Central Asia and the Afghanistan Security Dilemma: Amelioration, Retrograde, or Status Quo? Central Asia's Role in Regional Security Regarding Afghanistan after 2014

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Introduction

The regional security of Central Asia hinges on the level of stability within Afghanistan and its foreign relations with its neighbors.[1] Afghanistan is not only pivotal in the maintenance of regional security, but is also crucial to the region's economic and political development. As Ashraf Ghani, chairman of the Afghan transition commission, stated, "The region needs to make a choice, a stable Afghanistan … is absolutely essential."[2] However, there is looming doubt as to the ability of Afghan forces to be able to defend the state against domestic and external insurgent movements and to sustain the progress in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency that the U.S.-backed, NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan has established under UN mandates since the United States initiated military action against the Taliban in 2001. The year 2014 is the deadline that has been set for ISAF troops to withdraw from the war-torn country and hand over the responsibility for ensuring security in the nation to the Afghan Security Forces. Currently the U.S. and NATO forces are transitioning from a mission of combat to one of support.[3] The participants of the "Bonn+10" conference[4] identified 2011 as the dividing point "From Transition to the

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1 Central Asia is defined for the purpose of this paper to include the five near and bordering countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

2 Anna Borshchevskaya, "Key Regional Perspectives: Central Asia," *New Atlanticist Policy and Analysis Blog*, Atlantic Council (18 November 2011); available at www.acus.org/new_atlanticist/key-regional-perspectives-central-asia.

3 Latif Mohammadi, "2014 Withdrawal Dateline: An In-depth Study," in *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, ed. Dr. Hussain Yasa (11 November 2011); available at http://outlookafghanistan.net/topics.php?post_id=2446. See also Katelyn Sabochik, "President Obama on the Way Forward in Afghanistan," *The White House Blog* (22 June 2011); available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/06/22/president-obama-way-forward-afghanistan.

4 The "Bonn+10" title signifies the ten-year anniversary of the original conference held in Bonn, Germany in 2001, where the international community established actions and goals to implement over the following decade to attain a peaceful end state for Afghanistan.

Transformation Decade," during which the burden on the international community to assist Afghanistan in maintaining peace and continuing to develop its governmental reforms should gradually diminish.[5] Several important questions require informed and insightful responses: During this "Transformation decade," what will the security picture in Afghanistan look like? Who will supplant the U.S. forces and complement the Afghan security forces to establish the necessary stability in Afghanistan to allow further economic and political development in the country and the region?

This article evaluates what kind of role the Central Asian states will play in Afghanistan after U.S. and NATO/ ISAF forces complete their withdrawal in 2014. Through a survey of regional media and analysis from renowned security agency assessments of these countries, I assess the interests and political will of each Central Asian state to provide their own security, and that of the region in dealing with Afghanistan. I also describe and compare regional trade and security cooperation efforts with relation to Afghanistan and to threats external to each respective state. These interests are then compared with each state's individual and collective capacity to fulfill them, considering a variety of characteristics related to leadership, economic strength, security and armed forces capacity, and national foreign policy dynamics, along with other factors that may inhibit future regional cooperation efforts. Finally, comparative analysis of these traits is displayed in a matrix format, which assists in determining future engagement approaches with Afghanistan on the part of each Central Asian state.

As a result of this research, I argue that the low levels of security force capacities, both historical and projected, of the Central Asian countries, their diverse levels of political will and corresponding goals regarding security operations in Afghanistan, and the lack of effective cooperation among the Central Asian states on a variety of related security issues will lead to their inability to cooperate in a comprehensive unified effort to establish stability in Afghanistan. Therefore, collectively, Central Asia will play only a minor role in continuing the U.S./ISAF security and stability operations in Afghanistan after 2014, directly affecting the regional security of Central Asia at large. Instead, the countries will continue as they have been doing, strategically creating a buffer zone of protection against any negative spillover effects resulting from any conflicts that may arise in Afghanistan. These conflicts include incursions from terrorist organizations, drug trafficking, and other organized crime. Furthermore, they will increase their reliance on either bilateral or multi-lateral security relationships with larger superpowers and regional organizations such as the U.S., Russia, or the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to supplant their weak military, drug control, and border security organizations, as well as other deficiencies within their respective security sectors.

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[5] "Conference Conclusions," in *Afghanistan and the International Community: From Transition to the Transformation Decade*, proceedings of The International Afghanistan Conference, Germany, Bonn, 5 December 2011; available at http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/cae/servlet/contentblob/603686/publicationFile/162762/Conference_Conclusions_-_International_Afghanistan_Conference_Bonn_2011_engl.pdf.

Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan has a unique record of cooperating with developmental efforts in Afghanistan. Kazakhstan has supported peacekeeping operations under NATO auspices by providing officers to work in hospitals and ISAF headquarters, and by providing overflight rights and emergency access to its airports during Operation Enduring Freedom. Furthermore, it adapted a special plan on Afghanistan under which it allocated millions of dollars toward humanitarian assistance in the form of food grains given to the Afghan people, besides providing funds for state transport infrastructure and educational institution development.[6] Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev reminded other heads of state in 2010 at the NATO Lisbon Summit that Kazakhstan was the first Central Asian country to join ISAF in support of the war effort in Afghanistan.[7] Since then, Kazakhstan has transported non-military cargo for ISAF and coalition troops, and has offered a deeper supportive role in providing food and construction materials and training experts in civilian specialties.[8]

President Nazarbayev supports the Afghan president in holding that security can only be enhanced through established economic growth. Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai stated during the 2011 SCO Summit in Astana that, although he hoped that the UN mission and the international troops will be withdrawn from Afghanistan by 2014, the governmental institutions and the Afghan economy would "remain vulnerable." Therefore, further assistance in economic development will be required from the international community.[9] When President Nazarbayev became president of the OSCE, he stressed that Afghanistan remained the most serious regional problem, and committed Kazakhstan to acting as a dedicated partner with the OSCE to restore the economy of Afghanistan as the most important goal to improve matters and achieve a calm and peaceful life for the Afghan people. He concluded, "Until we rebuild the economy, until we give work to the people, the only source of their livelihood will be drug trafficking. That is a global concern…. We say the economy first, then politics," pointing out that Afghanistan, like Kazakhstan and other post-Soviet countries, are not

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6 Kanat Saudabayev, "Prepared Remarks by H.E. Kanat Saudabayev, Secretary of State of the Republic of Kazakhstan, at the NATO PA Plenary Session" (speech given to the NATO PA Plenary Session in Valencia, Spain, 18 November 2008); available at www.akorda.kz/en/secretary_of_state/speeches/prepared_remarks_by_h_e_kanat_saudabayev_secretary.

7 Office of External Affairs, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, "President Nursultan Nazarbayev Addresses a Session of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) on Afghanistan at the NATO Summit in Lisbon," 20 November 2010; available at http://www.akorda.kz/en/page/page_president-nursultan-nazarbayev-addresses-a-session-of-the-euro-atlantic-partners_1348722984.

8 "Kazakhstan Sending Troops to Afghanistan Under UN Mandate – Minister," *BBC Monitoring Central Asia Unit* (27 May 2011). See also "Sending Troops to Afghanistan Could Pose a Threat to Kazakhstan's Security, Diplomat," *Kazakhstan General Newswire* (9 June 2011).

9 "Kazakhstan: Afghans to Assume Responsibility for their Security in 2014 – Leader," *BBC Monitoring Central Asia Unit* (15 June 2011).

Figure 1: Map of Central Asia.[10]

ready for drastic changes. According to Nazarbayev, democracy needs time to develop gradually to convince the populations in these transition states of its merits.[11]

Kazakhstan's foreign policy focuses on developing healthy economic trade and strategic security relationships with a range of global powers to diversify its foreign relations towards Russia, the U.S., and Europe.[12] President Nazarbayev boosted trade between the members of the Customs Union (CU), which consists of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus. Trade with these countries increased 38 percent the first ten months of the union, and Kazakhstan's economic growth has increased twelve times since 1994.[13]

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[10] Map showing the Countries of Central Asia and adjacent countries with borders, capitals and main cities. Available at www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/central-asia-map.htm.

[11] Interview of Nursultan Nazarbayev by Denis Loktev, "Nazarbayev: 'Economy First, Then Politics," *Euronews* (15 January 2010); available at www.euronews.com/2010/01/15/nazarbayev-economy-first-then-politics/.

[12] IHS Janes, "External Affairs," in "Country Report – Kazakhstan," *Jane's Military and Security Assessments* (IHS Global Unlimited, 2011).

[13] Greg Delaney, "President Nazarbayev – Address to the Nation 2011 (highlights)," *KazakhstanLive.com* (1 January 2011).

However, Kazakhstan is wary of yielding too much to influence from Moscow. U.S. bilateral security arrangements with Kazakhstan have also been established. In late 2011, Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Konstantin Zhigalov supported the ratification of a proposed protocol on amendments to the agreement between the U.S. and Kazakhstan to create another commercial rail transit route for special cargo and personnel on Kazakh territory near the Kazakhstan–Uzbekistan border. This agreement was "in connection with the [United States'] participation in efforts to stabilize and rebuild the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, [and] meets a key foreign policy goal set by President Nursultan Nazarbayev to create a security belt around our country."[14] The U.S. has supplied equipment and counterterrorism training for Kazakh troops. However, the Kazakh President precluded the U.S. or NATO states from basing aircraft in Kazakhstan, as they have done previously in Uzbekistan and currently do in Kyrgyzstan. Kazakhstan has expressed a desire to increase cooperation with NATO, but does not want to become a full-fledged member, in fear of unduly antagonizing Russia.[15] Kazakhstan has also looked to international organizations and multi-lateral engagements to enhance efforts to counter terrorism, insurgency, and illicit drug trafficking from Afghanistan.[16] As the current chair country of the CSTO in 2012, Kazakhstan remains one of its most active members.

Unfortunately, Kazakhstan's security relationships with its Central Asian neighbors are highly variable.[17] Kazakhstan is worried about Kyrgyzstan's inability to arrest its own problems of social welfare and poverty, which has produced chronic political infighting and social instability. Additionally, issues such as labor migration from Kyrgyzstan, water disputes, transit of goods, and border demarcation work against building positive Kazakh-Kyrgyz relations. Kazakh-Uzbek border disputes still stifle cooperation, and corruption, tax rules, customs obstacles, or other bureaucratic issues (most on the Uzbek side) have historically hampered economic ties. More positively, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Turkmenistan agreed in 2007 to build a pipeline along the Caspian coast, to transport mostly Turkmen gas to Europe. President Nazarbayev supports the idea of transporting Turkmen gas via Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to China using the existing Kazakh energy infrastructure.[18]

Corruption is a key problem throughout Kazakh society. The absence of mechanisms for democratic control or accountability, combined with the high concentration of resources within the higher echelons of government, has allowed corruption to infect all levels of government. As a result, corruption is evident in Kazakh bureaucracy and at every stage of the judicial process, providing governmental impunity and making independent investigations nearly impossible. Kazakh army officials have in the past

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[14] "Kazakh MPs Approve Bill on New Transit Point for US Cargo to Afghanistan," *BBC Monitoring Central Asia Unit* (2 November 2011).

[15] IHS Janes, "External Affairs," in "Country Report–Kazakhstan."

[16] "CSTO to Work at Building Collective Air Defense System in CA," *Kazinform* (21 February 2012); available at http://inform.kz/eng/article/2442774.

[17] IHS Janes, "External Affairs," in "Country Report – Kazakhstan."

[18] Ibid.

embezzled millions of dollars worth of military budget allocations. Furthermore, the rise in illicit trafficking is linked to pervasive corruption among Kazakhstan's customs and security services. Even today, it remains a mystery to what extent Kazakh state officials are involved in the drug trade.

Kazakhstan is a relatively economically strong and stable nation in comparison with its regional neighbors. However, it still relies on bilateral relationships with world powers as well as dedicated membership and active participation in international organizations to aid its economic development and enhance its strategic regional security.[19] The importance President Nazarbayev places on its trade and security relationships with Russia and China leads me to believe that it will look to these countries and the security alliances in which they play a leadership role more so than to the U.S. as the NATO/ISAF troops withdraw from Afghanistan, even though Kazakhstan attempts to uphold a balanced foreign policy with the West and Asia. Furthermore, Kazakhstan's past history of diplomatic and indirect international support in Afghanistan through humanitarian assistance and economic development projects indicate that future actions will continue to carry a defensive character, as President Nazarbayev pursues a "security belt" approach in his security policy with Afghanistan.

Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan is not only concerned about the transnational threats from Afghanistan that affect its own security, but also about how they affect the stability of the entire Central Asian region. At a recent interview in Brussels, Kyrgyzstan's former interim president, Roza Otunbayeva, stressed: "The region is becoming increasingly insecure because of the activities of the international force in Afghanistan. Military violence is coming increasingly close to our borders. Right now, jihadist groups are active everywhere. They are waiting for their opportunity. I am concerned about the very porous border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and that between Tajikistan and Afghanistan."[20] Miroslav Niyazov, a retired Major-General of Kyrgyzstan's State National Security Committee, shares a similar concern that Afghanistan has been and remains a source of illicit narcotics, and the U.S./NATO troop withdrawal will cause his country's security to deteriorate.[21]

Despite this concern, Kyrgyzstan's newly elected and appointed political elite continue to focus internally on resolving domestic issues rather than on any expressed intent to provide direct support in Afghanistan in response to the NATO/ISAF troop withdrawal. During his presidential inauguration speech, the former Kyrgyz Prime Minister Almazbek Atambayev swore to develop and protect the interests of Kyr-

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[19] IHS Janes, "Security," in "Country Report–Kazakhstan."

[20] Chris Hensen, "'Jullie Weten Dat Wij Een Brandhaard Zijn.' Instabiliteit in Centraal-Azië President Roza Otoenbajeva Van Kirgizië Vertelt over Haar Angst Voor Chaos En Geweld (Interview with Kyrgyz President Otunbayeva in Brussels Warning of Regional Chaos)," *NRC Handelsblad Online* (2 March 2011).

[21] "Central Asian States Not to Benefit from US Afghan Pullout–Kyrgyz General," *BBC Monitoring Central Asia Unit* (23 June 2011).

gyzstan looking north towards Russia, with whom Kyrgyzstan has "a common history and future," but nothing was mentioned regarding cooperation towards a regional solution for stability in Afghanistan.[22] At the end of 2011, upon being elected as the new President of Kyrgyzstan, Atambayev focused on domestic affairs. While acknowledging that Kyrgyzstan is still recovering from ethnic turmoil in 2010, he affirmed that further inter-ethnic turmoil would not be tolerated. Issues involving security, terrorism, and drug trafficking remain only as "acute problems." The political scientist Aida Alymbayeva has mentioned that all of Kyrgyzstan's recent efforts have focused on preserving political and ethnic stability in its own country by "establishing relationships between the political elites."[23] However, Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Ruslan Kazakbayev did shed a ray of hope in a meeting with the Afghan Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan, when he stressed that ensuring regional security against drug trafficking and religious extremism remains the focus in regional cooperation. The Kyrgyz government's plan to implement their share of regional security cooperation is to work with the OSCE in training Afghan custom officers in Kyrgyzstan, and to participate in conferences and projects directed towards the economic restoration of Afghanistan.[24] However, such good intent is indirect in nature, and has yet to yield substantial or measurable results.

Kyrgyzstan is the home of the Manas Transit Center near Bishkek. Although Manas is recognized as the most important transshipment and refueling point for the U.S. and NATO in support of operations in Afghanistan, its validity is losing political clout as the integrity of the Kyrgyz government and the transit center's cost/benefit ratio is put into question.[25] The U.S. invested USD 123.5 million into the Kyrgyz economy in support of the airbase in 2010. Today, payments to the Kyrgyz government are sustained at USD 60 million annually. Unfortunately, some believe most of this money fuels corruption and lines the pockets of sitting politicians.

Kyrgyzstan, like other Central Asian states, has a history of straddling the political fence with its foreign policy to leverage national interests for economic benefit or strategic security support, and will likely continue to do so.[26] Former Kyrgyz Presidents Akayev and Bakiyev were known to play political games with both the U.S. and Russia for economic support and security. In 2009, for example, President Bakiyev fell to Russian pressure to revoke U.S. rights to use Manas air base in return for financial

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[22] Reuters, "KYRGYZSTAN: Newly-inaugurated President Almazbek Atambayev Says He Will Strengthen and Protect His Nation and Build Relationships with Neighbouring Countries," *ITN Source* (2 December 2011).

[23] Asker Sultanov, "Atambayev Reviews 2011 Achievements," *Central Asia Online* (29 December 2011); available at http://centralasiaonline.com/en_GB/articles/caii/features/main/2011/12/29/feature-02.

[24] "Kyrgyz Foreign Minister, Afghan Envoy Discuss Security, Drug Fight," *BBC Monitoring Central Asia Unit* (6 February 2012).

[25] "Russian Paper Says USA Uses Kyrgyz Base to Ferry Troops to Central Asia," *BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union - Political* (9 June 2011).

[26] IHS Jane's, "Foreign Relations," in "Country Report–Kyrgyzstan," *Jane's Military and Security Assessments* (IHS Global Limited, 2011).

investment and supplies for its military.[27] However, shortly thereafter, Bakiyev agreed to cooperate with the U.S. on an agreed lease of over triple the rent paid in previous years.[28] In June 2011, Kyrgyzstan's Foreign Minister Ruslan Kazakbayev praised cooperation with Moscow, while expressing hope that U.S.–Kyrgyz relations would continue to prosper in the security sector and in efforts to combat drug trafficking through its newly reopened Drugs Control Agency. Simultaneously, former Prime Minister Almazbek Atambayev and his deputy, Omurbek Babanov, groomed relations with Kazakhstan and Russia.[29] Recently, the Kyrgyz National Security Committee's border service received USD 16 million worth of military hardware from Russia, which is only half of the scheduled aid from a Russian program dubbed "Brothers Fighting for Fixed Borders." This further reinforces President Atambayev's claim that Russia is Kyrgyzstan's "main strategic partner."[30]

Kyrgyzstan supplements its military weaknesses not only with strategic bilateral relationships, but with ties to regional security organizations as well. Kyrgyzstan's defense capabilities are weak, and unable to defend the country against incursions even of small groups of radical Islamist militants. The successful attacks in Kyrgyzstan from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in 1999 and 2000 are proof of Kyrgyzstan's security shortcomings. Other radical Islamist groups such as *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (HuT) and the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) are also active, some of which have claimed attacks in neighboring Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Although the reform of the security sector has been initiated, little progress has been made, and Ministry of Defense sources admit that more than half of their Kyrgyz conscripts are unfit for military service.[31] Therefore, Kyrgyzstan's security is reliant on both economic and military alliances. These include NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program and the Central

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[27] "Russian Paper Says USA Uses Kyrgyz Base to Ferry Troops to Central Asia."

[28] Lieutenant-General U.S. Army (Ret.) David W. Barno, Andrew Exum, and Matthew Irvine, *Beyond Afghanistan: A Regional Security Strategy for South and Central Asia,* report, 25 May 2011, 16.

[29] Erica Marat, "Kyrgyzstan's Chaotic Foreign Policy," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 8:121, The Jamestown Foundation (23 June 2011); available at www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[swords]=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews[any_of_the_words]=Yemen&tx_ttnews[pointer]=3&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=38087&tx_ttnews[backPid]=381&cHash=12078e23b0eb7463a945b91db5565c76#.Ue3-OlOxM7A.

[30] Deirdre Tynan, "Central Asia: Russia Taking Steps to Reinforce Security Relationships," *EurasiaNet.org* (2 February 2012); available at www.eurasianet.org/node/64946.

[31] IHS Jane's, "Defense," in "Country Report–Kyrgyzstan."

Asia Cooperation Organization (CACO).[32] Understanding that both Moscow and Beijing have a strong vested interest in maintaining stability in Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan is also a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Officially, both the Kant air base and a new facility being constructed in the south of Kyrgyzstan are not strictly Russian bases, but military facilities of the CSTO. Bishkek also hosts the secretariat coordinating the CSTO's Collective Operational Reaction Force (CORF).[33]

Besides being unpredictable, with inconsistencies in its foreign policy and deficiencies in its military strength, Kyrgyzstan has other characteristics that hinder its capability to be effective in contributing directly to regional security efforts in light of Afghanistan's U.S./ISAF troop withdrawal. The new parliamentary system established by former President Roza Otunbayeva still suffers from infighting and struggles to exert political control over semi-autonomous southern regions in Osh and Jalalabad, where ethnic violence that flared in June 2010 still haunts the region.[34] Kyrgyzstan is still one of the poorest former Soviet states, so its potential and capacity to assist financially in fostering Afghanistan's stability remains low. Kyrgyzstan produces hydroelectric power for domestic and export purposes. However, decreasing water levels and increasing domestic demand has yielded low profits and extensive electricity shortages. Unemployment estimates of 10–20 percent, exacerbated by weak economic and job growth potential, forces many Kyrgyz nationals to seek work elsewhere.[35] Furthermore, narcotics trafficking, organized crime, and corruption remain endemic problems in Kyrgyzstan. Even the Kyrgyzstan Drugs Control Agency "has so far proven to be as ineffective and corrupt as the rest of the country's law enforcement bodies."[36]

The prospects for Kyrgyzstan's future contribution to any "war on terror" in Afghanistan and associated contributions towards regional security efforts seem bleak. Although Kyrgyzstan's former leadership considers that Afghanistan's situation is dire, and its current foreign minister advocates that a comprehensive security strategy is

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[32] The Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO) was initially created under the name of Central Asian Economic Union in 1994, by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. Tajikistan joined the group in 1998, and the organization was then renamed the Central Asian Economic Cooperation (CAEC). On 28 February 2002, the CAEC was transformed into the Central Asian Cooperation Organization. The recent integration of Russia into the agreement (28 May 2004) is very likely to change the center of gravity of CACO. The main focus of CACO is presently the improvement of regional safety and stability as the basis for further improvement in the economic situation in the region. For more on this topic, see: http://ecetrade.typepad.com//Central%20Asian%20Cooperation%20Organization%20basic%20info.doc.

[33] IHS Jane's, "Executive Summary," in "Country Report–Kyrgyzstan."

[34] Roman Muzalevsky, "Key Risks Facing Central Asia in 2012 and Beyond," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 9:27, The Jamestown Foundation (8 February 2012); available at www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=38985&tx_ttnews[backPid]=13&cHash=617585be26c5232803a2a60ccec22c17#.Ue3_G1OxM7A.

[35] IHS Jane's, "Economy," in "Country Report–Kyrgyzstan."

[36] IHS Jane's, "Drug Trafficking," in "Country Report–Kyrgyzstan."

needed, newly elected President Atambayev has focused on resolving domestic issues, relying on international organizations and regional security alliances to compensate for Kyrgyzstan's inability to effectively contribute to regional security efforts. Instead, Atambayev has only offered to assist the regional stability effort by training Afghan forces on its own territory. Kyrgyzstan's lack of military or financial strength, engrossed involvement in its own domestic affairs, and inconsistent political ambitions make it a weak candidate for any direct contribution in Afghanistan as more ISAF/NATO troops continue to withdraw from Afghanistan through and even after 2014.

Tajikistan

Tajikistan is deeply concerned about its own security as well as that of the region. However, history has proven Tajikistan's insufficient capability to counter transnational threats relative to the Central Asian region. In his address to the Supreme Assembly (*Majlisi Oli*) on 25 April 2011, President Emomali Rahmon noted that security and stability in Afghanistan was necessary for Central Asia, particularly for Tajikistan "as much as the air we breathe." The president reaffirmed that, "Addressing modern threats and challenges and joint struggle against other negative phenomena, as well as helping and promoting Afghanistan's efforts, training necessary personnel for Afghanistan in our country and other areas will always be in the spotlight of the agenda of our cooperation with this friendly country."[37] Unfortunately, history has proven that the means to meet such good intentions may not be within reach. During the most deadly civil conflicts in Tajikistan from 1992 to 1997, government forces battled against radical Islamists and local warlords in fighting that resulted in thousands killed and/or internally displaced, and threw 80 percent of the Tajik population into poverty. Only through brokering deals with political factions, keeping peacekeepers at a minimum, and tolerating disruptive warlords as a necessary evil was Tajikistan successful in becoming "tolerably stable." It opted for a *laissez-faire* approach, integrating warlords into the political scene while still allowing them to retain their substantial autonomy.[38] Although the 1997 peace accords were established with the Islamist-dominated United Tajik Opposition (UTO), the frequency of cross-border militant activity of the IMU insurgency or other armed groups has increased since 2009.[39] After the pitiful display of resistance that Rahmon's forces put up against the insurgency uprising that occurred in the eastern region of Rasht in 2010–11, Tajiks now fear that their tattered security

[37] President Emomali Rahmon, "Address by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan His Excellency Emomali Rahmon to Majlisi Oli on Key Directions of Internal and Foreign Policy of the Republic of Tajikistan" (address, Dushanbe, 25 April 2011).

[38] George Gavrilis, "The Tajik Solution: A Model for Fixing Afghanistan," *Foreign Affairs* (22 November 2009); available at www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65690/george-gavrilis/the-tajik-solution.

[39] IHS Janes, "Security" and "Executive Summary," in "Country Report – Tajikistan," *Jane's Military and Security Assessments* (IHS Global Limited, 2011).

forces will not be able to withstand further offensives from the IMU,[40] even more so as the planned withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan by 2014 begins to commence.[41]

Tajikistan's armed forces, domestic security, and border patrol units remain weak. Motivation among the population to serve in the armed forces is dismal, therefore draft-dodging, desertion and banditry are frequent. With only USD 60 million dedicated to the defense budget, the pace of military transformation is extremely slow. Even though Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB), the U.S., China, and the UNODC have provided training and financial aid to assist in addressing the massive narcotics trafficking and "Islamist militants" problems along the Tajik–Afghan border, Tajikistan's Committee for State Border Protection (KOGG) remains "underfunded, poorly trained and equipped, and fails to protect the Afghan border…." A vast majority of illegal narcotics trafficking passes by the Tajik border guards, and significant clashes have recently increased with Islamists insurgents, which have left scores of militants and KOGG personnel dead. Institutional corruption furthermore prohibits the KOGG from stemming the flow of drugs across the border.[42]

As a result, Tajikistan relies on its bilateral and multi-lateral relationships to supplement its meager security efforts. Russian instructors train the Tajik National Guard to defend Rahmon's regime, and Tajikistan's most capable fighting force, the 1st Special Operations Brigade, follows Russian airborne forces' doctrine and training methods. Since 1999, Tajikistan has supported Russia's military installation called Okno ("window"), which tracks any flying objects up to 40,000 km above Central Asia. Russia's 201st motor rifle division is considered the best-equipped and most combat ready force in Tajikistan, and serves as the basis of the CSTO's Collective Operational Reaction Force (CORF).[43] During a quadrilateral meeting in Dushanbe in September 2011, Tajikistan agreed to jointly strengthen its effective cooperation with the SCO, CSTO, UN, and OIC, and to host the Fifth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA V) in March 2012.[44]

Tajikistan is most likely to provide economic support to transform Afghanistan through collaborative efforts with Russian-based organizations and agreements. At last year's OSCE meeting in Vienna, the Tajik foreign minister stressed the importance of the four-party framework of governments from Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and

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[40] Andrew Stroehlein and Kimberly Abbott, "Tajikistan: The Changing Insurgent Threats," International Crisis Group, Report no. 205 (24 May 2011), Executive Summary and Recommendations; available at www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/media-releases/2011/asia/tajikistan-the-changing-insurgent-threats.aspx.

[41] "Tajikistan Fears Security Threat after NATO Troops Withdrawal from Afghanistan," *Russia and CIS Military Newswire* (19 December 2011).

[42] IHS Janes, "Executive Summary," "Security," and "Foreign Forces," in "Country Report–Tajikistan."

[43] Ibid., "Security" and "Foreign Forces."

[44] "Afghan, Pakistani, Tajik, Russian Leaders Sign Joint Statement," *BBC Monitoring Central Asia Unit* (2 September 2011).

the Russian Federation, as well as that of collaboration in implementing joint projects, including the CASA-1000 project – an economic initiative planned to provide 1000 MW of electricity from Tajikistan to Pakistan, through Afghanistan. In his view, such projects as this and "the training and professional development of civilian and military personnel and the construction of railways, highways, and bridges linking our countries" contribute to the rehabilitation of Afghanistan. Furthermore, it was hoped that trade and tourism would flourish as the frequency of direct flights between the two countries increased.[45]

Unfortunately, Tajikistan still remains the poorest country in the region. A World Bank poverty assessment in 2003 showed that 64 percent of households in Tajikistan lived under the poverty line. High unemployment and its poor economy have driven nearly 800,000 residents to become migrant workers, who send inconsistent remittances home due to the unstable and depressed world economy. Susceptible to drought and dependent on others for natural gas, Tajikistan has suffered financially from low levels of production in its cotton and aluminum industries, and of other chief exports such as hydroelectricity. Therefore, outside assistance is required to prevent Tajikistan's economy from imploding.[46]

However, Tajikistan has cleverly benefited from international aid stemming from the conflicts in Afghanistan. In his address to the *Majlisi Oli*, President Emomali Rahmon stressed the importance of "constructive cooperation" with the United States and European Union as members of the "antiterrorist coalition … fighting against terrorism, extremism, illegal drug trafficking and transnational organized crime."[47] Tajikistan profits from "win-win" developmental projects, which Tajik officials insist must be constructed on their side of the border with Afghanistan.[48] A recent pact with Russia (signed in September 2011) ensured "the preservation of the Russian presence in Tajikistan [and] participation of Russian representatives in the improvement of state border protection and the operational border security of the Republic of Tajikistan."[49] Furthermore, recent ratifications of earlier agreements with Russia to receive Russian

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[45] Hamrokhon Zarifi, "Statement by Mr. Hamrokhon Zarifi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, at the 856th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council" (speech, 856th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council, Austria, Vienna, 31 March 2011); available at www.tjus.org/latest-news/107-statement-by-mr-hamrokhon-zarifi-minister-for-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-tajikistan-at-the-856th-meeting-of-the-osce-permanent-council. See also "Electricity Projects on Top of Ahmadinejad's Agenda," *Somoso.com News* (15 February 2012); available at http://www.somoso.com/news/electricity-projects-on-top-of-ahmadinejads-agenda/.

[46] IHS Jane's, "Executive Summary," in "Country Report – Tajikistan."

[47] President Emomali Rahmon, "Address by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan His Excellency Emomali Rahmon to Majlisi Oli on Key Directions of Internal and Foreign Policy of the Republic of Tajikistan."

[48] George Gavrilis, "Why Regional Solutions Won't Help Afghanistan: The Myth of Neighborly Harmony," *Foreign Affairs* (18 October 2011); available at www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/136598/george-gavrilis/why-regional-solutions-wont-help-afghanistan.

[49] Tynan, "Central Asia: Russia Taking Steps to Reinforce Security Relationships."

advisory personnel, training, transportation, and equipment assistance with Tajikistan's Border Control further solidifies Tajikistan's reliance on Russia for its security needs. However, India may compete with Russia for the right to use Tajikistan's Ayni airfield due to its historic investment of nearly USD 70 million toward refurbishments,[50] providing opportunity for the Government of Tajikistan to profit economically and politically from collaborative security interests.[51]

Tensions between Tajikistan and its Central Asian neighbors continue to prevent regional cooperation. Improperly marked borders result in sporadic clashes with subsistence farmers, and shootouts occur occasionally between border guards from Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan as they have allegedly attempted to assist civilians in cross-border crime. As a result of disagreements over natural gas payments, Uzbekistan closed its border with Tajikistan in 2008, and disputes over landmines planted in 1999 and 2000 in response to IMU incursions continue to flare up. Tajikistan strongly objected to Uzbekistan's withdrawal from the Central Asian unified energy grid in 2009, which deprived the Tajiks of Turkmen electricity. In response, Tajikistan is attempting to break its dependence on Uzbek energy supplies by building a major hydropower station in Rogun, which will transform Tajikistan into a net electricity exporter.[52] Even today, a fence still separates the two countries, and repeated border skirmishes have prompted Uzbekistan to move tanks closer to its border with Tajikistan.[53]

Corruption and narcotics trafficking remain significant problems in Tajikistan. As the Drug Control Agency (DCA) in Tajikistan recognizes increases of up to 61 percent in opium production in Afghanistan, the UN International Drug Control Program (UNDCP) reports that the Tajik DCA has successfully intercepted only 3 to 4 percent of the total of narcotics trafficked through the country.[54] Understaffed and underpaid police and security forces in Tajikistan capitalize on illicit profits from narcotics trafficking, and consequently are not capable of enforcing the security measures needed to protect the porous 1350-km Tajik border with Afghanistan.

Although the President of Tajikistan and other political elites understand and have voiced the sentiment that security and stability in Afghanistan is as necessary "as the

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[50] Alexander Sodiqov, "Dushanbe and Moscow Disagree over Russia's Use of Ayni Airbase," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 8:28, The Jamestown Foundation (9 February 2011); available at www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[swords]=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews[any_of_the_words]=ayni%20airbase&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=37478&tx_ttnews[backPid]=7&cHash=3677858bb61bc95b73b5537f8d77ee4e#.Ue4GkFOxM7A.

[51] "Tajik Parliament Ratifies Tajik-Russian Agreement on Border Cooperation," *Russia and CIS General Newswire* (29 February 2012).

[52] IHS Jane's, "Security," in "Country Report–Tajikistan."

[53] Roman Muzalevsky, "Key Risks Facing Central Asia in 2012 and Beyond."

[54] The increase of 61 percent was in comparison of results in 2011 to those of the previous year as reported by the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics of Afghanistan of the UNODC. Remarkably, production in the northern Tajik bordering province of Badakhshan rose 55 percent last year alone. For more information, see "Increase in Opium Production in Afghanistan Gives Cause for Concern," *Tajikistan News-NA "Asia-Plus"* (26 January 2012); available at http://news.tj/en/news/increase-opium-production-afghanistan-gives-cause-concern.

air we breathe," the political will to pursue the measures necessary to establish the security required is simply not evident. Tajikistan's poor economic condition and its inability to stem the corruption so prevalent among the forces needed to provide security in its country further prevent it from being an active or effective contributor to any regional stability effort.[55] Instead, Tajikistan has been shown to profit from a dysfunctional Afghanistan by obtaining continued financial benefit and military support from larger superpowers such as Russia and the U.S. Furthermore, its capacity to intercede militarily in Afghanistan in order to defend its own people is woefully inadequate. Tajikistan must continue to rely on the political and military support of regional organizations, preferring those in which Russia has the largest influence. Therefore, Tajikistan is most likely to pursue a passive role in support of Afghanistan's stability, preferring that Afghanistan advocate a *laissez-faire* style of compromise with the Taliban, similar to the way the Tajik government had to conciliate with its opposition during its exhausting civil war in the 1990s. Tajikistan will hold a defensive stance against any insurgency, relying on the collaborative efforts of the CSTO or SCO to facilitate effective intervention, while it remains engaged in protecting itself or negotiating to overcome the differences it has with its other Central Asian neighbors.

Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan's isolationist foreign policy has hindered its development, causing it to be the slowest former Soviet state to progress economically. Since Turkmenistan gained independence, former Turkmen President Niyazov established a series of societal and political reforms under a policy publicly known as "permanent neutrality," which isolated it from the outside world and provided him with lifetime control of the country. After Niyazov's sudden death in December 2006, President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov has done little to improve the well-being of the citizens of Turkmenistan, and has only opened its doors to the outside world in a very controlled and slow manner. By maintaining a highly controlled and oppressive regime he is able to stem all political opposition and theoretically reduce the risk of popular unrest. Furthermore, Turkmenistan's new leadership has yet to diversify its economic activity beyond the energy sector. Virtually none of the Turkmen gas revenue has been invested into other areas of the economy, increasing the nation's financial risk from a potentially unstable source of income. Turkmenistan's lack of transparency in its budget makes assessing its growth unreliable and unpredictable. Consequently, major multilateral financial organizations are prevented from providing desperately needed financial assistance to help Turkmenistan invest in diversifying and developing its economic sector.[56]

This isolationist stance has contributed to unstable relations between Turkmenistan and its Central Asian neighbors, which may have a sharply negative effect on a col-

[55] IHS Janes, "Executive Summary," in "Country Report – Tajikistan."

[56] IHS Janes, "Executive Summary," in "Country Report–Turkmenistan," *Jane's Military and Security Assessments* (IHS Global Limited, 2011).

laborative approach in dealing with regional security. Turkmenistan is the only Central Asian state to not participate in any sub-regional organizations such as the Eurasian Economic Community (EURASEC), CACO, CSTO, and the SCO.[57] Uzbekistan has regular disputes with Turkmenistan over the latter state's construction of the "Lake of the Golden Century," concerned that the creation of the lake from the Amu Darya River will deprive it of its water needs downstream. Furthermore, tensions regarding border delimitation between the two nations have led to stricter visa regimes and border controls.[58] However, during a visit to Tashkent in May 2011, President Berdymukhammedov and Uzbek President Karimov agreed that cooperation in settling the Afghan problem with its neighboring countries must be established, and that a military solution was impossible to establish peace in Afghanistan. The two countries further emphasized expanding trade and economic cooperation between them, particularly in the fuel and energy sector, applauding their success in constructing the Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan-China gas pipeline project launched in 2009.[59]

However, economic cooperation with Afghanistan has failed to generate any real results. After the U.S.-led invasion in Afghanistan, concerns over regional security prevented investment in the Trans-Afghan Pipeline (TAP) between Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Then again, in 2010 a new agreement was reached with Iran to build a 1700-km Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-Iran (TAPI) pipeline, 735 km of which will run through the Taliban heartlands in southern Afghanistan.[60] Although the countries involved have the will to realize the project, further challenges beyond security such as pricing, gas certification, technical capacity, and funding make the economic and political agreements harder to solidify.[61]

Turkmenistan's contributions to regional security with respect to the conflict in Afghanistan remain indirect and diverse. The Government of Turkmenistan has been the least cooperative state in the region in terms of supporting the U.S. and NATO forces in complying with the UN mandate in Afghanistan. Turkmenistan was the only Central Asian state that did not support offensive operations in Afghanistan during the onset of the military campaign in 2001, but since then has allowed extensive air and ground transport use for NATO and international humanitarian relief agencies to provide humanitarian assistance.[62] Although willfully supporting NATO supply aircraft, President

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57 Ibid., "Executive Summary" and "External Affairs."

58 Ibid., "External Affairs."

59 "Uzbek Leader Says Compromise Alone Can Solve Afghan Problem–Fuller," *BBC Monitoring Central Asia Unit* (7 May 2011).

60 Rainer G. Palau, "The TAPI Natural Gas Pipeline: Status and Source of Potential Delays," *Afghanistan in Transition Report* (February 2012); available at http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CFC_Afghanistan_InBrief_Afghanistan_Displacement.pdf.

61 Emma Graham-Harrison, "Afghanistan Says Confident Can Secure TAPI Gas Pipeline," *Reuters* (22 September 2010).

62 IHS Janes, "External Affairs," in "Country Report–Turkmenistan."

Berdymukhammedov reaffirmed in 2009 that no foreign bases are to be established in Turkmenistan.[63]

Unfortunately, Turkmenistan is a poor example and a weak role model to the Afghan security forces in their transition effort. Turkmenistan's military sector is a debacle, as its armed forces are ill-equipped, untrained, and notably the weakest in the Central Asian region. Despite Berdymukhammedov and other senior defense officials promising military reform, the armed forces have yet to receive new equipment or better training; since 2001, the Turkmen military has relied on conscription to meet its personnel requirements. Instead of focusing on external threats, national armed forces are used to combat internal dissent, guard stockpiles of old Soviet-era equipment (which they are incapable of maintaining), or work on farms, as traffic police, or as untrained medical assistants.[64] Furthermore, Turkmen security forces are noted for their ineffectiveness, holding a reputation of being unprofessional, brutal, and highly corrupt, as the police have sweeping powers of oversight, surveillance, and detection. Despite U.S. assistance with border security training and resources, Turkmenistan suffers from low standards in personnel and surveillance efforts, which consist of only occasional land and air patrols and a few underequipped and undermanned checkpoints.[65] Although a new counterterrorism unit and a State Drug Agency were developed in recent years, their effectiveness is waning. During a visit by the UNODC, it was noted that although it is recognized that the methodology to clean up the drugs situation in Afghanistan is known, no solution can be realized unless there is combined political will and partnership capacity is enhanced[66] to put forth such programs as the UNODC's Regional Program for Afghanistan and Neighboring Countries.[67]

Turkmenistan's isolationist foreign policy since independence has severely hindered its development politically, socially, militarily, and has also prevented it from collaborating with its neighbors on a cooperative regional security policy. Instead, the political elite has focused more on bilateral relationships on those rare occasions when the opportunity has been to its own advantage. Although Turkmenistan has exerted recent efforts to reverse its historical isolationist policy and build financial bridges with its neighbors, its lack of financial diversification, poor standard of living, and lack of capacity to provide the necessary security to do so has prevented the fruition of such initiatives. The proposed TAPI gas pipeline has promising benefits for Afghanistan and its neighbors; however, even this proposal has been hindered by disagreements among

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63 Ibid., "Security" and "Foreign Forces."

64 Ibid., "Executive Summary."

65 Ibid., "Security" and "Foreign Forces."

66 Jelena Bjelica, "Afghan Minister of Counter Narcotics and UNODC Visit Turkmenistan and Tajikistan," UNAMA: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (30 October 2011); available at http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=1783.

67 See United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), "Drug Trafficking–Central Asia," at www.unodc.org/unodc/en/drug-trafficking/central-asia.html for more information on the UNODC's Regional Program for Afghanistan and Neighboring Countries created with the aim to increase the capacity of the countries of the region in combating drug trafficking.

its investors on pricing, technicalities, and the lack of promised security along its route. In order for Turkmenistan to be an effective player with Afghanistan, drastic reforms must be implemented in its military, economic, and security sectors to almost the same degree that Afghanistan itself needs. Without the political will to take more action in reforming its own country, Turkmenistan is highly unlikely to have the will or capacity in the near future or after 2014 to intercede in Afghanistan.

Uzbekistan

Uzbek society is highly respected by some as "motivated, diligent, and well-educated." However, President Islam Karimov and his "family" have administered such a "benighted, corrupt, and brutal regime" that his family members are able to manipulate Uzbek society at will. The Karimov regime is notorious for committing multiple human rights violations, dictating court decisions, directing police raids on economic competition, ordering arrests, and for convincing evidence of torture, beatings, and assassinations. The post-Soviet "kleptocratic" family of President Karimov (essentially the Government of Uzbekistan) has successfully exploited the nation's wealth and has suppressed all opposition, leaving only clandestine Islamist groups to remain.[68] Uzbekistan has topped the charts as one of the most corrupt countries in the world, and is categorized as number one in the world in exploiting child labor and as a source for both human trafficking in the sex trade and migrant slave workers who are forced to work in CIS labor camps.[69] The nation is classified as not functioning as a democracy, a place where opposition politicians are systematically imprisoned on false charges, tortured and murdered. In short, some consider it as the "nastiest dictatorship in Central Asia."[70]

Domestic threats are not Karimov's primary concern. However, the groundswell of unrest that is driven by the extreme poverty, corruption, and governmental repression of any political opposition or non state-sanctioned religion has provided an opportunity for trained Islamist militants to return to Uzbekistan and glean young recruits frustrated by such austere conditions.[71] Three militant Islamist groups–the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), and the *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (HuT)—represent the largest external threat to Uzbekistan, and all three have links to Afghanistan. The multiple successful attacks by the IMU in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and 2000 and the IJU gun and suicide bomb attacks in Tashkent in March and July 2004

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[68] Scott Horton, "Uzbekistan as a Values Challenge for NATO," *Harper's Magazine* (5 March 2012); available at www.harpers.org/archive/2012/03/hbc-90008467.

[69] "Uzbekistan – Rotten to the Core but Number 1 in Some Important Categories," *Uznews.net* (18 February 2012); available at www.uznews.net/news_single.php?lng=enandcid=31andnid=19128.

[70] Andrew Johnson, "Don't Work with This Dictatorship, London Metropolitan University Told," *Islington Tribune* (17 February 2012); available at www.islingtontribune.com/news/2012/feb/don%E2%80%99t-work-dictatorship-london-metropolitan-university-told.

[71] IHS Janes, "Executive Summary," in "Country Report – Uzbekistan," *Jane's Military and Security Assessments* (IHS Global Unlimited, 2011).

and in the Fergana Valley in May 2009 collectively exposed the inability of the Central Asian states to regionally collaborate on creating a convincing response to terrorism in the region, which further destabilized the Fergana Valley.[72] In 2001, Karimov gained significant political leverage and protection when Uzbekistan became a coalition partner in assisting the U.S.-led effort in Afghanistan by leasing the Karshi-Khanabad (K2) military base to the U.S. and the Termez base to the Germans. However, since the Uzbek government forced the U.S. to leave the K2 base after relations between them deteriorated in the wake of violence in Andijon in 2005,[73] and since U.S. troops have more recently transferred security responsibility to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), threatening activity within certain sectors of northern Afghanistan has come to pose an increasing concern to the Central Asian states. By relocating to pre-October 2001 bases, the IMU fighters have been able to more easily blend in with the two million ethnic Uzbeks living in northern Afghanistan, and have revived their founding goals to "liberate" the Fergana Valley, overthrow the Karimov regime, and establish the Islamic Caliphate called "Turkistan."[74]

President Karimov expressed concern during his recent address to Uzbekistan's armed forces that the removal of U.S. and ISAF forces from Afghanistan by 2014, "could lead to expansion of terrorism and extremism activities, growth of tension and contradiction in this vast region [Central Asia], as well as creation of a permanent source of instability here." Taking a more defensive stance regarding the threat of insurgency from Afghanistan, one of his key objectives was to reform the Uzbek military and increase their combat readiness to ensure that "well-trained, strong, fully-equipped armed forces are capable to ensure security of our country."[75]

President Karimov understands that in order to meet the feared challenges ahead, he must not only modernize and reform the Uzbek military, but he also needs to outsource his security to a certain extent.[76] Responding to fears of revolutionary movements in 2003–05 in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan drew closer to the Russian- and Chinese-dominated SCO, and also became a member of the EURASEC. It also rejoined the Russian-led CSTO in 2008. However, Karimov is opposed to too much Russian influence, and does not wish to support regional organizations' rapid-reaction forces, such as the CSTO CORF. Uzbekistan has worked with Russia in military training of officers and joint training exercises, but Karimov continues to balance overtures of cooperation with Russia, NATO, and the U.S. President Karimov has participated in NATO's PfP program, and proposed the inclusion of NATO in a '6+3'

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72 Ibid., "Executive Summary" and "Non-state Armed Groups."

73 Gregory Gleason, "The Uzbek Expulsion of U.S. Forces and Realignment in Central Asia," *Problems of Post-Communism* 53:2 (March/April 2006): 49–60.

74 Jacob Zenn, "IMU Reestablishes Bases in Northern Afghanistan," *CACI Analyst* (8 February 2012); available at www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5710/print.

75 "Islam Karimov Says, Region Becomes Object of Close Attention," *UzDaily.com* (13 January 2012); available at www.uzdaily.com/articles-id-17077.htm.

76 Annette Bohr, "US–Uzbekistan Ties against Afghani Backdrop," interview on Voice of Russia Radio (4 February 2012); available at http://english.ruvr.ru/2012/02/04/65299936.html.

structure to promote collaborative efforts with the Central Asian states, the U.S., Russia, and NATO in stabilizing Afghanistan.[77]

Karimov has sustained a more current multi-vectored foreign policy to diversify and yet balance his diplomatic relations with the superpowers and other regional neighbors that are so keen to invest in his strategic country for the sake of security and their financial investments in the region. Just as the U.S. has recognized Uzbekistan's strategic significance in the region as the main artery into Afghanistan via the Northern Distribution Network (NDN), Karimov understands his strategic importance provides political influence as a pivotal key to achieve what he wants from both the U.S. and Russia.[78] He is also justifiably concerned about the possibility of drugs or arms being smuggled into Uzbekistan along with "retro cargo" as it exits Afghanistan.[79] Therefore, on 18 January 2012, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton lifted the ban against U.S. military assistance to Uzbekistan, previously established in 2005, so that "non-lethal" defensive assistance could be provided to Uzbek forces to protect them against any militant retaliation as they provide assistance with the transit of U.S. and NATO materiel to and from Afghanistan.[80] Such provisions provide Uzbekistan with the geopolitical clout to show Russia that other options exist for security assistance other than the CSTO or bilateral security arrangements with Moscow.[81]

Uzbekistan tends to pursue bilateral relations with Afghanistan, rather than cooperate in regional solutions for collective trade and security. After being uncooperative during economic summits, regional trade, and multilateral counter-narcotic efforts with Afghanistan,[82] and by not signing the Istanbul Process declaration, Uzbekistan did complete construction of a major rail line into northern Afghanistan in 2011.[83] The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is one of Uzbekistan's key lending partners whose support has enabled Uzbekistan to be the first and only supplier of round-the-clock electricity to Kabul as well as to construct and manage the major rail line into Afghanistan in support of ISAF forces.[84]

Unfortunately, Uzbekistan is further hindered from being a regional security contributor due to high levels of corruption, its poor economy, and enduring conflicts be-

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[77] IHS Janes, "Armed Forces" and "External Affairs," in "Country Report–Uzbekistan."

[78] Kirill Zubkov, "The U.S. Will Help Uzbekistan to Disperse Demonstrators 'Not Lethally'," *Defense and Security* (Russia) (6 February 2012).

[79] Joshua Kucera, "Russia to Host NATO Afghan Transit Hub?" *EurasiaNet.org* (3 February 2012); available at www.eurasianet.org/node/64953.

[80] News Briefing Central Asia interview with Farhod Tolipov, "Afghan Worries Prompt US Defence Aid for Uzbekistan," *Institute for War and Peace Reporting* (16 February 2012); available at http://iwpr.net/report-news/afghan-worries-prompt-us-defence-aid-uzbekistan.

[81] Joshua Kucera, "Uzbekistan to Get U.S. Night-Vision, GPS, Body Armor," *EurasiaNet.org* (2 February 2012); available at www.eurasianet.org/node/64944.

[82] George Gavrilis, "Why Regional Solutions Won't Help Afghanistan."

[83] Chris Cork, "Unsafe Roads," *SA GlobalAffairs* (28 February 2012); available at www.saglobalaffairs.com/special-features/1147-unsafe-roads.html.

[84] D. Azizov, "ADB Remains Key Partner of Uzbekistan," *Trend News Agency,* Baku, Azerbaijan (18 February 2012).

tween Uzbekistan and its neighbors. The efficiency and effectiveness of the Uzbek government is affected by the lack of accountability and nepotistic clan structure of Karimov's regime. Such corruption further facilitates persistent illicit drug trafficking in the region. Uzbekistan's remains a Soviet-style economy, where production is centrally controlled although the country is heavily privatized. Poverty remains endemic due to a lack of reform and constrained economic growth. Although Uzbekistan has abundant natural resources in cotton, gold, and natural gas, regional economic cooperation is hindered by restrictive trade barriers, high tariffs, and cumbersome border controls. The Fergana Valley region is the most susceptible to unrest, with a history rich in ethnic conflicts. In 1989 conflicts emerged between the Uzbeks and Meshkhetian Turks, and more recently in May–June 2010, when Kyrgyz and Uzbeks violently clashed in Kyrgyzstan's Osh and Jalal-Abad provinces. Reportedly thousands were killed, injured, or displaced during this conflict. Approximately 100,000 fled to Uzbekistan to temporary refugee camps, only to be forced to return only two weeks later.[85] A recent railway explosion at a bridge on Uzbekistan's rail route paralyzed transport of goods between the Termez terminal and Tajikistan. Although the blast was categorized as a "terrorist act," it inflicted the most damage on Tajikistan's rail system, suggesting that the act may have more to do with Uzbekistan's opposition to the Rogun Dam project than with terrorism.[86]

The future of Uzbekistan's contributions to regional stability efforts in light of the U.S. and NATO troop withdrawal through 2014 seems to be more defensive in nature, understanding that President Karimov's fears of insurgency or weapons and drug infiltration coming from Afghanistan remain a significant threat. Although his rule is aging and his brutal and repressive regime has bred social unrest domestically and has been highly criticized internationally, his successful suppression of any opposition and tight control within Uzbekistan against religious extremism or any foreign spill-over effects from neighboring countries prevents the likelihood of any sort of overthrow of the regime in the near term. While President Karimov intends to reform his security and

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[85] IHS Janes, "Executive Summary" and "Security," in "Country Report–Uzbekistan." Also note that various sources provide conflicting data on the number of Uzbeks displaced, numbers killed, or how many migrated between the two countries. For example, Uzbek sources have claimed 7000 casualties; see Anna Matveeva, *Kyrgyzstan in Crisis: Permanent Revolution and the Curse of Nationalism*, CSRC Working Papers 79 (London: Crisis States Research Center, 2010), 1; available at http://www2.lse.ac.uk/internationalDevelopment/research/crisisStates/download/wp/wpSeries2/WP792.pdf. The Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission (KIC) report (May 2011) counts 470 deaths, 1900 personnel receiving medical assistance, and more than 300,000 displaced; a separate 111,000 ethnic Uzbeks temporarily migrated to Uzbekistan before being sent back shortly thereafter. See Kimmo Kiljunen, comp., *Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission (KIC) Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010* (3 May 2011), ii; available at www.k-ic.org/images/stories/kic_report_english_final.pdf.

[86] "Doubts over Real Target of Uzbek 'terror' Blast," *Times of Central Asia* (Bishkek) (9 February 2012); available at www.timesca.com/index.php/m-news-by-category/other-central-asian-news/4868-doubts-over-real-target-of-uzbek-terror-blast.

armed forces in the near future, with the help of U.S. military aid, he understands the need for additional external support for security, and therefore relies on the strategic significance of his country to take full advantage of the political, financial, and military support that he needs from regional superpowers to supplement his country's deficiencies. When we consider the difficulty Uzbekistan has effectively cooperating with its neighbors, its economic interest in supplying Afghanistan with electricity, and developments in its transport infrastructure, coupled with its incapacity to project its armed forces, it appears most likely that Uzbekistan will resort to focused bilateral security engagements with Afghanistan versus partaking in a regional approach.

Central Asian States Assessment

As the Central Asian matrix shows (Table 1), each Central Asian state has a variety of characteristics that make it unique. Kazakhstan stands out as the strongest overall, with a healthy political concern for regional security regarding the withdrawal of U.S. and NATO forces from Afghanistan, a healthy economy, an abundance of natural resources along with a highly developed industrial sector, and manages the most cooperative and balanced foreign policy. This enables Kazakhstan to generate security and economic reforms that allow its security and armed forces to be more effective in cooperating with both bilateral and multi-lateral approaches to resolve security issues. In contrast, Turkmenistan is the epitome of other comparable Central Asian states, who are more concerned with domestic affairs than other security issues concerning the region. It also lacks a diversified or developed economy, which puts it at great risk and renders it an unreliable partner in effectively addressing regional security concerns. The Turkmen government is trying to diverge from its chronic isolationistic mentality, but such reform is slow, and its interests external to its territory are mostly social or economic in nature, rather than security related.

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan suffer from the poorest economic conditions, and are also concerned primarily with their own domestic issues rather than the situation in Afghanistan. However, they do share the volatile Fergana Valley region with Uzbekistan, an area where the militant Islamists, particularly the IMU, IJU, and HuT are striving to establish an autonomous Islamic caliphate. Such extremist groups and other insurgencies are becoming burgeoning threats to the governments of these three countries, especially as they regroup in northern Afghanistan, where security responsibility has been handed over to the ANSF. Uzbekistan—even with such a repressive, brutal, and corrupt regime—has stronger security and armed forces and is more strategically located to influence the outcome of any instability that may arise from Afghanistan and spread into the region. With such a center of gravity, Uzbekistan has influence to fulfill what security needs it has, and maximize any potential economic benefits with its multi-vectored foreign policy. Uzbekistan will most likely continue to pursue strong bilateral relationships rather than multi-lateral solutions to resolve regional issues. Collectively assessing these characteristics and comparing the interests and varying political wills from within the region, one can easily see that a regional solution to a regional security problem will be hard to attain. The relatively disruptive and uncoop-

Table 1. Central Asian matrix.

	INTEREST	POLITICAL WILL		
	Stated Concern for Afghanistan	Past Support for Afghanistan	Planned Support for Afghanistan	Bi- or Multi-lateral approach
Kazakhstan	1) Fears Unstable Afghanistan produces regional instability 2) Leadership in OSCE and OIC to develop regional security and economic relations	1) Humanitarian aid 2) Financial aide for infrastructure 3) Educational institutional development 4) Transport non-military cargo for ISAF 5) Overflight rights for ISAF	1) Financial support 2) Positive example for stable and modern Islamic nation 3) Social restoration 4) Economic development through increased trade 5) Continued infrastructure development	BOTH 1) Emphasis on Multi-Lateral 2) Strong Coop mindset with CSTO & SCO, EURASEC, Eurasian Customs Union
Taiikistan	1) Increased Insurgency threat 2) Narcotics infiltration most tangible threat 3) Although security inextricably linked to Afghanistan, Tajik financial benefits from Afghan instability	1) Training security personnel 2) Political, security, military, and trade cooperation with Afghanistan 3) Overflight rights for ISAF	1) Not only military action req'd 2) International economic and financial institutional dev. 3) Training prof. civ. & military for construction of transport infrastructure 4) Train for coop. in education, sports, culture	BOTH 1) Four-party security and socio-economic framework (Tajik, Afghan, Pakistan, Russia) 2) CASA-1000 electric power project 3) Coop w/ SCO, CSTO, UN, OIC
Kyrgyzstan	1) Former President Otunbayeva strongly concerned 2) Current President Atambayev domestically focused 3) MFA concerned that drug trafficking and religious extremism requires regional cooperation	1) Manas Airbase lease to U.S. to support NATO/ISAF transit 2) Overflight rights for ISAF	1) Work with OSCE training Afghan customs officers in Kyrgyzstan 2) Conference participation for economic reform in Afghanistan	MULTI-LATERAL Regional cooperation solution recommended for Afghanistan
Turkmenistan	1) Concern for Afghan people only. 2) Little evidence of regional security concern	1) Least cooperative with U.S./NATO efforts in Afghan 2) Humanitarian assistance 3) Provides electricity, and cancelled previous Afghan debt for Turkmen electricity 4) No foreign military bases allowed on territory 5) Promote TAPI gas pipeline 6) Ineffective implementation of UNODC programs	1) Provide free electricity 2) Provide LNG gas 3) Provide humanitarian aid 4) Pursue TAPI pipeline construction	BI-LATERAL Non-compliant with IO's or security alliances
Uzbekistan	1) Highly sensitive to Islamic Extremism 2) Increasing threat from IMU, IJU, HuT relocating N. Afghan	1) Early partner of ISAF in leasing K2 airbase to U.S./NATO & Termez military base to Germans 2) Financial aide for infrastructure 3) Construct/manage Rail way for NDN transport of non-military goods into Afghanistan 4) 24-hr elect. power line construct 5) Overflight rights for ISAF	1) Maintain electr. power support 2) Maintain railway into Afghan 3) Support U.S. efforts in sustain NDN and drawdown of equip & personnel from Afghan	BI-LATERAL Multi-lateral engagements highly inconsistent

	CAPACITY				LIMITATIONS	FUTURE OUTLOOK
	Economy	Security Force Capacity	Armed Forces Capacity	Foreign Policy Dynamics	Limiting Factors	Planned Approach toward Afghanistan post 2014
Kazakhstan	1) Best in region 2) Industrially developed 3) Good use of natural resources	Relies on Russia for economic and regional security support	Heavily relies on and Actively partakes in regional organization training exercises (CSTO, SCO)	1) Balanced policy with West and Russia 2) Russia is necessary for security in region 3) Relations with CA neighbors vary greatly	1) Corruption infiltrates all of Kazakh society - executive, judicial, military, etc. 2) High corruption prevents effective counter-narcotic efforts 3) Diverse degrees of cooperation with other CA states	DEFENSIVE 1) Favors "Security Belt" approach against negative spillover instability affects, 2) Protection is necessary against northward bound insurgency or narcotics 3) Socio-Economic development keystones in its projected aide
Tajikistan	1) Poorest in region 2) Majority live in poverty 3) Highly dep. on Intl funding 4) Thousands are migration workers	1) KOGG largely ineffective 2) Under-funded 3) Poorly trained 4) Poorly equipped 5) Under-manned 6) Heavily reliant on RU instruction and support	1) Poor leadership 2) Poor Discipline 3) Under-funded 4) Low morale 5) Slow military reform 6) Heavily relies on Russian-led CSTO & SCO 7) CSTO CTOF and RU military supplements	1) Heavily reliant on Russia for economic and security needs 2) Respects OSCE and Western affiliation 3) Relations depend on best security and economic benefits to Tajikistan	1) Repressive regime instigates domestic unrest 2) High corruption prevents effective counter-narcotic efforts 3) Poor cooperation with other CA states	PASSIVE DEFENSIVE 1) Lessons learned from its civil war make it prone to advocate lassie-faire style approach. 2) Defense against insurgency with assistance from RU, CSTO, SCO 3) Assistance through infrastructure development and electrical power delivery.
Kyrgyzstan	1) One of poorest in region 2) Highly dep. on Intl funding 3) Highly dep. on military base leasing 4) Depleting water resources for hydro-electric exports	1) Limited Centralized Control 2) Still recovering from ethnic conflicts 2010 3) Ineffective and corrupt Drug Control Agency 4) Dependent on RU Military aid	1) Notably weak 2) Majority conscripts unfit for service 3) Under-funded 4) Ill-equipped 5) Slow military reform 6) Focused internally vs. externally 7) Heavily reliant on EXT support (RU, U.S., CSTO, CSO)	1) "Chaotic" Multi-Vectored to leverage political interests & obtain maximum financial and security benefits from both RU & U.S. 2) RU & U.S. military base support 3) hosts RU-led CSTO rapid reaction forces 4) Limited coop w/ CA	1) Political infighting remains within newly formed Parliamentary govt 2) Ineffective narcotics control 3) High corruption and org. crime 4) Lack of focus externally 5) Poor economic condition	DEFENSIVE 1) MFA hoping for regional approach supported with bi-lateral engagements 2) Training Afghan officers for better security

Turkmenistan	1) Slowest former Soviet state in econ reform 2) Very reliant on gas revenues 3) Lacks INTL assistance	1) Low prestige 2) Highly corrupt 3) Drug Control ineffective 4) Poorly manned 5) Ill-equipped 6) Ineffective implementation of UNODC programs	1) Notably weakest in CA region 2) Untrained 3) Under-funded 4) Ill-equipped 5) Slow military reform 6) Focused internally vs. externally	1) Slow reform from "permanent neutrality" 2) Relations w/ CAS hampered by hydro-politics 3) No foreign military bases allowed on territory 4) No participation in EURASEC, CACO, CSTO, SCO	1) Repressive regime instigates domestic unrest 2) High corruption prevents effective counter-narcotic efforts 3) Historically uncooperative with other CA states 4) Isolationistic policies have prevented economic reform or enhanced trade	SOCIO-ECONOMIC 1) TAPI pipeline initiative 2) Provide Humanitarian Assistance
Uzbekistan	1) Constrained by lack of economic reform 2) Soviet-style centrally controlled, yet heavily privatized	1) Highly suppressive regime provides superior domestic security 2) Reliant on bi-lateral RU/U.S. border guard training, financing, and equip. support 3) Security forces are primary force as Armed Forces are not intl'y projectable	1) Military Reform in progress, forces not projectable for regional effect 2) Still reliant on bi-lateral RU and U.S. support for training, financing, and equip support 3) Inconsistent with regional IO's (CSTO, SCO)	1) Karimov understands Uzbek strategic significance 2) Multi-vectored to maximizes potential gains from external governments and IO's 3) "Uzbek path" prevails in relations w/ other CA states	1) Highly repressive "totalitarian" regime instigates social unrest 2) Human rights violations highly criticized by INTL community 3) High corruption prevents effective counter-narcotic efforts 4) Highly protective, uncooperative with other CA states, border disputes 5) Uncooperative with regional organizations (CSTO, SCO)	DEFENSIVE 1) Protection is necessary against northward bound insurgency or narcotics 2) Planned Uzbek military reform 3) Increase trade and Afghan reliance on Uzbek electricity

erative relationships between the governments of all of these countries, furthermore, prohibit consensus on a regional solution to resolve instability in the event of negative transnational effects after 2014. Therefore, a collective Central Asian regional solution to address the security deficiencies in Afghanistan after U.S. and ISAF forces withdraw from Afghanistan is highly unlikely.

Rather, a more collective defensive approach is likely to ensue. As the U.S. and Russia continue to pursue influence in the region through strategic bilateral military aid packages, and Russia persists with multi-lateral efforts through the CSTO and SCO to protect its national security interests, each Central Asian state will continue to rely on these relationships to supplement their security deficiencies and establish a defensive front. Only in the event that promising economic opportunities appear likely will they venture beyond this defense-focused stance. Turkmenistan will continue to pursue its TAPI pipeline, just as Tajikistan will construct its Ramon hydroelectric plant to bring joint economic benefit with Afghanistan. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan will continue providing indirect support through training assistance through the OSCE to restore the social and economic sectors in Afghanistan, but militarily or security force assistance will most likely not be directly provided in the near future.

The Future of Afghanistan and Central Asia's Role

The future of Afghanistan remains uncertain. While the international community remains publicly committed to the transformation of Afghanistan into a country that respects the rule of law and prospers democratically, many U.S. and UN officials in Kabul concede that in the best-case scenario, Afghanistan will become in two or three decades what most of its Central Asian neighbors are today. This model could resemble Tajikistan, which "is hardly a model of democracy or development. Elections are stacked, positions in the government bought and sold, and crucial public goods and services doled out to regime cronies."[87] Or, even worse, as some Afghans fear, a civil war will erupt, and the Taliban may return in full force.[88] The Taliban may be feigning weakness in their force capacities, to wait for the U.S. and coalition force strength to wane in the region. Mohammad Qorban Haqjo even pointed out that the Taliban view the troop withdrawal as a defeat for the foreigners.[89]

The role the Central Asian states will play in Afghanistan after U.S. and NATO/ISAF forces complete their withdrawal in 2014 has been shown to encompass a more indirect defensive approach. Without radical reform in the Central Asian states' security and armed force capacity, a significant reduction of corruption, and renewed foreign policies that reflect cooperation rather than foster disruption between neighboring

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[87] George Gavrilis, "The Tajik Solution."

[88] Mirwais Khan and Rahim Faiez, "Afghans Anxious About Exit of Foreign Troops," *USA Today* (2 September 2011); available at www.usatoday.com/news/world/afghanistan/story/2011-09-02/Afghans-anxious-about-exit-of-foreign-troops/50234734/1.

[89] Abdol W. Faramarz, "Afghan Pullout Blow to Economy," *Asia Times Online* (25 August 2011).

governments, any collective solution of intercession in Afghanistan toward a unified regional security goal on the part of the Central Asian states is highly unlikely to succeed. Instead, the countries will continue as they have been, strategically creating a buffer zone of protection against any negative spillover effects resulting from the conflicts that may arise in Afghanistan. These conflicts include incursions from terrorist organizations, drug trafficking, and other forms of organized crime. Furthermore, they will increase their reliance on either bilateral or multi-lateral security relationships with larger superpowers and regional organizations such as the U.S., Russia, or the CSTO and SCO to support their weak military, drug control, and border security organizations, and other deficiencies within their respective security sectors.

Solutions for regional security do not simply fall on the shoulders of Central Asia. Iran, China, Pakistan, India, and other regional actors will play a significant role as well. The UN Secretary-General pointed out during the Third Ministerial Conference of the Paris Pact Partners on Combating the Afghan Illicit Opiate Trade that the international community will look to the UN to shoulder the responsibility for ensuring stability and sustainable development in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of ISAF in 2014.[90] However, much international cooperation will depend on the outcomes of the 2013 and 2014 parliamentary and presidential elections in Afghanistan, as well as on the results of various related economic and security transitions that are currently evolving. Whether the newly elected leadership of Afghanistan will put forth a hostile or cooperative foreign policy will determine the level of cooperation and security contributions—financial or otherwise—that it can hope to gain through its diverse bilateral or multi-lateral partnerships.

[90] AKIpress News, "UN Secretary General, Foreign Minister Kazakbaev Discuss Reconciliation and Regional Issues," *ISI Emerging Markets* (17 February 2012).

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