



## Central Asia: A Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding

February 2006

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# Central Asia: A Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding

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## Acronyms

<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>AoGN</b>	Ambassadors of Goodwill Network
<b>AREU</b>	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
<b>BOMCA</b>	Border Management Programme for Central Asia (EU)
<b>CADAP</b>	Central Asia Anti-Drug Proliferation Programme (EU)
<b>CAREC</b>	Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program
<b>CBO</b>	Community-based organisation
<b>CIS</b>	Commonwealth of Independent States
<b>DCA</b>	Drug Control Agency (Tajikistan)
<b>DDR</b>	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
<b>DFA</b>	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (Swiss Government)
<b>DfID</b>	Department for International Development (UK Government)
<b>DOD</b>	Department of Defence (US Government)
<b>EBRD</b>	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>ESDP</b>	EU European Security and Defence Policy
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EurAsEc</b>	Eurasian Economic Community
<b>FAST</b>	Early Recognition of Tensions and Fact Finding (Frühanalyse von Spannungen und Tatsachenermittlung)
<b>FCO</b>	Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK Government)
<b>FSB</b>	Federal Security Service (Russia)
<b>FTI</b>	Foundation for Tolerance International
<b>GBAO</b>	Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (Province)
<b>GCPP</b>	Global Conflict Prevention Pool (UK Government)
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GEF</b>	Global Environment Facility
<b>GNI</b>	Gross National Income
<b>HCNM</b>	High Commissioner for National Minorities (OSCE)
<b>HuT</b>	Hizb-ut-Tahrir
<b>IBRD</b>	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
<b>ICG</b>	International Crisis Group
<b>IDA</b>	International Development Association
<b>IFES</b>	International Foundation for Election Systems
<b>IFI</b>	International financial institutions
<b>IGO</b>	Inter-governmental organisation
<b>INGO</b>	International non-governmental organisation
<b>IMU</b>	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
<b>IOM</b>	International Organisation for Migration
<b>IRP</b>	Islamic Renaissance Party (Tajikistan)
<b>ISAF</b>	International Security Assistance Force (Afghanistan)
<b>IWPR</b>	Institute for War and Peace Reporting
<b>JICA</b>	Japan International Cooperation Agency
<b>MFA</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<b>MoD</b>	Ministry of Defence (UK Government)
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>ODIHR</b>	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE)
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>OSCE</b>	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
<b>PDP</b>	UNDP Preventive Development Programme
<b>SALW</b>	Small Arms and Light Weapons
<b>SCO</b>	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
<b>SDC</b>	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (Swiss Government)
<b>SSR</b>	Security Sector Reform
<b>TRACECA</b>	Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Central Asia
<b>UNAMA</b>	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
<b>UNCTAD</b>	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNIFEM</b>	United Nations Development Fund for Women
<b>UNMOT</b>	United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan
<b>UNTOP</b>	United Nations Tajikistan Office of Peacebuilding
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>UNOPS</b>	United Nations Office for Project Services
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>WB</b>	World Bank
<b>WMD</b>	Weapons of Mass Destruction

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## Map of Central Asia



Map: courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin

## Executive Summary

This report analyses conflict potential in Central Asia, from which it derives a strategy for peacebuilding in the region. Despite widely expressed fears, and with the important exception of the war in Tajikistan in the 1990s, until recently Central Asia had remained relatively peaceful since gaining independence in 1991. However, issues that could lead to conflict have not disappeared and new challenges have emerged that are rooted in the way the Central Asian states and the region have developed politically since independence. The upheavals of 2005 in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan demonstrated that the apparent stability was deceptive. Further, the region's geographic location indicates that its security prospects must be viewed in a wider regional context that includes Afghanistan as well as its two great neighbours Russia and China. The next few years will be crucial for how Central Asia develops.

The headline conclusion is that the central issue with potential for violent conflict in Central Asia is the relationship between the citizens and the state, elaborated in Chapters 1-3. This conclusion indicates the need for a new peacebuilding strategy (Chapter 4) with specific targeted activities, recommended in Chapter 5.

### The States of Central Asia

Kazakhstan has developed positively in terms of both economic growth and the state's ability to provide public services. With energy wealth and a small population, economic and social development reduces popular pressure for political liberalisation. For these reasons, Kazakhstan is not a priority when assessing conflict potential.

In Kyrgyzstan, reform and civil society development successes were perhaps more shallow than earlier estimated. The turmoil in the country after the March 2005 change of power exposed the fragility of its institutions while the victors' lack of a coherent reform agenda revealed that the aim of democratic reconstruction did not run deep and 'clan privatisation' followed instead. Though there remains greater openness for media and civil society than elsewhere in the region, underlying political, economic and geographic rifts in society threaten stability. Given the existing political context, there is an urgent need for a strategy to address the current political challenges without waiting for the political and social conditions that would permit the Kyrgyz government to draw up a long-term development strategy.

Tajikistan has partially recovered from the 1992-97 civil war, which has left much of its political elite and society wary of anything that might provoke instability. Poverty, the trafficking of drugs and a fragile political system mean that the appearance of stability is misleading. Specific remedial measures addressing the potential for conflict are needed.

In Turkmenistan, energy wealth and secure, long-term contracts guaranteeing steady revenue from natural gas sales concentrated in the hands of the leadership determine the nature of the regime, which is uninterested in development assistance and unresponsive to diplomatic pressure from the international community, unless such pressure includes both the West and Russia. Political processes are closed, with complete state control over media and civil society. No change is possible under the current president, while his exit from the political scene will probably be highly destabilising. There is, therefore, a need for peacebuilding measures but no visible possibility of implementing them.

Uzbekistan is the most populous country in Central Asia. Since the 1990s it has experienced notable acts of violence, including attacks by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the violent

government crackdown on protests in May 2005 in Andijan. Growing social and political problems are being met with decreasingly effective responses, and the state is retreating into repressive measures as its only option. Further violence and even a social explosion are probable. The donor community currently sees two equally difficult options: either a complete withdrawal or engagement in areas amenable to the government, some of which may risk exacerbating tensions in society. A third way is needed to maintain a limited engagement that neither commits donors to support nor to oppose the current government but which allows dialogue and cooperation where possible. Potential areas for engagement are in education, local development, and networking and capacity-building with civil society.

### Common Regional Threads

The core driver of current conflict potential (where it is significant) is the issue of power and governance. There is a gap between state and society; the degree of accountability of government to the people varies on a spectrum from none to inadequate. In these circumstances, the measures taken to address problems that give rise to conflict offer short-term stability at best, while stacking up worse problems for the future. The role and actions of security sector agencies are a recurrent source of grievance and the state comes to its citizens in police uniform more often than as a provider of goods and services. The justice and prison systems have deteriorated in many places, and the quest for social justice is a growing preoccupation of the region's societies, in which there is widespread disillusionment. Justice in an Islamic cloak is becoming an increasingly viable alternative.

The Ferghana Valley, situated in the nexus of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and inhabited by a patchwork of peoples of different ethnicity has been the centre of a great deal of peacebuilding interventions by the donor community due to fears of ethnic violence stimulated by resource competition. The conflict potential in these issues (of ethnicity and resources) is significant insofar as they can be exploited as part of a conflict over power in each country. Action taken by Uzbekistan has focused on border controls and stronger security measures, leading to reciprocal action by Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. This has increased tension and generated resentment. Throughout Central Asia, borders established since independence are a serious source of frustration, with harsh border regimes negatively affecting the lives of ordinary people and feeding corruption.

There is a widespread concern among governments in the region about the risk of terrorism from militant Islamism, with governments increasingly blaming real or imagined jihadists for popular protest. Islamism is increasingly merging with wider economic, social and political discontent. By themselves, cells of jihadists are capable of sporadic acts of violence but are not powerful enough to ignite a larger popular uprising. Continued repression, however, may strengthen their hand and in the future they could be part of and able to benefit from a broader protest movement.

Drug trafficking has an increasing impact on the politics and security of the region. Given fragile political institutions and the lack of transparency, a future marriage of crime and politics is possible. The problem of drugs can either be a source of continued deficiency in development, governance and human security; cooperative cross-border solutions, on the other hand, could be the starting point for a major improvement in the region's prospects.

## The Wider Regional Environment and the Major Powers

### Afghanistan – from Problem to Opportunity?

The state-building process in Afghanistan is critical to the prospects for Central Asia. At worst, Afghanistan could be a continuing problem for development in Central Asia because of drugs and the threat of persistent instability overflowing into its neighbours. In the longer term,

however, there could be a mutually beneficial interaction between Afghanistan and its northern neighbours that could strengthen development prospects all round.

### Engaging with Russia

Stability in Central Asia has been perceived in Moscow as a crucial precondition for expanding its influence across the region. In September 2001, President Putin accepted US military deployment to the region and a consequent decline in Russian influence, knowing there would be other benefits for Russian policy and believing that a re-emergence of Russian influence would be possible. Events have borne this belief out. In 2004 and 2005 Russia has strengthened economic ties, primarily through the oil and gas industry backed by personalised political networking at the senior level. Following events in Kyrgyzstan, Moscow impressed upon other Central Asian leaders that their survival required firmness and determination. Russia approved of President Karimov's decision to use force in Andijan and put the blame for the violence on Islamic militants allegedly trained in Afghanistan. It joined in with criticism of international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for fostering instability. Russia is fundamentally not interested in fanning confrontation with the West, but its will and capacity to play an influential role in Central Asia should not be underestimated. Constructive engagement on a case-by-case basis is possible as long as the donor community respects Russia's role.

### The United States and the Limits of Engagement

US policy towards Central Asia has been characterised by inconsistency and is responsive to its changing global foreign policy objectives. Post-9/11 security concerns elevated the Bush administration's interest in Central Asia but in the long term Washington's capacity and even interest in Central Asia are limited. The US is geographically distant from Central Asia and has a full foreign policy agenda.

### China's Increasing Role and Influence

The role of China has often been neglected in discourse on Central Asia. It is no longer possible to do so. Current developments indicate that China's future regional role will be crucial. From Beijing's perspective, Central Asia is seen as a source both of potential security threats and of raw materials. Its main security concerns are instability, turbulent regime change, the potential for popular unrest and Islamic radicalisation. There is also a lingering Chinese concern about US influence in the region. China's relationship with Russia is as good as it has ever been. Like Russia, China is a major player in Central Asia and its influence will only grow. The policies of the donor community need to accommodate that basic premise.

### Risks, Potential and Prospects: Regional Overview

The headline conclusion of the analysis is that the potential for conflict lies in internal power dynamics rather than in ethnic division or competition for natural resources. The central issue is the relationship between the citizens and the state. The experience of Kyrgyzstan in 2005 has shown that the absence of a strategy to deal with the issue of succession can wreak havoc on a political system. The authorities in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are unable to adopt constructive problem-solving approaches to political or developmental issues; the governments therefore have become increasingly dependent on the security sector for their longevity. This is resulting in the alienation between the population and the law-enforcement agencies and, as the system of power is closed and unaccountable, corruption further increases popular resentment. In developing a strategic approach to peacebuilding in the region, there seems little point in focusing on Kazakhstan because of the strength of its current situation and its generally fair prospects, and there seem to be no possibilities in relation to Turkmenistan. A peacebuilding strategy should therefore focus on Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan with the aim of contributing to peace and stability in those countries and more widely in the region. The particular goal of the strategy should be to find ways to create linkages between the state and society as a necessary precondition for good governance.

Uzbekistan increasingly views foreign development aid and Western involvement with suspicion. To a lesser extent, similar suspicions in Tajikistan will remain an obstacle for donor engagement there. In resolving these difficulties, the approach of a peacebuilding strategy must be to address the reality of each country separately and not to treat Central Asia as a homogeneous regional entity. However, there are important issues that need to be addressed on a cross-border basis.

The role and influence of China and Russia in Central Asia must be factored into analysis, policy and strategic planning. It is pointless and counter-productive to attempt to marginalise either; rather they should be recognised by the donor community as major players, treated with respect and where possible, engaged in cooperation.

To summarise these broad strategic ideas:

- the key conflict potential in Central Asia lies in the nature and use of internal power;
- the focus of strategy should be on Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan with the aim of contributing to self-sustaining stable peace;
- the region is not a homogeneous entity and its interdependency should not be overestimated;
- regional cooperation will be valuable on various issues;
- China and Russia must be taken seriously as key regional actors with whom case-by-case cooperation should be possible.

### Approach and Means for Peacebuilding in Central Asia

With an analysis of the country-specific and regional issues impacting on security and the potential for conflict in Central Asia, this report tackles the question of what can and should be done to make a positive contribution to the development of self-sustaining peace in the region. First, a general look at peacebuilding is needed and then, through this lens, an outline produced of the evolution of the donor community's policy thinking and its resulting actions to date in order to suggest an adjusted approach and means appropriate to it for future engagement.

This report uses the concept of the 'Strategic Peacebuilding Palette', introduced in the *Overview Report of the Joint Utstein Study of Peacebuilding*,<sup>1</sup> which conceives of peacebuilding as a wide range of interdependent activities that, depending on circumstances, contribute to the development of the structural conditions, attitudes and modes of political behaviour that are necessary for self-sustaining peaceful development. These activities can be organised as a set of four categories of intervention that are interdependent: security, socio-economic foundations, good governance, and justice and reconciliation.

The donor community's approach has arguably been burdened by categories of analysis and policy that currently do not quite work in Central Asia. Early analysis of conflict potential may initially have made too much of ethnicity and nationalism as the primary drivers of conflict. Our analysis identifies the relationship between the citizens and the state as the central conflict issue in the region. This suggests that there is a need for a new and thorough look at the donor community's engagement.

While not changing the overall goals, a changed analysis of the potential lines of conflict in the region means that the objectives of programmes with government, private sector and civil society actors may need to be revised. The challenge now is to recognise key conflict risks that were not previously central to analysis and policy and to adjust policy and activities to suit. The resulting strategy will draw on programmes that are already being implemented – whether with or without explicit peacebuilding or conflict prevention goals – as well as on new programmes.

The record of donor community engagement contains a mixture of successes, such as in relation to the Ferghana Valley in terms of analysis, early warning and conflict prevention on a community level, community-based dispute resolution, relations between minorities, the

1. Smith, D., *Towards a Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding: Getting Their Act Together*, Overview Report of the Joint Utstein Study of Peacebuilding, Evaluation Report 1/2004, PRIO, Oslo, April 2004.

promotion of civil society and the anti-narcotics effort with other less certain achievements, such as in security sector reform (SSR) and border management, and others where the record is frankly deficient, such as regional cooperation.

Two different advocacy approaches have been used in Central Asia: open advocacy, publicly exposing wrongs and non-confrontational advocacy, using a quieter networking approach. In recent years, open advocacy is becoming increasingly difficult in Central Asia and is losing its audience. In much of Central Asia, work first needs to be done to ensure an audience before effective advocacy can be undertaken.

Conflict sensitivity is a relatively new concept in the development sector and has only recently been introduced into programme design and implementation, sometimes as a direct objective and at other times indirectly through mainstreaming. In Central Asia, activities of the donor community have, rightly, included the effort to mainstream conflict prevention into development interventions.

### A New Peacebuilding Approach

This report argues that the strengths in the donor community's work so far can and should be harnessed into a revised peacebuilding approach that addresses the conflict potential around how power is organised and used and that focuses on three countries – Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Such an approach needs to recognise the realities and limitations of the situation. These considerations include the limits to the absorptive capacity in the region, especially in the apparatus of governments, and the donor community's limited economic and political leverage. A peacebuilding strategy should be organised around the four parts of the peacebuilding palette – security, socio-economic issues, governance, and justice and reconciliation.

**Security Issues:** Four priorities in security issues have emerged from the analysis in the report: SSR, border management, a variety of measures against crime and enhanced analysis. In relation to Uzbekistan, only the last is suggested. Cooperation with the Chinese and Russian authorities on border management and anti-crime activities would be beneficial. SSR and security assistance need to be compatible with each other. Analytical efforts should be refocused to include the central issue of power alongside inter-ethnic and resource-related issues. On anti-terrorism, a non-ideological enquiry into the sources and causes of terrorism, with the participation of civil society actors would be beneficial. This could be done regionally, enabling participation of civil society from Uzbekistan, which is otherwise increasingly isolated.

**Socio-economic Foundations:** Alongside social and economic development programmes aimed at improving the lot of ordinary people through poverty eradication, education, infrastructure and resource management, three further issues arise from the analysis above – economic freedoms, corporate standards and anti-corruption measures. Particular attention should be paid to the question of incentives, when change requires the active engagement of authorities whose position seems viable without economic reforms. The only viable approach here is to emphasise the importance of a process of discussion and dialogue in which participants can start to recognise the benefits of new alternatives.

**Governance:** There is no reason to hide a preference for programmes that ensure full accountability, good governance at every level and democratic participation by all. But it is not the most effective approach to insist at all times on that full agenda, especially when some parties with which donor governments want to work, including governments in Central Asia, find profound cause for concern in a 'democratisation' agenda. The suggestion here is to focus on local-level transparency, some long-term aspects of state building and the development of national discussions about the future in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and

Uzbekistan. Medium-term achievements in governance will depend on the availability of trained cadre. Training courses and schools of government based primarily in the region could meet this need, while maintaining engagement with governments.

The most important single avenue to explore, because it addresses the key problems of shrinking space for democratisation and potential succession crisis, is the possibility of wide-ranging discussions about the national future in each of the three focus countries.

**Justice and Reconciliation:** Training programmes in dispute resolution would be a way to address the culture of conflict and generate a capacity to manage crisis peacefully. A systematic approach could include not only NGO staff at the local level, but also aim at empowering state institutions to adopt a problem-solving approach to crisis and conflict. Establishing locally-owned centres for dispute resolution – offering training courses and practical mediation in actual disputes – would be worthwhile in all three countries, albeit presumably less realistic in Uzbekistan. To avoid the possibility of development assistance becoming a source of tension, donors could increase their own and their partners' capacities to implement conflict-sensitive programmes, monitor implementation and, in the case of tensions, develop the capacity to quickly respond. Capacity in these areas could also be built among national officials, civil society and in academia.

### Donor Practice

A strategic reconsideration of the peacebuilding approach and revising means of implementation offers the occasion for bringing the donor community together with local stakeholders – possibly in a variety of formats to ensure that the process encompasses diverse actors and opinions – both to enrich the strategy and in order to enhance donor coordination.

### Influence

The donor community has a limited capacity to exert influence in Central Asia. This is because of a variety of factors discussed in this report – the nature of power, the sensitivities of the leaderships to infringement of sovereignty, the clan basis of political organisation, and the regional involvement of Russia and China, who offer alternative points of reference should relations with Western donors go cold. In most conceivable instances it will be more effective for the donor community to work in coordination and with the aid of quiet conversations and persistent engagement. It is not easy to fix on an alternative option between silence and sanctions, but since neither is likely to alter the recipient state's behaviour, it is worth at least attempting quiet persuasion.

### Conclusion

The situation in Central Asia demands a number of interlocking and interdependent actions if the risk of violent conflict is to be averted and a decisive turn is to be taken towards sustainable peace. These actions will be carried out, if at all, by Central Asian actors with friendly external support. In order for timely action to be taken there is a need for wider knowledge and understanding than currently exist about what needs to be done. That knowledge and understanding can be generated – and can only be generated – by a process of discussion and dialogue. The donor community is well placed to facilitate that process.

## Note on Methodology

This report was commissioned by the Global Conflict Prevention Pool (GCPP) of the UK Government and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). However, it is an independently produced document and the responsibility for its content lies with International Alert. The report is a result of a comprehensive research and consultation process aiming to: a) analyse the current situation in Central Asia, focusing on factors working towards or against stability and security inside the region, as well as external pressures and influences; b) explore the dynamics between these factors and suggest future trends and scenarios; and c) provide recommendations for future involvement.

The process was launched by a meeting in January 2005 of the research team consisting of International Alert staff, the lead author and the advisors. The meeting developed the concept of the report and the issues to be addressed. There followed a research process consisting of both a desk study of a wide range of primary and secondary sources and a number of field trips. These were conducted in February-June 2005 and covered Kyrgyzstan (Bishkek), Kazakhstan (Almaty and Chimkent), Tajikistan (Dushanbe and Khujand), Uzbekistan (Tashkent and Ferghana), Afghanistan (Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif) and China (Beijing, Urumqi and Kashgar). The research team was unable to visit Turkmenistan during the project period and the analysis in the report is based on Anna Matveeva's discussions during her earlier visits to Turkmenistan in 2004.

At the meetings with over a hundred representatives of international organisations, development agencies and international NGOs as well as local analysts, journalists and civil society, the interviewees were asked to reflect upon the potential for conflict within the Central Asian countries and on dangers stemming from regional issues; on the extent to which international engagement with the region had addressed such dangers; and on what might be done differently in future. The interviewees spoke in their personal capacity rather than as representatives of their organisations. Therefore, any references to such interviews made in this study attribute remarks neither to the individuals nor to organisations.

The preliminary results of the research crystallised at further meetings of the research team in June 2005 and initial thoughts were presented for discussion at meetings in the European Parliament, also in June. An initial draft of the final report was drawn up on the basis of the process thus far and disseminated among stakeholders for consultation and input. The consultation meetings were held in London with the Department for International Development (DfID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (October 2005), in Berne with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (November 2005) and in Bishkek at two separate meetings (November 2005) with civil society activists from the region and with stakeholders from the international community. The final report presented here incorporates the feedback from this consultation process.



## Chapter 1. Conflict Potential in Central Asian States

The five landlocked states of Central Asia have received increased international scrutiny since 2001 as a result of the US-led intervention in Afghanistan on the region's southern borders, leading to modifications in the patterns of external engagement.

The break-up of the USSR led to the creation of states that are not all coherent in terms of geography, history or economic viability. Mountainous terrain, large deserts, water shortages and huge distances pose significant natural obstacles to human development. Despite the natural wealth of Central Asia, much of its population still lives in poverty. Indeed, in many areas, a de-modernisation of the economy and society has taken place, despite the growth of the oil and gas industry. Not surprisingly, nostalgia for Soviet times is widespread.

Until recently, however, with the important exception of the war in Tajikistan in the 1990s, Central Asia remained relatively peaceful. However, issues that could lead to conflict have not disappeared and new challenges have emerged that are rooted in the way the Central Asian states and the region have developed politically since independence. The upheavals of 2005 in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan demonstrated that the apparent stability there was deceptive. Further, the region's geographic location indicates that its security prospects must be viewed in a wider regional context that includes Afghanistan as well as its two great neighbours, Russia and China. The next few years will be crucial to how Central Asia develops.

This chapter explores the conflict potential and faultlines within Central Asia, beginning with a review of issues within each state, an indication of the broad directions that may be possible for the donor community and continuing with a look at the trans-border and intra-regional issues.

### 1.1 The States of Central Asia

#### 1.1.1 Kazakhstan

Population: 14.9 million  
 GNI per capita: US \$1,780  
 GDP: US \$29.7 billion  
 Population below poverty line: 24% (2002)  
 ODA received total, US \$ millions: 268.4 (2003)  
 ODA received per capita: US \$18.0 (2003)  
 ODA received as % of GDP: 0.9 (2003)  
 Total World Bank commitments in 1994-2004: US \$1,925 million<sup>2</sup>

Unlike the other Central Asian countries, Kazakhstan has developed positively both in terms of its economy and of the state's ability to provide services to the population and has emerged as a middle-income country. Its energy wealth, relatively small population and market reforms have ensured development and the retention of the professional cadre. Although politically authoritarian, it is economically and socially quite liberal. Opportunities to develop businesses, travel and obtain education are widely available and not restricted to a clan-based elite. The wealth generated from energy sales is enough not only to satisfy the appetite of the elite, but occasionally to allow investment in development projects, social security, infrastructure and education. After initially toying with ambitions for preponderance by the titular nation, policies

<sup>2</sup> Sources: World Bank, *Kazakhstan Country Brief 2004 (2003 data)* [online], available from [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org); *UNDP Human Development Report 2005*, UNDP, New York, 2005.

have more recently been developed to assure an inter-ethnic balance and the country's current identity is based on its multi-ethnicity. Minorities have a relatively good standing except as regards appointments to positions of real power.

Thus, internal causes for instability are not acute. Among the brakes on discontent are President Nazarbaev's firm grip on power, which was reinforced by the December 2005 election, the strong security apparatus and the sheer size of the country. Although local disputes arise, the state has intervened positively to resolve issues. Political opposition largely originates among former officials whose record in government has often been dubious.

International opinion has concurred that Kazakhstan is unlikely to follow the path of Kyrgyzstan's turbulent regime change. A longer-term concern is its high dependency on oil income and, therefore, on the price of oil, which is currently unusually high. Little of the revenue from oil has been invested in diversifying the economy and infrastructure development. An anti-corruption drive could potentially emerge as a unifying factor for political change and anti-regime action. So far, evidence of this is scarce, and a 'Kazakhgate' scandal – a US lawsuit involving alleged bribes to Kazakh officials<sup>3</sup> – has had little public resonance and was not much exploited by the opposition in the December 2005 presidential election campaign.

The donor community rightly sees little possibility of leverage over the regime as long as international, mainly US, energy companies do good business in the country and provide revenue for the government. Russian and Chinese businesses have an interest in and, increasingly, capacity to compete for Kazakhstan's oil and gas reserves against Western players, especially as they do not have to adhere to the same standards of corporate governance.<sup>4</sup> Kazakhstan is perhaps the only place in Central Asia where energy resource competition between the West, Russia and China could impact on politics.

In these circumstances, there is currently no identifiable need for a peacebuilding approach within Kazakhstan.

### 1.1.2 Kyrgyzstan

Population: 5.1 million  
 GNI per capita: US \$330  
 GDP: US \$1.7 billion  
 Percentage of population below poverty line: 44% (2002)  
 ODA received total, US \$ millions: 197.7 (2003)  
 ODA received per capita: US \$39.1 (2003)  
 ODA received as % of GDP: 10.4 (2003)  
 Total World Bank commitments in 1993-2004: US \$680 million<sup>5</sup>

Bordering China and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan is the second poorest country of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Its main assets are in gold and agriculture. Since independence, the country has been relatively liberal in economic and social terms compared to its neighbours, albeit with restrictions on political freedoms. The country is sharply divided: the

- 3 Krastev, N., 'Kazakhstan: Country Again Features In U.S. Efforts To Combat Corruption' [online], *RFE/RL Newslines*, Vol. 9, No. 123, 29 June 2005, available from [www.rferl.org/newsline/2005/06/2-TCA/tca-290605.asp](http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2005/06/2-TCA/tca-290605.asp).
- 4 For example, PetroKazakhstan, which has a market value of \$2.8 billion, could be taken over in such a bid, as it has endured a run of bad news in 2005, including a fight with Russia's LUKoil over a jointly owned company in Kazakhstan, criminal charges against executives in Kazakhstan, and a production drop after Kazakh authorities banned the flaring of natural gas earlier this year. See 'Petrokazakhstan shares soar on bid news' [online], *RFE/RL Newslines*, Vol. 9, No. 123, 29 June 2005, available from [www.rferl.org/newsline/2005/06/2-TCA/tca-290605.asp](http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2005/06/2-TCA/tca-290605.asp). PetroKazakhstan is being bought by the China National Petroleum Corporation for \$4.18 billion with a stake offered to KazMunaiGaz, a state owned company from Kazakhstan.
- 5 Sources: World Bank, *Kyrgyz Republic Country Brief 2004 (2003 data)* [online], available from [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org); UNDP Human Development Report 2005, op. cit.

southern region with its Uzbek minority is both more religious and poorer than the more developed and russified north.

The first president of independent Kyrgyzstan was Askar Akayev. His 14-year rule saw the adoption of sound laws and policies; their implementation, however, was largely deficient. Senior government positions were generally vested with little power, leading to a lack of decision-making capacity with nobody taking responsibility for policy implementation. Moreover, officials served their patron rather than the state or the people.<sup>6</sup> In addition, doubts lingered over the long-term viability of the country and there was a sense that further upheavals might follow. Despite official statements supporting democracy, members of the president's entourage divided power and assets among themselves.

Between 1991 and 2002, more than 600,000 people emigrated from Kyrgyzstan and the percentage of its ethnic minority population shrank from 47 to 33 percent.<sup>7</sup> Although the ethnic policies of Akayev's regime were fairly balanced, the presence of minorities – especially of groups indigenous to the region, which in theory can claim parts of the territory as 'theirs', such as Uzbeks – has been a challenge. Formal rights have been assigned and certain Soviet-era provisions remain – including the right to education in one's own language – but minorities lack access to patronage networks and, consequently, access to power. The alienation of minorities, especially the Uzbeks, from decision-making is a concern for future stability. Initially, the change of power worried Kyrgyzstan's remaining Russians,<sup>8</sup> but their fears have subsided. Even so, minorities are severely underrepresented in government, parliament, police and security forces, making it difficult to mitigate interethnic tensions that arise.

In general, compared to the rest of Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan has received a good press in the West since independence and has been a favoured target for development assistance. However, donor funds and leniency have also contributed to a pattern of government departments and officials avoiding responsibility.<sup>9</sup> In Kyrgyzstan – in this respect not alone among the Central Asian states – the provision of public services such as healthcare, education and pensions has been outsourced to the international community.<sup>10</sup> In 1998, development assistance covered 72 per cent of Kyrgyzstan's central government expenditure.<sup>11</sup> The country also accumulated a significant debt to the international financial institutions (IFIs), which it is in no position to repay. This debt has been restructured since the regime change, with limits on borrowing and an increase in the proportion of IFI financing made available in the form of grants.<sup>12</sup>

The rule of President Akayev and his family came to an abrupt end in March 2005 amid popular protests against rigged parliamentary elections. Kurmanbek Bakiyev, a southerner and a former prime minister in an Akayev government, was elected president in July 2005. Felix Kulov, a northerner and another former prime minister, took the premiership once again. This tandem was meant to seal unity between the south and the north of the country but it will take more than this to achieve that end; during 2005, there were signs that the rift was deepening.

6 For an analysis of how the political system functioned under Akayev, see International Crisis Group, *Political Transition in Kyrgyzstan: Problems and Prospects* [online], Asia Report No. 81, ICG, Osh/Brussels, August 2004, pp. 5-8, available from [www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/central\\_asia/081\\_political\\_transition\\_in\\_kyrgyzstan\\_problems\\_and\\_prospects.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/central_asia/081_political_transition_in_kyrgyzstan_problems_and_prospects.pdf)

7 IRIN, 'Kyrgyzstan: Ethnic Minorities Say They Face An Uncertain Future', [online], *IRIN*, 8 June 2005, available from [www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=46962&SelectRegion=Asia&SelectCountry=kyrgyzstan](http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=46962&SelectRegion=Asia&SelectCountry=kyrgyzstan)

8 Estimated at 500,000, in third place after the Uzbeks. Estimate by the Russian Embassy in Kyrgyzstan, November 2005.

9 For analysis of this, see Vaux, T. and Goodhand, J., *Conflict Assessments: Disturbing Connections: Aid and Conflict in Kyrgyzstan* [online], The Conflict, Security and Development Group, King's College, University of London, London, July 2001, pp. 49-58, available from [www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/conflictassessmentkyrgyzstan.pdf](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/conflictassessmentkyrgyzstan.pdf)

10 This argument is developed in Zuercher, C., *The Future of Intervention: Intervention, Legitimacy and Reconstruction of Statehood* [online], Discussion Paper, Blankensee Colloquium, July 2004, available from [www.oei.fu-berlin.de/~blankensee/data/Rahmenpapier%2013-7-04.pdf](http://www.oei.fu-berlin.de/~blankensee/data/Rahmenpapier%2013-7-04.pdf)

11 *2005 World Development Indicators* [online], World Bank/IBRD, March 2005, p. 351, available from [www.worldbank.org/data/wdi2005/pdfs/Table6\\_10.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/data/wdi2005/pdfs/Table6_10.pdf)

12 Author's interview at ADB, Bishkek, November 2005.

After the regime change, it became evident that, unlike in Georgia's 'Rose Revolution', which is often seen as a path-breaking event for regime change, there was no new elite ready to take over.<sup>13</sup> In fact, the future of the country had hardly featured in the preceding election campaign, which largely concerned personal rivalries. In the process of power changing hands, criminal groups have joined with those contesting power and provided financial and physical resources for action. Although there have been distinct and important gains from the events of March 2005, especially in freedom of speech and expression and in an increased space for civil society, alliances that have effectively brought criminality closer to the centre of power pose severe risks to the post-Akayev era.

The turmoil in the country exposed the fragility of institutions while the victors' lack of a coherent reform agenda revealed that the aim of a democratic reconstruction did not go very deep. Redistribution of assets and 'clan privatisation' followed instead. The regime's overthrow unleashed forces in society that politicians could not control. Gaining a sense of freedom, the population realised that protests are an effective way to fulfil objectives. The relationship between power and criminality, latent under Akayev, has now become one of the determinants of the political process, when serious contenders have to have 'shadow' backing. With the central authorities in disarray, local tensions broke out, dismantling many achievements of the previous government and opening up local faultlines, among them inter-ethnic disputes and cross-border tensions.

International discourse on how to approach Kyrgyzstan in the new situation is still evolving. Interpretations of the events of March 2005 differ. One view is that 'the underlying conflicts (...) are more economic and regional than political – and more likely to be worsened than relieved by the current instability'.<sup>14</sup> There are expectations among the donor community that Akayev's downfall has created more opportunities for positive change and freed the country from the stranglehold of corruption. At the same time, there is apprehension that the interests of clans and criminal organisations could severely undermine the emergence of a national agenda.

The question is how to facilitate the building of a viable state by external intervention when significant social forces are unconcerned with a national agenda and political issues, and are instead driven by clan interests. Establishing public trust in government institutions is not going to be easy and it may well be equally hard to persuade citizens of the validity of international recipes for state-building, since they were endorsed by ex-President Akayev while he was in power.<sup>15</sup>

Without both the appearance and the substance of political will from the government to plan a long-term strategy and identify priorities for development, devising a way forward will be hard. Donors are ready to support the development of a strategy, but the initiative should come from the Kyrgyz government.

However, a long-term strategy may not be forthcoming while the country is still in crisis. One approach for the donor community is to wait until the political elite settles its internal battles, but a better option is to facilitate the creation of a plan that would lay out opportunities for crisis management. This could include tactical advice for the government. A roadmap on how to achieve stabilisation and strengthen consensus between the north and south of the country is a priority need; it would involve a strategy for personnel appointments, improvements in the police and justice sector, and for strengthening the capacity for dispute resolution. Once the country is stable again it would be time to work out a long-term strategy.

13 Interview with Chinara Jakypova, IWPR, Bishkek, February 2005.

14 Burkett, E., 'Democracy Falls on Barren Ground', *International Herald Tribune*, 30 March 2005.

15 Askar Akayev used international development notions as political slogans, if not always as a guide for action. Kyrgyzstan was declared 'a country of human rights'; each year was named after some development initiative, such as 'a year of social mobilisation' etc.

### 1.1.3 Tajikistan

Population: 6.3 million  
 GNI per capita: US \$190  
 GDP: US \$1.3 billion  
 Population below poverty line: 64%  
 ODA received total, US \$ millions: 144.1 (2003)  
 ODA received per capita: US \$22.9 (2003)  
 ODA received as % of GDP: 9.3 (2003)  
 Total World Bank commitments in 1996-2004: US \$333 million<sup>16</sup>

Located on the borders of Afghanistan and China, Tajikistan is disadvantaged by its adverse regional setting, locked between hostile neighbours and high mountains. The country's main assets include hydroelectric power, aluminium production and cotton. Tajikistan survived a civil war in 1992-7, fought over the division of power between different regions of the country. The Russian and United Nations-sponsored peace process produced the Peace Agreement of 1997, which so far has held.<sup>17</sup>

Although the civil war has left a profound impact on politics and society, its consequences have never been systematically assessed and it remains a taboo subject. Because of the civil war, Tajikistan was the first Central Asian country to experience significant intervention from the international community. The level of aid provided to the country constituted 107.1 per cent of central government expenditure in 1998.<sup>18</sup>

Thus far, post-civil war Tajikistan has achieved a degree of stability. Formal institutions and informal power arrangements are a product of the civil war and battles over them have already been fought. The central authority controls the key sectors and rules through a combination of legitimacy and a certain degree of coercion, while the international community substitutes for the state in areas that the latter is unable or unwilling to attend to.

Progress since the end of the civil war includes enhanced security – the main plank of the government's legitimacy – and the emergence of modern technocrats to replace less qualified political appointees. Improved security, however, is double-edged, since the means by which it is provided increasingly contribute to building up the potential for conflict which, if not addressed satisfactorily, may later escalate. Struggles and even violence within the political elite are possible. However, they are unlikely to affect the country as a whole, as the ability of elite figures to mobilise large-scale support is low.

Land rights and distribution remain causes for grievance, as there is a widespread perception that land was initially distributed unfairly so that those with power and money got better deals and many poor people in the rural areas got land with debt already attached to it. In some areas people have only tiny allotments that are insufficient to provide for a family. The present arrangements are complicated. Although land remains state property, it is being distributed to farmers for cultivation with the right of inheritance. If the land is not cultivated (or if farmers plant what they want rather than cotton), the state reserves the right to repossess it. Conflict lines in the countryside lie both between the farmers and the authorities who distribute land (and among farmers with conflicting claims) and between emerging cotton monopolists and peasants forced to deliver raw cotton.

16 Sources: World Bank, *Tajikistan Country Brief 2004 (2003 data)* [online], available from [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org); UNDP *Human Development Report 2005*, *op. cit.*

17 For background, see Abdullaev, K. and Barnes, C. (eds.), *Politics of Compromise: The Tajikistan Peace Process* [online], Accord International Review of Peace Initiatives, Conciliation Resources, London, March 2001, available from [www.c-r.org/accord/tajik/accord10/index.shtml](http://www.c-r.org/accord/tajik/accord10/index.shtml)

18 *2005 World Development Indicators*, *op. cit.*, p. 351.

The short-term potential for political instability stems from two factors:

- Firstly, competition persists within the regional group – the Kulyabis – which came to power as a result of the war. The president’s native Dangara clan of Kulyab – his main power base – has monopolised the most lucrative appointments and business opportunities, to the dismay of other Kulyabi clans who also made an important contribution to victory;
- Secondly, rivalries between drug mafias have intensified. Divvying up the drug smuggling market was perhaps an unwritten part of the peace agreement, in which both sides had a share. Earlier, remarkably little violence was associated with drug smuggling, apart from skirmishes with Russian border troops on the border with Afghanistan. The situation altered after arrests and prosecutions of some major drug dealers, and, together with the Russian border troops’ withdrawal, the drug market is open for a new round of division. Bomb explosions in Dushanbe in 2005 had drug mafia undertones.

However, none of these issues has significant potential to disrupt peace. A greater potential for destabilisation is related to Islamism and drug trafficking and lies in the periphery of the country, in the far-southern and far-northern provinces.

There are diverse views in the donor community on the situation in Tajikistan and each view has different implications for donor policies:

1. Tajikistan can be viewed as primarily a post-conflict state where peace is precarious and civil war could resurface: ‘the political system is fragile, and warlordism and regionalism govern much of its dynamic.’<sup>19</sup> In this perspective, the priority for assistance is peacebuilding.
2. An alternative perspective is that Tajikistan has an authoritarian regime using the pretext of Islamic extremism to justify its repression against the population, thereby provoking conflict. Repressive practices, violations of human rights and diminishing space for the opposition and media freedoms could cause a reaction. The priority for assistance is democracy and human rights.
3. A third perspective is that Tajikistan is a developing country with a young population, devastated by war, but making serious progress towards peace and stability which enables development to take root. In this view the priority is economic development; the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has selected it as the only country in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to aim for the Millennium Development Goals.
4. Finally, the country can be seen as a drug trafficking state thanks to its long border with Afghanistan and weak defences, so that the fight against drugs would be the priority. In this connection, Tajikistan is often considered a success story. The West has enjoyed good cooperation on drug issues where the government’s and international interests coincide. Aid comes as an accompaniment to the anti-drug efforts, which are the main reason for the donors’ involvement.<sup>20</sup>

Each of these four views catches part of a complex reality. The truth is that these are four interdependent problem areas. Specific measures to address the potential for violent conflict and thus ensure good governance must accompany a poverty reduction strategy. Effective cooperation in anti-narcotics policies can be seen as laying the basis for further and wider cooperation between donor governments and the authorities in Tajikistan.

19 International Crisis Group, *Tajikistan’s Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation?* [online], Asia Briefing No. 33, ICG, Dushanbe/Brussels, 19 May 2004, available from [www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/central\\_asia/040519\\_tajikistan\\_politics\\_confrontation\\_or\\_consolidation.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/central_asia/040519_tajikistan_politics_confrontation_or_consolidation.pdf)

20 For instance, the UK Anti-Drug Unit has recently put £2 million into border management and anti-trafficking measures. Interview with UK Embassy in Tajikistan, Dushanbe, March 2005.

### 1.1.4 Turkmenistan

Population: 4.7 million  
 GNI per capita: US \$1,130  
 ODA received total, US \$ millions: 27.2 (2003)  
 ODA received per capita: US \$ 5.6 (2003)  
 ODA received as % of GDP: 0.4 (2003)  
 Total World Bank commitments in 1995-2004: US \$90 million<sup>21</sup>

Turkmenistan borders Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Iran, Afghanistan and the Caspian Sea; its main assets are natural gas, oil and cotton. The country is ruled by Saparmurat Niyazov, or Turkmenbashi, who has declared himself president for life. Of the CIS states, Turkmenistan has departed furthest from the common Soviet past. Energy wealth and secure, long-term contracts guaranteeing steady revenue from natural gas sales concentrated in the hands of the leadership determine the nature of the regime.

One could say that, so far, the project seems to be working. The 25-year agreement with Russia's Gazprom to supply it with gas secures long-term income. Under the agreement, Russia will buy gas remaining from sales to Ukraine until 2007, and thereafter will get most of Turkmenistan's gas. At the same time, the economic situation in other CIS countries has improved, and they have started repaying their debts to Turkmenistan.<sup>22</sup> A further agreement with Gazprom was signed in September 2005 to ship Turkmen gas through Uzbekistan's pipeline system, implying that Russia will soon control all of Turkmenistan's gas exports.<sup>23</sup> In this situation the president sees no need for financial assistance.

The system of governance is concentrated around the leader, who takes all decisions. This means that senior officials are unwilling to take responsibility, no new managerial class has been created, decision-making is extremely slow and a great deal of incompetence is concealed behind a stern facade. Despite controls, corruption among officials is rampant and the practice of *kompromat* is widespread, i.e. getting people removed from official positions by passing compromising material about them to the authorities. Many officials, even those who receive favours, can have their privileges removed, creating grievances among those who should be loyal servants of the regime.<sup>24</sup> The president keeps competition between tribes<sup>25</sup> under control through frequent rotation of appointments. Some observers argue that should the president suddenly die, power struggles between tribes could wreak havoc in the country. Looming large at the same time is the nation-building project – an effort to create an 'all-Turkmen' nation<sup>26</sup> – in which Uzbeks are particularly disadvantaged.

As well as propaganda, the leader relies on an extensive law-enforcement apparatus to ensure control. The educated middle class remains a challenge, as it has aspirations beyond merely guaranteeing its own physical well-being. Thus, opportunities for education and access to information are restricted. Education is apparently perceived as a time bomb, so consistent

21 Sources: World Bank, *Turkmenistan Country Brief 2004 (2003 data)* [online], available from [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org); UNDP *Human Development Report 2005*, *op. cit.*

22 For instance, from 1 July 2005, Ukraine is to pay \$44 per 1,000 cubic metres of gas in cash, down from previous \$58 per 1,000 cubic metres (half in cash and half in kind). It agreed to pay its debt of \$600 million accrued in 2004-05 on payments in kind with goods shipments. Turkmenistan is contracted to sell 36 billion cubic metres of gas to Ukraine in 2005. Source: 'Ukraine Agrees to Pay Cash for Turkmen Gas' [online], *RFE/RL Newline*, Vol. 9, No. 121, 27 June 2005, available from [www.rferl.org/newline/2005/06/2-TCA/tca-270605.asp](http://www.rferl.org/newline/2005/06/2-TCA/tca-270605.asp)

23 RFE/RL, 'Russia, Uzbekistan ink gas deal' [online], *RFE/RL Newline*, Vol. 9, No. 184, 29 September 2005, available from [www.rferl.org/newline/2005/09/290905.asp](http://www.rferl.org/newline/2005/09/290905.asp)

24 For instance, see IWPR, 'Turkmenistan: Fate of Kurbanmuradov Uncertain' [online], *IWPR Reporting Central Asia*, No. 389, 21 June 2005, available from [www.iwpr.net/index.pl?archive/rca2/rca2\\_389\\_2\\_eng.txt](http://www.iwpr.net/index.pl?archive/rca2/rca2_389_2_eng.txt)

25 Turkmen society is organised along tribal lines (with 44 tribes altogether). The largest ones are the Ahal-Tekke in the centre, the Ersary in the Turkmen/Afghan border region and the Yomut in the West. See Akiner, S., *Central Asia: Conflict or Stability and Development?*, Minority Rights Group, London, 1997, p. 30.

26 For instance, in Tashauz everybody is pressured to wear Turkmen national dress; even Russians have to wear *tubeteikas*. Interview with an Uzbekistan-based journalist, Tashkent, March 2005.

efforts are made to undermine it. Foreigners are unwelcome not only because they can step out of line, but because their presence changes the social atmosphere. Many Western businesspeople and foreign NGOs have had difficult experiences in Turkmenistan.

Discontent in the regions appears to centre on at least three issues: education, cotton harvests and the requisitioning of agricultural produce. During harvests, cotton-producing areas are cordoned off by troops and the population cannot travel out, even to nearby cities. In autumn, after the harvest is collected, squads arrive to take produce away from the peasants, leaving only the bare minimum for survival.

With natural resource exploitation laying the foundations of autarchy, little can be done to influence the regime's internal political behaviour while the president remains in charge. There is a widespread expectation among international observers of havoc and turmoil when he dies but opinions differ over what to do in the interim. The main options and arguments for them are as follows:

1. Disengage – on the basis that little of use can be done and that the international presence only serves to legitimise the regime's existence.
2. Stay engaged – because the international community needs to be present when the situation starts to change. The international presence provides a lifeline of support and solidarity to the few civil society actors and remaining intelligentsia.
3. Pressurise the leadership into tackling issues of strategic importance, like anti-drug measures ('drugs' do not officially exist in Turkmenistan)<sup>27</sup> – because these measures are needed and are more likely to be taken up as the president is sensitive to the prospect of complete international isolation.

Whichever option is chosen for overall policy, it is not possible to see viable openings for peacebuilding approaches by the donor community in the present circumstances.

### 1.1.5 Uzbekistan

Population: 25.6 million  
 GNI per capita: US \$420  
 GDP: US \$9.9 billion  
 Population below poverty line: 28% (2002)  
 ODA received total, US \$ millions: 194.4 (2003)  
 ODA received per capita: US \$7.6 (2003)  
 ODA received as % of GDP: 2.0 (2003)  
 Total World Bank commitments in 1994-2003: US \$599 million<sup>28</sup>

Uzbekistan is the most populous country in Central Asia, famous for its cotton production, which requires irrigation and hard manual labour.<sup>29</sup> Since the late 1990s, Uzbekistan has suffered acts of violence, including attacks by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), and bomb explosions in 2004 that were reportedly carried out by underground Islamist groups. Internal political controls culminated in the May 2005 crackdown on protests in Andijan. Opinions differ as to how far internal repression is a cause or consequence of 'terrorism' in Uzbekistan.

After a period of stabilisation in the 1990s, the economic and social situation has steadily deteriorated in the last few years, while development strategies have stalled. By denying any

27 In an indirect admission of the problem, President Niyazov dismissed Murad Atagarriev, an Akhal province governor, for 'drug addiction', RFE/RL, 'Turkmen president dismisses regional head for drugs problems' [online], RFE/RL *Newsline*, Vol. 9, No. 184, 29 September 2005, available from [www.rferl.org/newsline/2005/09/290905.asp](http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2005/09/290905.asp)

28 Sources: World Bank, *Uzbekistan Country Brief 2004 (2003 data)* [online], available from [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org); UNDP *Human Development Report 2005*, op. cit.

29 International Crisis Group, *The Curse of Cotton: Central Asia's Destructive Monoculture* [online], Asia Report No. 93, ICG, Bishkek/Brussels, 28 February 2005, available from [www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/central\\_asia/093\\_curse\\_of\\_cotton\\_central\\_asia\\_destructive\\_monoculture.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/central_asia/093_curse_of_cotton_central_asia_destructive_monoculture.pdf)



political, economic and social modernisation, the leadership has brought the country to a deadlock, as the system is virtually incapable of reform and transformation. The suppression of economic liberties has become a grave concern for ordinary people, who have little interest in politics, but are unable to make the ends meet.

After Andijan, the regime is more aware of the discontent among the population, but is faced with a difficult choice: on the one hand, even cautious liberalisation in the short-term is likely to disrupt stability and may unleash a process of turbulent change allowing long-suppressed grievances to be expressed. On the other hand, increasing control and repression requires the maintenance of an expensive security apparatus and a loyal elite, while indications have emerged of dissatisfaction with the repression in Andijan among segments of the elite.<sup>30</sup> Some army units reportedly refused to open fire on civilians.<sup>31</sup>

Some international observers expect continuing tensions to produce a further explosion of violence. Others, by contrast, believe that overwhelming repression has produced such a degree of fear that the elites and society at large are paralysed into inaction. However, an increasing number of social and political problems are being met with decreasingly effective responses, with the state retreating into repressive measures as its only option. A social explosion or, at least, further violent incidents seem probable.<sup>32</sup> In this case, Uzbekistan's neighbours will feel some of the impact while Uzbekistan itself is likely to become a magnet for Islamic solidarity, attracting fighters and money from abroad.

The donor community has tried various approaches to influencing the Uzbek government, with limited success. Those giving it the benefit of the doubt have been frustrated in their expectations, as restrictions over political and social freedoms have steadily intensified and economic policies have discouraged development.<sup>33</sup> Time and again the internationals have discovered that the government is not willing to accept advice on its core policies and is only interested in technical aid.<sup>34</sup> There is very little space for enlightened and moderate elite representatives with whom the international community seeks to work in the hope that eventually they will gain more influence. On the whole, the donor community's appetite to work with the government has dwindled, and assistance is mostly provided at the local and provincial levels. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) suspended all aid to the central government at the end of 2004, following the increase in authoritarian tendencies, while the European Union (EU) introduced sanctions in October 2005.

Continuing this trend of sanction and withdrawal is one option for the donor community. However, there is much that is unsatisfactory about swinging from alliance to isolation as if they were the only two policy options available. There is considerable dismay among civil society actors in Uzbekistan who feel they have been abandoned by international actors who supported them in their aspiration for more openness in society. It is worthwhile, therefore, to consider ways of continuing with a limited engagement, one that commits donors neither in favour of the current political arrangements nor against, but which recognises that Uzbekistan has an important place in Central Asia and that, for this reason, it is worth having serious dialogue and communication as well as cooperation where possible. This could mean working within multilateral organisations – both the UN and, arguably, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) could have a role here. It could mean supporting education and

30 For an outline of the events in Andijan see International Crisis Group, *Uzbekistan: the Andijan Uprising*, Asia Briefing No. 38, ICG, Bishkek/Brussels, 25 May 2005, available from [www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/central\\_asia/b038\\_uzbekistan\\_\\_\\_the\\_andijan\\_uprising\\_edited.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/central_asia/b038_uzbekistan___the_andijan_uprising_edited.pdf)

31 Dubnov, A. 'V Tashkente nervnichayut uzbekskkiye vlasti i inostrannyye diplomaty' [Nervosity among Uzbek authorities and foreign diplomats in Tashkent] [online], *Vremya Novostei*, 7 June 2005, available from [www.vremya.ru/2005/99/5/126893.html](http://www.vremya.ru/2005/99/5/126893.html)

32 Donovan, J., 'Is Uzbekistan Headed for Regime Change?' [online], RFE/RL *Central Asia Report*, Vol. 5, No. 25, 7 July 2005, available from [www.rferl.org/reports/centralasia/2005/07/25-070705.asp](http://www.rferl.org/reports/centralasia/2005/07/25-070705.asp)

33 'The IMF Has Critically Assessed the State of the Uzbek Economy' [online], *Times of Central Asia*, June 17, 2005, available from [www.timesca.com/news/Economy/Uzbekistan/2005/06/17/0072146](http://www.timesca.com/news/Economy/Uzbekistan/2005/06/17/0072146)

34 Interviews with international development agencies based in Uzbekistan, Tashkent, March 2005.

local development initiatives, together with some networking and, perhaps, practical projects with civil society and academic organisations.

### 1.1.6 Common Regional Threads

While each of the five Central Asian countries has its own complex reality, which must be analysed in its own right, there are also some interesting common threads between them. The core driver of current conflict potential (where there is a significant potential) is the issue of governance, which can perhaps more clearly be grasped in this case as the question of power: how power is organised on the local and national level, the values and social conventions that underpin it and the patterns of inclusion and exclusion that it relies on and perpetuates.

In this region, governance is generally based on patronage and networks of informal arrangements, on which the ruling group typically holds a decision-making monopoly. This monopoly enables it to exercise control over the most important assets possessed by a country. Loyalty rather than merit lies at heart of personnel appointments and decisions that affect the functioning of political institutions. Such systems create considerable pressures in the societies, driving the leaderships at times to resort to repression as a problem-solving tool. Institutions are rarely responsive to ordinary people's needs and do not encourage participation. Ordinary people, in their turn, have not tried very hard to challenge such patterns, allowing them to become firmly entrenched.

The political will of the leaderships of these countries determines most political developments, especially their relations with their Central Asian neighbours. Soviet ways of treating populations and dealing with social problems largely persist. A relatively new factor lies in the connections between politics and organised crime that have emerged as the consequence of the drug trade and other murky practices that flourish in an economically restrictive environment. Such connections have recently become visible in Kyrgyzstan, but also affect the other states.

In some senses, the power elites in Central Asia feel somewhat on the defensive. The processes resulting in the change of leadership in Georgia and Ukraine worried Central Asian leaders, and the regime change in Kyrgyzstan caused real concern. In some quarters the conclusion has been drawn that a 'soft' approach to public protests is the quickest road to being overthrown. The leaderships perceive regime change to be a Western plot.<sup>35</sup> Following the fall of Akayev, Tajik officials made it clear to the US that they would not be willing to accept aid if the price for it was the possibility of a 'revolution'.<sup>36</sup> These suspicions hamper any strategic approach aimed at peacebuilding; all such initiatives risk being perceived as external interference.

The role and actions of the security sector agencies are a recurrent source of grievance and the state comes to its citizens in police uniform more often than as a provider of goods and services. The justice and prison systems have deteriorated in many places even in comparison to the Soviet period, as revealed by the October 2005 prison riots in Kyrgyzstan. Thus, the quest for social justice is a growing preoccupation of the Central Asian societies, in which there is widespread disillusionment with the fruits of independence and democratisation. Justice in an Islamic cloak becomes an increasingly viable alternative, especially for the younger generation.

Problems experienced by young people, who have few prospects for meaningful jobs unless they emigrate to Russia, are preparing the ground for future instability. The decline in both educational access and standards is a long-term risk factor in the region, despite the persistent commitment of Central Asians not to lose the best achievements of the Soviet era. As a result, pressures are building across the region.

35 Leaders have been warned by ex-President Akayev that his ousting was due to US interference; 'The rulers of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan would learn lessons from the events in Kyrgyzstan and successfully resist any attempts to chase them from power', Isachenko, V., 'Akayev Blames U.S. For Kyrgyz Uprising', *The Associated Press*, 05 July 2005.

36 Interviews with international diplomats based in Tajikistan, Dushanbe, March 2005.

To sum up, the major conflict lines within the Central Asian states lie in the issue of power and governance. Disputes and grievances arising from inter-ethnic relations and competition for natural resources are secondary sources of conflict that could in future be made more dangerous as a result of conflict escalation resulting from these central governance issues.

## 1.2 Regional Issues

### 1.2.1 Borders

Borders established in Central Asia in the post-independence period remain a serious source of frustration. The establishment of these borders led to territorial claims and disputes. Border regimes are harsh, as borders are used as a means of settling scores with unfriendly neighbours. Increased control has reduced opportunities for social and economic interaction with neighbours, disrupting local trading patterns. Originally, the policy of closing borders with Central Asian neighbours was initiated by Uzbekistan's leadership, on the grounds of concern about the incursion of Islamist militants into the country. Uzbekistan's measures provoked responses in kind from its neighbours, and the process eventually gave birth to integrated networks of corrupt officials and smugglers.

Today, border regimes in Central Asia function as joint operations in rent extraction. Appointments in the border areas are prestigious and job-buying is widespread. Many have a stake in these arrangements, such as customs officers, border guards, police, local authorities and local citizens who live off smuggling.

As a result, there are strong vested interests at the borders, represented by lobbyists at the level of the national governments. Border restrictions create considerable resentment among local populations, partly because of the negative practical impact, partly because of the growth of corruption, and partly because of a lack of self-identification with post-Soviet states and borders and a preference for the previous habits of coexistence and interaction. But even if the leaderships were inclined to relax border restrictions and facilitate trade, it would be hard to do so in practice because of the power of those with a stake in the *status quo*.

Border issues of various dimensions are also thrown up by the fact that, of the five states under discussion here, three of them – Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – border on Afghanistan. The Uzbek/Afghan border is only 80 kilometres long and is *de facto* closed for trade and transit,<sup>37</sup> with no evident intention to open it. The nature of the regime in Turkmenistan means that little is known about the border area. Foreigners are seldom allowed to travel there and, while it is believed that narcotics cross the border with relative ease *en route* to Russia, Azerbaijan, and maybe Iran (to circumvent the more strictly policed Afghan/Iranian border), the Turkmen border authorities report no drug seizures.

More is known about the border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan. In addition to the smuggling of precious stones and illegal migration to and through Central Asia, the issues of greatest concern are trafficking in narcotics, people and small arms:

- With regard to drugs, the main crossing point appears to be the Shurobod district in Tajikistan's Khatlon province. From 2001 to 2004 Russian troops there confiscated over 13 tonnes of drugs, half of it heroin.<sup>38</sup> In 2004, 127 people were arrested crossing the border illegally and two Russian soldiers were killed in a clash in this sector.<sup>39</sup> Some Tajik drug dealers are believed to buy opium in advance from Afghan farmers, offering them 'future's contracts'.<sup>40</sup>

37 The *Druzhba* (Friendship) bridge between Termez and Hairaton is open for crossing only with a special permit issued by the Uzbek government. Author's experience, March 2005.

38 Eighty per cent of drug seizures by the Russian border troops were in Moskovsky. Interview with a Russian Embassy representative, Dushanbe, March 2005.

39 Dikaev, T., 'Is Drug Trade on Tajik-Afghan Border Set to Expand?' [online], *IWPR Reporting Central Asia*, No. 374, 07 May 2005, available from [www.iwpr.net/index.pl?archive/rca2/rca2\\_374\\_3\\_eng.txt](http://www.iwpr.net/index.pl?archive/rca2/rca2_374_3_eng.txt)

40 Interviews with international observers, Kabul, March 2005.

- The problem of cross-border kidnapping is also serious. Women and children from the border areas of Tajikistan are reportedly being abducted and taken into Afghanistan. The reasons reported for this include the enforced collection of drug debts, sex trade, forcible organ donation and selling children as beggars.<sup>41</sup>
- Small arms and light weapons (SALW) are readily available on the Afghan side of the border. Evidence indicates that weapons cross into Central Asia at present,<sup>42</sup> but that the scale of this is not great.<sup>43</sup> However, if changes in the political situation boost demand, supply would follow. As a reminder, an influx of SALW from Afghanistan was a contributing factor in the civil war in Tajikistan.

Germany is the lead donor on the police reform pillar in Afghanistan (it has contributed 12 million euros), but there are also other donors. The target is to train 12,000 border police, reflecting German and US calculations of Afghanistan's needs.<sup>44</sup> Border police stations are under construction in Herat and Kunduz; the units stationed there will target illegal immigration, the SALW traffic and cross-border kidnappings. The impact of these developments lies in the future. However, while Afghanistan's border with Tajikistan is now the focus of donor engagement, its border with Turkmenistan remains a source of concern and scarce information. Western efforts to broach the issue with Turkmen authorities have encountered a very limited and discouraging response. It may be worth exploring how this segment of the border can be tackled from the Afghanistan side, especially given that NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is expanding in the north-western part of the country and that the situation there is relatively stable.

### 1.2.2 The Ferghana Valley

Situated at the nexus of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, the Ferghana Valley has received considerable attention as a potential sub-regional source of conflict. Anticipated sources of violent conflict in this area have generally been ascribed to inter-ethnic tensions and competition for natural resources, with border issues as an exacerbating factor. Recent major incidents of violence include the 'Batken events' in 1998 and 1999, when fighters of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) crossed into Kyrgyzstan's Batken province before launching attacks on Uzbekistan, and the May 2005 Andijan demonstrations and killings. The Ferghana Valley also witnessed violence prior to independence, with clashes between Uzbeks and Meskhetian Turks in Ferghana and Kokand and between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in Osh and Uzgen.

Not surprisingly, these pre-independence clashes across ethnic divides helped fuel the analysis that these divisions would be major sources of violent conflict. This view correctly identified the importance of ethnic affiliations and cleavages in Central Asian societies, in which suspicion and stereotyping between ethnic groups are strongly felt, even if seldom expressed in the open. With time, however, it has become clear that, as in many other places, negative perceptions of other groups are, on their own, not powerful enough to provoke violent conflict. It is primarily when ethnic cleavages coincide with other cleavages and perceived inequalities, or when perceived difference can be exploited politically in order to mobilise for conflicts that primarily arise from other sources that they make their most explosive contribution to conflict escalation. It is of particular concern in such cases that, once a conflict has assumed an ethnic or religious dimension, it is extremely difficult to rid the issues in dispute of those aspects.

41 Interviews at IWPR, Robert Kluyver and others, Kabul, March 2005.

42 For discussion, see *Moving Mountains: The UN Appeal for Tajikistan 2005* [online], available from [www.untj.org/files/reports/UNAppealEng.pdf](http://www.untj.org/files/reports/UNAppealEng.pdf); and UNDP HDR Series No. 1, 2005: *Sustainable disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants and conversion of military assets to civilian use*, pp. 28 – 30, available from [www.undp.tj/publications/index.htm](http://www.undp.tj/publications/index.htm)

43 The Russian FSB Border Service releases data on seizures. See, for example, Russian Border Troops' press service in Tajikistan, cited in *Asia-Plus Blitz*, 21 October 2004 and Mukhin, V., 'Podvodnyye kamni na puti rossiisko-tadjikskogo sblizheniya' [Pitfalls to Russian-Tajik Rapprochement] [online], *Fergana.Ru Information Agency*, 22 October 2004, available from <http://news.ferghana.ru/detail.php?id=974884283101.45,1761,1672997>

44 Interview with a representative of the German Police Project, Kabul, March 2005.

Competition over agricultural resources such as land, water and pasture rights tends to add more fuel to underlying tensions and could be the kind of conflict issue to coincide with ethnic cleavages. The significance of land and water for ordinary people has increased considerably, since most jobs in industry and in many other lines of work have collapsed, and agriculture has become the main source of income. Meanwhile, pressure on land grows as birth rates remain high, especially among Uzbeks and Tajiks. Disputes between ethnic communities over distribution of land and water unfold both within states and across state borders, for example between communities along the Tajikistan/Kyrgyzstan border. Such disputes may be local in scale, but their significance resonates beyond the area as they reflect hidden territorial claims over the other state. The donor community has devoted considerable attention to programmes in the Ferghana Valley intended to dampen conflict potential arising from resource issues. However, this focus has diverted funding from possibly more immediate needs and priority problems.

At the same time, the cross-border nature of resource issues means that the delimitation of borders and establishment of new border regimes became a further source of tension. Resentment is widespread against borders that do not seem to make sense and are associated with obstacles to crossing for goods and people, as well as with rampant corruption. It is keenly felt in the Ferghana Valley, which has developed as an integrated entity over centuries. The complicated pattern of ethnic settlement led to the creation of ‘enclaves’ – areas belonging to one state surrounded by the territory of its neighbour. Kyrgyzstan hosts most of these enclaves, which belong to Uzbekistan or Tajikistan. Access to and through the enclaves is problematic, as each of the three states creates barriers for its neighbours to cross. Every hostile move is followed by reciprocation. The long-term existence of the enclaves seems unsustainable.

The current challenges to peace and stability in the Ferghana Valley are largely political and stem from the policies and actions of the ruling regimes, such as the violence in Andijan. Since independence, much state action has been directed at the risk of ethnic separation, with reinforcement of the borders and deployment of security agents to the area. This has increased tension between populations and the security agencies, especially police and customs, which are regarded by many as brutal and corrupt in their dealings with ordinary citizens and ineffective against criminals and drug traffickers. Along with less arbitrary approaches by security forces, better handling of the border issues between the Central Asian states would ease the situation in the Ferghana Valley. In general, inter-ethnic issues by themselves are not likely to generate violent conflict and potential resource conflicts have received considerable preventive attention from the donor community. Although both kinds of issue could be manipulated as a means of escalating conflict, concern should primarily be directed – in the Ferghana sub-region as elsewhere in Central Asia – at the potential sources of manipulation and the core issues of power and governance.

### 1.2.3 Political Islam

Increasingly, Islam occupies a significant place in the social and political life of communities in Central Asia. A growing number of people undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca; mosques – where allowed – are being built with private money from abroad and religious observance is growing. The proliferation of Islamist groups, ideas and actions in Central Asia is an apparent, but little understood phenomenon. What is obvious is that the authorities use this threat to increase control and justify domestic authoritarian practices. Understanding the appeal of Islamism for Central Asians would help to elaborate strategies to respond better to these tendencies.

Using terminology developed by the International Crisis Group (ICG), it is possible to speak about three main types of Islamism, which all have in common a demand for a radical change to the existing order:<sup>45</sup>

45 International Crisis Group, *Understanding Islamism, Middle East/North Africa Report, No. 37*, ICG, Cairo/Brussels, 2 March 2005. See also further Crisis Group reports: *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Responding to Hizb ut-Tahrir*, Asia Report No. 58, ICG, Osh/Brussels, 30 June 2003; *Central Asia: Islam and the State*, Asia Report No. 59, ICG, Osh/Brussels, 10 July 2003; and *Is Radical Islam Inevitable in Central Asia? Priorities for Engagement*, Asia Report No. 72, ICG, Osh/Brussels, 22 December 2003.

- *Political*: these are Islamist movements whose purpose is to attain governmental power. They accept the nation-state and operate within its constitutional framework. The sole significant example of this category in Central Asia is the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) in Tajikistan, which was accepted as a legitimate political force following the 1997 Peace Agreement. Compromises with the presidency in order to remain close to power precluded the IRP from defining a clear agenda and its leaders have been largely co-opted into the system with lucrative posts and, one by one, purged of corruption. The present IRP leadership has therefore lost its standing with its former constituents. Although a growing Islamic constituency exists in the country, the IRP is unlikely to get political benefit from it.
- *Missionary*: for this category, political power is not an objective; instead the purpose is to preserve the Muslim identity, faith and moral order.<sup>46</sup> Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HuT) is the main Central Asian version of missionary Islamism. It is the organisation with the strongest popular backing across the region. HuT's initial strength was in the Ferghana Valley. Some observers interpret support for it there as a popular reaction to the establishment of national boundaries in a region where such borders never existed.<sup>47</sup> The idea of a *caliphate* (unification into one multinational Islamic entity) strikes an emotional chord with communities that are segregated. More importantly, a commitment to social justice, which in the minds of many has largely disappeared with independence, is one of HuT's attractive values. From the Ferghana Valley, HuT spread despite being outlawed as an alleged terrorist organisation. Speculation continues over the allegation: on the one hand, HuT is openly opposed to the modern state and the current regimes in particular, and calls for replacing secular powers by a system based on Islam; on the other, it states that such change will occur through non-violent means and has never admitted responsibility for acts of terror in the region. Some Central Asian governments insist they have evidence of HuT links with terrorism, but the donor community has been unconvinced.
- *Jihadi*: though the tradition of *jihad* is as much about a struggle within the individual as about political action, the term is used here to refer to Islamist groups devoted to armed struggle. Three variants can be identified: 'internal (combatting nominally Muslim regimes considered impious), irredentist (fighting to redeem land ruled or occupied by non-Muslims) and global (combatting the West).'<sup>48</sup> *Jihadis* in Central Asia have mainly been internal but recently some have acquired an anti-Western orientation (primarily anti-US). There were explosions in the US and Israeli embassies in Tashkent in 2004 but security has been too tight so far for any major acts to take place.<sup>49</sup> Individuals and groups that did not start as *jihadi* could evolve in that direction. For example, leaders of the IMU such as Juma Namangani were originally interested in a political role within Uzbekistan.

There are reports that the IMU has merged with a number of other groups to form an Islamic Movement of Turkestan but there is no evidence of their activities. In fact, the available evidence appears to indicate that a number of *jihadi* groups or cells operate in the region, only loosely connected with each other. Some started to gain a higher profile, such as Bayat ('Oath') in Tajikistan's strongly Islamic Isfara region. Bayat entered the stage with the murder of a Protestant convert in Chorkuh in January 2004. A dozen Bayat members were detained and put on trial in Tajikistan on charges ranging from organising a criminal group to conspiracy to murder. Cells of Islamists existed in Andijan province before the May 2005 crackdown, occasionally clashing with police and security forces when the latter raided their strongholds.<sup>50</sup> Now, the suppression in Andijan could provide a boost for new recruitment and radicalisation.

The Central Asian states blame the rise of Islamist movements on penetration by Islamist ideologues from outside and influences from Pakistan and Arab countries in the 1990s. By contrast, many international observers see it as motivated both by a response to social conditions in Central Asian countries and by repressive actions of the regimes themselves. For states in

46 International Crisis Group, *Understanding Islamism*, *op. cit.*, p. i.

47 Interview with an independent expert, Dushanbe, 2004.

48 International Crisis Group, *Understanding Islamism*, *op. cit.*, p. i.

49 Interview with a foreign diplomat based in Kyrgyzstan, February 2005.

50 Interviews with local observers, Ferghana Valley, March 2005.

Central Asia religion is a security issue, not a constructive social force.<sup>51</sup> The authorities, especially in Uzbekistan, tarnish all groups that deviate from the state-sponsored norm as potential terrorists, with no distinction between ‘terrorists’, ‘radicals’, ‘traditional strict fundamentalists’, ‘moderate traditionalists’, etc. There is a reluctance to entertain the possibility that a desire to raise the profile of Islam does not necessarily equate to political radicalism. There is no notion that those who want an Islamic state are not automatically determined to employ violent means to achieve this goal. Consequently, the state is perceived in some quarters as anti-Islamic and against God, notwithstanding the lip service it pays to religion.

Islamism is now increasingly merging with wider discontent over economic and social issues, developing as a reaction to political persecution. By themselves, cells of *jihadists* are capable of sporadic acts of violence, such as the bombings in Uzbekistan in 2004, but not powerful enough to ignite a bigger popular uprising. However, were they to unite with the masses of desperate people suffering poverty and hardship, this could create the basis for a broader protest movement.

### 1.2.4 Drugs

Drug trafficking is increasingly what Central Asia is known for. As production in Afghanistan increased in 2004, Central Asia became more deeply implicated. There are various estimates of the scale of the problem. One is that up to half the opiate output in Afghanistan is exported via Central Asia. Tajikistan and Turkmenistan are the most affected. Another is that 15-20 per cent of the opium grown in Afghanistan passes through Tajikistan,<sup>52</sup> and a third is that Tajikistan and Uzbekistan account for about 24 per cent of Afghan drug exports.<sup>53</sup> About twenty ‘mini-factories’ have sprung up near the Tajik border, each able to produce 20 kg of heroin per day. There have been increasing drug seizures. Since 1992 Russian border guards seized over 29 tonnes of drugs on the Tajik-Afghan border.<sup>54</sup> In 2004 the security services in Tajikistan seized drugs worth \$1 billion.<sup>55</sup> Tajik and Russian agencies reported a 42 per cent increase in drug seizures in 2003 over 2002. Over 9 tonnes of drugs were intercepted, of which two-thirds were heroin.<sup>56</sup>

Drug trafficking is a significant source of income and becoming more widespread. So far, there is not much of a link to violent crime, apart from clashes between Russian border troops and traffickers on the Tajik/Afghan border, but some violence attributed to inter-ethnic tensions is in reality the product of disputes over narcotics between ethnically-affiliated mafias. Police try to combat illicit drug trafficking, but are, on occasion, implicated. Most drug barons have their patrons in the police force.

Drug interests are also believed to have found their way into politics; there are allegations that some politicians in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have been sponsored by drug money.<sup>57</sup> Russian security experts publicly reported the involvement in the drug trade of Tajik local authorities and representatives of the security and border services.<sup>58</sup> In Tajikistan some major drug barons who have turned to politics have been arrested and prosecuted, but not on drug-related charges, while some have been detained in Moscow. In the Kyrgyz city of Osh (one of the main drug dealing centres in Central Asia), some of the unrest during the regime change was related to drugs. For example, a major dealer-turned-politician, Bayaman Erkinbaev, was murdered in September 2005; he used to wield influence on the redistribution of power, assets and personnel appointments.

51 Interview with a representative of an international development agency, Tashkent, March 2005.

52 Interview with a representative of the British Embassy, Dushanbe, March 2005.

53 Dikaev, T., ‘Is Drug Trade on Tajik-Afghan Border Set to Expand?’, *op. cit.*

54 *ITAR-TASS*, 15 October 2004.

55 Tajikistan/Russia, *Oxford Analytica Daily Brief*, 15 June 2004. Total drug seizures in 1999-2004 were more than 40 tonnes (including 21 tonnes of heroin).

56 UN OCHA, *Tajikistan 2004, Consolidated Appeal Process Mid-Year Review* [online], p. 2, available from [http://ochadms.unog.ch/quickplace/cap/main.nsf/h\\_Index/MYR\\_2004\\_Tajikistan/\\$FILE/MYR\\_2004\\_Tajikistan\\_SCR\\_EEN.PDF?OpenElement](http://ochadms.unog.ch/quickplace/cap/main.nsf/h_Index/MYR_2004_Tajikistan/$FILE/MYR_2004_Tajikistan_SCR_EEN.PDF?OpenElement)

57 Interviews with international security experts, March and June 2005.

58 *Oxford Analytica Daily Brief*, 15 June 2004.

Moral opposition to the drug trade is fairly low because internal consumption remains small (around 1 per cent).<sup>59</sup> The smuggling of drugs – like smuggling in general – is widespread in an economically restrictive environment. In rural Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan drug traffickers may come across as benefactors and act as local ‘godfathers’ who provide social support to their people, exercising considerable influence at a local and sometimes provincial level.<sup>60</sup> In Turkmenistan, one observer stated that internal consumption has reached ‘biblical proportions’<sup>61</sup> but the regime officially denies the existence of a drug problem. Some observers believe it covertly approves of consumption as a means of social and political control.<sup>62</sup>

Until drug production in Afghanistan is halted, Central Asia will be affected, as it lies on one of the major smuggling routes to Europe. Drug trafficking has an increasing impact on politics and security of the region, and there are observers who believe that drug money has financed terrorist activities.<sup>63</sup> It would be wrong to state that crime and politics are systematically interlinked at present but, given fragile political institutions and lack of transparency, a marriage of crime and politics is possible in future.

Because of its long border with Afghanistan, Tajikistan is the country that is the main focus of anti-drug efforts in Central Asia and international security experts regard it as the most successful in terms of international cooperation.<sup>64</sup> The government is an eager recipient of assistance, particularly from the UK and the US. Anti-narcotics programmes are the UK’s primary focus in Tajikistan; Russia also attaches considerable weight to combatting drug trafficking. By contrast, Turkmenistan’s cooperation with the international effort is very weak. The government has tightly restricted the activities and movements of external experts although international pressure is leading to greater cooperation.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is the international body leading the anti-narcotics measures. The US government is the largest donor. The UNODC office in Central Asia seeks to promote cooperation with Afghanistan, but given the huge disparity in capacity between Afghan, and Uzbek and Russian border guards, this has in many respects been less than optimal due to problems around sharing sensitive information. As well as attempting to prevent the Afghan export of narcotics, the effort is to prevent the import of precursor chemicals. Russia cooperates with the UNODC and has provided \$1.5 million funding for various projects.

In Tajikistan the Drug Control Agency (DCA) was established in June 1999 directly under the Office of the President and on the initiative of Western donors, while its institution-building activities were facilitated by the UNODC. The DCA is staffed by 350 personnel, 150 of them special forces bearing arms and capable of combatting criminals. The DCA officers are hand-picked by a thorough system of testing and background checks, and are paid a considerable salary by Tajik standards. The agency does not have a reputation for corruption. When drug seizures are reported, it is normally the DCA which is involved in investigations and arrests.<sup>65</sup> The same model is being currently applied in Kyrgyzstan.

59 ‘The closer to the border, the bigger is the use’; interview with a UNODC representative, Tashkent, March 2005. Uzbek officials admit that the country faces a drug problem because of opium cultivation in Afghanistan. Drug trafficking has led to addiction within Uzbekistan, which has 22,000 officially registered addicts, although specialists say the total could be five times higher [‘Uzbekistan faces growing drug problem’] [online], *RFERL Newslines*, Vol. 9, No. 121, 27 June 2005, available from [www.rferl.org/newsline/2005/06/2-TCA/tca-270605.asp](http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2005/06/2-TCA/tca-270605.asp). In 2004 the harvest was up 17% at 4.2 million tonnes. The area of cultivation spread by 64 per cent, or as a UNODC report puts it, ‘like wildfire’; UNODC, *Afghanistan: Opium Survey 2004*, November 2004, available from [http://www.unodc.org/pdf/afg/afghanistan\\_opium\\_survey\\_2004.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/pdf/afg/afghanistan_opium_survey_2004.pdf)

60 For discussion on Tajikistan, see Zuercher, C., *Analysis of Peace and Conflict Potential in Rasht Valley, Shurabad District and GBAO, Tajikistan* [online], Analysis Research Consulting for GTZ, March 2004, pp. 25 – 31, available from [www.arc-berlin.com/pdf/ARC%20GTZ-Report-Tajikistan.pdf](http://www.arc-berlin.com/pdf/ARC%20GTZ-Report-Tajikistan.pdf)

61 Interviews with an international security expert, Ashgabat, July-August 2004.

62 Interviews with international development practitioners, Ashgabat, August 2004.

63 Interview with a UNODC representative, Tashkent, March 2005.

64 Interview with a UNODC representative, Tashkent, March 2005.

65 For instance, drug traffickers were detained in Soghd province on the way to Novossibirsk province in Russia. In July 2004 FSB and Russian Customs intercepted 237 kilograms of heroin in packs of juice that were transported from Khujand (Sodgh province) to Novossibirsk province. The street value of the consignment in Russia was up to \$2.5 million (*Asia-Plus Blitz*, 28 October 2004). Over a 9-month period in 2004 the DCA Directorate for Kulyab seized 293 kilograms of drugs, including 37 kg of heroin (*Asia-Plus Blitz*, 27 October 2004).



In common with other cross-border issues, the problem of drugs can either be a source of continued deficiencies in development, governance and human security or, by being the occasion and focus of cross-border, regional and international cooperation, it can become the starting point for a major improvement in the region's prospects.

## Chapter 2. The Wider Regional Environment and the Major Powers

### 2.1 Afghanistan – from Problem to Opportunity?

The state-building process in Afghanistan is critical to the prospects for Central Asia. At worst, Afghanistan could be a continuing problem for development in Central Asia, not only because of drugs or because persistent instability would affect the security of its neighbours, but also because events in Afghanistan could offer pretexts for escalated repression among the Central Asian states. At best, however, although not in the immediate future, there could be a mutually beneficial interaction between Afghanistan and its northern neighbours that would strengthen development prospects all round.

Persistent insecurity in Afghanistan undermines security in the region because of connections between the Taliban in Afghanistan, the al-Qaeda network that they supported, groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) that had some direct links with Taliban and al-Qaeda, and the diffuse *jihadi* groups. Where drugs and abductees can be trafficked across borders, fighters can also cross, along with supplies of small arms and light weapons. These fighters can and do include those whose targets are state authorities in Central Asia – if not in the quantity implied sometimes by those authorities. The US-led coalition's intervention in Afghanistan overthrew the Taliban and weakened al-Qaeda and groups associated with it like the IMU, but has not entirely eradicated any of these forces. Coalition forces may in a long-term perspective be gaining the upper hand in Afghanistan and there may be reasons also to anticipate greater political stability over time, but currently and for at least some time to come, neither the Kabul government nor the coalition forces control all of Afghanistan's territory. Though the Kabul government and the internationals have managed to incorporate major regional warlords such as Dostum in Shibergan or Atta in Balkh into the national political framework, this has enhanced the power of second-tier local commanders.

A second transmission mechanism for insecurity lies in crime. With no external backing and few viable opportunities in the legitimate economy in Afghanistan, earning money through criminality has become relatively widespread. Crime breeds corruption, in particular at the borders, where allegiance to national law is easily bought off to allow drugs and other goods to pass. Allegiance to national security can equally easily be bought off from the same corrupt officials. With the increase in poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, a regional nexus of crime and insecurity has been created. In order to prevent Afghanistan from reverting to a pre-Taliban situation, long-term external security assistance is essential.

The transmission of insecurity could also take place the other way round – that is, political turmoil in Central Asia could have an impact on Afghanistan.<sup>66</sup> If, for instance, President Niyazov suddenly dies and Turkmenistan descends into chaos or a popular revolt erupts in Uzbekistan, these events may send refugees and fighters – the one group seeking safety, the other exploiting mountainous terrain for bases – into Afghanistan from the north. This would disrupt the power equations between ethnic groups in the provinces, since the refugees would have kinship with groups in northern Afghanistan. The influx could intensify competition for scarce resources, creating shortages, and triggering local reactions – for example, to offer support and safe havens to the fighters, or to expel them, or to exploit the refugees – by autonomous commanders not incorporated successfully into Kabul's political framework. Diverse reactions by local commanders could also unleash rivalries between them, creating complex layers of conflict dyads. Exploitation of the ensuing situation by Taliban and al-Qaeda could be expected in a

66 Interview with Robert Kluyver, Soros Foundation, Kabul, March 2005.

context in which local capacities for cross-border cooperation in order to manage the problems have been weakened by criminality, venality and political rivalry. Fragile institutions in Afghanistan might be unable to cope with a new round of instability of this kind.

Understandably, the Central Asian leaderships regard Afghanistan as a source of threat rather than of opportunity. On the ground, local militia groups and regional commanders who hold *de facto* power in Afghanistan interact with Central Asian authorities across the borders, sustaining informal security arrangements. However, on the national scale there is little relationship with the government in Kabul. Tajikistan has been wary of cross-border interaction with Afghanistan for a long time, though there are encouraging signs of change in this regard. Bridges in Darvaz and Khorog in Gorno Badakhshan built by the Aga Khan Foundation in 2004 and 2002 respectively, became fully open to commercial traffic only in 2005, having been delayed for perceived security reasons. Eventually, Tajikistan's leadership decided that the benefits the bridges could bring in promoting trade and development outweighed potential repercussions of trafficking in drugs and in other illicit commodities, and illegal migration. The foundation stone of a bridge over the Pyanj River was laid in June 2005.<sup>67</sup>

It is fair to say that the donor community did not approach the new era of engagement in Afghanistan after the overthrow of the Taliban with a settled perspective on the wider regional dimension. Central Asia was perceived initially as a launch-pad for military operations with some observers canvassing the possibility of incorporating it into a wider network of security arrangements.<sup>68</sup> The need to engage in supporting social and economic development in the Central Asian states also received a higher profile than it had before the war in Afghanistan. But the inter-linkages between problems and possible solutions in the five Central Asian states and in Afghanistan were not treated as part of the same picture. Some cross-border projects have been pursued in Tajikistan by international agencies, such as the Aga Khan Development Network, the Eurasia Foundation (training for small-scale businesses and NGOs) and the Soros Foundation. In general, however, the relevant regional dimension of Afghanistan's politics and security is thought of in terms of relationships with Iran and Pakistan and insufficiently engages Central Asia.

Russia is isolated in relation to Afghanistan and has not been brought into a dialogue on drugs and security. When it showed interest in joining the anti-narcotics initiatives, the government of Afghanistan was extremely sceptical,<sup>69</sup> which is hardly surprising but inevitably hampers the larger effort. A Russian military base was set up immediately after the fall of the Taliban in Kabul, but was quickly withdrawn.

Narcotics loom large in any discussion of Afghanistan today, whether seeking to understand its likely internal trajectory, its wider regional role or its global significance. After the 2001 intervention by the international coalition, drug production and trafficking increased, with a further upsurge in 2004. It is estimated that 90 per cent of world heroin production originates in Afghanistan. Drugs are cultivated in 29 out of 32 provinces and 40 per cent of GDP is made up of narcotics-related income. Opium is the main cash crop and the only commodity in which Afghanistan has a comparative advantage internationally. Society shows little moral opposition to opium cultivation as the products are destined for foreign markets. In some areas drug bazaars operate quite openly. Drug dealing continues to be linked to armed groups and organised crime. There have been some inadvertent contributions to the problem in the internationally sponsored state- and peace-building effort; for example, among the former militiamen who joined police through the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process were ones who used to deal in drugs in the north; after DDR, they were better placed to get into the drug trade.

67 The bridge is due to be completed in 2007, but doubts have been expressed on how realistic this deadline is. The building work will cost \$28,352,000 financed mainly by the US, with contributions from Japan and Norway. Isamova, L., 'Tajikistan: Border Bridge to Boost Economy' [online], *IWPR Reporting Central Asia*, No. 389, 22 June 2005, available from [www.iwpr.net/index.pl?archive/rca2/rca2\\_389\\_3\\_eng.txt](http://www.iwpr.net/index.pl?archive/rca2/rca2_389_3_eng.txt)

68 Starr, S.F., (ed.), *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, *op. cit.*

69 Interviews with Western diplomats based in Kabul, March 2005.

The UK is the leading power fighting drugs in Afghanistan and the largest European donor (£100 million)<sup>70</sup>, while Germany and the US are responsible for police training, including border police. The European Commission (EC) finances some drug control, police reform and alternative livelihoods projects. The UK has been able to persuade the US to join the anti-drug effort, although the American domestic market is not much affected by supply from Afghanistan.

Despite this impressive international line-up, there are many obstacles to surmount for successful implementation. In principle, the main active role should be taken by national forces. Coalition forces deployed to fight terrorist groups have neither the capacity nor the mandate to fight poppy cultivation. The mandate of NATO's ISAF<sup>71</sup> is interpreted in a way that also excludes anti-narcotics operations.<sup>72</sup> Even if that mandate were to be changed, engaging directly in eradicating crops would bring ISAF into conflict with farmers and their communities with negative consequences for other parts of the current international engagement in Afghanistan.

The preferred strategy is thus to establish and train provincial anti-narcotics squads made up of local men who will carry out the physical eradication. Political leaders in Kabul and in the provinces have combined with religious authorities to back this approach. The squads are to be trained by private security contractor Dyncorp and their activity monitored by aerial photography. These steps are supplemented by establishing a justice system prepared to cope with drug traffickers and by promoting alternative livelihood development.<sup>73</sup>

The problem is deep-rooted; the anti-narcotics effort will mitigate it but it will persist to some degree for a considerable period of time. The lack of economic alternatives, the profitability of the trade, the pressure of the Taliban, the remoteness of key centres, the relative lack of state capacity – all these factors have to be overcome by the anti-narcotics effort. A more radical option that has been floated is to accept that Afghanistan will continue to grow poppies until economic alternatives open up, and simply buy up the opium harvest at a fair price for use by the international pharmaceutical industry.<sup>74</sup> The Senlis Council has advocated opium licensing, arguing that there is an unmet and growing global need for opium-based painkillers.<sup>75</sup> Though stable prices might actually work to increase production, this approach might make it easier to separate criminals from ordinary farmers and avoid criminalising large sectors of the population.

If progress is made on issues of insecurity and narcotics, it will become evident that Afghanistan and Central Asia have positive things to offer each other in the development field. One can begin by looking at the part of Afghanistan north of the Hindu Kush, which is largely populated by Central Asian kinship groups. Positive interaction between Central Asia and northern Afghanistan could be based on:

- Skills and human capital: while Central Asia has retained more educated professionals (civil engineers, teachers, doctors), Afghans have more developed business and entrepreneurial skills, because when there was no real state the market was the only force that kept the country going. It appears that both sides have skills to offer to each other.<sup>76</sup>
- Opening trade possibilities for Kunduz, Mazar-i-Sharif, Faizabad and other towns in northern Afghanistan: these centres are not on the major trading routes that go towards Iran and Pakistan and are not destinations of priority for trade coming in from Iran and Pakistan.

70 DfID, *Afghanistan Country Profile* [online] as of August 2005, available from [www.dfid.gov.uk/countries/asia/afghanistan.asp](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/countries/asia/afghanistan.asp)

71 *UN Security Council Resolution 1510* [online], New York, 13 October 2003, available from <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N03/555/55/PDF/N0355555.pdf?OpenElement>

72 Interviews at NATO ISAF headquarters, Kabul, March 2005.

73 For an outline of this, see Bhatia, M., Lanigan, K., and Wilkinson, P., *Minimal Investments, Minimal Results: The Failure of Security Policy in Afghanistan*, AREU Briefing Paper, Kabul, June 2004; pp. 17-18.

74 Interview with Andrew Wilder, AREU, Kabul, March 2005.

75 *Feasibility Study of Opium Licensing in Afghanistan*, The Senlis Council: Drug Policy Advisory Forum, Kabul/Brussels, September 2005.

76 At a UNDP conference on 'How to do business in Afghanistan' in Tashkent in 2005, the observers were reported to be positively impressed by the participants from Afghanistan.

Expanded legal two-way commerce across Afghanistan's northern borders would appear to offer the classic mutual advantages of trade.

- Population projections in Afghanistan are for rapid growth: if Central Asian economies pick up, they could employ cheaper labour from Afghanistan.<sup>77</sup>

On a nationwide scale, Afghanistan could be both an energy market – in principle, for gas from Turkmenistan, although its reliance on the Russian market may be too firmly entrenched, and more surely for electricity from Tajikistan – and a conduit to the Pakistani and Indian energy markets further south. More ambitiously, the development of an adequate road network could give Central Asian states trade access to the sea. Recently, the donor community has begun to promote infrastructure and development projects linking Afghanistan and Tajikistan, such as the construction of bridges and an electricity transmission line from Tajikistan to Kandahar to bring energy to Afghanistan. Though more is needed to build confidence between peoples from both sides and overcome mutual distrust and negative stereotyping, initial steps have been taken. In the long run, Afghanistan and those Central Asian states willing to cooperate with it and with the donor community face significant potential gains.

## 2.2 Engaging with Russia

During the first post-Soviet decade, the Russian leadership had only vague and inconsistent assumptions of the scale and character of Russia's interests in Central Asia. Despite its large-scale intervention in the civil war in Tajikistan in 1992-7, Moscow paid scant attention to growing regional problems, and generally took its influence for granted. Its non-military capacities for building ties and networks both diminished and were generally underused. Since Vladimir Putin's arrival in the Kremlin in early 2000, the intensity of political efforts and the level of resources aimed at advancing Russia's interests in Central Asia have significantly increased. Counter-terrorism has become the focus of attention and also the key instrument for gaining advantage in the competitive market for energy development projects.<sup>78</sup>

Stability in Central Asia has been perceived in Moscow as a crucial precondition for expanding its influence across this region while concentrating priority attention on geopolitical manoeuvring vis-à-vis the US and the EU. The sudden collapse of the Akayev regime and the violent uprising in Andijan caused great concern among the Russian leadership, which is worried not only about the new security risks to Russia's southern borders but mostly about the resonance of these events inside the Russian Federation. It is the spectre of unpredictable revolution that secures unwavering Kremlin support for the ruling regimes in Central Asia, which are expected to suppress smouldering discontent regardless of the quality of the resulting political stability.

In September 2001, President Putin gave his consent to the limited deployment of US and NATO troops in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, knowing that some reduction in Russia's influence would be inevitable, but assuming that a non-cooperative stance would be interpreted as abandoning the anti-terrorist coalition. Moscow was convinced that there could be no 'quick fixes' for Afghanistan and that the presence of Western troops would have to be sustained for many years to come, so the US air bases were perceived as permanent rather than temporary facilities. This was viewed as an inevitable and, by and large, acceptable price to pay for reducing the scale of security challenges coming from Afghanistan. Nevertheless, Russia planned for only a temporary 'retreat' from Central Asia and was confident in its ability to re-establish pre-eminence within a few years.

<sup>77</sup> The UN Population Fund estimate of population in Afghanistan for 2004 is 25 million, projected at 70 million by 2050. See UNFPA, *State of the World Population* [online] 2004, p.107, available from [www.unfpa.org/swp/2004/pdf/en\\_swp04.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2004/pdf/en_swp04.pdf)

<sup>78</sup> Solid analysis of this shift in priorities can be found in Lena Jonson's *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia: The Shaping of Russian Foreign Policy*, I.B. Taurus, London, 2004. For an updated and insightful overview, see Martha Brill Olcott in *Central Asia's Second Chance*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington D.C., 2005.

The three key elements of this ‘comeback’ strategy were:

- Aggressively expanding economic ties, first of all in the energy sector;
- Personalised political networking, primarily at the senior level; and
- Increasing capabilities for power projection.

On the economic front, Moscow achieved significant success as early as 2002 in securing the channelling of oil from Kazakhstan through its pipeline system, including the newly built Tengiz-Novorossiisk pipeline. Then an exclusive deal on purchasing and transporting the bulk of natural gas was struck with Turkmenistan, giving Gazprom the possibility to increase its exports to Europe. In mid-2004, President Putin authorised a large-scale investment in re-building two hydropower stations in Tajikistan and reviving aluminium production there.

While Russia generally does not see international organisations as helpful for its foreign policy, in Central Asia it has invested energy in institution-building. Despite overlapping mandates, the activities of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO; formerly the Tashkent Treaty), the Central Asia Cooperation Organization (which Russia joined in 2004), the Eurasian Economic Community and, particularly, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which includes China as a full member, have been expanded and intensified. Typically, declarations have been more impressive than real achievements but it is noticeable that every one of these organisations addresses the threat of terrorism, but none addresses issues of democratic rights or individual security. Russia seeks to use these extensive networks to make the regimes more dependent on multiple ties with Moscow.

Russia’s capacity for projecting power was demonstrated at the unprecedented military exercises in the Caspian Sea in the summer of 2002 and confirmed by the establishment of a new Russian air base in Kant, Kyrgyzstan. Nevertheless, this building of military muscle has turned out to be quite limited. The lack of meaningful military reforms undermined ambitions to boost power projection capabilities and instability in the North Caucasus determined the sustained concentration of military efforts towards this more immediate challenge. The Caspian exercises have therefore not been repeated and the ‘anti-terrorist’ exercises (for instance, with Kazakhstan in July 2005 and Uzbekistan in September 2005) involved the deployment of only a few hundred troops. The military presence in Tajikistan has been reformatted (with the establishment of a permanent military base) but not increased. Moscow tried to compensate for this crucial weakness by increasing military education programmes and arms exports to the Central Asian states, as well as staging several small-scale anti-terrorist exercises. The credibility of its security guarantees to the ruling regimes, nevertheless, remained questionable, since it was quite clear that a peace-enforcement intervention, similar to the one in Tajikistan in 1992-7, was not on the cards.

The start of the war in Iraq in the spring of 2003 convinced Moscow that US geopolitical attention had shifted away from Central Asia and so the road was clear for its rapid advance in this direction. It stepped up criticism of the conduct of operations in Afghanistan, with particular reference to the increased production of opium and the ‘destabilizing experiments’ in democratisation. While the continuing US and NATO combat operations against the remnants of the Taliban clearly addressed Russia’s own security concerns, it was ‘counter-balancing’ rather than cooperation that framed the Kremlin’s approach.<sup>79</sup>

Despite the huge political resonance from the ‘Orange Revolution’ in Ukraine in November-December 2004, the post-election turbulence in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005 was initially perceived as a minor irritant, so the swift collapse of the Akayev regime took the Kremlin by surprise. However, Russia’s reaction has been calm, as the events were not viewed as a victory of US influence over Russia or as a threat to the Russian military presence, but more as internal

<sup>79</sup> An accurate evaluation of this policy is made by Roy Allison in ‘Strategic Reassertion in Russia’s Central Asia Policy’, *International Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 2, April 2004. Dmitry Trenin argued in favour of expanded cooperation in ‘Southern Watch: Russia’s Policy in Central Asia’, *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 56, No. 2, Spring 2003, pp. 119-131.

strife among the Kyrgyz.<sup>80</sup> Russia's Ministry of Defence had to hastily relocate scheduled military exercises from Kyrgyzstan to Tajikistan in order to counter the impression that it was preparing to intervene to restore the *status quo ante*. Shocked by the inability of its long-term ally to resist a small-scale uprising, Moscow impressed upon other Central Asian leaders that their survival required firmness and determination. Russia approved of President Karimov's decision to use force in Andijan and put the blame for the violence on Islamic militants allegedly trained in Afghanistan, while also criticising international NGOs for fostering instability.

The discourse that associates every public protest against existing regimes with religious extremism and terrorism was spelled out in political statements from the summer 2005 round of meetings of Central Asian organizations. Ironically, the new Kyrgyz leadership that had taken power with the 'Tulip Revolution' embraced this discourse with few doubts.<sup>81</sup> One very pronounced element in the Russian stance is a new readiness to confront the US, claiming that the Bush administration is supporting protests against 'legitimate' regimes and sponsoring 'radicals' through various NGOs. Visiting Uzbekistan in September 2005, Russian Defence Minister Ivanov confirmed Moscow's readiness to protect Karimov's regime from Western pressure and explored possibilities for deploying some Russian air assets at the Khanabad base after the withdrawal of US forces.

Achieving some success in its counter-offensive, Russia is likely to calibrate its next steps carefully, since fundamentally it is not interested in fanning confrontation with the West but rather in surfing the counter-terrorist wave and acquiring some competitive advantages in the energy business. At the same time, Russia appears firmly set on the course of allying with authoritarian regimes in Central Asia and supporting their internal policies, whatever the price in terms of human security.

These developments in Russia's policy – and their cogency, coherence and success – are key elements in the geopolitics of Central Asia today. Having engaged enthusiastically with the West in 2001, since 2004 Central Asian regimes have largely realigned themselves in the security sphere with Moscow. Western security assistance brought little political capital. Where Central Asian leaderships used to compete with each other for Washington's and Brussels' attention, they now compete for Moscow's favours. Kazakhstan signed an important border treaty with Russia in 2005 and political rapprochement continues. In 2004 Tajikistan's leaders concluded that Russia is the only country capable of helping them in the event of civil disorder over elections or a crisis. Even in Kyrgyzstan, good relations with Russia remain a priority for any leader. The first official visit by the premier, Felix Kulov was to Russia, where he stressed the importance of bilateral ties.<sup>82</sup> After the departure of US troops from Uzbekistan at the government's request, Kyrgyzstan is host to the remaining US base in Central Asia. Thus, the country was a prime target during the visit to the region of the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, keen to preserve the US presence on the borders of Afghanistan and China. Moscow's response was that 'the US military presence in Central Asia is not needed'.<sup>83</sup>

The Uzbek leadership started its turn towards Moscow in late 2004. The appointment of a pro-Russian foreign minister led to a personnel reshuffle to give preference to Russia-leaning cadres. Moscow and Beijing's support for the repression in Andijan showed President Karimov who his real friends were.<sup>84</sup> During a June 2005 visit to Moscow, Karimov linked the Andijan revolt to

80 'Kyrgyz were fed up with the Akayev family rule and with dragging of dozens of relatives into politics'; a source in Putin's entourage, quoted by *Argumenty i Fakty* in 'Voyna za Srednuiu Aziju' (War for Central Asia) [online], No. 13, March 2005, available from [www.aif.ru/online/aif/1274/04\\_01](http://www.aif.ru/online/aif/1274/04_01)

81 See insightful analysis by Eric McGinchley in 'Revolutions and Religion in Central Asia', *PONARS Memo 364*, CSIC, Washington D.C., June 2005.

82 'Relations with Russia a Priority for Kyrgyzstan' [online], *RIA Novosti*, 30 September 2005, available from <http://en.rian.ru/world/20050930/41561590.html>

83 Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in an interview with RTR, reported in 'Russian Foreign Minister says U.S. Military Presence in Central Asia is not needed' [online], *RFE/RL Newswire*, Vol. 9, No. 195, 17 October 2005, available from <http://www.rferl.org/newswire/2005/10/171005.asp#2-tca>

84 Makarkin, A., 'Karimov's choice: Moscow and Beijing, not Washington', *RIA Novosti* [online], 7 July 2005, available from <http://en.rian.ru/analysis/20050705/40848112.html>

movements that toppled the governments in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan.<sup>85</sup> Following this, in September 2005 Russia conducted joint military exercises with Uzbekistan, the first since the dissolution of the USSR.

Finally, the presence of US troops in Central Asia has been challenged. On the request of Uzbekistan, the timeframe for the presence of the US bases was included in a July 2005 SCO declaration, which called for withdrawal of US military contingents from neighbouring countries.<sup>86</sup> Tashkent requested that US troops and warplanes vacate the Karshi-Khanabad airbase in 180 days and terminated cooperation with Washington on counterterrorism.<sup>87</sup> The last US troops left in November 2005. France also reduced its military presence in Tajikistan, withdrawing six Mirage jets and 250 military personnel from Dushanbe in November 2005.<sup>88</sup>

Russia's will and capacity to play an influential role in Central Asia should not be underestimated. Competition with the West, mostly with the US, will remain one of the drivers of Russia's policy. However, this does not make constructive engagement impossible. The message from local civil society to donors is that they have to adapt to the reality of Russia's relative power in the region, which will only grow. It is worth exploring ways to engage Russia on a case-by-case basis rather than believing in the possibility or desirability of marginalising it; such a strategy is bound to fail and will only generate more suspicion and less cooperation on Russia's part.

Areas in which possibilities for engagement with Russia could be explored include the following:

- *Investment standards:* Russian and Chinese investment is increasing in the region, which is in principle a welcome development since the region needs capital but sources of investment are scarce. However, there is justifiable apprehension that this investment might be accompanied by dubious business practices and low standards of corporate governance, leading to unfair competition and takeovers, exacerbating corruption and perhaps eventually leading to conflicts. In the long-term it is in the interests of all the biggest players in any competitive market or investment arena that there are clear rules with fair and equal treatment for all. Moreover, as time goes by and enterprises mature, Russian and Chinese companies will increasingly appreciate that their reputations are assets and that reputational risk is a business risk. Support for good business practice thus provides a basis on which to engage constructively and cooperatively with Russian and Chinese companies and authorities.
- *Stabilisation in Kyrgyzstan:* Russia is at odds with the OSCE at a high level. However, it can cooperate with the OSCE in the field when the general interests of OSCE members are shared. The stabilisation of Kyrgyzstan is one example where this is the case. The donor community and Russia could jointly explore through the OSCE Centre in Bishkek how to help put the country on the road to stability.
- *Russia as a provider of education and information:* Much information and influence in education still comes from Russia because of familiarity with the Russian language and cultural affinity. It may be appropriate to take this into account while supporting education and information projects to make more use of opportunities already available.
- *Regional fora:* Russia's investment in large-scale water, energy and industrial projects is growing, potentially giving Moscow the power to influence regional arrangements, expand energy exports to South-East Asia and control a share of the extraction industries. Moreover, promises of government investment and inter-state contracts have a political effect on Central Asian leaderships and societies alike. It would therefore seem worthwhile to bring Russian actors into engagements of different kinds, with fora such as the Central Asia Regional

85 Bigg, C., 'Russia plays Uzbekistan blame game' [online], *Asia Times Online*, 1 July 2005, available from [http://atimes.com/atimes/Central\\_Asia/GG01Ag01.html](http://atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/GG01Ag01.html)

86 See 'Statement of Uzbek Foreign Ministry on Khanabad airfield', *UzReport.com*, 8 July 2005; and 'U.S. Military Presence In Central Asia Defined By Russia-China Cooperation – Newspaper', *KABAR*, Bishkek, 7 July 2005.

87 Wright, R., 'Uzbekistan Cuts Off Ties To US On Fighting Terror' [online], *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 2 October 2005, available from [www.post-gazette.com/pg/05275/580616.stm](http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/05275/580616.stm)

88 'France to downsize military presence in Tajikistan' [online], *RFE/RL Newsline*, Vol. 9, No. 196, 18 October 2005, available from <http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2005/10/181005.asp#2-tca>



Economic Cooperation Program (CAREC), or with the World Bank or the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Russian-led investment projects would benefit from international technical and financial assistance, while Russia can be more effective in resolving issues of transit via Uzbekistan. Such moves have already started, with UNDP Tajikistan exploring options to cooperate with RusAl (Russian Aluminium) on the social consequences of energy projects and taking part in discussions on projects of energy supply from Tajikistan to Afghanistan, and could be further enhanced.

## 2.3 The United States and the Limits of Engagement

In the last few years the Central Asian states have witnessed an increase in US security assistance and development aid, invitations to Washington, high-profile visits by US politicians, growth in the numbers of US personnel on the ground and assurances that the Central Asian states are valued allies in the ‘War on Terror’. The Central Asian governments expected that US aid would come in the form of financial transfers and as investment in large-scale projects. Instead, much of the aid has arrived in the form of technical aid, equipment, humanitarian supplies and support for rural development. This has created a sense of disappointment among the Central Asian governments.

And yet, from Washington’s perspective, the real US capacity and even interest in Central Asia are severely limited. US policy on Central Asia is derivative of other security interests rather than an end in itself. The reasons are straightforward. The USA is geographically distant from Central Asia, and as the world’s sole power with truly global interests, it has an increasingly full foreign policy agenda. Furthermore, it has a limited number of high-level personnel available to spearhead policy toward Central Asia within the government. Those officials who are responsible for directing or coordinating US policy in Central Asia – in the White House/National Security Council, the State Department, the Pentagon, and at USAID, among other key agencies – usually also have other regions within their portfolio. They have limited time to devote to the region on a daily basis, and little opportunity to bring regional issues to the attention of policymakers at the top of the US decision-making hierarchy, where Central Asia has then to compete with the urgent issues of the day. As a result, policy-making on these states, since they are not in first place on the US government’s agenda, is fairly decentralised, and embassies in the countries play a considerable role in it.

All of this means that US policy is sometimes haphazard, and often in conflict with itself, as each government agency pursues policies in the region in line with its own institutional priorities and vested interests. USAID, for example, continues to pursue a long-term development agenda for the region laid down in the 1990s that focuses on issues like grassroots civil society development irrespective of shifts in security priorities at the top of government. Meanwhile, the Pentagon has moved from viewing Central Asia as an area for enhanced military-military cooperation, to a base for support operations for the military campaign and ongoing reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, to one potential platform for missions in other areas of the world as part of the US military’s post-September 11, 2001 planning on force repositioning.

In the absence of an overarching strategy for Central Asia, ample room is left for different actors outside the US government – ranging from Congress to the NGO community – to push their own agendas. This fragmentation and confusion of US policy through the pursuit of multiple agendas by a range of actors has led to considerable misperception of US intentions by the leaderships of Central Asian states.

Behind these multiple agendas, however, there are significant elements of continuity between the Clinton and Bush Administrations, largely because the policy drivers are the same. In the 1990s, the Clinton Administration moved gradually away from a ‘Russia first’ policy in Eurasia to

emphasising the security and development of all the former Soviet states, including the Central Asian countries. By the mid-to-late 1990s, Clinton's foreign policy team was increasingly worried about the emergence of a security vacuum, a major conflict or instability in Central Asia. Such scenarios could presage increased influence by states with interests inimical to those of the US like Iran, or a new monopoly by Russia or another major power like China over the region's policy options. The entry of all Central Asian states into security organisations like the OSCE, and NATO's Partnership for Peace Programme as well as into bilateral military-military partnerships with the US was heavily promoted by the Clinton Administration as a mechanism for creating a new regional security framework.

Post-9/11 security concerns elevated the Bush Administration's interest in Central Asia. The region's strategic location, its porous borders, propensity for trafficking and militant incursions all drew US attention. Drugs from Central Asia *per se* do not fuel domestic consumption, but the USA has agreed to cooperate with its European allies in anti-drug measures. It became the largest contributor to the UNODC's operations in the region. State weakness, economic decline, and increasing government illegitimacy also created specific sets of security concerns for the US. Old Soviet nuclear, chemical and biological weapons sites in Central Asia and mounting evidence about the smuggling of fissile material raised concerns about proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. And the established links between the IMU, the Taliban and al-Qaeda fed fears of al-Qaeda-type activity spreading across the whole of Central Asia. In US intelligence circles, Central Asia rapidly came to be seen as a likely source of origin for radioactive material for a 'dirty bomb' that might be used against an American target. All of these issues began to raise the importance of the individual states and the behaviour of their regimes in US security calculations.

Energy security was an additional policy driver with the aim of relieving US dependence on oil from the Middle East. In 2002-3, Russia and the broader Caspian region briefly became the new hope of American policymakers to diversify US and global oil supplies away from the Persian Gulf. Unfortunately, hype outran reality. Even with projected production increase over time, Russia and the Caspian states could not hope to displace the Middle East in global oil supply calculations. Energy remained a driving factor in Washington's relations with the region in 2005, but more in terms of the US encouraging Russia and the Caspian states to increase the general supply to world markets and take the edge off growing energy demand in Asia.

In 2005 there were signs of another possible change in US policy on Central Asia (and, indeed, the rest of Russia and Eurasia). Again, it was derivative of concerns elsewhere, as US experiences in Iraq and the Middle East led to revising some aspects of security thinking. Authoritarian regimes in the Middle East are no longer seen by Washington as guarantors of regional stability, but instead, over the longer term, as the instigators of failed states. They are therefore likely to generate dissent targeted against the US, which is blamed by opposition forces for supporting and propping up abusive governments. The US is beginning to acknowledge – in some circles at least – that the sense of stability engendered by an authoritarian regime is false and a more holistic conception of security is emerging. The Bush Administration's new policy of promoting democracy and reform in the Middle East was conveyed in President Bush's second Inaugural Address in January 2005 and in his February 2005 State of the Union speech.

By extension, this policy on the Middle East has altered Washington's perspective on Central Asia. The Bush Administration is now emphasising reform instead of propping up tyrants and disreputable leaders. In this context Uzbekistan became a clear liability rather than a strategic asset for the US. As democratisation, economic reform and building effective state institutions have now been directly linked by the Administration to ensuring the stability and viability of states, expectations have risen in Washington of increased US government pressure on Central Asian leaders to pursue reform. The question remains of whether a consistent, lasting and coordinated approach will emerge out of this new thinking.

## 2.4 China's Increasing Role and Influence

The role of China has often been neglected in discourse on Central Asia; this is no longer possible. Current developments indicate that China's future regional role will be crucial in defining prospects for peace, prosperity and good governance. At this stage in China's growth – both in economic and geopolitical terms – it is important to gain a sense of mutual perceptions. Policy actions taken today in Central Asia on the basis of current perceptions may have long-lasting effects for good or ill.

To map official perceptions, it is necessary to generalise. There are two rough categories of Chinese perceptions: Central Asia is seen as a source of potential security threats and as a region rich in raw materials. Overlaying these pragmatic considerations are historical factors including enmities and grievances. Officially, Chinese policies are determined to combat the three evils of terrorism, extremism and separatism.<sup>89</sup> The state's threat perception, in order of priority, appears as

- a) Separatist tendencies among the Uyghur (Turkic Muslims – akin to Uzbeks – living in Xinjiang, population approximately 8.8 million);
- b) Muslim rebellion movements with proliferation of devout fighters;
- c) Western hegemony.

The situation of the Uyghur in Xinjiang is the second most sensitive issue for Chinese policies after Taiwan.<sup>90</sup> During the 1990s, militant Uyghur separatists carried out bombings, shootings and murders of civil servants and loyalist mullahs. Allegedly, some had refuges in Central Asian states. But over the past decade, Chinese policy has made major advances on the issue. China successfully persuaded Central Asian states to take action to suppress the Uyghur groups' activities, including the handing over of suspects to the Chinese authorities. The situation inside Xinjiang has also stabilised as a result of a combination of Soviet-style carrot-and-stick policies towards the Uyghurs and rapid economic development. On the one hand, the underground groups have mostly been eliminated and many militants imprisoned or executed. At the same time, consistent with policies applied in other parts of China, the state promotes the 'modernisation' of ethnic minorities. The policy embraces improvements in education, university quotas, opportunities for women, hygiene and healthcare. The policy also entails concessions to Islamic traditions, such as permitting the Muslim Uyghurs two children per family, while a one-child policy operates for Han Chinese. Nonetheless, Islam is viewed with caution, as it is a factor in the ethnic unity of the Uyghurs and their separateness from the Chinese state. Increasing numbers of Han Chinese are moving to Xinjiang, while educated young Uyghurs are increasingly offered professional appointments in other parts of the country, in an attempt to break the link between territory and ethnicity.

In Central Asia, Uyghurs live mainly in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Their real numbers are unknown (officially 300,000 in Kazakhstan, but perhaps many more, as some Uyghurs were registered as Uzbeks in Soviet times). When cross-border trade started between China and Kazakhstan, Uyghurs initially did well because of their common language with Uyghurs in Xinjiang; this niche has now been taken over by Han Chinese manufacturers, and Russian and Kazakh traders. In Soviet times Uyghurs were better off in the USSR but this has changed since independence as China has developed and Central Asia regressed. Political and intellectual links across the borders between Uyghurs are discouraged by the Chinese state and officially-sponsored connections are tightly controlled.

China also has other security concerns in Central Asia – instability, turbulent regime change, the potential for popular unrest and Islamic radicalisation. Turmoil in Central Asia would inevitably have implications in Xinjiang, which will be a priority concern for Beijing for years to come.

89 'Three Evils Threat to Peace and Security of Central Asia', *UzReport.com*, 5 July 2005.

90 Interview with Bat Batjargal, Department of Strategy and Public Policy, Peking University, Beijing, June 2005.

During the March 2005 events in Kyrgyzstan, it was noted that many Chinese businesses suffered in the riots in Bishkek.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, the Andijan events caused apprehension despite official declarations of support for the Uzbek leadership.

A policy of stabilising borders has thus been adopted. The original strategy of the Chinese leadership was to abstain from making binding commitments on border delimitation and territorial disputes with neighbours in the hope that the power equation would change in their favour and better terms could be negotiated. These policies altered after 2000, as the Chinese government concluded that framework treaties with neighbouring states make political relations more predictable. Agreements were signed with Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Pakistan and Uzbekistan (even though it is not a border state). These created a better environment for resolving border problems, which became more pressing as border crossings became more numerous. Cooperation between security forces has been much increased as a consequence.

There is also a lingering Chinese concern about US hegemony in the region, even though, as discussed above, US policy in the region has been inconsistent and is relatively low on Washington's scale of priorities. China's alignment with the US took place as part of building the coalition for the 'War on Terror'. Putting a largely unknown Uyghur group on the US List of Terrorist Organisations<sup>92</sup> has helped bilateral relations greatly. The US military presence in Central Asia has been a source of irritation, especially the base in Manas in Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, the orientation of Central Asians towards the US, as they became aware that the latter could bring benefits beyond what China and Russia could offer, was unwelcome. These concerns are abating somewhat as the Central Asian states themselves have turned more towards Russia.

China's relationship with Russia is as good as it has ever been. More attention has been dedicated to promoting the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, which is to act as a counterbalance to the advancement of US interests in the region. The four-year old SCO is still finding its role as a regional organisation balancing security, economic and social dimensions. It is yet to prove itself as more than a forum for political networking among leaderships and contacts among policy experts. As a forum, however, it has played a useful part of the process through which the Central Asian states have re-aligned themselves with Russia and China.<sup>93</sup> In a veiled negative allusion to the role of the US, it has adopted a joint declaration to combat terrorism and speed up strategic cooperation.<sup>94</sup>

On the economic front, the contrast between rapid development in China and the reversal of modernisation in Central Asia could not be greater. As a market, Central Asia is negligible. China is, however, interested in energy supply from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (an agreement was signed with Tashkent in May 2005<sup>95</sup>) and Chinese businessmen are becoming more active in the region. Other commodities such as cotton are attractive to a rapidly growing economy, which already imports cotton from Australia.<sup>96</sup> Trade and transport arrangements are likewise important since they encourage investment in the western regions of China. UNDP, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Tourism Organisation have initiated a Silk Road project to promote trade and transit, investment and tourism along the ancient Silk Road through China and Central Asia, to which the Chinese government attaches importance.<sup>97</sup>

91 In early 2003 unknown criminals killed 20 businessmen from China in the Naryn Region and then burned their corpses. In July 2005 Kyrgyz law-enforcement officers prevented an armed attack on Chinese businessmen returning via the Bishkek–Torugart highway; 'Kyrgyz Law Enforcement Officers Saved Chinese Businessmen From Death' [online], *KyrgyzInfo* [online], 7 July 2005, available from [www.kyrgyzinfo.kg/eng/?art=1120703463](http://www.kyrgyzinfo.kg/eng/?art=1120703463)

92 *US Department of State List of Foreign Terrorist Organisations* [online], 30 January 2003, available from [www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/fs/2003/17067.htm](http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/fs/2003/17067.htm)

93 'Chinese, Uzbek presidents urge closer ties', *Xinhua News Agency*, 6 July 2005.

94 'Central Asia summit declares war on terror' [online] *Indo-Asian News Service*, 5 July 2005, available from [www.eians.com/stories/2005/07/05/05ast.shtml](http://www.eians.com/stories/2005/07/05/05ast.shtml)

95 Jize, Q., 'China, Uzbekistan sign \$600m Oil Agreement', *China Daily* [online], 26 May 2005, available from [www2.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-05/26/content\\_445707.htm](http://www2.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-05/26/content_445707.htm)

96 And this may be a more attractive option for Central Asians, since China is unlikely to criticise slavery in the cotton industry as Western NGOs do in respect of Western companies. See International Crisis Group, *The Curse of Cotton: Central Asia's Destructive Monoculture*, Asia Report No. 93, ICG, Bishkek/Brussels, 28 February 2005.

97 Interview with Ma Hyiun, UNDP China, Beijing, June 2005.

Among the Central Asian states, Tajikistan has a particular need for good relations with China so as to find a way out of isolation and a source of investment, which it finds hard to attract. The Kulma border crossing with China was opened in 2004 with access to the Karakorum highway and the SCO is considering a major highway project in Tajikistan. The government of Tajikistan hopes that with the launch of the Sangtuda hydro power station it will find a market for electricity in China.

In general, there is a great deal of apprehension over China in Central Asia, although from the Central Asian perspective, nothing can be gained by complicating relations with a powerful neighbour, while a lot can be achieved with its goodwill. China's rapid growth worries its neighbours, despite Chinese pledges to calm their concern. Distrust of the newly powerful neighbour stirs concerns over illegal migration and an uncontrollable influx of Han Chinese. Fear persists, especially in Kyrgyzstan, that future territorial revision is possible and that small states could be incorporated into China as Eastern Turkestan once was. These concerns are built on foundations of economic anxiety that rising imports from China are making domestic production non-viable, as almost anything that Central Asia manufactures is cheaper in China. This is especially true since China has relocated and reoriented its cheap industries westwards (thus, towards Central Asia, though that was not the particular intention) to make space for high-tech ones in the developed coastal areas.<sup>98</sup> Kyrgyzstan entered the World Trade Organisation in December 1998 and faced a major influx of Chinese goods. Along with the internal economic consequences of this, there was a second effect when, to stop the same thing happening in Uzbekistan, the authorities there closed the border with Kyrgyzstan. Regional openness thus added to Kyrgyzstan's vulnerability.

There is a symbolic significance of 'Chinese expansion' for Central Asians that should not be underestimated. This relates both to a perceived threat to the viability of the newly independent states, and to their cultural identities. The sheer fact that most of the signs at Kara-Suu market, the largest wholesale market in the eastern part of Central Asia, are in Chinese, carries much symbolic weight. It would clearly be beneficial for Central Asian governments and civil society organisations to find ways of addressing these concerns through a mixture of studies, education, dialogue and policy modifications. As with Russia, it would also be important for Chinese companies to be encouraged to adopt high standards of corporate governance and behaviour. China is going to be a major player in Central Asian politics, economics and security and the policies of the donor community need to accommodate that basic premise.

98 Interview with Bat Batjargal, Department of Strategy and Public Policy, Peking University, Beijing, June 2005.

## Chapter 3. Risks, Potential and Prospects: Regional Overview

The analyses of the situation of each of the five Central Asian states in Chapter 1 and of the wider regional environment and external players in Chapter 2 indicate a broad framework that can be articulated as a basis for further assessment and planning. The headline conclusion of the analysis is that the potential for violent conflict lies in internal power dynamics rather than in ethnic division or competition for natural resources. This chapter first presents that conclusion in general terms, then traces its outlines in the five Central Asian states, to orient the reader towards the core strategic conclusion of the analysis.

In summary terms, the central issue with potential for violent conflict in Central Asia is the relationship between the citizens and the state – in other words, the question of power and how this power is exercised internally. The way the countries are governed largely tends to suppress the expression of grievances rather than resolve problems. If and when the lid is taken off, there is a serious risk of profound instability. Each country faces these problems in a different form and with differing degrees of urgency.

The experience of Kyrgyzstan in 2005 has shown that the absence of a strategy to deal with the issue of succession can wreak havoc on a political system. Current leaders may be wary of reforms that would permit orderly successions on the grounds that the reforms could weaken their power. But attempts to avoid paying that cost simply defer it. This issue is intimately connected to the inability of the authorities in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to adopt a constructive problem-solving approach to political or developmental issues. Their inclination is to deal with difficult issues by addressing the symptoms rather than the causes, sometimes by permitting some letting-off of steam, sometimes through tactical concessions that may be later withdrawn, sometimes by repression. This means that issues that should be relatively benign, such as cross-border trade, can grow into serious problems with the potential for social explosion.

These governments are therefore dependent on the security sector for their longevity, which can lead to imbalances of power within the state; lop-sided state budgets because the resource demands of the security sector come first; a risk of acute alienation between the population and the law-enforcement agencies; and, since the system of power is closed, opaque and non-accountable, the prospect of corruption on an epic scale and consequently deep popular resentment. The issue of how power is organised and wielded needs also to be understood against the background of deteriorating social and economic infrastructures, combining disrupted transport links with decreased supplies of energy and water, and deteriorating health and education services.

In the short term, the dangers of a turbulent political succession are most acute in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, both headed by ageing leaders who have concentrated power in their hands. As political institutions are weak and personal rivalries are intense, an orderly transition could prove extremely difficult. Apart from the ‘coloured revolution’ scenarios on Georgian and Ukrainian lines that the Central Asian states seem to fear most, there is a wide range of other possibilities for turbulence in the event of any apparent weakening of their grip on power. The March 2005 events in Kyrgyzstan probably offer a mild indication of more violent storms to come.

For such scenarios to be credible, there needs to be an identifiable transmission mechanism that can connect intra-elite rivalries and manoeuvrings at a moment of crisis – such as illness or death of a leader or demotion of a major figure – with a background of discontent and resentment in a

way that leads to social explosion. That mechanism is to be found in Islamist radicalism, which flourishes in part because social discontent has virtually no alternative political channel for expression. Increasingly, underground Islamist movements have become the sole outlet for popular grievances and offer the only remedy for social injustices. These are, moreover, movements of young people for whom the Soviet legacy has little meaning and who are therefore not influenced by nostalgia for the system, including its secularism.

There are yet further dimensions of the weakening of the capacity for governance that is the backdrop to these grim scenarios:

- The trafficking of narcotics is key, and is likely to continue for as long as there is substantial production in Afghanistan. There is a risk that the drugs business will have a growing impact on Central Asian societies, giving rise to endemic corruption (which, as noted above, finds good breeding ground in the terrain of opaque and non-accountable government) and creating a merger between criminal, business and political circles.
- There is a long-term deterioration underway in professional and educational standards. Over time this means a decline in the competence and capacity of governments. It also means a decline in the capacity for open, free and creative discussions in civil society, the media, academia, business circles and political world – discussions that are in any case discouraged by official circles. It is an irony of international presence that many of the best qualified people work for international organisations rather than for national governments or in the private sector.

These are – in broad terms – the contours of conflict potential in Central Asia. The situation with the individual states can be summarised as follows:

- *Kazakhstan* appears the most stable and in fact does not exhibit many of the key dynamics summarised above. A long-term risk factor is its dependency on a high oil price: if the current bubble collapses, the state would lose its major revenue source, with severe economic and social consequences.
- *Kyrgyzstan* has gone through one round of political change that seems but a precursor to further change, though in what direction it will move is unclear. On the one hand, after the change of power, presidential elections and the formation of the new government, a space has opened for administrative reforms that might purge the country of corruption, build viable political institutions, and ensure broader representation. There is an opening of possibilities for freedom of expression and new opportunities for civil society organisations. On the other hand, the regime change has unleashed the forces of clan politics and criminality that might prove difficult to rein in. There is now a danger of continuous political uncertainty, and a rapid rise and fall of governments. Even the external borders of the country should not be regarded as sacrosanct if – for whatever internal or external reason – political chaos were to arise.
- *Tajikistan* has demonstrated a capacity to overcome the immediate consequences of the civil war without reverting to violence. This has enabled the implementation of development policies. Stability remains a major achievement of the authorities, whose power is unlikely to be seriously challenged in the short-term. However, there is potential for destabilisation in the outlying provinces. Regions in the north (like Isfara district in Soghd province) are more prone to instability. The north did not taste the civil war and therefore may be less reluctant to challenge the *status quo*. Proliferation of Islamist groups and propaganda has been the strongest in the rural areas of the north, but so far such movements have not established an urban base. Kulyab could be affected by power struggles between Dangara and other Kulyabi clans, while its very south, such as Shurobod district, may become more prone to drugs and a spill over of instability from Afghanistan, as happened in the early 1990s.
- *Turkmenistan* is not amenable to outside influences while the current president remains in power. The introduction of sanctions is not an option, since Russia would be unwilling to halt

purchases of Turkmen gas, while trade restrictions on cotton and textiles would not produce the desired effect as long as the income from gas is secure. In any case, sanctions would not persuade the president to adopt reforms or change anything for the better. Like all personalised power, the system has a brittle strength – its force is great but its resilience could be extremely limited. If change starts, it is highly likely to degenerate into chaos.

- *Uzbekistan* is the Central Asian state most likely to experience serious instability. In the short term local civil society organisations and independent media and religious groups have restricted and diminishing space to operate freely. The authorities seem unable to introduce innovative economic policies or political modernisation, nor to communicate effectively with the people. Significant groups may finally lose patience, and could turn towards radical action. Triggers could lie in economic issues, in disunity within the security sector, in disaffection among the elite, or in events such as illness of the ageing leader. Andijan showed what may happen as a result, but the next time the conflict may continue into further rounds of violence and repression; full-scale insurgency cannot be ruled out even if, as the most extreme scenario, it is by definition less likely than chronic disorder and growing chaos.

In developing a strategic approach to peacebuilding in the region, there seems little point in focusing on Kazakhstan because of the strength of its current situation and its generally fair prospects, and there seem to be no possibilities in relation to Turkmenistan. These two countries can be regarded as outliers in the region. A peacebuilding strategy should focus on Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan with the aim of contributing to self-sustaining stable peace in those countries and thereby in the region. The particular goal of the strategy, it follows from the headline analytical conclusion, is to find ways to encourage good governance.

The issue that arises here is the question of incentive. In structural terms, states whose income primarily derives from natural resources have relatively little need to encourage very broad economic participation, and therefore not much incentive to initiate the governance framework required for a bustling, wealth-generating private sector, or to support or encourage other kinds of broad social participation. There is no easy answer here, for the factors that create the state-society problems in which the risk of violent conflict resides are factors that perpetuate the problem. Only through dialogue and discussion is it possible to generate a viable incentive structure, first of all, perhaps, by alerting elite constituencies of the risks that the *status quo* is generating, and secondly by permitting awareness to grow of the opportunities that an alternative course would create.

Uzbekistan increasingly views foreign development assistance and Western involvement with suspicion, especially where it targets democratisation, governance and support for civil society. This suspicion will be accompanied by a reluctance to accept foreign involvement, and the space for NGOs, media and independent religious actors will also continue to shrink. Tajikistan is likely to display this tendency in a weaker form, and Kyrgyzstan is likely to be far more amenable to an international presence.

The approach of a peacebuilding strategy must therefore be to address the reality of each country separately, and not to treat Central Asia as a homogeneous regional entity. It is worth noting that some representatives of the donor community, inter-governmental organisations (IGOs) and some international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) report that the assumptions and expectations that surround their work do include a homogenising regional view in their organisations. Such a view is not tenable when the reality of each country is explored, and could be counter-productive if it mistakenly led to an undifferentiated way of working in the region.

While the region is not a homogeneous entity, there are some issues that need to be addressed on a regional basis and which can be addressed more effectively as more players are involved in a joint effort. There are also some issues that need to be addressed on a cross-border basis by two



or three governments and further issues that need to be addressed in parallel in different ways in two or more countries, as well as issues that are country-specific. Regional cooperation is evidently required for dealing with regional problems such as trafficking in narcotics, people and weapons, and also for making the most of opportunities in trade. However, it should be emphasised that even with these regional issues, an effort to address them has to be shaped by reference to the specific social and institutional frameworks, which differ between the countries of Central Asia.

It is because of these regional issues as much as the security dimension that Afghanistan will remain a factor for its northern neighbours; indeed, interaction between Central Asia and Afghanistan is likely to increase if and when the latter stabilises and develops. Programming for a self-sustaining peace in Central Asia will therefore also need to incorporate attention to Afghanistan and harmonisation with donor community efforts there.

Russia and China will play a permanent role in the region and will increasingly have more capacity to project influence. US government interest in the region could, by contrast, prove temporary as it is based more on tactical and short-term factors, such as the shifting theatres of the 'War on Terror' and the current focus on the spread of democracy. In the long-term the strategic significance of Central Asia for the US is likely to diminish, and thus also its interest.

The clear conclusion for the donor community is that the political, economic and security roles and influence of China and Russia in Central Asia need to be factored into analysis, policy and strategic planning. It is pointless and counter-productive to attempt to marginalise either; the effort will not be successful and risks provoking a negative reaction. Instead, both China and Russia should be recognised by the donor community as major players, treated with respect and, where possible, invited to cooperate on a case-by-case basis. The donor community has legitimate interests in Central Asia, ranging from its connection to the security situation in Afghanistan, to its interest in stability in the CIS, to the narcotics trade, to interests in stability in neighbouring areas including Pakistan and the Gulf region, and not excluding its wider interests in good relations with both China and Russia. The legitimate nature of Chinese and Russian interests in Central Asia needs to be acknowledged if there is to be reciprocal recognition of donor community interests. There is no need for enthusiastic endorsement or close alliance to develop a working relationship in which *ad hoc* cooperation is opted for whenever possible.

It is as well to ask, however, whether even the expectation of *ad hoc* cooperation is realistic. It is not a realistic expectation if the Russian or Chinese authorities have no interest in a given project or programme, and it is not a realistic expectation if they suspect that *ad hoc* cooperation is the thin end of the wedge for some longer-term project of intrusion into Central Asia. By contrast, if the particular project or programme is about an issue over which interests meet, and if it is evident that Western donors' proposals reflect only their legitimate interests and their general commitment to development, then it is reasonable to anticipate case-by-case cooperation in Central Asia, as has been possible in other regions.

In particular, both for Russia and – albeit to a lesser extent – for China, issues related to security, terrorism and the potential social and political implosion of some of the Central Asian countries are of interest. From a peacebuilding perspective, the response to these issues that Russia appears to support is one that is simply multiplying the problems for the future. A first step that would be worthwhile from the donor community's perspective and interesting from a Russian and perhaps also a Chinese perspective would be to promote discussion about the issues, their implications and potential responses.

To summarise these broad strategic ideas:

- The key conflict potential in Central Asia lies in the nature and use of internal power;
- The focus of strategy should be on Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan with the aim of contributing to self-sustaining stable peace;
- The region is not an homogeneous entity and its interdependency should not be overestimated;
- Regional cooperation will be required and valuable on various issues;
- China and Russia must be taken seriously as key regional actors with whom case-by-case cooperation should be possible.

## Chapter 4. Approach and Means for Peacebuilding in Central Asia

The broad strategic ideas outlined in the previous chapter provide both a sense of direction and some criteria for assessing appropriate means, the latter of which is the subject of this chapter. To get to grips with the question of what can and ought to be done to make a positive contribution to the development of self-sustaining peace in Central Asia, this chapter first looks in general terms at peacebuilding – what it is and what its goals are. The chapter then briefly outlines and assesses the evolution of the donor community’s policy thinking in Central Asia and the actions that this policy thinking has shaped. It then offers an outline re-think of donor community policy, indicates means appropriate to the adjusted approach and concludes with some issues of donor practice. The ensuing chapter transforms these indications into recommendations.

### 4.1 The Strategic Peacebuilding Palette

It is worth beginning by clarifying that, as a general approach, peacebuilding is not confined to war-torn countries. Though it is possible – and, indeed, common – to speak of post-war peacebuilding, that is actually a narrow version of the idea of peacebuilding. As stated in the *Utstein Report* on peacebuilding, based on four donor governments’ experience,

*‘Peacebuilding attempts to encourage the development of the structural conditions, attitudes and modes of political behaviour that may permit peaceful, stable and ultimately prosperous social and economic development.’*<sup>99</sup>

It follows from this that a peacebuilding approach can be adopted not only when conflict has turned violent, in an effort to end the violence and recover from it, but also when there is a risk of violent conflict. Peacebuilding, in other words, embraces conflict prevention as well as post-war recovery.

Peacebuilding entails a wide range of different activities – and different *kinds* of activities. In different circumstances, peacebuilding needs to contribute to the smooth running of (and, in extreme cases, actually to generate) government services and functions, ranging from a reliable justice system, to efficiency and professionalism in law enforcement, customs services and taxation, including the operation of public utilities and strengthening of the infrastructure alongside establishing conditions for foreign investment with a workable banking system and law of contract, at the same time as promoting transparency, accountability and respect for human rights, with dialogue and reconciliation between contending groups often a key ingredient.<sup>100</sup>

This formidable range of activities can be organised as a set of four categories of peacebuilding activities:<sup>101</sup>

- Security;
- Socio-economic foundations;
- Good governance;
- Justice and reconciliation.

The detailed activities in each category vary according to circumstance and need.

Experience indicates that there are two particularly salient points about this four-sided framework for peacebuilding tools and methods:

99 Smith, D., *op. cit.*, p. 20.

100 Adapted from the *UN Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations* [online], chaired by Lakhdar Brahimi, August 2000, paragraph 77, available from [www.un.org/peace/reports/peace\\_operations/docs/](http://www.un.org/peace/reports/peace_operations/docs/)

101 Smith, D., *op. cit.*, p. 20.

1. These four categories are interdependent. Success on the security front will make it easier to lay good socio-economic foundations, for example. To give another example, failure in governance will likely lead to failure in security, especially if the security sector is not properly governed, which will entrench grievance and a sense of injustice instead of reconciliation. Thus it is not possible to treat any one of these categories as in principle more important than any other, as the magic key that will open the way to sustainable peace.
2. It is possible to combine activities under different categories and there is much to gain by doing so. For example, Security Sector Reform could not only help ensure a well-functioning security sector, but could also contribute both to good governance and, by involving community leaders in discussions, to dialogue and reconciliation between contending groups. The different methods of peacebuilding can be combined together to get the intended effect – like mixing paints, which is the reason for the metaphor of a ‘palette’.

How the different components are mixed together, which are the items that initially receive more emphasis, which ones can and should be deferred and which ones are unnecessary – all this depends on the specific context and is to be analysed in context as a peacebuilding strategy is designed and implemented. There is no easy template and no default mode: peacebuilding strategies have to be tailored to the specific circumstances and needs they are intended to address.

## 4.2 The Evolution of Donor Community Analysis and Policy

When the Central Asian states gained independence, the region was initially viewed by the donor community through the prism of the post-Soviet transition towards market economy and democracy.<sup>102</sup> Russia’s interests and capacity also loomed large, raising issues such as its ability to project influence, the condition of its armed forces, nuclear non-proliferation, the position of ethnic Russians throughout the region and Russia’s overall approach in the ‘Near Abroad’.<sup>103</sup> The agenda of the 1990s also included some specific issues – civil war in Tajikistan, inter-ethnic tensions in the Ferghana Valley, concerns over environmental degradation, and management of energy and water. Possible future conflicts were seen as rooted in these factors and until recently, donor community policies and strategies were largely based on or influenced by this thinking.

By the late 1990s the realisation was growing among donors that investment in conflict prevention is necessary and this has gradually entered the international agenda in Central Asia. The last seven or eight years have witnessed conscious efforts by donors to promote peace and reduce conflict.<sup>104</sup> Currently, for example, ‘conflict resolution and peace building’ together constitute one of the three pillars of the DfID Regional Assistance Plan for 2004–7.<sup>105</sup> Switzerland’s Regional Mid-Term Programme includes ‘governance, security and conflict prevention’ as one of five domains.<sup>106</sup>

An early target of attention – perhaps even pre-dating a general shift into conflict prevention by donors active in the region – was the Ferghana Valley, with many commentators predicting explosion. The situation of minorities was also identified as an area of potential risk. These concerns led to early warning projects designed to track risks so as to enhance both crisis avoidance measures and timely response.

While the impact of donor assistance in Central Asia has been considerable, especially in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in developing rural areas, empowering communities to deal with local

102 For an overview of the donor’s views on the region in the 1990s, see MacFarlane, N., *Western Engagement in the Caucasus and Central Asia*, RIIA, London, December 1999.

103 See, for instance, Lena Jonson, *The Tajik Civil War: a Challenge to Russian Policy*, RIIA, London, March 1998.

104 For an overview on the earlier period, see articles on Central Asia in Van Tongeren, P., Van de Veen, H. and Verhoeven, J. (eds.), *Searching for Peace in Europe and Eurasia: an Overview of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, London, 2002, pp. 516 – 533.

105 DfID, *Central Asia, Caucasus and Moldova: Regional Assistance Plan* [online], June 2004, Annex 4, available from [www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/rapcascm.pdf](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/rapcascm.pdf). Assistance focuses on Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Moldova.

106 SDC & SECO, *The Swiss Regional Mid-Term Programme Central Asia 2002 – 2006* [online], November 2002, available from [www.deza.ch/ressources/product\\_40\\_en\\_1137.pdf](http://www.deza.ch/ressources/product_40_en_1137.pdf)

problems and opening up access for Central Asians to the world outside, the conflict prevention impact is harder to assess, as is so often the case.<sup>107</sup> With appropriate reservations because of the inherent difficulties of impact assessment, and subject to more detailed analysis of specific programmes, local consultations and available literature suggest the donor community can count a number of worthwhile successes. The donor community's work has:<sup>108</sup>

- Played a considerable role in assisting recovery from the consequences of the civil war in Tajikistan and helped foster dialogue and national reconciliation;
- Strengthened civil society capacities to recognise and respond to conflict; this effect has extended into small towns and rural areas in the Ferghana Valley;
- Enhanced analytical capacities of experts in the political and security fields;
- Exposed civil society and academic experts to global professional networks and expertise, an indispensable aid for development;
- Acted as a catalyst for discourse on issues of peace and conflict;
- Established mechanisms and opportunities for dialogue in the Ferghana Valley.

Through such means the donor community has contributed to reducing the risks and dangers of conflict in the Ferghana Valley.

More recently, recognition has grown that an analysis that swings on ethnic relations and the Ferghana Valley misses much that is crucial. Considerable investment in various mechanisms of early warning did not give advance warning of the March 2005 events in Kyrgyzstan or of Andijan. Important though work in the Ferghana Valley was, there was a need for work on other conflict dimensions as well. International organisations have sought to better understand the causes of conflict and respond accordingly by appointing staff with conflict-related expertise.<sup>109</sup>

The donor community's approach has arguably been burdened by categories of analysis and policy that do not quite work in Central Asia. For example, its analysis of conflict potential may initially have made too much of ethnicity and nationalism by analogy with the Caucasus and the Balkans. There was also a tendency to see it as an integrated region, where behaviour based on a rational notion of interdependency would foster cooperation and peace. And it seems that since Kyrgyzstan was viewed as a showcase for democratic development, there was some difficulty in seeing the emerging limits of democratisation there. Kyrgyzstan remained a much more conducive environment for the donor community than the other countries in the region and it would appear that some negative dimensions – corruption, the role of the clans, drug trafficking and its impact on politics, and north-south tensions – were overlooked. It could be that this was also shaped by donors and agencies sometimes relying too much on their good relationships with government and not having a wide enough circle of partners and interlocutors from whom they might get a more balanced picture.

Our analysis in Chapter 1, summarised in Chapter 3, identifies the central conflict issue in the region as the relationship between the citizens and the state – the issue of power. This perspective has only emerged into clear focus recently and is just beginning to shape donor engagement. Our headline analytical conclusion implies the need for a thorough look at donor community engagement overall. When state-society relations are not seen as conflict issues, after all, there is little perceived need to include them in designing development cooperation. Since they are key to potential conflict, all work in sectors such as security must be assessed against criteria of conflict sensitivity. This includes work on high priority issues such as combatting terrorism and trafficking in illegal drugs. It may also increase the importance of what are currently low priority issues in the field of governance, transparency and the rule of law. While not changing the overall goals of the donor community in the region, this changes the objectives of programmes with government, private sector and civil society actors.

<sup>107</sup> For a brief survey of the issues and difficulties, see Smith, D., *op. cit.*, pp. 51-53.

<sup>108</sup> See section 4.3 below for further information on the means used.

<sup>109</sup> Political Division IV (Human Security) of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs fielded a regional human security advisor and UNDP – a regional peace and development advisor on Central Asia. USAID appointed a regional religion, state and society advisor.

## 4.3 Experience of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding in Central Asia

Although analysis and policy perspectives had a somewhat limited take on conflict potential in the region, donor community policies and actions in Central Asia have contributed noticeably to peaceful development. The challenge now is to recognise key conflict risks that were previously not central to analysis and policy and then to adjust policy and activities accordingly. Doing this will draw on programmes that have been implemented with explicit peacebuilding or conflict prevention goals as well as on programmes that did not have those explicit goals but nonetheless are relevant, together with new activities that were not previously implemented. This section looks at activities and programmes already implemented or under way, while the next section looks at adjustments and innovations.

### 4.3.1 Analysis and Early Warning

Various ‘early warning’ networks have been created in Central Asia, most of them dedicated to the Ferghana Valley.<sup>110</sup> Currently FAST (a Swiss Peace Foundation project, supported by the Swiss Foreign Ministry) is the main publicly available source. The UNDP has an early warning system established within its Cross-Border Project. The UN Framework Team in New York compiles early warning reports on the Ferghana Valley. Other UN early warning projects concerning the Ferghana Valley include work by UNIFEM and the ‘Environment and Security Initiative’ by OSCE/UNEP/UNDP. The Council on Foreign Relations and the International Crisis Group have also identified the Ferghana Valley as a hotbed of future instability and focused considerable reporting and analytical attention there.

The southern region of Kyrgyzstan is a further focus of early warning networks by the OSCE Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, UNDP Preventive Development Programme (PDP) and NGOs such as the Foundation for Tolerance International (FTI), which is supported among others by SDC. A new ‘Early Warning and Early Response’ project in Kyrgyzstan has been initiated by the FTI and IFES in June 2005 funded by the OSCE<sup>111</sup> and UNDP. Lately there have been some cooperative moves and information sharing between early warning systems.

### 4.3.2 Ferghana Valley Projects

International initiatives in the Ferghana Valley have been hampered by the Uzbek government, which interpreted conflict prevention projects as an attempt to set up a separate geo-political entity, thus dismembering Uzbekistan. However, Switzerland managed to develop a tri-partite project on ‘Regional Dialogue and Development’<sup>112</sup> and the UNDP started the Cross-Border Project on conflict prevention between northern Tajikistan and southern Kyrgyzstan with emphasis on analytical work and engaging with regional authorities. There have been various USAID-funded projects on promoting cross-border trade and travel and facilitating social and cultural links. The Eurasia Foundation has followed a modified approach based on parallel work in all three parts of the valley rather than integrating activities in single projects.

Projects can also be positive from a peacebuilding perspective even if they do not directly address conflict issues, as long as they are backed by an analysis that does look at those problems. An example is a Swiss DFA-funded project on ‘Trade and Peace’ in the Ferghana Valley which encourages and seeks the authorities’ approval for interaction between businessmen from Osh and Andijan across the borders.

110 Such as the ‘Ethnological Monitoring and Early Warning Network’ by the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences which was active in the 1990s.

111 The OSCE contribution is funded mainly by Switzerland. The main structure for the prevention of violence (early intervention) has been developed and funded by PD IV of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with FTI as a local partner. For more information contact [ewlist\\_eng@osce-academy.net](mailto:ewlist_eng@osce-academy.net)

112 Peace through inter-communal dialogue and infrastructure rehabilitation projects, budget \$3 million for Phase I, 2002 – 2005.

### 4.3.3 Civil Society and Conflict Prevention

The initial involvement in conflict prevention by means of NGOs targeted Tajikistan.<sup>113</sup> However, Parviz Mullojanov argues convincingly that, ‘despite the rapid spread of conflict resolution activities among civic organisations, their impact on national reconciliation is inadequate, largely because of the disparity between the main elements of Tajik civic infrastructure: the European-influenced NGO sector and the traditional civic network.’<sup>114</sup> A joint Swiss-German project on ‘Islamic-Secular Dialogue in Tajikistan’ sought, however, to incorporate secular and religious authorities in a constructive dialogue.<sup>115</sup>

As elsewhere, there is a range of different kinds of civil society organisations in Central Asia. In most places they face suspicion from the authorities and in some places outright suppression of their activities.

The origins of some NGOs go back to the period of *perestroika* before the demise of the USSR. These are primarily human rights organisations and most are currently on the verge of extinction. Like some newer NGOs and other actors such as the independent media, academics and think tanks, they face a struggle against all odds, which they are gradually losing because of coercion and sheer exhaustion. Those which survive rely on financial and moral support from the donor community and have less and less outreach in their own society. They are outsiders to the patronage system and cannot mobilise clan support to their defence. Restrictions on activities of US organisations, which were the largest civil society supporters, would further undermine them.

There are also NGOs that were established by former academics and government officials with Western donor support. Many implement projects for donors when government institutions lack suitable capacity or when donors choose not to work with government agencies. Some of these NGOs are no more than money-making organisations for those who work in them, for whom a job is just a job – and among them are some that are straightforwardly corrupt. Others are run by idealists who are admirably professional, ethical and effective.

In practice, civil society has been largely understood by the donor community as being constituted by NGOs and the media. Some NGOs have taken on the role of opposing the state rather than being its constructive critic.<sup>116</sup> As a result, relations between state and civil society organisations have often become polarised. Officials have started to divide NGOs into good and bad, with the ‘good’ ones repairing water supply systems and suchlike, while the ‘bad’ ones interfere in politics. The tendency to see politics as a sphere in which freely expressed opinions count as interference reflects retrograde attitudes that all too often justify repression. Notwithstanding, official attitudes to NGOs do touch on real problems.

Most NGOs survive on foreign grants; there are no membership organisations that can be sustained by local contributions. One prominent NGO activist observes that ‘the West has created NGOs rather than civil society’.<sup>117</sup> This inevitably raises a question over the extent to which NGOs can be taken as a voice of society if they are ultimately accountable only to donors, however fine their work. From the perspective of some civil society actors,<sup>118</sup> NGOs are gradually losing their positive image as agents of change and development, being viewed as foreign project

113 See more in Slim, R. M. and Hodizoda, F. ‘Tajikistan: from civil war to peacebuilding’, in Van Tongeren, P., Van de Veen, H. and Verhoeven, J. (eds.), *op. cit.*

114 Mullojanov, P., ‘Civil Society and Peacebuilding’ in Abdullaev, K. and Barnes C., *op. cit.*

115 For more information see SDC, *CH-TJ Update* [online], Vol. 4, No 3, July 2005, available from [http://162.23.39.120/dezaweb/ressources/resource\\_en\\_24884.pdf](http://162.23.39.120/dezaweb/ressources/resource_en_24884.pdf)

116 For instance, in Uzbekistan some human rights NGOs used to pay those who were seeking day work in the city to participate in a protest demonstration, while the authorities draft students who need a pass mark at an exam to go on pro-government demonstrations – interview with an NGO representative in Tashkent, March 2005.

117 Author’s interview, Bishkek, June 2005.

118 These views were expressed during an International Alert consultation meeting with civil society actors in Bishkek, November 2005.

implementers. Moreover, some NGOs have demonstrated less than the highest standards of behaviour and some have taken on projects that they cannot implement.

There are also community-based organisations (CBOs) that were established and nurtured by international development partners to implement projects on providing services that the government could not deliver, especially in rural areas, with CBOs effectively fulfilling parts of the role of local government. Many played a role in community mobilisation at the local level. CBOs are generally placed in the ‘good’ (practical) category by sceptical officials. Mosques are also important actors with capacity for autonomous social and charity work.

NGOs are mistrusted by some and supported by others as potential sources of regime change, as in Georgia. In fact, Kyrgyzstan is the only country in Central Asia in which NGOs have flourished with agendas of social change and improved governance. Many played a role in the run-up to the political crisis in February and March 2005; by contrast, political parties played hardly any role, as they did not represent real interests.<sup>119</sup> Independent media have been instrumental in exposing the personal corruption of the Akayev family based on the accounts of his former allies who were excluded from political competition.

It is, however, easy to exaggerate the role of NGOs and important not to. Civil society played a role in preparing the ground for regime change in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, but in both places its role during the crisis was small and its influence thereafter was limited. Civil society organisations can have a significant influence within a functioning state, with which they can work in partnership or opposition. In those circumstances, NGOs can also contribute to the good functioning of the state. But when a state breaks down, even if only temporarily, it is the security sector and the directly political actors who determine outcomes. Building NGOs as long term change agents – especially if the emphasis is on regime change – would be a major mistake. It would weaken other NGOs with different roles, would be counter-productive and is not on the agenda of the donor community.

#### 4.3.4 Advocacy

In Central Asia as in other contexts there are different opinions about which is the best model of advocacy for policy change: open advocacy – i.e., the public exposure of wrongs and demands that they be put right, which is the stuff of single-issue campaigning in mature democracies; or non-confrontational advocacy, using a quieter networking approach that is often associated with lobbying activities. In Central Asia as elsewhere, opinion differs as to which is more effective, partly because the answer depends on details of circumstance and timing.

An example of non-confrontational advocacy is the ‘Ambassadors of Goodwill Network’ (AoGN), supported by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). It unites eminent persons from the Ferghana Valley and the national capitals to provide joint reflection on issues of potential conflict and influence the authorities.<sup>120</sup> The rationale for this approach is that persons of former status retain a degree of influence with the current powers, which they can use to promote better policies and raise issues in a non-confrontational manner.

A number of international NGOs and media groups argue that the donor community must live up to the standards that it professes – about which there should surely be no dispute; and they use this as a basis for arguing for open advocacy. The difficulty here, of course, is that even a body such as the International Crisis Group finds it hard to get a hearing for its policy recommendations when governments simply close their ears, as authoritarian regimes are

119 Interview with Chinara Jakypova, IWPR, Bishkek, February 2005.

120 ‘The SDC programme operates on two levels: by strengthening conflict resolution mechanisms and by identifying causes of conflict. It supports local NGOs that offer continuing education courses for local figures who play a mediating role in conflict causes in and among communities. Communities affected receive aid from a Foundation for Infrastructure Projects, so that the causes of water conflicts can be eliminated’. SDC & DFA, *Peacebuilding: SDC Guidelines* [online], Bern, February 2003, p. 25, available from [www.sdc.admin.ch/ressources/deza\\_product\\_e\\_646.pdf](http://www.sdc.admin.ch/ressources/deza_product_e_646.pdf)



inclined to do. There seems no point in engaging in advocacy in the name of standards if the way that it is done results in losing the audience, since adherence to standards would also then be lost. But this argument presupposes that, to begin with, there is an audience – i.e., that it is possible for NGOs to be in dialogue with the authorities. In much of Central Asia, work first needs to be done to ensure there is an audience before there can be effective advocacy.

#### 4.3.5 Dispute Resolution

The general modes in which disputes are pursued and settled can have a major influence on how political grievances are handled and on whether conflict escalates. What may be called the culture of conflict is therefore an issue of concern in conflict analysis. In Central Asia, this has rightly been identified by a number of donor agencies as an area for engagement, especially when it comes to land and agricultural disputes. Projects such as ‘Third Party Arbitration in Land Disputes’ (DfID) in Tajikistan<sup>121</sup> and ‘Legal Assistance to Rural Citizens’ (SDC/USAID) in Kyrgyzstan are commendable examples of moves in this direction. More programming of this type would be beneficial not only for handling local disputes but in general as a way of developing the capacity within society to withstand the temptation to escalate.

Examples of this kind of programme are relatively scarce. There has not been sufficient capacity to intervene and mediate in property or industrial disputes (such as a dispute over the Kumtor gold mine in Kyrgyzstan), as well as in situations of social tensions (such as between refugees and the host population). In Kyrgyzstan many such disputes opened up under the old regime, exposing injustices.

One way to deal with such disputes may be through the courts. One problem here is that there is often a lack of trust in the local justice system; a second issue is that settling disputes in courts is often slow when what may be required is the capacity to resolve disputes quickly. In western Europe, for instance, industrial mediation services are available during strike action. In Central Asia efforts have been made to create the capacity to deal with inter-ethnic tensions, and to a lesser extent with problems arising between the police and civil society through a project of the Swiss DFA Political Affairs Division IV on Human Security (PD IV). The results have not yet been put to the test.

#### 4.3.6 Conflict-Sensitive Development

In post-war situations, links between peacebuilding and poverty reduction interventions are straightforward to conceptualise if often complex to operationalise.<sup>122</sup> But there has been less conceptual clarity in relation to the role of socio-economic development in preventing potential conflicts from erupting. However, the activities of the donor community have rightly included the effort to mainstream conflict prevention into development interventions and to establish operational links between conflict and development practitioners. This approach is used, for instance, by UNDP.

Conflict-sensitive programming is an approach that aims to ensure that poverty reduction and other development interventions do no harm as far as the potential for conflict is concerned and, if at all possible, do some good.<sup>123</sup> It is distinct from an approach that simply attempts to ascribe peacebuilding effects to every project of poverty reduction, micro financing, income generation and community development without absorbing peace and conflict issues into programme

121 The programme is implemented in Eastern Europe and in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in Central Asia; *Third Party Arbitration Courts: Resolving Land Disputes in Eastern Europe and Central Asia* [online], DfID Briefing, Policy Division Info Series No. 059, September 2004, available from [www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/central-asia/land\\_arbitration.pdf](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/central-asia/land_arbitration.pdf)

122 See, for instance, *Reintegration of ex-combatants in Tajikistan*, UNDP Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Development Programme, Internet Forum on Conflict Prevention, 2004, available from <http://ochaonline.un.org/DocView.asp?DocID=2379>

123 See *Conflict-Sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peacebuilding: A Resource Pack*, Africa Peace Forum, Centre for Conflict Resolution, Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies, Forum on Early Warning and Response, International Alert, Saferworld, London 2004.

design. Unfortunately, this labelling exercise is sometimes seen as advantageous by implementing agencies, which sense in some contexts that connecting a project to peace and conflict questions may enhance fundraising prospects. This can result in considerable puzzlement among beneficiaries: on the one hand, in their view, there was no conflict in their areas; on the other hand, they really needed the schools, water supply systems, first aid centres that the grants were meant for. If one admits that there is no conflict, would money be withdrawn and go to neighbours who claim ‘conflict potential’?

Conflict sensitivity is a relatively new approach and, while it has generated a great deal of discussion, it is only now being introduced into programme design and implementation. It is a promising approach because it offers the prospect of avoiding the negative side-effects of development assistance projects that sometimes unintentionally generate or exacerbate conflicts. It does not necessarily entail re-naming projects as peacebuilding; rather, it entails reshaping them.

To build peace it is necessary to have strong socio-economic foundations and there are examples of very clear links between poverty reduction and preventing violent conflict. One of these examples is the Kulyab area of the border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan where Russian border troops have been withdrawn. The local population lost out economically as a result. The most readily available alternatives for generating income, it hardly needs to be said, are in drug trafficking and other smuggling from Afghanistan. Measures to develop the area can therefore work towards conflict prevention. This would decrease the resentment towards central government (which was viewed as driving the Russian troops out), keep local businesses from collapsing, prevent a slide into poverty, and prevent further engagement in drug trafficking and other criminal activities.

It would not be necessary to label such a programme in the Kulyab area as conflict prevention, which could well be confusing because that terminology presents some difficulties. Apart from the difficulties of communicating specialised vocabulary to ordinary citizens, national authorities in Central Asia have often perceived the language of ‘conflict prevention,’ ‘early warning’ and ‘crisis management’ as threatening. These terms tend to worry the authorities, who conclude that the donor community expects conflict in their areas and views developments from a negative perspective. Moreover, in Russian and in Central Asian languages such terms can have more negative connotations than in English. It may be worth exploring how such terminology can be modified towards more positive and less charged language.

#### 4.3.7 Security Sector Reform

Actions of the security sector and especially the law-enforcement agencies are a source of concern for the populations of Central Asian states. Facilitating a better relationship means persuading the authorities to reform their security sectors and conveying to society at large what law enforcement is for and how citizens can work together with police to maintain public order.

Some initiatives have been undertaken along these lines, such as the OSCE programme for ‘Interaction with Internal Affairs Organs’ in Kyrgyzstan, agreed with the government in August 2003. One of its goals is to separate the civil function of the police from the army and paramilitary-style policing. The aim is to create a Police Service of Kyrgyzstan by January 2010.<sup>124</sup> This is supplemented by the US commitment to extend a new \$1.5 million aid package to finance police reform, aimed at rooting out corruption within the State Traffic Inspectorate.<sup>125</sup> In Tajikistan the United Nations Tajikistan Office of Peacebuilding (UNTOP) is engaged in the reform of the police and work with border guards, providing training in police professionalism,

124 The programme aims at radical change in police culture (from a force to a service); strengthening of professionalism, decentralisation and flexibility; enhancement of community relations; improvement of legal basis and improving of police working conditions, see *Kyrgyz Republic: Police Reform Strategy* [online], OSCE, Vienna, December 2004, available from [www.osce.org/documents/cib/2005/04/13866\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/documents/cib/2005/04/13866_en.pdf)

125 ‘U.S. extends aid to revamp Kyrgyz traffic police’ [online], *RFE/RL Newswire*, Vol. 9, No. 189, 6 October 2005, available from <http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2005/10/061005.asp#2-tca>

setting up a forensic laboratory and helping the police to elaborate more humane approaches to investigations and treatment of detainees. UNDP Uzbekistan has been involved in a project on human rights with the Ministry of Interior, educating police officers on human rights approaches and principles.<sup>126</sup>

One of the difficulties in Security Sector Reform (SSR) is the intersection of different kinds of security – in particular the security of the citizen against crime and against arbitrary authority and the security of the state against external threats and internal subversion. In the name of state security individuals can be wrongly targeted and subjected to abusive and coercive behaviour. An effort to increase citizens' security against such abuses through SSR may be seen as risking the weakening of state security. Meanwhile, efforts to improve the investigation of ordinary crimes may be seen as an attempt at unwarranted interference in state security issues and may also fall foul of a policing culture in which citizens are seen as problems for the police rather than as beneficiaries of their protection.

This generic difficulty in SSR is multiplied in Central Asia by international and global security issues, including Afghanistan, the 'War on Terror' and the security interests of both China and Russia (see Chapter 2). Central Asian leaderships understood the changed situation after September 2001 as giving them increased leverage to bargain and the capacity to play off one power against another, and one policy against another to get the best deal.<sup>127</sup> Thus, US security interests made it possible to get more room for manoeuvre in relation to Russia, before Russia's rebuilding of its role and influence gave Central Asian states more room for manoeuvre vis-à-vis the USA. And likewise, the security interests of the US and its allies offered the prospect of reducing pressure on the human rights front and getting increased development assistance. Along with getting bases – the USA in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, France in Tajikistan – and transit rights – NATO through Tajikistan to support ISAF in Afghanistan – the West has provided military training and other assistance. For instance, in the fiscal year of 2004, the USA gave over \$50 million of assistance to Tajikistan. One aim of the programme was to modernise the communications system and the structure of the Ministry of Defence.<sup>128</sup> The US government also provided \$9 million in 2005 for border protection and anti-narcotics programmes.<sup>129</sup>

Problems here include the low absorptive capacities of the security sector in Central Asia, which renders the more sophisticated packages of training and equipment ineffective. While Uzbekistan has reacted sharply to criticism over Andijan and the US base has now left, the long-term strategic importance of the region has been confirmed by the appointment in October 2005 of a new NATO liaison to coordinate relations with Central Asia.<sup>130</sup>

The greater difficulty for the donor community, however, lies in the association of security assistance and SSR with the most troubling aspects of state power. For example, US training assistance has included one counter-terrorism unit that was present at Andijan; the USA has also trained other security personnel from units of the kind that were present in Andijan. Similarly, British training in marksmanship for the Uzbek army in February and March 2005 created uncomfortably close associations. This is a classic dilemma of this kind of assistance programme. The training was self-evidently not delivered so that Andijan could happen – the international reaction afterwards testifies to that – and it is not at all evident that there was any causal

126 The UNDP 'Umbrella Project for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights' project document, available from [http://www.undp.uz/component/option,com\\_docman/Itemid,2248/task,view\\_category/catid,102/order,dmname/ascdesc,ASC/](http://www.undp.uz/component/option,com_docman/Itemid,2248/task,view_category/catid,102/order,dmname/ascdesc,ASC/), states that 'Human rights are addressed by building the national capacity to integrate international human rights obligations with the national legal framework, raising awareness on international human rights principles and enhancing the population's access to justice'.

127 Matveeva, A., 'Tajikistan: Evolution of the Security Sector and the War on Terror' in Ebnöther, A., Felberbauer, E.M. and Malek, M. (eds.), *Facing the Terrorist Challenge – Central Asia's Role in Regional and International Co-operation* [online], DCAF, Vienna and Geneva, 2005, available from [www.dcaf.ch/publications/epublications/CentralAsia\\_terror/Ch.5.pdf](http://www.dcaf.ch/publications/epublications/CentralAsia_terror/Ch.5.pdf)

128 *Asia-Plus*, 15 September 2004.

129 Dikaev, T., *op. cit.*

130 'NATO official names new liaison to Central Asia' [online], *RFE/RL Newswire*, Vol. 9, No. 189, 6 October 2005, available from <http://www.rferl.org/newswire/2005/10/061005.asp#2-tca>

relationship between the training delivered and the events in Andijan, nor any effect in aggravating the scale of the killings. But such programmes do create discomfiting associations when events like Andijan occur. Opting out of SSR completely would have consequences both for ordinary citizens in Central Asia and - because of issues such as drug trafficking and border security - for the core interests of donor governments. The challenge for donor governments, therefore, appears to be:

- How to integrate genuine reform of the sector with assistance and training;
- How to get the best possible balance between the two parts;
- How to be clear and explicit that there is a red line which, if crossed, triggers programme-termination; and
- How to help beneficiary governments from staying well back from the red line.

#### 4.3.8 Anti-Terrorism

Prevention of terrorism is high on the global security agenda and is an issue in which the interests of governments coincide. It is therefore, in principle at least, a fruitful area for cooperation between the donor community, China, Russia and Central Asian authorities. There is an evident risk in this thought, which has already been alluded to, namely that shared concerns about terrorism are easily exploited to suit an internal political agenda of tightened controls. Uzbekistan, for example, has been an eager participant in counter-terrorist cooperation, having faced terrorist attacks in the recent past but its definition of who are terrorists, as demonstrated by its actions in Andijan, is disconcertingly broad from the point of view of the Western partners.

The responses to terrorism that were on offer to Central Asian states after September 2001 were fairly standard – strengthening border defences, training and equipment for the military, capacity-building for appropriate government departments and agencies. One avenue that has not been explored is analytical. The fact is that, while there is much concern about terrorism there is little understanding, and it would be productive to address that deficiency.

Popular attitudes towards groups named as terrorists in Central Asia are not black and white, as some terrorist suspects have been local benefactors, sometimes providing for the welfare of whole villages. Groups of IMU fighters led by Juma Namangani were well-behaved when they set up their camps in the Tavildara area and paid for goods and services, unlike many government troops. Refugees from Tajikistan were cared for by Afghan fighters during the civil war. Some acts of terror, such as attacks by suicide bombers on police in Uzbekistan in 2004, have been met with popular sympathy.

To an extent, the phenomenon of religious radicalism is related to problems experienced by young people in rural areas of Central Asia, who face material hardship, a spiritual vacuum and an uncertain future. Islamist movements seem to be able to capitalise on this trend. So far, the donor community has tried to assist with solutions – or at least with responses – before fully comprehending the problem. A better understanding is needed of the causes and significance of terrorism in Central Asia. Civil society has an important role to play in this because its representatives often have more insight into how social processes work and the way that frustrated aspirations for change may be part of what feeds extremism.

#### 4.3.9 Border Management

Border management is a further security issue that has received considerable attention in recent years. The border with Afghanistan has been a particular source of concern and Russian guards had been stationed on its border with Tajikistan since the break-up of the Soviet Union until their

withdrawal, at the urging of the Tajik authorities, in July 2005.<sup>131</sup> The withdrawal provoked intense international concern; Moscow had carried well over 90 per cent of the costs of the operation<sup>132</sup> and there had been significant drug seizures by the Russian border guards.<sup>133</sup> As Tajik troops came to guard the border, the situation deteriorated due to poor preparedness and supply shortages.<sup>134</sup> The withdrawal led to an increase in trafficking through Tajikistan, prompting concerns in Moscow. Russian Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov made an issue of it at the Russia-NATO meeting, urging formal cooperation between NATO and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation.<sup>135</sup>

Management of borders within Central Asia has also been a focus of donor attention since 2003. The flagship programme of the EU is the Border Management Programme for Central Asia/Central Asia Anti-Drug Proliferation Programme (BOMCA/CADAP), which started as BOMFER (Border Management in the Ferghana Valley). When Russian border guards were withdrawn from Tajikistan in 2005, the programme expanded to the Tajik side of the border with Afghanistan. At that point, the EU contributed another 8 million euros, the UK seconded international staff, and plans were made for a component on the Afghan side of the border. In September 2005 the donor community facilitated the signing of an agreement between the Tajik and Afghan sides on setting up inter-agency groups to jointly combat the cross-border drug trade.<sup>136</sup>

BOMCA has generated significant investment in technical and infrastructure aspects, but some of its goals remain unclear. It could have been an opportunity to ask fundamental questions about the tendency towards closing or tightly controlling borders, which has hampered attempts to promote cooperation (see next section). There is a need to balance open commerce with controls on smuggling and to link anti-contraband actions at the border with improved internal policing. Because it did not ask these questions in the design phase, the programme has come to be regarded as expressing international approval of tight border controls with restrictions on trade and travel, whereas what is required for development is a well regulated border system in which freedom of movement of goods and individuals is promoted.

#### 4.3.10 Regional Cooperation

The initial approach of the donor community was to regard Central Asia as an integrated region with a high degree of commonality and interdependence – a coherent economic and security complex.<sup>137</sup> In a break with the Soviet pattern, which distinguished Kazakhstan from Central Asia, all five ‘stans’ tended to be regarded as a distinct region. This perception was shared by donor governments, international organisations, media and academic observers. There was a consequent tendency to see cooperation in economic and social spheres – on the lines of the EU – as an answer to the many problems of trade, development and social interaction. This seemed at the time to be a reasonable paradigm, given the recent experience of belonging to a single geopolitical state and the artificiality of the newly created state borders. There is considerable economic benefit in regional cooperation on water, energy, trade and transit, and there is considerable security benefit in a cooperative approach as well.

131 Aleksandr Kondratev, a spokesman for Russian border forces in Tajikistan, announced on 14 June 2005 that Tajik guards protected the full length of the 1,344-kilometer Tajik-Afghan border; ‘Tajik guards take control of full length of Tajik-Afghan border’ [online], *RFE/RL Newsline*, Vol. 9, No. 113, 15 June 2005, available from [www.rferl.org/newsline/2005/06/150605.asp#2-tca](http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2005/06/150605.asp#2-tca)

132 *Oxford Analytica Russia/CIS Daily Brief*, 3 March 2004.

133 For instance, 50 kg of heroin were taken in one seizure on a routine patrol from smugglers crossing the river, *Asia-Plus*, 28 October 2004.

134 Reportedly, three servicemen died of anaemia during the winter in Badakhshan. The Russian side delivered supplies via the Osh-Khorogh highway from Kyrgyzstan, while the Tajik side has to use the Dushanbe-Khorogh road, practically closed in the cold part of the year; interviews with IWPR and international diplomats, Dushanbe, March 2005.

135 Roze, A., Terekhov, A., ‘Sergey Ivanov ‘ne skazal nichego dramatichnogo’’ [Sergey Ivanov ‘said nothing dramatic’] [online], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 15 September 2005, available from [http://www.ng.ru/world/2005-09-15/5\\_ivanov.html](http://www.ng.ru/world/2005-09-15/5_ivanov.html)

136 Socor, V., ‘International assistance focusing on Tajik-Afghan border’, Jamestown Foundation, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 2, No. 182, September 30, 2005.

137 Bohr, A., ‘Regionalism in Central Asia: New Geopolitics, Old Regional Order’, in *International Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 3, May 2004, pp. 485-503.

Multilateral and bilateral donors that promoted regional cooperation in Central Asia include the EU, UNDP,<sup>138</sup> Japan,<sup>139</sup> and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) among others. The ADB has been particularly consistent in promoting cooperation in the region. It is the driving force behind the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC),<sup>140</sup> which also engages the other main international finance institutions. The ADB also actively supports fora such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEc).<sup>141</sup> The World Bank has been more cautious over regional cooperation, having pursued a regional framework with national programming, but not a regional programme as such. Russia has also backed cooperation in EurAsEc and, like China, in the SCO.

There are, in short, clear economic and security gains from regional cooperation and a considerable amount of international political and financial muscle behind it. Yet,

*'Regionalism – understood as an active process of change towards increased cooperation, integration, convergence, coherence and identity – has not been an obvious feature of security (or other) policy interactions in Central Asia.'*<sup>142</sup>

In fact, what has actually happened is the opposite. In fifteen years of independence the states of the region have developed as closed political entities, often hostile to their neighbours. Borders have been sealed, and in the case of Uzbekistan, mined, while the transport infrastructure of the Soviet period has suffered severe disruption. Alternative roads started to be built to avoid passing through the territory of an unfriendly neighbour. The trend towards separation rather than integration has settled in, reinforced by competition for the same markets and for the attention of external players. The social and cultural interaction of the Soviet period has turned into isolation for most people, who seldom travel outside their own lands.

Moreover, Kazakhstan, the richest state in the region, although paying lip service to 'regional cooperation', increasingly looks north towards Russia and Europe as it becomes a wealthier country and is less enthusiastic about dealing with its neighbours to the south who have come to be seen as sources of problems and instability.

Although it is apparent that the states lose out in economic terms from impediments on regional interaction, the ruling regimes do not see it this way. Political power and security considerations are paramount. The leadership groups are not ready to engage in regional cooperation before their own statehood is firmly entrenched. They largely regard their neighbours with suspicion:

*'To judge by the growing list of disputes and tensions among the Central Asian states, it would appear that the greatest threat to the region's security and stability comes not from Afghanistan, Russia or Islamist groups, but from within the region itself.'*<sup>143</sup>

Given the size and geographic position of Uzbekistan, its leadership has been the main obstacle to cooperation. The regime displays varying degrees of hostility to its neighbours, the worst to Tajikistan: borders are mined, most transport links have been severed and the regime of energy supplies is designed to disadvantage Tajikistan. Uzbekistan's justification for adverse relations is that Tajikistan harboured terrorists (IMU fighters who set up bases on its territory in the 1990s) and exports drugs and instability. Tajikistan's grievances include historical injustices because of the ancient cities of Bukhara and Samarkand, allocated to Uzbekistan in the Soviet period, the

138 'Bringing Down Barriers', *UNDP Central Asia Human Development Report, op. cit.*

139 Malaysian National News Agency, 'Japan, Five Central Asian Nations Eye Ministerial Meeting In Late August' [online], *Malaysian National News Agency*, Tokyo, 4 July 2005, available from [www.bernama.com/bernama/v3/news\\_lite.php?id=143216](http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v3/news_lite.php?id=143216)

140 CAREC members are Azerbaijan, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. Russia has observer status pending its application as a full member.

141 Comprising Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Belarus; Uzbekistan is seeking membership, as are Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine.

142 Allison, R., 'Strategic Reassertion in Russia's Central Asia Policy', *op. cit.*, p. 465.

143 Bohr, A., *op. cit.*, p. 501.

role of the Uzbek armed forces during the Tajik civil war and the current policy of cutting off Tajikistan from viable transit routes. Various approaches aimed at drawing Uzbekistan into regional cooperation have been tried, but results have been limited. Even the ADB became frustrated with Uzbekistan: it had to cut financial allocations to Uzbekistan following its resistance to the Tajik/Uzbek electricity lines rehabilitation project, such as in water management.<sup>144</sup>

The lack of regional cooperation has the worst effects on Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. They have a viable chance to develop only if they have access to the world outside. Tajikistan in particular is largely cut off from viable access; given instability in Afghanistan, mountainous terrain on the Chinese border, and hostility from Uzbekistan, its only functioning border is with Kyrgyzstan. Expanding chances for Tajikistan is in the interests of the donor community in order to avoid long-term dependency.

However, it is not worth relying on simply banging the drum for regional cooperation, especially if that is viewed as a step towards regional integration. It has little resonance in the region as a general principle. By contrast, cooperation between the states of Central Asia, with no diminution of sovereignty, is important and practical in several fields. It can and should be promoted in relation to the private sector and civil society, could well be valuable in the education sector, remains crucial in cross-border work in areas of potential tension – not only in the Ferghana Valley but also in other parts of the region such as the southern segment of the border between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan – and is essential for cooperation on international security issues. Cooperation between two or more states can address specific issues successfully without in the short or medium term promoting deeper integration or even a general improvement in political relations. It is important to emphasize that cooperation is important fundamentally as a means to an end, and the donor community will do well to stay away from appearing to promote cooperation as an end in itself. It looks too much like a request that newly independent states give up some of the sovereignty that their leaders cherish.

#### 4.4 Revising the Peacebuilding Approach

It is hardly surprising that, in a complex region like Central Asia, the record of donor community engagement contains a mixture of successes, such as in relation to the Ferghana Valley, in terms of analysis, early warning and conflict prevention on a community level, community-based dispute resolution, relations between minorities and the promotion of civil society, and the anti-narcotics effort, with other less certain achievements, such as in SSR and border management, and some where the record is frankly deficient, such as regional cooperation. Beyond the specific instances of positive impact, something can also be said about the donor community's contribution to the general situation and atmosphere. There has been a transfer of know-how and a linking of local groups and organisations to their international counterparts that is widely appreciated by stakeholders and that has kept hope alive in difficult circumstances. By providing international linkage and facilitating learning, the donor community has also promoted commitment to the rule of law and to various important values such as fairness in recruitment and treatment of people, cooperation and the importance of coalition building.

This report argues that these strengths can and should be harnessed into a new strategic peacebuilding approach by the donor community that addresses the conflict potential of how power is organised and used, and which focuses on three countries – Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

This approach needs to recognise the realities of the situation. It is revealing to read the World Bank's evaluation of risk assessments of Kyrgyzstan, which did not address problems of

144 For an outline of water management programming see, for instance, Bucknall, J., Klytchnikova, I., Lampietti, J., Lundell, M., Scatasta, M., and Thurman, M., *Irrigation in Central Asia: Social, Economic and Environmental Considerations* [online], World Bank, February 2003, available from [www.worldbank.org/eca/environment](http://www.worldbank.org/eca/environment) or 'Tapping the Potential: Improving Water Management in Tajikistan', *UNDP National Human Development Report 2003* [online], Dushanbe, 2003, available from [www.undp.tj/publications/index.htm](http://www.undp.tj/publications/index.htm)

corruption, the drug trade, internal tensions and violence, and disputes with neighbouring countries over water, electricity and border trade.<sup>145</sup> About its programme in Kazakhstan, the Bank notes that its and other donors' 'expectations were overly optimistic, in that the transition to a market economy could be accomplished in a short time, at a low social cost.'<sup>146</sup> There also seems to have been a mis-estimation of absorptive capacities, especially in the apparatus of governments, which have been weakened by emigration and by appointments based on clan loyalty rather than merit. And finally, there appears to have been an over-estimation of the degree of economic and social leverage that the donor community has. The EU, for example, is too far away and too different for its power of attraction and example to work in the way that it has done and is still doing in eastern and south-eastern Europe.

In addition, revising the approach entails clarifying objectives. In the most general terms, the donor community's aim has been to enhance stability. But how to achieve this has been a matter of shifting agendas. One reason for this was the global strategic change brought on by the response to 9/11, with the intervention in Afghanistan and a new US presence in the region. However, inconsistency in US policy, the result of it not having the highest priority in Washington, means that the US has been unable to participate with other donors to provide an objective around which coherence could ensue and thus reduce uncertainty. As a result, an overview of the past decade of donor engagement in Central Asia indicates a process of shifting fashions – for instance, conflicts over water and environment, and today, border management. The donor community has responded to different interests at different times – sometimes complementary, at other times conflicting. Initially, energy development was an exciting topic, as the Caspian Sea was the last unclaimed territory open for exploration and division. Other business interests such as cotton and tobacco played some role,<sup>147</sup> together with the development of an east-west transport corridor, although this failed to make a decisive impact. Increasingly, security considerations, hard and soft, have topped the agenda. They sometimes clashed with other considerations, such as democracy, human rights and good governance, as discussed above.

For this report, the overall donor community's goal of enhancing stability in the region offers an appropriate point of reference for thinking about peacebuilding. Stated as such, it implies that there is not a major economic interest (for example, natural resources) that might cut across the attempt to contribute to stability. It is, moreover, an interest that in principle is shared with other external actors – China and Russia – though there are many reasons why the interpretation of the goal and modes of acting upon it are likely to differ significantly. As has already been argued, it is legitimate for donor governments to have this goal in Central Asia, given their other interests in the immediate environment.

The region offers a variety of factors that aggravate instability, including the as yet unfinished story of turmoil in Afghanistan, illegal narcotics and other kinds of trafficking, and regional disputes. These factors exacerbate the central problem and prime source of conflict potential – the nature of power and how it is used – which is an internal source of conflict. In this context, two adverse trends are important:

- The space for democratisation and good governance is shrinking;
- Political succession is a probable source of crisis.

It is towards these two trends that peacebuilding strategy and activities need to be addressed.

145 'Kyrgyz Republic – Country Assistance Evaluation', *The World Bank Report No. 23278*, 12 November 2001, p. 2, available from [www.worldbank.org/oed/transitions/economies/caes/kyrgyz\\_cae.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/oed/transitions/economies/caes/kyrgyz_cae.pdf)

146 'Republic of Kazakhstan – Country Assistance Evaluation', *The World Bank Report No. 21862*, 20 February 2001, available from [www.worldbank.org/oed/transitions/economies/caes/kazak\\_cae.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/oed/transitions/economies/caes/kazak_cae.pdf)

147 BAT had an investment in Uzbekistan which, largely, did not pay off: 'The Uzbek-British joint venture British American Tobacco Uzbekistan (BAT Uzbekistan) reduced cigarette output 12.4% year-on-year to 2.054 billion in January-May 2005, the country's State Statistics Department said. The company produced 2,316 tonnes of fermented tobacco in the five months, down 52.6%', 'BAT Uzbekistan Cigarette Output Falls 12% In January-May', *Interfax*, Tashkent, 29 June 2005.



## 4.5 Selecting the Means

The analysis in Chapters 1 and 2 led to the conclusion that the focus of peacebuilding support by the donor community should be Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Each state is in a different condition and peacebuilding activities will not therefore be uniform across the three. In particular, when advocating that it is possible to remain engaged with Uzbekistan, it must be recognised that this can by no means be taken for granted. Few of the activities outlined below, therefore, are intended to be adopted as part of programming in or with Uzbekistan. The general thrust of the analysis leads to the acknowledgement that the most that is possible, and which would also be beneficial, is to engage with the authorities in Uzbekistan on issues of mutual concern and to engage with what remain of civil society organisations in the country on issues of high priority. The form of these engagements, both with the authorities and with civil society, should be quiet discussion and dialogue. The goodwill that is generated by continuing development projects in Uzbekistan may also make such peacebuilding efforts possible.

The organisation of this section follows the categories of the peacebuilding palette.

### 4.5.1 Security Issues

Four priorities in security issues emerge from the analysis and arguments above and from donor community experience in Central Asia: security sector reform, border management, a variety of measures against crime and enhanced analysis. Only the last is suggested in relation to Uzbekistan. Liaison with Chinese and Russian authorities on border management and the drive against crime would be self-evidently beneficial.

SSR is a continuing activity. For reasons discussed above, it is complex and involves risks for donors, partly because of the risks that the recipient states see in it. For the sake of coherence, it is important to ensure that security assistance, which presumably will be continued, does not undermine needed reforms in the security sector. The project to create a genuine police *service* in Kyrgyzstan shows the way to go, if government authorities in Tajikistan can be won over to it.

On border management, the EC's BOMCA programme provides the framework for continuing the activity. If it were possible to use it as a basis on which to open longer-term and wider issues about the border regimes, this would both strengthen the programme and deepen its contribution to development and sustainable peace. The discussion that is needed is about the long-term balance between security and crime control on the one hand and a well regulated system for trade and travel on the other.

It is important to continue efforts against trafficking in drugs and other contraband. It may, however, be worth exploring whether the emphasis on trafficking, which leads to an emphasis on border controls, is by itself the best way to approach this problem. It may be possible to package police aspects of SSR with a strategic discussion on strengthening internal measures against organised crime. This faces political resistance where organised crime and political groups have allied themselves, but as part of the ticket of travel towards international access and legitimacy, may be attractive to some groups in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Two issues arise under the heading of analysis. The first is to continue what has been called early warning, but adjusting the focus to look at national-level political issues about the distribution of power as well as the inter-ethnic and resource-related issues that have long been in focus. It would be worth considering whether 'early warning' is in fact the best rubric under which to pursue this work, and not only because the term alienates some people. In general terms, the model of 'early warning' is to identify a future event early enough for something to be done about it. This leads to an emphasis on cataclysmic events and counter-action. A focus on process is

likely to be more productive because it permits a more strategic view; what is at stake here is what is going on in society, what risks it entails, and how to ameliorate them.

The second aspect of analysis reflects the arguments above regarding some shortcomings of anti-terrorism. Alongside short-term defensive measures, it is worth having a thorough and non-ideological enquiry into the sources and causes of terrorism. As indicated already, civil society actors may be particularly well placed to make a responsible and fruitful contribution to this discussion. It would be possible to establish a regional process on an informal basis in which groups from Uzbekistan could also participate.

A discussion with Chinese and Russian experts of shared security risks, their causes and significance would be a way to begin exploring anew the prospects of identifying common ground and areas of cooperation in security and other policy areas. Private exchanges that allowed the different perspectives to be articulated and compared and contrasted could – as such exchanges so often have done – lead to greater clarity on all sides about interests, roles and possible areas for working together.

#### 4.5.2 Socio-Economic Foundations<sup>148</sup>

Social and economic development programmes aimed at improving the lot of ordinary people through poverty eradication, education, infrastructure and resource management are limited in their impact by administrative restrictions, hostile border regimes and corruption. Measures to address economic freedoms, corporate standards and anti-corruption are needed.

Over and above these three issues, however, it is necessary to return to the question of incentives. It is not difficult to design programmes to address these issues, but the work requires the active engagement of authorities who may see no real benefit in it. The incentives for their engagement are not clear if their own position seems viable without economic reforms. There is, however, a variety of views among the elite, and some of those who fare less well from the current set-up may favour reforms out of self-interest, whereas others are far-sighted enough to see the long-term need for real reforms as a way of avoiding a social and political explosion.

If ordinary people lack viable economic strategies, a slide into poverty and increased criminality is unavoidable. It is therefore in the interests of each country's development strategy that it is possible to establish and operate private businesses. Programmes to ensure an appropriate legal framework would allow potential entrepreneurial energies to be harnessed for the good of the country rather than to fester into frustration and resentment that might at some point be turned against the authorities. Components of these programmes include government capacity-building and educational and training programmes. It could, in principle, be suggested that programmes along these lines are relevant for all three focus countries but in practice there must be doubts in all three cases; it would be necessary therefore to begin by investigating the possibilities.

There are concerns in the region about intrusion by large external economic actors such as corporations. On the other hand, trade and investment bring benefits that are also well recognised. There could therefore be some openness to discussing the idea of corporate standards and guidelines. Such programmes, which would be able to start by drawing on well-established international guidelines, including those created through the UN Global Compact, would be enhanced by the involvement from the outset of both China and Russia.

Corruption weakens states but, not surprisingly, in many states where the problem is rife, political leaders refuse to recognise it. It would therefore make most sense to engage with both China and Russia to see if there is the basis for a joint approach on anti-corruption since their engagement in such measures would give it much more leverage. If this is the case, an ambitious

148 For an excellent analysis of the social and economic situation in Central Asia see 'Bringing Down Barriers', *UNDP Central Asia Human Development Report*, *op. cit.*

programme could be possible, in which all three of these components – economic freedoms and international corporate standards as well as anti-corruption measures – are packaged together, offering something for everybody and a fair basis for economic competition. If the engagement of China and Russia is not possible, the donor community may do best to limit itself to making clear in precise terms the standards of transparency and accountability by which it operates.

### 4.5.3 Governance

There is no reason to hide a preference for programmes that ensure full accountability, good governance at every level and democratic participation by all. But it is not the most effective approach to insist at all times on that full agenda, especially when some parties with which donor governments want to work, including governments in Central Asia, find profound cause for concern in such an agenda. At this stage a better approach in the three focus countries would be to identify certain goals and activities that offer a partial reflection of the donor community's democratic values. The suggestion here is to focus on local-level transparency, some long-term aspects of state-building, and the development of national discussions about the future in each of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Local-level transparency grows from local development projects and networks established under the rubrics of conflict prevention and early warning and could be created through gatherings of stakeholders. The argument in favour of transparency is always efficiency and effectiveness – opaque systems hide errors. As a condition of local projects, transparency can be promoted to citizens, local authorities and national authorities alike as fulfilling the responsibility to spend resources wisely. There is no reason to believe that this approach disturbs the authorities in Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan and there is plenty of reason to see if it might also be possible in Uzbekistan.

Over the medium term there is a growing problem; there are not enough well educated and trained people available to offer the authorities sufficiently competent and sufficiently large recruitment pools for state functionaries. Training courses and schools of government would be a way to help develop an adequate recruitment pool for each country that would accept and participate in such a system. The courses could be calibrated to be sure they met the specific needs of each country and could accommodate people at various stages of their careers. These needs can only marginally be met by international courses, which are most useful if they are building on strong foundations of national courses.

The most important single avenue to explore – because it addresses the key problems of shrinking space for democratisation and potential succession crisis – is the possibility of wide-ranging discussions about the national future in each of the three focus countries. What does the future hold? What are the capacities for making the best of likely opportunities? What is the right mixture of private and public provision for meeting basic needs? What are the prospects for avoiding long-term dependency on external development assistance? How is it possible to turn back the tides of corruption and criminality? All these and other questions are of essential interest to the citizens of Central Asia. They are not adequately discussed either in legislative assemblies or in the media in any of the three countries. The academic world, media and above all civil society are the appropriate means of developing national discussion fora.

For most effect and durability, such fora need external (because neutral) facilitation and should avoid not only political stances but also any other kind of advocacy outcomes. The processes need not be large, although when small they would have to involve individuals with a high multiplier capacity – that is, people with influence and access to effective channels and networks of communication. The process of discussion that happens in these fora is itself the purpose of the activity; it is one of the rare cases when the means are the end. The reason is that the goal of

the activity is not to change a policy or promote a particular point of view, but rather to enlarge the constituency of people who are thinking creatively and communicating the results, with two overarching purposes. The first is that the discussion process is a first step towards generating a social capacity to handle crisis and conflict without violence. The second is that the discussion process is also part of a very long-term process of broadening the political class and thus developing a successor generation.

#### 4.5.4 Justice and Reconciliation

Two conflict prevention initiatives can be put forward under this heading – dispute resolution and conflict sensitivity.

Training programmes in dispute resolution would be a way to address the culture of conflict and generate a capacity to manage crisis peacefully. There have been programmes offering training in dispute resolution and related techniques; some beneficiaries criticise them as too generic and quite often as too short with inadequate follow-up. A systematic approach could not only include NGO staff at the local level, but also aim at empowering state institutions to adopt a problem-solving approach to crisis and conflict. Establishing locally owned centres for dispute resolution – offering training courses and practical mediation in actual disputes – would be worthwhile in all three countries, albeit presumably unrealistic in Uzbekistan.

Conflict sensitivity responds to the problem that development assistance can inadvertently become a source of tensions. For instance, distribution of humanitarian aid can serve as a cause for intra-communal conflicts as it is difficult to establish entirely satisfactory criteria for vulnerability. Moreover at times, development projects are known to have exacerbated local tensions because they involve the injection of resources into a given locale; control of those resources can quickly become a political question and a conflict issue. Donors can address this risk in two main ways. First, they can train local and international staff in conflict sensitivity and the ‘Do No Harm’ approach<sup>149</sup> – and, even better, train national officials, civil society representatives, academics and others in these approaches. Second, they can continuously monitor projects so that, if local tensions do arise, they can respond quickly and make appropriate programme adjustments.

### 4.6 Donor Practice

#### 4.6.1 Coordination

Some local stakeholders have suggested that it is hard for the donor community to promote cooperation when its own practice, taken overall, lacks coordination. In fact, processes promising to enhance donor coordination are already underway. For example, in February 2003 Kyrgyzstan was selected as a pilot country for donor harmonisation and alignment; harmonisation (donor coordination) has reportedly proceeded well, although political constraints have made strategic alignment (with the Bishkek authorities) more limited.

There remain concerns about coordination – not least because the consistency of policy and strategy over time are still questionable. The option of revising the peacebuilding approach and considering revised means of implementation offers an occasion for bringing the donor community together with local stakeholders – possibly in a variety of formats to ensure that the process encompasses diverse actors and opinions – in order to enhance donor coordination.

149 See, *inter alia*, *Conflict-Sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peacebuilding: A Resource Pack*, *op. cit.* and Anderson, M., *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – Or War*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, Colorado, 1999 and training materials available from [www.cdainc.com/dnh](http://www.cdainc.com/dnh)

### 4.6.2 Crisis Response Capacity

Events in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in 2005 revealed insufficient preparedness for an adverse turn of events and lack of mechanisms on how to respond to crisis. Political turbulence in Kyrgyzstan has negatively affected development programmes. For example, much of what was achieved in terms of local authorities building their capacity for governance was undermined when local structures and institutions were rapidly dismantled.

While it is the goal of peacebuilding to contribute to preventing such crises from erupting, a related goal is to be able to respond quickly if they do. Worthwhile measures include donors ensuring that they have adequate analytical capacity. It is worth knowing in advance which programmes are the most vulnerable and difficult to implement if there is a crisis, thus indicating which ones may have to be cut and which could continue. For instance, aid to the security sector may be more appropriately withdrawn as a first step while assistance to the rural poor may proceed. A working method that maintains contact with a wide range of actors – civil society and private sector as well as government and politicians – is important regardless of whether there is a crisis; in a crisis it offers multiple networking options that together imbue programmes with enhanced resilience.

It is also worth linking with systems that make possible the deployment of qualified personnel at need. For instance, the European Commission, within its European Initiative on Democracy and Human Rights, has invested in training in civilian aspects of crisis management with a view to creating a pool of specialists who can be deployed at a short notice to areas of conflict. More recently, this training has been linked to the EU European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) in preparing civilian, police and military response to international crises. It is worth exploring whether and how such existing capacity within the EU could be utilised for Central Asia.

### 4.6.3 Influence

Debate continues on whether donor pressure on national governments can prevent conflicts. More typically, pressure is applied only after a crisis has unfolded, such as the introduction of EU sanctions on Uzbekistan in October 2005. However, it was clear that the regime in Tashkent had already re-aligned itself with Russia and China, and made a choice to blame the West before the West blamed it.

In other cases negative developments – such as poorly run elections in Tajikistan in 2000 and 2005 – were effectively overlooked.<sup>150</sup> This was understandable in 2000, when the implicit notion was that bad peace is better than no peace, that the president is a factor of stability and if he manipulated the elections so as to prevent gangsters from entering parliament, this may not be so bad. Such attitudes were less understandable when the civil war became more distant.

These examples suggest that the donor community does not see a wide range of options in the event of adverse developments for which the government is responsible. It might seem to an observer that the only options envisaged by donors are silence and sanctions. It is true that the donor community has only a limited capacity to exert influence in Central Asia. This is because of a variety of factors discussed in this report – the nature of power, the sensitivities of the leaderships to infringement of sovereignty, the clan basis of political organisation and the regional involvement of Russia and China, who offer alternative points of reference should relations with Western donors go cold.

Even so, there are instances when donors as a combined group have had a certain lobbying power. For example, in Turkmenistan the OSCE Office, supported by other agencies, successfully lobbied against a provision in the law on NGOs. In 2003, the donor community and Russia cooperated and successfully pressed Turkmenistan to abolish exit visas.

150 Interview with an international diplomat based in Dushanbe, March 2005.

The donor community faces a number of dilemmas over the general patterns of its assistance. One concerns the way in which development assistance starts to substitute for the functions of the state, with donor funds going to meet the basic needs of the people while the state continues to lavish money on prestige construction and memorials. Another dilemma concerns the way in which official corruption becomes routine and it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to get any response from various officials and departments whose cooperation is required for projects to be implemented, without offering bribes. In both cases, a proper reaction may seem to be to walk away – to refuse to compensate for the state’s refusal to use what resources it has for meeting basic needs, and to refuse to condone corruption. In both cases, moreover, these unacceptable practices deepen the gulf between officialdom and ordinary citizens and thus contribute to conflict potential. Yet walking away would terminate much needed programmes.

Assistance packages can be designed to address these dilemmas – requiring co-funding of basic needs projects, for example, and incorporating anti-corruption measures. Such steps have limited impact if some donors do not adopt them, and even then may founder on lack of political will in the recipient state. On corruption, as on human rights, there needs to be a red line: a clear indication that donors will walk away from affected projects if corruption persists. This could be regarded as a partial sanction, with cooperation continuing in other fields, and a possibility of reconsidering and resuming cooperation in the abandoned project if there are grounds to. The sanction would then be matched by an incentive.

In most conceivable instances it will be more effective for the donor community to work in coordination and with the aid of quiet conversations and persistent engagement. It is not easy to fix on an alternative option between silence and sanctions, but since neither is likely to alter the recipient state’s behaviour, it is at least worth attempting quiet persuasion.

## Chapter 5. Recommendations

The recommendations that follow are presented in schematic and summary form, the basis for them having been analysed, argued and presented in the preceding chapters. Once again, the core recommendations are presented under the categories of the peacebuilding palette and for details the reader is referred to section 4.5 above; however, there are also some recommendations that do not fall so neatly under those headings. The recommendations are interlinked to address the core conflict issue of power and the relationship between state and society. Running throughout the recommendations and highlighted at the end is the proposal to emphasise discussion and dialogue involving a range of different actors.

1. The donor community should revise its approach in Central Asia so that it adopts a new strategic peacebuilding framework that addresses the central conflict issue of the nature of power in the Central Asian states and how it is used. In general terms, what is at stake is the separation of state and society. The donor community cannot itself bridge that gap, and in particular must avoid the temptation of linking solely with the state or solely with civil society in its programmes. What the donor community can do is facilitate possibilities for Central Asian actors to bridge the state-society gap. Particular issues to address are the shrinking space for democratisation and the potential for crisis that lies in political succession. The articulation of a new peacebuilding strategy for Central Asia is an occasion that the donor community can use to enhance its cohesion and coordination.
2. Peacebuilding efforts should be focused on three of the five Central Asian states – that is, on Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Engagement with Uzbekistan will necessarily be more limited than what is possible in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. A continued limited engagement can be used as a means to explore what is possible and to remain in contact with people and groups who need and merit external support.
3. Attempting to engage Russia and China over certain issues will strengthen peacebuilding activities. Even if the attempt to engage them is not successful, there is much to be gained by recognising that both countries have a legitimate stake in Central Asia, wield considerable influence and cannot be marginalised by the donor community. There may be particular Russian interest – and some Chinese interest as well – in engaging in discussions about the social, economic and political basis of challenges to regional and wider security such as terrorism. A further and more tangible area of cooperation is in the shared interest of Russia and the donor community to contribute to sustainable stability in Kyrgyzstan.
4. Donor practice can further be strengthened:
  - a. By developing capacities to respond to crisis. To do this, there is a need for enhancing analytical capacity in the region. Peacebuilding and development programmes alike should be assessed to see what can continue and what must be interrupted in the event of crisis.
  - b. By identifying intermediate options between silence and sanctions for responding to adverse actions and developments. Partial sanctions, clear red lines and quiet conversations are techniques that can be considered.
  - c. By ensuring that the interlinkages with developments in Afghanistan are factored into peacebuilding programming in Central Asia.

5. In the field of security:
  - a. The donor community could support the establishment of a project to develop a new police service in Tajikistan, based on the model now being implemented in Kyrgyzstan.
  - b. The donor community would benefit from internal cross-government discussions to ensure that security assistance does not undermine security sector reforms.
  - c. In Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan the donor community should explore packaging the policing aspects of security sector reform with strategic measures to strengthen policing within partner countries.
  - d. The donor community can encourage the groups that analyse conflict risk to change focus and include the central issue of internal power, to investigate process rather than the likelihood of cataclysm and to explore how to ameliorate the risks.
  - e. The donor community could contribute to effective anti-terror measures by sponsoring a regional discussion of the causes and sources of terrorism. It will be important to engage policy experts from both China and Russia in this kind of discussion. It is also important that civil society interlocutors be involved in a broad discussion process, which the donor community can support.
  
6. In the socio-economic field:
  - a. In Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan the donor community can investigate possibilities for programmes to encourage private sector development, including capacity-building.
  - b. The donor community can approach China and Russia to initiate a discussion of international standards for foreign corporations in Central Asia, drawing on established norms and guidelines.
  - c. The donor community should take the step of approaching China and Russia to assess willingness to strengthen anti-corruption initiatives in Central Asia. If the response is negative the donor community should make clear its own standards and hold to them. A positive response from China and Russia on international standards and anti-corruption would help create the conditions for a coordinated package of strengthening the legal basis for the commercial economy.
  - d. The donor community could facilitate exchanges between actors in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on the one hand and Afghanistan on the other to explore possibilities for mutually beneficial economic cooperation as the situation in Afghanistan stabilises.
  
7. In the field of governance:
  - a. The donor community should ensure that all local development projects in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan incorporate local transparency in their project design.
  - b. The donor community can contribute to state capacity in the long term by inviting the governments of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to explore the potential for national training courses and education for government officials.
  - c. The donor community can make a crucial long-term contribution to peacebuilding, peaceful crisis management and the development of creative thinking about key issues by encouraging discussion about each country's future. This should be regarded as a widely drawn process of overlapping discussions among different groups, that can and should be conducted at national level, at local levels and on a sectoral basis (among teachers, among businesspeople etc).
  
8. Under the heading of justice and reconciliation:
  - a. The donor community can support the establishment of locally owned dispute resolution centres to undertake mediation of conflicts and to provide training for civil society actors and state officials.
  - b. The donor community should train local and international staff in conflict-sensitive programming, and monitor project implementation for conflict potential.



While it is included above as but one recommendation among 21, the proposal of discussions about each country's future is, to repeat a point made in section 4.5.3, the single most important activity that the donor community can undertake. In Central Asia as elsewhere, the situation demands a considerable number of interlocking and interdependent actions if the risk of violent conflict is to be averted and a decisive turn to be taken towards sustainable peace. These actions will be carried out, if at all, by Central Asian actors – governments, civil society organisations, security forces, business enterprises – with friendly external support. And whether these actions will be initiated in time to avert violent conflict is currently unknowable. What is needed in order for timely action to be taken is wider knowledge and understanding about what needs to be done. That knowledge and understanding can be generated – and can only be generated – by a process of discussion and dialogue. The donor community is well placed to facilitate that process.

## Annex A. List of Interviews<sup>151</sup>

	<b>Name of interviewee</b>	<b>Position/Organisation</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>KAZAKHSTAN</b>			
1.	Serik Aidossov	Sociological Resource Centre	Shymkent
2.	Itziar Gomez Carrasco	Delegation of the EC in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan	Almaty
3.	Marcel Cloutier	Embassy of Canada	Almaty
4.	Daur Dosybiev	IWPR	Shymkent
5.	Olga Dosybieva	IWPR	Shymkent
6.	Peter Felch	Political and Mass Media Officer, OSCE	Almaty
7.	Mark Hannafin	Program Manager Democracy and Conflict Mitigation, USAID	Almaty
8.	David Hinchon	UK Embassy	Almaty
9.	Gordon Johnson	Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP	Almaty
10.	Ablet Kamalov	Senior Research Associate, Institute of Oriental Studies, Kazakh National Academy of Sciences	Almaty
11.	Simon Kenny	Regional Program Coordinator, World Bank	Almaty
12.	Raikhan Khobdabergenova	Executive Director, South Kazakhstan Association of Lawyers	Shymkent
13.	Alessandro Liamine	Political Affairs Officer, Delegation of the EC in Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan	Almaty
14.	Konstantin Syroezhkin	Chief of Informational-analytical Department, 'Kontinent' magazine	Almaty
15.	Eduard Poletaev	IWPR	Almaty
16.	Sholpan Primbetova	Community Mobilization Officer, ACDI/VOCA	Shymkent
17.	Sean Roberts	Democracy Specialist, USAID	Almaty
18.	Kommunar Tolipov	Institute of Oriental Studies, Kazakh National Academy of Sciences	Almaty
19.	Brian Toll	Counsellor, Delegation of the EC in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan	Almaty
20.	Dennis de Tray (over e-mail)	Regional Director, World Bank	Almaty
21.	Kairat Zhantikin	Programs Director, Soros Foundation Kazakhstan	Almaty
22.	Eugeniy Zhovtis	Director, Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law	Almaty
<b>KYRGYZSTAN</b>			
23.	Natalia Ablova	Director, Kyrgyz Bureau on Human Rights and Rule of Law	Bishkek
24.	David Akopyan	Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP	Bishkek
25.	Daniel Berg	Country Director, EBRD	Bishkek

<sup>151</sup> This list is not exclusive, because in some instances colleagues were present at interviews, or more interviews were held in the same agencies and not all names have been entered.

26.	Leonid Bondarets	International Institute for Strategic Studies	Bishkek
27.	Djapar Birimkulov	President, Foundation for Peace in Central Asia	Bishkek
28.	Clifford Brown	Country Representative, USAID	Bishkek
29.	Ruslan Budrin	Embassy of Russian Federation in Kyrgyz Republic	Bishkek
30.	Tim Epkenhans	Director, OSCE Academy	Bishkek
31.	Urs Herren	Country Director, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	Bishkek
32.	Chinara Jakypova	Country Director, IWPR	Bishkek
33.	Raya Kadyrova	President, Foundation for Tolerance International	Bishkek
34.	Emil Kalamatov	OSCE	Bishkek
35.	Mira Karybaeva	Konrad Adenauer Stiftung	Bishkek
36.	Jason Lane	Head of Office, DfID	Bishkek
37.	Oskar Lehner	International Project Management Advisor, UNDP	Bishkek
38.	David Lewis	Central Asia Project Director, ICG	Bishkek
39.	Chris Lovelace	Country Office Senior Manager, World Bank	Bishkek
40.	Jenish Mamatov	Project Coordinator, SDC	Bishkek
41.	Cholpon Mambetova	ADB	Bishkek
42.	Markus Müller	Ambassador, OSCE	Bishkek
43.	Nurlan Nabiev	UNDP	Batken
44.	Mia Rimby	UNDP	Bishkek
45.	Jerzy Skuratowicz	Resident Representative, UNDP	Bishkek
46.	Carina Skareby	Charge d’Affaires, Head of Section Kyrgyzstan, Delegation of the EC	Bishkek
47.	Medet Tiulegenov	Director, Soros Foundation Kyrgyzstan	Bishkek

## TAJIKISTAN

48.	Peter Argo	Country Representative, USAID	Dushanbe
49.	Igor Bosc	Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP	Dushanbe
50.	Bahrom Faizullaev	UNDP	Khujand
51.	Hakim Feerasta	Resident Representative, The Aga Khan Development Network	Dushanbe
52.	Uwe Federsel	Programme Delivery Manager, UNDP	Dushanbe
53.	Lidia Isamova	IWPR	Dushanbe
54.	Muatar Haidarova	NGO ‘Law and Society’	Dushanbe
55.	Zuhra Halimova	Executive Director, Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation	Dushanbe
56.	Michael Hall	Project Director, ICG	Dushanbe
57.	Faredun Hodizoda	Coordinator, Ambassadors of Goodwill Network	Dushanbe
58.	Henk Hulshof	Human Dimension Officer, OSCE	Dushanbe
59.	Suhrob Kaharov	Programme Manager, EC-UNDP Border Management Programme for Central Asia	Dushanbe
60.	Yousuf Kurbanov	National Project Officer, UNODC	Dushanbe
61.	Yusuf Kurbonhojaev	Executive Director, NGO ‘Ittifok’	Khujand
62.	Graeme Loten	Ambassador, UK Embassy	Dushanbe

63.	Vladimir Lezhen	Senior Counsellor, Embassy of the Russian Federation	Dushanbe
64.	Ahad Mahmoudov	Programme Manager Communities Programme, UNDP	Dushanbe
65.	Jan Malekzade	UNTOP	Dushanbe
66.	Muzaffar Muhammadi	Administrative Assistant, Ambassadors of Goodwill Network	Dushanbe
67.	Parviz Mullojanov	NGO 'Inter-Tajik Dialogue'	Dushanbe
68.	Gisela Nauk	UNDP	Dushanbe
69.	Maxim Peshkov	Ambassador, Embassy of the Russian Federation	Dushanbe
70.	Shuhrat Rajabov	Representative, DfID	Dushanbe
71.	Waldemar Rokoszewski	Political Affairs, UNTOP	Dushanbe
72.	Bernard Rouault	Political Officer, OSCE	Dushanbe
73.	Victor Schmidt	CivPol Advisor, UNTOP	Dushanbe
74.	Farrukh Tyuryaev	Project Officer, SDC	Khujand
75.	Lilia Zaharieva	Human Rights Officer, UNTOP	Dushanbe
76.	Daniel Züst	Country Director, SDC	Dushanbe

### UZBEKISTAN

77.	Lykke Andersen	Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP	Tashkent
78.	Kudrat Babajanov	IWPR	Tashkent
79.	Dieter von Blarer	Human Security Advisor, Swiss Embassy	Tashkent
80.	James Callahan	Regional Representative, UNODC	Tashkent
81.	Bakhtiyor Ergashev	Research Coordinator, Center for Economic Research	Tashkent
82.	Jeff Erlich	Regional Director, Eurasia Foundation	Tashkent
83.	Bahodur Eshenov	UNDP	Tashkent
84.	Alexander Gamirov	Director, Cultural and Educational Centre 'Uzbekistan XXI Century'	Tashkent
85.	Marie-Carin von Gumpfenberg	Political Officer, OSCE	Tashkent
86.	David Hunsicker	Religion, State and Society Advisor, USAID	Tashkent
87.	Arustan Joldasov	Director, Center for Social and Marketing Research 'Expert Fikri'	Tashkent
88.	Ildus Kamilov	Research Coordinator, Center for Economic Research	Tashkent
89.	Christoph Lang	Head of Regional Dialogue and Development Project, SDC	Tashkent
90.	Rano Mahkamova	Ambassadors of Goodwill Network	Ferghana
91.	Vladimir Paramonov	Research Coordinator, Center for Economic Research	Tashkent
92.	Marina Pikulina	Country Coordinator, Swiss Peace Foundation	Tashkent
93.	Rafik Sayfulin	Independent Analyst	Tashkent
94.	Kae Yanagisawa	Resident Representative, Japan International Cooperation Agency	Tashkent

**CHINA**

95.	Bat Batjargal	Department of Strategy and Public Policy, (Guanghua School of Management), Peking University	Beijing
96.	Gennadii Chufirin	Institute of World Economy and International Relations	Moscow
97.	Jennifer Grange	UK Embassy	Beijing
98.	Alain Guidetti	Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Switzerland	Beijing
99.	Ma Huiyun	Programme Manager, UNDP	Beijing
100.	Serik Naryssov	Deputy Secretary General, SCO	Beijing
101.	Maxim Tchernyshev	Senior Office Staff, SCO	Beijing
102.	Evgueny Tomikhin	Senior Counsellor, Embassy of the Russian Federation	Beijing

The Alert team conducted interviews with a number of local analysts and observers in Beijing and in Xinjiang, but did not consider it appropriate to publish the names of these individuals.

**AFGHANISTAN**

103.	Michael Alexander	Delegation of the EC to Afghanistan	Kabul
104.	Christoph Baldus	German Project for Support of the Police in Afghanistan	
105.	Wolfgang Dambier	German Project for Support of the Police in Afghanistan	Kabul
106.	Suleyman Gokce	NATO ISAF	Kabul
107.	Ruedi Hager	Country Director, SDC	Kabul
108.	Robert Kluyer	Soros Foundation	Kabul
109.	Jean MacKenzie	IWPR	Kabul
110.	Rosalind Marsden	Ambassador, UK Embassy	Kabul
111.	David Potts	Provincial Reconstruction Teams, ISAF	Kabul
112.	Ranjeet K. Singh	Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, US Embassy	Kabul
113.	Horacio Ureta	US Embassy	Kabul
114.	Tanja Viikki	UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan	Mazar-i-Sharif
115.	Doug Wankel	Office of Drug Control, US Embassy	Kabul
116.	Andrew Wilder	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit	Kabul

**USA**

117.	Lilia Burunciuc	World Bank	Washington DC
118.	Arshad Sayed	World Bank	Washington DC
119.	Johannes Linn	Brookings Institution	Washington DC
120.	Cory Welt	Center for Strategic and International Studies	Washington DC
121.	Frederick Starr	Central Asia Institute, The Johns Hopkins University	Washington DC
122.	Eugene Rumer	Senior Research Associate, RAND	Washington DC
123.	Olga Olikier	RAND	Washington DC
124.	Bruce Parrott	The Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies	Washington DC

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## Notes



