violation of human rights and persecution of opposition, adopted a special resolution. In this resolution, the Senate highly evaluated

²²⁸ Sally Cummings, "Reactions in Post-Soviet Central Asia," *Asian Affairs*, (Vol. 33, Issue No. 1, 2002), p. 72.

²²⁹ Eduard Poletaev, "Sobytiya 11 sentyabrya posluzhili detonatorom izmenenii vo vnutrennei i vneshnei politike Kazakhstana," *Regional Conference: Central Asia One Year Later*, (Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan: Institute on War and Peace Research, September 9, 2002), p. 3.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

Kazakhstan's desire to cooperate with America on regional security issues and struggle against terrorism, thus allowing Nazarbaev to gain more leverage. He increased pressure on opposition and independent mass media, claiming that this was necessary in order to preserve political stability, which was also desired by the West.²³²

Laumulin argues that Russia's role in Central Asia is declining rapidly. Currently, Astana can deal with Washington independently, without fearing reaction from Moscow. This presents a serious geopolitical shift in the local balance of forces. The U.S. is pushing at its complete control over the Caspian area. Undoubtedly, the U.S. interests in Kazakhstan are concentrated on the Caspian basin. The U.S. is strengthening its position in the region and supporting the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline, its favorite project. It will allow America to reduce Russia's role as a Caspian oil transit country and completely exclude Iran as another oil transit country. In the nearest and more remote future the U.S. will continue promoting its very specific interests in Kazakhstan. It will try to keep Kazakhstan in the orbit of American regional and global strategy because of the Caspian factor. It will do so by gradually removing Astana from Moscow's influence, weakening and dissolving the Shanghai process as regional security system, putting pressure on China, establishing control over illegal drug trafficking, bringing Kazakhstan and other Central Asian states into various U.S.-controlled international trade and economic organizations, the WTO in the first place.²³³ Some political analysts also believe that the opportunity to establish themselves close to border with China was another important factor in America's broadening of its relations with Kazakhstan.²³⁴

Although the two countries continue their cooperation in the following areas: trade, economy, regional and transborder cooperation, fuel and energy, transport, military technology, as well as humanitarian affairs, the decreased role of Russia in Kazakhstan after September 11 events is reality. The visit of the U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to Kazakhstan in April 2002 weakened Russia's position in the country: Kazakhstan allowed the U.S. to use its air space and air bases.²³⁵ In the summer of 2002, the U.S. allocated US\$7,750,000 to Kazakhstan for military purposes. At the same time, Kazakhstan and the

²³² Ibid., pp. 4-5.

²³³ Murat Laumulin, "Central Asia After 11 September", *Central Asia and the Caucasus Journal of Social and Political Studies*, (Sweden: Information and Analytical Center, No. 4, 2002), pp. 31-32.

²³⁴ Poletaev, p. 4.

²³⁵ Laumulin, "Central Asia After 11 September," p. 33.

U.S. signed a memorandum about providing the international airport in Almaty as a spare one for landing and fuel recharging of American military airplanes in emergency situations.²³⁶

4.2.2 Post-September 11 Developments in Uzbekistan

In August 1999, several hundred ethnic Uzbek guerrillas from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) crossed the border from Tajikistan into the Batken region of Kyrgyzstan in order to initiate a jihad against the Uzbek government. The guerrillas took several hostages, which included four citizens of Japan and a senior Kyrgyz army commander. They repelled attacks of the Kyrgyz government troops and returned to Tajikistan in October.²³⁷ In summer 2000, the IMU detachments invaded Uzbekistan once again. Uzbekistan was the first Central Asian victim of Islamic radicals.²³⁸

Uzbekistan also became the first country in Central Asia, which expressed its readiness for cooperation with the U.S. and allowed the coalition military forces to be stationed on its territory. Uzbekistan's facilities, such as the former Soviet military bases and airfields, which were used by the USSR in the war against Afghanistan during the 1980s, helped the U.S. plans. During President Karimov's visit to Washington in March 2002, the American side basically received Tashkent's confirmation of its loyalty to the U.S. regarding its anti-terrorist operation and further support. Uzbekistan feared that the military infrastructure in Afghanistan was not completely destroyed and there were possibilities of future terrorist attacks both in Afghanistan, as well as against Uzbekistan. Tashkent became interested in a prolonged military presence of the U.S. and its allies in Afghanistan.²³⁹

Furthermore, Uzbekistan was able to establish representation of its interests in the Afghan government. Abdurashid Dustum, leader of the numerous Uzbek minority group, received the post of vice president, which could help Uzbekistan to solve the problem of the IMU. Uzbekistan also favors the plan of creating a confederation in Afghanistan, which was

²³⁶ Poletaev, p. 8.

²³⁷ Cassidy Craft, Suzette Grillo and Liam Anderson, "The Dangerous Ground: Nonproliferation Export-Control Development in the Southern Tier of the Former Soviet Union," *Problems of Post-Communism*, (Nov.-Dec. 2000), p. 5.

²³⁸ Korgun, p. 10.

²³⁹ Murat Laumulin, "Islamskie igroki na Centralnoaziatskom pole: interesy blizlezhshih musulmanskih gosudarstv v stranah regiona," *Centralnaya Azia i Kavkaz: zhurnal sotsialnyh i politicheskikh issledovaniy*, (Sweden: Information and Analytical Center, No. 2, 2003), p. 64.

suggested by Dustum. Under such circumstances, there would be an Uzbek group on the Afghan territory near the border with Uzbekistan, which would provide security for the southern border of Uzbekistan, and serve as an instrument of influence on the geopolitical processes in this strategically important region.²⁴⁰

The referendum, which took place in January 2002 in Uzbekistan, extended the term of president of Uzbekistan from five to seven years. In the beginning, the government was trying to convince people that new terms were meant not for President Karimov but for the next president, who would be elected in 2005. However, the parliament approved new date for presidential election in December 2007 and referendum results were recognized to be valid since 2000, thus extending President Karimov's term almost to eight years. Mathilda Bogner, a representative of Human Rights Watch in Uzbekistan, stated that this referendum and the way its results were used witnessed that Uzbekistan was not going on the path of democracy. During this time, there was a delegation of the U.S. senators in Uzbekistan and when one senator was asked to comment on these events he said: "Uzbekistan, by providing its assistance in anti-terrorist campaign, proved that it is our good friend, but if our friend is not ideal, it does not mean that he cannot be our friend."²⁴¹

On 12 March 2002, Uzbekistan and the U.S. signed a Declaration on Strategic Partnership and Cooperation. In this declaration the two parties confirmed their desire to "carry on dynamic military and technological cooperation."²⁴² Under this declaration, the U.S. took upon itself the responsibility to assist Uzbekistan in the process of democratization, preventing security threats, cooperation in military and military/technical fields, and implementation of economic reforms. Cooperation within anti-terrorist framework increased the amount of financial aid to Uzbekistan. According to the U.S. State Department data, aid to Uzbekistan was increased to US\$193 million in 2002. This was more than 40% of the entire financial aid (US\$444,3 million) provided to Uzbekistan by the U.S. since 1992.²⁴³

On 14-15 April 2003, a meeting of the American-Uzbek council on security

²⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 65.

²⁴¹ Galima Buharmetova, "Prava cheloveka i svoboda slova v Uzbekistane posle teraktov v SShA 11 sentyabrya 2001 goda," *Regional Conference: Central Asia One Year Later*, (Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan: Institute on War and Peace Research, September 9, 2002), p. 30.

²⁴² Laumulin, "Central Asia After 11 September," p. 35.

²⁴³ Buharmetova, pp. 24-25.

cooperation took place in Washington. The parties made a statement that the development of bilateral relations between the two countries in 2002 witnessed their serious intentions to continue long-term and large-scale cooperation in all spheres. They stated that their cooperation was based on the interests of the peoples of the two countries and aim to promote peace, freedom and prosperity in Central Asia and the whole world. On 15 April 2003, the United States Agency for Trade and Development allocated two grants in the amount of US\$809,995 to support projects in the aviation sector of Uzbekistan.²⁴⁴

During the debate on the Iraq question, Uzbek Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov stated that there was enough evidence to justify Washington's position. He was quoted saying: "Powell's address...reinforced the U.S. call for more decisive and dramatic steps to exclude any possibility of Iraq having weapons of mass destruction or resources and technologies for their production."²⁴⁵

In November 2003, Brzezinski visited Uzbekistan and met with President Karimov. According to Brzezinski, the future of Uzbekistan is tightly connected to the future of the Central Asian region as a whole. In addition to the former five Soviet republics, this region also includes Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, and is characterized by religious and ethnic conflicts. Thus, stability in the region directly projects onto Uzbekistan's future. He stated that the U.S. and Uzbekistan share similar positions with regards to strengthening of regional stability. They both believe that Central Asia should not be under the influence of any one colonial power. This would lead to internal contradictions and social conflicts with devastating results. If the region can achieve a high level of integration into the world economy, if there are more pipelines, roads and railroads running through its territory, then the chances for successful development will increase. For this reason, Uzbek-American cooperation becomes the major factor of stability in Central Asia and the platform for regional progress.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ "USA and Uzbekistan Confirmed Status of Their Bilateral Relations," Accessed July 12, 2003 at <http://usinfo.state.gov/ruski>

²⁴⁵ Ariel Cohen, "Eurasian States Grapple with Difficult Choices Over Looming Iraq Offensive," Accessed July 12, 2003 at <http://www.eurasianet.org>

²⁴⁶ "Zbignew Brzezinski ishet formulu bezopasnosti, sotrudnichestvo Vashingtona i Tashkenta garantiruet stabilnost v Centralnoi Azii, schitaet professor," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, Accessed November 11, 2003 at <http://www.gazeta.kg/view.php?i=3301>

4.2.3 Post-September 11 Developments in Turkmenistan

On 24 September 2001, in his speech on national television, President Niyazov said that during his telephone conversation with the U.S. State Secretary Colin Powell, it was agreed that the U.S. troops would not be permitted on the territory of Turkmenistan. However, Ashgabat would permit the transportation of humanitarian cargos destined for the civilian population of Afghanistan by rail and air.²⁴⁷ It is noteworthy that about 40 percent of the humanitarian goods that were delivered to Afghanistan since September 11 went through Turkmenistan.²⁴⁸

Turkmenistan was the only country in the region for which anti-Taliban operation would have brought negative consequences. It closed one of the sources of currency flow into Turkmenistan, since relations between President Niyazov and the Taliban was based on the external trade, which provided Ashgabat more than US\$100 million annually.²⁴⁹ During his meeting with the UN Deputy Secretary General Kenzo Oshima, President Niyazov tried to gain the UN support for a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan via Afghanistan to Pakistan. He said that this pipeline would help to restore normal life in Afghanistan.²⁵⁰

The international society sees in Turkmenistan, a country in which the government has almost literally destroyed all institutions of guarantee and promotion of human rights. However, some believe that Western democracies try not to notice what is happening in Turkmenistan. One Turkmen official made the following remark at an unofficial gathering during an international conference:

As long as there is a problem of Afghanistan, as long as America is busy preparing for its war with Iraq, and perhaps with Iran, as well, we will be remembered only as an ally with whom one can negotiate. Lukashenko (president of Belarus) is the one who will be threatened with the human rights problem, but not us. Furthermore, our gas and oil serve as guarantees of the West's predictability in its policy toward Turkmenistan. And, as long as we (Turkmenistan) look toward Russia, nobody will talk about human rights in the West. Forget about it...²⁵¹

²⁴⁷ "President Says U.S. Troops May Not Enter Turkmenistan," Accessed July 12, 2003 at <http://www.eurasianet.org>

²⁴⁸ Beth Jones, *U.S. Relations with Central Asia*, (Briefing to the Press, February 11, 2002), Accessed November 11, 2003, at <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2002/7946.htm>

²⁴⁹ Sergei Kamenev, "Vozmozhnye posledstviya voyny s terrorizmom dlya situatsii na Blizhnem Vostoke i v Centralnoi Azii," *Centralnaya Azia i Kavkaz: zhurnal sotsialnyh i politicheskikh issledovaniy*, (Sweden: Information and Analytical Center, No. 6, 2001), p. 14.

²⁵⁰ "Turkmenistan President Seeks UN Backing for Gas Export Pipeline Via Afghanistan," Accessed July 12, 2003 at <http://www.eurasianet.org>

²⁵¹ "Turkmenistan - tyurma dlya naroda," *Regional Conference: Central Asia One Year Later*, (Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan: Institute on War and Peace Research, September 9, 2002), p. 19.

It is true that Turkmenistan's reputation for having one of the world's most repressive governments does not deter foreign interest in energy development projects. International political organizations and financial institutions do not condition economic assistance to Turkmenistan on human rights improvements by president Niyazov's regime. At present, the country's energy abundance outweighs corporate concerns about Niyazov's practices. Turkmenistan reportedly possesses the world's fifth largest reserves of natural gas and international interest in possible investment opportunities in the country remains very high.²⁵²

Herman Scheer, a Social Democratic deputy in the German Bundestag stated that there is a serious battle going on over the Caspian Sea resources in order to provide for the energy security of the West. Scheer said that if the West were successful in imposing the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline route, then it would free the Central Asian states, most importantly Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, from Russia's influence. He also argued that Russia, China, and India represented rivals searching for a new factor of power as a counterweight to the West.²⁵³

According to Assistant Secretary Jones, the U.S. government has had a difficult time developing relations with Turkmenistan. It is mainly working on developing the number of exchanges and works a lot with the U.N. organizations in Turkmenistan. She stated that the U.S. government does very little work with the central government and does some work with the private sector, NGOs, and local governments, which can provide their services to local people.²⁵⁴

4.2.4 Post-September 11 Developments in Kyrgyzstan

President Akaev skillfully used the anti-terrorist campaign to improve his image in the West, which deteriorated due to his persecution of some of the opposition leaders. Akaev expressed his warm support to the U.S. and offered it the maximum he could - the use

²⁵² Mark Berniker, "Turkmenistan's Rights Record Doesn't Outweigh International Investment Interest," Accessed July 12, 2003 at <http://www.eurasianet.org>

²⁵³ Laumulin, "Central Asia and the European Union," p. 231.

²⁵⁴ Jones, p. 1.

of its airspace²⁵⁵ and the country's major airport Manas near Bishkek for accommodation of the anti-terrorist coalition forces to provide humanitarian assistance to Afghan population.²⁵⁶

Furthermore, late in September 2001 all flights from Bishkek to Asian countries were grounded to give airspace the U.S. and other anti-terrorist coalition airplanes. Although at this stage the U.S. was not prepared to use Kyrgyzstan's airspace and territory for geographical reasons, the president was able to somewhat improve his image.²⁵⁷ In addition to Akaev's desire to use external factor in solving Kyrgyzstan's internal political and economic problems, there was also willingness to liquidate the threat of intrusion of military bands from Afghanistan.²⁵⁸

Russia was also able to open its air base in Kant near Bishkek explaining it by security concerns and threat posed by Islamic radicalism. Many Kyrgyz consider the establishment of a Russian base in Kyrgyzstan as an undermining of the country's sovereignty. At the same time, Kyrgyz are conscious about the U.S. presence at Manas airport. Although many do not see the U.S. presence as threat to Kyrgyzstan's sovereignty, as they see with the case with Russia, they do believe that the U.S. has double-standards. One opposition leader said: "They [U.S. officials] talk about democratization. In reality, they support an authoritarian regime. They are financing corruption in Kyrgyzstan."²⁵⁹

The U.S. military base near Bishkek is the largest American base on the territory of any former Central Asian Soviet republic. Along with the U.S. base in Khanabad, Uzbekistan, and some military premises in Tajikistan, this base played an important role during the last stage of the war in Afghanistan. It also signified a geopolitical revolution - the Western military forces secured themselves in the heart of Asia.²⁶⁰

At the present time, there are approximately 1,500 military men and around 30 airplanes, including F-16, C-130 'Hercules' and KC-135. The majority of the soldiers and

²⁵⁵ Korgun, p. 12.

²⁵⁶ Laumulin, "Islamskie igroki na Centralnoaziatskom pole: interesy blizlezhnykh musulmanskih gosudarstv v stranah regiona," p. 65.

²⁵⁷ Korgun, p. 13.

²⁵⁸ Laumulin, "Islamskie igroki na Centralnoaziatskom pole: interesy blizlezhnykh musulmanskih gosudarstv v stranah regiona," p. 65.

²⁵⁹ Justin Burke, "Russian Deployment in Kyrgyzstan Could Prompt Growing Domestic Turmoil," Accessed July 12, 2003 at <http://www.eurasianet.org>

²⁶⁰ Vladimir Sokor, "V Kyrgyzstane amerikantsy s russkimi okazalis blizkimi sosedyami," *Moya Stolitsa*, (N16, 19.08.2003), p. 7.

airplanes are American. However, since December 2001, soldiers and airplanes of such NATO member countries as Denmark, Norway, France, Spain, Netherlands, Italy, Australia, New Zealand, as well as South Korea, have visited the base.²⁶¹

The American military presence provides an important source of income to the economically troubled Kyrgyzstan. Besides the lease, the U.S. pays US\$7,000 for departure and arrival of each airplane, pays in US\$ to the local providers of goods and services and provides with salary local workforce. In addition to this, the U.S. aid to Kyrgyzstan increased to US\$92 million dollars, including indirect compensation for the government's decision to allow the military base on the territory of Kyrgyzstan. During his visit to Kyrgyzstan in July 2003, the NATO's Secretary General Lord Robertson promised that the military assistance to Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian states will be increased.²⁶²

The Russian base is located just 30 kilometers away from the Manas base, yet it cannot compete with the American base from a military point of view. It is more of a political statement by Russia and a way for it to monitor the activity of the U.S. military. Moscow thought that the U.S. base should exist only for the duration of the operation 'Enduring Freedom'. The U.S. states that its base in Kyrgyzstan is not permanent but it will exist for as long as it is necessary. Now, many believe that after Russia opened its base in Kyrgyzstan, it is unlikely that the U.S. will close its base unilaterally.²⁶³

In fact, the original agreement regarding the base was signed for one year with a possibility of extending the duration. The base currently occupies 12 hectares. However, in April 2003, the government of Kyrgyzstan along with the Ministry of Defense provided the base with almost 300 hectares in Sokuluk district near Bishkek. There have been rumors that the base will stay for another 25 years. The public relations officer of the Manas base stated that there are no strict terms in the agreement. The base will stay until the situation in Afghanistan becomes stable, and hopefully it will not take 25 years.²⁶⁴

It has been said that in the future, the base might play a role of security provider in case China suddenly becomes expansionist. The advantage of the Manas base is that

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Erlan Satybekov, "Forpost," *Vechernii Bishkek*, (23.05.2003), p. 6.

locations of strategic missiles employed in the western regions of China are within reach of American tactical aviation units located at the base.²⁶⁵

4.2.5 Post-September 11 Developments in Tajikistan

The majority of Tajiks, who have lived through the devastating civil war in 1992-1997, made a sober evaluation of the 11 September events and the military-political activity of the U.S. and some other countries first around and later in Afghanistan itself. They were skeptical about the U.S. definition of its actions as those directed toward the struggle against international terrorism. They did not have doubts that they were witnessing actions that were dictated more by pragmatic national interests of these states, rather than any other motives. Tajiks believed that the truth was that the U.S. intended if not to drive Russia out of Central Asia completely, then at least weaken and limit its position and influence in the region.²⁶⁶

Tajikistan's social, economic and political development since the second half of the 19th century has been defined by its relations with Russia. Lacking sufficient economic and military resources, Tajikistan is interested in close military and political cooperation with Russia. On the one hand, Russian troops are currently present on the territory of Tajikistan. Moreover, close to one million Tajik citizens work in Russia. Their money transfers serve as important source of currency flow into the country, which can even be compared to profit from cotton and aluminum exports of Tajikistan. Thus, one can see that Tajikistan could not ignore Russia's interests in the region.²⁶⁷

However, Tajiks also realize that their economy depends on Western countries. The majority of Tajikistan's exports are shipped to the West. The major investors into the economy of Tajikistan are from the West and economic reforms in the country are carried out with support from such influential international financial organizations as the IMF, World Bank, and EBRD.²⁶⁸ Furthermore, there has been a significant refugee problem in Tajikistan. A considerable number of Tajik refugees fled from Tajikistan into the territory of Afghanistan during the civil war. They were formed into armed opposition bands, brought

²⁶⁵ Sokor, p. 7.

²⁶⁶ Rashid Abdullo, "Tajikistan i antiterroristicheskaya kampaniya v Afganistane," *Centralnaya Azia i Kavkaz: zhurnal sotsialnyh i politicheskikh issledovaniy*, (Sweden: Information and Analytical Center, No. 5, 2002), p. 42.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

back into the territory of Tajikistan and used by the opposition in support of their policies. Since the end of the war in 1997, the return and resettlement of refugees has been the major problem for normalizing the situation at the border and in the region devastated by the war. The UN Commission and other international organizations have been assisting the government of Tajikistan in bringing the refugees back home.²⁶⁹

Presently, there are four positions among Tajik citizens towards the American actions in the country. First, there are those who support the Euro-centric position. These are mainly Tajiks who are oriented toward European political, cultural and ideological values. Their political views have been shaped in the past decade by the Russian mass media of so-called democratic orientation. Their opinion on September 11 is that they agree with everything that has been presented by the European and American mass media. They are also very cautious about everything that is connected to Islam.²⁷⁰

The second group is represented by those, whose position is defined by the Soviet past of Tajikistan. They were very negative about the possibility of strengthening of the U.S. and its Western allies' presence, not to mention their military presence, in the region. They viewed these activities not as much as the desire of the U.S. to fight against international terrorism but more as its imperial desire to include the region into its sphere of influence.²⁷¹

The third group are the supporters of the pro-Russian position, who thought that it would not be beneficial for Tajikistan to decrease Moscow's influence in the country. These views are shared mainly by those who have business, professional, political or other motives regarding their orientation toward Russia. Finally, there are representatives of Islamic circles, mainly the Party of Islamic Revival of Tajikistan and the underground Hizb-ut-Tahrir. It argues that religion dictates that the idea of Western military influence on any state with predominantly Muslim population is simply unacceptable.²⁷²

Some Tajiks were also doubtful about the Taliban's culpability in the killing of Akhmad-Shah Masud, who was of Tajik origin. Moreover, they suspect that his physical elimination, which happened right before great changes were to take place in Afghanistan,

²⁶⁹ Said Akhmedov, "Tajikistan II: The Regional Conflict in Confessional and International Context," in M. Walker, B. Coppieters, and A. Malashenko, eds., *Conflicting Loyalties and the State in Post-Soviet Russia and Eurasia*, (London: Frank Cass, 1998), p. 184.

²⁷⁰ Abdullo, pp. 46-47.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid.

was not accidental. This leader of the anti-Taliban forces was very much against foreign military and political patronage including that of the U.S. over his country.²⁷³

Tajikistan agreed to provide its territory for anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan. Taking into consideration the fact that it is one of Russia's closest allies in the CIS and depends on it more than other Central Asian states, one could assume that the decision of the Tajik leadership was the direct consequence of changes in Russia's external policies. More likely, this was Moscow's decision, not Dushanbe's.²⁷⁴ Russia's decision to cooperate actively with the U.S. against the Taliban, allowed Tajikistan not to fear negative reaction of its strategic partner. Within a short period of time, the country was visited by influential American politicians and officials of high ranks: Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy State Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs Elizabeth Jones, Senate delegation headed by such influential Senators as the Republican John McCain and the Democrat Joseph Lieberman, Congress delegation headed by Jim Colby, and General Tommy Franks. Dushanbe was also visited by key political and military figures from Germany and France. The increase in Tajikistan's importance in political and military plans of Western countries in Central Asian led Great Britain, France and Japan to open their diplomatic missions in Dushanbe.²⁷⁵

These developments certainly allow Tajikistan to hope for significant military, political and economic dividends. These include decrease of tension at its borders; broadening of Tajikistan's sphere of influence; obtaining an alternative transport corridor to the outside world, which includes the possibility of developing closer trade and economic relations with Iran, Pakistan, India and other countries through the territory of Afghanistan; as well as further development of economic and political links with Western countries. By providing support to the U.S., Tajikistan's leadership was hoping for its help in reviving the country's economy, and the possibility of including Tajikistan in the plans and programs of the international community aimed at assisting Afghanistan to overcome consequences of the war.²⁷⁶

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Laumulin, "Islamskie igroki na Centralnoaziatskom pole: interesy blizlezhskih musulmanskih gosudarstv v stranah regiona," p. 65.

²⁷⁵ Abdullo, pp. 48-49.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

The position of the ruling elite headed by the President Emomali Rakhmonov was strengthened as a result of Tajikistan's cooperation in anti-terrorist campaign as well.²⁷⁷ During President Putin's visit to Dushanbe in April 2003 to take part in the meeting of the heads of states, which are parties to the Collective Security Agreement, he had a discussion with President Rakhmonov about opening Russia's military base in Dushanbe. However, Russia and Tajikistan were not able to come to a mutual agreement. The Tajik side believes that Russia should be responsible for all expenses and wants to have the authority to influence and command the military. For example, in extreme cases, Rakhmonov would like to have the right to command the Russian military forces to surrender their arms. Russia, which has lately been bent on reviving its military and political influence in Central Asia, definitely wants to establish itself firmer in Tajikistan. The problem is that if it is going to be free of charge for Dushanbe, then Moscow will have to pay tens of millions of dollars to sustain its military presence there. However, if the U.S. presence becomes as strong in Tajikistan as it is in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, then the three-fourth of the Central Asian region will be controlled by America.²⁷⁸

4.3 Human Rights in Central Asia

The state of democracy is a major problem in all of the Central Asian states. In terms of advancement of democracy, the experience of the Central Asian states is a disillusioning one. The situation with democracy is deteriorating each year. In the beginning it looked as if Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan were steadily moving toward establishing democratic, or at least quasi-democratic, political systems. However, in recent years, political regimes in both countries have become more authoritarian. In Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, from the first days of their independence political power has been in the hands of dictators. Tajikistan seems to be the only light spot, where part of the opposition has been included in the government and the role of NGOs has increased in the past few

²⁷⁷ Vladimir Davlatov, "Vygody i izderzhki uchastiya Tajikistana v antiterroristicheskoi borbe," *Regional Conference: Central Asia One Year Later*, (Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan: Institute on War and Peace Research, September 9, 2002), p. 16.

²⁷⁸ Aleksandr Kim, "It is Time for Russian Soldiers to Be in Bases," Accessed July 12, 2003 at <http://www.eurasianet.org>

years. However, Dushanbe does not yet have full control over the country, which has been greatly damaged by war.²⁷⁹

According to Human Rights Watch, in the past years the U.S. policy in Central Asia has not been able to influence the state of human rights effectively. This is largely due to the inconsistency in its relations with the governments of the Central Asian states. The question of human rights and democracy as the basis for beneficial relations with the U.S. has been merely a rhetoric. The U.S. has been providing aid to these states regardless of their human right records. The U.S. needs to stress the importance of compliance with international human rights norms. It also has to be careful about bilateral military cooperation with the Central Asian states. Assistance in the fight against terrorism could serve as an excuse for regional governments to put an equal sign between terrorism and what they view as unfavorable to their rule.²⁸⁰

One cannot say that the U.S. efforts directed at the development of democracy in Central Asia have not brought any results. Nevertheless, it is obvious that these efforts are still far from being perfect. Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan have departed from their promises to develop democratic societies. Meanwhile, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have increasingly been turning into police states. Tajikistan has been able to achieve some success in developing a civil society but it has not yet been able to recover from the consequences of the civil war.²⁸¹

This certainly does not mean that the U.S. efforts have been useless. Independent mass media are gradually establishing themselves in most of the countries, although the range of topics that they cover is still limited. Lawyers and economists of the new generation are being trained. The new generation of administrators will certainly be more qualified than the present one. Nongovernmental organizations have become more numerous across Central Asia, although they mainly act outside of political sphere. The U.S. needs to continue reforms in the region, yet it needs to keep in mind that social transformation processes in Central Asia occur slowly and unequally.²⁸²

²⁷⁹ Martha B. Olcott, "Razmyshleniya o politike SShA v Centralnoi Azii," Accessed November 21, 2003 at <http://www.carnegie.ru/ru/pubs/procontra/55920.htm>

²⁸⁰ Human Rights Watch, *The U.S. Policy in Central Asia*, Accessed August 26, 2003 at <http://www.hrw.org/russian/world/2001/cenasia-memo-june.html>

²⁸¹ Olcott, "Razmyshleniya o politike SShA v Centralnoi Azii," p. 1.

²⁸² Ibid.

4.4 American Presence and the Regional Elite

Ahrari argues that American involvement in the region will be long-term. The downside of this involvement is that the U.S. is primarily focused on the military dimension of the global war against terrorism, whereas the main strategy should be focused on the promotion of political pluralism and market economies. He believes that Central Asia's importance for the U.S. is likely to grow at least until the end of this decade with a probability of extending into the next one. The reason behind this significance will be the global war against terrorism, which is likely to get more complex.²⁸³

Furthermore, according to some reports, the U.S. might transform its temporary military bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan into what the Defense Department calls 'lily pads', meaning permanent bases from which American commanders could rapidly deploy mobile, expeditionary forces. Yet such possibility and the notion of an 'American Occupation' could only lead to further destabilization of the region by causing Moscow's competitive impulses and increasing the number of recruits in terrorist groups.²⁸⁴

In general, the Central Asian leaders demonstrated a very pragmatic approach to the U.S. involvement in the region. The regional elite certainly profited from this cooperation. First, there is an issue of economic aid and investments. The politicians in the Central Asian states openly express their opinion that the West has to pay for the use of their territory, airspace, military bases, and air-fields. The second factor is that the international positions of these countries will be strengthened through the PfP program. The third reason is that the American presence will involve military aid in training, weapons, and modernization of their armies. Fourth, the regional authorities will have the opportunity to become more authoritarian since the West will be less strict in monitoring the state of human rights in their countries. Finally, the U.S. will take upon itself part of the responsibility for regional stability and security endangered by the local militant Islamist groups, the IMU and Hizb-ut-Tahrir, and drug trafficking.²⁸⁵

Boris Rumer suggests that the U.S. should think about consequences of its engagement in Central Asia. Certainly, obtaining a springboard for operations in the heart of

²⁸³ Ahrari, p. 157.

²⁸⁴ Brake, p. 1.

²⁸⁵ Korgun, p. 13.

Eurasia is valuable. However, it needs to remember that the U.S. is supporting authoritarian regimes in Central Asian states in order to suppress radical Islam. The situation could become similar to one in which the U.S. supported dictatorial regimes in Egypt and Saudi Arabia by choosing the lesser of two evils. From an economic perspective, the region is dependent on raw material exports and Western investment. The U.S. needs to be realistic about the costs of its involvement. Partial debt relief, loans, credits, and opening Central Asian markets for goods would only continue to increase the region's dependence on cash injections from abroad as it is the case in Kyrgyzstan and lead to further deterioration. In order to prevent such a development of events, there would be a need for more investment of intellectual and financial resources. However, the key point here is how these resources would be used under conditions of corruption.²⁸⁶

Olcott thinks that the U.S. policy in Central Asia should be aimed at strengthening of the Central Asian states by emphasizing economic reforms and democratization. The U.S. government should make it clear to the local leaders that their authoritarian behavior and failure to implement economic changes make security threats even more serious. The U.S. needs to provide more aid for the development of democracy in the region. Assistance to law and human rights groups, whose activity could help to decrease inter-ethnic tension in the region, will also help to solve problems in the sphere of security.²⁸⁷

4.5 Conclusion

Charles Maynes noted that prior to September 11 events, the former Soviet Central Asian states, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, "might as well have been on the other side of the moon as far as U.S. policy was concerned." The U.S. was totally indifferent to these states, which were landlocked, peripheral, poor, fearful, defenseless, undemocratic, and Muslim.²⁸⁸

Central Asia, thus, was carried on the world politics stage, where the U.S. started to implement its new strategic thinking. This led to the expansion of the U.S.'s military

²⁸⁶ Rumer, "The Search for Stability in Central Asia," p. 61.

²⁸⁷ Olcott, "Razmyshleniya o politike SShA v Centralnoi Azii," p. 1.

²⁸⁸ Maynes, p. 120.

presence in the region. Given President Bush's announced determination to defeat global terrorism at any cost, one can only guess how far the U.S. will go.²⁸⁹

Given America's new fears and interests, the U.S. military involvement in Central Asia will probably last longer than official statements suggest. Although the Bush administration promises to end its military presence in the region in a timely manner, many believe the U.S. will stay involved through complex political and military arrangements for years to come. The administration promised to stay until the 'job is done', which means eradicating the conditions that breed terrorism in the first place, and this vague objective suggests a quasi-permanent U.S. presence in Central Asia.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁹ Ahrari, p. 157.

²⁹⁰ Maynes, p. 120.

CHAPTER 5

THE RECEPTIVITY OF RUSSIA, CHINA AND AFGHANISTAN TOWARD INCREASED AMERICAN PRESENCE IN THE REGION

The balance of the three 'Great Powers' (the U.S., Russia and China) has changed since Central Asia has been brought from the periphery of American strategic interest to its very center. All three countries are interested in preventing the spread of fundamental Islam in the region. Since September 11, there is a tendency that the U.S. and Russia could achieve a consensus and establish a unified anti-Islamist front. The situation with China is more complex, although there is also a possibility that it could join the alliance.²⁹¹

Murat Laumulin, Deputy Director of Kazakhstani Institute for Strategic Studies, believes that the situation around Central Asia has gone beyond the 'Great Game' of the 1990s. Given such problems as the global struggle against terrorism and drug trade, it has become a matter of ensuring security not only in the Central Asian region, but also for the CIS, Europe and the West.²⁹²

5.1 Overview of Russia's Relations with the Central Asian States Post-Independence

In the early days of their independence, the leaders of the Central Asian states firmly believed that maintaining good relations with Russia was at top of their priorities list. Gregory Gleason, in his book *The Central Asian States: Discoveries of Independence*, provided statements made by the Central Asian leaders in this regard in December 1990.

²⁹¹ Rumer, "The Search for Stability in Central Asia," pp. 58-60.

²⁹² Laumulin, "Central Asia and the European Union," p. 237.

President Akaev of Kyrgyzstan stated: “No matter what new ties we establish in the West and East, no matter how great our urge to merge into eastern, western, or worldwide economic community, our ties with Russia and our friendship and cooperation with the Russian people will always be special. We will give this priority.”²⁹³ President Nazarbaev of Kazakhstan said: “We attach the highest significance to ties with Russia. And this is understandable. For many years we lived side by side. We have many common tasks which we have to solve.”²⁹⁴ Turkmenistan’s Deputy Prime Minister Nazar Suyunov said that Russia would remain Turkmenistan’s main economic partner. Khalykberdy Ataev, Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan, stated that Turkmenistan should maintain special relations with Russia.²⁹⁵

Central Asia is important for Russia from an economic perspective. Yet it is even more important for military and security reasons. There are three main explanations for such importance. First, the Central Asian states present the first defensive line for Russia against possible foreign invasion initiated outside of the CIS. Second, Russia views Central Asia as a buffer zone between itself and Iran, Afghanistan and partly China. Third, Russia is concerned about the effects of independence of the Central Asian countries on Russian minorities. It is worried that strong nationalist movements in the region would further encourage Russia’s dissatisfied Russian minorities to seek independence.²⁹⁶

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia continued to play a ‘special role’ in Central Asia due to geographical, demographic, economic and military factors. Moscow adopted its own ‘Monroe Doctrine’ over the territories of the former Soviet Union, perceiving a variety of Russian interests in the region. Security was an important factor that involved Russia into the affairs of the Central Asian countries. All post-Soviet Central Asian states had difficulties in creating national armies because of lack of funds, equipment and manpower. The lack of manpower happened due to the fact that the Soviet troops on the territory of Central Asia were commanded mainly by Russian officer corps.²⁹⁷ For example,

²⁹³ Gleason, p. 139.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Hooman Peimani, *Regional Security and the Future of Central Asia: The Competition of Iran, Turkey, and Russia*, (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishings, 1998), p. 72.

²⁹⁷ Kubicek, pp. 648-649.

in Kazakhstan, the Defense Ministry set troop strength of 70,000 but the dependency on Russian officers was approximately 97 percent.²⁹⁸

Maxim Shashenkov argues that Russia's post-independence policy in Central Asia has been reactive rather than pro-active and lacked an agreed-upon vision of Russian interests and priorities. It has yet to develop a realistic foreign policy and comprehensive strategy for the region. Until Russia continues to struggle with its own problems and manages to adapt to Eurasia's new geopolitical environment, the uncertainty in its policy towards Central Asia will remain. Currently, Russia is experiencing an identity crisis and attempting to establish national, ethnic and geopolitical definitions for the new entity that has never existed in its present borders and that has left more than 25 million ethnic Russian's outside its frontiers.²⁹⁹

Russia's military doctrine defined the frontiers of the former Soviet Union as the strategic frontiers of the Russian Federation, which served as a shield to Russia from 'far-abroad' countries. At the present time, Russian frontier guards are present in all Central Asian republics with the exception of Uzbekistan. Russian expeditionary corps are stationed in Tajikistan. There is also a large number of the Russian population living in Kazakhstan.³⁰⁰

On July 1, 1990, Kazakhstan adopted the law that made Kazak language the state language of the republic.³⁰¹ Although Russian emigration from Kazakhstan has not been very significant, mainly the best and the brightest relocated, which created a serious 'brain drain'.³⁰² As a result of language policy, some Russian groups demanded a greater degree of local autonomy for areas with compact Russian populations. Some groups, such as Cossacks from Uralsk area even made straightforward separatist demands, either to join Russia or the eventual 'Siberian republic'.³⁰³ As a result, the 1995 constitution gave Russian the status of

²⁹⁸ William E. Odom and Robert Dujarric, *Commonwealth or Empire? Russia, Central Asia and the Transcaucasus*, (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hudson Institute, 1997), p. 52.

²⁹⁹ Maxim Shashenkov, "Russia in Central Asia: Emerging Security Links," in Anoushiravan Ehteshami, ed., *From the Gulf to Central Asia: Players in the New Great Game*, (University of Exeter Press, 1994), p. 168.

³⁰⁰ Roy, p. 190.

³⁰¹ Martha B. Olcott, "Kazakhstan: A Republic of Minorities," in Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras, eds., *Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States*, (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 210.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 213.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

‘the social language between the peoples’ saying that “in government offices and in offices of local administration Russian is officially used equally with Kazak.”³⁰⁴

In the summer of 1992 Uzbekistan’s Supreme Soviet finalized the state language law and brought it in accordance with Uzbekistan’s status of an independent state.³⁰⁵ Population migration from Uzbekistan to Russia between 1990-1994 reached 394,063. As a result of language reform, some Russian-speaking population left because of fear of anticipated interethnic conflict, however, there was also an aspiration for returning to historical homeland, as well as economic reasons, for some of them.³⁰⁶ However, Uzbek leadership is aware of Russia’s concern about discrimination of Russians in Central Asia and since it is likely that Uzbekistan’s relations with Russia will remain important, the Russian language is likely to keep a high status, thus slowing down the progress of linguistic uzbekization.³⁰⁷

In Kyrgyzstan, the 1989 language law calling for Kyrgyz to replace Russian as the language of state created a massive exodus of Russians. Between 1989 and 1993 the Slavic share of the population declined from 24 to 18 percent. This meant serious political and economic consequences for the country. Those leaving Kyrgyzstan were among educated and highly-skilled workers necessary for modern economy. It also created problems in Kyrgyzstan’s relations with Russia, which demanded to give Russian a status of a second state language alongside with Kyrgyz. This demand led to the suspension of the implementation of the state language law by decree.³⁰⁸

In order to maintain internal order, fearing influence of neighboring countries like Iran and China and the spread of the Tajik conflict in the region, and having no means to control their external borders, Central Asian states, with the exception of Turkmenistan,

³⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 215.

³⁰⁵ William Fierman, “Independence and the Declining Priority of Language and Law Implementation in Uzbekistan,” in Yaacov R’oi, ed., *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies*, (London: Frank Cass, 1995), p. 206.

³⁰⁶ Vladimir Mesamed, “Interethnic Relations in the Republic of Uzbekistan,” *Central Asia Monitor*, (Issue No. 6, 1996), p. 24.

³⁰⁷ Fierman, pp. 219-220.

³⁰⁸ Eugene Huskey, “An Economy of Authoritarianism? Askar Akaev and Presidential Leadership in Kyrgyzstan,” in Sally Cummings, ed., *Power and Change in Central Asia*, (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 255-256.

signed a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) collective security agreement³⁰⁹ in May 1992.³¹⁰ This agreement preserved the integrated Soviet defense space, which was redefined as the CIS, and ensured Russian control over the CIS borders and military installations.³¹¹

Russia is certainly interested in Central Asia's stability. Destabilization of the situation in the region would bring many negative consequences for Russia. Conflicts and disturbances would require a great deal of Russia's resources and strategic attention. It would also create a serious refugee problem for the Russian government.³¹² As Sergei Karaganov of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Europe,³¹³ stated:

We will not be able to get away from them (Central Asian states), as we tried to do a year ago (1991). We will be driven back by the whirlpool of events, if Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and others start to fall apart. If we do not start with the help of Kazakhstan to play an active post-imperial role in this region, to contain conflicts, to defend minorities etc., then, sooner or later all this will stream on us and we will not get away from it. In ten years time everything there will be like a boiling cauldron. Islamic fundamentalism is frightening. But it will be worse, when a zone of unstable countries emerges there. I think we should realize this: Russia should return to its traditional role and should win over local princes, dispatch forces, rescue people, and so on. This is a thankless task, but one that history set before us and one that we have partly brought on ourselves.³¹⁴

According to Konarovsky, the U.S. fundamental goals in Central Asia do not seem to contradict those of Russia. The key factor in both American as well as Russian approaches to the region is similar views on regional stability. He further argues, that because of this, both sides should demonstrate more encouragement for each other, so that the struggle for Central Asia does not lead to the end of secularism. The U.S. and Russia could give more effort into coordinating their regional policies.³¹⁵

Russia continues to view the region as a buffer zone against instabilities originating in the south. In its relations with Central Asia Russia has the advantage of its geographical proximity, although it is separated from the land borders of other Central Asian countries by

³⁰⁹ Kubicek, p. 649.

³¹⁰ Odom and Dujarric, p. 51.

³¹¹ Kubicek, p. 649.

³¹² Shashenkov, p. 177.

³¹³ Gerard Holden, *Russia After the Cold War: History and the Nation in Post-Soviet Security Politics*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), p. 177.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 179-180.

³¹⁵ Konarovsky, p. 256.

large territories of Kazakhstan. Furthermore, due to Russia's Eurasian geography and absence of effective Russian-Kazakh border regime, Russia is in the situation of opportunity, vulnerability, and continuous engagement in the region. However, for a 'positive-sum' situation, Russia lacks investment resources, including military resources, to invest in the region and its levels of trade with the Central Asian states are declining.³¹⁶

A leading Russian ideologue Aleksandr Panarin offered an interesting interpretation of Samuel Huntington's work *The Clash of Civilizations*. Huntington's speculations about the future conflict between the Muslims and the Slavs made Panarin to believe that the West, especially the U.S. views both as dangerous rivals and set a goal to instigate conflict between them. In order to defend its national security interests, Russia should keep this point in mind. Panarin also said that Turkey played an important role in the West's strategic geopolitical game. He thought that the West used Turkey as a kind of 'Trojan horse' in order to gain influence over Muslim regions of the former Soviet Union and weaken Russia.³¹⁷

Newly independent Central Asian states face serious problems posing a threat to their future. These problems include state-building from scratch, need for restructuring and modernizing their economies, real or potential ethnic conflict, and uncertainty about their security environment.³¹⁸ One of the biggest problems for all of the republics is that they are all landlocked. They are all looking for direct access to international markets that will allow them to export their raw materials in exchange for hard currency. The difficulty is that up until now all main channels for exportation, including oil pipelines and railways, have passed through Russia. Another serious problem is Russia's domination. This is not only due to the land-locked nature of the Central Asian states, but also as a result of Russian neo-imperialism, which has become obvious since 1993.³¹⁹

5.1.1 A Decade of Russia's Vacillating Policy toward Central Asia

Russians can hardly be accused of the 'colonial mentality' towards the Baltic peoples, Ukrainians or Belorussians. However, the majority of Russian intellectuals and

³¹⁶ Allison, p. 249.

³¹⁷ Rumer, "The Search for Stability in Central Asia," p. 49.

³¹⁸ Kubicek, p. 637.

³¹⁹ Roy, p. 190.

politicians saw Central Asia as backward, underdeveloped and culturally alien during both the Tsarist and Soviet times. Russians believed in their historical and geopolitical destiny to carry the 'white man's burden' of bringing civilization to the region.³²⁰

During the 1990s, Russian policies toward Central Asia vacillated greatly. Under Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar in the first Russian government, Central Asia was regarded as an economic burden.³²¹ In 1992-1993, Russia and Central Asian states signed bilateral agreements on friendship, mutual assistance, and cooperation in the military field. During 1992-93 Russia adopted a policy of quasi-isolationism and decided not to get involved in Central Asia.³²²

In 1993-1994, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev and head of the Russian Intelligence Service Yevgenii Primakov warned that lack of Russia's involvement would create a vacuum in the region and that the U.S. was trying to undermine Russia's efforts for recovering its great-power position.³²³ However, between mid-1994 and early 1995, Russia changed its policy to the one of presence. There were several factors, which influenced Moscow's decision to promote a more assertive policy in Central Asia.³²⁴

First, Russia's failure to deal with the Chechnia problem made the government to compensate for it by fostering more effective foreign policy in the near abroad.³²⁵ Chechnia declared itself independent on 1991, but its independence was recognized neither by Russia nor by any other country. The war in Chechnia erupted in December 1994, when Russia sent troops to Chechnia in order to overthrow President Dudaev and establish its authority over the country. The brutality of Russian forces, killing of civilians and bombing of Chechnia's capital Grozny caused objections from both Russian citizens (75 percent, according to 1995

³²⁰ Shashenkov, p. 170.

³²¹ Lena Jonson, "Russia and Central Asia," in Roy Allison and Lena Jonson, eds., *Central Asian Security: The New International Context*, (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs and Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), pp. 97-98.

³²² Yalcin, p. 250.

³²³ Jonson, pp. 97-98.

³²⁴ Yalcin, pp. 251-253.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 251-253.

poll), as well as the West. As a result, the prestige of the Russian military and President Yeltsin declined.³²⁶

Second, there was a threat of NATO's expansion to the east, which forced Russia to strengthen its position in the strategically important region.³²⁷ In 1993, the final document of Russia's official foreign policy, reportedly written by Security Council Secretary Iurii Skokov, placed emphasis on Russia's rights and responsibilities in the former Soviet republics, generally referred to as 'near abroad'.³²⁸

Third, Yeltsin's opponents called for re-establishment of old Russian and Soviet empires by any means. For example, Vladimir Zhirinovskii expressed ideas for the restoration of the former Russian empire and its rule in Central Asia.³²⁹ Others, like Karaganov, wanted to send Russian soldiers to the region. Fourth, Russia was willing to foster closer political and military cooperation within the CIS framework in order to reinforce its own position.³³⁰

Fifth, in Russia, there was hostility to growing American involvement in Central Asia. Sixth, Russia's security concerns about the potential threat of radical Islam and potential inter-ethnic or territorial conflicts in the region and its periphery grew. Seventh, in 1994, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan agreed to create a Central Asian Union (CAU), which Moscow thought was an attempt to distance themselves from Russia. With a number of problems in its autonomous regions, such as Tatarstan, Daghestan, and Bashkortstan, Russia did not want to have a hostile bloc of countries to its south. Finally, the Kremlin became also suspicious about Ankara's Turkic policy in the region.³³¹

In September 1995, President Yeltsin issued a decree on a new policy that would integrate the CIS territory, including the Central Asian states. This policy, however, was set aside. Russia's interests toward the region were based on strategic and security concerns.³³²

³²⁶ Robert H. Donaldson and Joseph L. Noguee, *The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests*, (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), pp. 229-230.

³²⁷ Yalcin, pp. 251-253.

³²⁸ Donaldson and Noguee, p. 129.

³²⁹ Yalcin, p. 252.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

³³¹ *Ibid.*

³³² Jonson, pp. 97-98.

Furthermore, a powerful ‘industrial lobby’, whose supporters succeeded to take over several important posts in the new government of Victor Chernomyrdin, stressed the importance of preserving close economic and trade links with the Central Asian states.³³³

Russia’s largest oil company Lukoil joined Tengizchevroil in November 1995. It received a 10 percent share from both Kazakhstan and Chevron. In return, Lukoil was to provide Tengizchevroil with a part of its oil export quota from Russia or make concessions in the context of the CPC.³³⁴ The CPS was founded in 1995 by Russia, Kazakhstan, and Oman. It consists of eleven companies, including Amoco, Pennzoil, Unocal, Exxon, McDermott International, British Gas and a number of smaller companies from Britain, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Norway. The consortium’s initial goal was to deliver oil from Tengiz field to the Russian port of Novorossiisk at the Black Sea for further shipment to Western markets.³³⁵

Changes in Russian policy toward Central Asia started in 1996. At this time, the pro-Western Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev was replaced by the new Foreign Minister Evgenii Primakov. Russia tried to restore its influence. However, the opportunity has already been lost.³³⁶

Olivier Roy argues that Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have basically delinked themselves from Russia and the other three Central Asian states will likely follow their example in the long run. The delinking has occurred in four areas: economic, strategic, political, and cultural. In the economic sphere Russia has lost its influence because it has nothing to offer in the field of economic development. Economic difficulties have pushed the republics closer toward the West. Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan were forced to create their own currencies, whereas they wanted to remain within the ruble zone. Blackmail and threats to shut down oil and gas pipelines also pushed republics to look for other outlets. Most importantly, Russia is not able to guarantee positive economic cooperation, such as providing aid, loans, investments, and sending of experts.³³⁷

³³³ Shashenkov, p. 172.

³³⁴ Gleason, p. 143.

³³⁵ Ibid., p. 145.

³³⁶ Syroezhkin, p. 172.

³³⁷ Roy, pp. 195-196.

From a strategic view, the Russian army is actually contributing to the troubles (civil wars and drug-trafficking) in the territories that it claims to be controlling. Roy argues that local crises (Tajikistan and Nagorno-Karabakh) allow Russia to stay there and that is why it is not trying to resolve them. Moscow is able to keep its influence over weaker states like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, but it is gradually losing its influence over those that count, for example, Uzbekistan.³³⁸

Another source of Russia's delinking is the absence of real pro-Russian parties in the Central Asian states, based either on the old nomenklaturas or on the local Russian-speaking populations. Moscow lacks 'indigenous' support and political channels among the Russian-speaking minorities, which are decreasing in number. Moscow has never tried to promote elites emerging from the Russian-speaking population in Central Asia. The Russians of Central Asia prefer to obey the law and are not inclined to upheaval. The Lad party and Cossack movements in Kazakhstan could be the only examples of militant movements.³³⁹

Finally, there is an issue of cultural de-Russification. Roy argues that the decline of the Russian language is irreversible. Russian teachers are leaving from the Central Asian states; Russian is not favored in schools; Russian newspapers are expensive and difficult to find; Russian television is less present due to political censorship and big fees requested by Moscow-based broadcasting companies; travel is very expensive; the local elites prefer to learn English; and Moscow is not providing scholarships, books, or aid volunteers.³⁴⁰

At the same time, major corporations had opened their offices throughout Central Asia. Their activities were supported by the U.S. government, which supported projects to provide local governments with advice and assistance in financial planning, privatization, and other important issues. The Peace Corps had sent volunteers to teach English and provide expertise for small business development. A number of trade agreements and bilateral assistance arrangements between all of these countries and the U.S. had been made. These agreements aimed at providing legal protection and assurances for the U.S. investors.³⁴¹

³³⁸ Ibid., p.197.

³³⁹ Ibid., pp. 197-198.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 198.

³⁴¹ Lubin, "Central Asia: Issues and Challenges for United States Policy," p. 270.

Russia became seriously preoccupied with the growth of American influence in Central Asia. Iran and China shared and openly expressed this concern, as well.³⁴² Russia tried to make it clear to other regional powers that its national and strategic interests in the region must be respected. Russia became concerned about the changes in the strategic situation in the Caspian region and Central Asia caused by increased regional involvement of the U.S. The foreign policy orientation of the region became influenced by the investments in the oil and gas sectors, as well as the prospects of new transport routes.³⁴³

In 1994, the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service report accused the U.S. policy of an attempt to weaken and isolate Russia from the rest of the former Soviet states. At that time this view was not shared by the majority of the Russian leadership. However, by November 1999, when Igor Sergeev, Russia's Defense Minister, argued that "Western policy constitutes a challenge to Russia, a challenge aimed at weakening its international positions and edging it out of the strategically important regions of the world, primarily from the Caspian region, Transcaucasia and Central Asia," his words reflected a predominant opinion of the Russian political elite. The U.S. involvement in the region caused Russia's rapprochement with Iran and China, which became more respectful towards Russian interests in Central Asia.³⁴⁴

Russia was very upset with NATO's 1999 enlargement, its strategic concept for out-of-area-operations and bombings of Kosovo and Serbia. In April 2000, President Putin signed the new military doctrine. This document, along with the National Security Concept of February 2000, demonstrated Russia's feelings about the changes in the international security system. By using such key words as 'unipolar' and 'multipolar', Russia criticized the U.S. policy and said there was need for tactical alliances that would counter a growing American and Western influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Russia also stated that its national interests in 'Europe, the Middle East, the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Asia-Pacific region' were threatened by 'attempts of other states'.³⁴⁵

³⁴² Lena Jonson and Roy Allison, "Central Asian Security: Internal and External Dynamics," in Roy Allison and Lena Jonson, eds., *Central Asian Security: The New International Context*, (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs and Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), p. 17.

³⁴³ Jonson, p. 114.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

5.1.2 Russia's Post-September 11 Policy

As an heiress of the Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, Moscow considers that the events taking place in Central Asia (and in the whole Central Eurasia) touch upon its traditional interests. Until the recent events, Central Asia remained mainly as the zone of exclusive Russian responsibility. It is no wonder that President Putin had to make some soul searching before joining the anti-terrorist coalition. He understood that Russia could lose more than others, which is to lose its exclusive position in the region, which it had to put much effort into in order to keep it after the fall of the Soviet Union.³⁴⁶

Russia supported the U.S. efforts of fighting international terrorism in general. After rather prolonged pause of more than ten days, President Putin expressed Russia's readiness to join anti-terrorist activities. Russia's assistance was limited to participation with the U.S., England and other NATO countries in joint activities, allowed to use its airspace for military and transport airplanes, activated exchange of intelligence and other confidential information about terrorists. Moscow also agreed to increase the volume of military and technical assistance to the Northern Alliance forces, which were in opposition to the Taliban.³⁴⁷

Since President Putin's coming to power in Russia, Moscow shifted from economic to military cooperation in its policy toward Central Asia³⁴⁸ and Russia's leading specialists on U.S. politics found it difficult to come to terms with Putin's pro-American U-turn in foreign policy. They had to put up with American air bases and military presence in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan after September 11. However, there has been strong opposition to Putin's 'pro-American' stand. Traditionally, Russia's top echelons of the armed forces and security forces are anti-American. They are not likely to remain indifferent if Central Asia leaves Moscow's orbit and accepts American patronage. This would mean the end of 'Great Russia' and become Putin's failure as leader.³⁴⁹ Without Central Asia, Russia would not be able to reclaim its former status of a world power.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁶ Vyacheslav Belokrenitskii, "Elementy 'Bolshoi igry' v voine zapada protiv terrorizma," *Centralnaya Azia i Kavkaz: zhurnal sotsialnyh i politicheskikh issledovaniï*, (Sweden: Information and Analytical Center, No. 6, 2001), pp. 157-158.

³⁴⁷ Vyacheslav Belokrenitskii, "Vozmozhnye posledstviya voiny s terrorizmom dlya situatsii na Blizhnem Vostoke i v Centralnoi Azii," *Centralnaya Azia i Kavkaz: zhurnal sotsialnyh i politicheskikh issledovaniï*, (Sweden: Information and Analytical Center, No. 6, 2001), p. 17.

³⁴⁸ Rumer, "The Search for Stability in Central Asia," p. 56.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

However, Russia's decision to support the American military deployment in Central Asia after September 11 was a demonstration of its cold-blooded pragmatism. President Putin realized that there was no point in fighting battles that could not be won and talking about 'spheres of influence' when you cannot prove your case. Russia could not have prevented American involvement because it realized that its influence in Central Asia was not so significant as to have them not to do what is in their utter security interests. Russia accepted new developments with grace, since it also benefited from the elimination of the Taliban regime.³⁵¹

September 11 events allowed President Putin to use this opportunity to reshape Russia's relationship with the U.S. His rational basis was clear: Russia also viewed Islamic extremism as a threat, especially in Chechnia. By supporting the West on this issue, President Putin could gain long-term political and economic benefits. Sergei Chugrov, a senior researcher with the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, formulated it as follows: "Russia's main goal is to find its place, not on the margins of world policy, but as a part of the civilized world together with the U.S. and Europe."³⁵²

After September 11 events, Russia was hoping that there would be a change in the U.S. view of the terrorist acts in Chechnia. Prior to these events, the U.S. pressured Russia motivating it with 'protection of human rights'. President Putin made the following statement and warned the U.S. about double standards:

...Political problems must be resolved by political means, but not with bandits who should be in prison...The blood of the Russian people killed in the blowing up of residential buildings is the same color as the blood of those killed during the terrorist acts of 11 September in New York. Terrorism is our common problem, which we must resolve responsibly without rush, panic, bargaining, and speculation...When we talk about double standards, we mean the following: a universally known terrorist organization al-Qa'eda functions in Afghanistan, and it was protected by the criminal Taliban regime. Everyone agrees to fight against this. The same al-Qa'eda also functions in Chechnya, where it is protected by a different criminal regime. If this regime differs in any way from Taliban, it is only in that it is probably even more bloody...³⁵³

³⁵⁰ Akimbekov, p. 75.

³⁵¹ Lo, p. 82.

³⁵² Donaldson and Noguee, p. 341.

³⁵³ Xing Guancheng, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the Fight Against Terrorism, Extremism, and Separatism," *Central Asia and the Caucasus Journal of Social and Political Studies*, (Sweden: Information and Analytical Center, No. 4, 2002), p. 17.

Since Russia expressed its support of the U.S.'s stance in the fight against international terrorism, it also wanted the U.S. to abandon its double standards and take a new look at the Russia's fight against terrorism, separatism and extremism in Chechnia.³⁵⁴ It has also been argued that Russia's participation in the anti-terrorist coalition would give Russia a chance to improve the situation in Chechnia because the terrorist groups in Chechnia, at least temporarily, would lose the financial and military support formerly provided to it by the Taliban.³⁵⁵ However, the situation in Chechnia is so out of control that no success could be guaranteed.³⁵⁶

Some scholars think that although Russia agreed to the Western military presence in its sphere of influence for the short-term, this position might change before long. Condoleeza Rice, the U.S. National Security Advisor, tried to reassure Moscow that Russia would not be 'squeezed out' of Central Asia. However, a statement made by the U.S. Secretary of State Powell in Tashkent on December 8, 2001, clearly contrasts her statement: "As regards our interests, unconditionally, they are long-term, our interest in this region should be permanent and these relations will continue after the crisis."³⁵⁷

According to Olcott, Russia still considers the countries of Central Asia as the sphere of its vitally important interests. These states have common historical ties with Russia; geographically – they are neighbors; and many of them have large Russian minorities. For this reason, even if though it seems as if Russia is stepping back on a global scale, it is nevertheless prepared to endure big losses in order to further its interests in this region.³⁵⁸

At the present time, Russia does not seem to be interested in influencing the formation of new political and economic institutions in the Central Asian states: let corrupt leaders manipulate elections as they wish and let the economic reforms continue to go

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Belokrenitskii, "Elementy 'Bolshoi igry' v voine zapada protiv terrorizma," p. 158.

³⁵⁶ Belokrenitskii, "Vozmozhnye posledstviya voiny s terrorizmom dlya situatsii na Blizhnem Vostoke i v Centralnoi Azii," p. 18.

³⁵⁷ Michael Denison, "Central Asian Politics After the Taliban: New Risks, New Opportunities," *Asian Affairs*, (Vol. 33, Issue No. 1, 2002), p. 72.

³⁵⁸ Olcott, "Razmyshleniya o politike SSHA v Centralnoi Azii," p. 1.

slowly to the benefit of local bureaucrats. After all, there should be bad times, not good ones in order for Russians to come back.³⁵⁹

Olcott thinks that it is possible to avoid competition between the U.S. and Russia in Central Asia. There is even hope that both countries could cooperate to promote improvement of the situation in Central Asia and help countries in this region to resist threats to their security. If this works out, then successes in Central Asia will bring harm neither to America, nor to Russia, nor to their strategically important bilateral relations.³⁶⁰

Some could argue that the U.S. is not as yet strong enough in the south of the post-Soviet region to assert its own rules and regulate regional relations. The complex of relations which had evolved back in the Soviet era will not permit the Central Asian states to quickly reorient themselves toward a new partner. Nevertheless, the capacity that the U.S. acquired is sufficient to ‘destroy’ the dominating ideas about the essence of Eurasian relations and the power hierarchy.³⁶¹

Certainly, Russia remains a natural partner for the Central Asian states due to the reasons mentioned earlier. President Putin stated that economically strong Russia will attract cooperation with these states. Yet for another five to ten years Russia will be busy with its domestic problems and for this period it might need to accept a realistic role of one among other influential countries that can contribute towards the establishment of a new security framework in the region.³⁶²

5.1.3 Russian Scholars’ Perspectives

Russia continues to be the geopolitical ‘heartland’ of Eurasia. However its dominance in the region, including Central Asia, is no longer valid. In political and economic terms, a dynamic situation has developed in the international strategic space of the region, providing scope for action to other actors. The end of Russia’s historic hegemony

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Alexei Fenenko, “The U.S. Factor and the Crisis of the Trans-Eurasian Area,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus Journal of Social and Political Studies*, (Sweden: Information and Analytical Center, No.3 (21), 2003), p. 22.

³⁶² Jonson, p. 120.

created a power vacuum in Central Asia, which opened a geopolitical space for internal conflicts, and external competition and intervention.³⁶³

Vechyaslav Belokrenitskii, Chair of the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences, argues that it seems that at this point the West has replaced Russia as the guarantor of stability in the region and the main force behind realization of economic and social development programs in the Central Asian republics. Moscow will have to find its place in the new local balance of forces, having to accept the role of one of the 'older brothers', but by far not the 'oldest one'. On the other hand, it could try to counter-balance the establishment of the West in Central Asia. It could have been supported by China, India and Iran, but it is very unlikely that these countries would like to risk their relations with the U.S. and other Western countries. Alone, Russia will not have the courage to put itself against the West.³⁶⁴

As Vitaly Naumkin, President of the International Center for Strategic and Political Studies in Moscow stated,

They [some Russian politicians] fear that a U.S. presence would inevitably lead to a weakening of Russian influence in the region, especially if long-term. It is evident, however, that Putin and his supporters preferred to 'admit' the United States into the security sphere on the CIS's southern flank, both to demonstrate their intention to pursue an unprecedented rapprochement with the West and out of fear of burdening Russia with onerous, expensive, and overwhelming burden of protecting its CIS partners from terrorism...³⁶⁵

Anatolii Utkin, President of the Center of International Relations at the Institute of the U.S. and Canada thinks that Americans do not do things without a reason. The U.S. has achieved its goal, the Taliban is defeated, then the American presence in the three Central Asian states has a geopolitical meaning. The meaning is to be next to the Caspian oil and Turkmen and Uzbek gas. Whereas Manas is the best base on the border with China that one

³⁶³ Ciro E. Zoppo, "Turkey and the Independent States of Central Asia," in David Carlton, Paul Ingram and Giancarlo Tenaglia, eds., *Rising Tension in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, (Dartmouth Publishing Company, 1996), p. 137.

³⁶⁴ Belokrenitskii, "Vozmozhnye posledstviya voiny s terrorizmom dlya situatsii na Blizhnem Vostoke i v Centralnoi Azii," p. 18.

³⁶⁵ Vitaly V. Naumkin, "Russian Policy Toward Kazakhstan," in Robert Legvold ed., *Thinking Strategically: The Major Powers, Kazakhstan, and the Central Asian Nexus*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), p. 62.

can wish for. The U.S. would like to have some influence on the Central Asian states and at the same time to be nearby Russia and China.³⁶⁶

Vladimir Romanenko, Deputy Head of the Institute of the CIS, expressed an opinion that American presence in Central Asia would be long term. He said that Americans always came in very fast but left very slowly. For example, Russia has pulled its troops out of Europe long time ago, whereas American troops have remained there since the end of the World War II. American presence in Central Asia is favorable to Russia because of stabilization of situation in Afghanistan. However, its long-term presence could lead to the loss of Russia's influence in the region. Furthermore, American presence has also touched upon the interests of China. Since both Russia has certain responsibilities under the Shanghai Organization, and it was the one who unofficially permitted the use of bases, it could affect Russia's relations with China. With many interested parties, such as Russia, the U.S., the Central Asian states, China, Afghanistan, as well as Pakistan and India, a very complex knot is being tied.³⁶⁷

Aleksei Arbatov, Deputy Head of the Defense Committee at Russia's Gosduma, believes that Americans will stay in Central Asia at least several years and maybe more. He thinks that this situation does not present a direct military threat to Russia. The U.S. does not pose a threat from its bases in Central Asia, considering that it could reach Russia's territory from many other directions. For example, it would be much closer for Americans to fly from Turkey, not to mention that their modern carriers have sufficient distance range and they do not need to be close by. However, he thinks that the rhetoric on the loss of influence is valid. In the past, Russia basically had monopoly in its influence over the region. Now there is another player in Central Asia – a Super Power that can provide both for security and economic development.³⁶⁸

5.2 The Role of China

In the mid-1990s, the U.S. started to shift its foreign policy and security interests toward Asia. In 1998, the Pentagon issued a report, which said that in the next 10 or 15 years no new superpower would appear to challenge the U.S. global dominance. At the same

³⁶⁶ “Bochka chernoï neblagodarnosti s ma-alenkoi lozhkoi meda,” Accessed August 28, 2003, at <http://www.zatulin.ru/institute/sbornik/046/03.shtml>

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

time, analyzing a possibility of such challenge in the foreseeable future, the report said that Asia was a potential source of threat. The reasons for such conclusion were the continent's dynamic growth, vast economic, natural, demographic, intellectual, and military resources. Asia was described as a continent that was capable of producing a global competitor to the U.S. Brzezinski also believes that a country or a group of countries from Asia may come forward in strategic perspective to compete with the U.S. on the global scale. In his book *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, he pointed out that China had all necessary qualities to develop into a superpower.³⁶⁹

5.2.1 China's Geopolitical and Geo-economic Interests in Central Asia

Three of the five Central Asian states have common borders with China. China's new neighbors in the Northwest are Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. China has a more than 3000-kilometer frontier with these states.³⁷⁰ China is interested in political stability and preventing fundamentalism in the region. If fundamentalist influence in Central Asia increases, then problems in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region and even Tibet could grow. Already in 1991, the Central Asian Uighur community boosted its activity and groups calling for independence of Xinjiang emerged. As a result, China had to strengthen its border control and make entry to the autonomous regions stricter.³⁷¹

China's interests in the region also concern cooperation and boosting trade relations with the Central Asian republics. China is the second largest energy consumer in the world. According to the U.S. Department of Energy estimates, Chinese consumption will increase to 10.5 million barrels a day. Depending on the accuracy of the estimates, China might soon become the world's largest energy consumer. In the last two decades, China's overall annual economic growth rate has been at 8-9 percent. If China maintains a growth rate of 6 percent per person, by the year 2030 it would achieve an average of ten thousand dollars per capita income, which is twice the size of the 1998 American economy. In order to reach that point, China would need a guaranteed supply of oil. Due to its proximity to Central Asia and the

³⁶⁹ Makhir Khalifa-Zadeh, "Security Problems in Asia and Certain Aspects of U.S. Foreign Policy," *Central Asia and the Caucasus Journal of Social and Political Studies*, (Sweden: Information and Analytical Center, No. 4, 2002), pp. 45-46.

³⁷⁰ Guancheng, "China and Central Asia: Toward New Relationship," p. 34.

³⁷¹ Lounev and Shirokov, p. 226.

Caspian Sea region, China can become a serious competitor for profit and influence in the area.³⁷²

China has a great interest in gaining access to the rich deposits of carbon-dioxide and hydro-resources of the Central Asian region. Beijing is actively taking part in exploring Aktyubinsk and Mangyshlak oil deposits and building an oil pipeline Kazakhstan - Xinjiang (the volume of investments could reach US\$4 billion). It also reached an agreement of participation of Chinese energy specialists in building Rogun and Nurek hydroelectric stations in Tajikistan. The question of building a gas pipeline Turkmenistan - China and railroad China - Kyrgyzstan - Uzbekistan through Torugart is also being explored. China believes that increasing economic cooperation and business dependency of Central Asia on China will help to increase its political presence in the region.³⁷³

During his visit to Almaty in 1994, President Jiang Zemin expressed his view regarding the need to create a new world order and resist the U.S. global hegemony: «The world is not at all tranquil; hegemonism and power politics are developing by new means. The so-called neointerventionism that is emerging is a new manifestation of hegemonism and power politics.»³⁷⁴ In September 1997, Premier Li Peng signed an estimated \$9.6 billion deal on oil shipments and construction of two pipelines with Kazakhstan. Based on the agreement, the China National Oil Corporation (CNOOC) will build a 3,000-kilometer pipeline from Kazakhstan to China's western border. The second 250-kilometer pipe will be built from Kazakhstan to Turkmenistan border. The CNOOC will also continue the development of the Uzen and Aktyubinsk oil fields in Western Kazakhstan on the east of Caspian Sea with an estimated 1.5 billion barrels in oil reserves. Unocal and Amoco, two major U.S. oil companies, also wanted these two large oilfields. Despite lobbying from Washington, they could not come up with the terms guaranteed by China, who agreed to finance the pipeline. This was a signal to Washington that the U.S. and international oil companies are not the only ones with interests in the region. President Jiang Zemin said that China was ready to act as a 'bridge' for railroad traffic and pipelines to the Pacific Ocean.³⁷⁵

³⁷² Alaolmolki, pp. 7-8.

³⁷³ Sergei Okhotnikov, "Kitai i Centralnaya Azia posle nachala anti-terroristicheskoi operatsii v Afganistane," *Centralnaya Azia i Kavkaz: zhurnal sotsialnyh i politicheskikh issledovaniy*, (Sweden: Information and Analytical Center, No. 6, 2001), p. 23.

³⁷⁴ Syroezhkin, p. 198.

³⁷⁵ Alaolmolki, pp. 7, 8, 10.

China and Russia are bound by the Shanghai Organization of Cooperation (SOC). It was established as a result of signing of an agreement on strengthening cooperation in military sphere at the border in 1996 by five countries of the region: China, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. In 1997, the parties signed the agreement on decreasing arms and armed forces at the border. The Shanghai organization is used by China as an arena for agreeing interests of China and Russia in the region and preventing tension between the two powers. It also serves as a tool of influence on the internal and external policies of the Central Asian states, in particular on their position on the problem of Uighur separatism.³⁷⁶ China wants to make sure that Uighur separatists will not find support neither in Kazakhstan, nor in Kyrgyzstan. The organization also provides for cooperation in spheres of trade, energy, economy, and military.³⁷⁷ Uzbekistan joined the Shanghai organization turning the Shanghai Five into Shanghai Six in 2001.³⁷⁸

5.2.2 China's Post-September 11 Policy

September 11 events started not only a new epoch in world politics, but also as a new stage in struggle for dominance in Central Asia. It is clear that neither Russia nor China would be happy to see increased American military presence in the region and a long war against terrorists on the territory of Afghanistan. China in particular would not be interested in weakening its geopolitical strategy pursued since the end of 1980s: reliance on north, which means achieving strategic agreements with all of the former Soviet neighbors;³⁷⁹ stabilization in the west, including the 'large-scale development of the West' plan of March 2000, which proposes to resettle large number of ethnic Han Chinese in the Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region;³⁸⁰ and concentration of China's main efforts in the east and south, which means maintaining normal relations with Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan. Furthermore, if radicalization of Islamists takes place in Pakistan and Afghanistan becomes

³⁷⁶ Okhotnikov, pp. 31-32.

³⁷⁷ Rakhmani, p. 154.

³⁷⁸ Guancheng, "China's Foreign Policy Toward Kazakhstan," p. 133.

³⁷⁹ Syroezhkin, p. 204.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 197.

a pro-American puppet state, it could have unfavorable outcomes for China, especially given the Xinjiang problem.³⁸¹

China is certainly interested in keeping peace and stability in the region. Since there was no question of having China provide air corridor for the U.S. airplanes, Beijing provided the U.S. with intelligence information and provided humanitarian assistance to refugees. Other actions included keeping the border in the area of the Wahan corridor closed for fear of bin-Laden's supporters' intrusion into the territory of Xinjiang. The support provided to the Islamic fundamentalists and separatists in Xinjiang in the last decade has created a threat to the territorial integrity of China. The Chinese officials have tried to have unofficial talks with the Taliban in order to prevent incoming of Uighur groups trained in Afghanistan to Xinjiang.³⁸²

Zhu Banjao, the representative of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, made a statement after September 11 events in his interview with Reuters that in response to the U.S. request of support in its fight against terrorism, China also asked Washington to support and show understanding of the Chinese people's struggle against internal terrorism and separatism. He also stated that there should be no double standards. Just like Russia was criticized for its operations in Chechnia, China was also pressured by the U.S. for violating human rights in the case of the Eastern Turkistan movement. The Chinese government argues that the Eastern Turkistan movement is trying to carry out its separatist activity under the banner of human rights, democracy and protection of minority rights, yet in its essence it is a terrorist organization:

...These measures are aimed at protecting the overall interests of the representatives of all nationalities and ensuring normal religious activity. The Chinese government is against terrorism in any form and against double standards in this area. Turning a blind eye to the terrorist forces of Eastern Turkistan will harm not only China, but also the Chinese people.³⁸³

Beijing views the American bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and the American military presence in Central Asia as a serious threat to its security.³⁸⁴ Within short period of time, the U.S. troops appeared at the Chinese border. The Chinese political analysts

³⁸¹ Ibid., p. 204.

³⁸² Tatyana Shaumyan, "Vozmozhnye posledstviya voyny s terrorizmom dlya situatsii na Blizhnem Vostoke i v Centralnoi Azii," *Centralnaya Azia i Kavkaz: zhurnal sotsialnyh i politicheskikh issledovaniy*, (Sweden: Information and Analytical Center, No. 6, 2001), p. 16.

³⁸³ Guancheng, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the Fight Against Terrorism, Extremism, and Separatism," p. 17.

³⁸⁴ Laumulin, "Central Asia After 11September," p. 34.

considered this is an undoubting victory of Washington and serious defeat of Beijing. The U.S. was able to use favorable moment to gain advantage. However, China decided to play smart. Prior to September 11 events, the Bush administration took a very tough stance on China. In spring 2001, the U.S. engaged in several measures of clearly anti-Chinese orientation: it sold large quantity of modern weapons to Taipei, issued entry visa to the U.S. to the president of Taiwan Chang Shuibang and stated that the U.S. would do everything to protect Taiwan. All of these led to deterioration of Chinese-American relations. However, China, by supporting the anti-terrorist coalition became Washington's ally in anti-terrorist fight. As a result, FBI office opened in Beijing. Both countries consult on the problem of terrorism on a regular basis. China became member of WTO, which Washington continuously resisted in the course of 15 years. Thus, China was able to overcome serious crisis in Chinese-American relations.³⁸⁵

5.3 The Afghan Issue

At the end of the 19th century, Afghanistan found itself at the intersection of interests of two great empires, the British and the Russian, which were moving toward each other while expanding their territories. Afghanistan's location happened to be in a buffer zone due to the fact that it was situated between spheres of influence and responsibility of Britain in India and Russia in Central Asia. This period in history received a title of 'The Great Game'. In 1838-1842, the first British-Afghan war took place, during which Afghanistan managed not to lose its sovereignty. As a result of the second war, which took place in 1878-1881, Afghanistan's emir was forced to agree to conduct his external affairs through British-Indian representatives. The 'Great Game' of the 19th century was over in 1907, when the alliance between Germany and Austria-Hungary, which was growing stronger, made Russia and Britain create an alliance of their own. The third British-Afghan war took place in 1919 and reinstated full sovereignty of the country.³⁸⁶

After the end of the World War II, especially from the mid-1950s until the end of 1970s, Afghanistan turned from a buffer zone and a developing state valuing its independence, which it was at the end of the 19th-beginning of the 20th centuries, into a victim of the Cold War. It turned into a devastated, fragmented, archaic periphery of the

³⁸⁵ Okhotnikov, pp. 28-29.

³⁸⁶ Belokrenitskii, "Elementy 'Bolshoi igry' v voine zapada protiv terrorisma," p.152.

modern world. The end of the rivalry between the USSR and the U.S. in Afghanistan could not bring it back into a state of weak yet centralized country moving toward modernization due to the following factors: an internal struggle between various groups had begun; consequences of destructive war had not been eliminated; Afghanistan turned into an object of rivalry not only of global powers (the U.S.), but also regional powers - Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, as well as regional-global powers—Russia, India, and to some extent China. The last and the most important factor of destabilization was a combination of Islamic radicalism, extremism, and terrorism.³⁸⁷

Since the mid-1990s, Islamic international, mainly Arab, extremism strengthened the Taliban movement, which was able to establish itself in the south and south-west of the country. Between 1994-1996 due to assistance from Pakistan, with approval from the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, the Taliban managed to take over Kabul. The influence of several thousands of Arab extremists, who were headed or somehow connected to Usama bin-Laden, increased in Afghanistan.³⁸⁸

In August 1998, after the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, Washington drastically changed its attitude toward the Taliban. Departing from its indirect support that it provided in the past, the U.S. started demanding extradition of bin-Laden, and in August 1998 bombed Afghanistan aiming to destroy bin-Laden's residencies, bases and terrorist training camps. It is important to note that the Taliban was likely in a difficult situation itself, since it mainly depended on bin Laden, his organization, connections, and money. Furthermore, it lost full support from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which were the only countries that recognized the Taliban's authority over Kabul and Afghanistan. The presence of Arabs, who follow teachings of Wahhabism, among the Taliban forces promoted radical views among its leadership. Furthermore, the Prime Minister of the Taliban government, Mulla Mohammad Rabbani, who was considered a moderate, died in spring 2001. As a result, the radical wing in the Taliban leadership increasingly dominated the movement.³⁸⁹

On September 11, 2001, the world was shocked by the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon building in

³⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 153-154.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 154-155.

Washington, D.C. On October 8, 2001, the U.S. started bombing Afghanistan.³⁹⁰ As a result of the anti-terrorist campaign in Afghanistan, the Taliban as a military-political, ideological, and power structure was defeated.³⁹¹

Various groups, parties and military leaders emerged after the defeat of Taliban. Those who had joined the coalition forces before September 11 were able to position themselves as real players. One of them is Abdurashid Dustum, who currently controls the Northern provinces with exception of Tahrar and Badakhshan. General Ismail-Khan reappeared in the west and became the governor of Herat, which was his possession in the past. The Shi'ite Hazaras and the head of the Hezb-e Wahdat party Karim Khalili returned to their possessions.³⁹²

Gulbeddin Hekmatyar, leader of the Islamic Party of Afghanistan, poses as an active Anti-Americanist. Sayed Ahmad Gilani, leader of the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan, acts as a pro-Western liberal figure. Sibghatullah Mojaddidi, head of the National Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan, looks toward the conservative Arabic circles and also enjoys Iranian patronage. There is also a professor of theology, Abdur Rauf Sayyaf, who is the leader of the Islamic Union for the Liberation of Afghanistan. In the past, he was the president of the provisional *mujahiddin* government in Peshawar, Pakistan, but recently he supported the Northern Alliance and was said to control the province of Parwan.³⁹³

In November 2001, Hamid Karzai, leader of the influential Pashtoon tribe of Popolzai living near Kandahar emerged as the leader of the U.S.-supported Afghan government. His grandfather was Chairman of the Upper Chamber of the Afghan Parliament in 1968-1973 when Zakir Shah was still the King. In 1992-1995, under Rabbani, Karzai was Deputy Foreign Minister. In October 2001, with support of the former king, he returned from exile and fought Taliban in the south of Afghanistan. At the Afghan Bonn conference, it was agreed to establish 'coalition government with a participation of all ethnic groups' and appoint Karzai head of provisional government.³⁹⁴

³⁹⁰ Korgun, p. 8.

³⁹¹ Ibid., p. 5.

³⁹² Ibid., p. 8.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 9.

As a result of September 11 events, the U.S. and its NATO allies established military presence in three of the five Central Asian states. As Legvold described it, “Central Asia, in particular, ceased to be a collection of forgettable ‘-stans’, and emerged as an integral piece in the war on Al-Qaeda and the Taliban.”³⁹⁵ The U.S. did actually more than simply establish bases in Central Asia. It demonstrated that it would assume responsibility for Central Asia’s security. The U.S. reconstructed airstrips, mounted housing compounds, installed communication equipment, brought the F-15Es and FA-18s—all of these measures indicated that the U.S. intended to stay. Even when the mission in Afghanistan is completed, the infrastructure allowing for rapid redeployment would be there. As the U.S. Undersecretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz said, the U.S. wanted to “send a message to everybody, including important countries like Uzbekistan, that we have a capacity to come back in and will come back in—we are not just going to forget about them.”³⁹⁶

The war in Afghanistan turned Central Asian states into a vital strategic resource because they provided bases that the U.S. and its allies needed for their operation. This does not mean only war, but also delivery of humanitarian and other aid for post-war rebuilding process in Afghanistan. At the same time, the Central Asian states became a new object of concern because the region is sensitive to instability, terrorism, and other possible problems, which could be generated by Afghanistan, and possibly Pakistan or Iran.³⁹⁷

5.3.1 Islam in Central Asia and the Threat of Islamic Extremism

During the Gorbachev era, Islam was able to revive itself in Central Asia. For Central Asians, Islam was a familiar way to go back to their pre-Soviet historical and cultural identities. By 1991, a great number of new mosques had been opened in Central Asia. At the same time, Islamic militancy or Muslim fundamentalism, a movement that became major force in the 20th and 21st centuries in reaction to Western power and influence, posed a threat to the region. Muslim fundamentalists believe that most of the regimes in the Muslim world are not sufficiently Islamic. They believe that the Central Asian states also fall into this category. They want to overthrow these regimes and replace them with others that would govern in accordance with the Islamic law—*sharia*. Islamic

³⁹⁵ Legvold, “Introduction: Great Powers in Central Asia,” p. 1.

³⁹⁶ Legvold, “U.S. Policy Toward Kazakhstan,” pp. 68-69.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

fundamentalists support *jihad*, or the holy war, and often use terrorism and other violent acts to achieve their goals.³⁹⁸

In many places in Central Asia, especially among nomadic Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Turkmen tribes, Islam has often been more tolerant than in other parts of the Muslim world. Since these nomads practiced shamanistic and mystical rituals before adopting Islam, they became less influenced by militant Islamic doctrines infiltrating into Central Asia by the late 20th century, then Uzbeks, Tajiks, and southern Kyrgyz co-religionists did. Afghanistan also played a role in spreading fundamentalist views during the 1970s and 1980s by teaching imprisoned Soviet Central Asian soldiers fundamentalist ideas, which they passed on to other youth upon returning home.³⁹⁹

All of the Central Asia's current leaders view 'tilt' to Islam as a threat to strengthening their political positions. These leaders have established a secular model of leadership in order to strengthen their authority and popularity. For example, President Nazarbaev of Kazakhstan thinks of himself as the leader of Asia's new economic 'dragon'. President Akaev of Kyrgyzstan sees himself as the head of 'Switzerland of Asia'. Turkmenistan's President Niyazov proclaimed himself 'Father' of all Turkmen. President Karimov of Uzbekistan has sought an image of a just ruler who had to become dictator by the force of circumstance. Tajikistan's President Rakhmonov is a leader who liberated his people from the tyranny of Islamic democracy.⁴⁰⁰

Despite the fact that all of the Central Asian leaders are non-religious in their outlook and the states are officially secular, there is possibility that growing national awareness will lead to an intensified Islamic consciousness.⁴⁰¹ For example, in Uzbekistan, there is not much sympathy for the Islamic fundamentalism among the educated Uzbek citizens. An airline employee said to a Western reporter: "I'm glad Karimov is locking up these Wahhabis up. They are a menace to society."⁴⁰² Another economist said: "Don't get me wrong. I'm not against religion. I'm a believer. I just don't think I need to be covered

³⁹⁸ Kort, p. 79.

³⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 79-81.

⁴⁰⁰ Martha B. Olcott, "Islamic Consciousness and National Ideology in Central Asia: What Role for Foreign Actors?" in Anoushiravan Ehteshami, ed., *From the Gulf to Central Asia: Players in the New Great Game*, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1994), p. 8.

⁴⁰¹ Brzezinski, p. 133.

⁴⁰² Kort, p. 129.

from head to toe in a *burka* to prove it. It's like anything else in life, moderation is best."⁴⁰³ However, many people are scared of the government and feel helpless in the face of repression and economic difficulties. As one teacher said: "Families live with their heads down struggling to survive...We can't eat ideals and slogans anymore. Things are getting desperate for everyone."⁴⁰⁴

On February 16, 1999, a bomb exploded inside the government building where President Karimov was to address the cabinet in the morning. As the president's car approached the building, gunfire and grenade concussions were heard. As a result of this act of violence, fifteen people were killed and more than 150 injured. It is not clear whether it was an assassination attempt on President Karimov or whether it was an attack on the current government.⁴⁰⁵

The Uzbek officials blamed it on the Islamic militants. They have expressed their fear of the rise of Islamic fundamentalism coming from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran, for a long time.⁴⁰⁶ President Karimov was fearful of destabilizing effects of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Tajikistan on Uzbekistan. He was quoted saying: "Tashkent does not want Tajikistan to become an Islamic state. An Islamic country bordering on it would be dangerous for the people of Uzbekistan, most of whose population are Muslims."⁴⁰⁷ During his visit to the U.S. in April 1999, President Karimov attributed the bombings and an assassination attempt as an expansion of religious fundamentalism in the region.⁴⁰⁸

According to the Amnesty International's Report for Uzbekistan 2001, there are reports of bad treatment and torture by law enforcement officials of members of independent Islamic congregations or followers of independent imams. Hundreds of suspected members of the banned Islamic party Hizb-ut-Tahrir, including women, were arrested and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment after unfair trials.⁴⁰⁹ Some argue that there have been certain

⁴⁰³ Ibid., pp. 129-130.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 129.

⁴⁰⁵ Alaolmolki, p. 78.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Tom Everett-Heath, "Instability and Identity in a Post-Soviet World," in Tom Everett-Heath, ed., *Central Asia: Aspects of Transition*, (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), p. 191.

⁴⁰⁸ Alaolmolki, p. 78.

⁴⁰⁹ *Amnesty International Report: Uzbekistan 2001*, Accessed August 26, 2003 at <http://web.amnesty.org>

improvements in the state of human rights in Uzbekistan since its conclusion of strategic partnership with the U.S. In September 2001, for the first time in history of Uzbekistan, political and religious prisoners received amnesty. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Uzbekistan, 860 prisoners, who were convicted for membership in Hizb-ut-Tahrir accused of anti-state activities, were released. However, the majority of members of Hizb-ut-Tahrir are already in prisons (approximately 4200 people) and the activities of this organization in Uzbekistan have been largely suppressed.⁴¹⁰

The hostage crisis, which took place in Kyrgyzstan in August 1999, was one of the largest activities conducted by an Islamists movement in the region. A group of more than three dozens of armed guerrillas calling themselves followers of the Uzbek Islamic leader Juma Namangani made their way into southern Kyrgyzstan from their bases in Tajikistan and took thirteen hostages with four Japanese geologists among them. This underground Islamic opposition group to President Islam Karimov aiming to establish an Islamic state in the Ferghana Valley demanded a safe passage to enter Uzbekistan. Four Kyrgyz officials were taken hostage and released only upon collecting a ransom. The group and its bases were bombed by the Uzbek air force, however it had little effect. The Kyrgyz army failed to force the group back to Tajikistan. By that time, the number of militants increased to more than seven hundred and several Kyrgyz villages in Osh Oblast were taken over by them. Kyrgyz authorities requested assistance from the Russian military to drive the insurgents out.⁴¹¹

In the fall of 2003, the Uzbek National Security Service arrested Azizbek Karimov, one of the IMU members, in Ferghana Valley. Karimov was a member of the elite IMU group *Istihborot*, which engages in intelligence and counter-intelligence activities, and guarantees the organization's security. Karimov said that he received an order to destroy the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek and the Hotel Pinara, where many Americans stay during their visit to Kyrgyzstan. Karimov claimed that he received his order in Tehran from someone by the name of Abu Sameh, who is the representative of Al-Qaeda. He received \$24,000 for the operation but the explosion at the American Embassy did not happen because of technical

⁴¹⁰ Buharmetova, pp. 25-16.

⁴¹¹ Alaolmolki, p. 6.

problems. Instead, Karimov arranged for an explosion at the Bishkek market. As a result of this act of violence, seven people died and 20 received injuries.⁴¹²

On November 4, 2003, Kyrgyzstan's National Security Service arrested three young Kyrgyz men. They were suspected in planning a terrorist attack on the Gansi military base, 30 kilometers from Bishkek. During the arrest, the agents expropriated grenades, a sawn-off shotgun, Kalashnikov rifle cartridges, and plans for a bomb.⁴¹³

According to the National Security Service, these three men were members of Hizb-ut-Tahrir and had been trained in camps in Afghanistan. The order to attack the base was also received in Afghanistan. None of the arrested men denied their actions. They said that Allah called Muslims to stage a war against the U.S. The Gansi base, which is under the U.S. command, and temporary home to several hundreds of American military men, was an ideal target.⁴¹⁴

By 2002, Hizb-ut-Tahrir had an estimated 3,000 active members in Kyrgyzstan. The majority of them are becoming increasingly active in the south of the country.⁴¹⁵ As of the beginning of the 2003, the IMU and Hizb-ut-Tahrir remain active in Central Asia. These militant groups are serious players attempting to reshape the future of Central Asia.⁴¹⁶ Some scholars argue that if the West continues to support the Central Asian regimes which lack democratic features, then it could lead to anti-Western sentiments, which is already common for the majority of the Islamic movements in other Muslim parts of the world.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹² Ludwig Gibelgaus, "...Mne prikazali vzorvat posolstvo SShA," *ResPublica*, (N28 (513), 9.09.2003), p. 2.

⁴¹³ Sultan Jumagulov, "RCA-Kyrgyz 'Terror' Arrests Questioned, Not Everyone Believes the Government's Claim to Have Foiled an Islamic Terror Attack on the United States Military," Accessed November 10, 2003 at <http://www.gazeta.kg/view.php?i=3253>

⁴¹⁴ Dmitry Glumskov, "Kirgizia priznana opasnoi stranoi dlya Amerikantsev," Accessed November 11, 2003 at <http://www.gazeta.kg/view.php?i=3217>

⁴¹⁵ Kort, p. 161.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁴¹⁷ Petra Steinberger, "'Fundamentalism' in Central Asia," in Tom Everett-Heath, ed., *Central Asia: Aspects of Transition*, (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), p. 239.

5.3.2 Narcotics Trafficking

Central Asia is close to one of the world's four major centers of narcotics production. It is the so-called golden crescent, which includes Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan. At the present time, there is much international discussion about restoration of the 'Great Silk Road' that once ran through Central Asia. However, this route has been restored a long time ago as the Great Narcotics Route.⁴¹⁸

Afghanistan ranks second after Burma in opium production. According to the U.S. CIA, Afghanistan harvested 1,670 tons of opium from 51,500 hectares in 1999, which showed a 23 percent increase compared to the previous year. While cultivation of opium is concentrated mainly in provinces Hilmand (25,500 hectares) and Nangarhar (12,500), which were under control of the Taliban, opium is cultivated in eighteen out of twenty-nine provinces. The data on opium production varies significantly. Whereas the CIA provided a figure of 1,670 tons for 1999, the Branch of Technical Assistance of the European Commission in Kazakhstan provided a figure of 4,600 tons, which is almost twice the amount of the previous year. Although in 1997 the Taliban announced that the cultivation of opium poppy should be reduced, its production steadily increased.⁴¹⁹

In 2002, Stanislav Zhukov argued that narcotics created the basis of Afghanistan's economy and no realistic alternative seemed to be possible in the nearest future.⁴²⁰ The role of Central Asia in drug trafficking based in Afghanistan has grown. The main transportation routes lead to the north where the former Soviet-Afghan border used to be and where the newly independent states of Central Asia are now. There are six main shipment routes to Europe and the U.S. Four out of these six lay through Central Asian states:

- 1) Kandahar-Herat-Turkmenistan-CIS-Europe;
- 2) Kandahar-Balkh-Jaujan-Uzbekistan-CIS-Europe;
- 3) Konduz-Khatlonskaia oblast of Tajikistan-Russia-Europe;
- 4) Peshawar-Chitral (northwestern Pakistan)-Afghan Badakhshan-the Gorno-Badakhshan autonomous oblast (Tajikistan)-Kyrgyzstan-CIS-Europe.⁴²¹

Pakistan's 'Pashtun mafia,' which is an organized criminal group among the fifteen million Pashtuns in northwestern Pakistan, also has interests in Central Asia. About the

⁴¹⁸ Stanislav Zhukov, "Central Asia: Development Under Conditions of Globalization," in B. Rumer, ed., *Central Asia: A Gathering Storm?* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 2002), p. 367.

⁴¹⁹ Akimbekov, p. 85.

⁴²⁰ Zhukov, p. 367.

⁴²¹ Akimbekov, p. 86.

same number of Pashtuns live on the contiguous territory of Afghanistan. This group controls the drug traffic and a huge volume of contraband. Central Asia has become a target for this group because its borders, which could be easily penetrated, create an ideal transit route for their activities.⁴²² According to the European Commission, 65 percent of all Afghan drugs travel through Central Asia. The biggest part, close to 2000 tons, goes to Europe.⁴²³

Kazakhstan has natural conditions that are favorable for growing cannabis and opium poppy, as well as narcotics use and trade. The country is also located on the route to narcotics markets in Western countries. Until 1991, Shymkent plant in Kazakhstan was the only source of medicinal opiate. Kazakhstan requested the U.S. to provide aid for drafting narcotics provisions in the new penal code. Kazakhstan's Ministry of Internal Affairs tried to run anti-narcotics program but due to low funding, the program of eradicating cannabis and poppy cultivation basically stopped in 1995.⁴²⁴ In July 1999, Kazakhstan along with other members of the Shanghai Forum agreed to establish a permanent mechanism for high-level meetings on such security issues as cross-border crime, drug trafficking, as well as transport cooperation and economic collaboration.⁴²⁵ In April 2000, the presidents of the member states in the Central Asian Economic Community (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan) signed a treaty. This treaty provided for shared efforts to struggle against terrorism, political and religious extremism, transnational organized crime and other issues presenting threat to stability and security.⁴²⁶

Kyrgyzstan's government officials believe that the narcotics industry presents the biggest challenge to the country's internal security and stability. The government is afraid that this industry will grow because there is not much international assistance. The current distribution chain delivers opium from Moscow to Poland and then further on to Europe and the U.S. It is said that Kyrgyzstan produces even better poppies than the nearby Afghanistan. In 1992, the country applied to the World Health Organization to get permission for

⁴²² Rumer, "The Search for Stability in Central Asia," p. 37.

⁴²³ Akimbekov, p. 86.

⁴²⁴ Martha B. Olcott, "Kazakhstan," *Country Studies*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), pp. 96-97.

⁴²⁵ Jonson, p. 117.

⁴²⁶ Martha B. Olcott, "Common Legacies and Conflicts," in Roy Allison and Lena Jonson, eds., *Central Asian Security: The New International Context*, (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs and Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), p. 43.

renewing production of medicinal opium in order to generate much needed income. However, the plan was dropped under the pressure from world community.⁴²⁷

Uzbekistan has an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 hectares of domestic opium poppy grown annually. The country has been exposed to the availability of domestic narcotics, as well as those smuggled from Afghanistan, for a long time. Due to its location in the center of the region, as well as its transportation system through Tashkent, make Uzbekistan's capital a hub for drug traffic from Central Asia to other destinations.⁴²⁸

In 1992, the U.S. recognized that Central Asia was a potential route for major drug trafficking and started persuading all Central Asian states to make drug control a priority in their domestic policy. The majority of the U.S. narcotics aid to Central Asia was channeled through the UN Drug Control Program. In 1996, under this program, Uzbekistan adopted drug-control intelligence centers and canine narcotics detection squads. One year earlier, Uzbekistan concluded bilateral cooperation agreements against narcotics with Turkey. The same year, it joined the 1988 UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.⁴²⁹

The border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan is easily pregnable for narcotics smugglers. The lack of serious law enforcement in both countries creates favorable opportunities. The opium trade became economically important during difficult times after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The transit line moves opium from Afghanistan to Pakistan into Tajikistan. From Dushanbe it travels to the Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan border and then on to Moscow, other Russian and CIS cities, as well as European markets.⁴³⁰ In 1995, Tajikistan's government decided to implement a new regional program for drug interdiction, based on the UN Drug Control Program office in Tashkent. The agencies responsible for drug interdiction included the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Customs, the Procurator General, however there was no formal framework for such interagency cooperation.⁴³¹

⁴²⁷ Olcott, "Kazakhstan," pp. 190-191.

⁴²⁸ Lubin, "Uzbekistan," pp. 465-466.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 467.

⁴³⁰ Atkin, "Tajikistan," pp. 287-288.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

Saodat Olimova and Muzaffar Olimov argue that the recent events in Afghanistan had no noticeable effect on the flow of drugs to Tajikistan. Despite the fact that the antiterrorist coalition had maps of narcotic crops and heroin laboratories in Afghanistan, the drug dealers seemed to remain unaffected. The Drug Control Agency experts said that the decrease in drug trafficking in the beginning of 2002 was due to technical reasons. However, it regained its usual level by February 2002. In 2002, experts expected Afghanistan to produce more than three thousand tons of opium, most of which would be shipped to Europe.⁴³²

Opium cultivation was banned by the provisional government of Afghanistan. It is trying to buy out the plantations of narcotic crops from the growers. However, a radical decline in drug production is not likely to happen until socioeconomic situation in Afghanistan is significantly improved. Drug growing and drug trafficking is also increasing in the Ferghana valley because of poverty, unemployment and lack of unity among the Central Asian states.⁴³³

According to the estimates made by the UN experts in 2000, 80 percent of Europe's heroin came from Afghanistan and Pakistan. Most of it made its way to Europe by passing through Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. As it made its way through these countries, many poor and rootless people turned into drug addicts. Heroin replaced opium, a weaker and less addictive narcotic, as the drug of choice in Central Asia. Because heroin is so close to the source, it costs very cheap: an average dose cost 50 cents in Tajikistan and \$2 in Kyrgyzstan. HIV infection and AIDS followed the heroin addiction and created a growing social tragedy and health crisis in these countries.⁴³⁴

The September 11 events caused an increase of heroin prices. This led to the expansion of the territories under narcotic crops and deterioration of the crime situation. In Central Asia, especially in the Kyrgyz and Tajik parts of the Ferghana valley, high government officials, military and militia are involved in drug dealing. Here, corruption lives on the drug business, state power is undermined, and the situation is unstable.⁴³⁵

⁴³² Saodat Olimova and Muzaffar Olimov, "Antiterrorist Campaign in Afghanistan and Its Impact on Central Asian Neighbors," *Central Asia and the Caucasus Journal of Social and Political Studies*, (Sweden: Information and Analytical Center, No. 4(16), 2002), p. 41.

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Kort, p. 78.

⁴³⁵ Olimova and Olimov, p. 42.

According to Olcott, several million Kyrgyz are engaged in the production, refining, sale and trafficking of drugs with an annual turnover of \$14 billion.⁴³⁶

5.4 Conclusion

The conflict in Afghanistan is far from being over. It still presents a security threat both for Central Asia, as well as for the rest of the world. For this reason, it is likely that the U.S. will continue its military presence in the region. However, it is too early to make conclusions about how it is going to affect the situation in the Central Asian states in the long run, given such factors as Russia's desire to revive its influence in these countries, as well as the possibility of China's challenge to the U.S. in the region.

⁴³⁶ Olcott, "Common Legacies and Conflicts," p. 43.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis, I examined the evolution of the U.S. policy toward Central Asia from the moment of Central Asian states' gaining independence until the establishment of NATO military bases in the region. From the literature review that was provided in Chapter 1, one could see that there had been different kinds of opinions with regards to the question about Central Asia's importance. Some authors argued that the region was somewhat important and some argued that it presented strategic importance to the U.S. In the process of writing the thesis, I realized that these two categories were not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, both categories proved that there had been a steady growth in America's interest toward the region due to political and economic reasons.

In Chapter 2, I discussed Central Asia's historical importance. For centuries, it attracted numerous conquerors and served as a cultural, political, and economic bridge connecting the West and the East. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1990, five newly independent Central Asian states emerged. These states, although rich in human and natural resources (some more than others), were weak and disoriented. However, the Central Asian states occupied an important part in the heart of Eurasia due to geo-economic and geopolitical factors and, as it was argued by Brzezinski, the U.S. became interested in taking over what once belonged to its great rival.

In Chapter 3, I discussed changes in the U.S. foreign policy toward Central Asia. From the early until the mid-1990s, the U.S. pursued a general policy of supporting democracy and economic reforms. It also wanted to contain instability fearing the misuse of the nuclear weapons and resources, as well as the spread of Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia. The Central Asian states were drawn into the Western military orbit through participation in NATO's PfP. During this period, the U.S. leadership has formulated more assertive goals toward the region and assigned Central Asia strategic importance.

In the late 1990s, the U.S. engaged in creating favorable economic conditions for the American companies investing in the region. It also became concerned about the possibility of the return of Russia's domination and China's aspirations for the region. The U.S. used economic and political leverage to exert more pressure on the Central Asian leadership. The U.S. policy was focused on restricting Russia's monopoly in the region and containing Iran. The end of 1990s demonstrated an increasing tendency in the U.S. policies for unilateral actions.

The September 11, 2001, events brought the Central Asian states into the center of the U.S. attention and led to the conclusion of strategic partnership and establishment of military bases in the region. As some scholars argue, because of this strategic interest, the U.S. is not critical enough of the Central Asian regimes, which have become increasingly authoritarian. The U.S. needs to support economic and political pluralism in these states. Furthermore, it does not need to act as a hegemon in the region and could share this responsibility with Russia. The U.S. commitment has grown with the establishment of new bases in Central Asia. However, the question is whether the U.S. would be able to carry this load of responsibility and whether it might eventually lead to anti-American sentiments both in the Central Asian region and the Muslim world in general. Some scholars also argue that the status of the U.S. military bases in the region might change from temporary to the permanent one.

In Chapter 4, I analyzed the development of the U.S.-Central Asian relations. Initially, the U.S. was mainly interested in Kazakhstan due to two major reasons: first, Kazakhstan possessed nuclear weapons and the U.S. eventually succeeded in eliminating this problem; and, second, the U.S. was interested in developing Kazakhstan's oil reserves. While relations with Kazakhstan remain very important from an economic perspective, Uzbekistan gradually became America's important strategic partner in the region. This importance was based on the fact that Uzbekistan was the most populous and homogenous country in the region with strong military and it could possibly serve to counter-balance Russia's influence. This strategic partnership became even stronger in the aftermath of September 11 when the U.S. established a military base in Uzbekistan. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have never been as important to the U.S. as these two states from the economic point of view due to the lack of resources. However, they were part of the region and they, too, proved to be important during the operation 'Enduring Freedom'. The two countries provided their territories and airspaces for the anti-terrorist operation. Turkmenistan is certainly important because of its vast oil and gas resources. However, due to its status of

neutrality and Niyazov's peculiar style of government, the U.S. has not been able to develop its relations with this country much except for the economic part.

In this chapter, I also analyzed the human rights situation in Central Asia. It is clear that the Central Asian leaders have given up their promises to build democratic societies in their countries. The U.S. policies have brought some effect in terms of improving the state of human rights in Central Asia; however, much remains to be done. As it was argued by some of the authors, the current strategic cooperation between the U.S. and the Central Asian ruling elite allows the latter to use the issues of Islamic extremism and terrorism to continue with their authoritarian style of rule and exert pressure on their citizens. Such attitude, however, could lead to internal social dissatisfaction and create a source of potential threat both for the states themselves, as well as for the region as a whole. For this reason, the U.S. needs to continue supporting political and economic reforms to ensure secure and stable situation in the region. However, the question how much financial support is needed and whether this support would not be misused by corrupt regimes remains open.

In Chapter 5, I discussed the receptivity of Russia, China, and Afghanistan toward increasing American presence in Central Asia. One could see that Russia conducted a vacillating policy toward the former Soviet republics of Central Asia. In the early 1990s, despite its 'imperial' attitude, given its own domestic problems, Russia viewed the Central Asian states as a burden and did not have much interest in securing relations. However, starting from the mid-1990s Russia undertook a 'near abroad' policy and attempted to dominate the region once again. When Putin came to presidency, this tendency increased even further and concentrated on military cooperation. Yet, September 11 events demonstrated Putin's pragmatic way of thinking, who not only offered Russia's cooperation to the U.S. in the battle against terrorism, but also did not object to the U.S. military establishment in Central Asia. The opinion shared by many Russian scholars and politicians is that while Russia will remain a natural partner for the Central Asian states due to historical, geographical, and economic factors, at the present time it is not in the position to stand up against the advancement of the American interests in the region. However, it is also clear that Russia would not be pleased if American military bases in Central Asia stay longer than it was promised.

Another important regional player is China. This is the country that was described by Brzezinski as a potential challenger to the U.S. primacy in the world. China, too, has a number of interests in Central Asia. These interests range from security issues related to the problem of the Uighur separatism movement to energy issues. China is a country with a

population of over one billion people and it surely needs natural resources to ensure its successful economic development. It is actively exploring possibilities of economic cooperation with all of the Central Asian states but primarily with Kazakhstan. Alongside with Russia, China is a member of the SOC and it uses this membership to shape its relations with the Central Asian states. China, too, was very cooperative during the anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan. Such eagerness brought China serious benefits in terms of improving its relations with the U.S. However, just like Russia, China would not be happy about a long-term U.S. military presence next to its borders.

Currently, the situation in Afghanistan is still unstable. It continues to present a security threat both to Central Asia and to the rest of the world. Although the Taliban has basically been defeated, there is data that members of militant Islamic groups Hizb-ut-Tahrir and IMU are being trained in camps in Afghanistan. There is still fear of Islamic extremism in the Central Asian states. Another serious problem is the narcotics trafficking. Despite the relative improvement of the situation in Afghanistan and policies aimed at eradication of narcotic crops in the country, the amount of crops continues to increase. The routes of narcotics trafficking go through all five of the Central Asian states. Furthermore, the significant number of local population in these countries is actively engaged in growing, processing, and transporting narcotic crops. The number of local drug addicts is also increasing. Economic underdevelopment, unemployment and general climate of instability contribute to this problem.

Central Asia with its population of over 55 million has a great potential for development. It has a lot to offer to the world. It has talented people, who have contributed to the world's culture. It has strategically important natural resources that make it unique. In order for the Central Asian states to become developed countries, they need to overcome obstacles that holding them back. The most important ones are the lack of democracy, corruption, and instability. If these countries manage to resolve these problems, the economic situation in the region should improve dramatically, making them even more attractive to foreign investments. All five of the Central Asian states have a good foundation in terms of human and natural resources to build on a successful nation. Their problems would be eliminated if these countries would make a decision to step away from the authoritarian rule of government. With this step, Central Asia would start on the path to a great and promising future.

The thesis has demonstrated that the U.S. goals in Central Asia are multifaceted. The U.S. is trying to provide for greater stability in the region by establishing closer ties

with the Central Asian states and weakening Russia's influence in Central Asia. If the situation in Afghanistan becomes stable, then it will allow the American oil lobby to channel the Central Asian energy fuels by excluding Russia and by-passing Iran to world markets. Strong military position of the U.S. in Central Asia will allow it to continue controlling military and strategic developments in Afghanistan and the region as a whole.

The U.S. policy toward Central Asia has undergone serious evolution from political and economic support to assigning the region strategic importance in terms of energy resources, preventing spread of radical Islam, counter-balancing regional powers from gaining too much influence in Central Asia, and turning the region into the battle ground in its struggle against terrorism. All of these factors indicate that America has serious and most likely long-term intentions with regards to the Central Asian region, despite Russia's and China's discontent. It is also clear that no other state could challenge its power at the present time.

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