

EMERGING REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX IN CENTRAL ASIA: SHANGHAI  
COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (SCO) AND CHALLENGES OF THE POST 9/11  
WORLD

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE EMERGING REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX IN CENTRAL ASIA: SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (SCO) AND CHALLENGES OF THE POST 9/11 WORLD**

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The aim of this thesis is to examine the changing characteristics of the regional security complex in Central Asia. The thesis focuses on the changes in the roles that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) plays in promoting regional security in Central Asia, especially since the formation of the international coalition against international terrorism in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001. Contrary to the mainstream literature that focuses mainly on the security concerns of either regional powers or of great powers that considered this region as their own sphere of influence, this thesis argues that Central Asia's security issues that emerged in the aftermath of 9/11 could be explained better by taking the emerging regional security complex in Central Asia as the main unit of analysis.

The thesis consists of seven chapters: In Chapter 1, thesis is introduced. Chapter 2 develops a conceptual framework for the thesis by examining the nature of regional security complex theory. This is followed by the examination of the characteristics of regional security complex in Central Asia in Chapter 3. Next, Chapter 4 discusses the foreign policies of the United States, Russia and China towards Central Asia. Chapters 5 and 6 examine the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, its role in the struggle against international terrorism and their reflections on the changes of the characteristics of Central Asian regional security complex. Last chapter concludes the thesis.

**Keywords:** Regional Security Complex Theory, Central Asia, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, International Terrorism

## ÖZ

### ORTA ASYA BÖLGESEL GÜVENLİK KOMPLEKSİ: ŞANGAY İŞBİRLİĞİ ÖRGÜTÜ (ŞİO) VE 9/11 SONRASI DÜNYA VE ZORLUKLARI

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Bu tezin amacı, Orta Asya'daki bölgesel güvenlik kompleksinin değişen özelliklerini incelemektir. Bu tez, özellikle, 11 Eylül 2001'deki terorist saldırıların ardından uluslararası terorizme karşı uluslararası koalisyonun oluşturulmasından itibaren, Şangay İşbirliği Örgütü'nün, Orta Asya'da bölgesel güvenliğin gelişmesine yardımcı olmada oynadığı rollerdeki değişimlere odaklanmaktadır. Özellikle, bölgeyi kendi etki alanı olarak değerlendiren bölgesel ya da büyük güçlerin güvenlik kaygılarına odaklanan hakim literatürden farklı olarak, bu tez 9/11'den sonra Orta Asya'da belirginleşen güvenlik sorunlarının, Orta Asya'da ortaya çıkan bölgesel güvenlik kompleksini temel analiz birimi kabul ederek daha iyi açıklanabileceğini ileri sürmektedir.

Tez, yedi bölümden oluşmaktadır: Birinci bölümde, tez tanıtılmaktadır. İkinci bölüm, bölgesel güvenlik kompleksi teorisinin doğası incelenerek kavramsal bir çerçeve oluşturur. Bunu, üçüncü bölümde, Orta Asya bölgesel güvenlik kompleksinin özelliklerinin incelenmesi takip eder. Ardından, dördüncü bölüm, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, Rusya ve Çin'in Orta Asya'ya yönelik dış politikalarını tartışmaktadır. Beşinci ve altıncı bölümlerde ise, Şangay İşbirliği Örgütü, onun uluslararası terorizme karşı mücadeledeki rolü ve bunların, Orta Asya bölgesel güvenlik kompleksinin özelliklerindeki değişimlere yansımaları incelenmektedir. Son Bölüm, tezi sonuçlandırmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bölgesel Güvenlik Kompleksi Teorisi, Orta Asya, Şangay İşbirliği Örgütü, Uluslararası Terörizm

**To Asutay, Sevtap and Özge**

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the changing characteristics of the regional security complex in Central Asia. Particularly, the thesis will focus on the changes in the roles that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) play in promoting regional security in Central Asia since the formation of the international coalition against international terrorism in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 (9/11.) In this context, dwelling upon these three preferred indicators will be beneficial in order to put a light on the intentions of this thesis.

First of all, in the post-Cold War world where regions acquired autonomy to a certain extent, unlike state-centric paradigms, a regional perspective is advantageous in examining the security architecture of the units, which share several interconnected concerns in terms of politics, economics and security. In other words, the security concerns are connected insofar as the conducts of one unit have consequences for others in the region. In this context, Central Asia draws significant amount of attention in world affairs after the collapse of the Soviet Union with its geo-strategic, geo-political and geo-economic position. This is to say, with its noteworthy potential for crisis stemming from internal or external dynamics and considerable economic resources at the heart of Eurasia, which Brzezinski claims to be a “Grand Chess Board”<sup>1</sup>, Central Asia needs to be understood as a significant region.

Although, until the end of the Cold War, the regional perspective was mostly neglected under the reigning realist paradigm, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, there appeared several scholars that focused on Central Asia and its security equation. While some of them centered on the relations of the Central Asian states with one or more great powers, be it the United States (US), Russia or China etc., others focused on one of the dynamics that has significant impact on its security equation, be it internal or external or both etc. Although, one can discern a lack of comprehensive and theoretical examinations of the

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<sup>1</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, New York, Basic Books, 1997, p. 30-50.

region that take all these components into consideration, it will be beneficial to have a look at the significant contributions to the studies concerning Central Asian security architecture.

Starting with Roy Allison and Lena Jonson, the most significant study of them, 'Central Asian Security: The New International Context' focused on the region in a comprehensive and multi-dimensional manner by the help of the concept of the regional security complex.<sup>2</sup> According to Allison and Jonson, the Central Asian security complex contained Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and also Afghanistan owing to its proximity and spillover effects on the region. In this regard, Central Asia, locked into common security concerns and linked to each other, was subject to great attention of the great powers, namely, the US, Russia and China followed by Turkey and Iran after the collapse of the Soviet Union due to its geo-strategic and geo-economic potentials. Therefore, along with its internal security dilemmas, especially deriving from the common denominator of radical Islam, these powers added much to the chaotic transition and affected the evolution of the regional security structure. They did so by mainly changing the distribution of power within the regional security complex with the help of their miscellaneous means and securitizations. As a result, according to Allison and Jonson, the region seemed unlikely to evolve into a regional society of cooperation. The conflictual dynamics dominated the security agenda of the region where regionalism attempts did not carry out any potential for such a transformation. In sum, they argued that the intervention of the great powers, especially Russia prevented the region from finding its balance. Although, this assumption is well supported in their book, the main weakness of their work appeared to derive from the fact that it does not take the impact of 9/11 into consideration as it was written before these events.

Considering the future prospects for the evolution of the regionalism in Central Asian security architecture, S. Neil MacFarlane, sharing the same assumption with Allison and Jonson, argued that the US has more impact on the evolution of the regionalism attempts than Russia, owing not only to its powerful means that provided deeper reaching out to the region as being the global hegemony, but also for the fact that it did not carry regionalism as its priority.<sup>3</sup> On this matter, one can also distinguish Annette Bohr who argued that the main obstacle in front of the success of the regionalism in Central Asia stems from domestic

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<sup>2</sup> Roy Allison and Lena Jonson (eds.), *Central Asian Security: The New International Context*, London, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2001, p. 219-246.

<sup>3</sup> S. Neil MacFarlane, "The United States and Regionalism in Central Asia", *International Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 3, 2004, p. 460-461.

dynamics, namely, the authoritarian attitudes of Central Asian states' leaders and their suspicion towards each other and towards their own people.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Niklas Swanström argued that Central Asia's most cooperation focused on crisis management through bilateral grounds rather than long-term conflict prevention owing to the lack of trust and political willingness to surrender some of the national jurisdiction to a regional organization. This tendency certainly invited the inclusion of extra-regional actors into the security mechanisms of the region.<sup>5</sup>

Following the events of 9/11, one can discern a shift of focus in the evaluations of scholars concerned with Central Asian security. Although there were several among them, such as Stephen Blank who have underlined the significance of the region for the security concerns of the US prior to these events especially in economical terms, in the aftermath of 9/11, the focus has shifted to geo-strategic security concerns in the name of international anti-terrorism campaign.<sup>6</sup> In this context, Allison and Jonson revised their theses. For instance, Allison dwells upon several weaknesses of security-related regionalism in Central Asia. Among them, along with the legacy or presence of Russian regional hegemonic influence, which may or may not be displaced over time by the US, he cites the competitive engagement of major powers and local states seeking to consolidate national sovereignty.<sup>7</sup> However, despite their tendency to take the presence of the US in the region into consideration, one can discern that their focus remained on the relations of Russia and Central Asian states, with an additional emphasis on the ability of the Central Asian states in a multi-vectored game with more actors engaged and with more security perceptions.

In this context, several other scholars focused on the attitudes of Central Asian states, stressing their sincere welcome to the US presence as a counter-balance to mainly Russia and China. According to Martha Brill Olcott, the Central Asian leaders enjoyed a major geo-political swing towards the region as they found a mission for themselves in

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<sup>4</sup> Annette Bohr, "Regionalism in Central Asia: New Geopolitics, Old Regional Order", *International Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 3, 2003, p. 498, 501.

<sup>5</sup> Niklas Swaustöm, "The Prospects for Multilateral Conflict Prevention and Regional Cooperation in Central Asia", *Central Asian Survey*, Vol.23, No.1, March 2004, p. 48-51.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Blank, "The United States and Central Asia", *Central Asian Security: The New International Context*, (eds.) Roy Allison and Lena Jonson, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, Brookings Institution Press, 2001, p.127-147.

<sup>7</sup> Roy Allison, "Regionalism, Regional Structure and Security Management in Central Asia", *International Affairs*, Vol. 80, No.3, 2004, p. 481.

global politics and have demonstrated the strategic importance of their region.<sup>8</sup> They have come to be the experts of the multi-vectored game of diversifying alternatives as witnessed in the aftermath of 9/11. As a consensus that can be discerned among the scholars, Uzbekistan drew the most attention with its critical position within the regional security complex of Central Asia. It was often argued that the route it would choose to follow determined the evolution of the region as well, especially in terms of possibilities for cooperation.

Scholars also paid attention to the new strategic triangle created between the US, Russia and China on the ground of Central Asia by revising the “Great Game” themes into a new version.<sup>9</sup> According to the consequent developments, they preferred to put forward short-term analyses. For instance, while Robert Legvold and also Celeste A. Wallender claimed that the relations between the US and Russia evolved into a cooperative nature<sup>10</sup>, Jia Qingguo made the same evaluation regarding the Sino-US relations with their consequences for Central Asia. Both argued that the US-led war in Afghanistan turned Central Asia into a strategic ground due to its proximity and potential for new security crisis.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Boris Rumer wrote that the geo-political situation in the region has been dramatically changed as the US has come to dominate the region as the main security manager while causing great amount of anxieties on the part of Russia and China.<sup>12</sup> Besides, according to Elizabeth Wishnick, in the aftermath of 9/11, the US started to play a key role in setting the limits to Sino-Russian strategic cooperation due to its entrance into the Central Asian security equation.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Stephen Blank discussed that the US engagement might lead to an intensifying focus of international rivalry with Russia, stemming from its recognition of the region as its sphere of influence. In this context, Çağrı Erhan also shared the same view with

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<sup>8</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, “Taking Stock of Central Asia”, *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 56, No. 2, Spring 2003, p. 3-18.

<sup>9</sup> Rajon Menon, “The New Great Game in Central Asia”, *Survival*, Vol. 45, No. 2, Summer 2003, p. 187-204.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Legvold, “Great Power Stakes in Central Asia”, *Thinking Strategically: The Major Powers, Kazakhstan, and the Central Asian Nexus*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2003, p. 1-38, Celeste A. Wallender, “Silk Road, Great Game or Soft Underbelly? The New US-Russia Relationship and Implications for Eurasia”, *Strategic Developments in Eurasia After 11 September*, (ed.) Shireen Hunter, London, Routledge, 2002, p. 93, 96-97.

<sup>11</sup> Jia Qingguo, “The Impact of 9-11 on Sino-US Relation: A Preliminary Assessment”, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 3, 2003, p. 159-177.

<sup>12</sup> Boris Rumer, “The Powers in Central Asia”, *Survival*, Vol. 44, No.3, Autumn 2002, p. 57-68.

<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth Wishnick, “Russia and China: Brothers Again?”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 12, No. 5, September/October 2001, p. 820-821.

Blank, claiming that the long-term presence would certainly raise the tensions between the US, Russia and China.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, whether the US' stay in the region will transform into long-term commitment would be critical for the evolution of the Central Asian security complex and it seemed reasonably clear that the US would likely to expand its presence in the region.

This thesis argues that Central Asia's security issues that emerged in the aftermath of 9/11, could be explained better by taking the emerging regional security complex in Central Asia as the main unit of analysis. However, until 2001, one can discern a lack of regional perspective on Central Asia's security issues. The focus was basically on the security concerns of either regional powers or of great powers that considered this region as their own sphere of influence.

In this context, this thesis intends to examine Central Asian security architecture through the prism of the SCO. In this way, it attempts to examine this organization in its own wider context, which is largely ignored in the literature, by relying on the Regional Security Complex Theory. Unfortunately, there is almost no significant theoretical study on this organization. In this respect, following Matthew Oresman, I think that the SCO is significant for a study that aims to enforce a multi-dimensional research.<sup>15</sup> This is to say that, the SCO, although being neglected among other organizations that have been established in the region, deserves more attention as it gives the scholar a ground to take a picture of almost all the units engaged in region's security architecture synchronically.

In addition, through its declarations and summits, concerns and factors shaping the calculations, whether internal or external dynamics, and conducts of these actors can be revealed. In this perspective, as the missing link of this equation, the global securitization process concerning anti-terrorism via the impact of 9/11 can be added into the picture as the developments that have taken place in Central Asia altered the very nature of its security architecture and this alteration can be witnessed through the response of the SCO. By doing so, one can also put a light on the limits of this organization in gathering the units of the Central Asian regional security complex behind a cooperative agenda on security.

In this framework, in Chapter 2, I will briefly dwell upon the framework provided by Barry Buzan under the name of Regional Security Complex Theory that will help evaluating the findings of the thesis in a more attentive manner. In this part of the thesis, I will shortly discuss the position of this theory in the debates including both the theories of international

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<sup>14</sup> Çağrı Erhan, "Amerika'nın Orta Asya Politikası ve 11 Eylül Sonrası Açılımları", <<http://www.stradigma.com/turkce/kasim2003/vizyon.html>>

<sup>15</sup> Matthew Oresman, "The SCO Summit and Criteria for Analysis", <[http://www.chinaeurasia.org/files/CEF\\_June\\_2004.pdf](http://www.chinaeurasia.org/files/CEF_June_2004.pdf)>



relations and security studies to grasp its principal assumptions and then continue to describe the scheme it provides for regional studies concerned with security.

In Chapter 3, I will mainly discuss the characteristics of the Central Asian regional security complex and for this end, have a look at the historical background of the Central Asian region which will include brief information about its implications on the present experiences of the region in relation with its strategic geo-political and geo-economic position. I will also discuss the transition that the region passed through in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, while dwelling upon both the internal and the external factors that the newly independent states of Central Asia faced. Meanwhile, I will have the opportunity to underline the significance of the region rendering it attractive for competing great powers which take their place in a new and revised 'Great Game' that opens up a new phase in the history of the region where strategic thinking in terms of geo-politics and geo-economics still reigns. Afterwards, I plan to examine the way the region preferred/or had to deal with the overwhelming conditions of the transition in terms of security, relying on its historical tendencies; accommodation and balancing. In this context, attempts of regionalism will be dealt with by referring to the corresponding web of the organizations within which the newly independent states of Central Asia participate, driven by different levels of the above mentioned tendencies and securitization processes. In this context, the emphasis will be put on the convenient ground provided for analyzing the Central Asian security architecture by the Shanghai Five and later on the SCO.

In Chapter 4, in order to interpret what the SCO reflects about the Central Asian security architecture properly, it will be beneficial to have an overall analysis of the strategic calculations of the great powers; the US, Russia and China, in terms of their objectives accompanied by the corresponding means they employed in Central Asia. However, separate relations between these great powers will also be mentioned as their patterns are frequently reflected on the regional dynamics of the Central Asia as well. In this regard, the US, Russia and China will be analyzed with respect to their relations with the Central Asian States since the collapse of the Soviet Union along with their implications for the Central Asian regional security complex. By doing so, I expect to put a light on the inseparable interaction between the internal and external factors, the regional actors and great powers that could not only underline the conflictual and facilitating dynamics accompanied by the patterns formed by friendship and suspicion among these actors, but also provide the ground for me to discuss the impact of 9/11 on the web of interactions concerning Central Asia.

In Chapter 5, I will try to seize what has been thus far discussed by accommodating the equation appeared throughout the thesis in the framework offered by the Shanghai Five and the SCO for the reasons mentioned above. In this context, the securitization processes

stemming from the security equation emerged through the interaction of the actors will be analyzed starting from the formation process of the Shanghai Five, stretching to the transformation of this forum into a regional security organization; the SCO and briefly its organizational structure while dwelling upon its main objectives and its summits. I will also provide an introduction about the varying perceptions of the actors concerning the organization with respect to their defined interests and securitization processes carried onto the SCO platform.

In Chapter 6, main emphasis will be put on the impact of the 9/11 on the Central Asian regional security complex as it paved the way for significant consequences that brought the region under heightened attention of the world politics and as it also brought about an intersection of the global and regional securitization processes in the name of anti-terrorism. In this regard, I will dwell upon the reactions of the actors that were previously analyzed, just after 9/11 hit the international scene. Afterwards, following the developments chronologically, I will try to put a light on the calculations that shaped the conduct of these actors with respect to their relations with each other. Finally, I will trace the reflections of these developments on the mirror of the SCO, through the answers it designed while dealing with its inner tensions and facing the challenge of the new variable added into the security architecture; the presence of the US.

In Chapter 7, which is the concluding part of the thesis, the prospects for the Central Asian security complex through the SCO will be discussed by referring to the findings of the chapters whose contents has been described above. In this framework, throughout the thesis, I will raise the following questions to be answered in the conclusion. First and most importantly, which regional patterns make the fore in the Central Asian regional security complex through the prism of the SCO and under which circumstances?' Secondly, what do these regional patterns imply about the essential structure of the Central Asian regional security complex and with respect to the developments starting from the collapse of the Soviet Union, stretching to date, does the SCO carry the possibility to transform the Central Asian regional security complex into a regional society destined for cooperation? Finally, what does the presence of the US in the region imply about the prospects for the SCO and Central Asia in the future, referring mainly to the anxieties of Russia and China and the receptivity degree of the Central Asian states?

By searching answers for these questions, the main purpose of this thesis can be considered to put a light on the present Central Asian security equation by paying attention to the regional actors and great powers involved in this equation, considering their strategic thinking, objectives, concerns and means along with their stance on the scene of the world politics. Although this intention is not the first among the theses concerned with Central

Asia, the strong point of this thesis is constituted by the reference to the SCO as an institutionalized securitization process, rather than focusing on the relations between one great power and the Central Asian states, enabling one to analyze the emerging regional patterns within the region in a more multi-dimensional and comprehensive manner in terms of actors and interaction avenues. Searching through these variables, another intention appears; to find an answer to the question whether the region carries out the potential for transforming itself into a regional society given its facilitating and conflictual dynamics and given the interaction between the internal and external factors overlapping with these dynamics and in this respect, whether the SCO has been able to create a facilitating platform.

By assigning himself to such an attentive work, the author hopes that this thesis will be helpful to anyone who desires to learn more about the region or who is interested in the developments that take place within the Central Asian regional security complex while taking its significance in world politics into account by putting forward different perspectives for regional studies owing to a combination of various analytical tools and an up to date analysis of wide-scoped research material to anyone who desires to learn more about the region or who is interested in the developments that take place within the Central Asian regional security complex while taking its significance in world politics into account.

## CHAPTER 2

### CONCEPTUALISING REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX

How can one best analyze the security architecture of Central Asia? I will claim that there emerged a distinct regional structure in Central Asia and this structure appeared with its unique patterns and interactions that it necessitated a closer analysis with a regional perspective. However, until the end of the Cold War, one can discern a lack of regional perspective where Central Asia has been overlooked. One can hardly find a theoretical analysis focusing on the regions. This lack of attention was mostly deriving from the principle assumptions of the prevailing realist paradigm which focused on several security themes such as deterrence, coercion and escalation, causes on stability, arms control and the importance of conventional forces and limited war in the context of the nuclear age; in sum the implications of the Cold War atmosphere.

Realism has depended on a “rational actor”, namely state that has been privileged in world politics by concerning it as the one and only legitimate focus for decision-making and loyalty. The state became the only referent object of Cold War studies in which strategic problems were analyzed in terms of their impact on states. “‘National security’ was stressed as opposed to the security of individuals, groups of one sort or another, civil society, world society or common humanity. The justification for this was the doctrine that the state provides security for its own citizens.”<sup>16</sup> Methodologically, these arguments were criticized by many not only for the failure of the actor to reach the assumed rationality, but also for drawing the attention away from organizational, psychological and domestic political factors that also shape the state behavior along with the rational calculations of the military balances.<sup>17</sup>

Secondly, realism mainly referred to military threats rather than nonmilitary sources of international tensions while leading to narrowing of the research field almost only to war. In this context, security was equated with military security. In other words, “during the Cold War, security studies were composed mostly of scholars interested in military statecraft. If

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<sup>16</sup> David A. Baldwin, “The Concept of Security”, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 23, 1997, p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> Stephen M. Walt, “The Renaissance of the Security Studies”, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 35, 1991, p. 211-215.

military force was relevant to an issue, it was considered a security issue; and if military force was not relevant, that issue was consigned to the category of low politics.”<sup>18</sup> In such a framework and with the absence of a regional perspective despite a deep focus on the state, it was not surprising that many elements of security escaped closer investigation.

Following the end of the Cold War, the importance of the regional level compared to the global one has been increased and this relative autonomy of the regional security forms a pattern radically different from that of the Cold War atmosphere. Therefore, the scheme put forward by the dominant realist paradigm appeared not adequate enough to evaluate the new security environment in a new world order. Given the tight relationship between the Cold War and security studies, it is not unforeseen that the end of the former led to a crisis in the latter,<sup>19</sup> which has been “an opportune moment for international relations scholars to examine the explanatory strengths and weaknesses of prevailing theories.”<sup>20</sup> This was not only due to the ceasing of the military and nuclear obsessions of the Cold War, but also as a result of the uncertainty that started to reign in the international arena accompanied by new threat perceptions.

Stemming from the theories of international relations, there appeared two agendas concerning security. While traditionalist security studies continue to insist on their military and state-centered view by situating the state in a global web of security issues, there also appeared a wider agenda. This wider agenda, known also as critical security studies were dissatisfied with the narrowing of the field of security to such a scope and suggested new routes to follow and actors to examine when analyzing security issues.<sup>21</sup> In this debate, claiming to take the middle ground, the Regional Security Complex Theory, developed by the Copenhagen School deserves attention. It does not only offer various analytical instruments for the security studies after the collapse of the Soviet Union, especially owing to its regional focus, but also contributes to forming of a reliable framework for the intentions of this thesis.

Before taking a closer look at the contributions and innovations of this theory, it will be beneficial to have a look at the insufficient evaluations of the neo-realist paradigm for the

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<sup>18</sup> Baldwin, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Kelechi A Kalu, “Post Cold-War Realism, Liberal Internationalism and the Third World”, *Journal of Asian and African Studies JAAS*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2001, p. 225.

<sup>21</sup> Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Lynne, Rienner, 1998, p. 1-5.

contemporary world order and its critics, mainly constructivism, in order to have a better understanding of the Regional Security Complex Theory.

Before taking a closer look at the contributions and innovations of this theory, it will be beneficial to have a look at the insufficient evaluations of the neo-realist paradigm for the contemporary world order and its critics, mainly constructivism, in order to have a better understanding of the Regional Security Complex Theory.

## **2.1 Neo-realist Understanding of Security and Its Neglect of Regional Level**

In order to have a better understanding of the different perspectives the neo-realists and the constructivists employ while evaluating international relations on a theoretical level, one can distinguish several components on which the neo-realist and constructivists have dissimilar arguments. In this regard, the role of structure in world politics, the effects of anarchy on state behavior, the definition of state interests, the nature of power and the prospects for change that leads to different security definitions and frameworks<sup>22</sup> can be cited.

Firstly, dwelling upon the role assigned to structure in world politics by these two perspectives will be beneficial in order to trace the contours of the debate. According to neo-realists, a structure is a set of variables, be it balance of power or market, that constraints the behavior of the states in an anarchical world politics. In this respect, states seen as unitary actors who want to maximize their self-interest under the constraints of international system should seek self-help; security independence, whenever possible. This translates into a never-ending struggle for survival, power and wealth.

In this context, “no theory of international politics emphasizes security more than neo-realism, which posits it as the primary motivation of states.”<sup>23</sup> According to Kenneth Waltz; in anarchy, security is the highest end. Only if survival is assured can states seek such other goals as tranquility, profit, and power.<sup>24</sup> Neo-realists view security as a zero-sum concept in the sense that more security for one actor (unit) means less for another. This suggests that the ‘winner’ of such a competition would be a state surrounded by insecure states. The question of whether insecure neighbors are good neighbors remains. Moreover,

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<sup>22</sup> Ted Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory”, *International Security*, Vol.23, No.1, 1998, p. 171-181.

<sup>23</sup> Baldwin, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p. 21-22.

according to Baldwin, this definition seems problematic, as it does not answer the questions such as “survival of which values, how much assurance is enough, what are the costs of security?”<sup>25</sup> Given the importance of security in neo-realist analyses it is surprising that they have devoted remarkably little attention to explaining what security means.

On the other hand, the constructivist approach views states as social actors whose actions follow international or domestic rules, norms, institutions and identities.<sup>26</sup> Constructivists claim that the neo-realist assumption concerning the role of structure in world politics is meaningless, as it does not contain the inter-subjectivity that effects the construction of the structure, mutually with the actor. That is to say that the actors develop their relations with and understanding of others through norms and practices, which simultaneously constitute the meaning. Therefore, it is this inter-subjective characteristic, not the anarchy defined as the absence of authority above the states on the international ground that establishes the meaning and the structure. And as the meaning is an inter-subjective product, then the definition of anarchy can be conceived in different domains with different meanings deriving from their social practices.<sup>27</sup> Besides, self-help can structurally determine state behavior only under one of the definitions of anarchy and is excluded from the equation where there is a chance of compromise. In this context, “one can begin to theorize about different issues in international affairs that are understood by actors, as more or less anarchic.”<sup>28</sup>

Secondly, identity stands at a crucial point in the constructivist challenge to neo-realist frameworks. While, neo-realists only recognize self-interested states as the only meaningful identity with a single eternal meaning across time and space and lead to a homogenizing assumption that states have the same a priori interests in the global anarchical environment, constructivists have a lot more to say on this issue.

According to Hopf, identities fulfill three important functions: “they tell you, who you are with respect to others; they differentiate between interests and corresponding actions and they do so concerning particular domains and with respect to particular actors.” In this regard, according to constructivists, a state understands others by attributing identity to them while simultaneously reproducing its own identity by conducting daily social practice. This

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Theo Farrell, “Constructivist Security Studies: Portrait of a Research Program”, *International Studies Association Review* 4, 2002, p. 50.

<sup>27</sup> Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics”, *International Organization*, Vol.46, No.2, 1992, p. 391-425.

<sup>28</sup> Hopf, *op.cit.*, 174.

means that a state cannot have the full control over its identity in the eyes of others as this process takes place inter-subjectively and a state does not necessarily constitute the a priori center but depends on historical, cultural, political and social contexts.<sup>29</sup> For instance, Russian Federation although tried hard to erase its imperial image from the memories of the Central Asian states, supporting the claim of inter-subjectivity, it could not be successful in doing so, given the fact that balancing organizations constituted to counter-balance Russian ambitions that are conceived as uncertain in the region. In sum, if a state is a variable depending on the process of identity formation and inter-subjectivity, then its interests will depend on the same process. Thus, one cannot assign the same and a priori interests to the states in a preferred definition of anarchical world order.

At this point, the crucial but missing question attracts the attention of the constructivists: why are some interests make the fore while others are absent from the agenda? In other words, “critique of neo-realists and neo-liberals concerns are not what these scholars do and say but what they ignore: the content and source of state interests and social fabric of world politics.”<sup>30</sup> Thus, constructivism rather seeks to explore how the current reality has evolved and this also applies for the preference between the issues to be securitized and the issues that are not securitized.

In this sense, from the perspective of constructivists, states are expected to have wider range of potential choices of actions before them than is assumed by neo-realists but these choices will be constrained by social structures that are mutually created by states and structures through social practices in an inter-subjective manner.

Thirdly, there are different conceptualizations of power. While neo-realists assumes that the materialistic power, be it military or economic or both, is the single and most important source of influence and authority, constructivism argues that both materialistic and discursive power are necessary for a better understanding of the world affairs. Leaning on Michel Foucault’s power/knowledge nexus or Gramsci’s ideological hegemony and in accordance with the inter-subjective characteristic of the meaning formation, constructivists claim that the discursive power derives from the social practices that reproduce inter-subjective meanings and simultaneously constitute social structure and actors. In other words, the state actions are constrained and empowered by prevailing social practices at home and abroad. However, one cannot ignore the fact that military and economic powers are required to sustain institutions, which enable these social practices.

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.175.

<sup>30</sup> Farrell, *op.cit.*, p. 51.



Lastly, constructivism, conceiving politics as a continual contest for control over the power necessary to produce meaning in a social group leads to the assumption that as long as there is difference, there is a potential for change. Concerning the prospects for change, constructivism, rooted in the sociology of knowledge and shares assumptions with post modernism as well as older approaches like Hedley Bull's 'anarchical society', tries to insert new definitions of threats, issues of security and actors to the agenda of international relations. However, it does not offer more hope than neo-realism as it widens the agenda, but new domains introduced to study are also constructed by the same social practices it tries to reveal.

To sum up, "Contra neo-realism, constructivism assumes that actors and structures mutually constitute each other; anarchy must be interpreted to have meaning; state interests are part of process of identity construction; the power is both material and discursive and change in world politics is both possible and difficult."<sup>31</sup> Thus, as a result of this comparison, while neo-realists define security "just as teams compete to be champions, so states compete for security; and just as the champion is better at playing the game than other teams, so states with more security than other states are better at playing the neo-realist version of the 'game' of international politics", constructivists focus on the process of securitization that is considered to be inter-subjective.

Relying on this view of security, constructivists argue that;

We must grasp the genesis and structure of particular security problems as grounded in concrete historical conditions and practices, rather than in abstract assertions of transcendental rational actors and scientific methods. We must understand the genesis of conflicts and the creation of the dilemmas of security as grounded in reflexive practices rather than the outcome of timeless structures.<sup>32</sup>

At this point, it will be beneficial to draw a differentiation between conventional constructivists and critical constructivists. Although both desire to denaturalize the taken for granted social phenomena and both recognize the inter-subjective characteristic of the social contexts leading to mutual constitution of the structure and actor, the main difference derives from their distance to positivist methodology. In other words, "to the degree that constructivism creates theoretical and epistemological distance with itself and its origins in critical theory, it becomes conventional constructivism."<sup>33</sup> While the latter depends more to the critical social theory introduced by Frankfurt School, the first one is closer to neo-realism

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<sup>31</sup> Hopf, *op.cit.*, p. 181.

<sup>32</sup> Lisa Thompson, "Theoretical Approaches to Security and Development", <<http://www.iss.co.za/Pubs/Monographs/No50/Chap4.html>>

<sup>33</sup> Hopf, *op.cit.*, p. 182.

in its acceptance of positivism to a certain extent. This is mainly because of their aims at theorizing the world affairs. Critical constructivists are more likely to dwell upon the possibilities for deconstructing the structure for change compared to conventionalists who are closer to neo-realists in their methodology.<sup>34</sup>

To sum up, one can easily discern that the neo-realist paradigm, like its precedent realism, continued to overlook the regional dynamics while analyzing world affairs concerning security by mainly focusing on a global anarchic system level and on states that seek self-help within this framework. Therefore, due to the relative autonomy appeared in regional terms after the collapse of the Soviet Union, a theoretical regional focus that could bring about productive conclusions remained absent theoretically in their analyses. Thus, the contributions of the Regional Security Complex Theory deserve great attention in putting away this deficiency.

## **2.2 Regional Security Complex Theory**

As a member of the conventional constructivist Copenhagen School<sup>35</sup>, Barry Buzan while taking his part in the above-mentioned debates, suggested a new framework for regional security studies. Retrospectively, his suggestion can be considered to be two-folds. First one is now named as the “classical security complex theory” and the second with a wider version of this theory; “regional security complex theory”. The latter derived from the desire to meet the needs of security analysts when researching the complicated world created in the aftermath of the Cold War. As this thesis mainly depends on this framework, it will be beneficial to dwell upon it briefly.

Buzan’s main objective was to include as many different types of threats and actors as possible to the security studies as a response designed for traditionalists’ narrow agenda and state-centric focus, and while doing so, knowing his limits in order not to fall into the incoherency of the wider agenda criticized by the traditionalists. Therefore, he started with giving no priority to any level of analyses. For this end, he depended on the assumption that after the Cold War, international relations would take on a more regionalized character.

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<sup>34</sup> For a criticism arguing that constructivist scholars have tended to ignore the constitutive effects of the global economy in the process of distancing themselves from materialist ontologies, see: Varadarajan, Latha, “Constructivism, Identity and Neoliberal (In)security”, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 30, 2004, p. 319-341.

<sup>35</sup> For further information and criticism, see: Michael C. Williams, “Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics”, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 47, 2003, p. 511-531 and Bill McSweeney, “Identity and Security: Buzan and the Copenhagen School”, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 22, No.1, 1996, 81-93.

The classical security complex theory (CSCT) has two steps when starting to analyze security.<sup>36</sup> First, it establishes the regional level with reference to the relational nature of security as it perceives security not as an isolated object, but an interconnected phenomenon and secondly it sketches out full range of layers of analysis.

To start, in the first step, Buzan defines a security complex in its regional terms according to several criteria. His basic assumption is that the security interdependence is more intense among the states inside such complexes than with states outside them. In this context, security complexes are about relative intensity of interstate security relations. These relations lead to regional patterns shaped by the differentiation among the units of the complex, patterns of enmity and amity among these units and as a result, the distribution of power. In sum, the structure of a security complex is generated by the states within that complex by their security perceptions of, and interactions with, each other.

Criteria concerning enmity and amity among units stand at a crucial point. If there is a growing amount of enmity among the units of a security complex then on the negative extreme, one comes across conflict formation; if there is amity at a high rate, on the positive extreme, there emerges a security community. A security community requires a conscious recognition on the part of regional states that they have certain common interests they need to preserve despite the existence of differences, even disputes among them. This recognition leads to regional integration while changing the power structure of the complex. Defined in this fashion, the concept of regional society is likely to appear analogous to the concept of international society introduced by the English school of International Relations theorists. In the words of Hedley Bull,

A society of states or international society exists when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions<sup>37</sup>

Such a notion usually manifests itself in strong and well-established institutions of regional cooperation for both security and welfare purposes.<sup>38</sup> Lastly, in the middle ground one faces states that perceive each other as threats but made reassurance arrangements to reduce security dilemmas. These patterns are designed to be sensitive about the major shifts

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<sup>36</sup> For further information for this theory, see: Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, Boulder, CO, Lynne, Rienner, 1991.

<sup>37</sup> Mohammed Ayoob, "From Regional System to Regional Society: Exploring Key Variables in the Construction of Regional Order", *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 53, No.3, 1999.p. 248.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249.

in the complex, which necessitates a redefinition of that complex in order to refer both to static and dynamic terms.

Then what is a security complex in its classical sense? It is a set of states with territorial proximity, namely neighboring states, with major security perceptions and concerns that are interlinked and their national security problems cannot be analyzed apart from each other due to the interdependence shaped by these factors.

Subsequently, in his second move, Buzan sets out the layers of analysis as the relations between domestic security environment of states and societies, regional security complexes and at the system level the great powers penetrating into affairs of local complexes. In other words, “it needs to be recognized that the degree of order and security at the regional level is crucially influenced by variables operating at the global and domestic levels.”<sup>39</sup>

On the domestic layer, the early stages of state-making and its corollary, nation-building involve the use of violent means by the state in order to extend and consolidate its control over contested demographic and territorial space, and counter-violence on the part of those segments of the population resisting the extension and consolidation of such control. State building is not conducted within individual countries that are territorially, demographically or politically isolated from each other. Colonial legacies and “inadequate stateness” lead to the proliferation of contested demographic and territorial space, and to frequent interstate conflicts in post-colonial regions that radically undermine regional order.<sup>40</sup> Such contests involve populations within states that unwillingly accept or ardently deny the legitimacy of post-colonial state boundaries and that have ethno-linguistic or ethno-religious links with peoples in neighboring states and inviting extra regional involvement.<sup>41</sup>

On the other hand, regional dynamics are determined not only by the domestic processes of the state building and nation-building processes. They are also deeply influenced by the operation of the global balance of power and rivalries among the major powers. “For their part, regional state elites attempt to utilize issues relating to the global balance to enhance their own state and regime interests. This leads to the inevitable intertwining not merely of global and regional, but of global and domestic dynamics as

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247.

<sup>40</sup> For a criticism concerning these arguments, see: Pinar Bilgin, “Beyond Statism in Security Studies: Human Agency and Security in Middle East”, *The Review of International Affairs*, Vol.2, No.1, Autumn 2002, p. 100-118.

<sup>41</sup> Ayoob, *op.cit.*, p. 250-251.

well.”<sup>42</sup> Together, the latter two have remarkable impact on issues of regional security, and for that reason, on the projection of creating a regional society. The post-Cold War era provided numerous examples that demonstrated the intermeshing of these three dynamics. Recurrently, the interests of global powers, mediated by domestic contests within states, and vice versa, appeared to determine the contours of the relationships of states within particular regions.<sup>43</sup>

As a result of these evaluations, Buzan finds himself, although not intentionally, in front of the military-political sector with the referent object as the state in his analysis, paving the way for many criticism, especially from the critical constructivists. On the other hand, when we look for the contributions of this theory, it is important that it avoids extremes of national and global security focuses, by referring to regions where these two focuses interplay. By adhering to the relations between domestic, regional and system levels, it also manages to discern stability and change through the patterns the regional security complex.

To sum up; Buzan probably could not be satisfied with the result of his theory ending up with military-political sector and state concerning security and tried to widen it to embrace the new threats, actors and levels emerging on the international arena by referring to sectors and multiple units of analysis. In other words, he moves on to an agenda where he tests whether the rationale shaping the regional level remains true within a multi-sectoral approach to security by referring more to the system level effects on the region though recognizing the relative autonomy of the security complex as well as regional focus that has dominated the CSCT. However, it is not to say that he prefers an analysis at the system level. “As long as political life is structured primarily by states, territoriality will continue to be important and will be predisposed toward regional formation” which contains mixtures of military-political, societal, economic dynamics and actors.<sup>44</sup> In sum, his step can be considered as an attempt to locate the subject matter of traditional security studies as one subset of a new framework dealing with security.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 252.

<sup>44</sup> Buzan, Waever and Wilde, *op.cit.*,p. 202-203.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207.

In addition, he intends that his framework include cooperative dynamics and as well as conflictual ones more fully unlike the CSCT that assumed security complexes had their origins as conflict formations within the region.<sup>46</sup>

Buzan creates two paths while underlining the fact that there is no reason to choose between the two. The case under examination will be the main determinant. First one is to define a security complex as a homogenous complex in which analysts can concentrate on specific sectors with predominant actors, such as state in military sectors, identity based units in societal sector etc. Second one is to design the field of work as a heterogeneous complex where analysts can find the opportunity to integrate different types of actors interacting across two or more sectors and to discern the spillovers between the sectors, such as states, nations, firms, confederations, organizations interacting across political, economic and societal sectors.

In this framework, he defines security as a situation where survival of the referent object (which is main reason of the securitization process) stands at the top of the security agenda and to deal with this kind of a situation emergency measures out of the political sphere have to be taken and accepted. In this context, security issues are made security issues by acts of securitization.

The securitization process, “the discursive process through which an inter-subjective understanding is constructed within a political community to treat something as an existential threat and to enable a call for urgent and exceptional measures to deal with the threat”<sup>47</sup> fits comfortably with the idea of security interdependence traced in CSCT, starts with a cause-effect definition in the shape of a speech act. This speech act, which not only takes place at the extreme of the politization referring to the fact that it is always a political choice to securitize or to accept a securitization, but also self referential, assigns the actors. In other words, “by uttering ‘security’ a state representative moves a particular development into a specific area, and thereby claims a special right to use whatever means are necessary to block it.”<sup>48</sup> Then, due to the legitimacy provided by the referent object, usually a collectivity that can enforce a “we” feeling, securitization process proceeds by carrying the issue to the top of the agenda as an urgent and existential situation to be resolved by emergency measures.

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198-200.

<sup>47</sup> Jivi Sedivy, Book Review of “Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever”, *Journal of International Relations and Development*, Vol. 7, 2004, p. 461.

<sup>48</sup> Williams, *op.cit.*, p. 513.

This schema brings about the inter-subjectivity of this process and also reveals the game of power politics. Therefore, Buzan by focusing on the securitization process which can be ad hoc or institutionalized, is looking after the answers to the question, “who (actor who does the speech act, in other words creates the cause-effect linkage) on which subject, for whom (referent object), with which consequences and under which circumstances securitizes?” in relative accordance with the definition criteria suggested by Baldwin concerning security. “One could specify security with respect to the actor whose values are to be secured, the values concerned, the degree of security, the kinds of threats, the means for coping with such threats, the costs of doing so, and the relevant time period.”<sup>49</sup>

In this regard, in order to have a better understanding of the securitization processes, Baldwin differentiates among the sectors and their corresponding referent objects. Sectors are considered as distinct arenas of discourse in which a variety of different values can be the focus of power struggles.<sup>50</sup> Accordingly, in the military sector, state appears as the referent object which has to be saved urgently; in the political sector sovereignty of the state is carried to the top of the agenda; in the economic sector, it is the existentially threatened national economies; in the societal sector, nations and religions emerge as the object for whom the securitization takes place; and lastly in the environmental sector, types of habitat, species etc. can be considered as the referent objects. However, one should not neglect the fact that “the units integrate the sectors both in their policymaking processes and in the way they relate to each other.”<sup>51</sup>

Although these sectors are designed to escape the narrowing effect of the state chosen as the main actor in security studies, their contours had to be drawn in accordance with the state. In other words, they have been assigned compared to the location of the state in the security equation in order not to fall into incoherency. However, this does not mean that the state appear as the most important security referent and visa versa. It should be underlined that as a response to the traditionalists, Buzan argues that state is not privileged over other actors in advance but according to the case under analysis, there is no reason for the state not to make the fore in a regional study. Thus, the subsequent additions of Buzan lead us to the fact that the difference between a state-centric approach and a state-dominated field should not be underestimated.

In classical security complex, the definition was phrased in terms of primary security concerns; in the current framework, it must be instances of securitization that

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<sup>49</sup> Baldwin, *op.cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>50</sup> Buzan, *op.cit.*, p. 196.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

connect and form the complex. In both cases, the core is obviously the articulation of threats by the major actors.<sup>52</sup>

In this context, it can be claimed that while the changing international environment has prompted scholars of international relations to reassess existing paradigms, Buzan, wanted to define a middle road between mainstream international relations theories that 'are too materialistic and mechanical' and critical perspectives that 'seem too absolutist in studying only the social construction of space'.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the regional security complex is his study's pivotal concept as the author has re-phrased its older definition.

Regional security complex is a set of units whose major processes of securitization, de-securitization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another. Its units normally generate the formative dynamics and structure of a security complex, due to the fact that the threats travel short distances in a shorter time, but they may also arise from collective securitizations of outside pressures. Thus, the overall configuration of the Regional Security Complex Theory contains four layers: domestic, regional, interregional and global while using structure at a regional level for both to access significant change and to identify most likely pattern of evolution. In this context, the relative balance of power among the actors is also taken into account along with the securitization processes.

Thus, the Regional Security Complex Theory uses a blend of materialistic and constructivist approaches. It is materialistic when it uses ideas of bounded territoriality and distribution of power that are close to neo-realist analyses and it is constructivist when it refers to the process of securitization as a product of inter-subjective interaction, essentially open and subject to influence by a host of factors.<sup>54</sup> And this blend is what renders this theory its uniqueness and conventionalist constructivist perspective.

### **2.3 Regional Security Complex Theory and Central Asia**

The Regional Security Complex Theory contributes to an analysis concerned with the security problems of the post-Soviet Central Asian states as when it is applied to Central Asia, it has several opportunities that enable analysts to differentiate among the complicated components of the regional security architecture, unlike realist and neo-realist paradigms.

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>53</sup> Sedivy, *op.cit.*, p. 463.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*



However, I will deploy the components of this theory in a more flexible manner, as an analytical toolbox equipped with useful concepts and categories, methods and checklists of comparative criteria.<sup>55</sup> This is to say that being aware of the arguments put forward by its critics, I will let the case under examination destine my route of analysis.

First of all, taking on both the classical regional security complex definition and the re-phrased version of it and with respect to the concepts these definitions employ, it appears that Central Asia can be considered as a regional security complex with regard to the chaotic transition the region went through in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union for two main reasons. Firstly, it is obvious that the common heritage of the five Central Asian states along with their forming of a coherent system in geographical and cultural terms contribute to the formation of an independent Central Asia as a regional security complex. In other words, Central Asia has been a significant ground for relative intensity of interstate security relations creating regional patterns. These regional patterns are shaped by the differentiation among the units of the complex, patterns of enmity and amity among these units and as a result, lastly the distribution of power. It should be noted that following Roy Allison, I will employ “friendship” and “suspicion”<sup>56</sup> instead of enmity and amity as these states were part of the same empire until recently, therefore, it is too rigid to claim an enmity versus amity among them as the way Buzan argues in structural terms.

Secondly, Central Asia can be considered as the ground for the interplay of internal and external factors resulting in a structure within which the states of the region form the regional patterns of interaction between each other and external powers as well. To grasp these interactions and possibilities for change in Central Asia, one should take into account the cooperative dynamics that prevent tensions, stimulate cooperation and conflictual dynamics that aggravate tensions, shaping the regional structure that is mutually constituted with the actors. This brings us mainly to the recent version of the regional security complex theory.

In this context, drawing the line starting from domestic conditions to regional level and then to global structure, concerning the domestic level under the rubric of cooperative dynamics, one can discern several factors. The common legacy of the Soviet Union, common history and cultural commonality can be cited in this category. On the other hand, under the rubric of conflictual dynamics, ethnic strife, competing national strategies, economic and political challenges, namely state and nation building processes, social

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 464.

<sup>56</sup> Allison and Jonson, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

conditions, fundamentalist Islamic tendencies, and water disputes can be cited.<sup>57</sup> Although the conflictual dynamics indicate to growing tensions, proportions of cooperative and conflictual dynamics form a balance where the Central Asian states went for the middle ground concerning the criteria for friendship and suspicion. The states of the region perceive each other as threats but made reassurance arrangements to reduce security dilemmas as discerned in many attempts of regionalism and also in the numerous organizations the Central Asian States have participated, one of which appears to be the SCO.

Stretching from domestic-regional connection to the global level, the great powers, for the concerns of this thesis, Russia, China and the US form their relations with Central Asia through historical and cultural affinities, economic interests, security concerns and strategic interests.<sup>58</sup> As Ayoob properly put into words:

The importance of regions is now judged by great power decision-makers in much more utilitarian terms, including possession of strategic resources, volume of trade and investment, and pressure from powerful domestic constituencies. Great power perceptions (negative or positive) of aspiring regional hegemons also play a part in determining the former's policy towards different regions.<sup>59</sup>

Depending on these arguments, I will claim that the SCO will constitute the best ground in order to fully comprehend these cooperative/conflictual and also internal and external dynamics of the Central Asian security complex. Thus, the SCO can be considered as an institutionalized securitization process that demonstrates the merging security concerns of the units within the regional security complex of Central Asia.

Moreover, the SCO will be considered as the focus of this thesis as it constitutes a convenient platform to specify the field of research as the securitization processes that take place in this organization by manifesting themselves through the speech acts of its members. The answers given to the following questions in the framework of the SCO will be the departure point of this thesis' intentions while trying to comprehend the Central Asian security architecture: "who (actor who does the speech act, in other words creates the cause-effect linkage) on which subject, for whom (referent object), with which consequences and under which circumstances securitizes?" Rather than trying to answer the question of "what should be a security issue?" I will prefer to leave this choice to the members of the SCO as it is a choice to phrase things in security terms, not an objective feature of the issue or relationship itself. Thus, the preferred processes of securitization that have been witnessed in

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8-14.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14-18.

<sup>59</sup> Ayoob, *op.cit.*, p. 252.

the SCO will also assign the sectors, actors and the referent objects, arranging the rest of the route. As a result, this move will inevitably design the field of work as a heterogeneous complex where one can find the opportunity to integrate different types of actors interacting across two or more sectors and to discern the spillovers between the sectors. However, it should be underlined that this orientation should not be perceived as the reproduction of the existing structures but rather as an attempt to reveal possibilities for change by an attentive examination of the present situation as perceived through the eyes of the actors. By doing so, my intentions are not to “defend” these security concerns but to “define” them following the paraphrase of Katzenstein.<sup>60</sup>

In this respect, at the expense of facing severe criticisms on conducting a state-centric approach, as the members of the SCO are recognized in state level, the main actors that conduct the speech acts remain the states. These states develop their relations with and understanding of others through norms and practices, which simultaneously constitute the meaning of regional security in an inter-subjective manner. Besides, these states understand others by attributing identity to them while at the same time reproducing their own identity by conducting daily social practice. This means that a state cannot have the full control over its identity in the eyes of others as this process takes place inter-subjectively and a state does not necessarily constitute the a priori center but a variable depending on historical, cultural, political and social contexts.<sup>61</sup> In this sense, there is a slight but important difference between conducting state-centric analysis and a state-dominated analysis. Following Buzan, I do not start with giving any privilege to any actor, namely state, and to any sector, namely military and political sectors, however, the reference to the securitization processes that take place in the SCO and the features of the case under examination allocated in a multidimensional approach ends up with a homogenous complex where the states and their referent objects, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and nations make the fore. Thus, if the SCO would have attached importance to, for instance, environmental sector, I would follow suit, but as it mainly refers to military and political sector and lately to economic sector, I find it convenient to focus on these areas.

Lastly, another orientation that accompanies the preference of the SCO as the basis for analysis is the impact of 9/11 on the regional security complex of Central Asia. It can be considered as the system-regional level interaction through a global securitization process intersected with the corresponding regional one. As the global securitization process

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<sup>60</sup> Peter J. Katzenstein, “Introduction: Alternative Perspectives on National Security”, *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, (ed.) John Gerard Ruggie, New York, Columbia University Press, 1996, p.2.

<sup>61</sup> Hopf, *op.cit.*, p. 175.

witnessed after 9/11 paved the way for the US to join the regional security architecture of Central Asia, the regional structure has been faced to serious changes. These changes does not only indicate to the shifting regional patterns but also gives us a great opportunity to test the possibilities of transforming the regional security complex into a cooperative regional community by means of the SCO.

Therefore, international anti-terrorist campaign could be taken as a major impact on the regional security complex, assigning the criteria of security in the region such as the referent objects, time period and consequences of the securitization processes that followed suit and the roles of actors. What is at stake here is whether this dynamic necessitates a redefinition of the regional security complex. I will argue that this question can be best analyzed through the SCO, as it is the only regional cooperative structure that contains both Russia and China, balancing the presence of the US in the region along with the Central Asian states.

In this regard, a number of aspects of the Central Asian regional security complex can be analyzed through the framework that has been constituted by the SCO such as historic development, the nature of the units and their security agenda that established and sustained the complex; the ‘essential structure’ of the complex; anarchy or integration, power distribution, friendship and suspicion and patterns of securitization; the interaction between the regional security complex and actors from the global level; the relative weights of the domestic, regional and global levels. Finally, with reference to the outcomes of the interrogation through these categories, scenarios for future development based on the present conditions and dynamics of the Central Asian security complex can be sketched out. In other words, by looking at the region’s character (conflict formation, security regime or security community); the intensity of security interactions and/or interdependence among the units; the kind of decisive unit(s), dominant security sector(s) and agenda that drive the securitization dynamics in the region through the prism of the SCO, this thesis intends to search for future prospects of the Central Asian regional security complex.

## CHAPTER 3

### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX IN CENTRAL ASIA

In the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, in the atmosphere where reigned uncertainty for the former Soviet territory, Central Asia appeared as a regional security complex; “a set of units whose major processes of securitization, de-securitization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another.”<sup>62</sup> In order to depend on such an assumption, it will be beneficial to have a look at the historical experiences of the region along with its geographical stance. In this context, the way the newly independent states of Central Asia deal with the effects of the transition while transforming into nation-states from republics of an empire, accompanied by the attention it drew owing to its significant features will be worth noting. Finally, regionalism attempts and the reasons of its failure will be discussed in relation with a questioning concerning the present potentials for emergence of a regional society from the Central Asian regional security complex.

#### 3.1 Interaction between Internal and External Factors in Central Asia

Being aware of the fact that “Central Asia is both one and yet many: united in culture, divided in politics, united in traditions and heritage, divided by circumstances,”<sup>63</sup> one can discern the impact of the past upon today concerning Central Asia<sup>64</sup>, at the heart of Eurasia as the “pivot of Asia.”<sup>65</sup> “The ancient history of Central Asia as a history of conquest and

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<sup>62</sup> Buzan, Oleaver and Wilde, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>63</sup> Gregory Gleason, “Legacies of Central Asia”, *The Central Asian States: Discovering Independence*, Colorado, Westview Press, 1997, p. 25.

<sup>64</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, Central Asia is used to refer to the five republics to the east of the Caspian Sea-Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

<sup>65</sup> Owen Lattimore, *Pivot of Asia: Sinkiang and the Inner Asian Frontiers of China and Russia*, Boston, Little & Brown, 1950, p. 32.

migration”<sup>66</sup> leading to “cross-cultural fertilization,”<sup>67</sup> shows the influences, which have gone into its formation, from pre-Islamic Iranian civilization, through the coming of Islam, then the Turks and the Mongols, to its incorporation in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. “All of these have left their mark in the variety of populations and lifestyles, in the shape of society and conduct of politics.”<sup>68</sup> These influences led not only to a rich communication ground for various civilizations, but also to a ‘poisonous mixture’ with a great potential for producing crises in the region, waiting for the necessary conditions to appear.

In this regard, one can argue without facing contradiction that “one of the many momentous events which have marked the twentieth century, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the world’s greatest empire, has undoubtedly had the most far-reaching consequences”<sup>69</sup> concerning the world order and also for the Soviet territory. In this context, it necessitates a deeper analysis for the former republics of Soviet Union, surely including its effects on Central Asian security equation, where problems in one country to sub-region readily spill across national boundaries into adjacent countries within the region and within the neighboring regions. In other words, Central Asia deserves attention as a significant ground for relative intensity of interstate security relations that created regional patterns shaped by the cooperative and conflictual dynamics within and between the newly independent states along with the ones inserted by the external players into the region.

According to Central Asian expert, Martha Brill Olcott, “few people in the world have ever been forced to become independent nations. Yet, that is precisely what happened to the five Central Asian republics in 1991 when the Soviet Union dissolved.”<sup>70</sup> She seems right given the entrance of Central Asia into the realm of international relations with minimum preparation and with no experience.<sup>71</sup> In this respect, “when independence

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<sup>66</sup> Gleason, *op.cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>67</sup> Shirin Akiner, “Post-Soviet Central Asia: Past is Prologue”, *The New Central Asia and Its Neighbors*, (ed.) Peter Ferdinand, New York, Council on Foreign Relations, 1994, p. 6.

<sup>68</sup> Beatrice F. Manz, “Historical Background”, *Central Asia in Historical Perspective*, (ed.) Beatrice F. Manz, Boulder, Co., Westview Press, 1994, p. 20.

<sup>69</sup> Touraj Atabaki, “The Impediments to the Development of Civil Societies in Central Asia”, *Post Soviet Central Asia*, (eds.) Taouraj Atabaki and John O’Kane, Leiden, Amsterdam, The International Institute for Asian Studies, 1998, p. 35.

<sup>70</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, “Kazakhstan: Pushing for Eurasia”, *New States New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*, (eds.) Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 556.

<sup>71</sup> Firuz Kazemzadeh, “Central Asia’s Foreign Relations: A Historical Survey”, *The Legacy of History in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, (ed.) Frederick Starr, New York: M. E. Sharp, 1994, p. 213.

suddenly arrived in December 1991, it came as a total surprise and shock often an unwelcome one in the Central Asian states”<sup>72</sup> as they were aware of the fact that the problems that were inherited from the Soviet era would not be solved easily given their conditions.<sup>73</sup>

In other words, as Hyman properly put into words, “the Central Asian republics did not leave the Soviet Union; it was Russia itself that left the Union.”<sup>74</sup> The sudden independence indicated to “a process over which Central Asian leaders had little control and to which they contributed little.”<sup>75</sup> Thus, independence came just like communist control, was imposed by external forces.

In this respect, when they were abandoned, they had to begin almost from scratch in their development in the 1990s. “The local administrative systems were not configured for self-governance, revenue collection and self-financing, diplomacy or national defense.”<sup>76</sup> They had no organized or powerful nationalist movements and no heroic leaders. Therefore, it is not unanticipated to see the party leaders in republics transforming themselves into nationalist protectors of the interests of the newly independent states and did not appear ‘enthusiastic’ about leaving their post since then.

To underline the most far-reaching impact of the Soviet Union on the region among other influences, it is not hard to discern that after living for seventy years, in a large-scale command economy, under totalitarian state control that reaches every aspect of the lives of Central Asians while trying to negate the traditional focal points in order to create a “*Homo Sovieticus*” as a part of the broader framework of communism, the dissolution of this huge structure would not vanish over night and without sufferings. In this regard, no transition from empire to nation-state is easy in various aspects such as politics, security, and administrative systems, social context and especially in economic terms.

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<sup>72</sup> Anthony Hyman, “Post-Soviet Central Asia”, *Challenges for the Former Soviet South*, (ed.) Roy Allison, London, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1996, p. 19.

<sup>73</sup> Gregory Gleason, “Uzbekistan: The Politics of National Independence”, *New States New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*, (eds.) Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p.571

<sup>74</sup> Hyman, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>75</sup> Roy Allison, “Regionalism, Regional Structure and Security Management in Central Asia”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 80, No.3, 2004, p. 463.

<sup>76</sup> Gregory Gleason, “The Politics of Counterinsurgency in Central Asia”, *Problems of Post Communism*, Vol. 49, No.2, March/April 2002, p. 5.





In losing Moscow as the center of gravity; the states lost crucial subsidies for budgets, enterprises and households, inputs for regional industries, markets for their products, transportation routes, and communications with the outside world...The World Bank estimates that as a result of these losses, between 1990-1996, the Central Asian states saw their economies decline by 20-60% of GDP.<sup>78</sup>

Besides and most importantly, one can also discern gradual erosion in the Soviet-era attainments in health, education, infrastructure and industrial development due to the economic decline. Moreover, as a result of this deprivation, a massive exodus of ethnic Russians and highly skilled members of indigenous ethnic groups from Central Asia further aggravated the transition period.

Furthermore, one should also consider the 'patchwork-like' ethnic composition along with the reference of the population to sub-national clan structures and supra-national focal points rather than national identities accompanied by the effects of the independence such as the absence of a social order in terms of politics, systematic economic life and mass discomfort. In this context, the tensions deriving from clan/tribe/region and urban/rural divisions seem to be some of the side affects of the collapse of the Soviet Union. These tensions also paved the way for the continuity of the 'one man rule' that oppresses almost all the political activities and hindered any democratization processes in the region. At the same time, it has rendered the efforts deriving from the commitment shaped by the normative means of Western engagement, namely, the efforts of NGO's useless.<sup>79</sup> Meanwhile, 'imported' fundamentalist Islam seems to gain momentum as a way of expressing the discomfort of the populations in the region that leads further oppression of political life, under the name of secularism and stability.

In these circumstances, after a short time of experiencing independence, the Central Asian states although started with a commitment to the goals of democratization and market reform, along with a desire to preserve and strengthen their sovereignty and independence, retreated from the pursuit of democratization and economic reform over the next decade in the name of stability. According to the argument of the Central Asian leaders, consolidating national sovereignty required authoritarian regimes in dealing with political dissent and Islamic extremism in a threatening and unstable geo-political environment.<sup>80</sup> However,

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<sup>78</sup> Fiona Hill, "Areas for Future Cooperation or Conflict in Central Asia and the Caucasus", <<http://www.brook.edu/views/speeches/hillf/20020919.htm>>.

<sup>79</sup> S. Neil MacFarlane, *Western Engagement in the Caucasus and Central Asia*, London, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, s. 58-69.

<sup>80</sup> Gail Lapidus, "Central Asia in Russian and American Foreign Policy After September 11, 2001", <[http://ist-socrates.berkeley.edu/~bsp/caucasus/articles/lapidus\\_2001-1029.pdf](http://ist-socrates.berkeley.edu/~bsp/caucasus/articles/lapidus_2001-1029.pdf)>

despite their emphasis on the security aspect of their transition, it is worth noting that “having relied on the Soviet center for security, after the withdrawal of Russian military forces, most states had (even) no functioning border guard units”<sup>81</sup> to deal with this geo-political atmosphere to which the ‘one man rule’ does any good.

In this respect, when focused on the internal atmosphere created as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, all the Central Asian states had launched state-building and nation-building projects in order both to provide the stability in their domestic affairs and to determine their position in the world. In other words, their status in the international realm depended on their decision on the path that they would follow in terms of these processes in this period. And up to now, they have achieved varying degrees of success, depending broadly on the demographic and ethnic composition of a country, its political culture, and its economic situation. However, the achievements are far from satisfactory for many scholars according to various criteria. For instance, many argue that while progress has been made in state building, much less has been done in terms of liberalization.<sup>82</sup> In sum, one can argue, “most of states in the region can be classified as weak states, as they fail to provide their citizens with the most fundamental political, economic and social goods such as security, political participation and economic security.”<sup>83</sup>

Having briefly mentioned the internal factors that the former republics of Soviet Union in Central Asia faced and still face, one should also take the external factors into account in order to put a light on the inseparable interaction between the internal and external aspects of any security issue.

From the international aspect concerning the Central Asian security architecture, which will constitute one of the main lines this thesis intends to follow, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, fifteen newly independent states quitting communist state structure and giving priority to liberalization gave hand to an opportunity of global cooperation. It also profoundly altered the international power configuration meanwhile raising the question of the functions of the international alliance systems, which were constituted against the Communist Bloc, such as NATO. In addition, as a result of the change in the geo-political environment and the new distribution of forces new actors started to engage in the region in order to fill the power vacuum in former Soviet territory, especially in Central Asia. This has

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<sup>81</sup> Hill, *op.cit.*

<sup>82</sup> Svante E. Cornell, “Military and Economic Security Perspectives”, <<http://www.silkroadstudies.org/pub/NBR.pdf>>

<sup>83</sup> Niklas Swannstrom, “Multilateralism and Narcotics Control in Central Asia”, <<http://www.silkroadstudies.org/CEF%20Quarterly%20Winter%202005.doc.pdf>>

paved the way for new tensions arising from the competition for influence whether at political, economic or cultural levels between the regional and non-regional actors with more diverse aims and different means and scope compared to the Great Game between Russian Empire and Britain in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In other words, the competition among major powers concerned with the region started to shape a new and revised ‘Great Game’<sup>84</sup> in which the significance of Central Asia in geo-political and geo-economical terms had played an important role.<sup>85</sup>

In this context, several factors contributing to the importance of Central Asia can be distinguished. Central Asia, being rich in natural resources due to immense energy resources of the Caspian Sea <sup>86</sup> and being close to Middle East, carries a possibility to transport these resources to the world markets, owing to its strategic position between Europe and Asia that attracted the attention of many external actors often leading to intimidation or manipulation of the region, resembling the experiences of the Third World.<sup>87</sup> In other words, Central Asia is significant for many actors as a source of strategic resources such as coal, gas and oil, which correspond to 16% of known global oil reserves, 53% of natural gas reserves. However, “oil is also known as the ‘devil’s tears’ as for the common people in all oil-producing countries, (except Norway and Britain) oil wealth has been more of a curse than a blessing leading to corruption, political instability, economic decline, environmental degradation, coups and often bloody civil wars.”<sup>88</sup>

Secondly, Central Asian states form a strategic zone of communication and interaction, which lead to a spillover effect into adjacent regions. Thirdly, the region constitutes a part of an underdeveloped corridor stretching from Africa through the Middle East into Central Asia. And lastly, the region forms a major test for the interaction of modern society and culturally nuanced form of Islam.

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<sup>84</sup> F. S. Starr, “Making Eurasia Stable”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 1, 1996, p. 80. For a comparison between the Great Game of 19<sup>th</sup> century and the new and revised Great Game see: Edwards, Matthew, “The New Great Game and the New Great Gamers: Disciples of Kipling and Mackinder”, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 22, No.1, March 2003, especially p. 87-90.

<sup>85</sup> For a brief comparison, see: Mustafa Aydın, “Büyük Oyun ve İkinci Büyük Oyun’un Ayırdedici Özellikleri”, *Türk Dış Politikası Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Yorumlar, Belgeler*, (ed.) Baskın Oran, Cilt II, İstanbul, İletişim, 2001, p. 392.

<sup>86</sup> Jan Argo Hessebruege, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: A Holy Alliance For Central Asia?,” <[http://www.fletcher.tufts.edu/al\\_nakhlah/archives/spring2004/hessebruegge.pdf](http://www.fletcher.tufts.edu/al_nakhlah/archives/spring2004/hessebruegge.pdf)>

<sup>87</sup> Allison, *op.cit.*, p. 463.

<sup>88</sup> Kleveman Lutz, “Oil and the New Great Game”, <<http://www.variant.randomstate.org/21texts/issue/21.html>>.

In this respect, Central Asia appeared as the Gordian Knot meaning “the power that controlled Central Asia also controlled the passageways to the riches of the East and to the markets of the West.”<sup>89</sup> Therefore, its rich history of conquests should not surprise us. At one point, Central Asia formed the northern frontier of the Persian Empire. At another time it formed the southeastern frontier of the Mongol Khanates. In the middle ages, it was the land bridge linking China with Europe. In the modern world, Central Asia’s importance grew from its role as a sphere of contestation among the great powers, particularly in Central Asia, which became clearer with the involvement of the world hegemony, the US in the region.

Relying on the interaction between the internal and external factors, a ‘vicious circle of instability’ makes Central Asia suffer due to the actual and potential tensions while enforcing nation and state building projects, accompanied by the changing wind of globalizing world. In this perspective, today for the most part, the new and revised Great Game still consists of economic competition for jobs, pipelines and new markets as well as political influence and strategic advantages, which confirms that even in the information age, geographic proximity remains relevant to project power.

To sum up, “the globalization for Central Asia is not merely an economic phenomenon, but primarily a strategic one.”<sup>90</sup> In this milieu, referring to its rich history and appealing geographical position, for Central Asia, certainly a new phase has been opened up with the collapse of the Soviet Union, shaping the region in accordance with the new world order.

In this framework, these external factors combined with the internal instabilities led to growing tensions with each other. In the absence of a security mechanism, the way for serious risks of interstate clashes and widespread civil war at the heart of Eurasia have been paved.

If a security complex is defined as a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another and if security complexes emphasize the interdependence of rivalry as well as that of shared interests, and if no one country can effectively deal with transboundary effects of such security complex, such as refugees, legal and illegal migration, organized crime networks, smuggling of drugs and arms, money laundering, international terrorism, transnational ethnic and political affiliations and regional environmental problems, then, Central Asia can certainly be considered as a security complex owing to its above mentioned

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<sup>89</sup> Gregory Gleason, *The Central Asian States: Discovering Independence*, Colorado, Westview Press, 1997, p. 136.

<sup>90</sup> Hesebruege, *op.cit.*

characteristics. In this case, the only effective way to deal with these issues seems to be a strong regional cooperation and in the long run perhaps an emergence of a regional cooperative society. However,

The obstacles to such a strengthening are equally obvious ranging at the regional level from cultural antipathy and jealousy (suspicion) through competition over scarce resources and disputes over borders to leadership rivalries. Perhaps equally serious is the weakness of the states in the region due to their difficulty in delivering commitments they make in regional cooperation.<sup>91</sup>

### **3.2 Failure of Regionalism in Central Asia**

While not being able to hold the chains of its own destiny and became a part of the plans of the actors that eyed the region for their own interests, the thing that is surprising to discern in Central Asia through out its history is, despite its diversity; meaning “together but divided”, the region showed “an extraordinary ability continually to recreate itself, to accept change and yet to maintain continuity.”<sup>92</sup>

For Central Asia that has managed to deal with the problems of different times and rules throughout its history, it is not unforeseen to view a struggle for adopting itself to the ‘New World Order’ and the ‘Chess’ that has been played by the international actors in the region since the collapse of the Soviet Union, owing to its distinct geographical and historical features.

In order to deal with this phase, when sudden independence faced the new states with a search of holding focus that would protect them from the shocking effects of the transition;

The former Soviet republics as a whole had three options concerned with the creation of security policy, defined narrowly as relating to inter and intrastate threat environment that create the potential for conflict rather than in the broad sense of human security, and also economic, energy or environmental aspects of security<sup>93</sup>; becoming neutral states, joining a neighboring regional organization or to form their own organization.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> S. Neil MacFarlane, “The United States and Regionalism in Central Asia”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 3, 2004, p. 460.

<sup>92</sup> Akiner, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>93</sup> Allison, *op.cit.*, p. 464.

<sup>94</sup> Suezawa Megumi, “Falling Apart or Coming Together?: Processes of Decentralization and Integration in the CIS”, <<http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/sympo/02winter/2002winter-e.html>>

Therefore, in land-locked Central Asia, states continued to depend on the willingness and ability of their immediate neighbors to take action on critical issues that affect them all.<sup>95</sup> Except Turkmenistan, who chose the first route and avoided joining a variety of political coalitions and regional organizations by preserving its neutrality, the rest of the Central Asian states although tried the third route respectively, could only precede to a certain extent due to above-mentioned constraints. In other words, they have been drawn back into the second alternative, as “an attainment of even limited coordination of their security and defense policies as a distinct Central Asian ‘unit’ has been an uphill struggle.”<sup>96</sup> Given their interdependence on and tensions with each other in terms of the competing nature of their infra structural deficiencies and with Russia, this was certainly not out of the blue.

At this period, the dominant variable of the interaction between the newly independent Central Asian States has been constituted by the negative extreme of relations for Central Asia; mainly suspicion, referring to the main pattern of regional interaction that shapes the regional security complex. They had to prefer security coordination under the influence of at least one dominant power leading to many regional and macro-regional entities that were expected to help easing the problems of the members stemming from suspicion and mistrust. In other words, “security fears, whether genuine or exaggerated for domestic political purposes”<sup>97</sup> have induced the Central Asian states to welcome many organizations for meeting their needs. However, these entities were often diverse and uncoordinated and sometimes even in competition with one another.”<sup>98</sup> As a result, quite a number of regional initiatives with overlapping membership and agendas have appeared in such manner that when one takes the international organizations present in the region into account, the question of how these differently oriented organizations interrelate arises immediately.<sup>99</sup> In this context, “the current security mechanism in Central Asia may be viewed as consisting of three overlapping structure: the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) dominated by Russia; the SCO guided by China-Russia and the USA’s

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<sup>95</sup> Hill, *op.cit.*

<sup>96</sup> Allison, *op.cit.*, p.463.

<sup>97</sup> Martin C. Spechler, “Allies and Adversaries: Regional Cooperation in Central Asia”, *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol.49, No.6, November/December 2002, p.44.

<sup>98</sup> Allison, *op.cit.*, p. 463-464.

<sup>99</sup> Gudrun Wacker, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Regional Security and Economic Advancement”, <[http://www.kas.de/proj/home/pub/37/1/year-2004/dokument\\_id-5210/](http://www.kas.de/proj/home/pub/37/1/year-2004/dokument_id-5210/)>

military presence”<sup>100</sup> along with NATO. Besides, the bilateral connections are worth mentioning concerning their scope and synchronous nature.

Before trying to define the configuration of this web of organizations and to make clear the position of the SCO in it, it will be beneficial to mention certain reasons that led to abandonment of the third route that is to form their own organization; the reasons that prevented the success of regionalism in Central Asia. Analyzing these factors would enable us to have a better understanding of Central Asian security complex when examined not only for its potentials to form a regional society through cooperation, but also for the state and patterns of relations within the complex that are shaped by the same factors.

Concerning the economic limitations as the base of the uncoordinated nature of the Central Asian states, the first thing that appears to hinder the process of regionalism can be discerned through the competing infrastructures reflected in the poor trade due to the limited and overlapping range of commodities.

Kyrgyzstan exports mainly gold and electricity; Tajikistan electricity, cotton and aluminum; Turkmenistan cotton and natural gas; Uzbekistan cotton and gold, and Kazakhstan, mainly oil and metal products. The countries’ economies are more competing than complementary with the exception of certain specific resource complementarities such as oil and coal in Kazakhstan and hydropower resources in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.<sup>101</sup>

In addition, poor land, rail and air connections, pipelines, transportation networks within the Central Asian region, mostly constructed towards Moscow, previously the center of gravity, combined with the large number of dispersed settlements have been major constraints on intra-regional trade, fueled by the protectionist trade policies of nationalizing, at least till the consolidation of monopolizing regimes.<sup>102</sup>

In this context and due to the fragile security environment of the region, it was almost impossible for them to finish reconstructions and adjustment of their national economic systems in the short run. As a result, as the economic recovery gets to be delayed and social security systems function ineffectively, extremist sentiments arise and contribute to the vicious circle of instability and discomfort of the region, where combinations of poverty and political exclusion have the high potential for creating environments in which criminal organization and extremists groups flourish.

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<sup>100</sup> Alexei Bogaturov, “International Relations in Central-Eastern Asia: Geopolitical Challenges and Prospects for Political Cooperation”, *The Brookings Institution: Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies*, June 2004, p. 12.

<sup>101</sup> David Jay Gree, “Regional Co-Operation Policies in Central Asia”, *Journal of International Development*, No.13, 2001, p. 1157-1159.

<sup>102</sup> Bohr, *op.cit.*, p, 496, 498.

On another dimension, Allison, while analyzing the constraints on a security-related regionalism in Central Asia cites several factors; referring to the mutually nourishing atmosphere created by the interaction between the internal and the external aspects of security. In this regard, Allison tends to evaluate Russia, the regional hegemonic power, as the main constraint on any initiative for regionalism in Central Asia, while others, like MacFarlane, argue that the world hegemon, the US has far-reaching impact on this process, especially referring to the developments shaping the international context since 9/11.<sup>103</sup>

Whether one takes side with the first or the second argument, it can be claimed that the main constraint on regionalism in the region is caused by the competitive dynamics between major powers for influence over the region. These factors are to be considered along with various infra-regional and state-level factors, such as political turbulence and economic stagnation accompanied by domestic unrest and underdevelopment. Besides, geographical proximity, common material culture, social structure, cultural value-system and trans-boundary natural resources inherited from the Soviet legacy and historical memory etc. while enforcing nation and state building processes led to oppressive political atmosphere, at least till the achievement of a consensus on the national identity.<sup>104</sup> In addition, these have also contributed a great deal for the prevention of any further step concerning the goal of regionalism. On the other hand, it should also be taken into account that before independence as Moscow was the central gravity of the Soviet Union, “all serious political decision-making took place in the Kremlin, far from the republics’ capitals and there was little republic to republic interaction despite their common religious, cultural and linguistic traditions.”<sup>105</sup>

Lastly, with respect to the assumption that the higher the degrees of economic and political liberalization in a Central Asian state, the more likely its regime to engage in regional projects. Bohr argues that while Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, having personalist regimes and oppressive and authoritarian political atmosphere, kept their distance and depended on bilateral relations, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, having relatively liberal political atmospheres, have been more eager regionalists.<sup>106</sup> In short, the low level of openness, tolerated by the regimes of the Central Asian states while forming the security

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<sup>103</sup> MacFarlane, *op.cit.*, p. 461.

<sup>104</sup> Bohr, *op.cit.*, p. 486, 495, 498-499.

<sup>105</sup> Gregory Gleason, “The Politics of Counterinsurgency in Central Asia”, *Problems of Post Communism*, Vol. 49, No.2, March/April 2002, p. 5.

<sup>106</sup> Bohr, *op.cit.*, p. 498-501.



threats assigns the corresponding means for dealing with them and provides another constraint for a possible regionalism in Central Asia.

According to Allison and also to Bohr, these factors come up to the conclusion that “the regional frameworks...are unlikely to be principal actors in serious security crises in future within Central Asia.”<sup>107</sup> In this respect, in the absence of regionalism, the region is destined to be managed through the interventionist model in terms of humanitarian, political, economic and military spheres.

However, though ending up with limited success, there have been at least some efforts in the direction of a common regional platform. Therefore, it can be argued that the states of the region, although perceived each other with suspicion, tried to make reassurance arrangements to reduce security dilemmas, taking the middle ground between the negative and positive extremes of the friendship-suspicion pattern for mainly practical interests. To name the main developments in this respect, the Central Asian Union (which became the Central Asian Economic Union; CAEC, in 1998), composed of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, (Tajikistan has joined the union in 1998) has been established in 1994 as an economic union.<sup>108</sup> However later on, it has also started to consider regional security issues. This attempt remained unsuccessful given not only the absence of consensus on the major defense challenges among its members, but also Turkmenistan’s permanent neutrality.

Another phase of this attempt of constituting a regional security platform was the transformation of CAEC into Central Asian Cooperation Organization; CACO, in December 2001 in order to take initiative to form a single security zone and to draw up joint action on maintaining peace and stability in the region. However, “except some multilateral action, no substantive measures followed as the main actors render these initiatives neutral due to the ups and downs of the region.”<sup>109</sup>

Beside these attempts, Central Asian states were more likely to form security platforms around clear functional issues such as nuclear weapons (referring to the Central Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone-CANWFZ), though not reaching an efficient level of action due to the manipulations of the main actors and also the fluctuations of the global world politics. The examples of such attempts are numerous, yet not efficient enough to form the intended security platform for the region.

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<sup>107</sup> Allison, *op.cit.*, p. 467.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 473.

<sup>109</sup> Natalia Ushakova, “Central Asian Cooperation: Toward Transformation”, *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 21, No.3, 2003, p.125.

If this is the case with regionalism, in other words, if the attempts could not be successful enough to form a trustworthy regional security society among the Central Asian states, then what has been the way that Central Asian states preferred in order to deal with the turbulence of the period? Caught between two regional giants; the ‘Russian Bear’ and the ‘Chinese Dragon’ and later a global one; the US, while facing immense internal problems of economic stagnation and growing political unrest, what was the move of the Central Asian states in terms of providing their security?

The answer has two complementary parts, which are both fostered by the perspective that suggests multiplying alternatives is the only way out for the newly independent states of Central Asia faced with mounting security problems in military-political and economic terms.<sup>110</sup> Referring to region’s ability of adaptation witnessed throughout its history, the newly independent states of Central Asia chose to participate in attempts of hegemon-sponsored regionalism or in that of macro-regionalism given their interdependency concerning the security issues, namely in Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), or in SCO. At this point, before moving on to the second part of the answer concerning the balancing tendency, it will be convenient to underline some points by referring to the CIS.

To comment on the role and position of the CIS in the complex network of organizations often means to dwell upon the role of Russia in the security architecture of Central Asia. Although, Russia’s position in the Central Asian security complex will be analyzed in the following part of this thesis, it will be beneficial to have an overall view of this organization in order to have a better understanding of the relations between the Central Asian states and Russia while paving the way for a better understanding of SCO in this configuration.

It is often stressed that the CIS could not achieve “a supranational identity and collective multinational entity”<sup>111</sup> though this was the intention behind its constitution in the Alma Ata Declaration of 21 December 1991. This was mainly the result of the lack of its implementation mechanism, which led to unfulfilled agreements and rhetoric in the security aspect concerning the region and due to Russia’s intention of domination in the organization regarding Central Asia as its backyard. At least from the point of Central Asian states, these have surely given way to mistrust among members, rendering them inactive and uncoordinated in fulfilling the underlined aims of the CIS. In a complementary sense, it is often cited that the variations in the geographical location, resources and threat perceptions

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<sup>110</sup> Allison, *op.cit.*, 468-469.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 469.

of the Central Asian states made them resist Russian endeavors to achieve a security-related 'CIS integration'.<sup>112</sup>

In this context, after 9/11, an effort to reconfigure the organization by using the label of counter-terrorism to regenerate a CIS collective security system and by pumping fresh blood into the veins of its institutions on part of Russia can be discerned. For this end, Moscow tried to characterize the CIS Collective Security Council based on the founding agreement named Collective Security Treaty of 1992, as an active regional security organization. However, it could not reach the assigned role in implementation.

Following this inefficient ongoing concerning the establishment of Collective Security Organization, in May 2002 Russia managed to agree with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to create a Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which replaced the Collective Security Council, in order at least to form a challenge and a coequal for NATO from the perspective of Russia, surely the leading figure in the organization. However, it could not convince Uzbekistan, the core regional state and Turkmenistan to become members.<sup>113</sup> For many reasons, CSTO remained without much contribution to foster a regional security identity in Central Asia.

While the inflection between the regional hegemon Russia, the main inheritor of the Soviet Empire and the interdependent and newly independent states of Central Asia can be observed through the CIS in this manner; referring to the second ability of Central Asia for balancing the competitive dynamics for maximizing their interests, one can differentiate, for instance, GUUAM as a balancing apparatus for any excessive hegemony imposed from Russia, while SCO as a macro-regional balancing system designed by China and Russia to challenge the global reach of the world hegemon, the US and referred by the Central Asian states as a convenient means to balance Russia with China. This tendency can also be perceived in the efforts of Central Asian states to balance their relations with Russia with respect to their trump appeared especially after 9/11. However, it should be kept in mind that the balance of the relations between these units are always subject to change and revision with respect to the constant fluctuation deriving from conjuncturally bilateral and multilateral approaches and one of the intentions of this thesis is to grab these revealing turning points.

As one of the exemplar of balancing tendency, GUAM was founded in October 1997 through agreements between Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova, initially as a search

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<sup>112</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, Anders Aslund and Sherman Garnett, "The Failure to Establish an Integrated Security Structure", *Getting it Wrong: Regional Cooperation and the Commonwealth of Independent States*, Washington D.C, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999, p. 77-102.

<sup>113</sup> Allison, *op.cit.*, p. 471.

of defense cooperation, which would offset Russia's influence on many aspects in the CIS space.<sup>114</sup> With the entrance of Uzbekistan into the organization in 1999, the grouping had also provided a channel on security issues with Central Asia. In this context, although Russia tended to consider the grouping as potential security cooperation or a 'trojan horse' consistently supported by the US among the CIS states; it is also unlikely to see this organization forming a self-sustaining regional security identity,<sup>115</sup> especially after the suspension of Uzbekistan's membership in 2002.

Lastly and most importantly, as the exemplar of macro-regional balancing, the SCO lies at a crucial point in the security equation of Central Asia. It reveals the most when one claims to analyze the security aspect of Central Asia as it does not only constitute a convenient vehicle for a comprehensive analysis concerning the region by referring to both inherited tendencies of the region from its history and geography; accommodation and balancing, but also reveal the inseparable interaction between internal and external factors by having Central Asian states except Turkmenistan and the two regional hegemony, Russia and China as its members. In this respect, Shanghai Five and definitely the SCO, can be considered as a mirror, which reflects almost every actor engaged in Central Asian security complex with respect to their security concerns evaluated in a larger picture of global politics.

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<sup>114</sup> Flemming Splidsboel-Hansen, "GUUAM and the Future of CIS Military Cooperation", *European Security*, Vol. 9, No. 4, Winter 2000, p. 92-106.

<sup>115</sup> Allison, *op.cit.*, p. 477.

## CHAPTER 4

### GREAT POWERS AND THE REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX IN CENTRAL ASIA

Having mentioned the atmosphere faced by the Central Asian states with their discomfort, anxieties and capabilities concerning security issues, in order to interpret what the SCO reflects about the Central Asian security architecture properly, it would be beneficial to have an overall analysis of the strategic calculations of the great powers; the US, Russia and China, in terms of their objectives and the corresponding means they employed in Central Asia and the nature of their relations with regional actors. By doing so, we do not only pave the way for a better understanding of the merging interests of the countries of the region in Shanghai Five and later in the SCO, but also provide a path for an analysis of the Central Asian security equation shaken up by the entrance of the global hegemon into the region and its expected and unexpected consequences and implications for the indigenous actors, especially for the SCO.

#### 4.1 The United States and Central Asia

The US quickly recognized the newly independent republics following the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, as during the Cold War, in the subsequent years independence, Central Asia did not constitute a priority among American foreign policy orientations. Until the second half of the 1990s, the US assigned secondary status to the region as it was busy with the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, Middle East Peace Process, Bosnia and Kosovo events, future of Russia and the reconstruction of NATO.<sup>116</sup> In this respect, until 1994, US interests were restricted to economic and political pursuits; military interests were nowhere in sight.<sup>117</sup> In other words, American strategy towards the region

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<sup>116</sup> İlhan Uzgel, “ABD’yle İlişkiler”, *Türk Dış Politikası Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Yorumlar, Belgeler*, (ed.) Baskın Oran, Cilt II, İstanbul, İletişim, 2001, s. 278.

<sup>117</sup> Bülent Aras and Barry Rubin, *The New Geopolitics of Eurasia and Turkey’s Position*, London, Frank Cass, 2002, p. 70-73.

focused on strengthening the independence of its states and on the transfer of values including democracy, human rights and economic liberalism. Therefore, during this period, the outline of the US security policy in Central Asia was mainly about the control of instability. In this respect, the US encouraged friendly relations with the Central Asian states, supported a range of governmental and non-governmental organizations, sponsored projects and given assistance under different frameworks, especially the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and even turned a blind eye on the mismanagement of funds.<sup>118</sup>

In addition, the Clinton administration had an enduring interest in the prevention of uncontrolled proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.<sup>119</sup> On this matter, the US policy toward Central Asia centered on a security relationship with Kazakhstan as Kazakh nuclear arsenal has to be taken under control from the perspective of the US.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, American policymakers were concerned about Central Asia's growing drug trade.<sup>121</sup>

In the meantime, referring to their commonalities, the US promoted the engagement of Turkey as a secular model contrary to the Iranian model of Islamic government and elicited Turkish support in countering Iranian influence in the region for the consolidation of the sovereignty of the newly independent states with an underlying goal of containing the influence of China, Iran and Russia. At this point, Turkey being also an ally of NATO contributed to this calculation.<sup>122</sup> It was believed that Turkey would help the US to strengthen its position, as a tool for the US policy in its penetration into the region.

In this period, the focus of Washington reflected a dual policy concerning the region. As a result of "Russia First" strategy, Central Asia was almost neglected in order to contribute to the transformation of Russia into a Western style democratic market model, to support Yeltsin against extreme nationalists and communists, and for this end to respect Russia's comprehensible security problems in the region. In this period, Russia was confronted with several serious problems such as a dramatic decline in economic and political strength and secessionist movements on its territory. In this respect, as long as

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<sup>118</sup> Gregory Gleason, *The Central Asian States: Discovering Independence*, Colorado, Westview Press, 1997, p. 153.

<sup>119</sup> MacFarlane, *op.cit.*, p. 450.

<sup>120</sup> Richard Giragosian, "The US Military Engagement in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus: An Overview", *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 17, 2004, p. 46.

<sup>121</sup> Fuller, *op.cit.*, p. 130-131.

<sup>122</sup> Jim Nichol, "Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests", <[http://www.ndu.edu/library/docs/crs/crs\\_ib93108\\_12apr05.pdf](http://www.ndu.edu/library/docs/crs/crs_ib93108_12apr05.pdf)>

Russia emphasized its commitment to democracy, rule of law, and market economy, the US affirmed its support for the reforms in Russia.

“During the (early) 1990s, it was clear that post-Soviet Russia was not a major threat to US security, but it was not clear whether the two countries could cooperate in security, politics or economic spheres.”<sup>123</sup> According to the US administration, the stability in the region could be provided by the enthusiasm of Russia.<sup>124</sup> Russia was evaluated in the US security policy through the problems centered on the questions of how to transform the country in economic and political spheres, how to prevent a new Russia neo-imperialism in the former Soviet territory etc. In this regard, an assorted policy of supporting reforms in Russia and at the same time restraining its influence over its neighbors made the fore at the US agenda.

As a part of its restraining strategy, the US military increasingly participated in bilateral relationships with the states of Central Asia and through NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) with the Central Asian militaries which “served as a key channel for US military engagement in the region... and a unique avenue toward fostering a greater integration of these states with Western political and military institutions.”<sup>125</sup> PfP, which came into being in 1994 contains all the Central Asian states except Turkmenistan. It stands at a crucial point as according to MacFarlane, its activities reflected an effort to balance Russian reassertation under the auspices of the CIS.<sup>126</sup> Thus, NATO managed to penetrate into the region.

Another important factor in this process can be considered the US support for the Central Asian Battalion (Centrasbat) on 15 December 1995 that was established under the auspices of NATO’s PfP with US Central Command (US CENTCOM.) This initiative while including Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Uzbek troops, was assigned for conflict management and peacekeeping activities in the region.<sup>127</sup>

All these developments - the power projection capabilities of the US, tying the region to the West through the PfP of NATO, enhancing local military capabilities for self-defense, preventing a military reliance on Moscow and excluding Russia from acting as the only mediator in conflict resolution in the region and NATO’s expanding interests - can be

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<sup>123</sup> Wallander, *op.cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>124</sup> Ariel Cohen, “US Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia: Building A New Silk Road”, <<http://www.heritage.org/Research/RussiaandEurasia/BG1132.cfm>.>

<sup>125</sup> Giragosian, *op.cit.*, p. 48.

<sup>126</sup> MacFarlane, *op.cit.*, p. 452-453.

<sup>127</sup> Murad Esenov, “The Anti-Terrorist Campaign and the Regional Security System”, *Russian Regional Perspective Journal for Foreign and Security Policy*, No. 2, 2002, p. 26.

considered as the early signs of a broader US regulation of the region's security agenda, which inflamed the anxieties of Russia.

In this fashion, the US involvement across the entire Transcaspian has also taken off, as Washington conclusively rejected Russia's claims for an energy monopoly.<sup>128</sup> This was related with two major goals of the US:

On the one hand, it was closely tied to security and defense issues, to prevent further Russian depredations on sovereignty and independence of the Central Asian and Trans Caucasian states. On the other hand, it reflected the success of business interests in persuading the US Government of the centrality of access to oil.<sup>129</sup>

In February 1995, the US decided to support pipelines running through Turkey and not Russia in order to break Russia's grip on Central Asia's oil export. Washington also offered Kazakhstan certain guarantees if Moscow 'turned off the oil tap.' "This was one of the first decisions by the US to interpose itself as an arbiter between Russia and the Central Asian states if disputes arose between them."<sup>130</sup> Besides, in May 1995, Under-Secretary of Energy; William White toured Central Asia, urging the republics to regard themselves as important producers of oil and natural gas and treat Russia and Iran as rivals.<sup>131</sup> This was not surprising as the US was committed to multiple pipelines routes. It clearly aimed to exclude Russia and Iran as far as possible from dominating future pipeline decisions.

The US while starting to comprehend the importance of the energy potential of the region viewed three aspects of the Transcaspian equation as crucial: increasing the supply of energy to consumers, excluding Iran from influencing the exploration, shipment, development and marketing from energy products and preventing any one state, namely Russia from monopolizing the local energy supply. In this context, officially, the US policy intended to enhance local states' capability to produce and ship oil abroad while trying to obtain access for the US-centered energy firms that want to invest in these republics. However, it should be underlined that the US officials frequently denied that they see these regions in terms of competition vis-a vis Russia. They insisted that US policy aims not to divide Central Asia and the south Caucasus into rival spheres of influence or to exclude Russia, but rather at a "win-win" solution for all parties.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Aras and Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 76-77. For further information, see: Jan Kalicki, "Caspian Energy at the Crossroads", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 80, No.5, September/October 2001, p. 120-135.

<sup>129</sup> Blank, *op.cit.*, p. 131.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> Boris Rumer, "Disintegration and Reintegration in Central Asia: Dynamics and Prospects", *Central Asia in Transition: Dilemmas of Political and Economic Development*, (ed.) Boris Rumer, Armonk, M.E. Sharpe, 1996, p. 10.

<sup>132</sup> Blank, *op.cit.*, p.133.



Meanwhile, there was another group in the US administration that evaluated the region on geo-political terms. They were more concerned with the “Center Region” conception –he, who controls this region would eventually change all the balances of the world power combination- devised by MacKinder<sup>133</sup> and Spkyman. Therefore, they have suggested a more active policy pursuit in the region. As a result of these calculations and due to the efforts of Russia to increase its influence in the region by means of the ‘Near Abroad Doctrine’, China’s endeavors concerning the region, Turkey’s failure to meet the expectations efficiently and the interests of the US-centered oil companies reflected in the contracts with the governments of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan in 1993 and 1994, the US started to be convinced to engage in the region more actively, unlike Clinton’s first term marked by the failure of creating a coherent strategy toward Central Asia.

Around this time, a consensus has been reached by the US policy-makers concerning Central Asia that is reflected in the words of Deputy Secretary of State of the US, Strobe Talbott, the founder of the “Russia First” strategy, which will be worth mentioning in order to reach a deeper understanding of the vital strategic interests of the US in the region in this period:

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 old 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 for terrorism, a 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.<sup>134</sup>

This speech, with a reference to ‘Center Region’ perspective, reveals that access to energy markets in oil and gas is the most vital US interest in the area.<sup>135</sup> Having conceived the region as an alternative energy source for Middle East, it was decided to deploy all the instruments of the US to establish itself as a major player in Central Asia.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> H.J. Mackinder, “The Geographical Pivot of History,” *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, New York: Norton Company, 1962, p. 241-264.

<sup>134</sup> Erhan, *op.cit.*

<sup>135</sup> Uzgel, *op.cit.*, s. 278.

<sup>136</sup> Blank, *op.cit.*, p. 127.

In this regard, the US speeded up its efforts to gain influence in Central Asia through economic means till the appropriate time came for an American stepping into the region in the military sense. For instance, in 1998 “National Security Strategy”<sup>137</sup>, it was underlined that for the energy resources to be transferred to the world markets, stable, secure and prosper Caucasus and Central Asia were the main prerequisites. In this context, the US national security strategy has tried to make the integration of the new independent states into Western economic, political and military institutions and practices while the fundamental regional policy aim of the Clinton Administration appeared to prepare the ground for the pursuit of the economic interests. In a parallel sense, 1999 “Law of Silk Road Strategy”<sup>138</sup> put forward the main lines of the US policies towards Caucasus and Central Asia. According to this law, the US is primarily determined to support sovereign, independent, (largely in terms of energy independence and multiple options for development),<sup>139</sup> and democratic governments, emphasizing respect for human rights, atmosphere of tolerance and multilateralism along with struggling against racism and Semitism. Secondly, taking active part in the solutions of regional conflicts and removing the obstacles that prevent the transborder trade, the constitution of friendly relations and economic cooperation stand at a crucial point for the US as it is mainly concerned with the proliferation of market oriented rules and procedures to support the US-oriented investments and commercial initiatives. Lastly, the improvement of the infrastructure in the fields of communication, transportation, education, health, energy and trade can be cited. Therefore, the ‘Law of Silk Road Strategy’, indeed, has been built upon the axes, which enables American initiatives to pursue their economic and commercial interests in the region, while between the lines other orientations spreading from democratization to human rights discourse assorted with the definition of globalization have been sprinkled.<sup>140</sup>

When viewed from the perspective of the Central Asian states, exports of energy appeared to be the only relatively short-term path as these states found themselves caught in a competitive international arena with few instruments of power in their hands, where the intense and new ‘great game’ that is stretching from Europe to China leaves them little room

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<sup>137</sup> A New Security Strategy for a New Century, <<http://www.comw.org/qdr/fulltext/nss2002.pdf>>

<sup>138</sup> Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999, <<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/auery/D?c106:2:/temp/c106aldGvc>>

<sup>139</sup> Wallander, *op.cit.*, p. 97.

<sup>140</sup> Çağrı Erhan, “Soğuk Savaş Sonrası ABD Güvenlik Algılamaları”, *Uluslararası Güvenlik Sorunları ve Türkiye*, (ed.) Refet Yinanç and Hakan Taşdemir, Ankara: Seçkin, 2002, p. 70-71.

beside stressing their energy reserves.<sup>141</sup> They could defend their economic, political and thus strategic independence by diversification of their foreign economic relations as well as larger security relations. Such diversification coincides with at least the rhetoric of the US energy policy. Therefore, the intensifying struggle embraced economic issues of energy routes, pipelines as well as the issues of security, the territorial integrity of states and defense.

As a result of these developments, since the mid-1990s, while the competition around the Caspian Sea and its oil reserves had been intensifying and the US becoming the main investor in the region, Moscow began to evaluate the US' moves in the oil-rich former Soviet states bordering Caspian as a deliberate attempt of driving it out of the region and place these resources under the US control, Washington, on the other hand, started to perceive Moscow's influence on the newly independent states as an evidence of Russian neo-imperialism after years of Russia First strategy. And in this equation, while the US was superior in financial and political terms, Russia was closer to the region and reserved its right for access denial.<sup>142</sup>

To summarize, the policy concerning Central Asia during Clinton administration depended on four main components: the US will support the Central Asian states in their democratization processes as well as in their transformation to market economies; the security of the Caspian energy resources will be provided while alternative route projects will be prepared instead of the ones that are under Russian control; regional conflicts will be resolved through nonviolent means; and the commercial activities of the American companies will be supported. The stated US policy implied that the US would rely on economic influence and military exercises, but avoid costly military involvements in resolving conflicts in the region.

Yet, it should be also noted that the democratization promotion has not become the central organizing principle of US policy as Clinton's rhetoric often suggests, as it depends occasionally on the context. In other words, the surfacing of the energy and security agendas in Central Asia clearly "reduced the previous stress in the American agenda on democratization and good governance, as the quest of such objectives might have intricate the pursuit of more tangible strategic objectives."<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Blank, *op.cit.*, p. 136.

<sup>142</sup> Dmitri Trenin, "A Farewell to the Great Game? Prospects for Russian-American Security Cooperation in Central Asia", *European Security*, Vol. 12, 2004, p. 22.

<sup>143</sup> MacFarlane, *op.cit.*, p. 452.

Where the US' economic and security interests correlate with the advance of democracy and a democratic trend is occurring, US policy incorporates democracy promotion. Where US interests necessitate working relationships with non-democratic governments and where no democratic trend is evident, US policy largely eschews it.<sup>144</sup>

Central Asia falls into the latter category as the energy resources of the region are the primary interest of the US policy and democracy building has lower importance compared to that of geo-economics. Elements of the political and legal agendas could be sacrificed in order to pursue economic opportunity and geo-political advantage.<sup>145</sup> However, as the time went by, in the late 1990s, the potential deep rooted discomfort in the Central Asian states came to the surface and as a result, it has been understood that the eradication of fundamentalist Islamic activities would not be accomplished just by referring to the economical aspect of the situation as the US focus indicated. Therefore, the US, achieving a certain degree of influence and being able to use all possible economic and political leverage to put pressure on a state if there were threat to its national interests, began to put strong political pressure on the regimes in these states, being highly critical about corruption and human rights records and the level of democracy.

During the period from the election of George Walker Bush to 9/11, as the advisor of American Foreign Minister, Clifford Bond, responsible for the formerly Soviet republics, stated in a report presented to the Committee of International Relations of the American Representatives Assembly that US had vital interests in the region and these vital interests focus on the transfer of the energy sources to the world markets without any problems and adaptation of the newly independent states to the free market conditions.<sup>146</sup> Therefore, in the US strategic thinking, discernible changes were not expected involving the Central Asian states.<sup>147</sup>

However, there has been a steady increase in the interpretations that underlined the American interests in the region going beyond economic terms. In these interpretations, the geo-political aspect concerning the region emphasized that the US should follow an active policy in order to counter-balance the impact of Russia and China. In order to do so, it formed multi-dimensional strategic relations with the states of the region. Yet, as Russia

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<sup>144</sup> Blank, *op.cit.*, p. 134.

<sup>145</sup> S. Neil MacFarlane, *Western Engagement in the Caucasus and Central Asia*, London, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, p. 58-63.

<sup>146</sup> Erhan, *op.cit.*

<sup>147</sup> Ehsan Ahrari, "The Strategic Future of Central Asia", *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 56, Spring 2003, p. 163.

started to pursue multi-dimensional policies stretching from strengthening the economical relations accompanied by an increase in its military presence and moreover, China, getting active through the means of the SCO in the region, the US could not easily pursue such an agenda. Instead, Washington preferred a policy of “wait and see.”<sup>148</sup>

In accordance with this prudent approach to the region, although the US Department of State continued to criticize the anti-democratic regimes of the Central Asian states through human rights country reports, it did not take concrete steps beyond its criticisms. Ironically, the US was also worried about the fact that democracy could carry Taliban-like groups to the government, which would not be convenient for its vital interests in the region. Thus, the US was not in favor of the existing conditions in the region as they fostered the radical Islamic groups and prevented the region from integrating with the West through liberalization and free-market economy.<sup>149</sup> However, one should not neglect the fact that these uncertain approaches concerning democratization of the US administration “carry the risk of stimulating anti-American sentiment, among a populace frustrated by Washington's unambiguous support for the existing regimes, which may heighten the tensions already present in the region”<sup>150</sup>

Meanwhile, on the global agenda, it is worth noting that Bush administration, departing from a series of international treaties (referring mainly to ABM Treaty) that constituted the bedrock of global balance, asserting national strategic and economic interests at the top of its list of priorities and with its unilateralism caused significant uncertainty in both Moscow and Beijing with respect to their bilateral relations with Washington. In this period, top US officials even called Russia an “active proliferator” and a “possible threat” in different occasions along with a harsher rhetoric and discourse towards Russia and China unlike that of Clinton era.<sup>151</sup> On China's part, shortly after Bush's inauguration in late January 2001, the new administration confirmed its new definition of China as a “strategic competitor”. These definitions not only indicate to gravitation toward realpolitik, which “consists the use of force to resolve international issues with military and economic power being a main criterion in appraising both allies and opponents,”<sup>152</sup> but also to a significant

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<sup>148</sup> Erhan, *op.cit.*, p. 71.

<sup>149</sup> Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 190.

<sup>150</sup> Roger McDermott, “Tajikistan and Uzbekistan Look Beyond US Security Assistance”, <[http://jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article\\_id=2369055](http://jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2369055)>

<sup>151</sup> Graeme P. Herd and Ella Akerman, “Russian Strategic Realignment and the Post-Post-Cold War Era?”, *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 33, No. 3, p. 357.

<sup>152</sup> Mikhail Margelov, “Russian-Chinese Relations: At Their Peak?”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 49, No. 6, 2003, p. 78.

amount of worry on both Moscow and Beijing's part, by Bush's pursuit. In this respect, it was not unforeseen that the two powers speeded up efforts for a major treaty of friendship and cooperation as a strong answer<sup>153</sup> in which the sides promised not to use nuclear weapons against each other, not to target their strategic missiles against each other and to come into contact in situations jeopardizing peace or threatening aggression against either side.<sup>154</sup>

However, the systemic shock of 9/11 brought with it a dramatic reconfiguration of the entire international security environment in which a bipolar world order has been recreated with one side formed by the US and the other "freedom loving states" stand "shoulder to shoulder" against global terror supported by rogue states and transnational terrorist networks<sup>155</sup>, as well as a fundamental shift in the ranking of American foreign and security priorities. In addition, 9/11 presented massive changes for the Central Asia in particular, which led to important consequences for Russia-US and Sino-US relations, as well as for the bilateral relations of the US with Central Asian states in general. From this point on, "Central Asia started to rank high on the list of target areas deemed to threaten US security and global stability; it combines weak states, proven energy resources, radical Islamic movements and an important geo-political location."<sup>156</sup> Therefore, one can claim that the Central Asian regional security complex drew great amount of attention in world affairs as a result of this global securitization process under the name of anti-terrorism campaign that had corresponding security concerns in this region.

#### 4.2 Russia and Central Asia

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia found itself in a state of profound social crisis. As Karl Polanyi properly put into words, "a social crisis does not derive from facing a socially dramatic event, but rather it derives from the destruction of its social basis and living in the new conditions without the necessary social institutions and mechanisms that appear as a result of the destruction."<sup>157</sup> Under the light of Polanyi's views, the extent of these crisis was manifested in four areas in particular in the case of Russian Federation: the

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<sup>153</sup> Yu Bin, "Treaties Scrapped, Treaties Signed", <<http://www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/0102Qchina-rus.html>>

<sup>154</sup> Margelov, *op.cit.*, p. 83.

<sup>155</sup> Herd and Akerman, *op.cit.*, p. 358.

<sup>156</sup> Cornell, *op.cit.*, p. 242-243.

<sup>157</sup> Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1957, p. 156-158.

search for a post-Soviet identity and sense of purpose, a dysfunctional political system, as a result of accelerating economic decline, rampant corruption and in the handling of concrete policy priorities or in other words, defining the national interests of Russia.<sup>158</sup> On top of these four internal areas, a complementary external factor has to be taken into account as these areas also determine the very nature of Russia's position in world affairs, starting from the relations with the successor states stretching to the global politics. At this point, it should be underlined that this difficulty is not unique to Russia. "No transition from empire to post-imperial status is easy"<sup>159</sup> as stated already for the Central Asian states.

In this respect, "Russia is today a country to redefine its past as well as searching for an identity in the future."<sup>160</sup> This search is basically related with the re-definition of Russia's position and role in the world. For many scholars, the salvation of this dilemma seems to lie in drawing a line between the motherland and colony as losing the territories considered as motherland was accepted hardly in Russia.<sup>161</sup> Giving up its land-based empire but still facing problems over borders, the Russian diaspora, its post-imperial political culture and new economic and political relations with the Soviet successor states and most importantly, as a result of loosing an empire, Russia had to face a decision whether to give up its great-power status and adopt to the conditions of transition or insist on its super power status and try to turn into a strong regional power. In short, due to this challenging context, Russia as the recognized legal heir to the Soviet Union could not adapt easily to a post-imperial foreign policy not only because of its domestic circumstances under the shock of losing an empire, but also because of its uncertain external environment which led to an incoherent foreign policy in Boris Yeltsin era.<sup>162</sup>

Yeltsin's primary concern was to create a safe external environment in order to free Kremlin to deal with the critical tasks of domestic political and economic transition. "Yeltsin

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<sup>158</sup> Bobo Lo, *Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy*, London, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chathamhouse Papers, 2003, p. 9-11.

<sup>159</sup> Ilya Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy: Nationalism and Leadership in Poland, Russia and Ukraine*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, Russian, Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies, 1998, p. 235.

<sup>160</sup> Gregory Guroff and Alexander Guroff, "The Paradox of Russian National Identity", *National Identity and Ethnicity In Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, (ed.) Roman Szporluk, New York, M. E. Sharpe, 1994, p. 98.

<sup>161</sup> Zeynep Dağı, *Rusya'nın Dönüşümü: Kimlik, Milliyetçilik ve Dış Politika*, İstanbul, Boyut Yayıncılık, 2002. p.173.

<sup>162</sup> Margot Light, "Post-Soviet Russian Foreign Policy: The First Decade", *Contemporary Russian Politics*, (ed.) Archie Brown, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 422.

had little alternative but to try to invent a new type of relationship with the West.”<sup>163</sup> In this sense, “the post-Soviet Russia came to the international scene with a strong pro-Western orientation by destroying the old regime, getting rid of the communist past, proclaiming itself decisively in favor of democracy and a market economy”<sup>164</sup> in order to take its place among the international elites, ‘the old enemies’.

While this was the case with the West in the initial years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, between 1991 and 1993, as Russia under Yeltsin leadership was busy with its own domestic problems accompanied with an orientation towards West, its influence could not be effective in Central Asia. Yeltsin interpreted the dissolution of the union as freeing Russia from the unnecessary financial burden of supporting the others, not as a way of letting them escape Russia’s grip. The main reason behind this evaluation was “a “secret” belief that successor states would naturally gravitate toward Russia because of the historical similarities, economical and military interdependence.”<sup>165</sup> Therefore, first full year of independent Russian foreign policy was characterized by a degree of hesitancy, even passivity in relations with the former Soviet republics in Central Asia. “Moscow tried not to bother about the state of affairs in former Soviet Union territory.”<sup>166</sup>

Their own country’s industrial might, the dependence of the Central Asian republics upon innumerable economic links with Russia, the preponderance of Russian engineers and technicians in Central Asian economies and of Russian administrators in government services, the various social and ethnic contradictions within and between the republics, the lack of their own armed forces and finally, the fact that the republics lacked their own foreign policy apparatus.<sup>167</sup>

However, the assumptions concerning the almost obligatory gravitation towards Russia on the part of Central Asian states, proved to be overstated with respect to the

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<sup>163</sup> Dale R. Herspring and Peter Rutland, “Chapter Eleven: Putin and Russian Foreign Policy”, *Putin’s Russia: Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain*, (ed.) Dale R. Herspring, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 2003, p. 227.

<sup>164</sup> Light, *op. cit.*, p.433.

<sup>165</sup> Richard Sakwa and Mark Webber, “Development of the CIS 1991-1998: Stagnation and Survival”, *Europe Asia Studies*, Vol.51, No. 3, 1999, p. 397.

<sup>166</sup> Vyacheslav Y. Belokrenitsky, “Russia and Former Soviet Central Asia: The Attitude Towards Regional Integrity”, *Post-Soviet Central Asia*, (eds.) Touraj Atabaki and John O’Kane, London, Tauris Academic Studies, 1998, p. 54.

<sup>167</sup> Grigory Bondarevsky and Peter Ferdinand, “Russian Foreign Policy and Central Asia”, *The New Central Asia And Its Neighbors*, (ed.) Peter Ferdinand, New York, Council on Foreign Relations, 1994, p.41.



developments in the region.<sup>168</sup> It became clearer that the formulation of a strategy towards Central Asia appeared to be more complex than estimated “because of the heterogeneity of the countries in this region did not make up a single whole, despite all the arguments”<sup>169</sup> in this direction. Furthermore, Central Asian states were trying to diversify their alternatives to distance them from Russia’s grip unlike Russia had calculated.

Therefore, since the autumn of 1992 and the early 1993, there has been a shift of emphasize in Russia’s foreign policy towards the ‘Near Abroad’. This concept provided a clear expression of the Russian perspective. For Moscow; the former Soviet republics were now independent states, but not entirely foreign countries. This shift derived from the concerns about the Russian diaspora in the former Soviet republics and also as result of “the greater concern for its national interests and for the potential threats to Russia’s national security and international status emanating from national and ethnic conflicts along Russia’s new state borders.”<sup>170</sup> One of the main motives for this foreign policy shift has been a consensus that Russia must reassert itself in the post-Soviet space, especially in Central Asia, if it is not to lose its status at least as a regional power. Russia started to give priority to the re-establishment of its influence in the former Soviet Union territory. Thus, “little time passed before regret about lost influence translated itself into a more active policy of keeping the CIS”<sup>171</sup> which was initially designed for a “decent divorce”<sup>172</sup> of the new states from their common Soviet heritage.

This shift also included the argument that “Russia should not accept any foreign player in what is called Russia’s sphere of interests.”<sup>173</sup> Given its domestic circumstances, Moscow would be responsive to any ‘uninvited’ outside influence that may worsen its situation. “In an important speech of the Civic Union on 28 February 1993, Yeltsin reiterated

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<sup>168</sup> Lena Jonson “Russia and Central Asia”, *Central Asian Security: The New International Context*, (eds.) Roy Allison and Lena Jonson, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London: Brookings Institution Press, 2001, p. 96.

<sup>169</sup> Irina Zviagelskaia, *The Russian Policy Debate on Central Asia*, Chamelon, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995, p. 2.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>171</sup> Michael Rywkin, “Russia and the Near Abroad Under Putin”, *American Foreign Policy Interests*, Vol. 25, No. 3, 2003, p. 4.

<sup>172</sup> Lena Jonson and Clive Archer, *Peacekeeping and the Role of Russia in Eurasia*, (eds.) Lena Jonson and Clive Archer, Colorado, Westview Press, 1996, p. 19.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

that ‘stopping all armed conflicts on the territory of the former USSR is Russia’s vital interest.’<sup>174</sup>

Moreover, the “Foreign Policy Concept” which came into force in April 1993 while shaping the political frame of ‘Near Abroad Doctrine’, mentioned the importance of rapprochement with the West in terms of economy and politics. It also stressed the need for Russia to be more active in the fields of military and politics in the near abroad. It implied that Russia was the responsible one to form the stability and security in the ‘Near Abroad’. Besides, Russia assumed that it was necessary to constitute an effective security system with the CIS member states. Furthermore, the document emphasized that treaties preserving the rights of Russian diaspora living in the former Soviet republics should be arranged.<sup>175</sup>

In this framework, Russia’s vital interests in the post-Soviet region included “the containment of local conflicts along the Russian border, the continuation of the Russian military presence in the newly independent states, the protection of the outer borders of the CIS and the protection of the human rights of ethnic Russians in the newly independent states of the ‘Near Abroad’. The strategic objective of Russia’s policy was to keep the other successor states to the former Soviet Union within its sphere of influence, to preserve the capability to influence both the domestic and the foreign policies of those states and to retain instruments for exerting pressure on them.

In this framework, Russia referred to several instruments while trying to maintain its influence in Central Asia. The main instrument remained the consolidation of the CIS and a succession of attempts have been made to convert the CIS into an institution capable of effective action. Many multilateral agreements have been signed between Russia and the Central Asian states, such as Tashkent Collective Security Treaty of 1992. The treaty was mainly concerned with external threats, and the signatories also committed themselves to refrain from the use of force against one another. All the Central Asian states except Turkmenistan became signatories. However, the Tashkent Treaty did not have the desired effect and military integration did not follow.<sup>176</sup> Generally speaking, the military and political policies and multilateral security treaties proved to be insufficient for the purposes of Russia. “The reluctance of other CIS members to integrate reflects their fears of Russian

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<sup>174</sup> Mohiaddin Meshabi, “Regional and Global Powers and the International Relations of Central Asia”, *The Making of Foreign Policy in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, (eds.) Adeed and Karen Dawisha, New York, M.E. Sharpe, 1995, p. 230.

<sup>175</sup> Dağı, *op. cit.*, p.188-189.

<sup>176</sup> Jonson, *op.cit.*, p. 104.

dominance within the organization.”<sup>177</sup> CIS proved a weak body as there is no consensus among the member states over the way that the CIS should evolve, stemming from their historical backgrounds, geographical positions, future goals, different development strategies, the importance attached to national sovereignty and the relations with Russia etc.

Another instrument was the Russian diaspora in the Central Asian states. Due to the migration of these people to Russia, then Russian Foreign Minister, Andrey Kozyrev has stated that Russia “will be protecting the rights of Russians in other CIS states firmly and even power methods can be employed.”<sup>178</sup> From this point of view, Kazakhstan attracted the most attention among Central Asian states. “The proportion of such a population (approximately one-third of Kazakhstan’s population are Russians) in this republic is the largest not only in Central Asia but in whole near abroad.”<sup>179</sup> Kyrgyzstan follows Kazakhstan with 13 per cent of Russian diaspora in its population.

Consequently these are the two most pro-Russian in orientation, with Russian concerns reflected in their domestic and foreign policies...By contrast; Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, geo-politically removed from Russia and with small Russian minorities (8 and 6 per cent respectively) could afford to play the independence card much sooner and much more wildly.<sup>180</sup>

Another instrument that Russia referred for reasserting its influence in Central Asia was the peacekeeping activities. “Russia has taken upon itself the responsibility to act in the near abroad as peacekeeper or rather ‘peacemaker’, as the Russian word ‘*microtvarchestvo*’ runs in translation.”<sup>181</sup> This was mostly legitimized due to the fear of a spillover from a potentially instable Central Asia with loyalties divided along ethnic, regional and religious lines, harsh socio-economic conditions and an ongoing Islamic fundamentalism. All these factors paved the way for conflicts and extremism in all the Central Asian countries from the perspective of Russia.<sup>182</sup>

In this context, some factors are conceived more likely than others to cause conflicts to spread and escalate from the perspective of Russia, namely the Tajik factor, the Uzbek

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<sup>177</sup> Lena Jonson and Clive Archer, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>178</sup> Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, *Russia and the New States of Eurasia: The Politics of Upheaval*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 64.

<sup>179</sup> Belokrenitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>180</sup> Sally N. Cummings, “Happier Bedfellows? Russia and Central Asia Under Putin?”, *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 32, No. 2, June 2001, p. 144.

<sup>181</sup> Jonson and Archer, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>182</sup> Jonson, *op.cit.*, p. 110.

factor and the Afghan factor. Due to these factors, Russia made use of the conflicts that aroused in Central Asia. In this regard, its most notable activity in this period has taken place in Tajikistan. Cummings argue that “the only state where Russia maintained an active presence was Tajikistan where 201st Motorized Rifle Division continued to prop up the pro-Russian incumbent regime and allowed Russia a foothold on the border with Afghanistan.”<sup>183</sup>

The Civil War in Tajikistan was more of a conflict among the local Tajik clans hidden behind the struggle for power between the communists and democrat-backed Islamists that deserved Moscow’s attention in 1992. “The Tajik Civil War gave rise to fears in Russia of Islamic fundamentalism spreading across Central Asia, toppling secular governments in a domino fashion and reaching Russia’s own borders.”<sup>184</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising to observe Russia referring to peacekeeping as a means to maintain its geopolitical influence and strategic position. However, according to Lena Jonson, the operation in Tajikistan in no way falls under any international definition of peacekeeping, not even an extended one, since Russian involvement provided support for one party (communists) in the conflict.<sup>185</sup> “Russia’s peacekeeping involvement raised a question of concern especially in Central Asia guarding their sovereignty in the shadow of a great power.”<sup>186</sup> On the other hand, the gap between Russia’s peacekeeping ambitions and its capabilities created an ironic position for Russia.<sup>187</sup>

Another issue of concern aroused from ‘Uzbek factor’. Uzbekistan’s potential for becoming a regional power in Central Asia could shift the power balance in the region. From Russian perspective, growing tensions in Uzbek society between the regime and its critics, especially radical Islamists, who have a stronghold in the densely populated Uzbek part of the Ferghana Valley, would complicate the situation for the neighboring states as well. Russia also feared that these groups would be influenced by the Tajik Islamic factors. In addition, “the Uzbek authorities’ readiness to carry on the struggle against terrorists outside the national borders demonstrated Uzbekistan’s potential and determination to act as a strong

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<sup>183</sup> Cummings, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

<sup>184</sup> Dmitri Trenin, “Southern Watch: Russia’s Policy in Central Asia”, *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 56, No.2, Spring 2003, p. 121.

<sup>185</sup> Jonson and Archer, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>187</sup> Roy Allison, “The Military Background and Context to Russian Peacekeeping”, *Peacekeeping and the Role of Russia in Eurasia*, (eds.) Lena Jonson and Clive Archer, Colorado, Westview Press, 1996, p. 33-47.

power in the region.”<sup>188</sup> Therefore, Russia has tried to counter Uzbek influence in the region, but also to find a common ground for cooperation with Uzbekistan.

The ‘Afghan factor’ was another source of instability and of the spread of radical Islam into Central Asia that concerned Russia. To the Taliban takeover of Kabul in September 1996, Russia reacted strongly and tried to rally the Central Asian states against the threat of Taliban crossing the border into Central Asia and to use the situation to encourage Russian military integration with Central Asian states.<sup>189</sup> In the first wave of fear, the Central Asian states perceived Russia as the force, which could contain them. However, by winter, fear had given way to attempts to find a compromise with the Taliban and the forces that were supporting them.<sup>190</sup> Turkmenistan refrained from any joint measures, referring to its status as a neutral country. Kazakhstan displayed concern but since its frontiers are far from Afghanistan this concern was less urgent than that of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In this respect, Russia assisted Uzbekistan in equipping the military forces of Dostum to oppose to Taliban rule. However, in August 1998, Uzbekistan claimed that the war in Afghanistan was of a domestic character and became a supporter of a negotiated solution to the war. Therefore, Russia lost its chance of influencing the situation with the help of Tashkent, but tried to maintain its support for the Afghan leader Ahmad Shah Massoud.<sup>191</sup>

In sum, Russia’s calculation concerning the region was simplistic; “the Tajik, Uzbek and Afghan factors create dynamics in the region which may easily escape control, and their complexity works to further undermine Russia’s influence in Central Asia.”<sup>192</sup> Therefore, the relations between Russia and Central Asian States should be evaluated in this framework.

Thus, the policy of Russia concerning Central Asia proves to be an amalgamation of policies that can be framed within several general categories.<sup>193</sup> the emotional category stemming from the fact that the presence of Russians in these newly independent countries; the political category along with the military evaluations encompasses the critical climate of

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<sup>188</sup> Jonson, *op.cit.*, p. 112.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112-113.

<sup>190</sup> Alexei Malashenko, “Turning Away from Russia: New Directions for Central Asia”, *Commonwealth and Independence in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, (eds.) Bruno Coppoieters, Alexei Zverev and Dmitri Trenin, London, Frank Cass Publishers, 1998, p. 164.

<sup>191</sup> Jonson, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>193</sup> Courtenay Dunn, “Central Asia: Examining Regional Security”, <<http://www.irex.org/pubs/policy/central-asia.pdf>>

the Central Asian states due to their internal dynamics as well as interregional threats posed by Islamic fundamentalism that can spread to Russia as many Russian see the region as a link in a larger chain of Islamic terrorist operation, beginning with Albania and Kosovo, stretching through Caucasus, Chechnya, Central Asian states, Afghanistan and Pakistan and also the economic category which includes not only the Russian perception of Central Asia as an energy supplier and a strong rivalry given its oil and gas reserves but also Russia's view of the region as a potential market and a route for transporting these energies.

Having mentioned the objectives and instruments of Russia for reasserting its influence in Central Asia, one can discern that the evaluation of 'Near Abroad', in particular Central Asia was surely connected with a geo-political point of view. Russia's perception of the region was similar to that of the Czarist and Soviet rulers who were concerned with a geo-political power vacuum that is contested by other external powers. However, the difference of Russia stemmed from its economic limitations and its insufficient capabilities, which led to a more rhetorical and moderate implementation in practice concerning the region, despite its emphasis in its official policy. Since its industrial capacity has been cut in half with the introduction of pro-market reforms, its economy and budget have become heavily dependent on foreign trade, particularly on oil exports,<sup>194</sup> Russia could no longer be the donor for Central Asia.<sup>195</sup> However, given its ties with these states and the emerging new world order, Russia did not stand any chance of turning its back to the region.

On the one hand, it is interested in having access to the transport routes through Central Asia and to the markets. It wants to retain control over the supply of metals and strategic and raw materials from the region. On the other hand, its limited economic capabilities made Russia press the Central Asian republics to introduce their own currency which is hardly in line with a proclaimed course towards reintegration.<sup>196</sup>

Nevertheless, the lack of trust and the fear of Russian domination from the perspective of Central Asian states also hindered a coherent ground for cooperation among the Central Asian States and Russia<sup>197</sup> owing to the unwillingness of Central Asian states. As Trenin properly put into words;

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<sup>194</sup> Trenin, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

<sup>195</sup> Zviagelskaia, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>197</sup> For further information, see: Bess A. Brown, "National Security and Military Issues in Central Asia", *State-Building and Military Power in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, (ed.) Bruce Parrott, New York, M.E. Sharpe, 1995, p. 234-252.

Through the bitter end of the USSR, the five Central Asian republics were prepared to live in a 'renewed federation' or confederacy. However, a decade later, the view of Russia as a colonial oppressor represents a necessary part of their nation-building mythologies.<sup>198</sup>

In this context, "with the exception of Tajikistan, (Russia's forward position in Central Asia,) the other Central Asian states tried to become foreign policy actors in their own right."<sup>199</sup> The role of geo-politics in these different attitudes towards Russia should also be taken into account.<sup>200</sup> For instance, Kazakhstan is the only state in the region to share a border with Russia more than 6000 km. By contrast, Turkmenistan's borders with Iran and Afghanistan have made relations with the south more important. Uzbekistan has no borders with Russia.

Kyrgyzstan, stayed in Kazakhstan's shadow and struggled for internal peace, was heavily reliant on Russia. Although, it was Russia-friendly, it embraced Western influence for the most part of the 1990s. Like Kyrgyzstan, the oil-rich Kazakhstan sought to diversify trade and investment partners and tried to follow a 'multi-vectored' foreign policy. Nevertheless, both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan's geo-politics ensured continuing close relations with Russia during the Yeltsin years. Therefore, Kazakhstan is of vital importance to Russia due to its geographical proximity, its six million strong Slav minority that is concentrated in the Kazakh provinces bordering Russia.

By contrast to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan openly campaigned to distance themselves from Russia. Uzbekistan, the region's most populous country with 25 million inhabitants, is a potential hegemon in the region. Home to half of Central Asia's population, it occupies a central position in the region and maintains a large military that terrifies its smaller neighbors, including Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.<sup>201</sup> From the start, Tashkent has taken a pro-independence stance vis-a-vis Moscow and no deployment of Russian forces has been allowed on its territory.<sup>202</sup> Furthermore, as a focal point for fundamentalist Islam, Uzbekistan stands in a crucial position. In this context, "Tashkent's decision to leave the CIS Collective Security Treaty in 1999 and its association with the GUAM states (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova-hence transforming it to GUUAM) made clear Uzbekistan's desire to pursue a foreign policy no longer centered on

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<sup>198</sup> Trenin, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

<sup>199</sup> Cummings, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>201</sup> Jonson, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>202</sup> Trenin, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

Moscow.”<sup>203</sup> This development was very significant, as the group has become the symbol of geo-political pluralism in the post-Soviet space, which at the same time referred to the balancing tendency the region has been granted due to the combination created by its history and geography. In sum, “Uzbekistan became the most outspoken critic of Russia among the Central Asian states and the most eager to enter cooperation with the U.S.A.”<sup>204</sup> in the 1990s.

On the other hand, natural gas-rich Turkmenistan has ensured a legal separation from Russia, phased out the Russian military presence and effectively shut itself off from its CIS partners owing to its policy of neutrality. There are no Russian military forces or facilities on Turkmen territory. It has never joined the Treaty of Collective Security and after the mid-1990s reduced its military cooperation with Russia.

Despite all the endeavors of Russia, in general Central Asian leaders remained skeptical about Russian proposals for military integration and developed cooperation at varying degrees within the framework of the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) that carried out joint military maneuvers on Central Asian territory.<sup>205</sup> In sum, by the end of the 1990s the Central Asian states fell into different categories depending on the degree and scope of their cooperation with Russia in security affairs: Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, which were outside the CIS Treaty on Collective Security; Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, who remained in the Treaty but were scaling down their participation and Tajikistan, the close ally.<sup>206</sup>

In other words, “what had once been common values between Soviet republics were replaced by separate identities, suspicions about Russia’s intentions and pragmatic calculations of what Russia could deliver.”<sup>207</sup> Furthermore, the elites of the Central Asian states have quickly learned the games of geo-politics and international economics. Most leaders have managed to navigate between Russia, China, Iran, Turkey and the US.

Western engagement in the Caucasus and in Central Asia with its plans and projects for constructing pipelines to Turkey across Caucasus and the Caspian Sea and security cooperation with the states of the region, reflected a drastic change of the strategic scene, with direct consequences for Russia.<sup>208</sup>

It was not surprising for Russia to watch the increasing engagement of external powers in Central Asia with concern, especially that of the US, while it had a basis for

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<sup>203</sup> Cummings, *op. cit.*, p.146.

<sup>204</sup> Jonson, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>206</sup> Jonson, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*



mutual understanding with China and Iran as these states were also concerned about the Western influence in the region.

To sum up all thus far has been said concerning Yeltsin era, in the first half of the 1990s, many observers believed that Russia was gaining its influence back in Central Asia. However, what appeared in the second half of the 1990s was a different trend. Russia's return to the region was followed by a process of "rapid though, involuntary disengagement" as Russia was losing influence in the economic, political, cultural and security spheres. As a result, its position as a 'security guarantor' in Central Asia was undermined as other external actors became more engaged.<sup>209</sup> While Russia watched this change with concerns for its national and strategic interests in the region, from a Central Asian perspective, greater involvement by the US or China, and to a lesser extent Turkey and Iran, offered a promise for future economic development and foreign investors, therefore welcomed.<sup>210</sup> Central Asian states instead of grouping around Russia in a security community, preferred to develop a web of bilateral agreements with Russia while underlining the importance of their sovereignty in these treaties unlike the first half of the 1990s.<sup>211</sup>

Owing to these developments and as a response to the US unilateralism in general, while Russia insisted on a multi-polar world, it also defined a pragmatic low profile policy towards the CIS states and customized its objectives with regard to CIS integration thanks to Yevgenii Primakov, who replaced Kozyrev in January 1996 as Foreign Minister of Russia. The emphasis in Russian foreign policy shifted to bilateral agreements and functional cooperation on specific issues.<sup>212</sup> Thus, the pattern of Russian relations with the Central Asian states has undergone a profound shift from predominantly multilateral agreements through CIS forums and agencies, to bilateral ones along with the shift in its foreign policy emphasizes.<sup>213</sup>

Despite these efforts, Central Asian states have not embraced these initiatives as wholeheartedly as Russia would have liked. In short, Russia's attempts to increase Russian influence in Central Asia in the second half of Yeltsin era also failed as Russia was unable to formulate a policy that was attractive to the Central Asian states. Furthermore, it showed confusion over what constituted Russian interests in Central Asia and in the implementation

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<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>210</sup> Meshabi, *op. cit.*, p.229-234.

<sup>211</sup> Jonson, *op.cit.*, p. 96-97.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>213</sup> Belokrenitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

of those interests. It lacked the military and economic capacity to continue to hold the region within its sphere of influence. “Under Yeltsin, Russia largely disengaged from Central Asia, which allowed the states of this region to anchor their newly discovered sovereignty by diversifying their foreign relations”<sup>214</sup> while developing diverging identities, values and interests from Russia.

However, Russia still remains an innate partner for Central Asian states owing to its geographical location, its long apparent border and various shared security problems. “Being well aware of this argument, President Vladimir Putin has claimed that an economically strong Russia will be an attractive partner for cooperation with the Central Asian states”<sup>215</sup> on these issues.

In the atmosphere described above, when Vladimir Putin became president of Russia, he was confronted with an array of problems; the country’s economy was in shambles, its political system was in chaos and its social and moral structure was in an advanced state of decay. On top of these, the world was ignoring Russia, as it knew that Russia was weak and not a serious player on the international scene.

Russia’s relations with the United States were troubled while the West was ignoring Russia, and even the Kremlin’s few remaining allies (such as India) had lost faith...When the Russian bear growled, who paid any attention? The answer was almost nobody.<sup>216</sup>

In these circumstances, Putin faced multiple challenges: reestablishing Russia as a credible international actor; restoring confidence in government decision-making; adopting effective positions in defence of national interests and placing Moscow’s relations with the West on a more constructive basis while retaining Russia’s relations with Central Asian states, China, India and Iran etc.<sup>217</sup>

In this respect and in sharp contrast to Yeltsin’s relative inactivity, “Putin brought a heightened level of presidential activism to Russian foreign policy by flying around the globe that gained him the reputation of presidential tourist”<sup>218</sup> in many circles. He has also made appearances in the Central Asian states hoping to enhance Russia’s status in this

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<sup>214</sup> Cummings, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

<sup>215</sup> Jonson, *op.cit.*, p. 120.

<sup>216</sup> Herspring and Rutland, *op .cit.*, p. 230.

<sup>217</sup> Bobo Lo, “The Securitization of Russian Foreign Policy Under Putin”, *Russia Between East and West: Russian Foreign Policy on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century*, (ed.) Gabriel Gorodetsky, London, Portland, Frank Cass, 2003, p. 12.

<sup>218</sup> Herspring and Rutland, *op.cit.*, p. 241.

energy-rich region<sup>219</sup> giving the hints of his multi-vectored foreign policy which will appear in the broader context of his pragmatism. He believed the isolationist game would get Kremlin nowhere, and in fact would only reinforce the prevailing image of Russian weakness.<sup>220</sup> Hence, Putin's approach to Russia's relations with the outside world clearly differentiated his policies from those of the Yeltsin era, which manifests itself in two catchphrases; 'pragmatism' and 'active diplomacy'.

"...Putin was (also) very talented in converting necessity into a virtue."<sup>221</sup> He was the first one to point to economic decline as the key determinant of Russian status on the international scene. Giving secondary status to geopolitics and expanding foreign economic benefits was a new approach for Russia given the policies of Andrei Kozyrev and Yevgenii Primakov tied to the grand ideas. As Putin properly put into words; "...we must get rid of imperial ambitions on one hand and on the other clearly understand where our national interests are, to spell them out and fight for them."<sup>222</sup> In this framework, beginning from Putin's coming to power, Russia started to use the economic means in order to attain at least a strong regional power status in the international arena, instead of a political and military approach to achieve a super power status. Indeed, from the perspective of the Central Asian states, firm relations with Russia in the economic field rather than politics, were more desirable as they have concerns about the aims of Russia about regaining its hegemony in the region.<sup>223</sup>

In this context, under Putin, the change in relations between Russia and Central Asia was manifested in four main ways; firstly, Russian foreign policy was shaped by a strong pragmatism. Secondly, the CIS and within this framework the Central Asian states, were prioritized. Thirdly, an elaborated Caspian policy has emerged. And lastly, a new mix of multilateralism and bilateralism characterized the relations.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Ariel Cohen, "Putin's Foreign Policy and U.S.- Russian Relations", <<http://www.heritage.org/Research/RussiaandEurasia/BG1406.cfm>.>

<sup>220</sup> Donaldson, Robert H., and Joseph L. Noguee, "Vladimir Putin and the Future", *The Foreign Policy of Russia*, New York, M. E. Sharpe, 2002, p. 331-332.

<sup>221</sup> Lo, *op.cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>222</sup> Donaldson and Noguee, *op.cit.*, p. 341.

<sup>223</sup> Oktay Tanrısever, "Rusya ve Bağımsız Türk Devletleri: Bağımsızlığın Anlamını Keşfetmek", *Avrasya Etüdleri*, No. 20, Summer 2001, p. 104-108.

<sup>224</sup> Cummings, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

One can evaluate that “the steps Putin took derived from these preferences as an adaptation to the contemporary conditions,”<sup>225</sup> when we examine doctrines that Putin enforced in comparison with the ones of Yeltsin. In contrast to the ‘Near Abroad Doctrine’ of Yeltsin era, the new “National Security Concept” (January 10, 2000) and “Foreign Policy Concept” (June 28, 2000)<sup>226</sup> put forward by Putin noted that “the limited resource support for the foreign policy of the Russia, making it difficult to uphold its foreign economic interests and narrowing down the framework of its information and cultural influence abroad.”<sup>227</sup> Moreover, these doctrines stated that “Russia admitted not being a super power but a regional power and realized that it can’t handle a new polarization”<sup>228</sup> and therefore, it should focus on a limited but effective influence zone that would lead to a regional hegemony.

On the other hand, they also reflected the Russian reaction to the changing strategic scene and provided a conceptual basis for criticism of the growing US influence in Central Asia. Thus, “Foreign Policy Concept emphasized that Russia’s national interests in the international arena were threatened by the ‘attempts of other states’ to prevent it from asserting its national interests ‘in Europe, the Middle East, the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Asia-Pacific region.’”<sup>229</sup> Behind this shift laid both internal and external factors. The most important one was the awareness of the “New World Order” which revealed that the game was over economic competition. Another factor was the comprehension that “the West had won the battle over to the South Caucasus impressed on Moscow the urgency of not allowing the same to happen in Central Asia.”<sup>230</sup> In this context, Russia would be willing to exert considerable pressure on Central Asian states to limit their interaction with western security organizations, particularly NATO, and to re-emphasize the CIS.

The concept also indicated the need “to form a good-neighbor belt along the perimeter of Russia’s borders”. It also revived the theme that “Russia’s relations with these states should depend on their readiness to take account of Russian interests including in

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<sup>225</sup> Yelda Demirağ, “Kafkasya’da Türk ve Rus Politikası”, *Stratejik Analiz*, Vol. 2, No. 40, August 2003, s. 77.

<sup>226</sup> These doctrines are available online at the Russian Security Council Internet site at <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/>

<sup>227</sup> Cummings, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

<sup>228</sup> Nazım Cafersoy, “Rusya’daki Jeopolitik Model Arayışlarında Putin Yönetimi”, *Stratejik Analiz*, Vol. 2, No. 37, May 2003, p. 67.

<sup>229</sup> Jonson, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>230</sup> Cummings, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

terms of the guarantees of rights of Russian compatriots”.<sup>231</sup> In other words Russian diaspora stands out as one of the focal points of new Russian foreign policy concept.

In this regard, Central Asia appeared pivotal to the renewed interest in the near abroad. “When Putin became prime minister in 1999, Russian foreign policy toward Central Asia became more pro-active than at any time previously.”<sup>232</sup> As a president, he first went to Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan in May 2000, while describing Russian-Uzbek relations as a ‘strategic partnership.’<sup>233</sup> “Tajikistan become even more dependent on Russia post-Putin...as in June 2000, Tajikistan’ President Rahmanov confirmed that a Russo-Tajik treaty had been signed, giving Russia the right to establish military bases in Tajikistan.”<sup>234</sup> In addition, Putin has placed the Caspian at the heart of Russia’s pragmatic interests. In July 2000 a joint company composed of LUKoil, Gazprom and Yukos was created to develop Caspian Sea resources.<sup>235</sup>

In addition to these developments, Putin reached a mixture of multilateral and bilateral approaches specific to the region. On the other hand, Putin has initiated many bilateral relations with each of the five states of Central Asia. In this respect, the most significant change in bilateral relations has been Putin’s apparent rapprochement with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. For instance, Uzbekistan not only has attended the Shanghai Forum in 2001, but also signed an agreement to supply Russia with Uzbek gas. This rapprochement can be clearly sensed in the words of Karimov: “we must openly accept Russia’s presence in the Central Asian region and admit that Russia has its interests in the Central Asian region, rather than play some game.”<sup>236</sup> Similarly, Putin’s visit to Turkmenistan in May 2000 seemed to have been successful and included agreements about gas and economic cooperation.

Despite these developments, the disagreements between Russia and the individual states of Central Asia were far from over. Though some regional security agreements have been concluded, there was little evidence of effective cooperation as Moscow’s influence

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<sup>231</sup> Allison, *op.cit.*, p. 451.

<sup>232</sup> Cummings, *op.cit.*, p. 142.

<sup>233</sup> Jonson, *op.cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>234</sup> Cummings, *op.cit.*, p. 147.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

was still constrained significantly by Russia's limited financial and economic means.<sup>237</sup> Nevertheless, this wind of change certainly carried implications, not only for the evolution of the Central Asian security complex, but also for other international players in the area. For instance, following the above-mentioned efforts of Russia, China and the US have responded with financial and diplomatic initiatives. "Visits by the U.S.A Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in April 2000 were interpreted in those states as confirmation of competition rather than cooperation between the two powers."<sup>238</sup> However, Russians believed that while the Americans can engage in Central Asia temporarily, they are in the region forever.<sup>239</sup>

Under the light of these developments, Russian national interests in Central Asia under Putin administration before 9/11 can be summarized in several points.<sup>240</sup> Stability in the region based on close partnership with the regional states comes in the first place. In this context, the Tajik, Uzbek and Afghan factors are evaluated with respect to an intensified Islamic extremism can be cited as the main concern of Putin in the region. Secondly, the maintenance of a common economic space with Central Asia stands at a crucial point as it could assist Russia's economic modernization. Lastly, the use of the region's geo-strategic potential for practical military needs and preserving Russia's status as a world and regional power that acquires international recognition forms another issue of concern.

In sum, Putin has taken a pragmatic and calculating approach to the conduct of foreign policy. He saw his mission as bringing national revival and ensuring that Russia achieves the international position it deserves. In order to fulfill his mission, he made use of foreign policy along with the desire of providing a strong economy as effective instruments nourishing each other. In this context, he tried to keep all the doors open that can help in maximizing influence and standing of Russia in the international scene covering its weak hand in economics until its recovery. Therefore, he can be best described as a pragmatic modern realist without forgetting his modern statism and these characteristics of Putin surely had impact on Russia's relations with Central Asia. Thus, it can be claimed that Putin has set his stamp on foreign policy and seemed to be seeking to retain power within Eurasia while at

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<sup>237</sup> Roy Allison, "Strategic Reassertion in Russia's Central Asia Policy", *International Affairs*, Vol.80, No.2, 2004, p. 277.

<sup>238</sup> Cummings, *op.cit.*, p. 150.

<sup>239</sup> Allison, *op. cit.*

<sup>240</sup> Dmitry Trofimov, "Russia and the United States in Central Asia: Problems, Prospects and Interests", *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2003, p. 76.

the same time maintaining strong relations with Europe and the US.<sup>241</sup> However, this ongoing did not necessarily guarantee Russia to remain as a great power in regional sense. The scene has almost totally changed after 9/11 when in a reorientation of Russian policy, Putin accepted the irresistible need to share security responsibilities in the US-led anti-terrorism campaign in Central Asia.

#### 4.3 China and Central Asia

After the end of the Cold War with the return of geo-politics back on the agenda, Eurasia turned into a competition ground for influence and one of the potential players was China. In order to benefit from the power vacuum in the region, it wisely arranged its steps. Besides bilateral relations with Russia referring to a discourse of multipolarity, China, by turning to Central Asia for the first time since the Mongol dynasty and the Great Silk Road<sup>242</sup>, sought to fulfill its ‘Grand Strategy’ that consists of three main objectives; economical development, security and superpower status. For these ends, it referred to “the ethos of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence that emphasize sovereignty, the diversity of political systems, non-interference, equality and mutual benefit.”<sup>243</sup> Therefore, the relations particularly with the Central Asian States and Russia constituted and still constitute a part of China’s global aims, both in terms of politics and economics.

The importance of Central Asia in the eyes of China mainly stemmed from its new security conceptualizations. During the Cold War, China stayed within the ‘zero-sum perception’ of its security relations with the outside world.

Restrained by limited political and economic resources, China managed its security by adopting an isolationist policy of ‘self reliance’. Economic, technological and environmental elements were hardly recognized in official documents. This stance and the geopolitics of the Cold War inevitably hindered China from using multilateralism as a means to secure its national interests.<sup>244</sup>

However, China’s security concept seems more pragmatic and accommodative to the outside world since the end of the Cold War. Indeed, the period of 1982-1991 was an exceptional

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<sup>241</sup> Oskana Antonenko, “Putin’s Gamble”, *Survival*, Vol. 43, No. 4, Winter 2001, p. 59.

<sup>242</sup> “China’s Emergence in Central Asia: Security, Diplomatic and Economic Interests,” Forum One: The Current State of China-Central Asia Diplomacy and Implications for US Foreign Policy, <[http://www.csis.org/china/030205\\_ce\\_forum01.pdf](http://www.csis.org/china/030205_ce_forum01.pdf)>

<sup>243</sup> Michael Yahuda, “Chinese Dilemmas in Thinking about Regional Security Architecture”, *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 16, No.2, 2003, p. 192.

<sup>244</sup> Wu Baiyi, “The Chinese Security Concept and Its Historical Evolution”, *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 10, No.27, 2001, p. 276.

time with its best security environment for China, due to the détente between the two superpowers and Moscow's approach to Beijing for reconciliation. In this period, one can distinguish several implications of revising the inherited security concept of China. Economic and technological issues started to obtain great importance from the perspective of Chinese leadership that necessitated an adaptation to international rules. In addition, China started to take part in negotiations on multiparty security regimes, to cooperate with neighboring states on transnational security problems (such as negotiations on border disputes with the Soviet Union) implying a departure from its isolationist conception due to its understanding of multilateralism.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the world entered into a foggy transitional period where China had its share in this uncertain atmosphere and as a result, presented a renewed security concept in accordance with the changing environment. According to this new security perception, the main goals of China can be cited as follows: "the integrity of national sovereignty and territory, the intactness of its political institutions, social stability, the capability to resist internal and external revolts and safety of its economic prosperity and natural resources"<sup>245</sup>. In addition, the rational approach to these goals was to develop the country's strength in terms of international competitiveness, elastic diplomacy and a complementary military capability with an emphasis on the economic security. The maintenance of a security environment favorable to China's reforms and growth would be necessary from now on. "For the first time, economic security was treated as equally important with those of 'high politics' and China focused more on the interrelationship between external and internal security challenges."<sup>246</sup> Therefore, China started to perceive threats to its security differently today than during the Cold War period, shifting its attention from conventional threats to unconventional threat perceptions such as economic, ethnic and religious security concerns.

In sum, instead of its previous national security concept, which led China to pursue confrontational security policies, the new security perception follows a more accommodative agenda for the modernization of China. This new approach involved a practical attitude to take initiatives for the first time in multilateral settings and also reflected Chinese interests by seeking to reassure neighbors, especially the ones in Central Asia that they had little to fear and much to gain from the rising China as it promotes mutual trust and consultation as a means of addressing security problems.<sup>247</sup> In addition, its prudence has also been maintained

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<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 281.

<sup>247</sup> Yahuda, *op.cit.*, p. 189.



concerning the other great powers as Chinese leadership have never expressed their intentions to rival the US or Russia in Central Asia<sup>248</sup> despite the new great game taking place in its doorstep throughout the decade long geo-political developments.

The shift in security conceptions was in accordance with the changing international arena inescapably tied with the desire of turning China into a global power. However, China could not follow the traditional path of territorial expansion and political-economic domination due to the presence of the US as it lacked power to balance it unilaterally. Thus, it did not create a threatening plan to conquer Central Asia and aggressive ambitions of obtaining control in the region. “Instead, China’s 30-50 year plan seems not to conquer Central Asia but to conquer its economy.”<sup>249</sup>

As a result of these calculations, China chose an indirect path to greater power acquisition and became supportive of multilateral approaches and mechanisms in international security and economic issues. In other words, China has promoted the country’s development of global power status through an international system, which included more institutions. In this context, it preferred prudent steps to deal with this situation following the advice of Deng Xiaoping. “‘Bide time’; work to take advantage of developing international opportunities in order to build China’s ‘comprehensive national power’ and secure a more advantageous world leadership position over the longer term.”<sup>250</sup> Joining in of China to World Trade Organization and its initiation of the SCO can be considered as illustrative cases.

In sum, China has multiple long-term objectives with respect to the evolution of its security concept.<sup>251</sup> First of all, China desires to help secure its foreign policy environment at a time when Chinese government focused on sustaining economic development and political stability. Secondly, China wishes to promote economic exchange that assists China’s economic development. Thirdly, China wants to calm regional fears and reassure Asian neighbors about how China will use its rising power and influence and lastly, China aims to boost its regional and international power and influence. In this context, stability, which also constitutes the basic logic of the Shanghai Five and later the SCO for its members and especially its initiator China, stands at a crucial point. At this point, with respect to the shift

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<sup>248</sup> Marat Yermukanov, “Global and Regional Aspects of Sino-Kyrgyz Cooperation”, <[http://www.chinaeurasia.org/files/CEF\\_Quarterly\\_Fall\\_04.pdf](http://www.chinaeurasia.org/files/CEF_Quarterly_Fall_04.pdf)>

<sup>249</sup> Dunn, *op.cit.*

<sup>250</sup> Denny Roy, “China’s Reaction to American Predominance”, *Survival*, Volume 45, No.3, Autumn 2003, p. 65.

<sup>251</sup> Robert Sutter, “China’s Recent Approach to Asia: Seeking Long-Term Gains,” <<http://www.csis.org/pacfor/pac0223.htm>>.

in China's strategic thinking and its implementations, its strategic interests, objectives and problems in Central Asia would be beneficial to dwell upon in order to comprehend the role of Central Asia for China's 'peaceful rise'.

As examined in Chapter 3, since the end of the Cold War, Central Asia has acquired a reputation as one of the most unpredictable regions in the world. Economic instability, weak civil societies and repressive political climate led to a chaotic transition for the Central Asian states. As a result, Central Asian states reluctantly turned to Moscow and Beijing for their immediate security and economic needs, although "China was conceived as an adjacent superpower whose relationship with Central Asia was for decades dominated by isolation and suspicion."<sup>252</sup>

Meanwhile, China considered the Central Asian states in the context of Eurasia. In the eyes of China, they have a linkage role, not only in a geographical sense, but also in the political and cultural sense. Therefore, Central Asia can be considered a bridge between East and West. If there were turbulence around that bridge, the future of political and economic cooperation in the whole Eurasian continent would be seriously affected. Political and economic cooperation with Central Asian states is therefore very important for China.<sup>253</sup>

Secondly, China considered its relations with the Central Asian states mainly with respect to the stability and development of Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR.) To suffice now, Beijing's economic and geo-political strategy in Central Asia is directed, to a large extent, by its goals in Xinjiang. China clearly perceived and still perceives a growing problem of instability coming from the ethnic disputes within the Central Asian states. Besides, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the Central Asian states alarmed the security concerns of the Chinese government. Thus, security and regional stability were closely linked for China as its national security rests on the concept of mutual security between China' and its neighbors' security interests due to the significance of Xinjiang. This was also related with the notion that a stable security environment would enable China in exerting its modernization efforts depended on its territorial integrity and national sovereignty.

However, given the 3000 km long borders with three Central Asian countries - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, it was not unexpected that China and the newly independent states had border disputes. In this respect, as early as 1986, Mikhail Gorbachev had initiated a gradual rapprochement between China and the Soviet Union. At that time, there were several unsettled issues between the Soviet Union and China and one of them was

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<sup>252</sup> Dunn, *op.cit.*

<sup>253</sup> Guangcheng Xing, "China and Central Asia", *Central Asian Security: The New International Context*, (eds.) Roy Allison and Lena Jonson, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2001, p. 153.

the border question. An agreement of 1991 resolved the issue of the eastern part of the borders, but the question of the western part of the border was left unresolved. In the post-Soviet era, in February 1992, in Minsk, a decision was reached to set up a joint group with representatives from Russia and the three Central Asian countries and parties agreed to negotiate on the border areas in accordance with the general principles of the 1991 agreement. In April 1994, China and Kazakhstan had managed to sign an agreement concerning their joint 1700 km-long border. In September 1997 and July 1998 additional agreements were signed which resolved the Chinese-Kazakh border problems. Largely, on July 1996, China and Kyrgyzstan solved the issue of Chinese-Kyrgyz border.<sup>254</sup>

In accordance with the developments in the border questions, reducing military forces in border regions has also been taken into agenda.<sup>255</sup> Negotiations between China and the Soviet Union were initiated in November 1989 and in April 1990. China and the Soviet Union signed an “Agreement on Mutual Reduction of Military Forces in the Border Region” and the “Guiding Principles of Increasing Mutual Trust in Military Affairs.” In addition, nuclear safety formed another issue of concern in relations between China and Central Asian states.<sup>256</sup> As Kazakhstan inherited a part of the Soviet nuclear weapon stock, it was reluctant to abandon them to Russia. However, with the help of the security guarantees from the US, Russia and China, Kazakhstan agreed to relinquish its nuclear stock to Russia as well.

Thirdly, as another point that should be added to the strategic concerns of China, one can easily articulate China’s growing economic momentum, coupled with its energy constraints that led the country to a search and diversification of resources. In this context, there is no doubt about the economic and geo-political importance of Central Asian resources to China<sup>257</sup>, which gives impetus to its modernization. In other words, “China’s interest in Central Asia is motivated to a large extent by its need for energy resources (where) China’s economy is booming but its domestic oil and mining industries cannot keep pace with demand.”<sup>258</sup> In this regard, considering its goals, production, investment and pipelines are among China’s priorities. “China would like to be a major operator/cooperator in front-line projects, especially development activities, pipeline construction and technical

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<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153-154.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155,164.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>257</sup> Xiaojie Xu, “The Oil and Gas Links Between Central Asia and China: A Geopolitical Perspective”, *Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries Review*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1999, p. 33.

<sup>258</sup> Jeremy Bransten, “Central Asia: China’s Mounting Influence,” <<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/pp112304.shtml>>

services, as well as a major partner in other projects that match its interests.”<sup>259</sup> Therefore, although China was absent and weakened by internal decline when the Great Game for hegemony over Inner Asia unfolded in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the socio-economic development of recent decades, it has transformed itself and grown as a major power in the world<sup>260</sup> where a new and revised Great Game unfolds, especially in Central Asia.

China, by mixing open market economy with socialism created an alternative system to the world and as a result of its efforts in the economic field, in 2002, scored 8% growth rate while this number has risen to 9.1% in 2003. It is estimated that by 2015, China will become the second largest importer of oil after the US.<sup>261</sup> In addition, China, who has recently become member of World Trade Organization (WTO), is the world’s biggest market for many technological devices.<sup>262</sup> In this respect, China, considered as a great power and a rising global one given its size and population, economic power, resource capabilities, military strength and competence<sup>263</sup>, was interested in the energy resources of the Central Asian states, namely the oil of Kazakhstan, the natural gas of Turkmenistan and the pipelines that will carry these resources to the world markets.<sup>264</sup> As a matter of fact, China became a net importer of oil and it is increasingly reliant on energy imports. Similarly, trade between China and the neighboring Central Asian states increased during the 1990s, especially during the second half of the decade. “Central Asia is a large market for China and so is China for Central Asia.”<sup>265</sup> For instance, China is the second largest trading partner of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, in May 2004, after seven years of negotiations, China and Kazakhstan agreed to build a 1000 kilometer pipeline from Kazakhstan’s Karaganda region to China’s northwestern Xinjiang region by the end of 2005, which will be a key link in a 3000 kilometer project that aims to join China to Caspian Sea.<sup>266</sup> In addition, China has also

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<sup>259</sup> Xu, *op.cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>261</sup> Pan Zhenqiang, “China’s Security Agenda in 2004,” <[http://www.kas.de/proj/home/pub/37/2/year-2005/dokument\\_id-6016/](http://www.kas.de/proj/home/pub/37/2/year-2005/dokument_id-6016/)>

<sup>262</sup> Tassos T Fakiolas and Efstathios T. Fakiolas, “Russia’s Grand Strategic Alternatives at the Dawn of the New Century”, *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 17, No.3, 2004, p. 392.

<sup>263</sup> Due to the categorization of Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, New York, Random House, 1979, p. 129-131.

<sup>264</sup> Yan Xüe Tung, “Gelecek 10 yılda Çin’in Güvenlik Sorunları”, *Stratejik Analiz*, Vol. 1, No. 8, December 2000, p. 94.

<sup>265</sup> Xing, *op.cit.*, p. 159.

<sup>266</sup> Martin Sieff, “China Steps Up Presence in Central Asia”, <<http://washingtontimes.com/upi-breaking/20040625-074328-8041r.htm>>

offered to help Uzbekistan develop its small oil fields in Ferghana Valley while investing into hydroelectric projects in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, China, beneficially located on the border of Central Asia, aimed to become a guide for the Central Asian states in their dealings with the Pacific countries and guide them to more active economic cooperation and trade contacts in the Pacific region in order to form “the second Eurasian bridge”.<sup>267</sup>

In this fashion, “China is expecting that it could someday drive much of the world economy in the way that the US does today.”<sup>268</sup> Thus, in order not to pass the opportunity of Caspian oil to the US as it did the Middle Eastern oil, China sought to approach to the Central Asian states in a positive manner. China also strengthened its relations with Russia to counter-balance Western involvement, especially the US, in the region and proposed a common market that could be formed in order to deal with the fundamentalist Islam, referring to the security of Xinjiang and the unipolar world that the US tries to design, referring to the energy resources that China wants to take its stake.

As a result of these calculations concerning security and economics, China had four expectations in developing its relations with the Central Asian states<sup>269</sup>; firstly, while the Central Asian states should support China’s standpoint on issues related with national sovereignty and territorial integrity, China would help them maintain their independence and encourage independent developing of each Central Asian states. Secondly, China and each of the Central Asian states should regard each other as security partners and stand together against ‘separatism’, ‘Islamic extremism’ and ‘terrorism’ while cooperating to defend peace and justice on the international scene. Thirdly, China and mainly the three neighboring Central Asian states should take the advantage of cross-border ethnic links in order to strengthen friendship, understanding and contacts. Finally, China expects that the relations should be built on a firm economic basis, as Beijing is indifferent to human rights violations of Central Asian governments, and conceives the domestic problems of the regional states as similar to its own ethnic problems in Xinjiang.<sup>270</sup> In sum, “in exchange for recognition of the ‘One China’ principle, China promised not to interfere in their internal affairs.”<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Xing, *op.cit.*, p. 158.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>270</sup> E. Wayne Merry, “Russia’s Regional Role: Conflict or Cooperation: Moscow’s Retreat and Beijing’s Rise as Regional Great Power”, *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 50, No. 3, May/June, 2003, p. 26.

<sup>271</sup> Hessbruegge, *op.cit.*

China, as a state long noted for its potentially destabilizing ethnic heterogeneity, places a very high premium on national unity. Thus, “the policy of the Chinese government towards its minorities is a combination of autonomy and national unity.”<sup>272</sup> All attempts at secession have been suppressed immediately and brutally. In fact, the great majority of these attempts at secession have taken place in either Tibet or Xinjiang. Behind this attitude laid “the historically embedded memories of political disunity, heightened by the unexpected disintegration of its communist neighbor, USSR. Its worst nightmare consists of either the Kosovo effect or the Chechnya syndrome.”<sup>273</sup> In this context, “China’s fear derives from a possible failure to accommodate Muslim minorities that can lead to national dismemberment and international intervention”<sup>274</sup> referring to the groups in Xinjiang that are eager for independence.

In this context, the official Chinese response to ethnic unrest in Xinjiang was<sup>275</sup> firstly, to blame external factors, including unspecified ‘Western forces’, secondly, to place greater restrictions on contacts between Muslims in Xinjiang. Thirdly, China claimed that separatist activities are carried out by only a handful of counter-revolutionaries. Fourthly, China believed that the independence in Central Asia has stimulated instability in Xinjiang. Beijing being extremely worried about the instability of the region, wished to prevent Islamic notions and other ideologies from penetrating into its territory by neutralizing the impact of the new Central Asian states. From the perspective of Chinese government, in the case of any spillover militancy from Central Asia entering Xinjiang, separatist movements would certainly gain momentum while constituting an example for new ones to come. Therefore, not only to counter Western influence in the region, but also to combine resources and information in the combat against what the Chinese have termed the ‘three forces’ of Islamic separatism, extremism and terrorism, China wanted to keep good relations with Russia and Central Asian states. At this point, it will be beneficial to dwell upon the significance of Xinjiang for the relations between China and the Central Asian states.

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<sup>272</sup> For further information see: “China’s Policy on National Minorities and Its Practice”, *Beijing Review*, Vol. 42, No. 42, October 25, 1999.

<sup>273</sup> Sean Yom, “A Looming Dilemma: Uighur Muslims and Separatism in China”, <[http://www.iias.nl/iiasn/27/06\\_IIASNewsletter27.pdf](http://www.iias.nl/iiasn/27/06_IIASNewsletter27.pdf)>

<sup>274</sup> Dru C. Gladney, “Islam in China,” *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 174, 2003, p. 452.

<sup>275</sup> Craig Lillian Harris, “Xinjiang, Central Asia and the Implications for China’s policy in the Islamic World”, *The China Quarterly*, No. 133, March 1993, p. 118.

The part of China, largest provincial-level administrative region<sup>276</sup> forming a sixth of China's landmass that borders on Central Asia is the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR.) It holds a pivotal position at the crossroads of six cultural and geographic regions: Russia, Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan), Mongolia, the Indian sub-continent, Tibet and China, making it a useful springboard for projecting Chinese influence abroad<sup>277</sup> and serves as a security buffer for China. This geo-strategic position, which made Xinjiang a crucial passageway for the Silk Road in the distant past and a stake in the 'Great Game' between the Russian, British and Chinese empires at the turn of the century, is now even more sensitive to regional tensions.<sup>278</sup>

According to the 2000 Chinese government census, the XUAR's dominant ethnic groups are the Uighur Muslims (8.7 million, %47), and the Han Chinese (7.5 million, %41); additionally, Kyrgyz, Kazaks, Tajiks, Uzbeks and the other smaller ethnic groups inhabit the province.(1.2 million in total).<sup>279</sup> The most populous ethnic group, Uighurs, "... write in Arabic script, speak a Turkic language, practice Sunni Islam and are racially of Turkic stock."<sup>280</sup> In other words, "Uighur identity remains structured around not only Islamic faith but also a Turkic, explicitly non-Chinese ancestry and history."<sup>281</sup>

In addition, as "most of the indigenous people of Xinjiang are Sunni Muslims of the mainstream Hanafi School, who look to Turkey and the Middle East rather than to China as their spiritual and cultural home."<sup>282</sup> Besides, there are also the ethnic similarities of Uighurs and Central Asian nations. Therefore, Islam is another factor that leads China into a dilemma as Uighurs conceive Islam and ethnic consciousness very closely linked. "When China suppress Islam, most Uighurs feel oppressed and oppose the government; when they allow or encourage it, Uighurs become more content with the government but their strengthened

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<sup>276</sup> For information on Xinjiang's position in China's governmental structure see: Colin Mackerras, "Xinjiang at the Turn of the Century: the Causes of Separatism", *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 2001, p. 289-303.

<sup>277</sup> Chien-peng Chung, "China's 'War on Terror'", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No 4, Jul/Aug 2001.

<sup>278</sup> Nikolas Becquelin, "Xinjiang in the Nineties", *The China Journal*, No. 44, July 2000, p. 65.

<sup>279</sup> For a detailed demographic structure of Xinjiang see: Peter Ferdinand, "The New Central Asia and China", *The New Central Asia and Its Neighbors*, (ed.) Peter Ferdinand, New York, Council on Foreign Relations, 1994, p. 98.

<sup>280</sup> Yom, *op.cit.*

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>282</sup> Harris, *op.cit.*, p. 114.



Map 2 Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region <sup>283</sup>

<sup>283</sup> < <http://www.ibiblio.org/chinesehistory/images/atlas/provincial/xinjiang.html>.>



Islamic practices lead them to feel more separate from Chinese society.”<sup>284</sup> On the other hand, it should be also noted that China does not want to be branded as an anti-Muslim country before other Central Asian republics<sup>285</sup> and also in front of Middle Eastern countries with which China has considerable linkages concerning economics.

For some scholars, Islam in Xinjiang should not be considered as a source of unrest but rather as a vehicle for the expression of increased social and political frustrations while some others argue that Islam should be considered both a source of unrest and a vehicle at the same time.<sup>286</sup> Although according to the Chinese official documents, the Islamic element has been highlighted, Vicziany argues that what exists is a deep sense of alienation and extensive criticism by Uighurs of Chinese policy concerning Xinjiang on political, economic, social and cultural matters.<sup>287</sup> On both cases, it is sure to have a great impact on the question of Xinjiang.

Furthermore, there are other factors complicated the issue. The crucial importance of Xinjiang has also been reinforced by the discovery of large oil deposits in Xinjiang’s Tarim Basin, indicating that Xinjiang will become a major supplier for China’s ever-growing energy needs. Chinese geologists believe that the energy reserves under Xinjiang match those of Kuwait; 35.7 billion tons of oil, 22 trillion cubic meters of natural gas, representing 30 per cent and 34 per cent of China’s total on-land oil and gas reserves respectively.<sup>288</sup> Besides, there is vast mineral reserve as well as immense agricultural potential in the region. “Xinjiang has an estimated 1.6 trillion tons of coal, 110 billion cubic meters of water, 16.5 million acres of unclaimed land and 138 different kinds of minerals comprising 80 per cent of China’s minerals.”<sup>289</sup> Therefore, China pays great attention to the natural resources as 118 out of 148 types of mines that China possesses are obtained from this region. Further, Xinjiang produces one-third of China’s cotton. Moreover, because of its advantageous geographical position, Xinjiang has carried out the greater part of China’s trade with the

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<sup>284</sup> Mackerras, *op.cit.*, p. 296-297.

<sup>285</sup> Amalendu Misra, “Shanghai 5 and the Emerging Alliance in Central Asia: The Closed Society and Its Enemies”, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 2001, p. 311.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 301.

<sup>287</sup> Marika Vicziany, “State Responses to Islamic Terrorism in Western China and Their Impact on South Asia”, *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol. 12, No. 2, June 2003, p. 214.

<sup>288</sup> Yueyao Zhao, “Pivot or Periphery? Xinjiang’s Regional Development”, *Asian Ethnicity*, Vol. 2, No. 2, September 200, p. 212.

<sup>289</sup> Yueyao Zhao, “Xinjiang Oil Fields Are Rising Up Sharply,” <<http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/carfax/caet/2001/00000002/00000002/art00006>.>

Central Asian states.<sup>290</sup> In other words, Xinjiang is in a prime position to become China's gateway, in economic and political terms to Central Asia<sup>291</sup> considering the pressing need for China to develop new sources for oil, Xinjiang is the most likely place<sup>292</sup>.

However, the main obstacle for China in achieving its economic, political and strategic objectives in Central Asia is an ethno-religious resurgence, which could fuel the pan-Turkic/pan-Islamic secessionist movement in Xinjiang.<sup>293</sup> In this respect, growing unrest, separatism, Turkic revivalism, cross-border infiltration of drugs, and arms in Xinjiang are the top priorities on the Chinese domestic security agenda as these are perceived as threats by China to its sovereignty and territorial integrity over Xinjiang<sup>294</sup> and affect its relations with the Central Asian States.

When we look at the historical background of the resurgence in Xinjiang, internally, it appears as a product of China's historical experience that has been reinforced by ongoing regional political, economic and ethnic conflicts, economic disparities between Han and non-Han, continued state control over religious expression, wealth distribution, discrimination about employment, policies of education etc.<sup>295</sup> Externally, considering the equation deriving from sharing a common culture, religion and related Turkic languages with their counterparts in the neighboring Central Asian countries, any cross-border fraternization on ethno-religious grounds between the Muslims of Xinjiang with their Central Asian neighbors is a potential source of instability along China's strategic frontier.<sup>296</sup> In this respect, "independence which was forced upon the Central Asian republics has given rise to a new upsurge of nationalist feeling and new security concerns on both sides of the frontier."<sup>297</sup> In other words, the independence of the former Soviet Central Asian Republics encouraged some Uighurs in their aspirations to reestablish an independent homeland and "have created a new awakening among the indigenous Muslims of Xinjiang with regard to their Islamic, as

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<sup>290</sup> Kulbhushan Warikoo, "Ethnic Religious Resurgence in Xinjiang", *Post-Soviet Central Asia*, (eds.) Touraj Atabaki and John O'kane, Tauris Academic Studies, 1998, p. 272.

<sup>291</sup> Michael Clarke, "Xinjiang and China's Relations with Central Asia, 1991-2001: Across the Domestic-Foreign Frontier?", *Asian Ethnicity*, Vol. 4, No. 2, June 2003, p. 215.

<sup>292</sup> Ferdinand, *op.cit.*, p. 101-103.

<sup>293</sup> Warikoo, *op.cit.*, p. 272.

<sup>294</sup> Xing, *op.cit.*, p. 161.

<sup>295</sup> Vicziany, *op.cit.*

<sup>296</sup> Warikoo, *op.cit.*, p. 270.

<sup>297</sup> Ferdinand, *op.cit.*, p. 99.

well as their pan-Turkic identity,”<sup>298</sup> which in return gave rise to the fears of China in the atmosphere created by globalization towards ethnic nationalism and self-determination. Furthermore, the Uighurs carried out operations from the Central Asian states. For instance, they were most active in Kazakhstan where they have founded the East Turkestan Committee, Uighuristan Liberation Foundation and the Uighur Trans-National Union.

These organizations claimed that they are living under the Chinese yoke in their own motherlands for centuries while their national culture and identity have been ignored and assimilated.<sup>299</sup> Although, Uighurs desired for either independence or at least substantive religious, political and cultural autonomy, Beijing has refused either option, instead responding to all such demands with religious and political repression. As a result, “the decade opened with the worst disturbances in Xinjiang since the Cultural Revolution with riots breaking out in the town of Urumqi, Kashgar, Khotan, Kuqa, Aksu and Arrtush.”<sup>300</sup>

During the 1990s, the most serious Uighur uprising in Xinjiang occurred right at the start of the decade with the Uighur riots in Baren on April 5, 1990, when the rebels took control of the town and announced their goal as the establishment of an independent Eastern Turkestan Republic. The response of the Chinese government was sending People’s Liberation Army and military while employing tanks and bombs in order to fight the rebels.<sup>301</sup> “The second most violent incident that occurred in Xinjiang during the 1990s were the riots in Yining (Ili or Gulja in Uighur) in 1997 and 1998”<sup>302</sup> which was a serious riot during which the terrorists called for the establishment of an Islamic Kingdom. The response of China was what is known as the nationwide “Strike Hard” campaign that was launched in 1998.<sup>303</sup>

On the other hand, the uprising in Xinjiang had to do with the worldwide rise of ethnic nationalism in an era of globalization. Indeed, the 1991-2001 period witnessed three major and potentially destabilizing, regional conflicts or crises - the civil war in Tajikistan

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<sup>298</sup> Warikoo, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

<sup>299</sup> Kemal Özden, “Çin’in Yeniden Yükselişi: Jeo-Stratejik Önemi, Politik ve Askeri Gücü ve Türkiye ile Olan İlişkileri”, *Avrasya Etüdleri*, No. 19, 2001, p. 109.

<sup>300</sup> June Dreyer, “The Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region at Thirty: A Report Card”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 26, No. 7, July 1986, p. 50.

<sup>301</sup> Vicziany, *op.cit.*, p. 248-249.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250.

<sup>303</sup> Dru C. Gladney, “Xinjiang: China’s Future West Bank?”, *Current History*, September 2002, p. 267.

(1992-1997), the volatile situation in the Ferghana Valley and the Afghan conflict<sup>304</sup> which have given rise to the fears of China about Xinjiang. Thus, “China was not immune to the new tide of ethnic nationalism ... in the post-Cold War period.”<sup>305</sup>

In this context, for maintaining stability in Xinjiang, Beijing has used a mixture of economic means along with political and military control to undermine Uighur calls for independence. Behind this step laid the presumption that if the economic prosperity could be provided and the living standards could be raised, separatist sentiments would eradicate. For this end, Chinese leadership sought to integrate the region into Chinese and emerging Central Asian markets. As the main means of eliminating separatism is thought to be by solving socioeconomic problems<sup>306</sup>, the Chinese government pursued a modernizing economic agenda in order to combat these influences with the central assumption that if the government can deliver economic growth and well being to Xinjiang’s ethnic minorities, ethnic separatist tendencies will diminish.<sup>307</sup>

How to catch up with the more advanced areas and raise the standard of living have become issues of vital importance, not only because Xinjiang’s development provides long-term support for the rest of the country but also because Xinjiang’s economic prosperity is crucial to ethnic unity and political stability.<sup>308</sup>

Therefore, China initiated trade routes to Central Asia across Xinjiang border along with new rail and road links with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in order to solidify trade opportunities and provide a market of 50 million for Chinese exports, which in return raise the living standards of Xinjiang as intended.

In this respect, as Christoffersen properly put into words;

Xinjiang appears to have two potential roles in China’s Open Door policy: as supplier of raw materials to coastal region for the latter to export or use in industrialization and as the nexus of a Silk road economy in the Great Islamic Circle. The former requires strong linkages to the domestic economy as the latter does to the Central Asian economy—a double opening (domestic and foreign) for Xinjiang.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> Becquelin, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>305</sup> Gladney, *op.cit.*, p. 467.

<sup>306</sup> Aleksei Malashenko, “Islam, Politics and the Security of Central Asia”, *Russian Politics and Law*, Vol. 42, No. 4, July-August, 2004, p. 17.

<sup>307</sup> Clarke, *op.cit.*, p. 216. For an account of China’s regional development strategies since 1949, see: Zhao, *op.cit.*, p. 198-206.

<sup>308</sup> Zhao, *op.cit.*, p. 209.

<sup>309</sup> Gaye Christoffersen, “Xinjiang and the Great Islamic Circle: The impact of Transnational Forces on Chinese Regional Economic Planning”, *The China Quarterly*, No. 133, March 1993, p. 136.

However this “double opening” strategy while serving for the economic desires of China also paves the way for linkages between Xinjiang and Central Asia concerning the spread of radical movements or ideologies that can fuel the separatist movements in the region.<sup>310</sup> Therefore, the dual function of Chinese policy in Xinjiang has compelled it to seek a broader regional approach to issues of ethnic separatism, drugs and weapons trafficking, radical Islam and security under the auspices of the SCO.<sup>311</sup> The Chinese government has been ‘very talented’ in gaining the support of the Central Asian states which were also subject to threats imposed by radical Islamic movements in a manner that they do not welcome any source of instability.

However, there are also some questions regarding the effectiveness of the Chinese strategy in Xinjiang. “Contrary to the intention of the Chinese government over the past two decades, its policies toward Uighurs have worsened the situation in their province. Instead of removing the threat of instability and separatism, they have actually provoked the reverse.”<sup>312</sup> Chinese government by cracking down on Islamic practices as potentially fundamentalist or militant, provide no modern alternative and produce greater militancy among the Muslim population. In this context, unless China finds a way to deal with this dynamic problem, its troubled region is unlikely to calm down any time soon with its cultural, social and religious distinction from the rest of China and this will certainly have effects on the relations between China and the Central Asian states as well as the future of China, considering its need of oil and markets.<sup>313</sup> In short, it is difficult to decide whether Xinjiang is either a foreign or a domestic policy problem for China.<sup>314</sup>

At this point, having mentioned the multi-dimensional strategic game of the Central Asian states and the strategic concerns of the global hegemon, the US, the ‘Russian Bear’ and the ‘Chinese Dragon’ concerning the Central Asian regional security complex, it will be useful to have a brief look at the multilateral platform provided by Shanghai Five and the SCO as the intersection set of the security concerns of these actors.

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<sup>310</sup> Harris, *op.cit.*, p. 123.

<sup>311</sup> Clarke, *op.cit.*, p. 224.

<sup>312</sup> Hooman Peimani, “Beijing’s Harsher Uighur Policy a Shot in Two Feet,” <<http://www.afgha.com/?af=article&sid=14053>>

<sup>313</sup> Özden, *op.cit.*, p. 115.

<sup>314</sup> Clarke, *op.cit.*, p. 208.

## CHAPTER 5

### SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (SCO) AS A FRAMEWORK OF REGIONAL SECURITY IN CENTRAL ASIA

As a relatively successful macro-regional balancing attempt with a consultative security framework, the Shanghai Five and later on the SCO have prominent status in the security architecture of Central Asia. On their agenda appear two main fields of orientation; regional security and especially since 1997, economy. In this respect, examining these wheels will be beneficial, as Shanghai Five and its successor organization SCO have devoted most of their efforts to these fields.

#### 5.1 The Formation, Objectives and the Summits of Shanghai Five

Prior to the formation of the Shanghai Five, on March 29, 1996, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan had signed a wide-ranging agreement on the “Regulation of Economic and Humanitarian Integration.”<sup>315</sup> Its broad objectives were establishment of a customs union, development of common energy and transport systems, the harmonization of legal systems, and co-ordination of foreign policy in what was come to be known as “Agreement of Four”<sup>316</sup> that also emphasized the need to maintain the multilateral nature of inner-state military and security dialogue. Besides, the Gorbachev era discussions on the demarcation and demilitarization of the Sino-Soviet border contributed to the process of its establishment.

Consequently, Shanghai Five, which owes its origin to the joint border agreement between China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Russia on April 26, 1996, has been established. Shanghai Five is a name invented by Western journalists for their own convenience and was accepted by all parties concerned. Later, the Chinese side justified the location for a regional forum in Shanghai and not in Beijing as a decision that tended to reflect the spirit of equality among member states. This document committed that the

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<sup>315</sup> Misra, *op.cit.*, p. 319.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 319-320.

member states would establish collectively a range of confidence-building measures in the field of military cooperation along their common borders and stand against ethno-religious nationalism. It is clear that border security was the initial motivation for establishing this mechanism not only as all the members shared a common border with China, but also they were all interested in securing the borders in terms of human resources and financial means.<sup>317</sup>

Subsequent phase served to the consolidation of trust among its members through confidence building measures in 1996 referring to the “Agreement on Strengthening Mutual Trust in Military Fields in Border Areas and Troop Reduction” in 1997 referring to the “Agreement on Mutual Reduction of Military Forces in Border Areas.” At the same time these arrangements constituted a ‘counter model’ to NATO with a new form of security arrangement, which no longer followed the pattern of the Cold War.<sup>318</sup> In this respect, the first two summits of Shanghai Five had the agenda with issues related with these themes.

Although in the beginning, the objectives of the grouping were rather vague, and although it started out as a multilateral summit in Shanghai in 1996 with the purpose of military force reduction, confidence building and transparency in the 7400 kilometer border areas of the original five member states, in time, the focus of the members progressively concentrated on the development of regional security following violence and unrest in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Xinjiang. In other words, the main factor behind Shanghai Five’s objectives evolved from confidence building measures to the ‘three forces’; separatism, terrorism and religious extremism. In this context, issues related with these themes can be considered as the main common securitization of the units within the regional security complex of Central Asia along with Russia and China. Therefore, it can be argued that the Shanghai Five constitute one of the best grounds to fully comprehend the cooperative/conflictual and also internal and external dynamics in Central Asian regional security complex. Indeed, evolving such cooperation is not new in international arena. States encountering such threats may actually come together to act in accordance on a particular issue if that helps them to maintain their security and if they realize that the long term interests of states are dependent on and affected by each others’ activities especially in the same region.

Since its summit meeting in Bishkek in 1999, the main security concern, namely the fear of separatism rising from the multiethnic profile of the member states achieve one of the top spots on its agenda. “The focus has been on a few key issues and as improvements were

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<sup>317</sup> Wacker, *op.cit.*

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*

made the agenda has developed, such as social stability, economic development... and (most importantly) suppression of separatism and extremism.”<sup>319</sup> This was mainly deriving from the potential of “irredentism within China, Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan and ethno-religious uprising in Tajikistan which provided a strong reason for these states to stay together in the face of adversaries.”<sup>320</sup> The complex ethnic mixture of the Central Asian States has made it imperative for these countries to respect the status quo and discourage intra-ethnic solidarity to protect their territorial integrity. Thus, “the rationale among Shanghai Five is strongly in favor of mutual non-interference in minority soft spots.”<sup>321</sup>

Second of these three forces that defines the rationale for evolving such a mechanism of cooperation can be considered as the fight against terrorism. In this context, Afghanistan was identified as a major source of instability at an early date-long before 9/11 that drew the attention of the world to Afghanistan. Last one of the three forces, religious extremism take part among the top issues on the agenda. The perceived potential danger of Islamic militants as the main threat that binds the regional security policies of the member states, sharing growing unease with these separatist movements, speeded up the formation process of the SCO. In this period, one can discern that;

China faces its perennial Uighur separatist problem in Xinjiang, Russia wages its costly war in Chechnya ...and Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and (later on) Uzbekistan struggle with violent Islamist movements like Hizb-ul-Tahrir and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan fermenting in the volatile Ferghana Valley,<sup>322</sup>

which stands at the crossroads of many Islamic organizations as after being trained in the Afghan camps, militants pass through Ferghana Valley and spread into the Central Asia and Xinjiang.<sup>323</sup>

Islamic militancy in Central Asia has for many years presented a major security concern of the five Central Asian republics, particularly Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. As they have banned all radical Islamic opposition for the past decade, it was not unforeseen that the region’s autocratic leaders faced an underground Islamic opposition that was frequently supported by Islamic extremist groups in the surrounding regions, such as Taliban in Afghanistan. In other words, one can sense a growing unease with the Islamic

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<sup>319</sup> Niklas Swaustiom, “The Prospects for Multilateral Conflict Prevention and Regional Cooperation in Central Asia”, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol.23, No.1, March 2004, p. 45.

<sup>320</sup> Misra, *op. cit.*, p. 314.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>322</sup> Yom, *op.cit.*

<sup>323</sup> Pauline Luong Jones and Erika Weinthal, “New Friends, New Fears in Central Asia”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol 81, No.2, Apr/May 2002, p. 65-70.



fundamentalism seeping out of Afghanistan and inflaming their discontented populations as echoed in the words of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev: “the cradle of terrorism, separatism and extremism is instability in Afghanistan.”<sup>324</sup>

Most prominent exemplar of the Islamic fundamentalism is the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, which became known for its declared goal of toppling the Uzbek government. Another illegal Islamic organization, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir al-Islami (Party of Islamic Liberation) based in Uzbekistan, is also known to be very active in the region shared the same line with Al Qaeda in its logic of a supranational Islamic society.<sup>325</sup> In this context, “the consensus on the seriousness of the threat brought forth a new spirit of cooperation among the states of the region. The evolution of the SCO is one result.”<sup>326</sup>

At this point, it should be noted that these primary provisions developed under the auspices of an increasingly stable bilateral entente between Russia and China, revealing the fact that they are over the past, as they view each other as partners, not competitors.<sup>327</sup> “With their cold war military confrontations ended, each side started to view the other as a strategic partner against the hegemony of the United States.”<sup>328</sup> In other words, “once Moscow’s most worrisome ideological opponent, China has become in the post-Cold War international order a valued strategic partner.”<sup>329</sup> Similarly, from Beijing’s perspective, Sino-Russian relations have never been better than in the 1990s. Furthermore, as the relations of China and Russia with the USA deteriorated in the late 1990s, the two countries came closer in identifying with each other’s foreign policy interests.<sup>330</sup>

As cracks began to appear in Russia’s relations with the West, Moscow began to take increased notice of China. To begin with, President Yeltsin visited China in December

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<sup>324</sup> John Daly, “Shanghai Five Expands to Combat Islamic Radicals,” <[http://www.janes.com/security/international\\_security/news/jtism/jtism010719\\_1\\_n.shtml](http://www.janes.com/security/international_security/news/jtism/jtism010719_1_n.shtml)>

<sup>325</sup> For further information see: “Central Asia: Is the IMU Still a Threat to Regional Security”, <<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/pp012404.shtml>>, Richard Giragosian, “The US Military Engagement in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus: An Overview”, *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 17, 2004, p. 53-56. Gregory Gleason, “The Politics of Counterinsurgency in Central Asia”, *Problems of Post Communism*, Vol. 49, No.2, March/April 2002, p. 6-10, Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 187-204.

<sup>326</sup> Gleason, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>327</sup> Stephen Blank, “Which Way for Sino-Russian Relations”, *Orbis*, Vol. 42, No. 3, Summer 1998, p. 345.

<sup>328</sup> Merry, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>329</sup> Wishnick, *op.cit.*, p. 798.

<sup>330</sup> Harsh V. Pant, “The Moscow-Beijing-Delhi ‘Strategic Triangle: An Idea Whose Time May Never Come”, *Security Dialogue*, Vol.35, No. 3, 2004, p.314.

1992, signing a joint declaration with President Jiang Zemin that declared Russia and China to be friendly states. Following this visit, in September 1994, relations between the two states were upgraded to a “constructive partnership”. In January 1996, Russia reinvigorated relations with China along with the former Soviet republics to raise Russia’s profile in Central Asia. In April 1996, the two presidents signed a joint statement declaring that their countries are committed to develop a ‘strategic partnership.’ In this joint statement, “while China supported Russia’s rejection to NATO’s eastward expansion and recognized Chechnya as a domestic issue for Russia, Russia recognized ‘One China Policy’ of China. In short, certainly both recognized the importance of cooperation as a check balance to US expansionism in the world as also witnessed through the July 2000 statement reiterated Russia and Chinese opposition to US efforts to amend the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and deploy national anti-missile defense systems<sup>331</sup> that would undermine their own security by enabling the US to achieve unilateral military superiority. In this context, they articulated resentment against a unipolar system dominated by the US and the anxiety about the expansion of the US military and economic intervention in Central Asia, criticism of NATO and the rejection of US’ plans for a new missile defence system, which initially led the Shanghai Five to be interpreted as a potential balancing mechanism developed by China and Russia to counteract the US hegemony at a strategic level, with respect to its founding document which called repeatedly for a multipolar and anti-hegemonic world order in world affairs, and the linear view of radical Islam can be cited among these reasons.<sup>332</sup>

Subsequently, the establishment of the warm relations has been institutionalized at the broad “Friendship and Cooperation Treaty” signed July 16, 2001, by Presidents Putin and Jiang Zemin which calls Moscow and Beijing to cooperate for preserving the global strategic partnership revealing their commitment to the SCO as a means to maintain stability in Central Asia. It mainly emphasized, “The sides have no territorial claims to each other that the established borders will be respected while negotiations will continue on disputed sections of the border.”<sup>333</sup> Article 8 commits the parties to refrain from entering into agreements with third states that could harm the security, sovereignty or territorial integrity of the partner while Article 9 obliges the parties to contact each other immediately in case of a threat of aggression.<sup>334</sup> Moreover, Article 14 of the Friendship and Cooperation Treaty

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<sup>331</sup> Wilson, *op.cit.*, p. 3-4.

<sup>332</sup> For an analysis of Islamists’ activities in Central Asia, see: Malashenko, *op.cit.*, p. 8-14.

<sup>333</sup> Margelov, *op.cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>334</sup> Wishnick, *op.cit.*, p. 803.

notes that the two states should promote stability with their peripheral regions, establish an atmosphere of mutual understanding, trust and cooperation, and establish a mechanism for multilateral cooperation for dealing with the actual security and cooperation issues in these regions. In this context, “while there is little doubt that the Sino-Russian rapprochement in the post-Cold-War period, especially under Yeltsin, has been a result of the changing balance of power in the world politics, it is Putin who has tried to diversify Russian foreign policy.”<sup>335</sup> Putin was prudent enough to underline that Sino-Russian relationship was not an alliance, but a confrontational relationship that targets a third party while building closer relations with China as neither Russia nor China could openly provoke the US.

These warm relations and similar views such as the desired structure of the post-Cold War international order, the key role of UN in global decision-making and the precedence of national sovereignty over limited sovereignty that was accompanied by humanitarian interventions reflected themselves on Central Asia as well. Indeed, several common interests of Russia and China in particular concerning Central Asia can be distinguished.<sup>336</sup>

Sharing many security interests and threat perceptions witnessed in the support of Beijing for Moscow concerning Chechnya conflict and in the support of Moscow for Beijing concerning the issues in Xinjiang, the two countries have reached an understanding concerning their roles in Central Asia. As Beijing respected Russia’s leading position a possible confrontation has disappeared. In other words, as long as Russia worked against Islamic fundamentalism and ethnic separatism, Beijing seemed to respect Russia’s leading influence in the region. In sum, China and Russia shared an interest in maintaining stability in the region with same enemies of separatism and extremism along with the emerging force of terrorism.

Another area subject to common interests could be the economic sphere of relations given their need of economic development that led to the desire of cooperation on issues such as trade, energy projects and constitution of institutional links. “Russia exports what China badly needs-military hardware (including technology and arms sales) and energy resources- while China provides investment and manufacturing products at very competitive prices.”<sup>337</sup> Currently, Russia is China’s eighth largest trade partner, while China is Russia’s

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<sup>335</sup> Pant, *op.cit.*, p. 315.

<sup>336</sup> Bobo Lo, “The Long Sunset of Strategic Partnership: Russia’s Evolving China Policy”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 2, 2004, p. 296-297.

<sup>337</sup> Lanxin Xiang, “China’s Eurasian Experiment”, *Survival*, Vol.46, No.2, Summer 2004, p. 112.

sixth largest trade partner.<sup>338</sup> “From 1990 to 2001, China bought over \$10 billion worth of military equipment...Furthermore, Chinese energy purchases have made up a significant portion of annual turnover.”<sup>339</sup> In short, while Russia’s central need from China is money, this need is consistently met by Chinese military purchases and the export of oil. However, it seems that China needs Russia more than Russia needs China. “While Russia needs Chinese investment to keep its arms industry alive, China, has no alternative but to buy from the Russians (due to the arms embargo enforced by EU since 1989)... Similarly, Chinese energy demand drives its thirst for Russian resources. However, in a global market Russia has no problem finding buyers for its oil.”<sup>340</sup> Lastly, demarcation of borders and illegal immigration constituted some of the other issues of co-operation between the two countries.

To sum up, the Sino-Russian strategic partnership;

...represents the attempt of two large and precarious multiethnic continental empires to form a mutual help relationship that would be uniquely useful to them in the face of a relatively hostile international environment...(namely) in a post-Cold war world lacking strategic structure or balance both feel threatened by de facto American hegemony.<sup>341</sup>

This mechanism of mutual help is considered not in terms of ideology but pragmatically designed to enhance the national interests of the two parts. “While Russia has witnessed a downward slide in its status as a superpower in the last decade, China is a rising power that sees the US as the greatest obstacle it faces if it is to achieve a pre-eminent position in the global political hierarchy.”<sup>342</sup>

Referring to the arguments cited above, the Shanghai Five seemed the perfect intersection of these two countries’ interests. However, initially, Russia perceived the Shanghai Five nothing more than a confidence building process about the border disputes inherited from the Soviet Union with China. Besides, Russia considered the Shanghai Five as a platform for raising its voice against unilateral approaches of the US and for suggesting a multipolar one for the sake of its own interests. Therefore, it is not unforeseen to observe Russia acting watchful about the nature of the Shanghai Five and seeing no clear reasons for making it a strong international body. Moscow viewed it as a tool for conflict-prevention

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<sup>338</sup> Ying Ding, “Neighbors Through Thick and Thin”, *Beijing Review*, September 30, 2004, p. 13.

<sup>339</sup> Matthew Oresman, “Challenges to the Sino-Russian Relationship”, <<http://www.asianresearch.org/articles/2461.html>

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>341</sup> Lowell Dittmer, “The Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol.10, No.28, 2001, p. 413.

<sup>342</sup> Pant, *op.cit.*, p. 313.

between member-states rather than an instrument for active regional maneuvering and as a tool to send a message to the US: “Don’t take Russia for granted” by taking the chance to improve relations with China.

While Russia evaluated the Shanghai Five in this manner, it was China that insisted on transforming it into a normal full-fledged organization. In other words, “the creation of the Shanghai Five and later on the SCO reflected Beijing’s recognition of the need for new mechanisms of security with Russia and its Central Asian neighbors, both for security and for future economic collaboration, especially in the energy sector and demonstrating the shift in its security conceptions.”<sup>343</sup> For instance, in one of his speeches Zemin underlined that the SCO was intended to be the NATO of Asia. In fact, by examining the declarations, summits and the evolution of the Shanghai Five and later on the SCO, one can easily sense that the issues put on the agenda and the decisions reached through the organization are mostly in the direction of the strategic desires of China.

In this context, Russia used the Shanghai Forum as an alternative to its bilateral ties while keeping an eye on the moves of China concerning Central Asia. Despite the dramatic expansion of Sino-Russian relations in the 1990s, significant sources of irritation remained present as well. At this point, “although Yeltsin sought to downplay the differences in the concerns of Sino-Russian relations, Putin has been more attempting to use these differences in a new form of triangular diplomacy in an effort to boost Russia’s profile, especially vis-a-vis the US.”<sup>344</sup> In this regard, “Russia has reasons to worry about China’s rising profile in East and Northern Asia compared to the results of Russia’s own reform efforts,<sup>345</sup> about Chinese immigrants overrunning the Russian Far East, which constitutes one third of Russia’s territory, but is home to a 6 million Russians and fears about China’s economy dwarfing its own.”<sup>346</sup> Besides, even though, China is the largest buyer of Russian conventional weaponry; from the perspective of Russia, China carries the potential for turning into the greatest potential security threat to Russia.

Evaluating the Russian-Chinese relations, one can discern both positive and negative columns.<sup>347</sup> On the plus side stands a compromise over the views on many international issues, common threat perceptions in Central Asia and expanding economic ties while on the

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<sup>343</sup> Jonathan D. Pollack, “Chinese Security in the Post-11 September World: Implications for Asia and the Pacific”, *Asia-Pacific Review*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2002, p.27.

<sup>344</sup> Wishnick, *op.cit.*, p. 815.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 808.

<sup>346</sup> Pant, *op.cit.*, p. 322.

<sup>347</sup> Lo, *op.cit.*, p. 306.

minus side, there is the burden of historical and civilizational prejudices and Russia's worries regarding China as the next superpower on the rise. In this context, it would not be wrong to confirm Russian anxieties as the Sino-Russian partnership seems to be a part of China's overall strategy of peaceful rise by winning time. Regarding this dualistic structure of the Sino-Russian relations, given Beijing's willingness to accept a secondary role and the existence of Sino-Russian security consensus against religious extremism, in Central Asia, Russia and China get along well enough to sustain some kind of stability. However, there is no guarantee that this balance will be sustained. "As Russia seeks to reassert its presence and influence in the region, and China attempts to maximize its economic stake, Central Asia looms as perhaps the most likely theatre for renewed bilateral tensions"<sup>348</sup> in the long run. In other words, "as the process of China's transformation from predominantly regional actor into global player gathers momentum, the divide in perceptions and priorities is likely to widen" though not likely to end up in an explicit contradiction in the context of the international arena.

In pragmatic terms, when China realizes it can gain more from America by abandoning a common position it holds with Russia, it will do so. And Russia will do the same concerning a Chinese position. Conversely, when the two realize that they will achieve the most through a joint position, they will stand against the United States.<sup>349</sup>

Although relations between Russia and China have strengthened in the political, economic, scientific and military fields under the rubric of 'strategic partnership', both countries maintain their autonomy and flexibility in dealing with the US, whom neither seeks to confront.<sup>350</sup> Therefore, as both need the US more than they need each other, especially for economic cooperation, Sino-Russian partnership seems limited and open to question as American policies toward both countries will play a key role in setting these limits. Thus, "only time will tell if this marriage of convenience can make it to a diamond anniversary."<sup>351</sup> Furthermore, this pragmatic equation along with its own logic that surpasses the strategic triangle of China-Russia and the US, due to other rationales mentioned above can be considered the main determinant of the future of the Central Asian security architecture. "Russia is yesterday's superpower, the United States is today's only superpower and China will be tomorrow's world power. This is the key to understanding the new strategic triangle

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<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 308.

<sup>349</sup> Oresman, *op.cit.*

<sup>350</sup> C.V. Ranganathan, "Friends With the Dragon", <<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.articleid=1954>

<sup>351</sup> Wishnick, *op.cit.*, p. 820-821.

involving China, the United States and Russia”<sup>352</sup> played at the heart of Eurasia, mainly in Central Asia.

The relations of the three powers in Central Asia depend on their general relations; “if their relations sour, this also reflects on their relations in Central Asia as an intensification or tension and if their relations are good, their relations in Central Asia will not be hostile and openly confrontational.” In this context, their attentive abstaining from open confrontation that reigns for over a decade now, derives from the fact that none of them intends to ally with one against the other and none is pleased to face a united front formed by the two against one, while, at the same time none wants to see the region monopolized by one power.<sup>353</sup> On the other hand, none of the three powers has a clear policy over their interrelations that the obscurity of the new strategic triangle appears like a tactic seeming to form the norm of their relations between each other and also relations with the Central Asian States in the near future.<sup>354</sup> In this context, the impact of 9/11 on the region would be a convenient focal point for analyzing this equation in order for one to test the limits of cooperation in the Central Asian security complex that can be mirrored through the evolution of the SCO.

From this perspective, there are two scenarios of calculations behind the formation of such a security mechanism as Shanghai Five. First one mainly proclaims that China and Russia founded the Shanghai Five as a mechanism by which China could engage in the region to counter-balance other external actors, especially the US. On the contrary, the second scenario argues that the Shanghai Five is a way by which Moscow can contain China’s Central Asian engagement which from time to time have gained support with respect to Russia’s bilateral efforts and the evolution of Sino-Russian relations. In any case, the Shanghai Five underscores Moscow’s and Beijing’s concern over the growing pull of Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia and the potentially destabilizing role played by the Taliban government. Besides, it is for sure a part of a reaction to the growing influence of NATO and the US in Central Asia. “At maximum, a cooperative and friendly Central Asia constitutes a vital part of efforts by Moscow and Beijing to create a multipolar world.”<sup>355</sup>

At this point, concerning the calculations of the Central Asian States, when the Shanghai Five was established they had already learned their lesson about multiplying

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<sup>352</sup> “Beijing Hands Moscow a Long Rope”, *Beijing Review*, November 11, 2004, p. 23.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>355</sup> Bin, *op.cit.*

alternatives in terms of their security needs that otherwise could not be fulfilled on their own. Therefore, they approached the organization, firstly as an opportunity to share the same table with both Russia and China, in other words, 'to share the same bed with two bears instead of one' and secondly to grab as much as they could in a region with attractive energy resources and a great potential of conflicts. Besides, later on, the organization was perceived as a trump when US criticized about democracy and liberation. In addition, there are some analysts who argue correctly "as local states (initially) found no concrete support from the West for their acute security concerns, including Islamic incursions, they saw themselves forced to cautiously seek the support of Moscow and Beijing."<sup>356</sup> However, in the initial phases, the Central Asian states were not fully aware of its potentials as they simply viewed it as a confidence building and border dispute resolution mechanism with vague intentions of becoming a regional security organization that could deal with their pressing and interlinked regional security concerns.

While these developments gradually formed the regional security aspect of the organization, on the economic dimension, starting from 1997, promoting economic cooperation between member countries has been on the agenda of Shanghai Five. Bringing economic prosperity to the region also started to be seen as a means to fight non-traditional security threats, such as poverty as the root cause of terrorism and extremism.<sup>357</sup> Since then, "...it becomes evident that the issue of regional security is an instrument of a cooperation-oriented economic policy that can able to reduce the influence of outsiders such as United States."<sup>358</sup>

Considering the economic aspect, facilitating factors on the positive side of the relations that could pave the way for cooperation, the Shanghai Five members do not only have common problems but also, concerning some resources as mentioned above, are united due to economical provisions. For instance, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan do not possess oil or gas but they are endowed with water which is in short supply in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and China. Therefore, it is not likely that they would prefer to adopt confrontational policies in the region. However, on the negative side, the challenging factors due to the fact that trade facilitation, building infrastructure-roads, railroads etc.- as well as harmonizing customs and tariffs are not issues to be resolved overnight. In addition, unstable security environment and domestic situations in Central Asian states, differences in local

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<sup>356</sup> Cornell, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>357</sup> Wacker, *op.cit.*

<sup>358</sup> Misra, *op.cit.*, p. 315.



conditions, in banking systems, in hard currency management and in laws as well as territorial issues and conflicts over water usage do not indicate to a smooth journey.<sup>359</sup>

With reference to the arguments concerning the two wheels; regional security and economy on which Shanghai Five roled, before moving on to the SCO, I would like to have a quick look for the reflections of what I have discussed above in the following summits of the Shanghai Five.<sup>360</sup>

In the third summit of the Shanghai Five on July 3, 1998, that was held in the capital of Kazakhstan, Almaty, members had formed a joint declaration concerning various issues. Especially against all the activities that were perceived as harmful for Central Asia, such as all the variations of ethnic separatism, fundamental Islam, terrorism, arms smuggling and drug traffic etc., all members emphasized the importance of acting on common grounds. In addition, the Alma-Ata Declaration signed at the summit proposed to take mutually beneficial economic cooperation as a new field for regional cooperation while putting forth some basic principles for economic cooperation.<sup>361</sup>

In the fourth summit, which was held in the capital of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, leaders of the member states declared their discomfort with the acts of NATO encouraged by the US as a tool to contain China that can be considered as an intervention to the domestic politics in the name of human rights. "China as a neighbor of the Central Asian states does not wish to see NATO conduct military maneuvers there year after year, near its borders. This is causing China serious anxiety, especially after the Kosovo crisis."<sup>362</sup> Besides, in the joint declaration, they expressed their desire for a multi-polar world instead of a unipolar one, emphasizing that they were against any threat of power in the international arena without the approval of the United Nations, which can be considered as their reaction to the operations of the US in Bosnia and Kosovo at the time.

In the fifth summit of the Shanghai Five on July 5, 2000 in the capital of Tajikistan, the attendance of NATO, Uzbekistan and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan as observers, was a sign of the increasing interest of the international community.<sup>363</sup> In addition, China had declared its support for the principle of 'One China' and Russia's acts about the Chechnya

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<sup>359</sup> Wacker, *op.cit.*

<sup>360</sup> Mehmet S. Erol, "Avrasya'da Güç Mücadelesi", *Stratejik Analiz*, Vol. 2, No. 14, June 2001, p. 69-73.

<sup>361</sup> Xu Tao, "Security Key for SCO", <[http://www.bjreview.com.cn/200424/World-200424\(C\).htm](http://www.bjreview.com.cn/200424/World-200424(C).htm)>

<sup>362</sup> Xing, *op.cit.*, p. 167.

<sup>363</sup> Peter S.J. Duncan, "Westernism, Eurasianism and Pragmatism: the Foreign Policies of the Post-Soviet States, 1991-2000", <[http://www.ssees.ac.uk/publications/working\\_papers/duncan.pdf](http://www.ssees.ac.uk/publications/working_papers/duncan.pdf)>

issue. Furthermore, the atmosphere for the new members to join the organization has been created. In addition, the Shanghai Five agreed to create an anti-terrorist center in the Kyrgyzstan capital, Bishkek.<sup>364</sup>

In this respect, it can be concluded that the Shanghai Five, predecessor of the SCO, successfully settled the security issues left over from the military confrontation between China and the former Soviet Union during the Cold War through dialogues and negotiations paving the way for mutual confidence in further regional security cooperation and other fields concerning separatism, extremism and terrorism. In addition to the changes in regional situation accompanied by the global world politics, their cooperation also took on non-traditional security threats, such as cooperation in intelligence and information sharing, police cooperation, judicial coordination etc.

In sum, Shanghai Five, with an agenda that has moved from traditional military components to regional security and economic development including common interests such as religious extremism, international terrorism, trans-border crimes, weapons smuggling, drug trafficking and illegal immigration, had five assemblies until 2000 and in 2001 achieving its mission transformed into the SCO.<sup>365</sup> “This meant a smooth transition from a mechanism of regular meetings of heads of state of the five countries to a regional cooperation organization.”<sup>366</sup>

## **5.2 Objectives and Organizational Structure of Shanghai Cooperation Organization**

On June 15, 2001, with the joining in of Uzbekistan, strong in its strategic location and distinctive status in the region, Shanghai Five turned into the SCO which would undertake the responsibility of the issues that were long being expressed such as the regional security and economic cooperation in a more comprehensive and determined manner. Several ‘firsts’ can be discerned in this respect. Along with the name of the organization, its mission has also been changed as it has been transformed into a regional cooperation organization.<sup>367</sup> While the heads of state signed “the Shanghai Convention on Fighting Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism” referring to the Taliban power in Afghanistan,

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<sup>364</sup> Misra, *op.cit.*, p. 316.

<sup>365</sup> Wilson, *op.cit.*, p.9.

<sup>366</sup> Miao Huashou, “Anti-Terrorism Is a Long-Term Task”, *Beijing Review*, January 31, 2002, p. 13.

<sup>367</sup> Erkin Ekrem, “Çin’in Türkistan Politikası: Shanghay Beşlisinden Shanghay İşbirliği Örgütüne”, *Stratejik Analiz*, Vol. 2, No. 16, August 2001, p. 68. For a perspective that claims a resemblance between the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Holy Alliance of 1815 see: Hessbruegge, *op.cit.*

meanwhile, the members agreed to speed up institutionalization of their cooperative mechanism in the areas of border security, confidence building, anti-terrorist-separatist-extremist activities, economic cooperation and socio-cultural exchanges.<sup>368</sup>

As a result of this “face-lift”<sup>369</sup> of the Shanghai Five, which is often evaluated as a “representation of China’s strategic forward into Central Asia, and a breakthrough in China’s Central Asian diplomacy”<sup>370</sup>, with the joining in of the Uzbekistan; Central Asia’s most populous and militarily powerful state, “SCO (started to) cover an area of over 30 million square km, or about three-fifths of Eurasia, with a population of 1.46 billion, about a quarter of the world’s total.”<sup>371</sup>

Its goals were declared briefly as follows: strengthening mutual trust, friendship, and good-neighborliness among its members, encouraging efficacious cooperation in political, trade, economic, scientific, technical, cultural, and educational, power engineering, transportation, environmental, and other fields, and maintaining and enduring peace, security and stability in the region.<sup>372</sup> The joint declaration at the end of the summit also called for drawing up a Charter for the Organization by its next SCO summit in St. Petersburg. While these constituted the regional objectives, on global terms, Russia, China and the four Central Asian states described a 1972 US-Soviet antiballistic missile treaty as the cornerstone of global stability and warned of huge damage if the accord is violated.<sup>373</sup>

For these ends, the SCO abides by the following principles:<sup>374</sup> loyalty to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations; respect for each other’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity; non-interference in each other’s internal affairs; mutual non-use or threat of use of force; equality among all member states; settlement of all questions through consultations; non-alignment and no directing against any other country or

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<sup>368</sup> Jing-dong Yuan, “Anti-Terror Exercises Only a First Step,” <<http://www.cns.miis.edu/cns/projects/eanp/pubs/pubs.htm>.>

<sup>369</sup> Bin, *op.cit.*

<sup>370</sup> Zhao Huasheng, “China, Russia and the United States: Prospects for Cooperation in Central Asia”, <[http://www.chinaeurasia.org/files/CEF\\_Quarterly\\_Winter\\_2005.doc.pdf](http://www.chinaeurasia.org/files/CEF_Quarterly_Winter_2005.doc.pdf).>

<sup>371</sup> Tao, *op.cit.*

<sup>372</sup> Gregory S. Logvinov, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: A New Qualitative Step Forward, On the Results of the SCO Summit in St. Petersburg”, *Far Eastern Affairs*, 2001, p. 19.

<sup>373</sup> Andrew Higgins, “Bloc Including China, Russia Challenges US in Central Asia”, <<http://www.ratical.org/ratville/CAH/ShanghaiCO.html#p8>.>

<sup>374</sup> Ni Yanshuo, “Regional Fight Against Terrorism,” [http://www.bjreview.com.cn/200430/World-200430\(C\).htm](http://www.bjreview.com.cn/200430/World-200430(C).htm).

organization; opening to the outside world; and willingness to carry out all forms of dialogues, exchanges and relevant international or regional organizations. These principles are longed to turn into a “Shanghai Spirit” characterized by mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, cooperation, respect for diversified civilizations and common development.

At this point, it will be beneficial to take a photograph of the member states’ approaches towards SCO, on the very date of its establishment in order to discern the deviations in the balance and the level of unity and integration it has inherited from Shanghai Five.

Starting from the leading actors of the organization, Russian President Putin and Chinese President Jiang Zemin’s respective speeches at the Shanghai Summit differed in their respective emphasis. While Putin underlined the significance of the SCO in terms of regional security, Zemin also focused on SCO’s potential as an economic and trade group. However, their main common ground was on the global level in relation with their expectations to expand cooperation to present a counter-balance with regard to the US. In other words, from the perspective of the two regional hegemonies, “the initiative, basically, responds to the growth of Western influence in Central Asia far more than it does to a putative threat from Afghanistan or an equally putative Chechen-Taliban-Uighur terrorist international force.”<sup>375</sup>

On one level this grouping has been interpreted as a potential balancing mechanism developed by China and Russia to counteract American hegemony at a strategic level, which was also suggested by the founding document of the SCO that defines the promotion of multipolarity as a core institutional objective.

At the moment of its formation, the SCO seemed the perfect intersection of these countries’ interests. It fused Moscow’s long-standing quest to increase control over the region with Beijing’s desire to create a multipolar world. They envisaged the organization as an instrument to ensure the safety of Central Asia from foreign encroachment by exerting dual hegemony over the region.<sup>376</sup>

When viewed from the perspective the Central Asian states, the joining in of Uzbekistan insert much to the alliance according to many scholars who quarrel that the peace and stability in Central Asia depend, to a great extent, on peace and stability in Uzbekistan. However, the discourse of Islam Karimov on his way back home from the conference implied three important points that revealed the stance of Uzbekistan within the networks of organizations, with its ability in making use of balancing as mentioned before. While he

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<sup>375</sup> “Shanghai Cooperation Organization Established,” <[http://www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=24&issue\\_id=2049&article\\_id=18468](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=24&issue_id=2049&article_id=18468)>

<sup>376</sup> Sean Yom, “Power Politics in Central Asia: The Future of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization”, <<http://www.registan.net/?m=200406&paged=2>>

emphasized that he evaluated Uzbekistan as the most powerful country in the region, he also underlined its need for the support of Russia and China against all those opposing Uzbekistan. Besides, he mentioned that Uzbekistan would quit the SCO if it becomes a military alliance just as it has quitted the CIS Collective Security Treaty. Lastly, he made clear that Uzbekistan would not oppose NATO's enlargement, give support to Russia's particular views concerning international issues in general and would not vote against a particular group of countries.<sup>377</sup>

On the other hand, while Kyrgyzstan was in pursuit of using the SCO for balancing Russia's and China's influence against each other, Kyrgyzstan, a capable practitioner of multi-polarism in diplomacy, was in pursuit of increasing the number of external actors in Central Asia and Tajikistan was interested in assistance for the development of fuel and water resources with the help of China within the framework of the SCO.<sup>378</sup>

To sum up, since the Central Asian states were concerned about the intentions of both China and Russia, the distinctiveness of the SCO remained the same with the Shanghai Five and laid in the opportunity it offered to bandwagon with both Russia and China in a framework where the Chinese presence restrains Russian intentions discarded by these states and the Russian presence equally provides reassurance about Chinese policies.<sup>379</sup> Furthermore, "the last thing these states wanted was to be involved in a Sino-Russian dispute. Cautiously, they signaled to Russia that they viewed a dialogue with China better than uncertainty about China's intentions"<sup>380</sup> and this was reasonable from the point of Russia that was also concerned about the same point.

Lastly, having mentioned the calculations of the SCO member states that laid behind their adherence to this organization, it will also be beneficial to have a brief look at its organizational structure in order to have a better understanding of its evolution concerning its stated objectives.

Considering the organizational structure of the SCO, today one comes across several institutions.<sup>381</sup> Although the latest institutions added to the organizational structure of the

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<sup>377</sup> "Six Countries, Six Agendas," <[http://www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=24&issue\\_id=2049&article\\_id=18470](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=24&issue_id=2049&article_id=18470)>

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>379</sup> Allison, *op.cit.*, p. 478.

<sup>380</sup> Bogaturov, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>381</sup> Yanshuo, *op.cit.*, p. 17.

SCO will be held in detail in the subsequent part of this thesis, it will be adequate for now to cite them chronologically.

First of all, 'Council of Heads of State' is the highest SCO organ with its main functions defined as identifying orientations of SCO activities, as determining matters of principle concerning SCO internal system and operation, as deciding on matter of principle of SCO cooperation with other countries and international organizations and as studying pressing international issues. Secondly, the functions of the 'Council of Heads of Government' are designed as adopting SCO budgets and determining the principal matter of cooperation in specific areas within the SCO framework, especially in the economic field, whose regular sessions are held once a year. Thirdly, 'Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs' has the mission to study and resolve major issues of current SCO activities, including preparing for the meeting of the Council of Head of State, implementing SCO decisions and holding consultations on international issues. The above-mentioned institutions meet annually.<sup>382</sup>

Fourthly, 'Conference of Heads of Agencies' takes its place in the organizational structure. Its main function is to study and resolve specific questions of cooperation in specialized areas. At present, the meeting mechanism has been established for procurators general and ministers of defense, the economy, commerce and transportation and culture as well as heads of law-enforcement, security, emergency and disaster-relief agencies. In the fifth place comes the 'Council of National Coordinators', a coordinator and management organ of SCO routine activities, which meets at least three times a year with its chair assigned by the host country that holds the meeting for the Council of Heads of State. Sixthly, and very importantly, 'Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure', officially launched in January 2004, is a permanent SCO organ based in Tashkent, capital of Uzbekistan with its main function of coordinating SCO member activities against terrorism, separatism and extremism. Lastly, the 'SCO Secretariat' also officially launched in January 2004 in Beijing, is a standing executive organ of the organization with its functions, such as to provide organizational and technical support for SCO activities, to participate in the study and implementation of SCO documents and to put forward suggestions for SCO annual budget-making. The Council of Heads of State appoints the executive secretary while member states take turns according to the Russian alphabetical order of their country names to serve a non-consecutive three-year term and in this regard, the first executive secretary is Zhang Deguang from China.

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<sup>382</sup> Robert M. Cutler, "SCO Moves into First Gear," <[http://www.cacianalyst.org/view\\_article.php?articleid=2226](http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=2226)>

## CHAPTER 6

### SCO AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

Just before the terrorist bombings of New York and Washington, on September 11, Putin phrased the visit of Premier Zhu Rongji as “extremely positive development of cooperation between Russia and China in trade, economic and military, technical matters.”<sup>383</sup> Beyond economics, Putin and Zhu also reaffirmed their commitment to defense of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) as the foundation of global strategic balance and security with a reference to apparent growing US unilateralism in this meeting. After this meeting, Zhu left Moscow on the morning of 12 September when the magnitude of the terrorist attack just started to unfold in New York and Washington. His next stop was Kazakhstan where the SCO members would hold their first prime minister meeting after Shanghai Five has turned into the SCO in June 2001.

“Not only did the attack instantly overwhelm the United States, it also radically altered the (Central Asian) regional security environment and will have an impact and consequences beyond which can be handled by the SCO.”<sup>384</sup> To start, the SCO annual meeting of the prime ministers, which was supposed to lay emphasis on of the organization from regional security to economic cooperation, was forced to face the reality of a major boom of terrorist attacks with deep roots in Central Asia. At Russia’s initiation, the SCO prime ministers straight away issued a statement denouncing the terrorist attacks in the US. However, following this statement, members of the SCO did not appear to be all set for any joint response to the predicament through the means of the SCO and instead most of the subsequent activities by the SCO’s member states seemed to have occurred outside the mechanisms of the SCO.<sup>385</sup> In other words, the individual member countries have reacted on

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<sup>383</sup> Yu Bin, “A ‘Nice’ Treaty in a Precarious World,” <<http://csis.org/pacfor/cc/0103@chinarus.html>>

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*

their own way to the war in Afghanistan and established independent roles in the US coalition in Afghanistan rather than acting as a whole.<sup>386</sup>

In this context, immediately after the attacks, almost all Central Asian SCO members looked to Moscow for either guidance or approval on how to cooperate with Washington in its military operations against terrorism. Meanwhile, both Moscow and Beijing were condemning the terrorist acts and despite their treaty of friendship, seemed to have been busier with echoing Washington than coordinating their bilateral actions.

In this framework, firstly, examining the reactions of the SCO members will be beneficial to underline the reasons and calculations that ended up in their handling of the situation separately in a highly receptive manner instead of acting under the umbrella of the SCO, collectively. Subsequently, dwelling upon the heightened concerns of Russia and China will be useful, concerning the nature of their relations with each other and with the Central Asian states that has been changed as a result of the entrance of the US into the region. The US entry has not only been sincerely welcomed by the regional units, but also altered the fragile balance maintained until then within the Central Asian regional security complex, and especially in the SCO. Finally, I will describe the path the SCO from the aftermath of the 9/11 to recent processes by taking into account the developments - concerning its institutional achievements, summits and enlargement witnessed in its securitization agenda - with respect to the challenges 9/11 added into the Central Asian security architecture. In this respect, one can prepare the way for an answer concerning the questions raised in the opening chapter of this thesis; ‘can the SCO be considered to form an effective regional cooperation platform for Central Asian security issues and does it carry the possibility to transform the Central Asian regional security complex into a regional society destined for cooperation?’ and ‘what does the presence of the US in the region imply about the prospects for the SCO and Central Asia in the future?’

## **6.1 Russia as the Strategic Partner of the United States**

Well aware of Russia’s strengths as well as its weaknesses,<sup>387</sup> Putin was the first leader to telephone Bush with condolences and denunciation of the terrorist acts. In a subsequent telegram to Bush, Putin despised the “barbarous terrorist acts aimed against wholly innocent people” and expressed Russia’s “deepest sympathies to the relatives of the

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<sup>386</sup> Hill, *op.cit.*

<sup>387</sup> Nina Bachkatov, “The Fragile Superpower: Russia Winning Without Fighting”, *Le Monde Diplomatic*, November 2001.



victims of this tragedy and the entire suffering American people calling for solidarity in the face of such actions.”<sup>388</sup>

One of the most fundamental and controversial shifts came when Putin declared (taking considerable risk in domestic politics) comprehensive cooperation with the US in Washington’s anti-terrorist campaign by providing information to the US about terrorist bases, allowing the use of Russian airspace for humanitarian flights in areas of anti-terrorist operations, and by supporting and arming the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan.<sup>389</sup>

On a complementary sense, Russia also did not raise any objection to US military presence in Central Asia by accepting the US use of Central Asian airfields for anti-terrorist operations. As a result of these Russian initiatives, the US Secretary of State, Colin Powell described 9/11 as finally marking the real end of the Cold War.<sup>390</sup> Fifteen years ago, it was impossible to imagine such an invitation. Then, what kind of a calculation one can discern behind this rapprochement with the US as “Putin was de facto conceding one of the most important principles of Russian post-Soviet military doctrine that is denial to any third party of a permanent military presence in any CIS states”?<sup>391</sup>

Actually, Russia was in no condition to guarantee the security of the region against terrorism on its own. In other words, “Putin has had to accept what he could not prevent.”<sup>392</sup> First of all, Russia didn’t have the potential of mobility in means of military structure that could combat with radical Islamic organizations, despite it had previously tried to deal with these actors in several occasions and through several means such as the CIS and the SCO. In other words, it was more than appropriate for Russia that the US take over the problem of Taliban which gave rise to Islamic radicalism and was a problem increasingly dominated Russian security concerns in the region during 1990s.<sup>393</sup> It was an immediate threat to secular Central Asian regimes along Russia’s southern frontier, which might ultimately destabilize Russia’s own large Muslim population.<sup>394</sup> Putin, most probably calculated that if the American venture into Central Asia eradicates Islamic radicalism, it would be better for

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<sup>388</sup> Herspring and Rutland, *op.cit.*, p. 239.

<sup>389</sup> Trenin, *op.cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>390</sup> Herd and Akerman, *op.cit.*, p. 358.

<sup>391</sup> Trenin, *op.cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>392</sup> Bachkatov, *op.cit.*

<sup>393</sup> Wallander, *op.cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>394</sup> Stuart Goldman, “Russian National Security Policy After September 11, 2001, <<http://www.sais-jhu.edu/programs/res/papers/Goldman%20Paper.pdf>>

Russia as well. “Russia, like the regimes of Central Asia, fears militant Islam, even more so because of the war in Chechnya and revolutionary Islamists in greater Central Asia.”<sup>395</sup> Voicing this opinion, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia A. P. Losiukov stated in an interview on July 24, 2003 that;

Neither China, nor we experience joy at an American military presence arising in Central Asia. This is a new and very serious element in the balance of forces in the region...we could not counter these threats (of the Taliban) either on our own or with China’s help. There was a threat of a complete takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban. And in that case instability would have spilled over across the border...and the American presence resulted from combating this threat, in which we were interested. It became possible to eliminate this threat with the help of American intervention, albeit not completely, and this is a considerable achievement. We do not regard the USA as an adversary but as a partner in this struggle, whose interests largely coincide with our own. The Chinese also understand this.<sup>396</sup>

Even if Russia did have the technical potential, its economy wouldn’t be able to handle the burden it would bring.<sup>397</sup> 9/11 has definitely “demonstrated the gulf which had widened through the 1990s, between Russia’s stated foreign and security policy objectives and preferences and its financial, military and institutional capacity to achieve those objectives.”<sup>398</sup> Besides, Putin was well aware of the fact that Russia’s state and society could only be stabilized and this gulf could only be closed through economic recovery, which is not possible without Western investment.

Secondly, its support’s pay off for the US-led anti-terrorism campaign was expected in arms control, economic assistance, the US support for its offer to pipe Caspian Sea oil over Russian territory<sup>399</sup>, and a more understanding American attitude towards the war in Chechnya.<sup>400</sup> Previously, Bush administration regarded the Russian attitude towards Chechen separatism as a human rights issue, while after 9/11, “it has decided that it was a terrorist issue”<sup>401</sup> revealing that securitization is an intersubjective and arbitrary process. In addition, “an alliance with the United States in the war on terrorism provided Putin with a golden

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<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>396</sup> Aleksandr Lukin, “Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Problems and Prospects”, *International Affairs*, 2003, p. 36

<sup>397</sup> Gökçen Ekici, “Orta Asya Güvenlik Ağı: Kim, Kimi, Kimden Koruyor?”, *Stratejik Analiz*, Vol.2, No. 39, July 2003, p.75.

<sup>398</sup> Herd and Akerman, *op.cit.*, p. 357.

<sup>399</sup> Trenin, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>400</sup> Menon, *op.cit.*, p.194.

<sup>401</sup> Qingguo, *op.cit.*,p. 172.

opportunity to make Russia once again a major actor on the world stage”<sup>402</sup> as Russia wanted to play a full part in shaping the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>403</sup>

Lastly, after 9/11, Putin had no choice but to consent to US military presence in Central Asia. If he had tried to block such a move, the Central Asian states, especially Uzbekistan would not follow Russia.<sup>404</sup> In sum, as a rare happening in history, Moscow and the US left their distant perceptions of the previous era aside, though temporarily.

As a result of this set of calculations, to grab and maintain this historic opportunity, one can even view Putin giving a mild reaction to the US pulling out of landmark arms control treaty ABM by describing the US move as a “mistake”, a “difference between friends” that should not crush “the spirit of partnership and even alliance between the two nations” unlike his previous attitude toward the same issue along with China.<sup>405</sup> As these indicate, from the pragmatic perspective of Putin, the opportunity of moving Russia into the US-led Western camp provided by 9/11, was too good to be spoiled by insisting on the integrity of ABM Treaty.<sup>406</sup> Complementarily, in a joint declaration between Bush and Putin at the US-Russia summit in May 2002, the Central Asia was designated as an area of common interest for the US and Russia, as both were willing to cooperate on the stability and security of the region. Russia has apparently voiced down on the issue and found a compromise with the US, while disappointing China.<sup>407</sup> Nevertheless, these developments do not necessarily imply that Russia’s foreign policy just looked up to West, on the contrary, Putin tried to catch a balance of active and multi-vectored global agenda<sup>408</sup>, which seems harmonious with Putin’s perceptions as witnessed in the subsequent turning points.

## **6.2 Cooperation between the Central Asian States and the United States**

Until 9/11, the Central Asian countries, being aware of their shortcomings, tried to find support from Russia, and partially from China for their security problems. However,

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<sup>402</sup> Herspring and Rutland, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

<sup>403</sup> Bachkatov, *op.cit.*

<sup>404</sup> Dmitri Trenin, “Southern Watch: Russia’s Policy in Central Asia”, *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 56, No.2, Spring 2003, p. 129.

<sup>405</sup> Yu Bin, “Tales of Two US-Partners: Coping With Post-Taliban Uncertainty,” <<http://www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/0201Qchina-rus.html>, January-March2002.>

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>407</sup> Yahuda, *op.cit.*, p. 201.

<sup>408</sup> S. Igor Ivanov, *The New Russian Diplomacy*, Washington, Brookings Press, 2002, p. 14.

after the attacks and with the shift in Russian foreign policy, the Central Asian states had grabbed the opportunity to cut down on their dependence on Russia in means of security and considered the US as a new and valuable alternative, in accordance with their multi-vectored approach that appeared as another regional pattern in Central Asian regional security complex. Indeed, it was not hard to discern a tendency among the Central Asian states towards a distance with Russia as some of them were concerned about the continuous Russian influence posed on them after a decade of their independence.

In the aftermath of 9/11, the Central Asian leaders, while hoping to receive more grants in aid and debt relief than before from the US, not only enjoyed a major geo-political swing towards Central Asia as they found a mission for themselves in global politics and have demonstrated the strategic importance of their region,<sup>409</sup> but also took advantage of a global securitization process intersecting with their security concerns that have been on their agenda for a long time. Therefore, Central Asian regimes eagerly signed security agreements with the US and bilateral cooperations have been initiated as the military involvement of the US in Afghanistan necessitated access to military facilities in Central Asian countries, due to their proximity and their important role as “security sentry” for the stabilization efforts afterwards.<sup>410</sup> The US viewed them as key partners in the coalition against terrorism. Cooperation with the Central Asian states focused on military cooperation, counter-terrorism and development of Caspian energy. However, it has to be underlined that “the long-standing energy focus has been superseded by the pursuit of security and stability within the prism of the global fight against terrorism.”<sup>411</sup>

Among the Central Asian states, Uzbekistan was the most enthusiastic applicant one. Indeed, as early as 1998 Uzbekistan granted permission to the US to conduct secret efforts against Al Queda. After 9/11, Uzbekistan, which has the best transport facilities, air bases and military capabilities in the region, offered bases at Karshi-Khanabad to station troops, to use Uzbek territory, to launch offensive strikes on Afghanistan and also allowed US the use of a land corridor to Afghanistan for humanitarian aid in October 2001. In return the US granted \$25 million to Uzbekistan for weapons and other military purchases while the US government officials and human right organizations have silenced their critics of Uzbekistan about its human rights abuses.<sup>412</sup>

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<sup>409</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, “Taking Stock of Central Asia”, *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 56, No. 2, Spring 2003, p. 5-11.

<sup>410</sup> Giragosian, *op.cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>412</sup> Luong and Weinthal, *op.cit.*

Similarly, its vital relationship with Russia has not prevented Kazakhstan from significantly expanding its military-technical cooperation with the US. Kazakhstan has provided over flight rights and access to rail for shipment of supplies. Moreover, the long-term strategic partnership with Kazakhstan established by the Bush administration during the visit of December 2001 aimed at strengthening cooperation in the fields of security, democratic reforms, energy, investment and the promotion of a free market economy as expressed in a joint statement of the US and Kazakhstan mainly focusing on the nuclear non-proliferation and energy development.<sup>413</sup>

On a parallel path, Kyrgyzstan provided a base for combat units at Manas International Airport for US-led coalition forces. In this respect, bilateral cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and the US has been initiated during the war in Afghanistan as expressed in the “US-Kyrgyz Republic Memorandum on Bilateral Cooperation” which primarily focused on economic cooperation while another joint statement of September 2002 stressed an establishment of a long-term strategic partnership and security cooperation between the two countries based on the endorsement of democratic, political and economic reforms and military assistance.<sup>414</sup>

Even perceived as Russia’s proxy in the region, Tajikistan granted the use of international airport in Dusanbe for US aircraft to refuel and later of the base in Kuliab. Lastly, after an initial hesitancy, Turkmenistan allowed blanket over flight rights and refueling privileges for humanitarian flights.

In sum, perhaps remembering the dictum of Bush; ‘either you are with us or you are with the terrorists’, Central Asian states preferred to side with the US and thus blessed with an exceptional opportunity to take advantage of strategic benefits and to establish a multiple-level security system and after 9/11, the U.S and NATO forces entered Central Asia consecutively. Moreover, the Central Asian States as mentioned above by providing the necessary support for the acts of the US in the region gained American assistance in terms of economy given the doubled American assistance that came up to \$580 billion in 2002.<sup>415</sup> Besides, the stability of the region could call on the foreign investors into Central Asia and end all the economic misery by boosting their economy.<sup>416</sup> In addition, they also enjoyed absence of criticism about their countries’ human rights records by “often employing anti-

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<sup>413</sup> Annette Bohr, “Inside Central Asia”, *BBC Monitoring*, February 22, 2004.

<sup>414</sup> For further information, see: <<http://www.bits.de/NRANEU/CentralAsia.html#A>>

<sup>415</sup> Charles William Maynes, “America Discovers Central Asia”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No.2, March-April 2003, p. 120.

<sup>416</sup> Rumer, *op.cit.*, p. 66-67.

terrorism as justification for maintaining a strong hold over political power.”<sup>417</sup> For instance, although the US State Department acknowledges that Uzbek security forces use torture as a regular investigation procedure, Washington gave Karimov regime \$500 million in aid and rent payments for the US air base in Khanabad.<sup>418</sup> This approach surely has impact on the vicious circle, as lack of democracy is one of the root causes of resistance and radicalism as the poor political and economic situation plays into the hands of radical Islamic and extremist groups, provoking the public to turn to more radical remedies.<sup>419</sup> In short, these short-term gains of the Central Asian States can be considered as a result of a multi-vectored approach in which they have come to be experts after a decade of independence, due to their significant conditions and two tendencies of accommodation and balancing. In this regard, there appeared two basic rules in this multi-vectored game in the aftermath of 9/11:

Cooperation with Russia and China premised on common acceptance of authoritarian political practice and driven by economic interests, often in energy sector and cooperation with the West, primarily the US, premised on the primacy of security concerns and driven by common opposition to Islamic extremism and just enough tension between the big outside players to let the smaller Central Asian players extract concessions with the occasional move to and from.<sup>420</sup>

Thus, the settlement of the US forces in the region ended up changing the security concerns and structures of the Central Asian states<sup>421</sup> where they managed to get the most out of the atmosphere created in the aftermath of 9/11 in the region.

On the other hand, as a result of these developments, the US seems to benefit strongly from its partnership with the regional actors and also Russia. It did not only steal away the strategic space of Russia to the north and threaten the security of west China to the east; while to the west, it will be able to contain Iraq and Iran, thus provided a coordinated support for its troops in the Middle East and to the south, controlled the two nuclear powers-India and Pakistan.<sup>422</sup> Moreover, as the US was looking for alternative oil suppliers,

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<sup>417</sup> Cornell, op.cit.,p. 247.

<sup>418</sup> Lutz, *op.cit.*

<sup>419</sup> Graham E. Fuller, “Central Asia and American National Interests”, *Central Asia*, (ed.) Hafeez Malik, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994, p. 137.

<sup>420</sup> Daniel Kimmage, “Central Asia A Year in Review,” <[http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/in\\_sight/articles/pp010205.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/in_sight/articles/pp010205.shtml)>

<sup>421</sup> M. Seyfettin Erol, “Orta Asya’da Tehdit Algılamaları Çerçevesinde Güvenlik Arayışları ve 11 Eylül”, *Stratejik Analiz*, Vol. 2, No. 40, August 2003, p. 18.

<sup>422</sup> Ge Lide, “Global Observer”, *Beijing Review*, January 17, 2002, p. 8.

particularly given the long-term uncertainties surrounding Saudi Arabia had grabbed the opportunity to diversify its supplies including Russia.<sup>423</sup>

### **6.3 Anxieties of Russia Concerning the Increased Cooperation between Central Asian States and the United States**

The initial victory of the U.S-led war in Afghanistan against Al Qaeda, Taliban and the IMU had aroused anxieties on part of Moscow and Beijing about the Central Asian countries to rely on the superpower to remove such regional security threats. According to many analysts, the US has squeezed Russia and China out of Central Asia in many ways and became “the de facto protector and guarantor of the region”<sup>424</sup>. After some time, when the evolution of the US policy in the region started to risk alienating Russia and China, or the extent that America’s power projection in the region began to be seen as a long-term strategic shift rather than a matter of immediate military necessity, these great powers felt uncomfortable with respect to their objectives in the region. As a result, China and Russia although they were *compelled* to side with the US in the war against terrorism remembering the dictum of Bush, started to get plagued by the fear that the US or NATO would expand their traditional spheres of influence under the pretext of the war on terror and the developments were quick to confirm this fear.<sup>425</sup> In sum, “the abrupt US military presence in Central Asia in the name of anti- terrorism campaign is, to Russia, an intrusion into its traditional sphere of influence and, to China, an intrusion into its strategic rear”.

On the US side, the military presence in Central Asia served to monitor China, prevent Russia from restoring its control of the region and support Central Asian independence from Russia and also restrict Iran’s influence.<sup>426</sup> Therefore, the geo-political calculations behind the US moves should not be overlooked as in addition to combating terrorism, its basic aim is to implement its global strategic deployment reminding the new and revised Great Game of the twenty-first century that abstain from open confrontation attentively. In this context, the US tries not to provoke China and Russia by stating that it embraces no hostility to China and Russia and by underlying that it seeks cooperation with them.<sup>427</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> Ian Bremmer, “The Future of Eurasia”, *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 34, No. 2, June 2003, p. 239.

<sup>424</sup> Maynes, *op.cit.*, p. 121.

<sup>425</sup> Hessbruegge, *op.cit.*

<sup>426</sup> Huasheng, *op.cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

When we draw a profit/loss scheme for Russia, unbalanced scales will be the result.<sup>428</sup> Despite Russia gained a discourse to use in Chechnya problem by trying to connect the international terrorism with this problem since the day of 9/11 and caught an opportunity for integration with the West, it faced significant loss with respect to the new regional security equation after the operation in Afghanistan. Taliban was a bogeyman that Russia used to frighten Central Asian governments and legitimize its necessity in means of security concerns of the region. However, “since USA had entered the region the balance have changed and the “bogeyman” has been kidnapped and used against Russia by the US.”<sup>429</sup> Furthermore, Russia heavily reliant on the activities of the CIS concerning its security concerns in the region and also to the SCO for emphasizing the multilateral approach in world order, felt uncomfortable and its desire to be a respected actor in the region has diminished. Therefore, it is not surprising to hear Putin’s critics raising their voices referring to the following analogy: “with the defeat of USSR in Afghanistan Russia lost an empire and secondly with the entrance of USA into Afghanistan she faced with the danger of losing her role in (Central Asia.)”<sup>430</sup> In this context, Russia’s policy is faced with a dilemma. “On one hand, Russia supported the US in combating terrorism and started to form new allies, but on the other hand, it has lost control over Central Asia.”<sup>431</sup> However, some argue that there is no dilemma at all. For instance, Trenin argues that Russia no longer perceives its most pressing security challenges as emanating from the West. The former East-West rivalry is growing increasingly meaningless as Moscow seeks to boost its standing as a European power.<sup>432</sup>

Trenin believes that there is not a clash of interest but rather a shared interest in the region for several reasons to some extent with which it is possible to agree. First of all, if Central Asia become destabilized or Afghanistan return to the chaos of civil war, both Russian and Western interests would suffer. Secondly, Russian and Western capabilities are complementary in the region as Russia was unable to counter Taliban threat on its own and the question of maintaining security in post-Taliban Afghanistan was more immediate for

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<sup>428</sup> For a detailed loss/profit scheme of Russia look at: Hasan Köni ve Sinan Oğan, “11 Eylül’ün Yıldönümünde Rusya: ABD ile Balayından ‘Şer Ekseni’ ile Flörte”. *Stratejik Analiz*, Vol. 2, No. 30, Oct 2002, p. 8-9.

<sup>429</sup> Hasan Ali Karasar, “Bağımsızlıklar Sonrası Türkistan’da Rus Siyaseti”, *Avrasya Dosyası: Rusya Özel*, Vol.6, No.4, Winter 2001, p. 267.

<sup>430</sup> Sinan Oğan, “Rusya’nın İkinci Afganistan Çıkmazı”, *Stratejik Analiz*, Vol.1, No.19, Nov 2001, p. 58- 60.

<sup>431</sup> Köni and Oğan, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>432</sup> Trenin, *op. cit.*, p. 120..





Map3 Military Bases of the United States<sup>433</sup>

<sup>433</sup> <<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2001/trade.center/military.map.html>>

Russia than it was for the US for the time being. As Strobe Talbott noted, “the US military action in Afghanistan would be targeting a former Russian enemy (Afghanistan) and current Russian threat (Islamic fundamentalism), in marked contrast to previous US actions against Russian allies Yugoslavia and Iran.”<sup>434</sup> Thus, similarly Putin must have “concluded that the Great Game was not so great after all, and that the new environment requires new alignments.”<sup>435</sup> In this context, as the US needed regional allies across the globe whose security interests overlap with its own, it is not surprising that Russia undertakes that role according to Trenin, who claims that the Russians started to regard the “southern axis” as the bedrock of threats and risks in the post-Cold War era stretching from Afghanistan and Tajikistan to Chechnya and the Caucasus.

However, contrary to the arguments of Trenin, the Russian deputy foreign minister and President Putin’s special envoy to the Caspian energy, Victor Kalyuzhny stated that: “if you have guests in the house there are two times when you are happy. One is when they arrive and one is when they leave again...Guests should know that it is impolite to stay for too long.”<sup>436</sup> In this respect, referring to Putin’s pragmatism that contains flexibility and multi-vector approach, Russia did not just pursue a ‘wait and see’ policy in the region. In other words, “given the changing contours of Moscow’s regional dynamics, accentuated by increasing US and Chinese influence in Central Asia, it is obvious that Russia cannot afford to be a bystander to the changing military and strategic balance of power in its backyard.”<sup>437</sup> As properly reflected in the words of Putin: “As for the subject of Eurasian security I think the overwhelming majority will agree that on a global scale not only in Eurasia one can hardly resolve these problems without the role of Russia now plays in the world.”<sup>438</sup> In sum, the long-term US military presence in Central Asia is not acceptable to Russia that seeks to get a strong foothold in political and economic terms in the region. For this end, Russia has exerted a great amount of efforts. To start, Russia searched for bases in Central Asia in order to counter-balance the US and NATO presence and raise its voice in the security affairs concerning the region.

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<sup>434</sup> Herspring and Rutland, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

<sup>435</sup> Trenin, *op.cit.*,p. 121.

<sup>436</sup> Lutz, *op.cit.*

<sup>437</sup> Arun Sahgal, “Growing Russian Influence in Central Asia,” <<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/pp110804.shtml>>

<sup>438</sup> “Putin Speaks of Russia’s Contribution to Eurasian Security,” <[http://www.cacianalyst.org/view\\_article.php?articleid=2498](http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=2498)>

Putin has shown a determination to stem the erosion of Russia's security ties and military presence in the region. He has tried various multilateral and bilateral means to reinvigorate his flagging military relationships with Central Asian leaders and revive Russia's broader military-security influence in Central Asia, using the rationale of a common counter-terrorist struggle.<sup>439</sup>

Putin also expressed Moscow's determination to maintain influence in Central Asia, in his address to the Federal Meeting where he noted that Russian policy in Central Asia will become more pragmatic and will take into account the interests of the post-Soviet states although including the allies in the anti-terrorism coalition.<sup>440</sup> Thus, Putin not only try to underline the importance of multilateral cooperation by saying that "the tragic events of 9/11 showed how vulnerable a country is on its own-even a country that is very powerful, economically and militarily"<sup>441</sup>, but also enforced a reactivation of plans to create joint 'CIS Rapid Reaction Forces' under the framework of a collective security system; Collective Security Treat Organization (CSTO), which is loosely based on the 1992 Tashkent Collective Security Treat in May 2002. Its members include Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan and its mission is to combat all sorts of security threats within the member states including terrorism. However, with the absence of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, it seemed to remain weak in Central Asia.<sup>442</sup>

In addition to the efforts exerted through the CSTO, Russia also opened a new airbase at Kant in Kyrgyzstan in October 2003 due to its location in close proximity, only 35 miles away from that of the US-led coalition bases used by Western aircraft for the campaign in Afghanistan, at Manas in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>443</sup> Moreover, Russia has agreed on the terms and status of its many strategic military facilities on Kazakh territory. Both sides also agreed to reinforce bilateral military cooperation, including defense purchases from Russia and to draft ambiguous plans for the joint use of troops in the interests of security for Russia and Kazakhstan.<sup>444</sup>

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<sup>439</sup> Allison, *loc.cit.*, p. 285.

<sup>440</sup> Herd and Akerman, *op.cit.*, p. 368.

<sup>441</sup> Wishnick, *op.cit.*

<sup>442</sup> Allison, *op.cit.*, p. 286. For further information about CSTO, see: Malia Du Mont, "That Other Central Asian Collective Security Organization - the CSTO", <[http://www.chinaeurasia.org/files/CEF\\_January.pdf](http://www.chinaeurasia.org/files/CEF_January.pdf)>

<sup>443</sup> Allison, *op.cit.*, p. 286-287.

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 288-289.

Besides, following the US denial of aid to Uzbekistan due to its government's dismal human rights record, Russia seized the opportunity to formalize economic and military agreements with this country, that are likely to enhance its standing with Uzbekistan but in all of Central Asia referring the plank of "stability" rather than that of "democracy". Under the terms of the agreement, signed between Russia and Uzbekistan on June 17, 2004 summit of the SCO, a regional security system based on cooperation between Uzbek and Russian ministries of defense, foreign affairs, interior affairs and security councils has been foreseen.<sup>445</sup> The treaty commits the two countries to building a regional security system declaring that the parts will grant each other the right to use military facilities on their territory. Along with the military exercises, the treaty opens the door to extensive military cooperation. In addition, the economic dimension involves Russia investing \$2 billions in Uzbekistan's energy sector.<sup>446</sup>

On another avenue, one can also discern a breakthrough in relations with Tajikistan, due to a bilateral agreement that will initiate border cooperation wherein Russia will assist Tajikistan in development and performance of its border guard structures as well as military aid, which will definitely guarantee Russian investments and overall stability in the region.<sup>447</sup> Thus, Tajikistan has also been expanding ties with Russia as the two countries signed agreements settling Tajikistan's Soviet-era debt to Russia, converting Russia's 201st Motor Rifle Division into a permanent military base and paving the ground for multibillion-dollar investments by the Russian companies.<sup>448</sup> Thus, for Russia, the agreements with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan meant a commitment to regain lost influence in Central Asia. They also augment Russia's special relationships with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

In addition, Putin referred to the SCO for further emphasize for multilateral cooperation and took further steps in this direction. Despite the joint efforts of Russia and China in consolidating the institutional structure of the SCO following 9/11, as Chinese influence was rising in the meantime in Central Asia, Russia has occasionally hardened its approach towards China. For instance, "in the October 2004 meeting of the SCO, it vetoed the idea of a free trade area suggested earlier by China, a move that was endorsed by other

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<sup>445</sup> Sergei Blagov, "Russia Pushes Back Against NATO Influence," <<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav070204.shtml>>

<sup>446</sup> M.K. Bhadrakumar, "New Regionalism in Central Asia," <<http://www.thehindu.com/2004/07/14/stories/2004071402781000.htm>>

<sup>447</sup> Sahgal, *op.cit.*

<sup>448</sup> Kimmage, *op.cit.*

members of the organization.”<sup>449</sup> It appears that Moscow is deeply concerned with Beijing’s growing economic and military influence, which is likely to subvert its own interests. This ongoing discomfort of Russia can also be witnessed on another occasion, which is the first of its kind as up till this statement; no Russian official has made any negative remarks about the Chinese military presence in the region, being formal allies thanks to 2001 Friendship Treaty and the SCO Charter. “On May 12, 2004, Russia’s Deputy Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Trubnikov gave a startling interview to *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, in which he not only lambasted US military presence in Central Asia but also publicly expressed opposition to Chinese military presence in the region.”<sup>450</sup> These words most probably suggest that behind the carefully knitted alliance since the collapse of the Soviet Union there laid serious tension and divergent views between Moscow and Beijing.

In sum, it can be argued that despite Moscow’s decline in influence and limited resources, Russia still has plenty of avenues for reasserting its influence in Central Asia. However, these developments do not necessarily underscore the fact that Russia does not want to antagonize with the US since it is unable to force the US out of the region. Therefore, all these agreements will possibly carry out a mutually acceptable and accommodative character.

While this was roughly the situation for Central Asian states and Russia in the aftermath of 9/11, China also had its share from this unexpected development in terms of its concerns about its role in Central Asia.

#### **6.4 Anxieties of China Concerning the Increased Cooperation between Central Asian States and the United States**

In the post-Cold War era, China tried to establish strategic relations with the US in the presidency of Clinton and with Russia in the presidency of Yeltsin. However, while Clinton administration preferred China centered policies, Bush administration chose to get closer with Japan.<sup>451</sup> As a check-balance concerning the economic growth of China, the US aimed to integrate China into the world economy in accordance with its own national interests, certainly not in a regional cooperation against the US. For instance, “during the presidential campaign, then Governor Bush...had characterized China as a ‘strategic

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<sup>449</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>450</sup> Stephen Blank, “Is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Cracking?”, *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, May 19, 2004.

<sup>451</sup> Özden, *op.cit.*, p. 110.

competitor', not as an emergent 'strategic partner'.<sup>452</sup> The new administration's withdrawal from the Antiballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) also aroused worries among Chinese strategists and officials. Furthermore, Bush administration had begun to identify Asia as the primary long-term concern for American defense planners.<sup>453</sup> In addition, the US continually criticized China concerning democratization and human rights, which in response led to greater resistance on China's part. By creating a vicious circle, this strong resistance of China paving the way for stronger US pressures ended up souring the relations in many aspects.<sup>454</sup>

Therefore, coincidentally, tensions were high when the 9/11 hit the international scene. The tragedy muted many of the strategic differences that had soured relations between the two countries and led Bush to term the Sino-US relations as "constructive cooperation,"<sup>455</sup> due to China's quickly expressed sympathy for the human and material loss, and Chinese support and participation in the anti-terrorist camp. Furthermore, the Chinese government voted in favor of anti-terrorism resolutions in the UN Security Council, and the Taliban regime of Afghanistan and provided intelligence on terrorist networks and activities in the region.<sup>456</sup> As a result of these steps, cooperative efforts eventually evoked favorable reactions from the Bush administration as Bush thanked China for its speedy reaction and cooperation with the US in this regard. As a result of these developments, China and the US have managed to cultivate their common interests concerning terrorism while dealing with their differences in world affairs in pragmatic and flexible ways.<sup>457</sup>

On the other hand, there are different interpretations for the explanation of the Chinese position in the post-9/11 world. Some argue that China had no other choice but to take its part in the US-led coalition as it intended to create a peaceful international environment and maintaining its economic development and this meant understanding and support on the part of the US instead of criticism in contemporary world order and this understanding could be built upon a common interest or enemy, namely terrorism.<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>452</sup> Pollack, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>453</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16-18.

<sup>454</sup> Qingguo, *op.cit.*, p. 168-171.

<sup>455</sup> Jiemian Yang, "Sino-US and Cross-Strait Relations under the Post-'11 September' Strategic Settings", *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 11, No. 33, 2002, p. 669.

<sup>456</sup> Qingguo, *op.cit.*, p. 164.

<sup>457</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

However, according to others, this tolerance did not mean to welcome a closer and longer US presence than it was expected and accepted near its periphery. As Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan clearly put into words in January 2002; “one should not endlessly expand the aims of the anti-terrorist operation.”<sup>459</sup> Therefore, the long-term US military presence in Central Asia is also not acceptable to China as although the US presence does not pose a strategic posture unfavorable to China when the relations are in good situation, but if the relations turn sour, China feels contained that leave it with a two-front confrontation in the south and in the north.<sup>460</sup>

In this framework, one can distinguish several impacts of 9/11 with respect to Central Asia, Sino-Russian relations and SCO, which summed up to a need of a new strategy for China. Until the sudden entrance of the US into the region, Russia and China were reaching an understanding that would have set the framework for geo-political realities for the next several decades if the things went smooth.<sup>461</sup> Thus, from the perspective of China, there emerged three possible scenarios concerning the US intentions in this period. Firstly, the US was in pursuit of a strategy of dominating Eurasia. Secondly, it sought to check the recovery of Russia and the rise of China. Thirdly, it aimed to exercise a hegemonic presence with regard to energy access, a subject of increasing concern to China.<sup>462</sup> In any case, given the existing economic and military alliances between the US and Asia Pacific countries and its settlement in Central Asia in the aftermath of 9/11, China felt contained from both East and West by the US. As Chinese President Hu Jintao properly summarized;

The US has strengthened its military deployments in the Asia-Pacific region, strengthened the US-Japan military alliance, strengthened strategic cooperation with India, improved relations with Vietnam, inveigled Pakistan, established a pro-American government in Afghanistan, increased arms sales to Taiwan and so on. They have extended outposts and placed pressure points on us from the east, south ad west. This makes a great change in our geo-political environment.<sup>463</sup>

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<sup>459</sup> P. Basken, “China, Russia Voice Concern Over US Bases in Central Asia,” <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/news/2002/020111-attack01.htm>.>

<sup>460</sup> Huasheng, op.cit., p. 32.

<sup>461</sup> Robert Cutler, “US Intervention in Afghanistan: Implications for Central Asia,” <[http://www.fpij.org/commentary/2001/0111afghanint\\_body.html](http://www.fpij.org/commentary/2001/0111afghanint_body.html).>

<sup>462</sup> Stephen Blank, “The Central Asian Dimension of Chinese Military Strategy,” *China Brief*, Vol. 4, No. 10, May 13, 2004.

<sup>463</sup> Robert Sutler, “China Remains Wary of the US-led World Order,” <<http://www.yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=1876>.>

In this fashion, 9/11 faced China with a security dilemma and four new factors appeared which shaped Chinese security concerns in Central Asia.<sup>464</sup> First of all, US came to the strategic northwestern rear of China and closed the door China had hoped to keep open to expand its political and economic influence in to the smaller states on its western frontier. As a result, “China perceived the presence of the US as a deterioration in its strategic environment as it places the military forces of the globally hegemonic power on the border of its least stable region.”<sup>465</sup> Secondly, Central Asia has become a unique region where three major powers-the US, China and Russia-have clearly defined, shared security concerns, especially related with militant Islam. Thirdly, international relations in Central Asia appeared to be more influenced by the energy related concerns and aspirations of all interested nations. Finally, NATO’s expansion through Central Asia led China feel imposed of limitations to its maneuvers. As a result of these calculations, China found itself in a geo-strategic atmosphere, which is no longer safe concerning the interests of China and forced to redefine its national security debate concerning Eurasia and Central Asia.<sup>466</sup> China does not only find itself displaced, but also alone.

Concerning the impact of 9/11 on the Sino-Russian relations, the US drawing nearer with Russia not only prevented a possible alliance between China and Russia that could counter-weight the presence of the US, but also left limited maneuvers for Chinese objectives concerning the region. The developments following the entrance of the US troops into Central Asia have indicated that the Sino-Russian partnership has real substance but also many underlying tensions. In this respect, the US as an ‘invisible player’ in the relations between Russia and China, will be the key determinant in setting the parameters for Sino-Russian partnership in the years to come.<sup>467</sup> Therefore, as a result of Russia cooperation with the US, China had to move in the same direction, “although not to the same degree nor for the same reasons.”<sup>468</sup>

As dwelled upon in the previous chapter, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, multipolarity, forging a partnership to counter-balance the US and its allies, was a ‘catch-phrase’ in both Moscow and Beijing and the rapprochement between China and Russia culminated in July 2001 with the signing of a friendship agreement replacing the Sino-Soviet

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<sup>464</sup> Bogaturov, *op.cit.*, p. 4-6.

<sup>465</sup> MacFarlane, *op.cit.*, p. 459.

<sup>466</sup> Pollack, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>467</sup> Wishnick, *op.cit.*, p. 798.

<sup>468</sup> Goldman, *op.cit.*, p. 32.



alliance of the 1950s. However, from the perspective of China, the events in the aftermath of 9/11 revealed that Moscow evaluated this partnership less appealing than China. Besides, it became clearer that Russia has started to define multipolarity in another sense different than China while perceiving the SCO as a Chinese encroachment on Central Asia, which needs to be carefully monitored in order to prevent the rise of the Dragon.

However, that does not mean that Russia is ready to give up China and uncover what it really calculates about China. One should not neglect the fact that “Russia still considers NATO enlargement an erroneous course of action.”<sup>469</sup> Therefore, the charter for expanding the organization’s mandate into broader economic and security cooperation at June 2002 SCO Summit can be considered as an implicit way of Putin’s compensation for his cooperation with the US. In addition, during the subsequent moves of the US, such as War in Iraq, Russia finding itself in need of the Chinese sense of multipolarity as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Igor Ivanov stated;

Multipolarity...means above all close interaction and regions on the basis of equality, democracy and constructive partnership. It is essentially, about the need to resolve international problems through multilateral cooperation, taking into account the interests of all states.<sup>470</sup>...(This) multidimensional, mutually beneficial cooperation has become a distinguishing feature of relations with our greatest Asian friend-China.<sup>471</sup>

Despite these complementary dilemmas, China also enjoyed a beneficial effect of 9/11 and the new agenda of Bush administration. In the wake of 9/11, China has launched its own ‘war on terror.’ “Since September 11, the Chinese government has actually expanded its suppressive policy toward the Uighurs this time under a more acceptable pretext: suppressing terrorists.”<sup>472</sup> Although the question of Xinjiang had a long history pre-dating 9/11 as outlined above, since then, the Chinese government has claimed that some elements of the Uighur ethnic minority were no different from other terrorists that are the focus of the global war against terror. In this respect, Beijing labeled those who have been fighting for an independent state in the northwestern province of Xinjiang as terrorists similar as Russia labels the separatist conflicts in Chechnya as terrorism. In this respect, China, Russia and the Central Asian states, in exchange for leading support and cooperation to the US in the fight

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<sup>469</sup> V.I Ostankov, “Geopolitical Problems and Possible Solutions in the Context of RF Security”, *Military Thought*, Vol. 14, No.1, 2005, p. 27.

<sup>470</sup> Igor Ivanov, “A New Foreign Policy Year for Russia and the World”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 49, No. 6, 2003, p. 34.

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>472</sup> Peimani, *op.cit.*

against global terrorism demanded support implicitly for their campaigns against groups they view as terrorists<sup>473</sup> and “they want a free hand in dealing with what they perceive to be foreign-sponsored terrorists on (their) soil, just as the United States is doing at home and abroad.”<sup>474</sup>

For this end, Chinese government started to introduce Uighur activists as part of the international terror network with funding from the Middle East, training in Pakistan and combat experience in Chechnya and Afghanistan.<sup>475</sup> Thus, the Chinese government has alleged that the members of “Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement” obtained funds and training from al Qaeda<sup>476</sup> and linked heightened discomfort in Xinjiang to Osama bin Laden. Furthermore, according to Chinese official view, “in early 1999, bin Laden met with the ringleader of ‘East Turkistan Islamic Movement’, asking him to ‘coordinate every move with the ‘Uzbekistan Islamic Liberation Movement’ and the Taliban, while promising financial aid.”<sup>477</sup>

To sum up, 9/11, by blurring the borders that are used for “distinguishing between genuine counter-terrorism and the repression of minority rights along with the international acts of terrorism and domestic ones”<sup>478</sup>, offered an opportunity for the Chinese government to reframe its battle with the Uighur separatists as part of a larger international struggle against terrorism. Although, Bush administration has been reluctant to connect the fight against terrorists with global reach with domestic separatist activities, it has nominated the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) on the list of foreign terrorist organizations.<sup>479</sup>

As a result of the above-mentioned developments, Beijing formulated its Central Asian strategy in accordance with the following objectives in the aftermath of 9/11.<sup>480</sup> First of all, China plans to establish a firm grip on the growing Central Asian economies by cultivating institutional and structural ties and aims to benefit both as a supplier and as an

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<sup>473</sup> Dewardric L., McNeal, “China’s Relations with Central Asian States and Problems with Terrorism”, <<http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/crs/r131213.pdf>>

<sup>474</sup> Chien-peng Chung, “China’s ‘War on Terror’”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 4, Jul/Aug 2001, p. 2.

<sup>475</sup> You Ji, “China’s Post 9/11 Terrorism Strategy”, *China Brief*, Vol. 4, No. 8, April 15, 2004.

<sup>476</sup> Chien-Peng Chung, “The Defense of Xinjiang: Politics, Economics and Security in Central Asia”, *Harvard International Review*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 2003, pp.58-63.

<sup>477</sup> “Beijing Links Separatists to Bin Laden”, <<http://atimes.com/china/DA23Ad02.html>>

<sup>478</sup> Chien-peng Chung, “China’s ‘War on Terror’”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 4, Jul/Aug 2001, p. 2.

<sup>479</sup> Pollack, op.cit., p. 20.

<sup>480</sup> “Beijing’s Central Asia Strategy,” <[http://www.Janes.com/security/international\\_security/news/jid031002\\_1\\_ns](http://www.Janes.com/security/international_security/news/jid031002_1_ns)>

investor once the Central Asian economies eventually take off. Secondly, China plans for the establishment of a regional free-trade zone, to which Russia would eventually resist given its fear of the rise of the Dragon. Thirdly, as China wants to promote coordinated measures with the Central Asia in order to combat Uighurs separatists while counter-balancing the growing US military presence in the region silently. For this end, it hopes that as the time goes by, the US and Central Asian rapprochement would go through a break of criticism due to the discussions of democracy and create an opportunity for China, which ignores human rights records of these states.

In this framework, some specialists argue that China's actual primary regional goal is to assert regional dominance while challenging US strategic positioning in the region along China's periphery. In other words, "the longer these forces remain the more suspicious and agitated China is likely to become."<sup>481</sup> From this perspective, as both the US and China are energy-deficient countries, the region could become a flashpoint for Sino-US tensions if the overall relationship deteriorates for some reason such as a crisis about Taiwan or North Korean issues. Thus, "the abundant energy resources of Central Asia (Caspian Seas has the biggest worldwide energy reserves following the Middle East) make it unavoidable that these two countries will compete with each other for access to these resources."<sup>482</sup>

On the other hand, some analysts argue that as Chinese leaders see their interests best served by a cooperative stance which could add to Chinese wealth and power, they forecast a positive viewpoint for the presence of the US, due to their vital interests of security and stability in Central Asia, particularly in the areas of counter-terrorism, combating religious extremism and global drug trafficking etc. China and the US seek to further natural resources and economic development.<sup>483</sup> China's need of American capital and technology strengthens the hand of the US. Following its great strategy of economic, political and diplomatic breakthrough, Beijing is deeply interested in consensus with the US as the cornerstone of the world security, economic and financial system.<sup>484</sup> In this respect, although in the short-run, it is not easy to overcome the trust deficit between these countries, one can observe a recommendation that has been discussed in the US and China is the

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<sup>481</sup> Matthew Oresman, "Engaging China in Central Asia", <[http://www.chinaeurasia.org/files/CEF\\_April\\_May.pdf](http://www.chinaeurasia.org/files/CEF_April_May.pdf)>

<sup>482</sup> Hu Jian, "Cooperation, Competition, Conflict: China and the US in Central Asia", [http://www.chinaeurasia.org/files/CEF\\_April\\_May.pdf](http://www.chinaeurasia.org/files/CEF_April_May.pdf).

<sup>483</sup> Huasheng, *op.cit.*, p. 33.

<sup>484</sup> Sergei Trough, "US-China Relations: Does Russia Matter?", *China Brief*, Vol. 4, No. 10, May 13, 2004.

creation of a SCO-NATO strategic dialogue as except China, all the rest of the SCO members are members of NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP).<sup>485</sup>

There are also some other scholars that seek a middle ground. They argue that although China has cooperated with the US in the war on terrorism, concerning other issues there remained anti-US tendencies in Chinese policy.<sup>486</sup> For instance, Allison argues that "China's reaction to American predominance is a mix of challenging; balancing and accommodation...which may in long-term be less willing to accommodate the US and more inclined to challenge and attempt to displace US influence."<sup>487</sup> Thus, China tries to balance US power and influence in non-confrontational ways in Central Asia, as confrontation would weaken the possibility of achieving its long-term goal; superpower status. In other words, following the advice of Deng Xiaoping; "bide our time and build up our capabilities"/ 'hide brightness, foster obscurity,'<sup>488</sup> China desires a peaceful rise by building up its comprehensive national power and secure a more advantageous world leadership position without drawing attention and causing confrontation considering the contemporary international scene. In this sense, it is not surprising to hear Jiang Zemin giving similar counsel; "enhance confidence, decrease difficulty, promote cooperation and avoid confrontation"<sup>489</sup>. However, it would be a mistake to think that China's tolerance does not have a limit. This accommodation does not necessarily imply a Chinese acceptance of an international order in which the United States appears as the one and only dominant actor. Rather Beijing seems determined to follow a longer-term strategy, which would increase Chinese influence relative to that of the United States in the countries along China's periphery.<sup>490</sup>

In sum, Chinese leadership bides its time due to its economical and technological dependency. In the meantime, it mobilizes most of its forces for the modernization of China and consolidates its national unity by dealing with ethno-religious resurgences in Xinjiang and depending on the SCO. However, if the technological and economical dependency of the developing China can be curbed down in the following years to the level of equality with the

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<sup>485</sup> Oresman, *op.cit.*

<sup>486</sup> Sutter, *op.cit.*

<sup>487</sup> Roy, *op.cit.*, p. 72-73.

<sup>488</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>489</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>490</sup> Robert Sutter, "China's Recent Approach to Asia: Seeking Long-Term Gains", <<http://www.csis.or g/pacfor/pac0223.htm>>

US, China is unlikely to hesitate raising its voice more loudly against the intervention of outside forces into Central Asia by consolidating the functions of the SCO. In other words, “as China’s overall capabilities grow, there should be little doubt that both its interests in projecting those capabilities into Central Asia and its ability to do so will grow as well.”<sup>491</sup>

At this point, having mentioned the reactions of the SCO members separately and with respect to the US military presence to the Central Asian security architecture in the aftermath of 9/11, it will be beneficial to look at the reflections of the developments dwelled upon above on the ground that the SCO constituted.

### **6.5. The SCO in the Aftermath of 9/11: Premature Death or Still Alive?**

On September 14, 2001, the SCO was one of the first international organizations to react officially to the terrorist attacks in the US through a joint declaration of its heads of government. “Although many observers started to proclaim a ‘premature death’ of the SCO after 9/11, these predictions have turned out to be false.”<sup>492</sup> On the contrary, we have witnessed an accelerated process of institutionalization of the SCO since early 2002. In other words, “the SCO sustained and developed after 9/11, and was not paralyzed as some analysts anticipated.”<sup>493</sup>

The joint declaration of the SCO can be considered in part due to the fact that anti-terrorism had been a key purpose for the SCO’s creation.<sup>494</sup> To remind, the three forces of terrorism, separatism and religious extremism have been on the agenda of Shanghai Five since the summit meeting in Bishkek in 1999. At this meeting, Afghanistan was identified as a major external source of instability in the region. However, despite this emphasis, the SCO was caught up ill equipped for the developments following 9/11 concerning Central Asia. These developments have raised serious questions about the viability of the SCO as the world turned its eyes on Central Asia due to its suddenly heightened strategic importance. SCO’s own internal inefficiency and inaction were also part of the problem. “With none of

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<sup>491</sup> Stephen Blank, “China’s Military Footprint in Central Asia”, <[http://www.cacianalyst.org/view\\_article.php?articleid=2609](http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=2609)>

<sup>492</sup> Wacker, *op.cit.*

<sup>493</sup> Huasheng, *op.cit.*, p.26.

<sup>494</sup> Greg Austin, “European Union Policy Responses to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization”, <<http://www.eias.org/publications/briefing/2002/sco.pdf>>

the planned SCO structures in place, it was not capable to play a decisive role in guaranteeing regional security.”<sup>495</sup>

When the September 11 Attacks took place, the SCO was drafting its charter; its planned anti-terrorism center in Bishkek was yet to be established; the Shanghai Treaty of Cracking Down on Terrorism, Separation and Extremism was waiting for confirmation of the respective parliaments of the six countries; and the SCO’s organizational setup had not been completed.<sup>496</sup>

Therefore, despite SCO’s early focus on terrorism, its members could not manage to form a common policy following the attacks. In other words, SCO had difficulty formulating a position and most of its members rushed to offer their support to the US without even consulting with SCO partners.<sup>497</sup> Since 9/11, SCO’s reputation about it constituting an anti-western front, since 9/11 seemed to be fading due to its wish to promote a constructive dialogue with the US in the context of counter-terrorism cooperation.

Secondly, and related with the first one, as the struggle against terrorism paved the way for American military presence in Central Asia, 9/11 had another consequence for the viability of SCO; its role in the fight against terrorism in the region found itself in danger of becoming secondary as the presence of the US military forces in Central Asia had injected a new dynamic into regional politics. As a result, it defused the functions of the SCO in the context that the US has achieved more concerning the member states’ security needs than the SCO had in six years<sup>498</sup> by providing an alternative for addressing the issue of regional terrorism.<sup>499</sup> Given the receptivity of the Central Asian states, in the cooperation with the US, the SCO was left without one of its main functions.<sup>500</sup> Thus, the distribution of power and influence in Central Asia was fundamentally altered by the serious commitment of the US to military and security engagement.<sup>501</sup>

In this respect, with the antiterrorism operations winding down in Afghanistan, and the US-led Western forces apparently settling down in Central Asian countries, Moscow and

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<sup>495</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>496</sup> Xia Yishan, “Significance of the SCO Foreign Ministers Meeting”, *Beijing Review*, January 31, 2002, p. 10.

<sup>497</sup> Hessbruegge, *op.cit.*

<sup>498</sup> Matthew Oresman, “The Moscow Summit: Tempered Hope For the SCO”, <<http://www.caciana.lyst.org/issues/20020604Analyst.pdf>>

<sup>499</sup> McNeal, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>500</sup> Chiang, *op.cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>501</sup> Cornell, *op.cit.*

Beijing decided to revive the SCO with an increasing emphasis on its role as an anti-terror coalition and try to line up the Central Asian States behind a common agenda.<sup>502</sup> This attempt of reactivation was mainly due to the concerns of Russia and China about a permanent US presence in the region that would eventually limit their influence. “The greater any US presence in the region, the greater the chances that the SCO will continue to lose credibility as a regional security forum.”<sup>503</sup> This calculation also explains the efforts towards the institutionalization of the SCO, which can be considered as a respond to the initial comments underlining SCO’s lack of focus and achievements in the field of security as Russia and China realized the pressing obligation to take more concrete steps in order to improve regional security cooperation. In sum, “it seemed to be a good idea to create as soon as possible SCO rapid reaction forces that could take over full responsibility for security in the region to make unnecessary the presence of non-regional military contingents for stabilizing Central Asia.”<sup>504</sup>

In this context, having a closer look at the speech acts of the SCO members through the SCO summits in the aftermath of 9/11 will be beneficial not only for tracing the contours of its securitization processes, but also for revealing the character of Central Asian regional security complex, the interaction between its actors while getting an idea of its future development based on its present dynamics.

In this context, starting with the Extra-ordinary Foreign Ministers Meeting of SCO, on January 7, 2002 among other significant summits of the organization, one can discern a consensus that was reached on issues such as the Afghan situation, the international anti-terrorism campaign, the crackdown on the three forces; terrorism, separatism and extremism, and the organizational construction of the SCO. The Joint Statement of this meeting stated that “as close neighbors of Afghanistan, we had long been subject to direct threats of terrorism and drugs originating from Afghanistan, prior to September 11 terrorist attacks”<sup>505</sup> while pointing out that any attempt aimed at imposing a certain model of governance on Afghanistan or putting it under certain influence is likely to bring about new crisis to Afghanistan and its surrounding regions and offering to settle the Afghan situation within the framework of the United Nations.<sup>506</sup> The joint communiqué also stipulated that antiterrorism

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<sup>502</sup> Jonas Bernstein, “Shanghai Cooperation Organization: A New Lease on Life”, <[http://www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=30&issue\\_id=2399&article\\_id=19510](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=30&issue_id=2399&article_id=19510)>

<sup>503</sup> Yom, *op.cit.*

<sup>504</sup> Lukin, *op.cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>505</sup> Zhao, *op.cit.*, p.11

<sup>506</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

actions should not lead to interference into the internal affairs of sovereign countries. Thus, the joint statement stated that:

All anti-terrorist operations should be in line with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and other universally recognized rules of international law, their scope may not be extended arbitrarily and they must not be accompanied by interference in the international affairs of sovereign states.<sup>507</sup>

In short, “the January 2002 meeting clearly injected momentum into the somewhat eclipsed regional security network.”<sup>508</sup> On the other hand, emphasizing the Security Council referred to their veto power, which rendered Russia and China an opportunity to raise their voices about the international affairs. Although, this could be considered as an important way of expressing views on certain matters for Russia and China, some international occasions proved the contrary. This power had limits, as observed in the war against Iraq started in the winter of 2003, where the world hegemon managed to find a way around.

On June 7, 2002, a meeting of the heads of the SCO was held in St. Petersburg at which the ‘SCO Charter’ (with which the SCO acquired the status of an international legal entity) an ‘Agreement on the Regional Antiterrorist Structure (RATS)’ (in order to show that the SCO is still alive with its mission of securing Central Asia in response to the presence of US assuming the same role) and a ‘Declaration by the Heads of the SCO Member States’ were signed.<sup>509</sup> The political declaration of the SCO sets forth in full the purposes, tasks and fundamental principles of the SCO. In addition, the heads of the state agreed to dramatically speed up the process for forming the legal infrastructure of the SCO.<sup>510</sup>

Special emphasize should be placed on the last paragraph of the Declaration which confirms that the SCO is not a bloc or closed alliance, is nor directed against individual countries of groups of states, and is open to broad cooperation with other states and international associations in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law, on the basis of mutual interests and commonality of approaches to resolving regional and worldwide problems.<sup>511</sup>

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<sup>507</sup> Joint Statement by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the SCO (Beijing, January 7, 2001) <[http://www.russia.shaps.hawaii.edu/fp/russia/sco\\_3\\_20020107.html](http://www.russia.shaps.hawaii.edu/fp/russia/sco_3_20020107.html)>.

<sup>508</sup> Yu Bin, “Tales of Two US-Partners: Coping With Post-Taliban Uncertainty”, <<http://www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/0201Qchina-rus.html>>.

<sup>509</sup> Logvinov, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>510</sup> Austin, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>511</sup> Logvinov, *op.cit.*, p.21.



Besides a declaration that identified broad economic development as an especially important goal has been issued while the main areas and priorities for SCO action in this domain in the near future has been outlined which included construction of communications, transport and power infrastructure; water use, mining and transport of energy resources.<sup>512</sup> However, “with the issue of terrorism so prominent in the global spotlight, the SCO ministers made only passing reference to economic and trade cooperation.”<sup>513</sup>

Moreover, within the SCO framework, China and Kyrgyzstan conducted a cross-border anti-terrorist military maneuver in October 2002 “described as the formal start-up of the SCO anti-terror mission by Chinese specialists.”<sup>514</sup> Concerning this move, one can discern a new Great Game going over Kyrgyzstan with the announcement on June 5, 2003 of a three-year extension of the US airbase in this country, with Russia’s decision to station its own forces in Kant and with China’s new interest in boosting security ties with Bishkek as witnessed in the cross-border exercise mentioned above.

Similarly, in the Annual Meeting of the SCO in Moscow, held on May 26-28 2003, several key decisions were concluded including the launching of the SCO Secretariat in Beijing and a regional anti terrorist structure in Bishkek. Besides, the presidents of the member states of the SCO joined forces called for strengthening the role of the United Nations and a multi-polar world. The declaration referred to the fundamental and significant role of the United Nations. In this context, it can be sensed ‘a thinly veiled criticism’ of the US-led coalition’s decision to wage war in Iraq without the explicit authorization of the UN Security Council.

At this summit, the host country Russia seemed to aim winning its traditional sphere of influence, dotted with American presence since the US-led war on Afghanistan, while emphasizing the need to pursue the anti-terrorist struggle on the basis of international law implying its discomfort with the situation in Iraq where the US went ahead with an operation to remove Saddam Hussein without an appropriate UN resolution. At this point, it was not a coincidence that also China exerted efforts to reestablish the importance of the SCO and tried to expand economic ties with the Central Asian states, while the US shifted its focus out of Central Asia and into Iraq since 2003.<sup>515</sup>

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<sup>512</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>513</sup> Leland Miller, “New Rules to the Old Great Game: Assessment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization’s Proposed Free Trade Zone”, <[http://www.chinaeurasia.org/files/CEF\\_Quarterly\\_Winter\\_2005.doc.pdf](http://www.chinaeurasia.org/files/CEF_Quarterly_Winter_2005.doc.pdf)>

<sup>514</sup> Pan Guang, “Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the Context of the International Antiterrorist Campaign”, *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 2003, p. 53.

<sup>515</sup> Adam Wolfe, “China Takes the Lead in Strategic Central Asia”, <<http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/FI17Ad04.html>>

Following this meeting, in August 2003, all five members, except Uzbekistan, participated in a joint anti terrorism exercise, code-named “Interaction 2003” in the border areas of Kazakhstan and China, close to Xinjiang. This joint exercise was the first of this kind not only within the framework of the SCO, but also for China, as foreign troops were invited onto Chinese soil for the first time to participate in joint maneuvers. This exercise was approved by the SCO defense ministers meeting in Moscow in May with a goal of developing and testing the “military component” of SCO antiterrorist cooperation.<sup>516</sup> In other words, “the stated purpose of Cooperation 2003 was to improve SCO member states’ ability to coordinate against terrorism.”<sup>517</sup>

The reason given by Uzbek officials for not participating in the exercise was the ‘inadequacy’ of its troops. However, this excuse was evaluated as an attempt “to put distance between its traditional allies and ...the United States, whom it has allowed to use a base for operations in Afghanistan.”<sup>518</sup> On the other hand, Karimov implied a rapprochement with Russia after Putin visited Uzbekistan on August 6, 2003 and two weeks later, a partnership agreement between Uzbekeftegaz and Gazprom have been reached in a major strategic move.<sup>519</sup>

Observers believed that this activation of the region’s leading but still loose security organization and the location of the exercises can be considered as a further sign of mainly Chinese and Russian concern about the activities of separatists and the presence of the US and NATO in Central Asia. In other words, “the officials of some member states-especially China and Russia- believe the maneuvers can build the SCO’s credibility as a security alternative to the US military presence in Central Asia.”<sup>520</sup>

Following this joint exercise, in late September 2003, the prime ministers of SCO member states met in Beijing to settle four accords; SCO’s 2004 budget of \$3.8 million, staff and salary for SCO’s institutions and other technical issues for the initiation of permanent institutions in order to establish the SCO Secretariat in Beijing and Antiterrorist Center in Tashkent by January 2004. On the other hand, the central task of this meeting was to

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<sup>516</sup> Yu Bin, “The Russian-Chinese Oil Politik”, <<http://www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/0303@China-rus.html>>.

<sup>517</sup> Malia K. Du Mont, “Cooperation 2003: Style, Substance and Some Surprises”, <[http://www.chinaeurasia.org/files/CEF\\_Monthly\\_Septembe\\_15771B.pdf](http://www.chinaeurasia.org/files/CEF_Monthly_Septembe_15771B.pdf)>

<sup>518</sup> Faruk Turaev, “Prickly Uzbekistan Comes Closer to Russia”, *Transitions Online*, August 28, 2003.

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>520</sup> Roger N McDermott, “Shanghai Cooperation Organization Takes Significant Step Towards Viability”, <<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav090503b.shtml>>

promote regional and multilateral economic cooperation among SCO member states for the final goal of forming a SCO free-trade zone by the year 2020. In other words a modern Silk Road, which could “speed up trade liberalization in one of the world’s most underdeveloped areas.”<sup>521</sup> For this goal, the heads of the six governments signed the “Outline of Multilateral Economic and Trade Cooperation of the SCO”. In this respect, economic and trade integration started to become a major focus of the SCO ministers. However, China’s enthusiasm for shaping the SCO into a free trade zone was not equally shared by other member states and the consensus seemed to favor such a move only for low politics in order to expand their cooperation in the more sensitive security areas.<sup>522</sup> Many observers argue that this was mostly due to Russia, not being able to compete with China in terms of economic promises to the Central Asian states due to its severe economic problems.<sup>523</sup> However, this is not to say that Russia did not try its best in the economic aspect. For instance, visiting Dushanbe in September 2004, Putin surprised his audience by pledging substantial financial investment in Tajikistan. “The Russian side...intends to invest some [US]\$2 billion in the Tajik economy within the next five years. I do not think any other country has, in the past 12 or 13 years, ever invested such an amount of money, or even announced plans to invest such an amount of money in Tajikistan,” Putin said.<sup>524</sup> As Putin previously and properly put into words what was at stake: “there is a tough, competitive battle going on in the world, but now this battle has moved from the realm of military conflict to economic competition.”<sup>525</sup> In this respect, due to the numerous overlapping power blocs emerging in the region and spilling over into the energy arena, one should not neglect the mistrust, competition and different securitizations among the members when there appears a step for integration.

On January 15, 2004, the doors of the SCO secretariat were officially opened in northeastern Beijing and an institutionalized and permanent home for regional multilateral cooperation has been created. Its main functions were assigned as “providing organizational and technical guarantees for the SCO’s activities, participating in the research and implementation of documents of various departments, and set forth suggestions for the

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<sup>521</sup> Meng Yan, “Free Trade Zone Proposed”, *China Daily*, September 24, 2003.

<sup>522</sup> Bin, *op.cit.*

<sup>523</sup> Niklas Swaustöm, “China Conquers Central Asia Through Trade”, <[http://www.cornellcaspian.com/pub/0104swanstrom\\_china.htm](http://www.cornellcaspian.com/pub/0104swanstrom_china.htm)>

<sup>524</sup> Bruce Pannier, “Russia Comes on Strong in Central Asia”, <[http://www.russiareport.ru/letter.php?chunk\\_id=28255](http://www.russiareport.ru/letter.php?chunk_id=28255)>

<sup>525</sup> B. Tol, “Beyond the Great Game?”, <<http://www.tol.cz/look/TOL/article.tpl?IdLanguage=1&IdPublication=4&NrIssue=102&NrSection=2&NrArticle=13565>>

organization's annual budget."<sup>526</sup> The secretariat was be made up of three departments; one concerned with political and security affairs; one focused on economic, trade and cultural affairs, last one with an orientation of press and legal affairs. Moreover, the secretariat would have a permanent staff of thirty officers from all member states.

On June 16-17, 2004 the 'Heads of State Summit' of the SCO occurred in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. At this significant summit, several new documents were signed, most importantly those approving the observer status of Mongolia. "This meeting concludes a monumental year for the SCO: an August 2003 multi-nation military exercise, the launch of the SCO Secretariat in Beijing and the launch of the SCO Regional Antiterrorism Structure (RATS) in Tashkent."<sup>527</sup> Therefore, the SCO started to be evaluated as a full-fledged international organization that can move forward in assisting the economic and security situation of its members. In this respect, some points that made the fore during this summit have to be emphasized in order to achieve a comprehensive hold of the SCO.

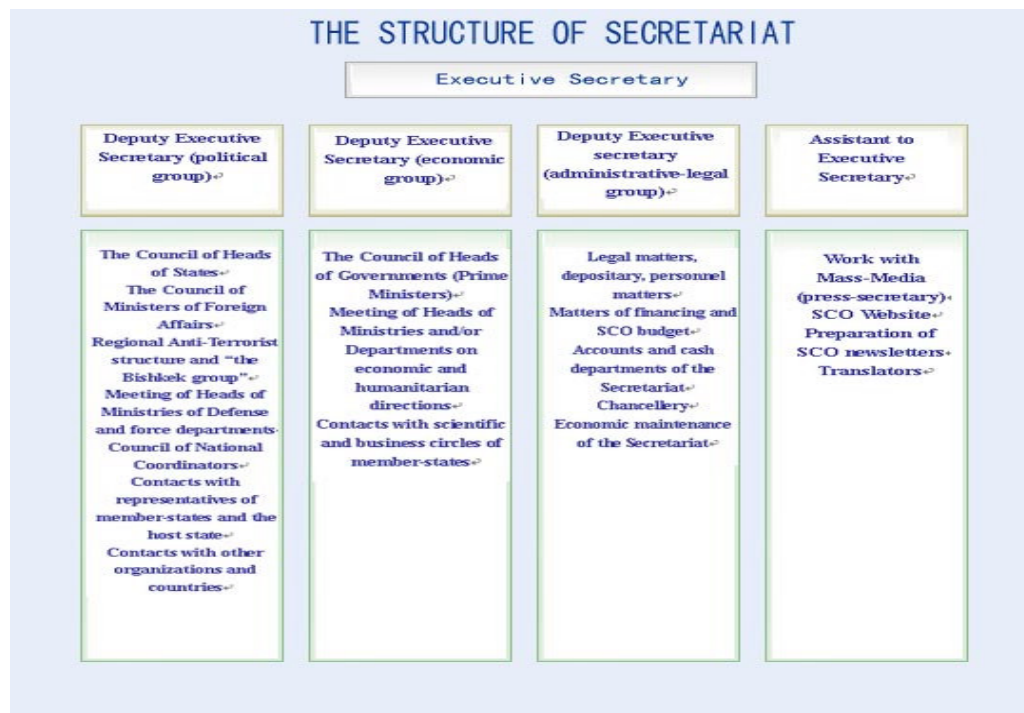


Figure 1 The Structure of the SCO Secretariat <sup>528</sup>

<sup>526</sup> Matthew Oresman, "SCO Update: The Official Lauch of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization", <[http://www.chinaeurasia.org/files/CEF\\_January.pdf](http://www.chinaeurasia.org/files/CEF_January.pdf)>

<sup>527</sup> Oresman, *op.cit.*

<sup>528</sup> <http://www.sectSCO.org>.

First of all, RATS became fully operational and officially opened at this summit. Although, it was originally planned to be launched in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, as both China and Russia desired to limit American influence and get an upperhand in the security calculations of the region, its location has been shifted to Uzbekistan in order to draw near with this country. Its main functions were defined as to coordinate the interaction of law enforcement bodies and special services of SCO member states in fighting terrorism, including sharing of information on regional security threats, devising common policies on combating these threats and initiating partnerships with outside nations and organizations. On the organizational structure the RATS is composed of a council and an executive committee where the council, the main decision-making body, is made up of ministers in charge of anti-terrorism departments of member states, and the director of the executive committee. The executive committee is the senior staff at the RATS that come up to 30 officials from the different SCO member states.<sup>529</sup>

China has been the main proponent of the anti-terrorist center and viewed it as the core security cooperation branch of the SCO as implied in the words of the assistant to Secretary General of the SCO Secretariat, Du Wei. He stated, “with the establishment of the RATS, the SCO has basically finished forming its mechanisms and building of a legal system which marks a transfer to a more pragmatic cooperation in various areas such as security and economic development.”<sup>530</sup> In this context, with the establishment of the two SCO permanent institutions, the Secretariat and the RATS, the SCO can be considered to be through with its basic institutional building, which enables it to handle everyday affairs and respond to emergency issues.<sup>531</sup>

Secondly, throughout this significant summit of June 2004 and in the statement of 2004, compared to the previous ones, there was a notable absence of anti-US or anti-hegemonic rhetoric and the RATS has implied a desire for cooperation with the US on counter-terrorism issues. As mentioned before, observers in the US have usually interpreted the Shanghai Five and the SCO as an effort to counter US influence in Central Asia and in general as an organization with an anti-American stance. And if we look at the earlier summit declarations, we can indeed find statements directed at the US though not explicitly, often by a passage against hegemony and power politics and by critical remarks concerning NATO’s eastward expansion and unilateral abolishment of the ABM Treaty etc. In these

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<sup>529</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>530</sup> “Regional Fight Against Terrorism”, *Beijing Review*, July 29, 2004, p. 16.

<sup>531</sup> Pan Guang, “The Tashkent Summit Meeting: The Steady Advance of the SCO”, <[http://www.chinaeurasia.org/files/CEF\\_Quarterly\\_Fall\\_04.pdf](http://www.chinaeurasia.org/files/CEF_Quarterly_Fall_04.pdf)>

documents, on one hand, the SCO leaders have declared that the SCO is not an alliance directed against any other states or region, on the other, mainly Russia and China have voiced their opposition to Western hegemony by jointly speaking out for a multi-polar world.<sup>532</sup> This oscillation did not only indicate a lack of cohesion among the members, but also led to confusion on the matter. However, as witnessed in this summit, anti-American rhetoric has gradually disappeared from the declarations certainly due to 9/11. In this respect, it can be clearly claimed that contrary to the initial fear of some, the SCO seemed unlikely and is in fact effectively unable to transform itself into an alliance directed against Western interests as nobody wants to antagonize the US despite their discomfort on several issues outline above.

On the other hand, concerning the Sino-Russian relations with respect to the invisible actor; the US, one faces a more frequent oscillation along the global tides. Reminding the formula put forward while dwelling upon the Sino-Russian relations in the previous part of this chapter, which stated when Russia realizes that it can gain more from the US, it abandons a common position with China and the contrary is also valid. When they realize that they can reap out more in a joint position, they are not hesitant to exert joint efforts. For instance, Russia attempted to stand in the way of the US concerning the war in Iraq by viewing China principally as a makeweight in its dealings with the West and by indicating several times its willingness to exercise its veto in UN Security Council,<sup>533</sup> until the US promised to honor Russia's existing oil contracts. Similarly, China remained quiet as being granted its share and did not employ any anti-American statements or meaningful references to the veto power at the UN Security Council.<sup>534</sup> Before that they were both opposed to military action that did not have UN support while promoting multipolarity in world affairs. In this context, the future of the Sino-Russian relationship is unclear as important common interests may not be enough in the face of enduring historical suspicions and the competing allure of the US. These developments surely will have impacts on the SCO intended to create a common ground, as when the two great powers are not in line, the organization does not seem promising in comparison with its objectives. Moreover, it has been claimed that the mutual suspicion of Russia and China about the US aims and interests

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<sup>532</sup> Hessbruegge, *op.cit.*

<sup>533</sup> Inozemtsev, V. "Russian-US Relations: Outlook For the Future", *International Affairs*, Vol. 49, No.6, 2003, p. 94.

<sup>534</sup> Margelov, *op.cit.*, p. 81.

in Central Asia is inflamed by their own mutual suspicion of each other's aims for Central Asia.<sup>535</sup>

Similar with the calculations of Russia and China, the Central Asian SCO members do not want to antagonize the US either, as the habitants of a "strategically important but politically fragmented area of competition between world powers." Instead of choosing one great power over another, they endeavored to play the competing powers off against one another while pushing their agendas over the SCO's, by rushing to offer support for the US.<sup>536</sup> From the perspective of the Central Asian states, "on the positive side, one might suggest that political, economic and even military pressures from the US will help insure Sino-Russian unity and successful cooperation in the Central Asian region."<sup>537</sup> However, one should not neglect the fact that the balances are not permanent, therefore always open to change as recently, "despite growing levels of post-9/11 U.S. security assistance aimed at strengthening the militaries and security structures in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, all these countries show clear signs of diversifying their security interests, reflecting a resurgent Russia and burgeoning Chinese interests in Central Asia."

In this framework, with reference to the developments witnessed up till now, the SCO will never turn into an anti-American alliance as it would be contradictory with the interests of its members, each of which is extremely interested in cooperation with the US and the West mainly for the good of their own economic development.<sup>538</sup> However, as the first international organization named after China's largest city, SCO remains one of the few international organizations without any direct US participation and it is unlikely to see Washington having any direct or unofficial role in the SCO in the near future.<sup>539</sup>

When we go back to analyze further steps taken in the summit of June 2004, one can distinguish the announcement revealing that as an open organization with a clear position that advocates a multipolar world,<sup>540</sup> the SCO attracts interest and respect in many parts of the world. However, the SCO is not yet ready to accept new members, with the possible

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<sup>535</sup> Stephen Blank, "Russia, China and Central Asia: The Strange Alliance", <[http://www.chinaeurasia.org/files/CEF\\_Quarterly\\_Fall\\_04.pdf](http://www.chinaeurasia.org/files/CEF_Quarterly_Fall_04.pdf)>

<sup>536</sup> Hessbruegge, *op.cit.*

<sup>537</sup> Sun Zhuangzhi, "New and Old Regionalism: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Sino-Central Asian relations", *The review of International Affairs*, Vol.3, No.4, Summer 2004, p. 611.

<sup>538</sup> Lukin, *op.cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>539</sup> Yu Bin, "Treaties Scrapped, Treaties Signed", <<http://www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/0102Qchina-rus.html>>

<sup>540</sup> Lukin, *op.cit.*, p.38.

exception of Mongolia, welcomed as an observer to the organization. However, while Pakistan, supported by China, applied for the SCO membership in September 2000 and up till now its application is waiting for a consideration, India, supported by Russia also recently applied for a membership. Similarly, although SCO also approved creation of the SCO-Afghanistan contact group to have a foothold in the reconstruction process of Afghanistan, Putin said that it was too early to discuss Afghanistan's membership.<sup>541</sup> As Wei properly put into words, "presently, the SCO has no schedule to accept new members, and I think it is an issue the SCO will consider in the future...Meanwhile the SCO lacks a legal basis in this regard."<sup>542</sup> In other words, the SCO seems to wait until it stands on its own feet and until Russia and China reaches a consensus on the memberships of Pakistan and India in the long run. However, possible memberships of these two countries can bring about big problems to further complicate the path of the SCO to reach a consensus on main security concerns. Therefore, it can also be claimed "if countries like Pakistan, India or Iran were to become affiliated with the SCO, this would further weaken the capacity of this framework to find a common security language except in response to a few pan-regional concerns such as counter-terrorism."<sup>543</sup> The more the SCO expands geographically, the less it can form a common security policy out of which a Central Asian security identity might emerge.

On the other hand, the SCO offered to join efforts with all international organizations in the Asian-Pacific region to start a partnership network by signing the Tashkent Declaration. "Regulations for SCO Observers" were adopted in order to expand contacts with other international organizations and countries regardless of their geographic location.<sup>544</sup> In this context, Moscow and Beijing even discussed the coordination of the CIS and SCO in a bilateral meeting. However, for this intention to come to the agenda, one had to wait for April 2005, when despite claims of "unanimity" between the CIS and SCO, SCO Executive Secretary Zhang Deguang and CIS Executive Secretary Vladimir Rushailo signed a memorandum of mutual understanding that prioritizes economic integration, security, and humanitarian cooperation. While both organizations were already in pursuit of economic integration, the CIS and SCO countries joined efforts to combat organized crime, terrorism,

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<sup>541</sup> Sergei Blagov, "Shanghai Group Aims to Keep US in Check", <<http://www.globalpolicy.org/empire/analysis/2004/0619shanghaigroup.htm>>

<sup>542</sup> "Regional Fight Against Terrorism", *Beijing Review*, July 29, 2004, p. 17.

<sup>543</sup> Allison, *op.cit.*, p. 480.

<sup>544</sup> Guang, *op.cit.*, p. 9.



narcotics trafficking, and illegal migration.<sup>545</sup> Yet, Rushailo agreed that the CIS has much to improve. Recent events in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, which highlighted the need to reform the CIS and its institutions, have revealed a political crisis within the CIS framework because of "authorities' weakness and socio-economic problems". However, Rushailo insisted that the CIS remains an important organization.<sup>546</sup>

On the economic aspect, the Tashkent Declaration pointed out "maintaining a sustained economic growth in Central Asia and the countries in its periphery and meeting the urgent needs of their peoples which serves as a major guarantee for ensuring the stability and security of the region."<sup>547</sup> This was partly due to the increasing economic influence of the US in Central Asia that faced the SCO serious challenges with the mounting competition. In this regard, the most significant move for SCO development was made by the Chinese President Hu Jintao, who offered \$900 million in credit loans as China believed that economic cooperation and the fight against three forces of terrorism, separatism and extremism were two key areas the SCO should relatedly work on. Although Putin welcomed China's initiative, also felt challenged on its traditional hold on the Central Asian states and found it necessary to indicate that Russia was also in position to provide such loans to SCO members as it was already providing economic assistance to those Central Asian states with low-price energy and other resources. However, Russia seems not to match China's offer.<sup>548</sup> Therefore, economic aspect remains as the main barrier in Sino-Russian relations and the integration of the SCO referring to the fear of Russia from a rising China in its backyard.

In this summit SCO members also decided for the first time that the organization should establish a Development Fund and an Entrepreneurs Committee to finance SCO projects on economic and trade cooperation with respect to its small budget. In addition, the summit declaration signaled that the SCO should assign itself to the issues of environmental protection and an effective utilization of water resources.<sup>549</sup>

Moreover, this summit meeting announced a new campaign against narcotics and "Cooperation Agreement among SCO Members on Fighting Against Narcotics, Mental

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<sup>545</sup> Sergei Blagov, "CIS, Shanghai Group Herald Cooperation Deal", <[http://www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=407&issue\\_id=3303&article\\_id=2369614](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=407&issue_id=3303&article_id=2369614)>

<sup>546</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>547</sup> Guang, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>548</sup> Yu Bin, "Presidential Politicking and Proactive Posturing", <<http://www.csis.org/pactor/cc/0401@china-rus.html>>

<sup>549</sup> Guang, *op.cit.*, p. 5-6.

drugs and Their Precursors”<sup>550</sup> has been signed. Especially after the war on terrorism, “narcotics trafficking have a corrupting effect and negative economic impact to the regional security as it finances terrorists, separatists and criminal groups,”<sup>551</sup> dominates the illegal market in Central Asia and contributes to further weakening the states of the region. However, the fear of Central Asian states, deriving from the distrust among them, that deeper cooperation in narcotics could decrease their sovereignty prevents taking concrete steps in this field.<sup>552</sup> In this respect, the failure of cooperation in the field of narcotics is a symptom of the failure to cooperate in general, revealing the lack of trust and willingness among the units of Central Asian regional security complex.<sup>553</sup>

Lastly, this summit emphasized the humanistic cooperation between its members, referring to the rich cross-cultural fertilization of the region, where the Confucian, Islamic and Slavic civilizations encounter each other by focusing on the Silk Road spirit; mutual understanding and communication among different civilizations.<sup>554</sup>

Following this important summit in Tashkent, the SCO hosted the annual summit of “Heads of Government” in Bishkek, on September 23, 2004. At this summit, the participants discussed the implementation of the multilateral trade-economic cooperation agenda, the establishment of the SCO Development Fund and SCO Business Council and the SCO budget for 2005. The communiqué of the meeting called for member states to gradually facilitate the free flow of commodities, capital and services and technology through the region; collaboration in oil and gas exploitation, construction of oil and gas pipelines, the exploitation of hydro power and mineral resources and the next Prime Minister’s meeting to be held in Moscow in the second half of 2005.

However, as witnessed in June 16-17 Tashkent Summit, one could sense possible tensions in the organization, as the Chinese proposal to speed up region-wide economic integration received a cool reception from other SCO members, especially Russia that evaluated the proposal as an attempt to infiltrate many of its markets. Perhaps because of this proposal, the plan of forming of a rapid reaction collective security force mentioned the day before the summit by Russian Ambassador to China, Igor Rogachev, was not brought up at

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<sup>550</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>551</sup> Niklas Swanstrom, “Multilateralism and Narcotics Control in Central Asia,” <[http://www.chinaeu-rasia.org/files/CEF\\_Quarterly\\_Winter\\_2005.doc.pdf](http://www.chinaeu-rasia.org/files/CEF_Quarterly_Winter_2005.doc.pdf)>

<sup>552</sup> Guang, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>553</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>554</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7-8.

the meeting.<sup>555</sup> In this context, although it was initially believed that a strong relationship with Russia would be enough to provide the Chinese economy with all the oil and gas imports it needs, Russian cooperation has not been very forthcoming.<sup>556</sup> For instance, although Russia's intended oil pipeline contract with China was welcomed with enthusiasm on part of China, its turn to Japan on this matter, as a check balance of China's rising power in the region, disappointed China to a great extent. In other words, Russia's wavering on the oil pipeline issue reflected its diverse opinion of China. It revealed Russia's fear of becoming the near abroad of China, while itself was referring to Central Asia as its near abroad.<sup>557</sup> There are even some scholars arguing, "over time, Russia could even come to accept the American presence as a desirable constraint on the projection of Chinese power westwards."<sup>558</sup> Therefore, these developments, concerning the economic aspect of the Sino-Russian relations constitute an obstacle for a meaningful integration around common security concerns.<sup>559</sup>

Although in the initial phase it seems as if the SCO proved to be useless compared to the changing power combinations in the region, subsequent developments falsified this assumption. This was partly due to the efforts of China, and then Russia, and partly to the widening of the avenues of the SCO that are connected with new securitization processes including economic, anti-criminal and humanitarian dimensions. On the other hand, even if the SCO becomes more institutionalized owing to the above mentioned developments, its potential as a framework for the coordination of regional security remains limited as until now, apart from limited coordination over terrorism, the dialogues have done little to address the complex security problems within and among the Central Asian states themselves as witnessed in the aftermath of 9/11. In this regard, one should first of all look at the level of commitment among its members.

Central Asian states perceive regional projects by their practical security benefits. Otherwise, they give priority to bilateral strong ties with Russia, China, and the US concerning their security and defense policies. Therefore, the extent of their commitment to

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<sup>555</sup> "Selected News Summaries: July-October 2004", <[http://www.chinaeurasia.org/files/CEF\\_Quarterly\\_Fall\\_04.pdf](http://www.chinaeurasia.org/files/CEF_Quarterly_Fall_04.pdf)>

<sup>556</sup> Miller, *op.cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>557</sup> Blagov, *op.cit.*

<sup>558</sup> Allison, *op.cit.*, p. 480.

<sup>559</sup> For further information about the Japanese attractive financing offer for the pipeline leading to Nakhodka and its implications for China see: Yu Bin, "The Russian-Chinese Oil Politik", <<http://www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/0303@China-rus.htm>> and Yu Bin, "Lubricate the Partnership, But With What?", <<http://www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/0403@China-rus.html>>

multilateralism in a regional organization such as the SCO is open to serious questions and there is obviously a big difference in the consequences of a multi-vectored foreign policy approach and multilateralism.

In addition, there are several interpretations concerning the Russian perspective of the SCO, unlike the consensus on the enthusiasm demonstrated by China. One point of view argues that Russia evaluates the CSTO, rather than the SCO as the main counterweight to the new US strategic presence. Thus, CSTO is often compared with the SCO as a regional security organization with many overlapping interests and characterized as the main challenge to the SCO. According to this view, although Moscow seems to engage in the SCO to counter-balance the practices of the US, to take a hold of China as the rising superpower and to multiply its avenues for its interactions with the region with respect to its intentions. In this regard, the CSTO remains to a certain extent the main instrument of Russia when dealing with Central Asian security.<sup>560</sup>

Supporting this point of view, there are other efforts of Russia owing to Putin's multi-dimensional approach in foreign affairs. For instance, the admission of Russia as a member of the Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO) in May 2004 represented a major step forward for Russia's objective of reestablishing Moscow's influence in the Central Asian region.<sup>561</sup> Furthermore, on January 21, 2005, CACO addressed its first task as preparing a list of terrorist, religious and extremist organizations banned in CACO member states that is similar to the database currently being created by the SCO RATS. In other words, traditionally viewed as a means to foster economic cooperation in Central Asia, CACO also placed terrorism, border security, and drug trafficking on its cooperative agenda.<sup>562</sup>

In these circumstances, Russia's reputation as a reliable security partner is currently growing within Central Asia, as a result of Russia's entrance into CACO, while promoting its interests through the CSTO, combined with higher levels of practical bilateral activities, confirming the fact known in Moscow for some time: Russia will not go away.<sup>563</sup> Parallel to these arguments, in June 2004, right before the SCO summit in Tashkent, it was not a coincidence to see the presidents of Uzbekistan and Russia signing an agreement on strategic

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<sup>560</sup> Du Mont, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>561</sup> Gregory Gleason, "Central Asian Countries Close Ranks With Russia", *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, June 30, 2004.

<sup>562</sup> Roger McDermott, "Moscow Reasserting Security Cooperation in Central Asia", <[http://www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=401&issue\\_id=3107&article\\_id=2368690](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=401&issue_id=3107&article_id=2368690)>

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.*

partnership<sup>564</sup> following the terrorist bombings in Tashkent and Bukhara, in late March and early April 2004. Contact between the two countries has increased, and an enthusiasm has reemerged for progress in security cooperation.<sup>565</sup> On the other hand, contrary to the one above, another view claims that Russia does indeed attach importance to the SCO as indicated in the words of Putin, himself in which he evaluated the evolution of the organization in brief terms:

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization has gone through significant changes since the idea of creating this organization was born. It was created as a tool to solve border issues with newly formed nations that appeared after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and to solve border issues of these countries with China. It must be said that it completely justified the tasks that were put before it from the moment that it was formed. Indeed, the vast majority of border problems have been solved. They have been solved effectively and to the benefit of all countries, which set the task of regulating them. The solution of these problems created a good basis for expanding the activity of the SCO. It has begun to have a completely different significance and influence in the world in the atmosphere that was formed during joint work. During our work, we began to raise problems of coordination in the political sphere, in the war on terrorism, and finally began to set and solve issues of cooperation in the economic sphere...Today, many countries of the region are showing an interest in participating in the work of the SCO, and in different qualities. I think that this clearly shows that the significance and influence of the SCO on international processes is growing. I am certain that it will continue to grow.<sup>566</sup>

With respect to this speech, although Russia seems to stand on both scenarios as a result of its pragmatic multi-vectoral approach, “mutual suspicion is not a reliable foundation upon which regional collective security can be built”<sup>567</sup> as witnessed particularly in Sino-Russian relations and generally in the relations of the SCO members. However, the further steps taken to improve the institutional structure of the organization, not only indicate to the SCO as a platform for Sino-Russian bargain to control Central Asia, but also despite the weakness the SCO has shown so far, it is still developing at an accelerating rate. If this can be considered as a success for a regional organization, then the prize should be given to China owing to its significant amount of efforts. It is obvious that China perceives the SCO, as its one and only avenue for interaction with the region and therefore, it is not unexpected

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<sup>564</sup> Farkhad Tolipov, “The Expansion of CACO: A Russian Offensive or A Central Asian Surrender?”, <[http://www.cacianalyst.org/view\\_article.php?articleid=2873](http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=2873)>

<sup>565</sup> Roger McDermott, “Karimov Moves Closer to Russian Fold”, <[http://www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=401&issue\\_id=2974&article\\_id=2368049](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=401&issue_id=2974&article_id=2368049)>

<sup>566</sup> David Johnson, “President Putin’s Interview with the Chinese Newspapers Renmin Ribao, Chinese Young Correspondent, the television channel Chinese Central Television”, <<http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/8408-22.cfm>>

<sup>567</sup> Blank, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

to see its attempts of widening the agenda of the organization towards economics; the soft under-belly of a rising great power. Yet, China has hard time achieving the level of interaction with respect to its needs in the region concerning the resistance of Russia along with the receptivity of the Central Asian States to US aids and bilateral arrangements.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

In this thesis, I examined the Central Asian regional security complex since the collapse of the Soviet Union, relying on the Regional Security Complex Theory discussed in Chapter 2. This theory enabled me to have a better understanding of the emerging regional security architecture in Central Asia in the post-9/11 world by providing useful analytical tools. Some of these tools are the historical development of a regional security complex; the nature of its units; the intensity of the security interactions among these units which lead to securitization processes that establish and sustain such a security complex; the interplay between the domestic, regional and global levels and a search for possibilities of change etc.

In this regard, in Chapter 3, I tried to put forward the regional patterns appeared due to the interaction between the internal dynamics whether facilitating or conflictual and the external dynamics owing to the significance of the region that attracted the attention of the great powers, the US, Russia and China and discussed the possibilities for an emergence of a regional society out of this context.

Central Asia displays a patchwork of approaches to the security problem due to its importance going beyond its geographical situation determined by its large energy resources, its advantageous strategic position, its heterogeneous political and socio-cultural entity, the relations between its units and outside influences in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. This complicated architecture led not only to the rise of the region in the hierarchy of the world economic and political interests, but also to an unsustainable atmosphere, where major processes of securitization are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be resolved apart from one another. In this context, although there appeared several attempts of regionalism that led to numerous organizations formed around overlapping security concerns, none of them could act as the effective basis for regional cooperation due to the level of suspicion emerged as the basic regional pattern between its constituting units. In other words, there could appear no single regional cooperation that functions between the five Central Asian states without external involvement. This also underlines another significant regional pattern of the Central Asian regional security complex; the multi-vector approach which stemmed mostly from their desire for not depending on only one actor in order to maximize and diversify their avenues

of interests. Thus, there is no united regional position or consensus on the most important security issues and therefore, it is very difficult to initiate any cooperation without commitment.

In Chapter 4, I discussed the strategic concerns of the great powers respectively along with their securitizations, whether political, economic or strategic, closely linked with the developments that took place in the region and also their relations with each other in order to find out the impact of these actors on Central Asian regional security complex to pave the way for a better understanding of the challenges that have been faced in the aftermath of 9/11.

In this respect, it appeared that the US perceived Central Asia as a possible alternative for energy resources, a market to be constructed in terms of its economic concerns, and as a ground to be liberalized and democratized in terms of its political concerns until 9/11. For these ends, initially, the US promoted the engagement of Turkey as a secular model contrary with the Iranian model of Islamic government. In the meantime, the US pursued not only a 'Russia First' strategy, but also tried to limit prospective Russian influence by inserting the foothold of NATO PfP and the US-centered energy firms into the region. In this period, although it has criticized the anti-democratic regimes of the Central Asian states through human rights country reports; it did not take concrete steps beyond its criticisms.

On the other hand, with Bush coming to power, the US has started to give the hints of its unilateral approach to world affairs and created a significant amount of worry on both Moscow and Beijing's part with its consequences on the international scene and also for the Central Asian regional security complex. Subsequently, the emphasis has been shifted to strategic concerns, namely with respect to the strategic position of Central Asia in close proximity to Afghanistan, where the US initiated its anti-terrorism campaign in the aftermath of the 9/11.

For Russia, Central Asia appeared as an indispensable historical sphere of influence where instability, stemming mainly from Tajik, Uzbek and Afghan factors from the Russian perspective, meant a possible spillover on Russia's territory and a significant leverage in terms of economics due to its resources. Although Russia started its relations with the newly independent states of the region with a kind of passivity relying on an assumption that successor states would naturally gravitate toward Russia because of the historical similarities, economical and military interdependence, it soon realized the importance of the region and initiated a number of efforts. In this context, Russia referred to several instruments such as bilateral agreements, the CIS, peacekeeping activities and Russian diaspora. However, despite its endeavors, Russia could not prevent the Central Asian states



to interact with the external powers, namely the US and contrary to its initial expectations lost a great amount of influence in the region, mostly due to its limited military and economic capacity. However, under Putin's presidency, there appeared a renewed interest in Central Asia accompanied by a remarkable speeding up in the efforts to regain Russian influence owing to Putin's pragmatic multi-vectored foreign policy approach and geo-economic focus through an amalgamation of bilateral arrangements and regional organizations.

For China, the region meant a source of instability with respect to separatism and religious extremism that could fuel its lasting problem of Xinjiang unless taken under control. Besides, under the pretext of its grand strategy and its pressing need of energy as a rising great power China found it necessary to engage in the region. Therefore, China preferred a peaceful rise and prudently arranged its steps in its relations with the units of the Central Asian regional security complex. In this regard, China also respected the precedence of Russia and abstained from any open confrontation with the US despite its discomfort articulated in its suggestion of a multi-polar world order. In this context, the SCO has been considered the best solution for maintaining this fragile balance on part of China in which it tried to manage dragging Russia and the Central Asian states to its routes of intentions.

In Chapter 5, referring to its main objectives, I described the atmosphere and calculations of its members that gave birth to the Shanghai Five. It appeared as one of the avenues that China and Russia initiated for maintaining their influences and to counterweigh the presence of the US and NATO in the region, while the Central Asian states made use of it in the context of their multi-vectored foreign policy approach.

In this chapter, I also dwelled upon the evolution of the Sino-Russian relations as the provisions of the Shanghai Five was developed under the auspices of a bilateral entente between Russia and China. It appeared that despite the common visions of these two powers with respect to their similar securitizations concerning Central Asia along with their commitment for a multi-polar world, there was an implicit tension between the two; Russia was also in pursuit of a rising China in its backyard. Therefore, the main pattern of their bilateral relations was shaped by mutual suspicion and pragmatism with consequences for the Central Asian regional security complex. However, in relation with the US, these great powers attentively abstained an open confrontation for their vital interests.

In this framework, although the Shanghai Five concerned itself primarily with regional security and border control, the perceived potential danger of the 'three forces'; terrorism, extremism and separatism, appeared to be the main threats that risk the stability in the region and bind the regional security policies of its members, when one examines the securitizations processes reflected on the speech acts of the SCO members, separately and

collectively. In addition, I analyzed the transformation of the Shanghai Five into the SCO while dwelling upon its objectives, and organizational structure.

In Chapter 6, the emphasis has been put on the atmosphere created in the aftermath of 9/11 in Central Asian regional security complex that forms the testing ground not only for the regional units in the face of emergent security threat, but also for the SCO with respect to its declared intention of forging an effective regional cooperation among its members in terms of security. Given the obligatory welcome of Russia and the enthusiastic reception of the Central Asian States that followed, one can argue that what has been tried to be built in the framework of the SCO has proved to be defective. In other words, the SCO failed in contributing to a transformation of the regional security complex in Central Asia into a regional society that act collectively facing an emergency of security, mostly due its ineffective institutionalization and the lack of cohesion among its members.

Russia had to open the doors of Central Asia to the US presence hoping that it would strengthen its hand in Chechen issue, root out the Taliban factor, and make its voice heard on the world affairs while wishing that the guests would be polite enough to leave when it is time. On the other hand, the highly receptive attitudes of the Central Asian states sticking to their multi-vectored approach of playing one great power off another, mainly raised concerns of China, whose main avenue to the region was the SCO. However, as China was in pursuit of a peaceful rise with respect to the dictum of biding time, it preferred to follow the footsteps of Russia and supported the US in its struggle while making use of its rhetoric in its Xinjiang problem by listing the opposition forces in Xinjiang as terrorists.

Nevertheless, as the time went by, Russia and China started to worry about the prolonged presence of the US with respect to its close ties established with the Central Asian states. In this context, the SCO had to be waken up from its lethargy and rediscover its core functions by further institutionalization. This attempt analyzed through the consequent summits of the SCO, which was mainly initiated by China, which calculated that its strategic standing in Central Asia could only be saved from being undermined by the post-9/11 geopolitical changes through such a move. Russia followed suit as it was also losing its historical sphere of influence to the global hegemon at its doorsteps. However, Russia was for the SCO only for pragmatic means, as Putin would not desire a risen super power like China, either. In this context, the tensions between Russia and China made the surface especially on the economic aspect of the SCO, fostered by the mutual suspicion that retake the SCO from integration around common paths. In sum, the SCO has failed to respond adequately to the most important terrorist attack in modern history.

In this context, there appear several variables when evaluating the future of the SCO. First of all, the most decisive factor seems to be the level of commitment of its members

concerning security issues and economic integration. Whether the involved parties see it in their interest to overcome mistrust, to address conflicts in a peaceful way and to develop a common vision for the region's future development stand at a crucial point. However, one can discern a lack of common vision among the members as proved in the aftermath of 9/11.

Secondly, the presence of the US also deserves attention in determining the future of the SCO and also the future of the Central Asian regional security complex. The US, concerned with Russian domination and Chinese aspirations in Central Asia, signals a long-term military presence in the region. In other words, it is likely that the US will be an important player in Central Asia for some time to come...its military and security relations with the region are likely to turn from tactical to strategic. However, not happy with directing economical aids and lately, with the authoritarian governance in the Central Asian states, it is likely that the US will not turn into the main security manager for the region. It is also aware that further support for the Central Asian ruling elites can inflame the anti-American sentiments and social dissatisfaction among the populations of the region. Instead, the US will likely perpetuate its influence on the region by referring mainly to NGOs; as witnessed in the recent developments orchestrated by the US-sponsored NGOs in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. It will also continue its critics of the regimes in Central Asia by referring to its economic leverages on Central Asian leaderships. By doing so, it is probable that the US aims at leaving a passageway in the region for taking initiative in the events to come concerning the security situation of the region by creating new securitization agendas.

As a result of these calculations, it seems likely that the Central Asian leaders, which have been making use of the issues of Islamic extremism and terrorism to continue their authoritarian style of rule and exert pressure on their citizens, will search support from Russia and China, which turn a blind eye on their authoritarian rules. Indeed, Russia and China, also uncomfortable both with the US presence in their backyard and a possibility of new pro-western governments in Central Asia, with a prospect for a spillover effect to their own countries. In other words, they are likely to evaluate prospective pro-US regimes can as a shadow on their intentions as well as on the future of the SCO.

Therefore, it will not be surprising to see these great powers to support the existing Central Asian regimes on bilateral grounds and also in the framework of the SCO by referring to the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of the Central Asian countries. Otherwise, they will face the risk of a loosening of the organization as its achievements have been due to these leaderships and common ruling style. In this context, if Russia and China manage to consolidate the components of the SCO, than it may seem to forge a new security strategy for Central Asia as it intends. Moreover, in light of uncertainty hanging over the future presence of the US in the region as a security manager, the Central

Asian states still believe that Russia and China are the best guarantees for regional security that will certainly tilt the balance of power against the US.

However, direct confrontation in the immediate future is not feasible for all the actors engaged in the region. Rather social dissatisfaction of the Central Asian states seems to determine the prospects for the regional security complex in Central Asia. On the other hand, the prospective securitizations that can be proposed by the US have to be so convincing that both Russia and China would accept its emergency measures. If the US can not provide such a foothold, it seems likely that the patience of Russia and China will reach its peak and release concerns for the relations of the great powers with each other and also for Central Asian regional security complex. What will be the consequences of such a development on the future of the SCO will be another time of testing for sure.

To conclude, the analyses in this thesis show that the role of the SCO in Central Asian security complex is getting increasingly complicated especially in the aftermath of 9/11. It seems that regional security complex theory becomes increasingly relevant for explaining the emerging regional security architecture in Central Asia. Rather than focusing on the security concerns of regional powers or of great powers separately and without referring to the structure emerged in Central Asian security complex, it is more illuminating if the researchers develop a regional perspective on Central Asia's security issues. Such a perspective would not only enable researchers to comprehend the unique regional patterns of its architecture, but also pave the way for a better understanding of the interaction between domestic-regional-global dynamics, revealing the obstacles standing in the way of Central Asia to transform itself into a regional cooperative society.

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