

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF ARMENIA

**ISLAMIC EXTREMISM
AND
REGIONAL ALIGNMENTS
IN CENTRAL ASIA**

A MASTER'S ESSAY SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
FOR THE PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

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DECEMBER 2001

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December 2001

Acknowledgements

My acknowledgements go to Dr. Armen Aivazian, my Faculty Advisor, whose advice and attention for all these months have inspired me for a constant search of perfection; to my family, without whose endless support and understanding I would have never done anything; to my friends, who tolerated my forgetfulness and inattention and never accused me.

Also special thanks to the faculty of the Graduate School of Political Science and International Affairs and the administration of the American University of Armenia.

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Abstract

This study demonstrates that the regional alignments and realignments in Central Asia during the post-Soviet decade have been greatly influenced by the rise of Islamic extremism. The recent escalation of Islamic radicalism serves as an axis for a number of regional alignments in Central Asia, but their viability is questioned. The causes of Islamic revivalism are elaborated. The effects of geopolitical position on the internal and external policies of Central Asian states are analyzed.

INTRODUCTION

Preliminary Notes

The modern Islamic revival emerged in the 1970s. It was built on a significant legacy of the past centuries. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, myriads of political movements sprang across the Islamic world in response to political, social, economic, and moral deprivation. It was necessary to purify the age-old political, social and cultural institutions from the overburdening alien values and ideologies of the colonial West, to maintain the distinctiveness and the uniqueness of the Islamic world.

The vast political changes and the new realities throughout the 20th century have resulted in the reemergence of Islamic revival. Both old and new regional and global powers have periodically set their minds to establish influence and control over the geo-strategically and geo-politically vital Islamic world. More precisely, the struggle for dominance has never stopped. Analysts today consider the modern rivalry over energy and political resources of the region to be a revisited “Great Game”.

Many revived Islamic movements have turned to extremism and violence to promote their case, becoming an equal threat to both the West and the East. The horrendous terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001 have demonstrated that extremism is a real challenge for the whole world. There are many names given to those organizations. Islamic fundamentalists, terrorists, and extremists – these are the frequently used terms in regard to those, who rely on aggression and bloodshed to have their voices heard in the world. Why do they do so? Is there no other way to be heard? To answer these questions means to make one more step to prevent violence in the world.

Being historically tightly interrelated to politics, Islam was exploited both by incumbent rulers and oppositions to gain credibility and legitimacy. Neither one can exclude the possibility that there

is a direct positive relationship between the emergence of regional and global alliances against the religious radicalism and the growing Islamic extremism in the world.

Literature Review and Methodology

This Essay examines the spread of Islamic extremism and its effects on the emergence of regional alignments in Central Asia. The study employs historical comparative methodology. For the sake of objectivity of the analysis, the study utilizes sources that represent as diverse outlooks on the given events and developments as possible. Where appropriate, the study has given theoretical backing to the hypothesis presented in the work. Demographic and other statistical data have also been used.

The sources of the present study include monographs, articles from specialized journals, the Internet and various analyses in English and Russian.

Among our sources are the monographs on history and politics of Central Asia. Thus, in “Central Asia: A Century of Russian Rule” Edward Allworth (1967) has presented a versatile view of Central Asia of the late 1800s. The contributions, covering different aspects of the Russian influence on the political, economic, religious and cultural life in Central Asia, have been helpful in analyzing the present geo-political developments in the region, in particular the relations of the post-Soviet Russia and the newly independent states of Asia Minor. The elaborations over the religious peculiarities, including the trends, the level of religiosity and traditionalism of the ethnic groups inhabiting Central Asia have been of high significance to the purposes of the present study. Moreover, the analysis of the Tsarist and the Soviet Russia’s geo-strategic calculations have been important for understanding the contemporary Russian foreign policies in this region.

Specialized journals and magazines that present various analyses and views over both past and current on goings in Central Asia are indispensable for examination of the subject matter of the present study. Their value lies in the multidimensional and timely covering of certain events from various points of view. Thus, *Central Asia and The Caucasus Journal of Social and Political Studies*, founded and published by Central Asia and The Caucasus Information and Analytical Center in Sweden has been irreplaceable source for the study of such issues as the relationships of Islam and the West, the origins of Islamic extremism in Central Asia or the ethnic conflicts brewing in the region. First Secretary at the Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic in the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2000, Orozbek Moldaliev's contribution is helpful especially because it comes from a Central Asian country that is directly challenged by the threat of religious radicalism. Similarly, the article by Nargis Kassenova that questions whether religious extremism in Central Asia is a "self-fulfilling prophecy in the making" elucidates both the origins and the typicality of various opposition groups, movements and organizations frequently labeled as terrorists or fundamentalists.

One of the main issues addressed in the present study has been the foreign policy of the states involved in the regional politics in Central Asia. For example, the analysis of Turkey's aspirations in the region demanded a careful study of the country's specific calculations not only in one particular region, but also in a larger area including the South and the Middle East, as well as its relations with other regional players - Russia and the USA. To this end, the study has utilized primarily Turkish sources. For instance, the major aspects of Turkey's national security strategy have been drawn from an article by N. Cem Orekli's "Turkey's National Security Strategy" located at a Turkish official website. The current concerns of the country's foreign policies covered in the article have been used for explaining Turkey's attempts to influence domestic and international politics of the Central Asian republics. Moreover, the information has also been useful for evaluating the level of both successes and failures of the Turkish diplomacy in this matter.

The Internet has been one of the most frequently used sources in this study. The fresh online news flow gives a unique opportunity to view events under study with a maximum volume of

information and a minimum bias. The up-to-date reports of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty have contributed a lot in keeping up the analysis of the emerging regional alignments in the light of Islamic extremist activities in the region relevant with the current development.

The official documentation, including interstate treaties, speeches or statements by the leaderships and foreign policy establishments of Russia, China, Turkey as well as the Central Asian countries are the most direct source of information on the views of those directly involved in the regional politics.

The study attempts to find some conformities of the current geopolitical situation. Given the geographic and the geopolitical position of Central Asia, the current complex developments of the region find a perfect explanation in Samuel Huntington's notion of the clash of civilizations. For example, Huntington brings several causes of the conflict among civilizations that include globalization, disproportionate economic modernization and political weight of Western and Eastern societies. Those differences are the leitmotif of the examined developments throughout the present study.

Research Questions

This Essay addresses four main research questions. Given Central Asia's situation between the great and regional powers, namely – Russia, China, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and India, it stands as an immediate object of their geopolitical as well as geo-strategic interests, calculations and actions. Therefore, one of the major research questions is about **how much the regional position has affected the course of internal and external policies and developments in Central Asia.**

During the last decade, the regional powers have been competing for the dominance over the Central Asian region. This contention has brought both success and failure to the rivals. One of

them is Turkey. While for more than a century under the control of Russia, Central Asia breathed independence immediately after the collapse of the Soviet empire. Moreover, other regional powers challenged the Russian dominance there. Thus, Turkey's efforts to replace Russia in the role of the "elder brother" did not give the desired results at the start, although today, Turkish-Central Asian relations gain new momentum. Therefore, the study also tries to evaluate **the initial failures of Turkey to win the race of supremacy in the region, as well as the perspectives it has in the light of new developments in the bilateral relations of this country with the region under research.**

Another important question of this MA Essay is about **the origins of Islamic extremism in Central Asia.** Furthermore, the study has tried to find explanation for the spread and the popularity of radical Islamic movements in this region. Many analysts explain this phenomenon mainly with the devastated socio-economics and authoritarianism. The study has focused on both finding other **reasons behind the possible proliferation of extremism in the region,** and the rightfulness of labeling those organizations as fundamentalist and terrorist.

Fighting the incursions of fundamentalists and keeping domestic as well as regional peace and security has become an issue of utmost importance to the states of Central Asia and their neighbors. The creation of the rapid reaction troops planned by the participant states of the CIS Collective Security Treaty aims at combating these militant Islamic attacks into the region. Besides, the recent enlargement of the Shaghai group, in particular, Uzbekistan's acceptance in this alliance signifies the tendency of strong regional integration with a frequently conflicting composition. The study has also tried to identify **the perspectives as well as the difficulties arising from within and outside such alliances.**

This Essay covers the situation in Central Asia before September 11th attacks on the USA. Though the subsequent events have somewhat affected our analysis and were taken into account in the conclusions.

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Up to the 1850s, Central Asia was comprised of three main khanates, namely, Bukhara, Khokand and Khiva, the major population of which were Uzbeks, Turkmens, Tajiks (of Iranian origin, unlike the rest which had a Turkic descent), Kyrgyz as well as Karakalpacs. The region during that period can be pictured mainly as relatively backward in terms of social economic conditions. Many of the tribes inhabiting it were engaged in agriculture and husbandry, while some others were nomads.

Due to social-economic and internal tribal rivalries, the region was vulnerable to the outer insurgences, which included the long-lasting contestation over the region between the colonial European powers, namely Great Britain and the enlarging Russian empire. Central Asia has been historically an isolated region, due to its vast territories and the climatic difficulties, including deserts. This type of isolation had played into hands of the Muslim leadership of the region to keep it protected especially from Russian expansion (Allworth, 1967, pp. 53-59).

In the 19th century, the first attempts of military intervention in the region were made in the 1830s by Russia and Britain, who have been trying to use the vulnerability of Central Asia for their expansionist interests. However, real activities and achievements came two decades later and culminated in 1865 by the fall of Tashkent to Russia. Although Great Britain had not lost its interest in the region, because of Anglo-Russian talks, Russia and Britain reached a compromise according to which the zones of influence in Afghanistan and Central Asia were divided. While the former was recognized by Russia as “independent”, although in reality under British domain, Britain acknowledged the interests of Russia in Central Asia (Всемирная История, 1959, pp. 291-303).

Russia had its interests also in Afghanistan, but the result reached by the talks was mutually acceptable.

a. Russia's Intervention in Central Asia and Its Strategic Interests in the Region

By the second half of the 16th century Abdullah Khan of Bukhara had some expansionist intentions regarding Siberia, which was of major importance for Russia in terms of the protection of its borders from the Central Asian incursions. The same region was a matter of concern for the Central Asians as well. They needed protection from Russia. Therefore, attempts were made to harden and thus delay the most possible Russian expansion. One of the major attempts was the mission sent by Abdullah Khan to Siberia to bolster Islam. In fact historically, religion was not a primary reason for the conflict, but still it was carefully used in political considerations. The most direct routes for the Central Asian pilgrims to Mecca laid directly across Persia. However, the unfriendly Shiite Muslims of Persia were closing the routes, thus forcing the Sunnites to use the alternative ways through Astrakhan, a Tatar territory occupied by the Russians in the 16th century. Thus, having both ways cut for the pilgrimages the Central Asians had to sue for permission from the Russian authorities, which were reluctant to give it. While the clashes between Central Asians and Russians were mostly of defensive character for the former, the latter, due to the growth of the empire, needed expansion of borders, protective zone and commercial accesses.

However, the process of subjugation has not been an easy one for the Russian empire. Several factors throughout history of conquering Central Asia have contributed to this. As has already been mentioned, due to the geographic location that includes the extremities of climate, the mountainous as well as hot, deserted areas, have precluded the foreigners to have an easy access to the region. Next, because of the bad preparedness of the Russian troops to the climatic specificities of Central Asia, victory became a "difficult trophy." Thus, during the full-scale attack upon Central Asia in

1839-1840, the severe weather was one reason for the retreat of the Russian forces. Throughout the 18th century, Russians had been building forts and fortified lines (Orenburg, Yail, the modern Ural, Ishim, etc.) against the unwanted Kazakh tribes. However, despite the defensive advantage that these fortresses provided, the Kazakhs, united by the grievances against the Russians' brutal treatments, resisted the Russian troops under the leadership of Sultan Kenisari Qasim Uli (1802-1847). The resistance was strong. Khiva, one of the three major Central Asian khanates, showed an "open sympathy" for the Kazakh struggle (Allworth, 1967, pp.1-59). Irritated by these tendencies, the Tsarist authorities decided to launch a broad attack against the Central Asians. But the shortcomings of the preparedness, in particular, the lack of relevant of transportation and supplies were skillfully used by the Kazakhs and the Khivan as an advantage, thus forcing the Russians to retreat soon.

Third, a shortcoming that hardened and thus prolonged the establishment of the Russian rule in Central Asia was that Russia, strongly reliant on its military, created additional artificial tensions and rivalries and gave birth to the enmity and hatred from the side of the Central Asians, while the lesser diplomatic efforts it made could have given quicker and more effective results (Allworth, 1967, pp. 1-59).

The Central Asia's subjugation was facilitated by the problems among the Asians themselves. Thus, despite initial Russian failures, the Kazakhs did not manage to withstand long the fierce Russian attacks. Among other reasons, this was a result of their internal weakness. After the death of Kenisari Qasim Uli, Russia did not meet any serious military opposition and its build-up of new fortifications along the borderlines.

In the 1800s, Khokand was engaged in systematic enlargements of its territory. By the middle of the century, they faced Russians in the battle. The Khokandian fort Aq-Meshit built in 1817 fell to the Russians in the summer of 1853. The reason was neither the numerical disproportion of the sides, nor the lack of fighting spirit among the Khokandians. Rather it was a mater of armament.

The Russians possessed firearms, which the opposites did not (Allworth, 1967, pp. 1-59). This resulted in casualties and losses that could not resist the Russian pressure.

Tashkent, an important site for the Russians, was conquered in 1865, when Mullah Alim Qul, the commander that lead the Khokandians, was killed. It is believed that his death resulted not because of the battlefield injuries, but because of treason. During that period Khokandian, Bukharian and other factions of Tashkent were at loggerheads; some of them even collaborated with the Russians (Allworth, 1967, pp.1-59).

However, these are only internal factors that gave advantage to the Russian advancement in Central Asia. More important were the external factors, in particular, the foreign colonial policies held by the great European powers in the region, including especially Great Britain and the Russian Empire.

b. The Great Game and Its Aftermath

Central Asian political entities of the first half of 19th century became a bone of contention between Russia and Great Britain. The strife ended by the division of the spheres of influence between the two powers. The sides achieved a compromise according to which the Tsarist government accepted the British dominance in Afghanistan¹ in return to the recognition of Russian rule in Central Asia.

Afghanistan being situated on an important geo-strategic and geopolitical location has served as “gates” to India, Iran and Pakistan, and therefore has been strategically and militarily important for the British. In the struggle against Iranian and Central Asian threats, and in larger scale, against the Russian expansion, as well as in order to provide itself a basis for the colonial advancements in

Synd and Penjab, the British government launched a campaign aimed at the establishment of a political agreement with the emir of Afghanistan Dost-Mohammad, who demanded in return to the fulfillment of English conditions money, weapons as well as the Peshawar region conquered by the ruler of Penjab in 1823. After being denied of his demands, Dost Mohammad turned to Russia, which had sent a diplomatic mission to Kabul with the prospect of establishing an alliance between Afghanistan and Iran aimed against the British Ost-Indian campaign.

The first Anglo-Afghan war was waged in 1839-1842, which however, did not have a clear outcome. Rejected both by the British and by the Russians, Dost Mohammad returned to Kabul only in 1843 and restored his power, after the British troops were forced to leave the country.

But the colonial forces in India could not submit to the failure in Afghanistan. To recover the image of an absolute power and continuing their expansionist policies, the British attacked Synd and Penjab, thus advancing tightly to the borders of Afghanistan. By the end of the 19th century, the British occupied the northern parts of Afghanistan and were looking forward to a precedent to start the second campaign against the rest of the country, which rejected to subdue to the humiliating conditions offered by Britain through diplomatic channels. Russia, trying to limit the British policies, gave the desired precedent for the war by pushing its 20.000 troops to the borders of Afghanistan. Being viewed as a counterbalance to Britain, Russia did not however support Afghanistan when asked and the country due to the diversions over the foreign policies within the ruling elite in Afghanistan signed a one-sided agreement of Gandamak (1879) according to which its foreign policy and the strategic mountains went under absolute control of the British. In response, Russia sent the relative of the then ruler of Afghanistan who was exiled in the Russian Central Asia to the country providing him with munitions and a significant number of troops. The British, needing destabilization and disintegration within the ruling elite of Afghanistan to ease their way of establishing a full control over the country, began talks with the Russian protégée, who received Kabul and the northern parts under his rule. As a result, Afghanistan was divided into three

¹ England viewed Afghanistan as a buffer zone between its colonies and Iran and Central Asia, and ultimately –Russia.

parts between Abdor Rahman Khan (the former Russian protégée), Ayub Khan and the British who got Kandahar as a base for the dislocation of the troops. Kandahar got the status of an independent vassal principedom. Thus, the outcome of the Great Game was a compromise between primarily Britain and Russia, allotting the Afghans little space of sovereignty (Всемирная История, 1959, pp. 291-303).

c. Soviet Period: Policies and Realities

For the purpose of the present work, the influence of the Soviet era in Central Asia should be viewed from three major aspects of Soviet policies carried out in the region - socio-economic, ethno-national and religious.

The introduction of Soviet rule in all Central Asian entities took place in a relatively synchronized way - in the period of 1917-1918. However, the formation of the Central Asian Union republics was not that similar. Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan were formed in 1924, 1925 and 1929 respectively, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan as late as in 1936.

While the Soviet Union and the policies it held, in general have had many negative consequences on all the entities it once comprised, it has also left a number of positive legacies in underdeveloped regions like Central Asia. To name just a few, the Soviet rule introduced literacy and education as a result of which there was a nearly absolute literacy in the rural regions usually isolated from the urban areas; improved health care (despite vast and tremendous ecological destructions and their negative consequences on the health and demographic indicators); introduction of contemporary sciences and technologies, albeit with some limitations; communications and various infrastructures, etc.

In terms of economics, Central Asia underwent ambiguous developments. Although industrialization carried out during the initial stages of Sovietization included electrification, manufacturing and communications introduction and development, the ways and the implications that these policies supposed, were colonial and mainly exploitative, which despite their short-term positive effects had broad negative impacts in the long-run. These negative influences play a significant role in the realities of the Central Asian states up to the present.

In the period between 1928 and the beginning of World War II, the industries in Central Asia showed a relatively rapid growth, which was in part a consequence of the increased electrification and introduction of power generating facilities. A paradoxical factor, as it is, Central Asia rich of coal, oil and gas deposits, lacked fuel. Therefore, hydroelectric power was an important impetus for industrial development of the region.

At the initial stages, the efforts were made to restore the industrial capacities of the region. Resulting from the destructions made by the periods of revolution and the prolonged Civil War² in Central Asia as well as the devastating “fairness” of nationalization, the pre-1917 capacities of the region had decreased. Up until late 1920s the efforts were directed toward the restoration of industries, in particular, cotton growth, processing and ginning. However, by the outbreak of the war the necessity of a larger industry came into being. For this purpose, the cotton textile industry was established and developed. In the forthcoming years a large textile mill was built in Tashkent, (which later became one of the industrial centers of the region), some fertilizer plants were constructed in Novaia Bukhara and Khokand, oil extracting facility and mechanized cotton gins as well as electrochemical works were founded (Matley, 1967, pp. 330-348).

The beginning of World War II necessitated diversification and enlargement of the industries in Central Asia. For both war and peaceful purposes, production of steel was needed. The diversification of industrial production was the result of strategic calculation in the center. There was a fear with the central authorities that the war could bring to the detachment of the region from

Russia because of disrupted communications and that the loss of important industrial centers in the west as well as evacuation of workers and plants could invalidate the country's fighting capabilities, (Matley, 1967, pp. 330-348). Despite this, the production of steel in Central Asia has never been proportionate in terms of the overall amount of produced steel in the Union.

Although Central Asian region was not out of its share of oil, gas, coal and other precious deposits, it lacked adequate quantities of these minerals for its needs. This was partly a result of Soviet centralized planning and crude commodity based development of Central Asian economies.

Another evidence of such policies was the creation of large network of communications that fastened the region, especially its mining areas, to the industrial centers within Russia. Central Asia was viewed as a supplier of raw and therefore cheap materials, which significantly impeded the development of the region.

In sum, industrialization of Central Asia did not aim at making the region a self-sufficient entity. Rather it was necessary to develop in order to make a relative equation with the rest of the state, so that no region was enormously backward than others. In fact, the Soviet policy toward the republics was to make them equally dependent on the center and on each other. The railroads and other communications introduced during the Soviet period were the ropes by which Central Asia and other regions were bound to Moscow. The vast deposits of gas in Uzbekistan, for example, did not contribute to the gasification of the republic by the 1960s. The national borders of the five Central Asian republics have been drawn according to the Russian imperial policies during the second half of the 19th century. In the process of border, defining the least role was given to the ethnic composition of the new administrative formation. Rather, defining factors during the demarcation in Central Asia were the interests of the great powers involved in the regional and global politics of that period. Among those powers were Russia, Great Britain and China, which historically had and still have vital interests in the region. Among the peoples now living in Central Asia are Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Uighurs, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Turkmen, Russians, Ukrainians, Jews, as well as big number of

² Civil war ranged throughout the Soviet territory in 1918-1920 against the counterrevolutionaries and national

other minorities. Due to various political, economic or social developments many of these nations have migrated from one country to another both from outside and within the region. Thus, for example, many Kazakhs, during the 19th and early 20th centuries have moved to China fleeing from the Russian and further Soviet oppressions. After the collapse of the Soviet empire, however, many of these people have reestablished themselves in the non-Communist Kazakhstan. Thousands of Uighurs, who are of Turkic origin, today live in the territory of the former Soviet Central Asia, and are connected with their kinsmen in the Chinese Xinjiang. Many Muslim Chinese, escaping oppressions and discrimination in China have fled to the Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan.

Because until the establishment of a separate union republic of Tajikistan, Tajiks were autonomous republic within the Uzbek SSR, both Uzbeks and Tajiks are intermingled and diffused in the region. Many Uzbeks remain in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, while some Kyrgyz live in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Besides, the diversity of ethnicities in Central Asia expands also to the neighboring regions and states, and the issue is complicated by the broad scope of religious trends worshiped by those nations. For example, Afghanistan, which is a mixture of a myriad of nationalities, includes a part of Badakhshan region, the second half of which is under Tajikistan. The population in this region on both sides is Ismaili³ and is tightly connected to those in Pakistan.

The issue of ethnicity became important after the introduction of Soviet rule in Central Asia. Several major directions in the Soviet ethnic policies can be defined - delimitation without the consideration of national-historical heritage, deportation, assimilation and Russification. Actually, the definition of the borders in Central Asia began because of expansion of the Russian Empire by the end of the 19th century. The establishment of external borders of the empire considered historical, geographical and strategic interests of the empire, but gave little significance to the ethnic compositions of the formed administrative entities. The five republics within the present borders are the artifacts of the Soviet policies of Stalinist period. The Soviet authorities used the process of

liberation movements. In Central Asia the Civil War was largely suppressed by 1922.

border drawing through the principle of titular nations. Thus, they did not ignore the existence of various ethnicities inhabiting the Union, while at the same time without allowing national sentiment to be shaped into the realization of national ideals. Ethnic policies of the Soviet period were directing broad resources toward the strengthening of individual consciousness of the substance of those identities, however, preventing the transformation of ethnic identity into a sense of nation (Brill Olcott, 1994, pp. 209-229). Several objective historical developments have influenced the ethno-demographic situation in Central Asia. Thus, the post-World War II period has brought many significant changes to this region in the ethnic aspect. Many Russians and other not indigenous peoples were moved or deported to Central Asia. The deportation touched not only the urban and industrial areas in Central Asia, but also the rural regions as well. Mostly, this trend was strong in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. Thus, today about half of Kazakhstan's population is not Kazakh, but mostly Russian, German, Ukrainian and other.

The deportations of non-indigenous nations did not have only a short-term intention of diversifying and thus diluting the local ethnicities. A much more far-reaching development was expected. A perfect way of decreasing and invalidating the national sentiments was the policy of assimilation. According to Brill Olcott, the result was that by the time Kazakhstan gained independence in 1991 only 40 percent of its population was Kazakh (Brill Olcott, 1994, pp. 209-229).

The Soviet policies concerning indigenous nations in Central Asia have were indeed refined and shrewd. While the Soviet period has contributed tremendously to the elimination of illiteracy in the region, this positive influence was accompanied with a negative underpinning. The creation of national alphabets for the native dialects was made through the adaptation of Cyrillic alphabet to the typically Turkic and Persian sounds.

³ The religious identity of the Central Asians is discussed in Chapter 2.

The Soviet policies were paradoxically targeted also at the factual elimination of strong national identities and related sentiments throughout the country were especially emphasized in Central Asian republics. One reason for this type of stress was the religious origin of the region. As Nazif Shahrani has objectively mentioned “remarkable numbers of highly educated native peoples forming cadres well versed in the art of Soviet political culture of ‘fear and favor’ and in the political culture of scientific atheism” have been inherited by the Central Asian states after the collapse of the Union (Shahrani, 1995, pp. 273-292). These policies have really had a significant success within the region. Two major factors have contributed to this end: first, the elimination of the traditional Muslim system of education and the introduction of the Russian (European)-type schools and higher educational institutions and second, the elimination of traditional Muslim social institutions. Islam, being by its nature religion of power, was to be destructed completely (Shahrani, 1995, pp. 273-292).

d. Post-Soviet Realities and Tensions

The emergence of the five independent Central Asian states from the former Soviet republics in 1991 was not a result of the national movements throughout the Soviet Union since the late 1980s. The realities that these new political entities faced included the lack of any experience of independence, which implied hardships of forming national foreign policies, formulation of national self-interests, “identification” of their national identities, and strong economic dependency on the former Union.

One of the most obvious problems that the “unanticipated independence” brought, was the ideological vacuum created by the initial decrease of the Russian interest in the region. Because of its being situated in a strategically crucial crossroad, Central Asia underwent intrusion of various

ideological, including religious trends, tendencies and interests, which have been both contradicting and complex from both internal and external aspects. Because of the Soviet delimitation policies, since the very collapse of the USSR the Fergana Valley has been the most challenging burden the Central Asian states have to carry on. Fergana is a culturally homogeneous and heavily populated area and has a high agricultural productivity. However, administratively it is divided between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. This complexity has had the most conflict-prone effects.

At the same time, Central Asia (and especially Tajikistan due to the internal weaknesses resulting from power strives, ethnic ambiguities and economic underdevelopment, have become vulnerable to international and regional problems, especially those related to the smuggling of drugs, money laundering, and most threatening of all, the international terrorism.

CHAPTER TWO

The Origins and Perspectives of Islamic Extremism in Central Asia

Today the world demonstrates a genuine interest in the role Islam plays in the regional and global politics. Since the emergence of the five independent republics in Central Asia, the issue of religious revival in these traditional Islamic societies has become a cornerstone of political discussions over the future of the region. Due to close geographical disposition to Afghanistan, the single country in the world until recently been ruled by radical Islamists, there is a fear that extremist ideology and rule may proliferate to Central Asia. Besides Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and Turkey are also “starring” in the regional religious politics of Central Asia.

This chapter attempts to establish the extent of the possible spread of radical religious ideology, including the factors facilitating or hindering the propagation of Islamic radicalism. The forces involved in both dissemination and containment of Islamic extremism in Central Asia are being identified as well.

a. The Islamic Tradition of Central Asia

Central Asian Muslims are mostly Sunnis, Shiites and Ismailis. The Sunnis are the absolute majority of the believers.

The Central Asian Islam has undergone a multidimensional and complex path of development. The complexity lies especially in that it is often very difficult to draw a distinct line between religion and politics in the region. One of the most important stages in the Central Asian religious

history has been the spread of Islamic mysticism, or Sufism, that became popular due to its opposition to authorities and the mullahs.

The Western values and ideologies brought by the Russian invasion of the region in the nineteenth century countered the traditional conceptions of religion and forced its reinterpretation, giving birth to Jadidism.⁴ The founder of an influential Tatar language newspaper *Tercüman* – Ismail Gasprinski inspired the spread of Jadidism. Similar to many movements in India, Egypt, Turkey and Afghanistan, Jadidism supported anti-colonialism, pan-Islamism and advocated religious and educational reforms. Moreover, like Sufism, Jadidism was also opposed to the mullahs. In this context, the movement was viewed as a general threat to the geopolitical estimations of the Tsarist Russia. Being mainly an intellectual movement, the Jadids were divided between ideology and practice. Although after the 1917 Revolution, many Jadids joined the Bolsheviks, they did not escape the Stalinist purges of 1930s.

The so-called Basmachi movement, Islamic guerilla groups, sprang shortly after the Revolution. Led by the local mullahs and clan leaders, they advocated religious and ethnic nationalism and anti-communism. Although the Basmachi led resistance for nearly a decade, they lacked unity and harmonized ideology and leadership. Many escaped to Afghanistan.

Throughout the Soviet domination, the Central Asians were deprived of opportunity to practice their belief. Islam was put under strong control of the Communist authorities and divided into “official” and “unofficial” trends. The former was to prove that Socialism and Islam were compatible notions. Still, some people ran underground schools (madrassas), religious communities and secret societies.

The relative openness and restructuring of late 1980s resulted in a boom of religious interest of the masses in Central Asia. Thousands of mosques were rebuilt and religious literature entered openly from Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

⁴ The reformation of religious concepts was typical for not only Central Asia but also to the completely Muslim world. The “civilization” conflict of the Eastern Muslim and the Western Christian worlds is very broad and complicated and will not be discussed separately in this Chapter.

b. Islamic Renaissance in Central Asia

The Islamic recovery of Central Asia can be viewed in the light of three consequent historical periods – the Afghan war of 1980s, the transition period of the last decade as well as the present situation in the region.

During the 1979-1989 invasion of Afghanistan the Soviet contingent was widely filled by the natives of Central Asia and it was the first time for over a century that thousands of Central Asians were introduced to their Muslim brethren outside the Soviet Union. Impressed with the fanaticism of the Mujahideen, hundreds of Soviet Central Asian Muslims were secretly traveling to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to study in local madrassas.

However, as has already been mentioned, today the religious revival in Central Asia has been influenced by regional policies of several powers including Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. Overall, it can be asserted that the geopolitical reality rather than the impression left by the Afghan Mujahideen Islamic zeal facilitated the resurgence of strong religious sentiments in Central Asia.⁵

Central Asia plays a pivotal role in Pakistan's foreign calculations. First, Pakistan being involved in a long-term conflict with India over Kashmir, is highly concerned over containing the growth of the latter's influence in neighboring strategically important regions like Central Asia. India also is interested to check any regional combinations that may be targeted against its interests. In this regard, ensuring the Central Asian political stability is vital for India. The scope of the Indian concerns in the Central Asian states expands from geopolitical to geo-economic issues. First, India is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country that hosts more than 130 million Muslims (Singh Roy).

⁵ This does not imply that only the external factors can be claimed responsible for the Islamic revival in Central Asia. However, the assertion implies that the geopolitics played a crucial role in this matter.

Therefore, its utmost concern is connected also with the fears of the possible resurgence of religious sentiments not only in Kashmir⁶, but also throughout the whole country.

Second, India has a growing interest in the energy deposits in Central Asia that include not only gas and oil, but the large resources of uranium in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan as well.

Moreover, Pakistan is a powerful Islamic state with a strong appeal of becoming, as Ahmad Shah Masood, a legendary guerilla leader of Tajik descent assassinated in September 2001, mentioned in one of his last interviews, “the axis of all Islamic countries in the region” (The Hindu, 2001). The origins of the Taliban and their road to power in Afghanistan are the best illustration of Pakistan’s attempts to realize those plans. The Taliban’s origins and subsequent successes happened, first and foremost, because of a diligent work by the Pakistani intelligence and military. Most of the Afghan Talibs got their education in the madrassas throughout Pakistan. According to Aabha Dixit, a research associate to IDSA,⁷ the Pakistani authorities used versatile policies to captivate ordinary Afghans to the madrassas (Dixit). Thus, by providing the basic demands of the students in those schools, the misery of the population was skillfully used to attract people. Further, thousands of Mujahideen, disappointed and disillusioned after the withdrawal of the Soviet troops in 1989, also joined the religious schools. The madrassas provided Pakistan with an exclusively important tool – ideology. However, Islamabad was well aware that it couldn’t rely purely on religious ideology. Realizing the extent of both moral and material devastation in Afghanistan, Pakistan largely exploited money as a source of both attraction and loyalty. One of the most decisive factors contributing to the Taliban success is believed to be the frequent cases of desertions of local commanders and soldiers. According to the same source, the growth chart of the Taliban has been in a positive relationship with that of sectarian madrassas in Pakistan. Moreover, it seems obvious that Pakistan is behind the Taliban, for the latter, with Osama bin Laden’s patronage, could not transfer neither money nor Arabs into Afghanistan without the help of the Pakistani authorities

⁶ According to Meena Singh Roy a contributor to Strategic Analysis Journal, Kashmir is the home for nearly 4 million Muslims.

⁷ Institute of Defense Studies and Analysis is an independent research center situated in Delhi, India

(The Hindu, 2001). The Pakistani president Pervez Musharaff has mentioned that Pakistan is supporting the Taliban because this is the country's interest and is necessary from the point of view of Pakistan's security. Throughout history, internally disintegrated Afghanistan has served as a perfect polygon of political testing for many regional and global powers. Furthermore, it has also been assumed as a ground base for many geopolitical experiments. Today Pakistan is likely to use Afghanistan for a broader agenda of its foreign policy especially in Central Asia. Reportedly, Pakistan has established madrassas within Pakistan for students from Central Asia. The Taliban, which are comprehended as the most challenging source of religious extremism especially for Central Asia, came up as militia and largely exploited the overall disenchantment and devastation of the Afghans, revealing their ideology only after several military successes. For the purposes of the present study it is crucial to identify two things – first, what is Islamic fundamentalism, and second, to what extent the notion of fundamentalism can be applied to the Central Asian political forces who are frequently blamed in extreme religious zeal.

c. Islamic Fundamentalism and Nationalism

For several centuries, the Islamic world was isolated from the growing pace of progress in the world forcibly immersed in the darkness of imposed values and attitudes. By the 20th century, confronted with the Western civilization, the Islamic society responded with an increased understanding that only reforms and reevaluation of the long-established standards and morals can save them from the dependency on colonial powers. The continuum of alternatives ranged from gradual reforms of traditional values to the more radical changes of political philosophies – Marxism or nationalism, or the extremities of returning to the ages of Muhammad, generally

defined as fundamentalism. Recognizing the importance of each alternative, the present study, however, will concentrate on only two of them – fundamentalism and nationalism.

The ideology of Islamic fundamentalism is based on several interrelated premises. A central place is given to the goal of establishing a single Islamic empire that in some interpretations of different groups include the revival of the Islamic Caliphate, idealization of the age of Muhammad and the pure Islam. The latter implies liberating the religion from foreign influence. Another principle of Islamic fundamentalism purports radical opposition to non-Muslim influences, which stand as obstacles to Islamic renewal.⁸ The Jihad then is a tool of opposition rather than aim. The fundamentalism is also strongly anti-Communist. The reasons include the opposing attitudes toward religion as well as the Western origins of the Communism. The fundamentalists also deny the notion of nationalism. Islam does not recognize ethnicity as a political unit. Rather the community of Muslims matters. While the ideological basis of fundamentalism is undeniably strong, Islamic fundamentalism is as much a social as a religious phenomenon. Fundamentalists earn credibility and legitimacy through their success in meeting people's needs. They provide schools, banks or other social services based on Islamic principles. Besides, the fundamentalists are a lobbying force of promoting "upgrading standards of public morality" (Simmons, 1990). However, fundamentalism today applies mostly to those who have little say in the politics of the modern Islamic world. The strong secular rulers in the region have established their own religious basis. Fundamentalists also do not have voice in the religious matters in most of the Islamic states.

By contrast, nationalism is believed to be one of the most popular ideologies in the Islamic world. The attractiveness of nationalism to Islamic societies has both social and political dimensions. In order to survive within existing boundaries nations need cohesion and integration. Nationalism by default provides incentives to unite. Unlike fundamentalism that derives support from only limited layers of society (lower middle class, small layer of ulama, unemployed, landless peasantry and a small portion of students), nationalism applies to larger masses and thus imposes

serious threat to governments. Moreover, realization of the need for progress has pushed the Islamic society to search of modern political structures that do not demand loyalty to ruler or a form of society. Nationalism demands loyalty only to nation.

d. The Opposition and The Threat of Islamic Fundamentalism in Central Asia

Trying to answer the question on the extent to which the term fundamentalism is applicable to the opposition forces of Central Asian republics, we would concentrate on their origins and political platforms. Today there are three major forces in Central Asia most frequently blamed of Islamic radicalism. These are the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) and Hizb-ut-Tahrir or Hizb-e-Tehrir (HT) or the Party of Islamic Liberation. According to Ahmed Rashid⁹ the resurrection of Islamic movements in Uzbekistan can be traced back to the events in Fergana Valley of early 1990s. A group of young men, being refused in a land site for building a mosque, captured party headquarters in December 1991. An underground mullah and fluent Arabic speaking militant Wahhabi from Saudi Arabia led the group. These people were once members of Uzbekistan's Islamic Renaissance Party. However, disillusioned with the attempts to control the authorities, they created Adolat party. Their demands included introduction of Islamic law, denial of the officially accepted Islam and Islamic traditions of the region and eventually, Islamic revolution. The government's radical measures of banning Adolat and arresting party members forced the party leadership to penetrate to the neighboring Tajikistan and join the opposition forces there. Later, one of the leaders of Adolat gained significant political weight within

⁸ It is important to stress that this ideology stands against not all non-Muslims but to those who hinder Islamic renewal. This issue is crucial in understanding the processes under study.

⁹ Ahmed Rashid is the Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia correspondent for the Far Eastern Economic Review and the Daily Telegraph. He is the author of "The resurgence in Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism?" as well as "Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia" (Yale, 2000).

the Tajik resistance movements, Tahir Yuldeshev, reportedly sought support in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and Turkey, including ideological and financial help. He finally was reported to find resort in the Taliban controlled Afghanistan, where he founded the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Despite the controversy with the Tajik Opposition, IMU kept close ties with it. The major reason of conflict arose when the United Tajik Opposition agreed on peace talks with the government. The Tajiks viewed IMU and its leadership as a liability that threatened to irritate both Uzbekistan and Russia. In 1999, the IMU militants crossed the Kyrgyz border instigating further serious unrests in Osh, Kyrgyzstan. Under the threat of force, Tajikistan tried to get the IMU leave the country. Only after the Kyrgyz and the Uzbek military intervention, backed by the Russian forces, the IMU leadership moved to Afghanistan. Declared a terrorist organization, the IMU leaders are sentenced to death penalty by the Uzbek authorities. It is worth mentioning, that Wahhabism and Deobandism have a strong say in the IMU ideology. The political platform of the movement does not claim for Islamic revolution and creation of Islamic state. The only thing it insists on is the replacement of the present authoritarian regime.

The United Tajik Opposition (UTO), a moderate force of resistance in Central Asia, has emerged at home and has brought different strands of Central Asian Islam together. The movement has survived in the civil war of 1992-1997 and the aftermath and has achieved significant promotion in the domestic politics. In particular, it has formed a coalitional government that today operates in Tajikistan. Since 1992, the Tajik opposition has been concentrated in three places, Afghanistan, Russia and Tajikistan. The UTO is alliance of several religious and political forces. It includes former unofficial clergy, operating underground during the Soviet period, representatives of official Islam as well as former Soviet soldiers that fought in Afghanistan. The Islamic part of the opposition, which fled to Afghanistan during the civil war, consisted mainly of the Islamic Renaissance Party and the forces loyal to Akbar Turajonzoda, the chairman of the Muslim Spiritual Board of Tajikistan. Along with nonaffiliated civilian refugees, these forces formed the Movement of Islamic Revival of Tajikistan (MIRT). The Islamic Renaissance Party (IPR) was established in

Astrakhan, Russia in 1990 by Tatar intellectuals who focused on organizing Muslims of the Soviet Union and campaigning for Sharia or Islamic law. The Tajik branch of the party was called Hizb-Nehzat-I-Islami that changed its name to the Islamic Movement of Tajikistan. After the peace talks of 1995, it joined the United Tajik Opposition. The IRP was also operating in the territory of Kazakhstan as well as Kyrgyzstan. While the non-Kazakh leadership explains the little popularity in the former, in Kyrgyzstan the party attracted especially the Uzbeks inhabiting the southern part of the country. It never emerged in Turkmenistan, or more precisely, its appearance was timely prevented there. In Uzbekistan, the IRP has rapidly spread especially in the Fergana Valley, mostly populated with ethnic Tajiks. Among the more radical groups that emerged in Uzbekistan were Tauba (Repentance), Islam Lashkarlari (Fighters of Islam) and Adolat (Justice – mentioned earlier).

The secular part of the opposition was based in Moscow and united the Democratic Party, the “Rastokez” Popular Movement, as well as various Pamiri groups. The “Rastokez” Popular Movement, established in 1988 and registered officially one year later, was among the first opposition organizations. The Movement’s agenda was built on such issues as national revival, republic’s sovereignty, promotion of national culture and language, and the Zoroastrian, pan-Iranian Islam represented as being truly Tajik one.

The Democratic Party of Tajikistan was founded in 1990 and represented diverse ethnic groups. It stressed the necessity of abolishing the totalitarian system of governance in Tajikistan, denunciation of Marxist ideology, introduction of democratic values and market-oriented economies, elimination of localism, and a democratic distribution of power.

Hizb-ut-Tahrir-al-Islami, according to Ahmed Rashid, is the most popular Islamic movement in Central Asia. It functions in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The operation of the organization is under strong secrecy. Thus, as Rashid describes, “only the cell chiefs or the mushrifs, know anything about the next level of the party organization. Uzbekistan’s secretive HT leadership is underground in Fergana, their names unknown to members” (Rashid, 2000). The organization originates from Saudi Arabia and Jordan since 1952. The party leaders reiterate that

while the party used to be of revivalist Wahabbi movement, it has split with Wahabbism on doctrinal basis. Prohibited in the Middle East (the founders were mainly Palestinian diaspora), the party has moved to Europe and is strong in Turkey, Egypt and North Africa. Appearing in Central Asia only in 1995-1996 it has gained nearly one hundred thousand of supporters in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (Rashid, 2000). Its agenda is centered on the issues of uniting first Central Asia and later the Islamic community under a caliphate, reestablishing the “Khalifate Rashida”, which existed shortly after Muhammad’s death. The historical period is seen as “a time when true Islamic society existed” (Rashid, 2000). The leader of the movement, who wished to remain unknown, told Ahmed Rashid, who held an interview with him, that Hizb-ut-Tahrir wanted to introduce Islamic law in a peaceful manner, unlike Wahabbis, who “were extremists and wanted guerrilla war and the creation of Islamic army” (Rashid, 2000). In religious issues, the movement is neither opposed nor supportive of Sufism, but it is strongly opposed to the Shias. Moreover, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir supports the Taliban in Afghanistan, where its members find refuge from the suppressions of the local authorities. Furthermore, answering the question about the Uzbek president Karimov, the leader of the movement mentioned that Karimov has no future in Uzbekistan (Rashid, 2000). The major reason for this is seen in the socio-economic disparity. “There is a lot of anger among the people”, he said (Rashid, 2000).

The governments of the Central Asian republics frequently claim that Islamic extremists and fundamentalists threaten their states. However, one should clearly differentiate the goals and the actions of the broad spectrum of organizations and movements that are charged of being terrorists.

Repeating the religious orientation of this or that group, it has become almost usual to comprehend it as fundamentalist, terrorist or extremist, i.e. the one that is likely to destabilize or challenge states and societies. It seems that a group or a movement cannot be claimed radical fundamentalist unless it complies with the basic definitions of being such. Nor does it mean that compliance to one of the characteristics of fundamentalism means its relevance to the label. Resort to violence is by no means justifiable. But the reasons creating grounds of violence cannot be

ignored. Neither can be ignored the forces that instigate the proliferation of truly extremist forces. Olivier Roy¹⁰ asserts that the Central Asian Islamic movements have shifted from a struggle for a supranational Muslim community to Islamic nationalism. That is to say, these people want to be fully recognized as rightful political players at home, and recognize the role of the state and the nation, frequently identifying with both. These movements want the rule of the Islamic law that would be treated as a part of state law. In short, they want the Islamic laws be equated to the secular laws. What is most typical to Islamo-nationalist groups is that they recognize the legitimacy of political institutions like parliament or elections. In particular, the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan is a vivid example of Islamo-nationalist movement (Roy, 2000).

Some other organizations at stake have agendas that are more radical and reluctant to accept the religious traditions of the Central Asians. An example is Hizb-ut-Tahrir, which neither opposes nor supports Sufism. At the same time, it fully rejects Shiism. The reportedly strong popularity of this group seems paradoxical. How can Islamic radical party gain credibility by opposing the religious foundations of those to whom it should have apply to? Traditional as they are, the Central Asians, annoyed with the ineffective socio-economic politics of the present leaders are likely to support this kind of movements, seeking political improvements.

According to Major Gregory Sarafyan, US Army, several reasons cause problems of Islamic extremism in Central Asia, in particular, in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. As Sarafyan mentions “although non was strong enough to bring about this movement alone, the synergism led to the current, dangerous state of affairs” (Sarafyan, 2001).

First, the decline of the Marxism-Leninism in the position of the single possible ideology resulted in a vacuum, which was filled with different ideas in an Islamic “package” (Sarafyan, 2001).

Second, the overall decrease of socio-economic standards has created general disenchantment of the population with the secular rulers, which the extremists skillfully exploit. As has already been

¹⁰ Olivier Roy is a senior researcher at the Foundation of National des Sciences Politques in Paris.

mentioned earlier, radical Islamic ideology tends to apply to the needs of the socially unprotected. Furthermore, Islam as a religion provides societal and economic norms and structures that claim to eradicate the evils of poverty and deprivation.

Third, the political history of the region has offered grounds of ethnic rivalry and social unrest. The Fergana Valley has continuously been a volatile region ready to explode at any time. The reasons, however, are not limited to the diverse ethnic composition or the historical truth. The Tsarist Russian and the Soviet policies have left both the intra-regional and the international borders uncertain.

The fourth reason is the political structure of the Central Asian states. The repressive policies of the local authorities against any religious expression have created a natural resentment among the traditionally Islamic societies, thus giving place to their refuge to extremist organizations.

Fifth, one of the most serious factors contributing to the spread of Islamic fundamentalism is the external assistance and instigation. The forces outside the region have their own geopolitical and geo-strategic calculation. To achieve these ends, those forces do not hesitate to use a wide range of political tools. Keeping the Central Asian states weak and dependent on more powerful neighbors provides their own security and safety. Moreover, global ambitions of the regional and world powers force them to facilitate creation of numberless alliances and alignments to contain the rivals.

CHAPTER THREE

RUSSIA AND CENTRAL ASIA IN THE POST-SOVIET PERIOD

The path of the Russian foreign policy should be viewed in terms of two major aspects: first, domestic developments of economic, inter-elite, military and ideological nature, and, second, external unfolding, which has affected Russian decision-making process. Despite many assertions that since the collapse of the Soviet Union only one superpower has remained (the USA),¹¹ Russia continues to remain a state on which regional and global developments of the politics depend.

Since the collapse of the Union, Russian foreign policy has taken various dimensions and directions. However, the role of Central Asia for the Russian interests has not been underestimated.

In fact, Central Asia is a buffer zone and a filter through which the threat of Islamic radicalism could penetrate into Russia, China, the Caucasus and elsewhere.

a. Foreign Policy Doctrines: Their Influence on Central Asia

Foreign policy of the Russian Federation after the Soviet Union can be separated into two major trends or schools of thought: Euro-Atlanticist and Neo-Eurasian. While the two schools are significantly opposing in the overall perceptions of the foreign policy approaches for the post-Soviet Russian federation, both schools have emphasized the geo-strategic implications and underpinnings that the Central Asian region holds.

¹¹ See Zbigniew Brzezinski "The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives" (New York, Basicbooks, 1997) asserts that today the USA is the power of unprecedented worldwide reach and grasp.

The Islamic threat, being an important issue of the Russian national security was viewed by the Euro-Atlanticists in a twofold perspective - from the angle of regional conflicts of ethno-nationalist origins and that of the spread of Islamic fundamentalism (Mesbani, 1994, pp. 268-312). This school of thought, according to Mesbani, identified internal and external sources of 'Islamic' threat, the latter of which was perceived to come primarily from the South, i.e. Afghanistan and the Middle East, including Iran - regions that have historically been challenging for both the Russian and Western comprehension of security.

Without exploring in detail the origins of this approach, one can still identify the reasons of the coincidence of the Russian and the Western understandings.

First, in the 19th century, the Central Asian region was contested by the West and Russia (the West was represented by the Great Britain), with eventual success of the latter. At the initial stages of post-Soviet period, the West, having its own security calculations, has promoted Euro-Atlanticist tendencies among the Russian elites, in order to provide itself with the leverages in the region given the strong influence Russia had there. Second, Russia itself, aware of its internal weaknesses such as economic decline or evolving political instability as well as separatist tendencies of the Muslim North Caucasus, needed support of the West. Moreover, the very idea of Russia 'remaining a great but 'normal power' (Mesbani, 1994, pp. 268-312) being one of the pillars of the Euro-Atlanticist doctrine, needed a confirmation of its great power status.

By contrast, Neo-Eurasianist doctrine did not conceal its intention to develop a foreign policy that would support its 'permanent interests' and not 'permanent friend' concept. Accordingly, "the most immediate objective of Russian foreign policy must be to secure both the interior and the exterior borders of the CIS" (Mesbani, 1994, pp. 268-312). The Central Asian republics therefore played 'pivotal role in this regard'. Besides, the Euro-Atlanticists considered Islamic fundamentalism and the revival of religious zeal in Central Asia as a challenge to the Russian strategic interests. And while the sources of the challenge were the same, the difference in these two

schools of thought expressed itself in the approaches of coping with the problem facing the decision-makers.

The Euro-Atlanticists, unlike Neo-Eurasianists, believed that Russia playing a role of the ‘elder brother’ to the Central Asian republics could promote Western values and political culture there, thus providing itself from getting face to face with the Islamic challenges. However, this approach did not take into account that despite the broad positive impacts Russia has had throughout a century and a half of its presence there, the new ‘emirs’ of the region would oppose to such kind of paternalistic treatment.

Therefore, Neo-Eurasianist trend, while similarly aiming at securing Russia’s interests, favored for very friendly relations with the Muslim world, which would contribute to Russia’s decisive geopolitical position in the global politics. In fact, Neo-Eurasianists have exhibited a more diplomatic approach and treatment to the same issue of concern of the Russian foreign policies.

The power struggles in the Russian political elites during 1992-1993 shifted the Russian foreign policies from the Atlanticist to the Eurasianist trend.

Today, with the beginning of the Putin era, Russian foreign policy is a continuation of the Neo-Eurasianist trend with the decision-making procedure influenced to a certain degree by the state security and military structures.

The Russian president in his speech devoted to the situation of the state at the threshold of the millennium has identified the major directions of the Russian foreign policies, which cannot be viewed independently of the internal developments of the country. The major issues are the notions of strong state and efficient economy. These two vectors foreseen by the Russian president are intertwined and interrelated to the extent that unless the state is not strong enough it can hardly have an efficient economy, and vice versa - the efficient economy is a prerequisite for a strong state to emerge and be maintained.

Thus, in general terms, it is possible to assert that Russian interests in the Central Asian region stem from economic and political military implications.

In economic terms, Central Asia interests regional and global powers (in particular, Russia, Turkey, Iran, China and the US) primarily form the point of view of the reportedly broad deposits of oil and gas of the Caspian basin, which until the collapse of the Soviet Union were inaccessible for the outside world. Moreover, these economic benefits are interesting from the angle of geopolitical and geo-strategic leverages they provide.

Thus, as has already been mentioned, one of the major issues of the current Russian policies is the building of the status of a superpower. A precondition to this, whether explicitly or implicitly recognized, is pursuing of an energetic industrial policy. One of the basic pillars of these policies is the promotion of export possibilities of energy and raw materials.

Although the Cold War has ended, one can still find a vast number of controversies between Russia and the US that do not significantly differ from those prior to the collapse of the Soviet empire. Thus, it is difficult to deny that the Russian interests go as far as to the South East. First, the closest possible cooperation with such countries as India, Afghanistan¹² as well as China can create the necessary balance with the USA, which is economically, politically and militarily closely related to the Western Europe. Next, Russia with its crippling socio-economic situation and the huge military system cannot afford itself to ignore the arms market that the Asian region offers. Both of these interests are being presented as ‘ambivalent’ within the Western analyses. Thus, Kim Holmes,¹³ while defining the major pillars of the Russian foreign policy indicates that Russians have “strong but ambivalent views” about the development of China, Iran and India as an arms market. “Some Russians dream of bringing these countries into a coalition to counterbalance the United States (Holmes, 2001). Those who espouse the ‘Eurasian’ position see Russia as the nucleus of the future anti-American bloc in the Eastern Hemisphere. They are strong supporters of Putin, who some Russian analysts believe supports this ‘Eurasian’ orientation” (Holmes, 2001). However, we think that Putin’s main motivation is less ideological and more economic and geopolitical. In

¹² Here is meant Afghanistan under the internationally recognized government of Burhannuddin Rabbani

¹³ Kim R. Holmes is Vice President and Director of The Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies at The Heritage Foundation.

short, he is looking for cash and for ways to maximize his international leverage, which the special relationships with these countries provide' (Holmes, 2001). However, where the antagonism lies is still not clear. Both serve the perceived well-being of the state and do not contradict each other. To see Russia as the 'nucleus' serves as an ideological basis or supplement to the practical visions of the Russian foreign policy considerations and does not carry any contradiction. A real ambivalence may occur, as Holmes objectively mentions, between Russia and China, taken into account the Russian reluctance to see China as a state with increasing economic and military power. However, this is already a reality and Russia, therefore, initiates and strongly supports number of strategic alliances with and without Chinese participation in the region, including the CIS Collective Security Treaty and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (formerly the Shanghai Group).

Russian foreign relations concerning another regional power, Islamic Republic of Iran, are complex. On the one hand, Iran is a country, which buys Russian arms, as well as invites Russia to active participation in the Iranian nuclear energy programs. This significantly bothers, and even challenges the West. It is well known that Iran is in the vanguard of the American list of the so-called 'rogue' states, especially in terms of weapons of mass destruction proliferation. The role that Iran plays in the regional politics has strategic, economic, political and religious dimensions. The Iranian claims to its share of the Caspian have both geo-political economic dimensions. The ethno-territorial tensions that Iran has with the Republic of Azerbaijan concern the Azeri population on its northern part. The Caspian oil related demands and the position Iran maintains, serve as a leverage affecting the Azerbaijani policies about its ethnic kins in northern Iran.

These realities are also significantly advantageous to the Russian intentions to maximize and maintain its status of great power. The troublesome situation that predominates in the Middle East provides a significant incentive for the military industrial complex of the Russian Federation, which experienced a considerable decline during the first decade of the post-Soviet period.¹⁴

¹⁴ According to Professor Stanislav Menshikov, the co-chair of ECAAR-Russia (Russian Association "Economists Allied For Arms Reduction"), compared to the 1991 level, the military plants production of armaments and military technology declined from 49.5 percent in 1992 to 9.9 percent in 1998 (<http://www.ecaar-russia.org/>).

The role of the Russian population in Central Asian states for the Russian foreign policy is increasingly important. Because of the persisting internal economic instability and high rates of unemployment in Russia, the state cannot afford to pack these ranks with the immigrants from Central Asia. At the same time, since Russia is highly concerned with keeping close ties with these states the existence of large Diaspora is most beneficial. The Russian population living in Central Asia gives Russia leverages (whether economic or political) for an easier access to this region. Moreover, in the future these people can provide strong lobbying for the promotion of Russian interests in these countries. At least one card will be available in the hands of the Russians - the threat of ethnic instability. In authoritarian states of Central Asia it is hard to believe in the lobbying powers to be a decisive factor, however, the threat that ethnic dyads can create (Davis and Moore, 1998), is an undesired thing, especially for the local ruling elites. Russia is not the state with which a country in Central Asia may or can compete both in terms of internal and external potential, and would even want to. Further, ethnic conflicts and the internal disintegrations and controversies are categorically undesired for states that face challenges of great power games and the threats from Islamic fundamentalism.

b. CIS Collective Security Obligations: Challenges and Perspectives

The three former Soviet republics of Belarus, Ukraine and Russia established the CIS in December 1991 and later were joined by the eight other newly independent countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Georgia joined the Commonwealth only two years later, in 1993.

Among the founding implications for the creation of the CIS has been the development of cooperation between the states participants to the alliance in the sphere of foreign policy, which would require common approach and harmonization of strategic-military, legal and economic policies (Chernorutskaya and Nikolayeva). While the CIS Charter stresses that “the member states pursue concerted policy in international security, disarmament and arms control, the building up of the armed services and the provision of internal security in the CIS, by all possible means, including the use of groups of military observers and collective peace forces,” some of the member states of the CIS are today significantly concerned and urged by the direct threat of Islamic extremism, which challenges to destabilize both the Commonwealth and the whole regional balance. This is a problem, which objectively can be solved only through mutual support and strong cooperation of the interested parties.

Upon the initiative of the Russian Federation the heads of the six CIS republics namely, Russia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan signed a Collective Security Treaty in Tashkent on May 12, 1992,¹⁵ which was later joined by three other states - Azerbaijan, Belarus and Georgia.¹⁶ In 1995 the participant states with the exception of Azerbaijan developed and signed the concept of collective security, the general trends of military cooperation. Thus, ‘the concept of collective security is a totality of views of the constituent countries about preventing wars and eradicating the threat of war, joint defense against aggression, protection of their independence and territorial integrity. It reflects the common interests as well as the military and political aims of the constituent states, demonstrating their intention to provide for their security by means of a collective security system. The system of collective security will be created step by step on the basis of consensus keeping a weather eye on the political situation in the world’ (Chernorutskaya and Nikolayeva). The step-by-step movement toward the creation of a system of collective security can be most vividly viewed at the example of the plans to develop a rapid reaction force that will target

¹⁵ The Treaty came into effect in 1994 after the ratification by all parties.

¹⁶ Georgia denounced its participation in the Treaty along with Uzbekistan in 1999. The main justification brought by the heads of these two states has been the incompliance of the Treaty to their national interests.

the militant Islamic incursions in Central Asia from the Taliban regions of Afghanistan. The plan envisions that the force will include a battalion from each of the member states, the overall number totaling nearly 1,700 men.¹⁷ According to Yuri Yarov,¹⁸ ‘in case of threat, or in case of actions on the part of some extremist groups or bands of terrorists, the CIS antiterrorist center and the country concerned can decide to send [the battalions] in for immediate help in liquidating the terrorist bases or stopping them from pushing further into the country’ (RFE/RL, 2001).

Since the very initiation of the joint rapid-reaction force, the idea has faced strong criticism. While the supporters emphasize the importance of the planned forces as an increasingly effective step toward a collective defensive partnership, those with negative look justify their view by bringing the example of the peacekeeping troops located in Abkhazia and Tajikistan. Many analysts insist today that the plans for rapid reaction forces will not get off the ground. As a basis for this assertion is the frequently used example of the Russian 201st motorized infantry division, which has been located in Tajikistan since 1993 under the CIS mandate as a part of CIS peacekeeping troops, which has reportedly undergone an approximately 80 percent force dropout before the mandate ended (RFE/RL, 2001).¹⁹

However, in order to understand and assess whether the planned troops will succeed in fulfilling their goals, one must look at the member states of the CIS Collective Security Treaty and why they are interested in the existence and operation of these troops.

The vitality of the planned forces would depend upon the parties’ interest in the fulfillment of the functions prescribed to them as well as the political opportunities that these forces would provide. The major, dominant function allotted to these forces, as has already been mentioned, was to strike back at the possible militant extremist organizations and groups of Islamic orientation from Afghanistan. Among the Central Asian states most vulnerable to the Islamic militant threats are

¹⁷ Figures given are based on data brought by Sophie Lambroschini in “Central Asia: CIS Plans Rapid-Reaction Force To Fight Terrorism” May, 2001, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL)

¹⁸ Yuri Yarov is the head of CIS executive committee, which is the CIS central organ in charge of finance

¹⁹ Despite the end of the CIS mandate, this division has not been withdrawn from the region under the Russian-Tajik bilateral agreement.

Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Of course, one cannot dismiss Russia from the list of the most concerned parties because of its own internal instability in the North Caucasus and its connection with the Central Asian region.

Throughout the history, Tajikistan has been one of the most volatile parts in Central Asia.²⁰ The Soviet unfair division of the Tsarist Turkestan into republics did not correspond to the ethnic boundaries. This factor has fostered the inclination of the Tajik people toward internal separation by means of localism. The power struggle between the elites from the major four provinces of Tajikistan – the Fergana Valley (Leninabad province), the Karategin and Hissour Valleys (Gharm, Hissour, Faizobod, Ragar), Khatlon (Kulob province) and the Pamir mountains (Gorno-Badakhshan autonomous province) was an expression of the localism typical to Tajikistan, which weakened tremendously its ability for nation building. Thus, the elites from the Leninabad province ruled throughout the Soviet period. This was expressed in the priority that was given to this province in both economic and political terms. The infrastructure, for example, was created mainly to promote the development of this region, which threw the other provinces significantly back.

The perestroika and independence did not change the situation, however. Moreover, the looseness of the central authority strengthened the tendency of localism, which poured into power struggle between the old Soviet elites with the growing opposition forces of religious-nationalist orientation. This time the old elite viewed localism as a tool for maintaining the power by instigating more regional rivalries to contain the oppositional forces. The mistakes of the opposition itself helped the old elites in this matter. For example, in 1992 some opposition leaders expressed anti-Kulob emotions that resulted in the Kulobis sentiments against the opposition. Moreover, the opposition happened to care little about support in the nation at large; and similar uses of force alienated much of the population and added to the standing of the old rulers.

²⁰ The historical overview presented here is based mostly on the data of The Center for Political and Strategic Studies located at <http://www.cpss.org/>.

The internal insecurity helped the outside interested parties, namely Russia and Uzbekistan, to intervene in the domestic affairs of Tajikistan and to promote their own interests.

One of the reasons of the Tajik disintegration was the historical and economic isolation of the Leninabad province (the Fergana Valley) from Tajikistan and its rather tight connection with the neighboring Uzbekistan. For example, it was connected with Tajikistan by a road that went through Uzbekistan and a railroad crossing both Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. As a result of the Soviet demarcation, the historical cultural centers of Bukhara and Samarkand, historically populated by the Tajiks were passed to Uzbekistan. These examples show how much the situation in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan was interdependent. At the early stages of the nationalist movements in Tajikistan, many claimed for the return of these two centers. Naturally, Uzbekistan was interested in suppressing those claims. Moreover, Uzbekistan under President Islam Karimov, envisaged the creation of an Uzbek dominated Central Asia. Islam Karimov was also fearful of the rising Islamic-nationalist movements in Tajikistan because they could bring to the same outcomes in Uzbekistan, thus challenging his own rule.

These realities served as a motivation to his support to the old ruling elites of Tajikistan against the Islamic and nationalist opposition forces, which were identified fundamentalist Islamic threat not only to Central Asia but to Russia as well. Russia itself was much concerned over its positions in this region. First, keeping its advanced status was necessary for the maintenance of geopolitical power; second, it had vast community of ethnic Russian as well as Russian speaking population in Central Asia who needed protection of their rights. Under the pressure of these factors Russia, supported Uzbekistan in this matter and meddled in the civil struggle in Tajikistan.

What contributed most to the possibility of their intervention in the domestic affairs of Tajikistan was the internal weakness of the republic. The instability in Tajikistan was a result of, first, continuing localist sentiments and the disintegration of power, that was a consequence of intra-elite conflict; second - high rates of criminalization; in fact, many criminal elements penetrated to the ruling elite of the republic, because the Tajik leadership tended to use the criminal forces to

contain the opposition. The third factor was the loss of sovereignty and independence, which had both economic and military dimensions. Furthermore, Tajikistan turned to be the only former Soviet republic unable to create a national army and therefore became dependent on a foreign military force (Panfilov, 2001).²¹ At the height of the civil war in Tajikistan Russia “committed itself to assisting in the creation of Tajikistan’s military force only under the favorable terms contained in the March 1993 treaty on friendship, co-operation, and mutual assistance” (Panfilov, 2001). The Russian 201st Motorized Infantry Division that received a formal assignment in Tajikistan according to 1993 treaty on collective security was actively supporting the struggle of the official Dushanbe against the opposition. At the same time, troops from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were located in Tajikistan, which was important for Russia in terms of Central Asian unity ‘necessary for Russia’s credibility’ (Panfilov, 2001).

All of this suggests that Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are interested in the effective functioning of the rapid reaction troops. Tajikistan, has indeed no alternative, first of all, because of the pressure that it will face from the Russian side. A state with the weakest defense forces in the region²² cannot afford itself losing credibility with a dominant military power like Russia. Next, Russia itself will not allow it to happen, using the leverages it possesses. Then, high economic dependence on Russia also will almost nullify such possibilities. Finally, the Tajikistan leadership, realizing its shaky positions, will hardly try to replace Russia with someone else in the foreseeable future. As soon as it dares to do so the opposition can rise again, moreover, it will not be a surprise, if Russia uses the opposition to replace Rakhmonov²³ with a new proxy.

Uzbekistan plays a different role in the regional politics. Being one of the first to sign the CIS Collective Security Treaty in 1992, Uzbekistan quitted the Treaty when it came for its renewal in

²¹ Oleg Panfilov was the Director of the Moscow-based Center for Journalism in Emergency Situations of the Russian Journalist” Union. Since 1994, he served as head of the Monitoring Unit of the Glasnost Defense Fund in Moscow, and worked as correspondent for *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, *Komsomolets Tadjikistana/Soglasie*, etc.

²² Tajikistan, according to data as of 1996, has 7.000 defense forces and some 1.200 paramilitary. Source: *The Military Balance 1997/1998*. London, Oxford University Press, 1997, brought by Commander Gunnar Helre, Royal Norwegian Navy in “The great Game Revisited: Politics and Security in Central Asia” at <http://www.cfsc.dnd.ca/irc/nh/nh9798/0009.htm>

1999. The main explanation brought by the Uzbek leadership was that Russia was trying to build a military bloc through the Collective Security Treaty and it does not correspond to national interests of Uzbekistan. Other objections against the necessity of such Treaty for Uzbekistan include open opposition to a) the Russian attempts for closer integration within the CIS framework, b) the deployment of Russian troops in neighboring republics. The Uzbek Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov stated that Russian troops have already fulfilled their mission in Tajikistan, and since the Tajik conflict is over, they should leave. Moreover, the Uzbek president Islam Karimov declared that the security arrangements like that limit 'Tashkent's ability to play a larger role in Central Asia' (RFE/RL, 1999). Additionally, Uzbekistan exhibits a strong desire to be in friendly relations with the United States.

Such policies by Uzbek leadership can be explained in both internal and external terms. First, the Uzbek leadership has the same problems with opposition within the country as Tajikistan and is fearful of its rise.²⁴ Second, in early 1990s Uzbekistan has been attempting to attract investments in the country that would facilitate the realization of its regional ambitions. These attempts have mostly failed (Cutler, 2000)²⁵, which hindered the fulfillment of the aforementioned plans. Because of the slow promotion of privatization, the foreign investments in the country remain small (ibid.). This has created incentives for the adoption of new foreign policies that will promote the national interests of Uzbekistan. As has been mentioned above, the Uzbek leadership announced that the close cooperation within the CIS, in particular in the Collective Security Treaty, limits its ability to promote the country's own interests. The new policies adopted by Uzbekistan are indeed multilateral and multifaceted. Objecting Russian dominance in the CIS, Uzbekistan made clear that it may be willing to join another regional alliance - the Shanghai Forum, that includes Russia,

²³ Rakhmonov came to presidential power owing to the Russian backing in November 1994 by a two-third-majority support.

²⁴ The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan is one of the strongest religious opposition parties in Central Asia along with the United Tajik Opposition and the Hizb-ut-Tahrir movement. The major purpose of the latter is believed to be the restoration of the Caliphate, the religious state uniting Muslim lands. These and other religious movements in Central Asia are examined in Chapter 2.

²⁵ Robert Cutler is a Research Fellow at the Institute of European and Russian Studies, Carleton University, Canada.

China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, an alignment that stresses the necessity for the joint fight against Islamic extremism. At the same time, according to Robert Cutler, the Uzbek government has hinted at recognizing the Taliban government in exchange for the withdrawal of its support for the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which has bases in Afghanistan and receives support from Kabul (2000). Furthermore, Uzbekistan is one of the Central Asian states that at first were most favorably inclined toward Turkey's attempts to replace Russian influence in the region.

However, the withdrawal from the CIS Collective Security Treaty has not kept Uzbekistan from declaring during the visit to Moscow on May 3-5, 2001 that military and technical cooperation with Russia 'should be systemized and long-term relations established' (Burke, 2001). The President of Uzbekistan identified three major problems on which this cooperation should be based on: first, ensuring security in the Central Asian region; second, guarding against the danger of international terrorism, namely the expansion of radical religious extremism; and third, coping the issue of drug trafficking through the region. Additionally, Uzbekistan develops close bilateral relations with Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The relations with Tajikistan are rather strained, however. Tajikistan is under the absolute Russian influence. This influence grew even more when Uzbekistan withdrew its forces from Tajikistan (that were located under the CIS peacekeeping umbrella), and were replaced by additional Russian troops. This tension was the continuance of long civil strife of 1992-1997 in Tajikistan in which Uzbekistan had a direct relation.

Thus, sharing the fear of Islamic radicalism in the region, Uzbekistan still adopts an independent policy in this regard. It does cooperate with all the sides interested in the terrorist threats, but is relatively strong enough to have its own opinion on the matter, especially when it comes the means of fighting the Islamic fundamentalism. Although mainly of defensive rather than offensive

character, its army is the largest and the strongest in the region, which weights a lot in the foreign and security policymaking of the republic.²⁶

The answer to the question posed earlier in this chapter whether the rapid reaction troops will operate effectively in the fulfillment of the prescribed task can be thus formulated in the following way: unless Russia is strongly interested in its existence and unless the main participants to the planned forces are not powerful enough to cope with the problem on an equal basis with other interested parties, in particular Russia, these forces will exist and will operate unless more effective ones are not created. These forces are the glue that unites the state-parties to the Collective Security Treaty, the single unilaterally dominated treaty of such scale in the region.

²⁶ Uzbekistan has defense forces of 49-54.000 as well as paramilitary of nearly 16.000. Source: The Military Balance 1997/1998. London, Oxford University Press, 1997, brought by Commander Gunnar Helre, Royal Norwegian Navy in “The Great Game Revisited: Politics and Security in Central Asia” at <http://www.cfcsc.dnd.ca/>

CHAPTER FOUR

CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY IN CENTRAL ASIA

a. China's Economic Interests in Central Asia

The regional powers have exhibited an irresistible interest in the former Soviet Central Asian republics. China has been one of the most influential players in this region.

The significance of the region for China is multidimensional. First, the vast oil and gas deposits in Central Asia generate China's interest. Second, the competition with other regional powers, particularly Russia, stirs the Chinese involvement in the Central Asian republics further.

Over the last decades of the twentieth century, China has performed an unprecedented economic growth that has enchanted the international community. The reforms introduced during the 1979-1999 period have brought Chinese economy to a substantial growth at an average rate of 9.7% per annum, making China one of the fastest growing economies in the world, and it is likely to keep the pace of development over the next decade and a half at nearly 6.5-7.0 % rate.²⁷ But the growth of the standards of life has brought an increased demand for energy resources in the country.

China has oilfields in the north and northeast, namely Daging, Shengli and Liaohe, in the northwest - Xinjiang province, as well as offshore oil deposits in the East China Sea.

²⁷ The figures brought here are drawn from the Statistical Communiqué of the People's Republic of China on the 2000 National economic and Social Development by the Chinese National Bureau of Statistics, February 28, 2001; "China's Economic Conditions" by Wayne M. Morrison, Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division, September 21, 2000, and "China's Changing Oil Strategy and Its Foreign Policy Implications" CNAPS Working Paper, Fall 1999, by Sergei Trough, Visiting Fellow, center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies, Foreign Policy Studies

However, since the early 1990s China became oil importer. Before that, it was providing oil for both domestic and international consumption.

China today has many infrastructural shortcomings. Inadequate energy and transportation systems are a real challenge to the country's economic development. China has failed to invest into its infrastructure in relevance with the growth pace, which has brought to bottlenecks in many aspects of development (Morrison, 2000).

The geopolitical political factor seems to have the heaviest influence in the Chinese energy strategy. First, today the world market is overwhelmed by the Middle Eastern oil, which contributes to the strategic weight of this troublesome region. According to some estimates, the Middle Eastern and the Venezuelan share in the world oil production is estimated to be nearly 45.4 % in the first decade of the 21st century (Trough, 1999). Taken into account the Chinese increasing reliance on exported energy resources it must be highly interested in other sources of oil besides the Middle East. For China, this is a matter of national security.

Second, the Chinese active involvement in the Central Asian oil games facilitates its ambitions concerning the Russian dominance in the region. As Sergei Trough mentions, while China and Russia share relative similarities in their approaches to global affairs, which makes it seem “ natural for Russia to become China's stable, if not primary, energy donor,” in terms of economic considerations the situation is not encouraging (Trough, 1999).²⁸ Moreover, China is also reluctant to increase any kind of dependence on Russia. Eventually, Russia is a proper ally for China, but China is not likely to let Russia exploit this fact.

b. The Problem of Uighur Minority in Xinjiang

Another aspect for political significance of the Central Asia for China is of internal nature.

The Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Province known also as Chinese or Eastern Turkestan is located in northern China and borders with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Afghanistan and India. Xinjiang has vast natural resources that include water (320 rivers, 100 lakes, and more than ten thousand glaciers); it is rich of precious minerals such as coal, petroleum, iron, and manganese. It is estimated that nearly 25 thousand million cubic meters of underground waters are available in this province. Moreover, the Xinjiang deposits estimate for 20 to 40 million tons of petroleum (Reeves, 1997).

Xinjiang is populated with Sunni Muslims many of which are ethnic Uighurs. Ever since Uighurs fell under the Chinese Communist rule in 1949, the Xinjiang Autonomous Region has been a kind of ethnic and religious clashes. Suppressed by strong authoritarian hand of the party, the Uighurs have been struggling for independence. As Jack B. Raman²⁹ mentions, “denied legitimate means of expressing dissent and giving vent to their anger against the state, the non-Han minorities of the outer rim have been increasingly using religious gatherings for letting out steam” (Raman, 1999). Throughout the world, the ethnic Uighurs have created their organizations, including in the USA, Europe, Turkey as well as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The Chinese authorities have launched a multifaceted full-scale campaign against the separatist movements of East Turkestan. According to Anil Joseph³⁰, China has established a formal organization to curb the rise of religious movements in the Communist state. The China Islamic Affairs Steering Committee (CIASC) was

²⁸ While Russia is one of the world’s largest oil producers and has the largest gas supplies, but its oil industry has, declined in the recent years.

²⁹ In 1999 B. Raman was Additional Secretary (Retd), Cabinet Secretariat, Govt. of India, and Director, Institute For Topical Studies, Chennai

³⁰ Anil K. Joseph is a contributor to Hindu Vivek Kendara at <http://www.hkv.org/>

established “to oppose religious extremist activities by making use of Islam” (Joseph, 2001). The Committee aims at regulating religious activities in the country, including the education of administrators on Islamic affairs and promoting the adaptation of Islam to China’s socialist society (ibid.).

The Chinese military periodically conducts long lasting exercises and parades in the restive Xinjiang, reportedly demonstrating the largest scope of armaments. Apparently, these parades are intended for the intimidation of local separatist attitudes.

The Chinese authorities periodically report on how the police seize explosives, illegal firearms and other ammunition as well as literature that encourages Jihad against China. Recently, China has accused that the Taliban for fueling the Uighur separatist movements.

Aware of the fundamentalist factor in Central Asia, China closely cooperates with the states of the region trying to secure its borders from the outside as well. This cooperation has different dimensions. The economic side of the Chinese-Central Asian partnership is the most vivid example. Economy is one of the most powerful tools to bind both states and regions. Chinese energy policies of the year 2000 revealed their intention to construct a 4.200-kilometer network of gas and oil pipelines from Chinese Xinjiang to Shanghai. As John Chan³¹ describes, “the project’s first stage is the construction of two gas pipelines from fields in Sichuan province to the central industrial city of Wuhan, then on to Shanghai by 2002. Gas fields in Shaanxi province will be linked into these pipelines. Gas and oil from basins in Qinghai province and Xinjiang province, including the major Tarim basin, will be connected by 2005” (Chan, 2001). But the construction of the pipeline network in the northwest of the country is not going to be limited to the internal resources. Given the energy resource shortages in the country, China has acquired also a somewhat expansionist policy toward the oil and gas fields in Central Asia. In 1997 (almost simultaneously with Russia), the Chinese National Petroleum Corporation gained the right to develop two potentially lucrative oilfields in Kazakhstan, outbidding US and European oil corporations. In exchange for development rights,

CNPC is committed to build pipelines to Xinjiang to enable the large-scale export of up to 50 million tones per year of Kazakh oil to China. Feasibility studies are also underway for the construction of over 3.000 kilometers of gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Xinjiang (Chan, 2001). The pipelines will most likely traverse the Xinjiang province. Commitment to the construction of two pipelines, including a 2,000-km pipeline from China to the Uzen field, and the Aktyubinsk oil pipeline from Aktyubinsk, Western Kazakhstan, to the Xinjiang region in China, was a precondition for the CNPC's participation in the Uzen joint venture (Gulomova, 2001).

China is recently engaged in complicated negotiations with Kazakhstan over the water resources of the two Asian rivers – Irtish and Ili. The complexity of the issue is not limited only to the scarcity of the available water supplies, but also is a matter of environmental and geo-political concerns.

According to Gulomova³², the Chinese-Kazakh oil pipeline construction is likely to result in complex problems related to the sharing of trans-border water resources between Kazakhstan and China (Gulomova, 2001). The projected pipeline is going to pass through Urumqi – the center of the Uighur Xinjiang province of China. It is supposed that the newly created job opportunities will bring to the growth of population and increased water demand. At the same time, the Irtish River that flows into Kazakhstan is used for irrigation and consumption there. The republic of Kazakhstan is relatively poor in water resources in comparison with the republics of the European and Siberian parts of the CIS, but it is wealthier than other Central Asian republics. The fresh water deficit is the most significant environmental problem. The water deficit causes are extensive use, excessive unrecoverable water consumption for irrigation as well as water losses. In addition, the surface water resources in Kazakhstan are distributed unevenly. Another limiting factor in Kazakhstan is the quality of the water. The condition of the drinking water supplies, according to environmental reports, worsens every year. The Irtish River is of strategic importance for Kazakhstan. The capital of the republic lives on the water of Ishim River. But because of the mercury pollution, the river

³¹ John Chan is a contributor to World Socialist Web Site published by the International Committee of the Fourth International.

supplies were closed. The Kazakh authorities plan to use more of the Irtysh water for the development of Astana. The plans imply to take water from the Irtysh-Karaganda canal and bring it to Astana. China simultaneously decided to build a dam on the Irtysh River. China also proposes to build a canal on the upper part of the Irtysh to bring some of the river's waters to the developing oil fields in the Xinjiang province. Throughout 1999, both states have been stressing the importance of the issue. At the OSCE conference in Prague, the official delegation from Kazakhstan submitted a paper notifying that the Irtysh River is the principle source of water for some four million Kazakhs and that it is, as the RFE/RL report cites, "a vital base for the industrial activities" (1999). While calling the meetings productive and cooperative, neither of the sides wants concessions in this matter.

The Chinese resolve concerning the water issue is explicable. Both water resources and oil transportation matters are advantageous for complying domestic politics to its interests. Given the threat of water shortages as well as the desirability of counterbalancing to the largest possible extent the Russian role in oil distribution, Kazakhstan will be less reluctant to oppose the Chinese demands for containment of the Uighur separatist organizations based in this Central Asian state. Evidence to the Chinese success to influence the domestic developments in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are the frequently reported human right abuses in both states committed against the ethnic Uighurs.³³ Thus, the Kyrgyz authorities brand the Uighurs as Islamic extremists and subdue to the Chinese demands to forcibly return them to Xinjiang, where they go to trials or are even executed (Grebenschikov, 2001).

According to Igor Grebenschikov, the governments of both Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan seek concessions from Beijing on other issues in return for suppression of the Uighurs at home. By containing the Uighur activities in Kyrgyzstan, the local government "hopes to persuade China to soften its stand in territorial disputes along the river Chon-Uzengukuush and the Kyrgyz border

³² Lola Gulomova received her MA degree in International Public Policy from the School of Advanced International Studies of the Johns Hopkins University, and is an associate of Cornell Caspian Consultancy.

settlements of Erkeshtam and Nuru”(Grebenschikov, 2001).³⁴ Since the mid-19th century, when the Tsarist Russia and China signed agreements on the Sino-Russian Turkestan borders, they have been ill defined. Little was made to establish clearly identified boundaries throughout the Soviet rule as well. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, China and Kyrgyzstan have signed two bilateral agreements on the demarcation of their borders - in 1996 and in 1999. According to the latter, Kyrgyzstan is obliged to cede to China nearly 125.000 hectares of its northern territory (Khamidov, 2001). And though the work over the demarcation started in early summer 2001, it was ceased due to the alleged parliamentary opposition in Kyrgyzstan. Taken into account the secrecy of the 1999 agreement,³⁵ presumably the Kyrgyz government must have made the deal with the Chinese in return for either political or financial support. Though no evidence is available to prove the latter, it is still possible to suppose that the Kyrgyz government have secured a Chinese backing for consolidating their positions at home against the domestic opposition.

c. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Islamic Threat in Central Asia

On June 15, 2001, the five founding states of the Shanghai Group – Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, joined by Uzbekistan, met to declare the creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The meeting aimed at confirming the Uzbekistan’s adoption in the regional alliance and the affirmation of the common goals. According to the Chinese leader Jiang Zemin, “the signing of the Shanghai Pact has laid the legal foundation for jointly cracking down on terrorism, separatism and extremism and reflects the firm determination of the six states on safeguarding regional security”. During the same meeting, the defense ministers of the

³³ The Uighur Diaspora in Central Asia dates back to the late 1940s when China created the Xinjiang Autonomous Region and tens of thousands of Uighur families fled to the Soviet Central Asia.

³⁴ Igor Grebenschikov is a regular IWPR contributor.

³⁵ Interestingly, while the agreement of 1996 was ratified by the Kyrgyz parliament, the latter was never informed about the signing of the second one in 1999.

participant states signed also a communiqué declaring their support for the 1972 ABM Treaty. One of the major goals of the Shanghai Pact was to create a legal framework for cooperation between security services and pave way for the establishment of an anti-terrorist center in Bishkek. The chief concern of the signatory states was the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which has led armed incursions across the region over the last two years in an attempt to create an independent Islamic state.³⁶ The original Shanghai Five was formed in 1996 as a forum to resolve old Soviet-Chinese border disputes. Uzbekistan's membership in the organization changed its orientation. While Uzbekistan does not have border with China, it has frontier with the troublesome Afghanistan. Besides, its Islamic dissident elements are the most active in the region. Soon after the creation of the SCO, according to Russian diplomatic sources, Moscow saw some ambivalence in the benefits that the Uzbek participation in the alliance could bring. Uzbekistan has long been a matter of concern for the Russian diplomacy, because of its "independent-minded" (from the Kremlin perspective) foreign policies and the resulting withdrawal from the CIS Collective Security Treaty in 1999. Since the start of IMU's activities in Uzbekistan Russia has sought ways to involve Uzbekistan in multilateral security initiatives. In an interview to Uzbek television immediately after the signing of the SCO treaty, Karimov declared that Uzbekistan was not going to obey Moscow. Moreover, he also expressed concerns that Russia might try to manipulate the Organization to promote its own agenda, especially concerning a would-be US missile defense shield. Two major explanations can be found for this resolve on the Uzbek side. First, the steadfastness of the Uzbek president was aimed at assuring the local forces about his loyalty to the foreign policy independence. Second, it was an attempt to alleviate the USA's and its proxy Turkey's concerns about the Uzbek reliability. "This organization must never turn into a military-political bloc. ...It should not be against any country, should not join certain trends, should not organize subversive activities against third countries" said Karimov (Eurasia net, 2001). However, the organization has the capacity for expansion. Pakistan has already expressed an interest in observer status, and

³⁶ The detailed elaboration over the activities of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan is made in Chapter 2.

Mongolia and India are considering future membership as well. Further, Iran and Turkmenistan³⁷ have also expressed an interest in the organization's activities.

³⁷ In December 1995, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously approved resolution recognizing Turkmenistan's "permanent neutrality".

CHAPTER FIVE

TURKEY: A NEW “BIG BROTHER”?

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, new realities and necessities have emerged for Turkey’s national and geo-political strategies. Several shifts have occurred due to the moves in the regional and global balance of power.

The modern Turkey has undertaken a multidimensional role in the regional politics. First, throughout the post-World War II period it has been the southern threshold between NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organization. And though the Cold War is over, Turkey as NATO’s southern flank stands today head to head to the CIS Collective Security alliance, which some analysts believe to be a geopolitical counterweight to the former at least in the Eurasian region. Second, perceived external and internal challenges to the Turkish national security, namely the problems with Greece and Syria on the one side, and the Kurdish problem on the other, have prompted the Turkish decision makers to pursue policies over establishment of a regional sphere of influence that would touch upon Caucasus, Central Asia and the Middle East. Third, by its active participation in the oil politics in Southern Caucasus and Central Asia, Turkey provides a balancing weight to other interested regional powers, namely Russia and Iran. Fourth, Turkey is the most reliant ally of the US, along with Israel, in the Middle East. The recent developments of the bilateral relations between Turkey and Israel serve as perfect evidence to that.³⁸

The purpose of this chapter is to study Turkey’s failures and achievements in Central Asia during the last decade.

³⁸ This issue is discussed later in this chapter.

Turkish concerns include issues of national security, economic benefits as well as geopolitical aspirations. Those aspirations concern especially Turkey's attempts to establish a geopolitically and militarily stable environment that will allot Turkey a leading role in the neighboring regions; offer economic incomes that can serve to the Turkish dream to be allowed to the privileged European Union, to get rid of the inferiority complex haunting it for more than a century, fortify its defensive positions to eradicate the threat stemming from historical memory of the nations formerly under its rule, as well as provide the political elites of Turkey with legitimacy and long term internal political stability. Moreover, Turkey has serious problems with Islamic radicalism and separatism.

Turkey's current concept of national security has emerged with the necessity to develop a "more independent course based on historical and geographical realities" (Orekli, 1998). The principles of this approach were based on instability in the Balkans, Caucasus and the Middle East, regarding especially regional and ethnic conflicts, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, religious fanaticism and terrorism (Orekli, 1998). Actually, the changes brought by the collapse of the Soviet Union did not make dramatic shifts in Turkey's assertions of its national security issues, rather those moves added to them and opened new horizons. Turkey's main national interests as it emerges in the 21st century include the preservation of national and territorial integrity of the country, adopting a proactive rather than reactive stance in foreign policy decision making and implementation, improving economic strength through extending trade, business and economic cooperation within and outside its region (Orekli, 1998). Thus, Central Asia due to its geographic location and remote ethnic affinity turned to be an area that would play a significant role in the fulfillment of the Turkish plans. Turkey adopted a multilateral policy to these countries. As the then Turkish Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel mentioned during the visits to Central Asian republics in spring 1992: "The need today is for every nation to reach the same standards of contemporary civilization. The new Asian republics have to understand that they are entering the modern world from an isolated position and they have to grasp the advantages and virtues coming from a system that embraces democracy, human rights, secularism and the concept of market economy. They have

in front of them a difficult period of transition, but this can be overcome, especially as Turkey stands ready to provide every help and support through this difficult period. Turkey will be ready to support and assist on the basis of equality, mutual respect and common benefit, and is prepared to pave the way for the new republics to join the modern world by helping to explain their problems to the outside world, seeking the support of the international community. Turkey is also ready to find ways for enhancing good relations between the republics themselves as they go about building strong ties with their neighbor countries.”³⁹ It is obvious from the speech that Turkey aims at playing a pivotal role in the state building process in Central Asia. Demirel’s remarks stress Turkey’s desire to be involved in Central Asian politics, especially in such decisive issues like secularism, economy as well as foreign relations. Ironically, all these issues have run into protracted problems in Turkey itself. Turkey is a country where the traditional notion of democracy is definitely distorted. Besides its frequently reported problems with the fundamental respects for human rights, it is also a state with highly influential military. The Turkish foreign policy, according to Gareth M. Winrow (1997), is not a monopoly of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The military involvement into politics of the modern Turkey dates to 1960 (Salt, 1999) when the army replaced the democratically oriented ruling party. However, this date is not the only one in the history. Three more coups have taken place in Turkey during the second half of the 20th century - in 1971, 1980 and 1997. The last coup resulted from struggle for power between the secular and the religious elites within the country. For the purposes of the present study, this takeover is interesting since it coincided in time of the initial failure of Turkey in the regional geopolitical struggle in Central Asia (as defined earlier in this chapter). As Jeremy Salt⁴⁰ describes, the coup was prepared since the beginning of 1997 and was aimed against the coalition government held by Refah

³⁹ The passage is cited in “Relations Between Turkey and the Central Asian Republics” at http://www.turkey.org/politics/p_rela12.htm

⁴⁰ Jeremy Salt, a former associate professor of political science at Bilkent University in Ankara, is the author of “Europe and the “Islamic Threat”: Putting the Spectre in Perspective”, in Philomena Murray and Leslie Holmes, eds., *Europe: Rethinking the Boundaries* (Aldeshot, U.K.:Ashgate Publishing, 1998)

(Welfare) Party⁴¹ and True Path Party. Despite Erbakan's⁴² public assuring that this coalition government "had no intention of damaging existing relationships", including those with Israel, the new foreign policy was directed "toward strengthening relationships with the Islamic bloc" (Salt, 1999)⁴³, which was a policy directly opposite to the secular military elites in Turkey. The concerns of the military in early 1997 reflected the overall social spirit in the country. Because of the vast social economic instability created by the policies of the previous governments since the 1980s as well as their political inabilities, they "steadily lost votes throughout 1990s" (Salt, 1999). The conflict in the Turkish society was created by the clash of the Western and the Eastern civilizations.⁴⁴ Despite the introduction of liberal economic relations at the beginning of 1980 that resulted in infrastructural and economic growth, the living standards of the Turkish population decreased and brought to a larger gap between poor and rich (Salt, 1999). Moreover, intrusion of foreign Western values delivered in the lives of common people through information and propaganda, created social confusion and distrust. The social tensions also brought to demographic changes in the country. Migrations from the eastern provinces caused by the hostilities between military and the Kurdistan Workers' Party grew at the expense of the migrants that were escaping the "lack of opportunities." The consequence of these societal developments was the increasing return of the popular masses to religion and traditionalism. Naturally, this was conflicting to the Kemalist secular nationalistic ideology, supported by the military, senior bureaucrats, judges, academics and financial and economic elites. The power struggle was called to be against "fundamentalism" (Salt, 1999), although in reality it was nothing more than a clash of elites.

Furthermore, Turkey's interest in Central Asia is promoted also by that of Israel, who is the cornerstone of anti-Islamic sentiments in the Middle Eastern region and is highly interested in the

⁴¹ Refah is a Muslim party, which declared its purpose to be the achievement of social justice and "just economic order" as well as promoting Muslim values in Turkey through education and propaganda. Erbakan campaigned in 1987 elections as head of this party.

⁴² Necmettin Erbakan formed the coalitional government in 1996, after the collapse of the previous cabinet.

⁴³ This included relations with both Syria and Iran with whom Turkey has had a long lasting history of conflicting interests.

containment of Islamic radicalism and the Muslim influence in Central Asia. Turkey's national security concerns, namely the rivalry with Syria (and Iran), have in their turn pushed it toward Israel. Common security problems have allied these two states in the formulation of regional political behavior of each, and will in future play a supportive role for the promotion of their interests. Thus, Israel, like Turkey, was one of the first states to recognize Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The initial policies toward these countries carried out by Israel have stressed diplomacy and trade relations. In an attempt to accelerate its political access to Central Asia, Israel has created social and economic ties, utilizing the influence of the large Jewish Diaspora in those states. The post-Soviet increased migration trends contributed to the strengthening of close relations between Soviet Jews and Israelis, which was successfully used to enhance the further involvement in the region, especially in economic terms.

While being interested in the mineral resources of Central Asian states, Israel has started its economic move from agricultural cooperation. This included irrigation projects, cotton production, expertise exporting, technological support and human resource training. Today the bilateral cooperation has entered a new phase; besides agriculture, Israel has invested in the banking system in Central Asia, in particular, Kazakhstan. During the visit of the Turkmen leader in 1995 to Israel, the latter became involved in project for the construction of a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Turkey, with the future intention to extend the pipeline to Israel. Furthermore, Israel plans to participate in the creation of telecommunication networks in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

The development of these relations is advantageous to the Turkish assertions in Central Asia. Israel also is interested in potentially backing the Turkish endeavors in this region. The Iranian factor in this matter is also critical. Both Turkey and Israel are interested in the containment of Iranian influence in Central Asia.

⁴⁴ Samuel P. Huntington has called Turkey a "torn" country – state where the leadership defines it as a modern, secular, Western nation state, while elements in the society support an Islamic revival and argue that Turkey is basically a Middle Eastern Muslim society.

Due to the discovery of huge oil and gas deposits in the Caspian basin, Turkey has developed interest in the region also in energetic terms and has entered into a strong competition with Russia and Iran. One major friction is related to the ongoing competition between the two countries regarding the oil pipeline, which would export the Azeri Caspian oil, Moscow perceives Turkey's assertiveness on the pipeline issue as a threat to its interests in the backyard. The rivalry between Russia and Turkey during the first post-Soviet decade has taken various forms. Thus, the initial variant of the "contract of the century"⁴⁵ was not going to include Russia and Iran, which is believed to be a result of strong pro-Turkish and explicit anti-Russian policies adopted by the government of Azerbaijan. That Russia eventually obtained a share in the contract resulted from both Russian and Azerbaijani diplomatic efforts. Iran, in its turn also interested in the containment of the Turkish and the Western expansion, "pursued a policy of currying favor with the Turkic Caspian states. Tehran offered various cooperation schemes to Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan to jointly extract and export their oil and gas resources" (Bolukbasi, 1998). However, the US objection over Iran's involvement in the Caspian projects brought to an obvious shift of Iranian policies toward Russia. These two rivals in their turn adopted a policy that was aiming at the exclusion of non-littoral states from the exploitation of the Caspian deposits.

The situation over the Caspian legal status was relatively clear before early 1990s for there were only two states regulating the basin, according to 1921 and 1940 agreements between the USSR and Iran. The emergence of three more states in the basin – Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, raised the necessity for distinct regulations regarding property rights over the offshore deposits. There are two types of property rights that can be exploited in this case – condominium principle according to which a coast strip of only 25 meters belongs to the neighboring territory the rest administered commonly. Another kind of property rights over the Caspian is provided by the

⁴⁵ In 1994, a consortium led by British Petroleum Company signed a deal with Azerbaijani state oil company SOCAR (State Oil Company of Azerbaijani Republic). Other investors in the "contract of the century" include American Amoco, Pennzoil, Unocal, and Exxon, Russia's Lukoil, Norway's Statoil, Japanese Itochu, the British Ramco, Turkey's TPAO, Saudi Arabia's Delta and the SOCAR. Data is brought according to Suha Bolukbasi, *EUROPE-ASIA STUDIES*, Vol. 50, No. 3, 1998, 397-414

Law of the Sea Treaty, which gives a 200-mile zone or in cases when the distance is less than that – the application of the equidistance principle. While the first was adopted by Russia and Turkmenistan, the second was applying to both Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. However, in reality Russia used this dispute as a means to provide itself with at least 10 percent in the regional deals that could be an advantage against outsiders.

Antagonism between Ankara and Moscow continued also over the pipelines to be exploited in transferring the Kazakh and Azeri oils. According to the Russian proposal, a two-leg route would carry the oil from the Kazakh Tengiz oil field to the Russian Novorossiysk, joining the Baku-Tikhoretsk pipeline that would carry also the Azeri oil. “The Turks, believing that a single Russian pipeline to carry the Azeri and the Kazakh crude would solidify Moscow’s stranglehold over the region, campaigned actively against it. The idea that the Turkish pipeline would earn Turkey hard currency in royalties was perhaps secondary to its geopolitical calculation that, if the Azeris and the Kazakhs had to rely solely on the Russian pipeline, Ankara’s hopes for improved ties with the newly independent Turkic states in the region would be drastically frustrated” (Bolukbasi, 1998). The Turks insisted on the Caspian Sea to Mediterranean Sea Pipeline (CMPL) that would transfer the Kazakh oil to Baku, and further to the Turkish terminal in Ceyhan (ibid.). However, the Turkish calculations were not only geopolitical or geo-economic. This route would significantly facilitate the stabilization within Turkey itself. As has been mentioned earlier, Ceyhan has been populated with Kurds and historically been within Syria. The adoption of the Turkish variant of oil transfer would involve many other interested parties, including the European Union, to the quick solution of the Kurdish problem. This will give Turkey an opportunity to solve it the way it considers necessary and by means that it chooses, which may be the case of justifying the means for the sake of the end. Quitting with the Kurdish problem will solve many others facing the foreign policy of the Turkish republic. Furthermore, elimination of the Kurdish problem will also solve the threats and the challenges to the Ankara regime on the domestic political level. Most significantly, it will strengthen the economic and the political control over the region in domestic and in foreign terms.

While facilitating a stronger control over the Kurds, it will bring other interested parties to be against Syrian territorial aspirations.

Assessing both Turkey's failures and achievements requires separation between the spheres of cultural, economic and military influence. Since the very beginning Turkey has continuously insisted on the ethnic and cultural ties that unite it with the Central Asian nations, but which have been ignored due to political and historical circumstances. With the opening of the borders and the independence of Central Asian states Turkey has carried out a broad campaign for establishing cultural and educational ties with this region (excluding Tajikistan). Indeed, in the cultural area Turkey has established very strong and firm relations with the Central Asian states, including establishment of schools, reconstruction of historical sites and monuments, etc. Although the creation of common television programs and the broadcasting of Turkish state television programs to these states can also be considered as cultural tie, telecommunications carry strategic importance in propagandistic terms. In this regard, Turkey has not achieved the maximum of possibilities. The main problem, according to Heinz Kramer, is that the programs reach only small portion of the population, "due to the lack of satellite dishes in many regions" (Kramer, 1996). To fill this gap, Turkey needs financial resources, which are not available now. However, Turkey can rely on its ally - Israel, who has recently been engaged in telecommunications projects in Central Asia.

In economic terms Turkey has declared a policy of contributing to the Central Asian states' efforts in overcoming "severe economic problems and to carry out their transition to democracy and market economy." Turkey believes that having experience in transforming from an import-substitution economy to a market one that it does, "has much to offer to these republics."⁴⁶

According to the Turkish sources, there have been more than 200 agreements signed in economic, cultural, educational, communications and transport, technical assistance and training fields. Moreover, the same source indicates that Turkey has allotted a total of 666 million US

dollars in program and investments credits to the Central Asian republics; nearly 400 Turkish private companies are involved in Central Asian economics. While this can be assumed to be a relative success on the Turkish part, in terms of energy resources available in the Central Asian countries, Turkey has not succeeded a lot. First, it has not eliminated the Russian involvement in energy politics. Moreover, Russia has recorded several successes itself that are contradictory to the Turkish interests. In 1996, Russia and Kazakhstan signed an agreement on the construction of an oil pipeline from the Tengiz field to Novorossiysk. The American Chevron, who had been interested in this field and invested nearly 700 million US dollars, decreased its rate as problems with the Russian pipeline arose. Although Turkey made several efforts to convince Kazakhstan in the preferability of the Turkish variant, it was decided that the Kazakh oil runs through Russian Black Sea terminals.

Turkey failed also in Turkmenistan. In 1996, the Russian Gazprom and the Turkmenistan Ministry of Oil and Gas founded a joint Turkmenrosgaz with a monopoly over extraction and export of Turkmen gas.

Another Russian advance in energy politics is the much-discussed Blue Stream gas project. Turkey is one of the regional markets with considerable demand for natural gas. After signing gas agreement with Iran in 1996, Turkey signed the Blue Stream project with Russia in 1997. Later, in 1999 it also signed agreement with Turkmenistan. According to Turkish estimates, its natural gas demands will significantly increase by 2020. However, it is generally accepted that the estimates are unrealistic. As Zeyno Baran mentions, even if the demand reaches the indicated figures (53 million cubic meters by 2010 and 82 billion cubic meters in 2020), the volume of the gas provided by the already signed agreements significantly exceeds those estimates (Baran, 1999). The result of the excessive calculations is the competition between two gas agreements – the Blue Stream project and the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline. The issue at stake has mainly geopolitical implications. The TCP is a part of the ambitious Eurasian Corridor project that aims to bring Caspian resources to

⁴⁶ The information is drawn from “Central Asian Relations” at <http://www.turkey.org/politics/asian.htm>

international energy markets through Turkey, escaping both Russia and Iran. The rivalry of the two projects lies in the strategic interests over the Caspian region. Russia has defined the Blue Stream project as of big importance; hence, the fate of the project is determinant of the Russian-Turkish multifarious relations. According to press reports, Russia's partner in building the gas pipeline has insisted that the project was going to start in June 2001 and will be finished by the year 2002.

In the last two years, Turkey has made a new attempt to establish closer relations with the Central Asian states. On October 22, 2000, the Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer visited the four Central Asian republics, except Tajikistan, and described it as an important step to "institutionalize our relations with the Turkic republics."

The recent activation of Turkish engagement in Central Asian republics is especially vivid in terms of security. As far as the Islamic resurgences are today an utmost threat, Turkey stresses strengthening of cooperation in the anti-Islamist direction. Thus, as of August 2001, Turkey has "pledged \$10 million in military aid to Kazakhstan over the next years" and has declared that it is going to support Kazakhstan "particularly in the military" (RFE/RL, August, 10, 2001). At the same time, Kyrgyzstan, one of the Central Asian states most vulnerable to Islamic radicalism, has received nearly \$3 million dollars equipment from the USA to "strengthen its borders" (ibid.). Moreover, a congressional delegation from the US has been visiting this republic mainly to discuss security issues. Noticeably, following this visit, the Russian Defense Minister also arrived in Kazakhstan for the same purpose.

As has been mentioned earlier, Turkey, limited in its abilities to provide large military support to these republics uses the interests of its regional allies, US and Israel, for the promotion of its interests. Obviously, the two allies also gain a lot from the Turkish involvement in the region.

However, in the long run it is arguable whether a stable secular rule in Central Asian states is preferable to Turkey's ruling elites. While shoring up struggle against Islamic radicalism in Central Asia, Turkey may be interested in keeping up the religious sentiments alive. Being well aware of

the continuing pro-Russian orientation of the leaders in those states, Turkey may try to use the radical Islamic factor to replace them with pro-Turkish ones.

CONCLUSIONS

Viewing the foreign and the domestic politics of Russia, China, Pakistan, Iran, India and Turkey throughout the chapters, the study has found how interests of the regional players can both collide and unite states and regions, and how each country's international relations can be affected by those developments. Were the region not situated in the threshold of East and West, the Christian and the Muslim worlds, were it not gifted with the vast deposits of natural energy resources, it would have never attracted the regional and global powers to the extent it did. First, for the West, Central Asia is a kind of a buffer zone that must alleviate the strong Islamic fundamentalist threat. Second, both the West and Russia are strongly interested in keeping the secular-oriented policies of the Central Asian states, as well as the authoritarian rulers that contain any possible attempt of Islamic proliferation. However, neither of the regional players wants to see a powerful Central Asian military. Military weakness added to an economic dependency is the perfect condition of controllability of the region. There are two alternatives for eliminating rivalry in the region: either equal distribution of power among the competing regional and global powers, which seems unrealistic, or dominance of a single power, probably masked as a regional military political alliance. Currently, one can definitely iterate one thing: Russia today, even after the deployment of the US troops in Uzbekistan, remains the major manager of the regional politics. Evidently, the Russian success is seen in the regional alliances that both alternate and fulfill each other. Unless some regional players are strongly interested in the existence of those alliances and unless the main participants to the planned forces are not strong enough to cope with the problem on an equal basis with other interested parties, in particular Russia and China, both the CIS Collective Security Treaty and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization will exist and will operate unless more effective ones are created.

In assessing the opportunities for Turkey to gain influence in this region, several issues should be taken into account. The first issue is in the sphere of energy resources of the Caspian basin. As is

well known, the first half of 1990s has been a period of mostly Russian victories in this aspect. The Turkish virtual success in this matter lies in its approach to the case. Most probably, in order to have chances for gaining more significance in the region it must adopt cooperative rather than rivaling position toward Russia. Though this will hardly facilitate the replacement of the Russian dominance with the Turkish one the matter is tangibly complicated with the present rivalry between the Blue Stream and the Trans-Caspian gas projects. Turkey today has to make a decisive choice between the two. The Trans-Caspian project is backed by the US, which considers it a part of the Eurasian Energy Corridor and aims largely at the containment of Russian and Iranian influence in the Caspian basin. Moreover, this project implies Turkish leadership in the matter. At the same time, as Turkey is lacking sufficient gas supplies, the Blue Stream project is more than desired. First, it gives direct supply of the Russian gas and then it is time effective since it will be supplying gas a year earlier than the Trans-Caspian pipelines. What seems wrong to Turkey with the Blue Stream project is that it further strengthens the Russian dominance in this aspect, which does not seem to be frustrated in the nearest future anyway.

The second important aspect in Turkey's attempts for dominance is the extent of military cooperation with the Central Asian states. In this regard, Turkey puts a special emphasis on its offered support to both Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan against the extremist incursions. Moreover, Turkey is, in Samuel Huntington's words, a torn country. In the light of the conflict of the secular military and the popular Islamic elites, the present Turkish support for Central Asian secular regimes seems relevant. However, it is arguable whether a stable secular rule in Central Asian states is preferable for Turkey. While shoring up struggle against Islamic radicalism in Central Asia, Turkey may be interested in keeping up the religious sentiments alive. Being well aware of the continuing pro-Russian orientation of the leaders in those states, Turkey may try to use the radical Islamic factor to replace them with pro-Turkish ones. Though, this is not a likely scenario for the nearest future.

The spread of Islamic movements in Central Asia has reasons beyond religion itself. The causes of Islamic proliferation in the region include ideological vacuum, declined socio-economic conditions and resentment with the authorities, ethnic and border insecurities as well as domestic politics. In this light, religion is a tool of political struggle.

This Essay's main conclusion may sound paradoxical. In reality, the Islamic threat is likely to serve as a stabilizing rather than destabilizing factor between the regional state actors. That is, the otherwise conflicting patterns in the relations between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Russia, Kazakhstan and Russia, China and Russia, are going to be minimized.

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