
**CONFLICT IN CENTRAL ASIA AND SOUTH CAUCASUS:
IMPLICATIONS OF FOREIGN INTERESTS
AND INVOLVEMENT
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INTRODUCTION

Geography has made the Central Asian and South Caucasus states a historical nexus for trade, competition, and sometimes conflict. Traditionally, foreign powers have seen the region as an economic and strategic gateway to other parts of the world. Somewhat more recently, since the states of the region gained independence from the Soviet Union a decade ago, the region's potential for energy production created new, additional areas of foreign interest. Today, it is increasingly clear that foreign competition over energy is only one component of a complex balance of the economic and strategic short- and long-term goals of a number of interested parties, a balance now complicated further by the crucial importance of Central Asia to the multinational coalition response to terrorist acts against the United States on September 11, 2001. If, in the summer of 2001, the International Crisis Group could safely write (with regard to Central Asia) that "no outside power is sufficiently interested in the region to make major investments in its security," this is clearly no longer the case.¹

It is therefore highly likely that coming years will see continued competition among outside powers over the region and its resources and allegiances. This does not necessarily mean, however, that great-power conflict will result. In fact, as the exploration of the interests and motivations of various actors undertaken in this chapter will

¹"Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map," Osh/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2001.

show, competition is moderated by the many shared interests of the outside powers in question. But strategic and economic interests will also cause foreign states to be increasingly active in the region diplomatically, economically, and militarily. This means that if other factors spur conflict in the region, as analysis elsewhere in this report suggests is likely, there is significant potential for outside powers to get involved—even if their interests are not themselves the reason that conflict emerges.

Because there is room for many states to gain from the region's potential and because regional stability is a shared goal as well, there will be high incentives to cooperate as well as compete. Strategic reasons to maintain good ties among interested third parties will also temper the likelihood of conflict. But because there is also little doubt that some will gain more than others, it is likely that competition will remain a significant factor—and may at times be fierce. Moreover, the existence of incentives for cooperation among outside powers does not imply that third parties cannot be potential sources of regional conflict in other ways, or that one or more of them will not get involved in conflict if it occurs for other reasons.

Even the generally shared interests in the peaceful development of these states may be what leads neighbors and other interested parties to become involved in conflict if it occurs. If the peace that they desire appears threatened, these states may see their interests as threatened as well. Moreover, the weakness of CASC states creates incentives for outsiders to seek to influence the policy directions of local governments and to question the latter's capacity to maintain peace and stability on their own. If these outsiders feel compelled to act to quell conflict, whether real or burgeoning, they will of course themselves become parties to it.

The ways and reasons that third parties could instigate, exacerbate, or otherwise involve themselves in regional fighting are as varied as the countries in question. The most obvious and critical concern today is the situation in Afghanistan. On the one hand, Afghanistan provides a harrowing example of the effects of state failure and factionalism that at least some of the CASC states are at risk of. A new commitment to preventing this sort of disintegration could lead to increased involvement by foreign actors in efforts to stabilize the region. At the same time, the processes of stabilization and state-

building in Afghanistan itself have the potential to be long and arduous, involving the reconciling of differences between a large number of conflicting groups—many of which share ethnic, religious, and linguistic ties with neighboring Central Asian states (and China). Moreover, members of the international coalition that is working to help stabilize the situation in Afghanistan are using bases in Central Asian states, which increase their own interests in maintaining stability and peace in this region. Their presence sharply increases the likelihood of their involvement in any unrest or conflict that emerges in this part of the world.

If it proves impossible to quickly quell conflict in Afghanistan, neighboring states may suffer from refugee flows, and possibly even the export of some of the instability. The narcotics trade that fueled what there was of Afghanistan's economy in recent years will also be difficult to eradicate. The production of narcotics remains one of the few trades available to rural Afghans seeking to make a living, and Northern Alliance factions were no less involved in the trafficking than were Taliban groups. Of course, Central Asia has suffered as the primary route for opium and heroin traveling from Afghanistan to Russia and Europe (see Chapter Four).

Russia, whose stakes in the region are historical, political, strategic, and economic, presents a number of complications. One is the fear among CASC states that this large neighbor, recognizing its increasing weakness and fearing a complete loss of influence in the region, will seek to reassert control while it still can, and will attempt to do so by force. Whether or not Russia has the capability to do so successfully is less important than the fact that in trying, it can spark ethnic, religious, and territorial conflict in the region, which would set prospects for reform and development back by decades. Moreover, Russia's deep and fundamental interests in the region all but guarantee that if conflict erupts, for whatever reason, Russia will seek to play a role—and to have a say over the extent to which other outside powers can get involved.

Perhaps even more dangerous is the possibility that Russia, due either to weakness or some other factor, cannot or does not act to stem local conflict, or does so belatedly. While Russia has clear interests in the region, which it has made no secret of, other regional powers, including China, Turkey, and Iran, also have reason to fear

conflict and anarchy in this region. To date, these states have to different degrees been deterred from actively pursuing their interests in the region by Russia's clear opposition to their doing so. A regional crisis combined with a seemingly disinterested, incapable, or otherwise insufficiently active Russia, however, could spur one or more of them to attempt to resolve the situation. This could potentially result in a Russian response less to the conflict at the root of the problems than to "interference" in its neighboring states.

The increased U.S. presence in CASC alters this equation in several ways, however. Prior to September 11, most of its interests in CASC could best be described as secondary economic interests (given the relatively low level of energy resource wealth that most estimates for the region assess), derivative of the interests of allies such as Turkey, or based in the pursuit of desired, but far from vital, goals such as democratization. On the other hand, the United States had and continues to have vital interests in responding to transnational threats that, while not specific to CASC, even before September 11, could not be advanced without some attention to this part of the world. These include the prevention of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the fight against transnational crime and the drug trade, and of course, the effort to combat and prevent the development and spread of terrorist groups and tactics. Moreover, it is worth noting that even secondary interests can have important second-order effects. Allies and U.S. and multinational energy firms, as well as the transnational threats mentioned above, created imperatives for the United States to be at least somewhat involved in the CASC region. Finally, as recent events have demonstrated beyond a doubt, the region's location between Russia, Afghanistan, China, Iran, and Turkey make it the staging area for a variety of combat scenarios—above and beyond the current one. If anything, the investment that the United States and its allies are now making in developing infrastructure and relationships in CASC states for the Afghanistan operation will make it more likely that these states will be called upon to support future missions and endeavors.

U.S. ties with the states of CASC had been growing and developing for a decade prior to the decision to base forces here for the military effort in Afghanistan. The United States has sought to deepen ties so as to influence regional governments to a wide range of goals (ideological as well as strategic), and U.S. policy, in turn, was also

affected by these contacts. Even before September 11, continued and deepening involvement made it likely that even if the United States avoided direct involvement in regional conflict, unrest in CASC would complicate U.S. military and nonmilitary efforts in and near the region. Today, with the likelihood of a significant long-term peacekeeping and humanitarian effort in Afghanistan that includes at least some U.S. involvement, it seems impossible that the United States would not get involved in some way in a Central Asian crisis. This has implications for the United States and the states concerned, but also for Russia and other regional powers. On the one hand, it makes it even less likely that China, for example, will choose to get involved in developing unrest, insofar as it believes that the United States can be relied upon to keep the situation quiet. On the other hand, depending on how the U.S. relationship with Iran evolves, the latter may feel it necessary to protect its interests in the region against the United States by supporting certain groups over others, as it has in Afghanistan. Turkey, as a U.S. ally, may be called upon to play a larger role than it might want. Finally, Russia, depending on the level of cooperation with the United States at the time, could either seek to flummox U.S. efforts or act in partnership, creating complications in either case.

This analysis considers the interests of third parties in the region, seeking to identify the potential for those interests to cause and/or exacerbate conflict. It discusses each potentially interested state in turn to assess its strategic position and threat perception, and how they affect its attitudes toward and relations with CASC states. It assesses the potential for conflict between third parties spurred by their interests and activities in CASC as well as how they might get involved in conflict in the region. It then turns to the states of the region to assess their perspective on these neighbors and other interested parties.

RUSSIA

To understand Russia's attitudes toward Central Asia and South Caucasus, it is imperative to understand the strategic and historical factors that influence Russian decisionmaking. Weakness and perceived vulnerability on the part of a state are generally believed by those adhering to the realist and neorealist schools of political sci-

ence to result in a view of the world as even more threatening and unfriendly than the anarchic political system already leads it to be.² Because stronger states have the capacity to harm, they are seen as dangerous to the weak state and its interests. At the helm of a formerly strong state, now in decline, Russia's leadership seeks to reverse the decline and (insofar as possible) reclaim a position of power and influence. But the state's weakness precludes success in this endeavor. While Russia may in principle be able to stop aspects of its political, economic, and military decline, efforts to re-establish some sort of pre-eminence in the short term by means of influence over other states makes sustainable reform of its own declining state structures even less likely.

Whatever Russia's own situation, however, it has numerous strategic reasons to see CASC as crucial to its security interests. Russia's historical effort to control the region derived from its belief that this control would reap economic and strategic benefits. Russian rule over regions of Turkestan and Transcaspia was cemented by the end of the 19th century, with the inner Asian region divided into spheres of influence by Russia and China.³ Moscow maintained that control during both the Tsarist and Soviet periods, and CASC states were important sources of resources for the successive empires. Over time, to many in Russia, such imperial possessions became a component of Russia's self-definition, and proof of its importance as a state and as a great power. Thus, the independence of these and other former Soviet states continues to be difficult to accept for many Russians, for whom the Russian empire and the Soviet Union were, to a large extent, Russia itself. As Roman Szporluk writes, "Russia did not *have* an empire, it *was* one."⁴ Moreover, many ethnic Russians

²The classic texts of neorealism are Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979, and Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987. On the impact of state decline, see A.F.K. Organski, *World Politics*, 2nd ed., New York: Knopf, 1968, and Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. See also Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, New York: Basic Books, 1990.

³Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, Chapter 17: "Islam in Central And Southern Asia," p. 415.

⁴Roman Szporluk, "The Fall of the Tsarist Empire and the USSR: The Russian Question and Imperial Overextension," in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (eds.), *The End of Empire? The Transformation of the USSR in Comparative Perspective*,

lived in these regions during Soviet times and, despite emigration following the collapse of the Soviet Union, many remain, particularly in Kazakhstan (see Chapter Six).

Strategic/historical interests aside, the economic benefits of continued close ties with CASC states are a strong motivator for Russia to seek to maintain influence over the region. Moscow recognizes that its own economic modernization will be crucial if it is to regain any semblance of the power that it once enjoyed. Caspian energy development provides real opportunities for economic gain, and Russia hopes to play a role. But while both Moscow and the CASC states stand to benefit from Caspian Sea development, Moscow's economic interests are not always aligned with those of its neighbors. Russia, a major energy exporter in its own right (with its own Caspian Sea reserves) has strong incentives, for instance, to charge high transit fees for Caspian oil transported over its territory, to buy up other states' production to keep prices high, and to otherwise prevent or hinder its neighbors from effectively and profitably exporting fossil fuels. The Soviet-designed and built network of pipelines that Caspian energy exporters rely on to get oil and natural gas to customers is one in which all pipelines (and much of the refining and other infrastructure) lead through Russia. This makes other producers dependent on this large neighbor, and because these fossil fuels are among the only export assets these countries possess, this infrastructure perpetuates economic dependence on Russia. It also enables Russia to manipulate Caspian energy exports to its own economic benefit, as well as potentially translating into political leverage over the CASC states. Russia therefore sees it as imperative to maintain these states' dependence on Russian export routes and has tended to oppose new pipelines or other energy export routes that fail to transit its own territory.⁵

Russia also sees a threat in the growth of radical Islamic political movements that seek to overthrow secular governments in Central

Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1997, pp. 65–95. Quote is on page 71. See also Ronald Grigor Suny, "Provisional Stabilities," *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (1999).

⁵That said, Russian energy companies are interested in being involved in Caspian energy development regardless of where the pipelines go, although they do have their preferences. Recent statements by Lukoil, for instance, suggest that the Russian government may drop some of its opposition to various pipeline routes, including Baku-Ceyhan, if Russian companies stand to gain from them.

Asia. With its own large Muslim population (concentrated primarily in the north Caucasus and the Tatar and Bashkir Republics), Russia fears that radical Islamic movements, if successful in Central Asia, will then spread to other states, including Russia itself, perhaps using Chechnya as a foothold, and that this will lead to further unrest and homeland terrorist attacks. Secessionist movements (whether religious in nature or otherwise) in CASC are similarly viewed in Moscow as potential spurs to secessionist activity in Russia's own regions, especially in the north Caucasus. As Grigor Suny writes, Russia, or at least the Russian media, tends to view the area to the south as the source of a variety of threats, including "militant Islam, ethnic mafias, agents of foreign states, and drug traders."⁶

The drug trade and crime are indeed reasons for Russia to be concerned. The narcotics trafficking routes that start in Afghanistan and move through Central Asia then transit Russia, where drug use and abuse is growing, along with the attendant health care problems. Russian and other post-Soviet criminal groups, including those in CASC, maintain close ties.⁷ Their growing power and influence threaten government control and the social order throughout the post-Soviet space and have repercussions beyond it, with activities in Europe, Israel, the United States, and elsewhere. At the same time, the Russian leadership also recognizes that for all of these threats, domestic instability keeps CASC states weak, which makes them more reliant on Russian assistance and support and thus more compliant with Russia's political and economic demands.

This has made for fundamental contradictions within Russian policy goals toward the CASC region. The Russians want to prevent unrest and violence, stem the flow of crime and drugs, and ensure that secular governments remain in place and in control, but these interests are at odds with their desire to maintain dominance, which requires that these states remain politically weak and dependent on Russian assistance. Similarly, the Russian desire to profit from Caspian energy development implies significant economic modernization and growth in the region, which of course would make these states

⁶Suny, "Provisional Stabilities."

⁷See Chapter Four of this report.

less dependent on Russia (unless, of course, Russia can attain and maintain a monopoly over energy export routes).

Over the last few years, Russia has sought to advance its goals in CASC with a multitracked policy of engaging local states to both build influence and attempt to mitigate the security threats it sees as emanating from the region.⁸ Efforts include political, military, and economic ties and assistance. Russia has sought to take advantage of fears of instability and conflict within the region itself by promising security assistance and commitments. (Some even suggest that Russia has supported insurgency movements in Central Asia in order to make the local states less secure.⁹) Military assistance includes the sale of weapons, the stationing of troops to assist with defensive goals, joint counterinsurgency training, and the establishment of a joint regional counterterrorist organization headquartered in Bishkek, as well as an associated joint rapid-reaction unit.

Russian success with military contacts and assistance has been variable. Tajikistan and Armenia have welcomed Russian troops,¹⁰ Kyrgyzstan has accepted some military assistance, and Kazakhstan has been willing to maintain military and political ties (including through the Shanghai Five/Shanghai Cooperation Organization—Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and, since June 2000, Uzbekistan). On the other hand, Turkmenistan has remained insistently nonaligned (and increasingly isolationist), Georgia continues to demand that Russian forces leave its soil (and has protested Russian attacks into Georgian territory in pursuit of Chechen

⁸Suny, “Provisional Stabilities,” argues that Russia is “a relatively benign hegemon in relationship to the Southern Tier rather than a neo-imperialist threat.”

⁹Edward Helmore, “US in Replay of ‘Great Game,’” *Johnson’s Russia List (The Observer)*, January 21 (January 20), 2002.

¹⁰Russia has about 25,000 men, including border guards and motor rifle troops, under its direct command in Tajikistan, many of them Tajiks. Tajikistan itself only patrols a small fraction, about 70 kilometers, of its 1,300-kilometer border. Russia patrols the rest, and provides training for Tajik forces as well. Agreements between the two countries permit Russia to as much as double its military presence, but the difficulties inherent in attracting personnel to serve in Tajikistan, along with Russia’s commitments elsewhere, make it unlikely that Russia will step up its presence to that extent. “Tajikistan: An Uncertain Peace,” Osh/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2001. “Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map.”

rebels¹¹), Azerbaijan has been adamant and consistent in its refusal to allow Russian troops to be stationed on its soil and more recently has largely rebuffed Russian efforts to re-establish close ties, and Uzbekistan has repeatedly refused to accept Russian military assistance. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan have instead sought to build ties with the United States and Turkey, with, until recently, varying degrees of success. Finally, although the efforts at multinational cooperation through CIS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization look plentiful on paper, implementation has been minimal.¹²

Mixed feelings about Russian overtures are to be expected. Even if Russian behavior today is not neoimperialist, this is a sharp break with the past experience of regional states, and, as Suny points out, it is difficult for them to view Russia as benevolent.¹³ And indeed, as already noted, Russia will pursue its own interests, which are at various times more or less congruent with those of its neighbors. If Russia once conquered and held Central Asia by the sword, Russia's real threat to the independence of these states today is one of economic and political pressure, not military incursion. While Russia's military might and capacity is questionable, the pipeline routes through its territory are very real. Not surprisingly, Russia's efforts at coercion have increasingly taken on an economic component. If it previously used tough talk and reminders of its force presence to convince its neighbors that they should be its allies, it has now supplemented words and military posturing with economic action: for instance, a government-supported campaign by Russian firms to invest heavily in the industry of peripheral states, particularly the energy sector. This increasing Russian ownership of industry in the CASC and throughout the former Soviet Union gives Russia more leverage over these states' economies, and provides a hedge in the event that Russia loses its near-monopoly over energy export routes. No matter which way the pipelines go, at least some Russian firms will stand to gain.

¹¹Vernon Loeb and Peter Slevin, "U.S. Begins Anti-Terror Assistance in Georgia," *Washington Post*, February 27, 2002, p. A1.

¹²"Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map."

¹³Suny, "Provisional Stabilities."

As with military ties, the record of success is mixed. Caspian oil-producing states Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, as well as transit state Georgia, hope that by supporting multiple pipeline routes, they can limit Russia's capacity to exert influence through these economic mechanisms. In the meantime, they resist Russian economic pressure in the expectation that these routes will be built. Azerbaijan and Georgia, as well as gas producer Uzbekistan and resource-poor Kyrgyzstan, are also hopeful that political, military, and economic ties with other states will help them withstand Russian pressure. Kyrgyzstan, with less to offer economically or militarily, is more accepting of Russian influence than Uzbekistan. Turkmenistan, on the other hand, whose most important export is natural gas, most of which is transported to customers by pipelines through Russia, has sought to dampen its continuing vulnerability to Russian pressure with a policy of increasing political, economic, and social isolationism. Finally, Armenia and Tajikistan depend on Russia for their security needs and therefore maintain close relations with Moscow.

Russia's mixed record in both the political and the economic spheres can be attributed not only to the history of empire, but also (as Suny notes) to the questionable nature of Russia's ability to deliver on its promises and threats. With Russia unable to establish law and order at home, it seems unlikely that it can assist Central Asia in its efforts to drive out rebellious religious fundamentalists, organized criminals, and drug traffickers. In some ways it is decades of rule from Moscow that has made the region poor, fragmented, conflict-prone, and economically dependent. Today, there is reason to doubt that Russia can do much to fix the situation, even if it wants to, or that it can make it worse without doing itself severe harm in the process.

The fact that others may be able to do something creates additional complications, of course. Because the region has so long been under Russian rule, because it remains one of few where Moscow retains influence, and because Russia, as a weak state, is inclined to perceive all foreign activities near its borders as threatening, Russia throughout the 1990s saw other states' efforts in this part of the world as a form of hostile encroachment. This was particularly true of Moscow's attitudes toward U.S. and Turkish bilateral and multilateral ties with Caucasus and Central Asian states. These activities were viewed as an attempt to woo Russia's natural allies away from its influence. Moreover, U.S. involvement in Central Asia was inter-

puted by much of the Russian leadership (and the Russian public) as a component of a concerted effort by the United States (along with plans for a national missile defense and NATO enlargement) to lessen Russia's influence and weaken it further. This perception made it all the more important for Russia to maintain influence over this region, not only to assert Russia's power and importance, but also to demonstrate to the world that the United States and its allies have not weakened Russia entirely.

From a neorealist perspective, this can be viewed as a form of "balancing" on Russia's part—a way of increasing its own strength relative to a stronger adversary or potential adversary, in this case the United States and its allies. Continued influence over at least the near abroad makes justifiable Russia's claim to be a great power, even given its political and economic weakness, because it continues to have states in its sphere of influence. Even if the actual military and economic power thus gained is minimal, the ability to attract allies at all augments Russian capacity to demonstrate that it remains a player on the global stage. That a role in the economic and energy development of these states can further benefit Russia makes continued influence over this particular region that much more important.

But the fact remains that Russia is a relatively weak actor on the global stage, even if it remains strong compared to its post-Soviet neighbors. This combination makes Russia a potentially dangerous player in the region over the next 10–15 years. That shifts in state power increase the risk of war is well accepted in the political science literature.¹⁴ In Russia's case, its difficulty in accurately assessing its own capabilities (to say nothing of the difficulties of others assessing them), combined with its desire to maintain influence and control over the CASC region (in part as a way of augmenting Russia's perceived power) could lead to military adventurism by a Russia that overestimates its capacity to attain a military solution. In fact, both Russia's continuing peacekeeping role in Tajikistan and its involvement in Georgia's internal conflicts can be seen as examples of such

¹⁴See Organski, *World Politics*, and Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*. On the impact of political transitions to and from democracy and authoritarianism, see also Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War," *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1995), pp. 5–38.

“overstretch” by a declining power. In Tajikistan, the effectiveness of Russia’s peacekeeping and border control efforts is debatable, and arguments that the presence is useful depend on assessments of how much worse things would be were the Russians not there. In Georgia, Russian military involvement has exacerbated conflict in ways that significantly weakened the Georgian state, supporting de facto secessionism in North Ossetia and Abkhazia, although it can be argued that Russian military presence more recently helped mitigate violence in Georgia.

Moreover, as discussed elsewhere in this analysis, the region itself is also one of inherently dangerous political transitions. Russia’s political and economic interests in the region, combined with its desire to maintain and demonstrate pre-eminence there and the continuing presence of Russian troops in both South Caucasus and Central Asia, all but guarantee that should conflict emerge (for any reason), Russia will play a role in responding to it. Because Russia itself is in the process of profound political and economic changes that are likely to continue for at least the next one or two decades, Russian weakness combines with its interests to create a potentially dangerous situation. If Russia attempts to stem conflict and fails, not only could the fighting spread, but other states might get involved in an effort to complete the job. Unless this is carefully coordinated with Russia, it might be perceived by Moscow as encroachment, leading to hostility and possibly even conflict between Russia and the offending state. Moreover, Russian interests in the region mean that if it does seek a foreign war to demonstrate its capabilities while it still has them, the CASC region is at risk of being a target. Alternatively, Russian weakness, particularly given a significant downturn in the Russian economy, may lead other states to take action in the region to advance their own goals, taking advantage of Russia’s incapacity to stop them. Finally, some combination of these scenarios, for instance a foreign power seeking to take advantage of Russian weakness to advance its own regional interests through military force but under the guise of humanitarian intervention or peacekeeping, is another possibility.

Because the potential for much Russia-spurred conflict rests in Russia’s perception of stronger (or other) states involved in its neighboring regions as hostile, the potential for conflict can be mitigated if Russia’s threat perception can be altered. This is a difficult task, but cooperation with the West in the region, for mutual goals such as

economic development and general stability, can play a role. For this to work, however, Russia will have to see both economic and political gains to be had, and many of these run counter to the interests of potential partners.

The military campaign in Afghanistan has caused a re-evaluation of Russian policy on this issue, although to what extent and for how long remain uncertain. President Vladimir Putin of Russia appears to have decided that acceptance of the U.S. presence in his Central Asian and Caucasian backyards, and cooperation in the counter-terrorist effort, will serve his country better in the long term than rumblings about encroachment and efforts to battle the United States for influence. That said, every new revelation of U.S. involvement and action sets off murmurs of discontent and complaints of U.S. imperialism among the Russian elite (an example is the late February news that the United States would be assisting Georgia with its efforts to battle insurgents in the Pankisi Gorge, shortly after the Georgian government once again refused Russian assistance), followed by a statement by Putin that this is not a problem. This suggests that Putin's policy is not entirely in keeping with the views of those around him (and often of his own ministers and advisors), and that its political sustainability may be questionable.

Certainly Russia is not willing to entirely give up its interests in CASC. Even those who accept the U.S. presence are loath to suggest that it might extend beyond the present conflict.¹⁵ Moreover, Russian officials have been consistent in their desire to be kept informed, and, if possible, involved in U.S. efforts in the region.¹⁶

If it can be developed and sustained, cooperation between the United States and Russia to respond to the threat posed by terrorist groups may be an important mechanism for altering Russia's threat perception. Insofar as both the United States and Russia see the danger of asymmetric terrorist threats to their states and their people as the greater danger, Russia's perception of the United States as a

¹⁵Edward Helmore, "US in Replay of 'Great Game,'" *Johnson's Russia List (The Observer)*, January 21 (January 20), 2002; Boris Volkhonsky, "The US Tries Walking in the Shoes of the USSR," *Johnson's Russia List (Kommersant)*, January 23, 2002.

¹⁶Tamara Makarenko and Daphne Biliouri, "Central Asian States Set to Pay Price of US Strikes," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 2001.

hostile power will be mitigated. To date, this dynamic has made it possible for the United States to reach agreement with Central Asian states about overflight and the stationing of forces on their territories in conjunction with counterterror efforts without jeopardizing either its own or its Central Asian partners' relations with Russia. But the ambiguities of Russian response reflect a real debate within the Russian Federation about the benefits and costs of cooperation with the United States, and it should not be taken for granted that Russia will continue to see terrorism as the greater evil. In fact, unless the United States matches its rhetoric with actions that signal to Russia that the United States is truly a partner, cooperation is unlikely to prove sustainable.

Moreover, even if the shared interest in fighting global terrorism trumps Russian distrust of the United States, continued and effective cooperation will require compromise on both sides, compromise that will have implications for the CASC states. One way in which the United States could signal Russia that it is not a threat, for example, is to become more reticent in developing its ties with the CASC states, involving Russia in its cooperative efforts. This could have the second-order effect of increasing Russian efforts to pressure those states on a variety of issues, from Chechen refugees in Georgia to oil pipelines. Failure to seek areas of compromise with Russia, however, may also lead to Russian pressure on these states, coupled with increasing hostility toward the United States, which will make it more difficult for the United States to pursue and attain its own goals in the region.

TURKEY

If Russia has a history of imperial control over the states of CASC, Turkey's connection is one of ethnic, religious, and linguistic ties with the Islamic states in the region. Its proximity, interest in Caspian energy development, and desire for a regional leadership role have led it to develop varying degrees of ties with a number of CASC states, including non-Muslim, non-Turkic Georgia. Turkey's efforts are complicated by its important trade relations with Russia and, to a lesser extent, by continuing tension between Turkey and Armenia stemming from mass deaths of Armenians in Turkey in

1915. Armenia views this as a genocidal act by the Turkish government, an interpretation the Turkish government disputes.

As Soviet rule weakened in the late 1980s and finally collapsed in 1990–1991, Turkey took steps to build ties with the post-Soviet Islamic states with which it shared aspects of heritage, ethnic kinship, and language.¹⁷ Turkey hosted the Azerbaijani prime minister shortly before Soviet troops moved in to put a stop to increasing ethnic/political violence in pre-independence Azerbaijan. Turkey was also the first state to recognize Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan when they declared independence in 1991. After the Soviet Union's collapse, Turkey signed a flurry of cultural and economic exchange agreements with these countries and began broadcasting television programs in the region. Toward the end of 1992, it took steps to establish visa-free exchanges of citizens and free up capital flows with Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Turkey also provided medical and educational supplies in the early 1990s, and established schools in the region and scholarships for local students to study in Turkey.

Turkey promised the Central Asians and the Azerbaijanis a model of an Islamic secular democracy, which was an appealing concept to the secular post-Soviet governments that were developing at that time. Having been rejected by the European Community, Turkey hoped that by building ties with these new states it could build a sort of Turkic community under its own leadership, a concept put forth by then Turkish President Turgut Ozal. This community would benefit Turkey economically and politically and, by serving as a bridge to the Islamic post-Soviet world, demonstrate Ankara's usefulness to Western states. This approach generally met with widespread support. Both U.S. and international funding organiza-

¹⁷Close ethnic and linguistic ties exist between Turks and the titular ethnies of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan (as well as some of the minority populations of Central Asia, such as the Uighurs). Although all of these are to varying extents distinct ethnic groups with unique languages, they are all members of the Turkic linguistic family. Tajiks are a Persian ethnies and speak a language closely related to Farsi.

tions, including the World Bank, provided assistance to Central Asian states through Turkey as a means of bolstering its efforts.¹⁸

The Central Asian states and Azerbaijan initially warmly welcomed Turkish assistance and support. By the end of 1992, however, it was clear that things were not going entirely as hoped. The Central Asians were disappointed that Turkey's help was not sufficient to bring economic health, prosperity, and integration with Western economic institutions. Many in Central Asia expressed frustration with what they saw as Turkey's almost condescending attitude toward the new states and their governments. In Azerbaijan, for instance, the coming to power of President Heidar Aliev resulted in a reversal of predecessor Abulfaz Elchibey. Where Elchibey sought to focus on Azerbaijan's Turkic ethnicity, Aliev in his early days distanced himself from Turkey and reinvigorated relations with Russia, rejoining the CIS (although refusing to allow Moscow to send troops to Azerbaijan).¹⁹

Meanwhile, Turkey had realized that doing business in the region was more difficult than anticipated, with efforts hampered by high levels of corruption and low levels of business competence. Moreover, its high levels of trade with Russia spurred Turkey to reconsider its initial enthusiasm for a large-scale effort to bring the Central Asian states into a Turkish sphere of influence.²⁰

As this history indicates, Turkey's foreign policy, like Russia's, is often one of conflicting interests. While membership in NATO and longstanding friendship with the United States give Turkey a measure of strength in the international arena, this is mitigated by the European Union's continued rebuffs, Turkey's domestic economic crisis, and its domestic political uncertainty. Continuing battles between Islamists and secularists in Turkey's government and society, to say nothing of a disturbingly strong military role in governance, have created problems in the domestic functioning of the Turkish political system that sometimes spill over into its foreign policy.

¹⁸See Martha Brill Olcott, *Central Asia's New States*, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996, pp. 25–26; Shireen T. Hunter, *Central Asia Since Independence*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996, pp. 136–138.

¹⁹Suny, "Provisional Stabilities."

²⁰Olcott, pp. 25–27.

If Turkey backed away from its initial exuberance toward Central Asia in the early 1990s, it has continued to seek ways of building on shared ethnic and linguistic ties with the region (as well as on its sheer proximity). One primary reason is its hopes for Caspian energy, both for its own needs, which it estimates will continue to rise, and for the promise of energy routes through Turkish territory, which bring with them lucrative transit fees and links to consumers in Europe. Turkey currently imports approximately 90 percent of its oil, which supplies half of its energy needs, and almost all of its gas, 70 percent of it from Russia. Although gas today accounts for only about 13 percent of Turkey's energy, Turkey estimates that demands by industry and power plants will increase dramatically, perhaps even sixfold, in coming years.

Turkey's success in wooing the Central Asian states has been limited. While business ties exist, they are a small component of Central Asian economies. Turkish bilateral military assistance to Central Asian states has become substantial only as of late 2000, and even here it focuses primarily on Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, which were willing to accept Turkish equipment and training to help prepare their forces to battle insurgencies. Turkish troops have worked with Uzbek and Kyrgyz special forces units, and in 2001 they gave the Kyrgyz military forces (ground forces and border guards) a variety of nonlethal supplies, including night-vision equipment, all-weather gear, uniforms, and radio stations and transmitters (as well as training in their use and in counterterrorism operations).²¹

The situation in South Caucasus is a different one. If Central Asian states remained hesitant to respond to Turkey's overtures, Caucasian states Georgia and Azerbaijan welcomed Ankara's involvement in the

²¹"A Prickly Friend," *The Economist*, June 8, 2000; Energy Information Agency, "Country Analysis Brief: Turkey," August 2000, www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/turkey.html; Laurent Ruseckas, "Turkey and Eurasia: Opportunities and Risks in the Caspian Pipeline Derby," *Journal of International Affairs*, Fall 2000, No. 1, pp. 217-236; "A Turkish Move into Central Asia," *The Economist*, November 25, 2000; "Kyrgyz Border Guards Get Military Aid from Turkey," *BBC Monitoring Service*, from *Vecherniy Bishkek* web site, June 1, 2001; "Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map"; Marianna Belen'kaya, "Fight for Turkish Gas Market" (in Russian), *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, August 7, 2001, internet edition, http://ng.ru/world/2001-08-07/6_market.html; Liz Fuller, "Turkey Delivers Military-Technical Aid to Kyrgyzstan," *RFE/RL Newslines*, Vol. 5, No. 187, Part I, October 3, 2001; author discussions with U.S. military and government specialists.

middle to late 1990s (Aliiev once again shifting his country's foreign policy in a more western direction). Turkey sponsors these countries' participation in NATO-led peacekeeping in the former Yugoslavia (as part of NATO's KFOR stabilization force in Kosovo), where their peacekeepers serve as part of the Turkish contingent, and provides significant military assistance, including training, refurbishment of bases, and so forth. Both Georgia and Azerbaijan cite Turkey as their largest single trade partner.²²

Energy is a big part of these relationships. Azerbaijan is a primary source of this energy. Georgia and Turkey both stand to benefit from Azerbaijani gas, both as customers and as transit states. Although Turkey lacks any ethnic, linguistic, or religious ties with the majority of the Georgian people, these states' shared interests (and Georgia's desire to identify and build strategic partnerships with NATO member states) have been more than sufficient to form the basis for an excellent relationship. The dark spot in Turkey's relations in South Caucasus, however, is Armenia. Turkey's insistence that the government was not at fault in the deaths of Armenians in Turkey in 1915 has severely constrained any development of bilateral relations between the two countries. Turkish support for Azerbaijan further exacerbates mutual distrust and hostility, as Armenia and Azerbaijan remain at war over the Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh. While the U.S. Congress prohibited the provision of most forms of U.S. military assistance to either Azerbaijan or Armenia throughout much of the 1990s (a prohibition recently lifted), Turkey faces no such restrictions.

Prior to September 11, the United States and NATO appeared generally willing to let Turkey take the lead for them in CASC, insofar as Turkey was able to do so. But Turkey's mixed success demonstrates the problems with this approach. Alone, Turkey lacks the resources to provide the level of economic and infrastructure assistance needed to make a difference in this underdeveloped region.

²²"A Prickly Friend"; "Turkey gives 2.5m-Dollar Grant to Georgian Defense Ministry," *BBC Monitoring Service*, Georgian News Agency *Prime-News*, June 4, 2001; Speech by Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze, "Georgia, the United States, and the New Security Paradigm in Eurasia," at the Willard Hotel in Washington, D.C., October 4, 2001; author discussions with U.S. military and government specialists. For more detail on trade relations, see Chapter Three of this report.

Moreover, throughout the region, Turkey's involvement was often seen as a proxy for U.S. involvement, both by local leaders and in Moscow. To Georgia and Azerbaijan, Turkey's assistance was perceived in large part as a means to more direct security assistance from, and alignment with, the United States. On the one hand, this made states more willing to accept Ankara's help. On the other hand, it meant that without U.S. backing, Turkey's independent influence was limited.

As in the early 1990s, Turkey also remained constrained by its economic ties to Russia. While Turkey views Central Asian and Azerbaijani gas as a possible alternative to dependence on Russia, and has been working with these states and Georgia to develop new oil and gas routes, it has also been working with Russia on the Blue Stream natural gas project. Blue Stream is a plan to lay a pipeline underneath the Black Sea in order to improve gas delivery (Russian and Caspian) from Russia to Turkey and beyond. Construction on Blue Stream began in 2001, and the route appears more feasible than do plans for a Trans-Caspian gas route.²³ The latter would require an underwater pipeline to deliver Central Asian gas to Azerbaijan and then parallel the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline through Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey.

Turkey's interests over the next decade and a half will be heavily influenced by where the pipelines go. Its cooperation with Russia on the Blue Stream natural gas pipeline demonstrate that it is not averse to closer ties with Moscow, if that is the best way to guarantee delivery of the gas. While Turkey wants to build ties in the region, it is generally likely to steer clear of antagonizing Russia. If pipeline routes avoid Russia, and Turkey is able to diversify away from dependence on Russian gas, that assessment may change, especially with regard to South Caucasus. If they do not, and if Turkey's assessment of its growing gas needs proves accurate, Turkey's interests will dictate closer ties to Russia.

This suggests that Turkey is an unlikely source of conflict in CASC. Its regional interests are primarily economic, and will follow energy flows. To the extent that it is able to diversify energy supplies, Turkey

²³Lyudmila Romanova, "Italian Invasion of Russia" (in Russian), *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, August 7, 2001, internet edition, http://ng.ru/world/2001-08-07/1_inroad.html.

will seek to maintain that diversity, which will lead it to make every effort to maintain stable relations with all suppliers insofar as possible. However, a diversified supply will make Turkey less nervous of offending any one supplier. Thus, if conflict emerges for other reasons, there are several possible ways that Turkey could get involved.

If the oil and/or gas pipeline routes through South Caucasus and Turkey develop in accordance with current plans, Turkey will be linked to the CASC region far more closely than it is now. If it becomes a customer for Caspian gas, and that gas can reach Turkey without first traversing Russian territory, Turkey's dependence on Russia will decrease drastically. Even if only oil pipelines from South Caucasus are laid on Turkish soil, these will become an important component of Turkey's economy. If conflict in South Caucasus or Central Asia then erupts to threaten oil and gas fields, pipelines, or related infrastructure, Turkey would face significant incentives to get involved in an effort to protect its diversified energy sources and control the situation. Moreover, insofar as it is likely that conflict near oil and gas fields and pipeline routes generally presents a threat to the energy trade, Turkey may choose to get involved even before there is a clear danger. While Russia's actions and its perceived capacity to act effectively on its own will have an impact on Turkey's decision calculus, like any other state, Turkey can be expected to act to protect its economic interests.

The other possibility for Turkish involvement in Central Asian or Caucasus conflict is linked to its developing relationships with Georgia and Azerbaijan and, to a lesser, lagging extent, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. While these ties do not involve formal security commitments on Turkey's part, they do involve military assistance and training, as well as the provision of equipment. This could lead to Turkey's involvement in conflict if Turkish forces are on the ground when conflict occurs and find themselves either in the line of fire or used as hostages by one or another combatant. Furthermore, simple development of close ties makes it likely that should Georgia or Azerbaijan perceive a severe internal or external threat to national security even now (and, if relations develop as Turkey hopes, some Central Asian states may eventually be as close to Ankara as Tbilisi and Baku are today), they may well ask for Turkey's assistance, and Turkey, although faced with conflicting political and economic interests in such a situation, may, having

weighed its political, economic, and strategic interests against one another, agree to provide it.

Finally, Turkey's involvement in the multinational counterterror effort now under way could lead it to commit forces to Central Asia. Increasing ties between the United States and CASC states mitigate Turkey's importance to those countries, insofar as Turkey was seen as a means to the true prize: cooperation with the United States. However, Turkey is likely to be involved in any multinational presence in the region. The development of U.S.-Russian relations could also affect this dynamic. If Russia and the United States are cooperating in their approaches to the region, Turkey will have strong incentives to join in that cooperation. This could further improve Turkey's relations with Russia. If U.S.-Russian cooperation proves unsustainable, however, Russia is likely to look even more askance at Turkey's involvement in its backyard, heightening tension between the two countries and potentially complicating their economic relations.

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ITS MEMBER STATES

With a few exceptions (namely the Baltic states and, to a lesser extent, Ukraine), the European Union states have kept the non-Russian states that emerged from the wreckage of the Soviet Union at arm's length, particularly those in the southern tier. With the United States and Turkey having taken a more active interest, most of the European Union members saw little reason to do more than take a wait-and-see approach to the development of the CASC region. They provided economic assistance and humanitarian aid after natural disasters, but limited their foreign policy involvement. As energy resources began to appear more lucrative, numerous European companies have gotten involved in CASC. While their governments continue to be cautious, these firms' involvement does change Europe's interests in the region. Moreover, European states are likely consumers of Caspian oil, and possibly even natural gas (although its cost makes it less appealing), as its development continues (see Chapter Five of this report). That said, European firms are involved in the entire range of Caspian oil projects, working with Russia (for instance on the Blue Stream pipeline through Turkey) as well as the CASC states. Thus, their interests, and to a large extent, it seems,

those of their governments, have been focused on economic rather than strategic goals vis-à-vis CASC states.

The EU (and the EC before it) and its member states have provided significant technical and financial assistance to states in the region, including food aid, market and legal reform efforts, and so forth. EU Partnership and Cooperation Agreements have been signed with all CASC states except Tajikistan (although the agreement with Turkmenistan has been signed but not yet ratified). Trade with this part of the world on the part of the EU is minor from the EU's perspective (although in some cases quite significant from the point of view of the CASC states) and generally geared toward energy imports. Accordingly, Azerbaijan is the EU's largest trade partner in South Caucasus, and Kazakhstan is the largest in Central Asia (see Chapters Three and Five of this report for more on trade).

Some EU countries have been more involved in bilateral activities than others, however. The United Kingdom is providing security assistance to Georgia, as is Germany, which of the European states has been possibly the most active in providing assistance in the former Soviet states.²⁴ German-Kazakh cooperation, spurred at least somewhat by the sizable ethnic German population in Kazakhstan (about 40,000 people, or 2.4 percent of the total Kazakhstan population), continues apace. In fact, German military cooperation with Kazakhstan in recent years was more active than that of the United States or Turkey (the latter until recently having had limited success engaging Astana and the former having seen a downturn in relations following Kazakh aircraft sales to North Korea).²⁵ France, for its part, has played a leading role (alongside the United States and Russia) in international efforts to help resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and has built a strong relationship with Armenia.²⁶ More recently, in conjunction with the counterterrorism campaign in Afghanistan, the French have deployed aircraft and personnel to Tajikistan (and, according to some reports Kyrgyzstan) and are developing a plan for

²⁴On security cooperation by the EC/EU and individual member states in the early 1990s, see Hunter, pp. 155–157. On current EU activities, see the European Union web site, www.europa.eu.int. See also Fiona Hill, *The Caucasus and Central Asia*, Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, Brookings Policy Brief No. 80, May 2001.

²⁵Author discussions with U.S. government personnel.

²⁶Hill.

future military cooperation, to include training and information exchanges, with the Tajiks.²⁷

As the EU develops its foreign policy and as energy exploration and exploitation in the Caspian continues, Europe's attitudes toward the region may change. A great deal depends on the extent to which the Caspian becomes a supplier of European energy, and on the routes taken by the pipelines that deliver that energy. If the routes go through Russia, the European states, individually and as part of the EU, are likely to continue policies similar to those now under way: economic assistance and cooperation, private investment, but no significant effort to exert strategic influence over the region. If routes bypass Russia, the Europeans may become more active in the region.

In any case, it is highly unlikely that the next one to two decades will see EU involvement in any CASC conflict independent of a U.S.-led NATO or other international framework. EU states might become involved in the region as part of multinational peacekeeping forces, and there is a fair likelihood that conflict in the region might lead one or more of its states, all of which are NATO Partnership for Peace members, to call for NATO consultations. It is unlikely, but plausible, that those would then lead to NATO action in the region. Finally, the development of the U.S. response to the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States has the potential to draw its European allies (along with numerous other states) into the counterterrorist effort, some component of which is likely to continue to center around Central Asia.

IRAN

Iran is linked to CASC by ties of proximity, religion (although it should be noted that Iran is predominantly Shi'ite and the post-Soviet Muslim states predominantly Sunni Muslim), and, in the cases

²⁷"Tajikistan Agrees to Allow French Jets to Use its Air Bases," *RFE/RL Newsline*, Vol. 5, No. 226, Part I, November 30, 2001; "French Troops Arrive in Tajikistan," *RFE/RL Newsline*, Vol. 5, No. 230, Part I, December 6, 2001; "Western Forces to be Based in Kyrgyzstan," *Jamestown Foundation Monitor*, Vol. 7, No. 227, December 11, 2001; Akbar Borisov, "France to Develop Military Cooperation with Tajikistan: Minister," *Agence France-Presse*, January 2, 2002; "French Military Experts Assess Tajik Infrastructure," *RFE/RL Newsline*, Vol. 6, No. 5, Part I, January 9, 2002.

of Tajikistan and Azerbaijan, ethnicity (Tajik ethnicity and language are of the Persian/Farsi family and almost one-quarter of Iran's population is ethnic Azeri). But after some early efforts to build strategic ties and foster the development of its own brand of Islamic fundamentalism, Iran has largely focused on its economic interests in the region since the Soviet collapse. Iran presents the most direct non-Russian route to market for both oil and gas, and it hopes to become a transit state for exports of these resources out of the region. Moreover, along with Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, Iran is a Caspian littoral state, with its own claims to the energy wealth of the seabed.

Iran is a state of enormous resources and energy know-how. It is OPEC's second-largest oil producer. Nine percent of the world's oil reserves and 15 percent of its gas reserves are on Iranian territory. But its ability to translate economic resources into power and influence are hampered by a U.S. sanctions regime that imposes penalties on countries that trade with Iran. This prevents Iran's economy from developing at a more rapid pace and becoming integrated into the global economic system. It also ensures that Iran continues to see the United States as a hostile power and its activities as potentially threatening to Iran's interests.

Iran's political system, in which power in both the executive and legislative is split between a popularly elected and a religious leadership, reflects continued divisions in its changing society.²⁸ With a reformist president in office, the contrast between Iran's conservatives and its reformers has been particularly stark in recent years, with the reformers seeking to open up ties with Western countries while the religious conservatives seek to continue the policies and postures of the revolution. The results of internal conflicts between Iran's political groupings can be expected to have important implications for its domestic and foreign policy choices in coming years.

In the meantime, given continued hostile relations with the United States, one of Iran's primary goals remains the development of political and economic ties with other states. Russia, whose relations with the United States have also been complicated over the last few

²⁸See Nora Bensahel, *Political Reform in the Middle East*, unpublished manuscript, for a discussion of Iran's political system.

years, presents a good candidate. Iran also seeks to make it more lucrative for a wide range of companies and countries to do business with Iran than to abide by U.S. sanctions. While it is also in Iran's interests to seek to improve ties with the United States so that the sanctions might be lifted, efforts in that direction have thus far fallen short, due both to opposition within Iran and a lack of reciprocal interest from the United States.

Because Russia is a primary partner for Iran, and because it is an important source of weapons and nuclear reactor technology, the relationship with Russia is quite important and often takes priority over other goals in the region. Thus, despite some initial overtures in the early 1990s that appeared geared to supporting Islamic fundamentalism in the CASC region, Iran has generally backed off from such approaches, instead focusing on economic development.²⁹ In fact, its closest ties in the region are with Christian Armenia, Russia's own closest friend (and client-state) in South Caucasus. In Central Asia, Iran maintains good relations with Turkmenistan. During the Tajikistan civil war, Iran promoted and hosted meetings and discussions between the opposing sides. Despite Iran's reported support of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) during the war, its relations with Tajikistan have been good in recent years.³⁰ Iran has also been relatively successful in building relations with Kazakhstan. It has had less luck with Uzbekistan. Russia has been generally supportive of Iran's efforts to build economic and political ties with these states.³¹

Iran agrees with Russia that Western influence over CASC should be limited. It also shares with Russia a perception that stability in the region is an important national security interest for both states. With a large Azerbaijani population in its north, Iran is loath to see conflict in South Caucasus (or Azerbaijani nationalism) spread to its own territory.

²⁹Further hampering efforts to build ties based on shared religion by both Iran and Turkey is the fact that, as Suny notes, the many predictions of a rise in pan-Islamism in Central Asia were not borne out by historical developments, as regional Muslims, while identifying to some extent with Islam, failed to transfer that into any particular affinity to Muslims outside of their own region. (Suny, "Provisional Stabilities.")

³⁰"Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map."

³¹See Hunter, pp. 129–136, for an analysis of Iran's interests in the region.

Iran sees itself as a natural route for Caspian oil and natural gas, and from a geographic perspective, it has a good point. Iran disagrees with Russia on the proper division of the Caspian Sea (Russia argues that the Caspian seabed alone should be divided, while Iran believes the entire sea should be blocked into five equal sectors), but it also has conflicts with other Caspian states, including Azerbaijan, who have their own views of how Caspian resources should be allocated.³² Iran and Russia have the most powerful military forces in the CASC region at present, and Iran has threatened the use of force in the Caspian—in fact, in what Azerbaijan considers its territorial waters, leading to harsh words from Azerbaijan and Moscow (see Chapter Five).

Iran's hopes for an oil route through its territory have thus far been stymied as a result of U.S. sanctions, although not a few oil companies (and a number of states) would like to see the sanctions lifted. There has been somewhat more progress with gas, including a gas swap deal with Turkmenistan and Turkey and an agreement to supply natural gas to Armenia (giving Armenia an alternative to its current monopoly supplier: Russia).

Iran is unlikely to do anything that would spur conflict in the Caucasus or Central Asia. Its hopes for an important and lucrative role in Caspian development make peace in the region an important goal for the Iranian government and business interests. While it is possible that Iran's and Russia's goals in the region will diverge over time, it is also unlikely that Iran will try to assert influence over CASC at Russia's expense, given its reliance on Russia as an arms and technology supplier and a balance against the United States. Insofar as Russia has indicated it will not back off from its relationship with Iran,³³ rapprochement between the United States and Russia should not critically change Iran's assessment of this situation, as long as its own relations with the United States remain poor and it remains in need of what friends it can get. If anything, U.S.-Russian cooperation in the counterterrorist effort may even lead Iran to lower its profile in the region further, as it seeks to maintain good relations with Russia.

³²See Chapter Five of this report.

³³Sergei Blagov, "Moscow Revitalizes Its Old Priorities in Asia," *Johnson's Russia List (Asia Times)*, February 7 (February 6), 2002.

Moreover, Iran's economic interests in maintaining stability in this region appear to outweigh any ideological desire to spread the Islamic revolution or politics built on ethnic ties. This is evidenced by Iran's long-term efforts to develop good relations with the Rakhmanov government in Tajikistan (which has cracked down on Islamic groups and continues to be limited in its power-sharing with the Islamic Renaissance Party, now incorporated into the government as part of the UTO, to which Iran reportedly provided some level of assistance during Tajikistan's civil war³⁴), and its failure to speak out in opposition to Uzbekistan's persecution of Islamic groups and Persian speakers. In fact, Iran continues to actively seek to improve relations with Uzbekistan, despite its policies.³⁵

One thing that could change this equation is a significant warming of ties with the United States, such that sanctions are lifted and Iranian routes for Caspian energy are supported by U.S. firms. Although this is tremendously unlikely at any time in the foreseeable future, if it were to take place, Iran would have less need of Russian friendship and could prove less inclined to continue to respect Russia's self-proclaimed sphere of influence in CASC. However, even given closer ties, Iran would be unlikely to welcome too much U.S. and NATO presence so close to its borders.

If conflict in the region develops, Iran is unlikely to get actively involved. The strategic interests are simply not strong enough to create a domestic coalition in favor of such an adventure. Iran will continue to seek to protect its economic interests, including oil and gas fields and pipelines to which it has links, but insofar as it believes that others can and will guarantee these interests, it has minimal incentive to itself send troops into the region—although it may provide support to specific groups, as it did in both the Afghanistan and Tajikistan conflicts. Even if it seems that others cannot control strife in CASC, Iran is likely to sit out any conflict, hoping that its economic

³⁴“Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map.” See Chapter Two of this report for a discussion of the political situation in Tajikistan.

³⁵See Hunter, pp. 132–136. Another example of Iran's pragmatism is its lack of criticism of Russia over the latter's Chechnya campaign. See also country reports in Adrian Karatnycky, Alexander Motyl, and Amanda Schnetzer (eds.), *Nations in Transit, 2001*, New York: Freedom House, 2001, available online at www.freedomhouse.org/research/nattransit.htm.

interests are not irretrievably damaged and focusing its efforts on preventing the spread of conflict to its own territory (a particular risk if conflict affects Azerbaijan, or if Islamic fundamentalists or refugees—or both—seek shelter in Iran).

Iran's early attitude toward the emerging anti-Taliban coalition reflected such an approach: Iran wanted to see the Taliban gone but did not want to be directly involved in the operation. That said, because Iran avoids active involvement does not mean that it will not seek to protect its interests in other ways. For example, as the post-Taliban interim government was formed, Iran continued to support its own client groups in Afghanistan (and within the interim government), seeking to ensure their victory in internal Afghan conflict within the Northern Alliance and, according to some, at least, potentially destabilizing the transition. While Iran shared the coalition's interest in destroying the Taliban, it did not share Washington's assessment of how the new government should look, and continued to pursue its own, divergent interests.³⁶ One aspect of its motivation in doing so, however, may well have been its exclusion from the coalition in any real way and the U.S. government's choice not to seek rapprochement with Iran, which appears to have also weakened domestic proponents of a more Westward-leaning policy.³⁷ The extent to which this experience is relevant to the pursuit of goals in CASC is uncertain at present, but it is clear that Iran's behavior and involvement will be determined not only by its regional interests, but also by its interaction with the United States, Russia, and other interested parties.

CHINA

China, too, has ethnic links to Central Asia and hopes to benefit from development of its energy resources—as well as from growing trade with the subregion in other commodities. China's northwestern province of Xinjiang is populated predominantly by Uighurs, a Turkic Central Asian ethnic group whose members also live in

³⁶John J. Lumpkin, "CIA Chief: Al-Qaida Remains Threat," *Associated Press*, March 19, 2002, downloaded from *www.washingtonpost.com* on March 20, 2002.

³⁷See John Ward Anderson, "Reform Faction in Iran Is Hurt by 'Evil' Label," *Washington Post*, February 15, 2002, p. A26.

Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, just as ethnic Kazakhs and Kyrgyz live in China. A large multiethnic state in which groups tend to be segregated, China fears that separatist and Islamic fundamentalist political movements will move east from Central Asia into Xinjiang, creating unrest, and/or that Central Asian states will provide a sanctuary for Uighur revolutionaries or help supply them with arms. The extent to which this is already taking place is unclear. The Uighur separatist movement in Xinjiang exists, and there are apparent links with Al Qaeda and reports of Uighur Chinese citizens fighting in Chechnya. However, the movement is also comparatively small and the area heavily militarized by China, keeping the situation apparently under control. The world's second-largest energy consumer, with a rapidly expanding industrial sector, China is increasingly concerned about its long-term ability to acquire oil and natural gas to fuel its economic growth.

China's economic, industrial, and military modernization and development of recent years have worried some countries. Strong states see an increasingly powerful China as a potential competitor, while declining states simultaneously fear its rise and look to it as a potential ally against stronger states.³⁸ Its growing economy presents a huge and lucrative market. For its own part, China is concerned about the threats to its national security that come from within, embodied in the dangers of dissent and fragmentation of this large state.

Economic growth is a fundamental priority of Chinese foreign and domestic policy. Stemming separatism at home is central to domestic policy. In Central Asia, China has focused its attention on developing economic ties with its neighbors, including discussing the potential for eventual energy purchases by China and pipeline routes to it (although it seems likely that these would be prohibitively long and circuitous). Good relations and cooperation with these states to prevent the rise of Uighur separatism would also have the added benefit of enabling China to decrease its military presence in its own

³⁸Even though China, too, is a potential threat, states can be expected to align with it against shared greater threats. See Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*.

western territories.³⁹ China also has a developing relationship with Russia, from which it buys arms and with which it shares viewpoints on a number of key foreign policy issues, such as opposition to U.S. development of a national missile defense. Both China and Russia have hoped that cooperation between them could somewhat balance U.S. power and what their leaders sometimes describe as “hegemony” or “unipolarity.” As with Iran, then, ties with Russia are generally more important to China than interests in developing any sort of influence over Central Asia (China has shown no particular interest in South Caucasus). Even China’s involvement in the region is through a Russian-oriented forum, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which aims to cooperate in stabilizing borders and combating terrorism. (In fact, in June 2001 the SCO decided that its planned counterterror center would operate under the auspices of the CIS and in January 2002 decided that its focus would be Chechnya, Xinjiang, and the IMU.⁴⁰) China’s primary interest has been in keeping the region quiet and friendly. Conflict makes trade difficult and expensive, and is therefore counterproductive to China’s interests.

China has had somewhat strained relations in the past with Kyrgyzstan, having initially refused to recognize borders (of particular concern given past Chinese claims to Kyrgyz territory), and both Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan worry somewhat about China’s large and powerful presence on their borders and the substantial Kazakh and Kyrgyz populations in China. For its part, China fears that uprisings and Islamic fundamentalist movements could emerge from Central Asia to threaten its control over Xinjiang (a key factor in its ready support for the U.S.-led counterterror efforts in fall 2001), while Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are concerned that separatist movements by Uighurs in Xinjiang could create problems for their own governments.

That said, Chinese-Kyrgyz border negotiations have made headway, and relations between China and both countries have been cordial to date, even involving the possibility of cooperation on rail and trade

³⁹“Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map.”

⁴⁰“Central Asian Terror Crack-Down to Focus on Three Groups,” *Johnson’s Russia List (AP)*, January 8, 2002.

routes, as well as pipelines, through Kazakhstan. China is a major trade partner for Kyrgyzstan, and Kyrgyzstan has acceded to Chinese requests to suppress Uighur opposition among the Uighur diaspora on its territory. Moreover, China has provided Kyrgyzstan with about \$600,000 in assistance, to include tents and army gear, and in June 2001 the Kyrgyz and Chinese defense ministries agreed that Kyrgyz soldiers would be trained at a training center in Guangzhou, China.⁴¹

China is also the only state other than Russia to provide lethal aid to a Central Asian state before September 11. In China's case, this took the form of sniper rifles (as well as flak jackets and other material) given (not sold, as all Russian equipment is) to Uzbekistan in 2000.⁴² Some military contacts have also begun with Tajikistan, although at a much more general level.⁴³

Thus, while there is some possibility that ethnic conflict in western China will create problems for its neighbors in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan or vice versa, in either case creating some potential for Chinese intervention in Central Asia, it is generally highly improbable that China could be a source of Central Asian conflict. Like Iran, China will generally be satisfied to stay on the sidelines and let Russia (or the United States) handle any difficulties in this region. There remains, however, the possibility that China may feel obliged to act if Russia (or the United States) for some reason fails to stem burgeoning conflict in the region. This possibility holds especially true for Kyrgyzstan. That said, China would no doubt prefer to be consulted prior to any significant actions near its borders and may respond if it feels its interests are being slighted. For instance, the Chinese chief of the general staff did say, in the context of the counterterrorist operation on Afghanistan, that any U.S. military deployment to Kazakhstan would threaten China's security.⁴⁴ This can be seen less

⁴¹"China to Train Kyrgyz Servicemen," *BBC Monitoring Service, Vecherniy Bishkek* web site, June 14, 2001; "Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map"; *Recent Violence in Central Asia: Causes and Consequences*, Central Asia/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2000; "Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map."

⁴²"Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map."

⁴³"Tajik Defence Minister Hails 'Fruitful' Tajik-Chinese Military Cooperation," *BBC Monitoring Service*, text of report by the Tajik news agency *Asia-Plus*, March 29, 2001.

⁴⁴Edward Helmore, "US in Replay of 'Great Game,'" *Johnson's Russia List (The Observer)*, January 21 (January 20), 2002.

as a statement that the U.S. presence itself is threatening, and more as a notification that China remains an interested party.

AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan has been important to CASC far more as an exporter of unrest than as a state whose leadership might have strategic interests in influencing the situation in the region. A weak state, in its third decade of continuing warfare and facing severe drought, Afghanistan even before September 11 was far from what can be called a functioning state. While the Taliban was generally successful in taking control of most of the country militarily, its rule also brought global isolation (and eventually retribution) on Afghanistan. Afghanistan under the Taliban was a state that trampled on the basic human rights of its citizens, especially the rights of women; that had developed into a center of the global narcotics trade (although Northern Alliance forces were no less guilty of involvement in this trade than the Taliban); and that harbored suspected terrorists, most notably Osama bin Laden, and hosted training camps for terrorists and insurgents, preparing them to fight in conflicts in Chechnya, Central Asia, and elsewhere.⁴⁵

Russia, Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan have all in various ways been linked to the conflict in Afghanistan during the course of the 1990s. The Northern Alliance against the Taliban was a conglomeration of primarily ethnic Tajik and Uzbek forces that joined together against the Pashtun-based Taliban. These forces were supported by Uzbekistan, Iran, and Russia (there are also some reports of Chinese support). Afghani factions have, in turn, been involved in Tajikistan's civil war, and elements of the Tajik opposition and the Chechen uprising, as well as Islamic revolutionary groups like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) that have targeted Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan have sheltered in Afghanistan and received training and support there.⁴⁶

⁴⁵See Chapters Two and Four of this report.

⁴⁶They have also received substantial support from groups in Pakistan. See Chapter Two of this report.

Prior to the events of September 11, it appeared that the Taliban hoped to attain international recognition as the rightful government of Afghanistan; it also seemed likely that if it could hold on to power and stabilize the country, it might even eventually get that acceptance. Positive indicators included an apparent crackdown on the drug trade,⁴⁷ and several states had taken steps that, while they fell far short of recognition, did appear to be moving slowly in that direction. Turkmenistan was the first of the Central Asian states to take a pragmatic line, declare itself neutral in the Afghanistan conflict, and develop some official ties with the Taliban (while also maintaining links to the Northern Alliance), including a trade agreement, all while stopping short of official recognition. Turkmenistan also hosted informal talks between Northern Alliance and Taliban factions in 2000.⁴⁸ At the end of September 2000, Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov stated publicly that he did not see the Taliban as a significant threat to his country and urged a coalition government composed of Northern Alliance and Taliban forces. In October of that year, the Uzbek ambassador to Pakistan met with representatives of the Taliban in Islamabad and reportedly reached an agreement for Uzbekistan and Afghanistan not to interfere in each other's affairs. In that same time frame, the Kyrgyz government also spoke of the need to have some sort of contact with Afghanistan's ruling regime, and perhaps even to consider recognition.⁴⁹

Russian officials, too, made some statements in the fall of 2000 to the effect that the Taliban's role as the most important force in Afghanistan should be recognized. Russia continued its support to the Northern Alliance in this time frame, but it also opened up some new contacts with Pakistan, which it used to pressure Islamabad on its continued support to the Taliban and on the question of terrorist training camps in Afghanistan. The Russians reportedly passed intelligence on these camps to Pakistani officials in the hope and expectation of some sort of action against them.⁵⁰ Those in Russia and Central Asia who favored improved relations with the Taliban

⁴⁷See Chapter Four of this report.

⁴⁸"Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map."

⁴⁹"Recent Violence in Central Asia: Causes and Consequences."

⁵⁰Ibid.

did so in part out of hope that such ties might translate into an end to the sheltering of revolutionaries on its territory and might limit attacks by insurgencies from Afghanistan, ties with the regime appearing the lesser of available evils.

The U.S. response to the September 11 attacks has created a fundamentally new situation, of course, and one that continues to evolve at the time of this writing. From the perspective of the Central Asian states, the worst-case scenario may be that the United States and its allies will succeed in driving the Taliban from power but then abandon Afghanistan and its neighbors. The former will then deteriorate into anarchy, with the United States taking less interest if it becomes a shelter for terrorists or other groups as long as they do not or cannot target the United States or Europe. This bodes ill, however, for the Central Asian states, Russia, South Caucasus, and China, as the insurgencies that threaten their security might well fit such a category. Moreover, a reinvigorated long-term conflict, with or without substantial foreign involvement, could lead to an influx of refugees into neighboring states, straining their already uncertain economic positions, and polarize political and social groups in the region, potentially creating a threat to government control. This is particularly the case in Tajikistan, where links to Afghanistani factions are strong and central control weak, but it is also true for Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and, to a lesser extent, Kazakhstan. Georgia, where it is believed some number of Chechen militants are hiding among the refugees, may also be at risk. Certainly the U.S. effort to assist Georgia in policing the Pankisi Gorge is predicated on the belief that it is possible that not only are militants there receiving Al Qaeda backing, but also that Al Qaeda militants from Afghanistan or elsewhere might seek shelter in areas of the country such as Pankisi, which are lacking in central control.

It is also worth noting that if narcotics production in Afghanistan continues despite (or because of) the international presence, the trade in these illegal substances will continue to move through Central Asia and Russia, further weakening governments and increasing the likelihood of crisis. If, however, war limits the capacity to produce narcotics in Afghanistan, parts of this industry may move

into Tajikistan or Kyrgyzstan.⁵¹ Almost regardless of the specifics of how events unfold, continued chaos in Afghanistan is likely to at least some extent, as no international peacekeeping effort or interim government will be able to consolidate effective control quickly. This will have repercussions for the capability of Central Asian governments to maintain control in their countries—and for the interests of other states.

THE UNITED STATES

There is no question that U.S. interests in the CASC region have been affected by its evolving response to the terrorist attacks of September 11. Prior to considering how U.S. relations with these states are likely to evolve in coming months and years, however, it is worthwhile to examine U.S. policy and interests in the region prior to the events of fall 2001, so as to provide a better context for any analysis of what is and what is not likely to change.

In the decade that followed the end of the Cold War, the United States sought to identify potential threats in what was from its perspective an extremely low-threat environment. It pursued goals and interests that might be termed “nice-to-haves” (as opposed to “need-to-haves”), which might or might not advance security goals but did advance ideological and humanitarian ones: democratization, peacekeeping, etc.⁵² It also pursued its economic interests and sought ways to mitigate nonimmediate, but still worrisome, transnational threats that threatened U.S. interests and prosperity, if not in any immediate sense its existence. These included dangers that

⁵¹For more on this, see Chapter Four of this report. See also “Central Asia: Drugs and Conflict,” Osh/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2001.

⁵²While proponents of democratization argue that it advances strategic goals as well, because democracies are, according to some data, less likely to fight wars (or, depending on the analysis, fight wars with one another), the literature is, in fact, far from conclusive on this matter. Moreover, according to some analysts, regardless of whether democracies are more or less war-prone, democratizing states are more likely to face conflict. Many of the key arguments in this debate can be found in Michael E. Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller (eds.), *Debating the Democratic Peace*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996. In addition to the papers in that volume, see Carol R. Ember, Melvin Ember, and Bruce Russett, “Peace Between Participatory Polities,” *World Politics*, July 1992; and Michael W. Doyle, “Liberalism and World Politics,” *American Political Science Review*, December 1986.

were a long way from development, such as a rogue state missile threat, and those that proved notoriously difficult to overcome, such as transnational terrorism and organized crime. Success in resolving these issues has been extremely limited (and some might argue that the efforts were limited as well).

The difficulties inherent in predicting whence threats will emerge can lead to a wide range of goals and involvements throughout the world which can, in turn, develop into involvement in conflicts and issues that, in retrospect, may or may not be found to warrant a significant commitment of forces and efforts on grounds of national security alone. U.S. activities in CASC in the 1990s can be seen in this light. U.S. policy in the region during that period focused on denuclearization assistance to Kazakhstan, low-level military to military contacts (both bilateral and through NATO's Partnership for Peace program), and various forms of democratization and economic assistance throughout the region. The U.S. government's perceived interests in the region focused on energy resource development, although strategic concerns about Russian resurgence and moral and ethical arguments about the continued independence of the post-Soviet states also played a role.

Although, as discussed in Chapter Five of this report, the United States itself is unlikely to become a customer for Caspian oil or gas, the production of the former will affect world oil prices (to what extent depends on how much oil turns out to be in the region), in which the United States certainly has an interest. And even if there is not as much oil and gas in the region as high-end estimates indicate, the resources have significance beyond mere quantity. Central Asian oil and natural gas provide the potential for diversification for many U.S. allies in Asia and Europe, now highly dependent on Russian and Middle Eastern sources of energy.⁵³

While a variety of U.S. government officials have voiced support for a network of multiple pipelines leading from the region, the better to minimize dependence on Russian (or Iranian) transport routes for both producers and customers, U.S. policy actions have focused

⁵³The extent to which this matters given a global oil market is debatable, but the argument for diversification is made frequently enough to create a political reason to diversify, whether or not an economic one exists.

almost exclusively on the development of routes through Turkey. The United States hoped to limit Russian influence in CASC, although its need to maintain good relations with Russia made it difficult to simultaneously pursue both goals. As noted, pipelines that avoid Russia would decrease Russian power over its Caspian neighbors. However, the United States has been wary of unequivocally placing itself in opposition to Russia in the region. Thus, while its cooperation with Caspian states increased, the United States steered clear of any promises of security assurances or guarantees. It also sought to promote Turkish influence in the region, of which support for pipelines through that country was but one component, and the United States worked with Turkey to coordinate military assistance and cooperation in South Caucasus and, increasingly (although still to a small scale, as discussed above), in Central Asia.

More specifically, the sort of assistance the United States provided to Central Asian states prior to September 11 included joint training of U.S. mountain combat units and Uzbek armed forces, as well as some nonlethal military equipment provided to Uzbekistan, for a total of some \$10 million promised to that country by 2000 (as well as additional assistance through the Central Asian Security Initiative Program).⁵⁴ Kyrgyzstan also received some \$4–\$6 million in assistance from the United States, primarily in the form of nonlethal equipment such as radios, night-vision equipment, and so forth. An interesting footnote is that upon receipt, the Kyrgyz found that some of the electronic equipment received from the United States was incompatible with their existing equipment.⁵⁵

Energy and Russia were not the only issues of concern from a U.S. perspective. Although the region is geographically distant, events there have implications for U.S. interests. State failure, armed conflict, and major political and economic unrest in the CASC region would add fuel to the fire of criminalization and drug trafficking, as well as potentially leading to sectarian civil wars of the sort that emerged in Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal. If this part of the world were to become a terrorist and criminal haven as Afghanistan did, the immediate security threats aside, it would

⁵⁴“Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map.”

⁵⁵Ibid.

become not just challenging, but impossible to exploit the region's energy resources. Moreover, while distance may isolate the United States from the drug trade to some extent, it does not do so for partners and allies in Europe and Asia. Post-Soviet organized crime has already made its mark in the United States despite the miles, and has the potential to wreak further havoc. Finally, as has been made all the more clear by the September 11 attacks, the terrorist threat is little constrained by distance, as a terrorist group can work from bases in one part of the world to carry out acts of terror far away.

The extent to which the terrorist attacks on the United States will mark a watershed event in U.S. strategic thinking, shifting it from that of a secure state to that of a state facing a clear and defined threat, remains uncertain. The dangers posed to the United States by radical groups with a willingness to use terrorist tactics is categorically different from the threat posed by another state. These groups do not threaten U.S. sovereignty nor its survival as a state.⁵⁶ However, terrorism threatens the U.S. way of life, its prosperity, and potentially its freedoms. At the time of this writing, the U.S. response suggests that these threats are seen as significant and vital. The United States is seeking allies against this asymmetric threat, it is responding militarily, and it is seeking to eliminate sources of the threat in a variety of ways.

Because Afghanistan has emerged as a sponsor and a shelter for terrorist groups, particularly Bin Laden's Al Qaeda, which orchestrated the attacks, Central Asia becomes particularly important for the U.S.-led effort. The United States has acquired permission from most states in the subregion to overfly their territories for humanitarian missions, and permission from some to overfly under any circumstances. It has forces, materiel, and facilities in place or available in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan has agreed to also provide such support if needed. Although the United States says it does not desire or plan any permanent military presence and has not granted any security guarantees to these states, it has signed an agreement with Uzbekistan promising to "regard with grave concern any external threat" to Uzbekistan. Significant financial assis-

⁵⁶Although the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by such groups could put them into the same range of destructive capacity as some states.

tance was also promised.⁵⁷ The United States is also, as noted above, providing equipment and training to Georgia to support its efforts to eradicate what are believed to be Al Qaeda-linked fighters in its Pankisi Gorge area.⁵⁸

The United States has also received unprecedented cooperation from the Russian Federation in this effort. Its overtures to the Central Asian states have been balanced by close and consistent cooperation and discussions with Russian government officials. The United States and Russia have exchanged intelligence in support of the counterterrorism fight and have pledged further cooperation in the long term. While many in Russia have continued to express concern at U.S. involvement in its “back yard,” President Putin has been consistent in reiterating that Russia does not oppose the U.S. actions. But the extent to which this cooperation is sustainable and can serve as a basis for further cooperation between the two states will depend on the extent to which they continue to perceive their interests as shared.

There are several possibilities for how this can play out for the states of CASC. An activist U.S. role in CASC will make it difficult to sustain cooperation with Russia. A higher priority on the U.S.-Russian relationship, however, will require the United States to tone down rhetoric and efforts to limit Russian influence in these countries, instead working with the Russians to advance shared goals in the region, which can be a problem insofar as CASC states see a quid pro quo of U.S. security support in exchange for their cooperation. At the same time, the U.S. force presence on and near the soil of these countries means that whatever the United States and Russia may agree between themselves, U.S. influence over the CASC states will grow, as will U.S. involvement in their affairs.

Prior to September 11, ongoing U.S. security cooperation and economic involvement in CASC meant that the prospect of regional conflict was a likely irritant for ongoing U.S. efforts in the area, and

⁵⁷Dana Milbank, “Uzbekistan Thanked for Role in War,” *Washington Post*, March 13, 2002, p. A23; “U.S., Uzbekistan Sign Military Cooperation Agreement,” *RFE/RL Newswire*, Vol. 6, No. 14, Part I, January 23, 2002.

⁵⁸Vernon Loeb and Peter Slevin, “U.S. Begins Anti-Terror Assistance in Georgia,” *Washington Post*, February 27, 2002, p. A1.

posed the threat that U.S. assets or forces could become the targets of attack by combatants. This situation is now further exacerbated by the active U.S. involvement in a conflict near the region. U.S. forces have committed themselves to assist local leaders in CASC with their efforts to control and eradicate “terrorist” groups on their territories. This, combined with the physical presence of U.S. forces, greatly increases the risk that the United States will be drawn into local conflict.

It is possible, of course, that the U.S. presence in the region will have the effect of dampening cleavages and making conflict less likely. But the possibility that it will exacerbate some aspects of it, and draw the attention of certain groups to U.S. forces as a plausible target in their campaigns against their governments, must also be considered. Moreover, there is the question of how and under what circumstances the United States will withdraw from the region and its fights. If the United States remains active in the region, it will find itself involved in a range of stabilizing efforts as it seeks simultaneously to fight terrorists, drugs, and crime and to create and/or maintain peace so as to enable its own forces to operate securely—and to fulfill its promises to local governments. If before September 11 there existed the possibility that the interests of allies, such as Turkey, would lead to greater U.S. involvement in the region, or that local conflict would lead to PfP consultations and perhaps even eventual NATO involvement, now the United States has its own imperatives to remain involved. If it withdraws, it runs the risk that the region will degenerate into anarchy and conflict and itself become a breeding ground for the terrorism and violence that drew the United States into the region in the first place.

INDIA AND PAKISTAN

A number of other states have interests in or implications for the CASC region. India and Israel have also provided military equipment to Central Asian states, for example, and India describes that region as its “extended strategic neighborhood” where it must fight against long-time adversaries Pakistan and China for influence over the

region.⁵⁹ It has built trade ties, including air transport agreements with Central Asian states, and has signed bilateral agreements with Uzbekistan.⁶⁰ As of this year, plans appear to be developing for India to assist in the training of the Tajikistan air force and to help modernize the Ayni air force base, which the French rejected for use due to its poor condition.⁶¹ India has also had close relations with Russia, which is its largest arms supplier, and, along with Russia, Iran, and others, it helped supply Northern Alliance forces during the Afghanistan war, largely by way of Tajikistan.⁶²

Pakistan sought a role in gas exports from Central Asia and took part in the Tajikistan peace talks. A number of trade and transport agreements have been signed with Central Asian states as well. That said, Pakistan's relationships with many states in the region, but particularly Uzbekistan, were poisoned by its support of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the purported links of Pakistani groups and parties to the IMU.⁶³ It seems unlikely that Pakistan will now emerge as a major player in Central Asia, but it will have an interest in developments in the region, if only due to simple proximity, its developing ties with the United States, and its continuing competition with India.

GREAT POWER COMPETITION AND GREAT POWER CONFLICT

A wide range of states have varying degrees of interest and involvement in CASC, interests that are variously affected by the events of September 11 and their aftermath. While in principle this could be

⁵⁹Ahmed Rashid, "IMU Gradually Developing into Pan-Central Asian Movement," *Eurasia Insight*, April 3, 2001, *Eurasianet.org*, downloaded March 19, 2002; Juli A. MacDonald, "The Reemergence of India as a Central Asian Player," *Central Asia Caucasus Analyst*, 2000.

⁶⁰MacDonald.

⁶¹"India to Help Train Tajik Air Force," *RFE/RL Newswire*, Vol. 6, No. 23, Part I, February 5, 2002; Sergei Blagov, "Moscow Revitalizes its Old Priorities in Asia," *Johnson's Russia List (Asia Times)*, February 7 (February 6), 2002.

⁶²Sergei Blagov, "Moscow Revitalizes its Old Priorities in Asia"; Rashid, "IMU Gradually Developing into Pan-Central Asian Movement."

⁶³See Hunter, pp. 135–136; M. Ehsan Ahrari, *Jihadi Groups, Nuclear Pakistan, and the New Great Game*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2001.

seen as having the potential to make the region an arena for conflict between outside interests, as Figure 7.1 illustrates for four of the states discussed in this chapter, the interests of many powers overlap considerably, and disagreements and agreements do not always follow clear lines of alliance, religion, or ideology. Moreover, in the aftermath of September 11, some interests (those in the lighter-lined boxes) may be overshadowed by others (priority interests are enclosed in heavy-lined boxes). Much remains uncertain. To what extent will Russia's fear of terrorism and desire to cooperate with the United States temper its stance on proliferation? How much (and in which direction) will Iran's policy of support for terrorist groups change in the face of U.S. policy and actions?

But the fact remains that for key powers such as Russia, the United States, Iran, and China (not shown in the figure due to its smaller level of involvement to date), areas of agreement appear to be more

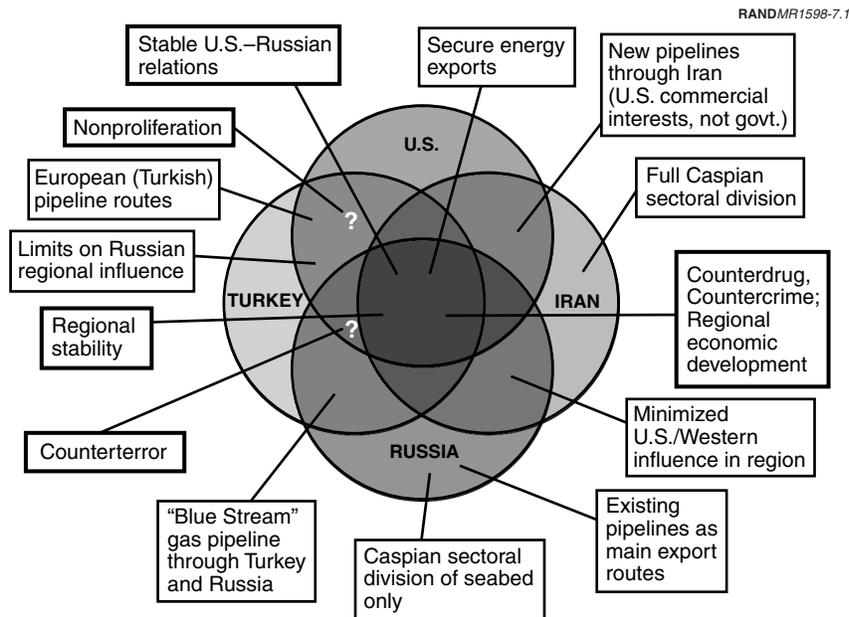


Figure 7.1—Foreign Interests in Central Asia and South Caucasus

important than areas of disagreement, which are in several cases simply the specifics of how to attain shared goals. Thus, while there will no doubt be competition between outside powers in the region, there are strong incentives in place to limit their proclivity to evolve into conflict.

A key component of this is the fact that for most of the outside powers with interests in CASC, their relations with each other are at least potentially more important than their desire for influence in the region. Even before September 11, Iran, China, Turkey, and the United States all had to weigh their desire for influence in CASC against their desire for good relations with Russia. Moreover, in Iran's case, economic interests tended to outweigh any desire to spread potentially destabilizing ideology to the region.

The exception was Russia. Until September 11, Russia was the only outside power that truly saw CASC as vitally important to its national security. While other states saw the potential for increased interest as pipelines were built, this was not likely to lead them to increase their commitment to this part of the world to the level of Russia's.

Today, Russia remains the outside state with the greatest degree of security and economic interest in CASC. But insofar as Central Asia becomes a support base and potential battleground for a U.S.-led coalition fight against terrorism, U.S. interests in the domestic and foreign affairs of these states become far more central to its overall policies. Insofar as these interests align with those of Russia, and both states see the terrorist threat as subsuming any dangers the other poses, it has the potential to boost cooperation between the two. But the United States and Russia maintain conflicting interests on a range of issues, and the strength of their nascent friendship is likely to be tested in a multitude of ways as the counterterror effort continues.

THE LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

An analysis of foreign interests in the CASC region is incomplete without a discussion of how regional states see foreign powers, and their own interests. The CASC states are politically and economically weak. Perhaps even more than Russia, they tend to perceive their security environments as threatening. Some of these threats come

from without. The immediate threat of Russian imperialism has in recent years been supplanted by the fear that Afghanistan's mixture of fundamentalist Islam and anarchy will spread, particularly in Central Asia.⁶⁴ Moreover, as discussed in detail elsewhere in this report, the political, economic, ethnic, criminal, and other internal sources of conflict in these countries are exacerbated by the danger of refugee flows, support for insurgents, and war stemming from the fighting and the anarchy in Afghanistan. This fear has, of course, been exacerbated by the prospect of reinvigorated fighting and unrest in Afghanistan in the wake of the September 11 attacks.

Because the CASC states expect their political and economic weakness to continue, they have long sought outside assistance to combat the threats they perceive. In the early days of their independence, the most significant threat to survival and security was perceived to be Russia, which made no secret of its desire to reintegrate its periphery in some form. As a result, most of these states hoped that Western assistance would help balance against this Russian threat.

This is what brought many of these states to join and participate actively in NATO's Partnership for Peace. Exceptions to the rule were states that needed more assistance and support than NATO and the United States were offering: Armenia, engaged in a war for the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh within Azerbaijan, accepted Russian support and assistance, as did Tajikistan, which dissolved into civil war in 1992. Russian peacekeepers were dispatched to resolve the conflict (Kyrgyz and Uzbek forces also took part), and Russia remained actively involved in the peace talks and settlement. Both Armenia and Tajikistan remain close to Russia, and Tajikistan can be described to a large extent as a client state of Russia, given its heavy military presence and close involvement in Tajikistan's government structures. Tajikistan prior to September 11 was hesitant to build ties with the United States and NATO.⁶⁵

To NATO and the United States, PfP was a means to build cooperation with all of the post-Communist world, and something far different from, and far short of, an alliance. To many of the Caspian states,

⁶⁴But also in the Caucasus: Georgia's President Eduard Shevardnadze spoke of the "Wahabist" threat to his country in a speech in the United States on October 4, 2001.

⁶⁵"Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map."

however, it was a step toward closer ties, leading perhaps to eventual alignment. In the meantime, although NATO and the United States offered no security assurances, PfP membership brought military ties, which Caspian states, particularly Georgia and Azerbaijan, hoped would signal to the Russians that they were not without protection. Bolstering that signal, these states resisted Russian efforts to get involved in their affairs. Uzbekistan, too, was seeking a similar route, welcoming U.S. assistance while resisting Russian offers, withdrawing from the CIS collective security treaty and joining the GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova) grouping, which, although not a military alliance, was seen as a statement by its members of independence from Russia.⁶⁶

In the middle to late 1990s, the development of domestic threats and the dangers posed by proximity to Afghanistan combined with the lack of clear Western commitment to make many states reassess their viewpoints. Although Georgia and Azerbaijan maintained a pro-Western outlook and continued to make clear their hope for ever-closer ties to NATO (even as their relationships with Turkey continued to deepen), many of the Central Asian states showed signs of warming to Russia, as Armenia and Tajikistan had already done. The Russian government, after all, shared these states' fears of regional conflict and stood willing and ready to offer whatever help was asked of it. This explains why Kyrgyzstan accepted the Russian offer of military assistance. While Kyrgyzstan has avoided a Russian military presence, it has nonetheless maintained good relations with Moscow.⁶⁷

But Kyrgyzstan was particularly weak, having little in the way of natural resources and having as neighbors potential hegemony Uzbekistan and China.⁶⁸ Other states sought other routes. Uzbekistan became less recalcitrant with Russia, but stopped short of accepting any assistance. Turkmenistan maintained its position of

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Although China is by far the larger state, Uzbekistan, with its past practices of ignoring Kyrgyzstan's borders in its efforts to ensure its own security (see Chapter Two), may actually pose the greater threat, insofar as its actions and statements suggest a more hostile intent (see Walt for a theoretical discussion of the components of threat).

nonalignment even as it increasingly isolated itself from the rest of the world (it never joined the CIS collective security treaty, and although it did recently join PfP, it has not been active). Kazakhstan, with its large ethnic Russian population, continued to tread carefully, balancing ties to Russia with ties to other states (and with the limited resources it could allocate to cooperation with NATO).⁶⁹ Kazakhstan also perceives a threat of Islamic/insurgency violence and, after the incursions into Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in August 2000, shifted many of its special forces units to the south of the country.⁷⁰

The Central Asian states also have complicated relationships with one another. Uzbekistan repeatedly accused Tajikistan of allowing the IMU to operate from its territory, while Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan were unhappy with Uzbek mining of border regions (including some areas that remain undemarcated), which has resulted in dozens of civilian casualties, as well as Uzbek air strikes across their borders, both in response to IMU incursions. Kyrgyzstan, too, has mined borders with Tajikistan and destroyed some mountain passes to prevent incursions. Tajikistan is also concerned about reports of discrimination against ethnic Tajiks in Uzbekistan, which include restrictions on Tajik-language literature and possible deportations from border regions.⁷¹

Uzbekistan, for its part, supported the Tajikistan government during its civil war (although it later served as the staging ground for at least one opposition incursion) and offered assistance in pursuit of the IMU after the 1999 insurgency attacks (when the assistance was declined, Uzbekistan went ahead with bombing raids into Tajik territory).⁷² In 2000, Tajikistan agreed to allow Uzbek helicopters into its airspace, and the two states signed an agreement to cooperate to fight Islamic extremism in September 2000.⁷³

⁶⁹“Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map.”

⁷⁰“Recent Violence in Central Asia: Causes and Consequences.”

⁷¹“Tajikistan: An Uncertain Peace”; “Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map.”

⁷²“Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map.”

⁷³“Recent Violence in Central Asia: Causes and Consequences.”

Kyrgyz-Uzbek relations have also been tense. In addition to the border mining and air raids, the two states have had disputes over gas and water (see Chapter Five), and Uzbekistan has pressured Kyrgyzstan to crack down on the Hizb ut-Tahrir and other Islamist groups. While Kyrgyzstan has generally complied and carried out arrests of individuals who were then turned over to Uzbekistani authorities, there remain some reports that Uzbekistani security has also taken matters into its own hands and crossed the border to apprehend suspects.⁷⁴

Arguments that Uzbekistan has sought to take advantage of the IMU incursions to strengthen its control over the region culminate in rumors that the Karimov government in fact supported the IMU for this purpose (these appear to be unsubstantiated).⁷⁵ There are over 100 border disputes between Uzbekistan and its neighbors, a fact that has not prevented Uzbekistan from claiming that there are none.⁷⁶

Thus, efforts by the Central Asian states to cooperate amongst themselves to enhance their security have generally remained on the level of agreements and meetings, rather than real accomplishment. On the other hand, the appeal of Moscow's offers to Caspian states was tempered by their knowledge that Russia lacked the cash and the know-how to invest advantageously and effectively in its neighbors' economies. Furthermore, to many states in the region, Moscow, long the center of imperial rule, continued to appear as a significant threat to their existence, such that Russian promises of military support rang false, and even dangerous. As Grigor Suny writes, post-Soviet states had some difficulty perceiving Russian involvement in their affairs as a positive factor, given Russia's past imperialism and present ineffectiveness.⁷⁷ But in the absence of alternative sources of support against either Russia, foreign-backed insurgent movements, or other dangers and threats, many of the Central Asian states, with

⁷⁴*The IMU and the Hizb-Ut-Tahrir: Implications of the Afghanistan Campaign.*

⁷⁵"Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map."

⁷⁶Ibid. "Uzbekistan Denies It Has Border Disputes with Neighbors," *RFE/RL Newsline*, Vol. 6, No. 24, Part I, February 6, 2002.

⁷⁷Suny, "Provisional Stabilities."

little military power of their own, saw little choice in the long term but to give in to Russia's pressure.

As with everything else in this region, the prospect of energy development and export played (and continues to play) an important role. If in the short term these states seek outside assistance with their security problems, in the long term, the energy producers among them continue to hope that they will be able to transform those resources into economic power and greater independence. States that lack oil and gas reserves hope that they can serve as transit countries and therefore also benefit from energy exploitation in the region.

This requires not only that the energy can get to market, but that there be multiple routes for it to do so. For the oil producers, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, this generally means routes through Turkey or Iran, as well as through Russia. For gas-producing states Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan also produce gas), which are separated from Turkey by the Caspian Sea, the most viable alternative to Russia is Iran (although Afghanistan has also been sporadically considered, it seems an extremely unlikely option today). Turkmenistan is already shipping a small amount of gas to Iran, but the long-term possibilities depend in large part on the United States easing sanctions against those who have dealings with Iran and its businesses (an unlikely prospect given the current situation). In the meantime, an additional problem with the hopes for multiple pipelines is that for multiple export routes to be economically sustainable, it must be feasible to build the routes and there must be sufficient quantities of oil and/or gas to fill all the pipelines. This is more likely to happen for oil, which is easier to transport, than for gas. But in either case it depends on high-end estimates of Caspian energy production proving true. If production proves to be lower, multiple routes may prove impossible for everyone.⁷⁸

Prior to September 11, this meant that for the gas-producing states, and to a lesser extent for the oil producers, there was little choice but to turn to Moscow for economic and security assistance, or perhaps

⁷⁸See Chapter Five of this report.

to seek to develop closer ties with Iran and risk antagonizing the United States by doing so. Moreover, the gain in trading export dependence on Russia for export dependence on Iran, a major oil and gas exporter in its own right, is questionable, as Iran could also use this power to control competing Caspian energy exports to their detriment.

Increased U.S. military involvement in Central Asia changes this dynamic. For Uzbekistan, the U.S. forces on its soil provide a means to enlist the United States in its fight against its own insurgents, and the United States has been amenable, at least insofar as targeting IMU bases in Afghanistan has been concerned. Uzbekistan also sees U.S. support as bolstering the Karimov regime and further decreasing security dependence on Moscow. The Karimov regime has been hesitant to reveal to the public the extent of U.S. involvement, however, heavily censoring press reports on the war in Afghanistan. It is also worth noting that Uzbekistan has agreed to access for humanitarian and search and rescue purposes—not combat operations. Moreover, it is unclear the extent to which U.S. pressure on Uzbekistan to democratize will strain the relationship. As noted in Chapter Two, in late January Karimov held a referendum to extend his presidential term from 5 to 7 years, a vote he won overwhelmingly. As Karimov's authoritarian rule continues, and insofar as he uses the war on terrorism as an excuse for further crackdowns on political opposition forces, the United States may find itself in an increasingly awkward situation. Finally, the implications of U.S. presence in Uzbekistan for U.S.-Russian cooperation in the counterterror effort should also be considered. While Russia opposes a long-term U.S. presence, and the United States has said that it does not plan a permanent military presence (although congressional leaders have said that U.S. support is part of a long-term commitment to the region), Uzbekistan has much to gain from keeping the United States in place and engaged for as long as possible.⁷⁹

The dynamic for Tajikistan is somewhat different. The Tajiks were already dependent on Russia for security before September 11, and it

⁷⁹Makarenko and Biliouri, "Central Asian States Set to Pay Price of US Strikes"; George Gedda, "U.S. May Remain in Central Asia," *Johnson's Russia List (AP)*, February 6, 2002; Olga Dzyubenko, "Franks Sees No Permanent US Bases in Central Asia," *Johnson's Russia List (Reuters)*, January 23, 2002.

is unlikely that they have taken or will take any action vis-à-vis the United States without Russian approval. Tajikistan has remained careful in its language and proposals, for instance arguing in December 2001 that peacekeeping in Afghanistan should be carried out by the 6+2 countries (China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, the United States, and Russia) except Pakistan under UN auspices.⁸⁰ It has permitted coalition forces to use its facilities in support of humanitarian missions (as well as search and rescue and combat “if necessary”), and France received permission to station six Mirage 2000 fighter-bombers in Tajikistan for the duration of the campaign, as well as to use Tajikistan facilities for its forces en route to Afghanistan. Italian and U.S. forces, too, have reportedly flown into Tajikistan, and status of forces agreements were rapidly negotiated. In exchange, Tajikistan is receiving aid packages from a variety of countries, including Japan and France (and India, as noted above), as well as help in refurbishing its airports and facilities, many of which were deemed unusable by coalition forces. Tajik officials have stated that they expect the foreign presence to be long term, as the stabilization of Afghanistan can be expected to take quite some time.⁸¹

Whether U.S. and coalition presence in the region increases Tajikistan’s security over time will depend on how successful U.S. and coalition forces are in controlling the unruly regions that Russian and Tajik troops have had such difficulty with in recent years. If they hope to operate in Tajikistan, they will have little choice but to try, if only in the name of their own force protection needs. As discussed in Chapter Eight, Tajikistan, with its limited central control, high levels of drug and other illegal traffic, and crime, will present unusual challenges.

⁸⁰“Tajik Security Official Sees Role for ‘Six Plus Two’ in Afghan Peacekeeping,” *RFE/RL Newsline*, Vol. 5, No. 232, Part I, December 10, 2001.

⁸¹“Tajik, French Presidents Discuss Afghanistan,” *RFE/RL Newsline*, Vol. 6, No. 14, Part I, January 23, 2002; “French Troops Arrive in Tajikistan,” *RFE/RL Newsline*, Vol. 5, No. 230, Part I, December 6, 2001; “Western Forces Arriving in Tajikistan,” *Jamestown Foundation Monitor*, Vol. 7, No. 225, December 7, 2001; Makarenko and Biliouri, “Central Asian States Set to Pay Price of US Strikes”; Akbar Borisov, “France to Develop Military Cooperation with Tajikistan: Minister,” *Agence France-Presse*, January 2, 2002; “French Military Experts Assess Tajik Infrastructure,” *RFE/RL Newsline*, Vol. 6, No. 5, Part I, January 9, 2002.

Kyrgyzstan, like Uzbekistan, was fairly eager to welcome a U.S. and coalition presence, and U.S. forces are in place at Manas airfield near the capital, with plans to expand their presence further. A bilateral agreement on the stationing of forces was signed with the United States and ratified by the Kyrgyz parliament in early December 2001. It is valid for one year but can be extended and explicitly allows for U.S. use of Kyrgyz installations in support of humanitarian and military missions. A variety of other coalition states, to include Britain, France, Italy, Canada, Australia, and South Korea, have also asked Kyrgyzstan for basing access. The United States also held a bilateral counterterrorism exercise with Kyrgyz forces in February. Reportedly, the agreement reached between the United States and Kyrgyzstan called for a payment of \$7,000 for each takeoff and landing of a U.S. plane. More recently, reports have surfaced in the Kyrgyz media that the sums actually paid are far lower, and there have been reports of "incidents" (including a hit-and-run accident involving a U.S. officer in March) involving U.S. troops in the surrounding region, as well as of growing resentment of the U.S. presence. The extent to which this resentment reflects the views of the Kyrgyz public is unclear. Moreover, as with Uzbekistan, the United States will face a growing mismatch between its pro-democracy rhetoric and local crackdowns on opposition political forces.⁸²

While Kazakhstan has expressed willingness to consider requests to station troops on its soil, no such requests appear to have been forthcoming at present, although U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell said in December 2001 that Kazakhstan would be making bases and airspace available to the coalition. Kazakh leaders have expressed their willingness to provide humanitarian and economic support to Afghanistan, and the president has suggested that the U.S. presence

⁸²Boris Volkhonsky, "The US Tries Walking in the Shoes of the USSR," *Johnson's Russia List (Kommersant)*, January 23, 2002; Olga Dzyubenko, "Franks Sees No Permanent US Bases in Central Asia"; "Western Forces to Be Based in Kyrgyzstan," *Jamestown Foundation Monitor*, Vol. VII, No. 227, December 11, 2001; *Johnson's Russia List (Reuters)*, January 23, 2002; George Gedda, "U.S. May Remain in Central Asia," *Johnson's Russia List (AP)*, February 6, 2002; "Kyrgyz Paper Accuses U.S. of Failing to Pay for Use of Airport," *RFE/RL Newsline*, Vol. 6, No. 36, Part I, February 25, 2002; "U.S. Officer in Kyrgyzstan Injures Two Women in Car Crash," *RFE/RL Newsline*, Vol. 6, No. 51, Part I, March 18, 2002.

in Afghanistan should be limited to the time it takes to complete the current operation.⁸³

Turkmenistan, for its part, has argued that its neutral status precludes the use of its territory for military forces involved in the war in Afghanistan, although its territory and airspace could be made available for humanitarian missions. In January 2002, Turkmenistan turned down a German request for air base access in support of the coalition effort.⁸⁴

Clearly, the U.S. and coalition forces face somewhat different environments in each of the Central Asian states. In the long term, whether U.S. involvement leads it to build closer ties with the Central Asian states or whether its need to cooperate with Russia will lead it to eschew efforts to exert influence at the Russians' expense, the implications of the ongoing counterterror effort for all of the states of the region will be significant. Influxes of U.S. aid, the physical presence of U.S. and other coalition forces, and the much-increased global attention to this part of the world and its problems may prove a tremendous boon for them. On the other hand, the underlying problems of the region will not go away simply because of a foreign troop presence, and, if anything, the likelihood of foreign (including U.S.) involvement in local problems has increased.

The South Caucasus states face a somewhat different situation. Both Azerbaijan and Georgia have been highly proactive in courting Western support, particularly that of the United States and Turkey. Unlike the Central Asian states, they continued to see Russia as their predominant source of threat. Georgia's domestic secessionists have enjoyed a measure of Russian support, while the refugees and possible militants in Pankisi are there in large part due to the war in Chechnya (although they chose Georgia to flee to not just due to proximity, but also because of the lawlessness and lack of central control in this country). Russian actions in Chechnya, and its de-

⁸³"Kazakhstan Signals Readiness to Host Antiterrorism Coalition Forces," *RFE/RL Newswire*, Vol. 5, No. 226, Part I, November 30, 2001; "Kazakhstan Again Says it May Join Antiterrorism Coalition . . .," *RFE/RL Newswire*, Vol. 5, No. 230, Part I, December 6, 2001; "Kazakhstan Offers Use of Facilities to Antiterrorism Coalition," *RFE/RL Newswire*, Vol. 5, No. 232, Part I, December 10, 2001.

⁸⁴"Turkmenistan Rejects German Request for Use of Airfields," *RFE/RL Newswire*, Vol. 6, No. 4, Part I, January 8, 2002.

mands on Georgia and Azerbaijan to assist in that effort, have not made them any less nervous. There can be no question that both of these states initially feared that U.S. rapprochement with Russia would lead to a cooling of relations with their NATO friends, along with increased pressure from Russia to go the way of Armenia and align with their neighbor to the north—or else face Russian political, economic, and potentially military wrath.

In Georgia, the visible U.S. assistance to help fight militants in Pankisi suggests that the United States is choosing a different path. In January and well into February 2002, Georgian officials up to and including the president denied Russian reports of cooperation between the two countries to fight crime and extremist Islam in Pankisi. In fact, a Georgian official said in mid-February that there was no need for joint operations with either Russia or the United States in Pankisi, although his country welcomed “methodological and technical assistance” from either or both. Then, in late February, it became publicly known that the United States was, in fact, providing helicopters and training for Georgian troops to assist in their efforts to eliminate Al Qaeda and other Islamic extremists believed to be in Pankisi. The United States reiterated that it has no intention of sending its own forces into combat in Georgia, and the Russian defense minister Ivanov, on a visit to Washington, reported that he had been fully briefed on U.S.-Georgian cooperation.⁸⁵

Georgia’s unwillingness to accept Russia’s help and cooperation in Pankisi and its willingness to work with the United States will not do much to improve Russian-Georgian relations, even if Russia’s President Putin remains willing to accept U.S. involvement. A congressional vote to loosen restrictions on aid to Azerbaijan and continued efforts to push forward the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline (and apparent Russian warming toward that plan as well) suggest that Azerbaijan, too, will continue to enjoy significant Western support, and that Russia has, for the time being at least, chosen to accept and

⁸⁵“Georgia, Russia Agree to Launch Joint Operation in Pankisi Gorge . . .” *RFE/RL Newslines*, Vol. 6, No. 20, Part I, January 31, 2002; “Georgian Officials Exclude Bin Laden’s Presence in Pankisi,” *RFE/RL Newslines*, Vol. 6, No. 32, Part I, February 19, 2002; Vernon Loeb and Peter Slevin, “U.S. Begins Anti-Terror Assistance in Georgia,” *Washington Post*, February 27, 2002, p. A1; Robert Burns, “Russians Tell of Terrorists in Georgia,” *Associated Press*, March 13, 2002, from www.washingtonpost.com.

perhaps even try to gain from this situation. How long this is sustainable, and what level of commitment the United States is truly willing to give to Georgia given the country's dire need for fundamental restructuring, remain key questions. If the United States does get involved in Georgia to any real extent, moreover, it runs a real risk of being drawn into that country's myriad internal conflicts and will face the challenges of operating in an area of continued instability and limited central control (see Chapter Eight of this report).

The extent to which recent and future events will affect the development of the energy trade is still an open question. Insofar as U.S. support for predominantly Turkish routes was driven by a desire to limit Russian and Iranian influence, U.S. cooperation with Russia (and potentially Iran, although, as discussed above, this appears less likely) may lead it to change its policies somewhat. Turkey will, of course, continue to support pipeline routes through its own territory, and Georgia will remain a vociferous advocate of those options, as it has tremendous amounts to gain from them as a transit state. It is still too early to judge, however, the extent to which U.S. energy policy will change.

CONCLUSIONS

The incentive structure in place for the major outside actors in the CASC region includes shared interests in economic (especially energy) development, political stability, and counterterrorism, counter-crime, and counterproliferation efforts. These combine with the greater importance that most of these states attach to relations with each other over and above relations with the Caspian states, to exert a moderating influence on the propensity for competition between them to evolve into armed conflict. This will continue to be the case for as long as current incentive structures hold. However, these incentives will be challenged as the multinational response to the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States evolves. Moreover, there exist a number of ways other than war between them in which third parties can develop into potential sources of conflict in the region. Finally, especially considering the importance to Russia, China, Iran, and increasingly the United States that the

region remain peaceful, it is likely that if conflict occurs, one or more outside states will be involved in its continuation and/or resolution.

Russia, which is weak relative to the strength enjoyed by its predecessor state, the Soviet Union, remains the outside actor with the most at stake in the region. The risk that in coming years it will seek to reassert its control over the region, perhaps even by force, is somewhat mitigated in the near term by its cooperation with the United States in the fight against terrorism. But because this is a threat born of Russian weakness rather than Russian strength, it does not entirely disappear, and its resurgence will depend in some part on the extent and form of U.S. presence in the next one to two decades. Moreover, if and when conflict occurs in the region, Russia will almost certainly play a role. In fact, the situation may be even worse if it does not. Insofar as states such as Iran and China, which have interests in CASC but also value highly good ties with Russia, believe that Russia will maintain a sphere of influence in the Caspian, they will seek not to tread on Russia's toes. If, however, they have reason to believe that Russia (or some other party, such as the United States) cannot or will not resolve dangers in the region, they may feel obliged to take action themselves. If the United States remains actively involved, these risks are mitigated, particularly if it can cooperate with Russia to maintain control in the region.

The United States will face important strategic choices in CASC in coming years. Prior to September 11, its interests in this part of the world were generally secondary and derivative of the interests of allies and economic actors. Even then, allies like Turkey and global goals such as democratization and the effort to control crime and drugs would have kept the United States involved on some level. Now that the counterterror effort has escalated to armed conflict, the United States has placed forces in the Central Asian region, changing its own incentive structure in several ways. Stability in this inherently unstable region has become far more important. The likelihood that the United States will become involved in regional conflict has become far greater. And whatever choices the United States makes in coming years, as long as it remains involved in the region at all, its local unrest, conflict, and economic and political problems, themselves possibly exacerbated by the evolving situation in Afghanistan, will complicate U.S. military and other efforts in Central Asia, South Caucasus, and beyond.