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Regional Cooperation as a Factor for Peace and Stability in Central Asia



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The seminar was focused on the evolution of regional cooperation since the independence of Central Asian states and analysis of internal and external factors that influence regional processes.

The event was organized as a part of series of strategic dialogues conducted by the United Nations Regional Centre with the expert community in Central Asia.

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Regional Cooperation as a Factor of Peace and Stability in Central Asia

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Kazakhstan is interested in a stable, economically sustainable and safe development of Central Asia. However, the current historical period is characterized by very serious challenges and threats to the region, both exogenous and endogenous.

Among exogenous factors, we can mention the substantial geopolitical transformation of the Eurasian continent following the Ukraine crisis, the ISAF withdrawal from Afghanistan this year, the gradual expansion of the area of the ISIS's destructive influence, and the use of sanctions in relations between the world's largest economies.

That concern is shared at the top level: in his address to the people of Kazakhstan (NurlyZhol), President Nazarbaev expressed the opinion, based on his vast international affairs experience, that “the next few years will be a time of global trials. The entire world architecture will be changing”.

Intraregional factors are also a matter of concern: it is no secret that interstate contradictions of a political and territorial nature remain in Central Asia, and intraregional trade and economic collaboration are still at a low level. A critical mass has been reached by problems like efficient use of water and energy resources, environmental protection, poverty, labor migration, corruption, etc. Increasing threats are posed by terrorist and religious and extremists groups, the spread of transnational crime, and the strengthened positions of the drug-trafficking mafia.

These challenges require immediate and, especially, well-coordinated response.

Aware of its responsibility for the region's stability and safety, Kazakhstan believes that the best way of stabilizing Central Asia and preventing or minimizing potential external and internal risks is to promote intraregional integration, which would reduce the conflict



potential, address social and economic problems, and untie the knot of water-energy and other contradictions. This policy vision is set forth in the Kazakhstan-2050 long-term strategy document. Along those lines, Kazakhstan's new 2014-2020 foreign-policy concept, adopted early this year, features Central Asia as one of the top strategic priorities of Kazakhstan's foreign policy.

We assume that Kazakhstan's stable development cannot take place separately, without an accompanying upturn of the neighboring states. Therefore, we maintain a regular political dialogue with our partners at all levels, seeking to expand economic and investment links, and pursue a policy of pooling efforts for joint countering of challenges and threats. Kazakhstan adheres to the principle of equal rights and accommodation of mutual interests, because each country of the region is of key importance for addressing various political, economic, or humanitarian issues. Kazakhstan respects the positions of each of them and intends to work in close contact with them.

Recently, there has been a clear trend of intensifying top-level contacts between our countries. In early November, President Atambaev of Kyrgyzstan paid a state visit to Astana. President Karimov of Uzbekistan is expected next week. President Nazarbaev plans to visit Turkmenistan in December to launch the railroad line from Kazakhstan to Turkmenistan to Iran to the Persian Gulf coast.

Kazakhstan's bilateral and multilateral cooperation with CentralAsian states will focus on the topical matters of regional security and intensifying political, economic, and humanitarian interaction founded on equality and good-neighborly links.

We do appreciate the consolidating initiatives made by the region's states. Kazakhstan fully supports the holding in Turkmenistan of an International Forum for Peace and Security in Central Asia. This will help to strengthen relations of trust among the region's states and to shape the CentralAsian countries' consolidated political will to deepen cooperation and to make joint efforts to address regional problems.



Kazakhstan's actions are dictated by our conviction that a regime of trust and dialogue should be built among all the parties, and advancing that goal is one of the central elements of Kazakhstan's foreign policy.

The Central Asian states are located at a juncture of Europe-Asia transport corridors and possess major mineral resources, a broad transport and communication network, as well as significant investment attractiveness and a great human potential.

In this context, we agree with World Economic Forum experts whose regional integration study entitled "Scenarios for the South Caucasus and Central Asia" calls for viewing the region's economic potential as a shared resource that can be used efficiently and effectively in a collective format only, meaning mutually rewarding cooperation among the region's states.

Kazakhstan, being the center of regional geoeconomic attraction, continues to make active efforts, in conjunction with other countries, to develop regional trade and economic and interregional transport infrastructure which will become the foundation of long-term interaction between Asia and Europe.

For our part, we plan to complete in 2015 the construction of the Kazakhstan segment of the Western Europe to Western China international transport corridor, which will be the shortest travel route from China to Europe, shorter than the Suez Canal route by a factor of 4.5, with the transit time 10 days shorter. We expect the cargo traffic volume between China, Central Asia, Russia, and Europe via the corridor to reach 33 million tons a year.

The construction of new rail routes will interconnect our region into a single whole – more than ever before. I have mentioned the planned commissioning of the Kazakhstan to the Persian Gulf rail line. Another rail route – from Uzbekistan to Turkmenistan to Iran to Oman to Qatar, for which agreement was first reached in 2011, – will also increase the region's transit potential significantly.



Moreover, further development of the transit and transport infrastructure is integrated into Kazakhstan's national economic development programs and is designated as a priority in President Nazarbaev's Nurdy Zholy Address. It would be appropriate to quote that address, which says, "The new lines that will be built by Kazakhstan's people will renovate our economy and society. They will tightly connect all the corners of our country with its center. Cargo flows will increase and become more rapid. Transit volumes via our country will increase".

We are certain that economic development will be a key factor for reviving Afghanistan as a peaceful and prosperous state and a good neighbor of Central Asia. Kazakhstan fully supports Afghanistan's integration into the expanding regional network of trade, energy, and transport links. We are confident that connection and access are crucial for realizing the huge potential of Afghanistan and the entire region. Kazakhstan has taken practical steps to support our neighbor's recovery. The government of Kazakhstan has allocated US\$ 2.38 million for the development of its social infrastructure and provided humanitarian food aid worth more than US\$ 17 million. We have allocated US\$ 50 million for educating one thousand Afghan students at Kazakhstan's universities.

The interest of both the Central Asian countries and external actors in a rapid restoration of Afghanistan's economy and its integration into the region's economic systems is illustrated by the fact that regional cooperation will be much more successful with external support for Central Asia's integration processes. We are witnessing a gradual convergence of the Silk Road project options, which, if successfully implemented, will transform Central Asia into an integral component of the North-South and East-West global economic links.

We can state with confidence that Kazakhstan is taking all possible steps to bring about real regional economic solidarity. In the very near future, Kazakhstan will start working to provide technical aid to Central Asian countries through a newly established KazAID agency.



I wish to emphasize the United Nations' essential role for Central Asia's development and to focus your attention on Kazakhstan's initiative to set up a UN regional hub in Almaty. We are certain that a UN regional hub in Almaty will complement the work of the UN Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Ashkhabad, with a special focus on humanitarian aid and development. The two regional units of the United Nations will make it possible to cover the wide spectrum of problems confronting this large region, including those faced by Afghanistan.

We seek to harmonize all the interests in the region and use our global partners' activities to set up a system of relations beneficial for all the parties involved, primarily for the region's countries. The long-term goal is transformation of the region into a single integrated component of international politics and economy.

To conclude, I will say it once again that there is no alternative to regional cooperation and integration. We are confident that the countries of our region will share not only historical memories, but also a common historic future.



Regional Cooperation as a Factor of Countering Growth of Trafficking in Persons and Irregular Migration in Central Asia

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Countering trafficking in persons, irregular migration and related illegal acts is a priority for government authorities and civil society organizations working to protect national security, society's interests, and citizens' rights, freedoms, and lawful interests.

Trafficking in persons is a human rights violation that exposes people to victimization at any stage or time segment, and each of them is accompanied by a violation of various human rights, and crimes against the victim. Human rights violations include denial of liberty, personal security, access to health/medical services, adequate sanitation, access to education or contact with families. Labor law violations related to exploitation under trafficking in persons include non-payment of salary, work safety and work time violations. Also, crimes against victims in the process of trafficking in persons include intimidation, theft of documents or belongings, unlawful imprisonment, physical violence under aggravating circumstances and/or sexual violence, forced prostitution, rape or even murder.

In recent years, trafficking in persons is increasingly viewed in connection with undocumented migration. In such case, preventing trafficking in persons requires preventing opportunities to leave or enter a country and, consequently, preventing opportunities to stay in a country illegally. But if trafficking in persons takes place within the borders of a country, such approach is useless. In that context, prevention of trafficking in persons transforms into combating illegal migration.

Identification of potential victims of trafficking in persons, usually referred to as “presumed victims of trafficking in persons” involves multiple organizations working to protect the rights of victims of



trafficking in persons and irregular migrants, which should cooperate to help with referral of victims of trafficking.

Cooperation among different actors is most effective when there is an exact delineation of their competencies and responsibilities. A comprehensive structure based on differing approaches, goals, and mandates can only be effective over the long term when this structure is clearly defined and accepted by all sides.

Transparency and clear delineation of responsibilities are the main principles of rendering professional assistance to victims of trafficking in persons. The victims should be kept informed about the objectives and competencies of the institutions they have to deal with. Also, the victims should be informed about the possible consequences of giving evidence in a criminal investigation. This transparent information policy should also apply when the victims stay at shelters, including information about other services available to them.

There are various methods used by regional government and non-government bodies to identify presumed victims of trafficking in persons.

Trafficked persons can be identified by government authorities and law enforcement bodies or NGOs and local social protection organizations, especially so if their personnel are properly trained and if there is a referral system in place. In order to build trust and establish contacts with presumed victims of trafficking in persons, the victim support system should include the following components:

- outreach work to find presumed victims;
- hotlines;
- identification of trafficked persons by law enforcement bodies.

Regional cooperation agreements help combine criminal prosecution with protection of trafficked persons' human rights. In practice, cooperation agreements are often concluded pursuant to a decree under which presumed victims are transferred from custody to the care of NGOs that provide support and protection or through signing a formal memorandum of understanding.



The experience of states that have cooperation agreements between government authorities and non-government organizations indicates that the existence of such agreements increases the number of traffickers' prosecutions. This is promoted by victims' greater willingness to cooperate and give evidence in court, resulting from the terms and conditions brought on by such agreements. The cooperation partner from the NGO sector should create an infrastructure for adequate treatment of presumed victim of trafficking in persons, to enable him/her to get early legal counseling and a safe shelter in an emergency.

Presumed victims of trafficking in persons should be informed about all the services available to them. Presumed victims should be able to make fully informed decisions to their best interests.

According to existing agreements, the main cooperation areas are: providing help to trafficked persons, exchanging information on prevention, termination, and investigation of acts of trafficking in persons, organizing and conducting joint prevention initiatives. The parties should consolidate efforts under the government's plan of preventing crimes related to trafficking in persons. The main focus areas should be regulation of migration in Central Asia, protection of labor migrants' rights, combatting trafficking in persons, providing support to crisis centers for trafficked persons' rehabilitation.

For example, a memorandum could be signed as a major step towards strengthening partnership in the sphere of countering trafficking in persons and enhancing the supervisory authorities' performance in this area.

In the Republic of Kazakhstan, 348 crimes related to trafficking in persons were detected in 2013. Help was provided by the International Organization for Migration to 64 citizens of Kazakhstan and 36 citizens of Uzbekistan, Russia, Moldova, and the Philippines who were trafficked in Kazakhstan in 2013.

For a variety of reasons, those who have become victims of trafficking in persons often do not want to reveal their status or experiences to state authorities. Victims may feel deep distrust to official bodies, stemming from experiences in their countries of origin.



Frequently, victims fear them and their family members being subjected to reprisal by traffickers in their countries of origin. Such threats of violence once they return home can enhance victims' fear of deportation because of their illegal status. Because trafficked are often initially reluctant to identify themselves as such, the term “presumed victims of trafficking in persons” is generally used to describe persons who are likely to be victims of trafficking and who should therefore qualify for anti-trafficking programs and special services.

Trafficked persons are only rarely able to come through the situation by their own. Usually, if they come to the attention of authorities at all, it is as a result of checks by the police, border officials, or other state authorities. Official bodies likely to come into contact with victims of trafficking in persons should be aware of their special circumstances, exercise sensitivity towards them and afford them access to existing protection mechanisms. It is important for official bodies to remember that trafficked persons are not only victims of a crime who are entitled to compassion and human rights but also that winning their goodwill and cooperation can help combat organized crime.

Part of the overall goal of a referral mechanism is to bring about a change in the methods of combatting trafficking in persons, so that this phenomenon be considered not only as a problem of criminality but as a serious violation of the human rights of victims. Adopting this approach will help ensure that all presumed victims – not just those who agree to serve as witnesses – receive protection and support.

Access to support and protection services should be facilitated by state authorities and non-governmental organizations. When a person is freed in circumstances suggesting that he or she may have been trafficked, there should be an initial assumption that the person is a presumed victim of trafficking in persons so he or she could be properly processed and referred to get appropriate support and protection services. This is so because, without professional support and protection services, the perfect identification of a trafficked person and the recounting of the events of the crime are far less likely to occur.



Combatting trafficking in persons requires a multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral approach to be implemented by all appropriate government and civil society actors.

Measures to combat trafficking in persons require multidimensional strategies, including that of internal security, economic and social policy, employment policy, migration, human rights, and crime prevention. In tackling the problem, different government and non-government organizations can come to varying conclusions based on different reasoning.

All cooperation partners should undertake to treat personal data of the presumed victims of trafficking in a responsible manner and as confidential. In order to facilitate the efficient communication of information, both cooperation partners should designate “contact persons” who shall be available at pre-arranged times.

Cooperation partners should exchange information concerning the safety of the presumed victims of trafficking and NGO workers.

The duration of the social support provided to the presumed victims of trafficking in persons depends on their status in the destination country, internal regulations, and the material resources available to the institutions.

Specialized services to trafficked persons are in most cases provided by non-government counseling centers. The latter may be, but not always are, similar to the NGOs providing accommodation; they also closely cooperate with government agencies.

Counseling centers should provide trafficked persons with specialized services in the following fields:

- ✓ Health;
- ✓ Counseling programs (individual and group counseling);
- ✓ Psychological support;
- ✓ Legal support;
- ✓ Education and/or training;
- ✓ Employment assistance;
- ✓ Support in dealing with the authorities.



General Principles of Work with Victims of Trafficking:

✓ Confidentiality. Anonymity and confidentiality are the most important conditions in work with victims of trafficking. The stories women tell about their lives, especially those involved in forced prostitution, are associated with intense feeling of shame. They bear, and with good reason, that they will be rejected by their communities. The fear of stigmatization and marginalization is very strong. On the other hand, the women with experience of being trafficked have information about the criminal world, and this makes them very vulnerable. Therefore, the clients should be certain that everything they say will remain absolutely confidential.

✓ Safety. Many of the women and girls who have managed to escape from traffickers have risked their lives in the process. They have experienced extreme situations and have been subjected to serious physical and emotional violence. Every day they have had to struggle for survival. All this destroys those feelings of safety and security that human beings need to function normally. Building up of these emotions is the first step in the process of rehabilitation.

As the target group is highly heterogeneous, a broad set of services should be made available to trafficked persons. Ideally, the coordinating NGO should maintain a current database of available social and other specialized services that non-government and government sectors provided to trafficked persons, not only in their country of residence, but also in the countries of departure and destination. All the relevant organizations and their staff members should abide by a code of conduct in dealing with trafficked persons.

The repatriation of a trafficked person to his/her country of origin occurs in most cases after the expiry of the “reflection time” or after the termination of court proceedings. Only in very rare cases is long-term residency granted. Therefore careful attention should be paid to policies and procedures for repatriation and social integration to ensure that they are in line with best practices for victim protection.



Repatriation of trafficked persons involves a complex set of legal issues. The obligations of countries of origin and countries of destination are not always clear and are not sufficiently broad to guarantee the safety and proper treatment of victims.

The problem of trafficked persons' security on their repatriation is often considered only superficially, if at all. This means that, on their return to their country of origin trafficked persons are often exposed to reprisals and intimidation by well organized groups involved in trafficking in persons. Therefore, repatriation often leads to re-trafficking of the victims. In addition to their security being endangered after their return to their country of origin, victims may find themselves back in the same place and in the same desperate economic and social situation which enabled the traffickers to recruit them for the first time.

A global study of women made victims of sexual exploitation revealed the following problems they face after their repatriation:

- No earning or employment opportunities (mentioned by 48 per cent of respondents);
- Psychological problems (46 per cent);
- Health problems (39 per cent);
- Debts that cannot be paid off (35 per cent);
- Stigmatization or rejection by society (33 per cent);
- Other difficulties, including rejection by their family, reprisals by the criminal groups against the victims or their family or relatives, no medical care, return to prostitution because of no other opportunities, re-recruitment by traffickers, and no housing (28 per cent).

Prior to repatriation, new documents (instead of the old ones) should be issued to the trafficked persons enabling them to enter and leave their country of origin. Care should be taken that the new documents do not lead to the conclusion that the person was a victim of trafficking.

Where repatriation is not a result of expulsion, the question arises as to who will pay for the travel costs. This can be regulated by bilateral treaties. Other options include repatriation programs run by international organizations or NGOs.



In order to ensure the security of the victim and members of his or her family, it is good practice to assess the person's likely security situation in the country of origin.

The repatriation and social integration of a trafficked person should be coordinated in advance between the country of destination and the country of origin and may also involve transit countries.

The social integration of trafficked persons in their country of origin can be a lengthy process. NGOs can offer long-term support in a variety of areas. Since victims of trafficking have usually been recruited in desperate circumstances (economic, political, social), upon their return they can once again find themselves in an untenable situation. The expression "re-integration" may not be applicable, since long-term rehabilitation and stabilization often requires the creation of new and more secure living conditions. Countries of origin should take an active role in devising and implementing ways to assist the social integration of trafficked persons returning home.

Thus, the mechanism for regional cooperation in helping trafficked persons should ensure that government authorities perform their obligations to protect and promote trafficked persons' human rights, coordinating their efforts in a strategic partnership with civil society and other actors working to protect and assist trafficked persons.

The main objectives of such cooperation are protection of trafficked persons' human rights and their effective referral to relevant agencies for the provision of necessary services.



The Experience of Existing Regional Organizations for Establishing Mutually Rewarding Cooperation in Central Asia

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It is now quite obvious that the global system of international relations has entered a new phase of evolution, due to the fact that the fundamental problems that caused the global financial and economic crisis of 2007-2009 have not been resolved.

Fresh evidence of this in the East is provided by the decision made on 21 November 2014 by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan (the number-three economy of the world) to dissolve the House of Representatives and to hold new elections on December 14. The reason is that Japan's Q3 2014 GDP was down 0.4 per cent from quarter 2 of this year. Japan's GDP has been shrinking for two consecutive quarters, which means the start of recession.

From July to September 2014, Japan's GDP decreased even more, year-on-year, by 1.6 per cent. The yen to the US dollar rate has hit a 7-year low. Therefore, as the Prime Minister put it, he needs the people's support for "a radical change of course".

In the West, this is confirmed by Europe's unemployment averaging 11.5 per cent, with much higher rates in southern Europe (25 per cent in Spain).

Experts do not exclude a new wave of a global economic crisis. Attempts are made to avoid a global crisis or at least to minimize its potential impacts, for example, by transforming the existing structure of geopolitical and geoeconomic relations and establishing global organizations – but now without Western countries' participation (the BRICS).

However, the transition from a monopolar system to a multipolar one proved to be more dramatic than expected, even tragic. We are



witnessing a new chapter in human history, its consequences unpredictable. The confrontation in the Islamic world has been moved to the Slav world and, moreover, to the Orthodox world. Who could predict such turn of events only a year ago, even six months ago? So, Kyrgyz expert M. Imanaliev was right when he said at yesterday's session that the world had been swept over by an atmosphere of alienation and, to a certain extent, immorality.

We are certainly concerned, first of all, over the situation in Central Asia and the region turning into an area of conventional and nonconventional threats moving in from the outside, – international terrorism, religions extremism, drug trafficking, organized crime, and illegal migration.

The situation is deteriorating, primarily because the political and economic reforms remain uncompleted, and the social and economic situation in the region's countries remains difficult.

The situation in Central Asia is negatively impacted by its proximity to areas of political instability, and local conflicts in Afghanistan, Pakistan, the regions of Xinjiang and Tibet in China. A powerful generator of terrorism and extremism are the complex social and economic and political processes in the Middle East, which have triggered deadly tribal, interconfessional, and civil conflicts in a number of countries of that region.

Challenges and threats moving to Central Asian countries from the outside can be effectively countered, in our opinion, in a regional format.

On the regional level, it is possible to pool the efforts of Central Asian countries to address complicated problems in the economic, social, political, military, energy, water, environmental, and other fields.

But interaction among the region's countries can only be based on an understanding of the region's common problems – in trade and economic relations, as well as security. So far, joint projects do not work, despite all the mutual statements about geographical, transit, resource, and human potential and common historical, cultural, language, and ethno-confessional background. The stumbling block impeding



Central Asia's integration is the official position of Tashkent, which rejects potential options for cooperation with the region's states, first of all, with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

There are territorial and border issues between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, and between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan that remain unsettled.

There are 58 disputed areas on which Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan have failed to agree. The total length of the border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is 970 km; only 54 per cent of that length (512 km) is duly registered, and there are 71 areas in dispute. This leads to conflicts: Since the start of this year, there have been 32 on the border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and 5, on the border between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, with 10 conflicts involving the use of firearms. There have been three exchanges of fire between the border guards of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Any moment, border clashes in Central Asia may grow into interstate conflicts with unpredictable consequences. This is especially so because militants from international terrorist groups that have an illegal presence in the region will be more than willing to take part in such conflicts.

There are economic contradictions between Central Asian countries. One of the main reasons impeding economic integration in Central Asia is insufficient real economy collaboration among the region's states. This is due to the countries' insufficient investment opportunities and unwillingness to look for mutually beneficial solutions to problems involving energy resources, water use, cargo transportation, transportation infrastructure development, and agriculture.

Mr. M. Jenča said yesterday that trade among Central Asian states totaled less than 10 per cent of the total volume. According to my information, intraregional trade accounts for 5 per cent of the Central Asian countries' total foreign trade. Mr. Jenča is surprised by the multiple barriers impeding intraregional trade. During the Fourth Central Asian



Trade Forum (held in Almaty on 29-30 October 2014), it was reported that a box of juice from Uzbekistan is taxed at 15 per cent in Kazakhstan, while a similar box of juice from Kazakhstan is taxed at 100 per cent or more in Uzbekistan. Kh. Kholiknazar of Tajikistan said yesterday that Kazakhstan accounted for 69.1 per cent of Tajikistan's trade, while neighboring Uzbekistan, for a mere 1.1 per cent of its trade.

With such figures, how would you promote intraregional trade? After all, it is a well-known fact that countries that trade with each other are characterized by a high level of stability.

The environmental situation is deteriorating. At an international seminar organized by UN agencies (in Dushanbe on 11-12 November 2014), it was noted that the region's glaciers were rapidly melting: the water reserves in Central Asian glaciers had shrunk by a quarter, and the melting continued. According to F. Klimchuk, representative of the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, Central Asian glaciers may vanish entirely by the end of the 21st century. The glacier melting will result in an acute shortage of water in the region, while the population will continue to increase there.

Another major problem for the region is drug trafficking. According to Kazakhstan's Ministry of Internal Affairs, more than 2,765 drug-related crimes were detected in Kazakhstan's territory in the first 9 months of 2014, including 1,613 drug pushing offenses. 23 tons of drugs were seized, including 217 kg of heroin. 109 attempts to smuggle drugs were stopped, and the activity 12 organized criminal drug trafficking groups was suppressed. 54 foreign nationals were arrested for drug-related crimes.

For comparison: according to V. Ivanov, Director of Russia's Federal Drug Control Service, drug addicts spend RUR 4.5 billion a day on drugs. On a yearly basis, that makes RUR 1.5 trillion, – that exceeds the entire budget of the RF Ministry of Defense by 50 per cent.

Afghanistan continues to be the main producer of raw opium and the main supplier of heroin to the world market, accounting for more than 90 per cent of the heroin used in the world. In 2013, Afghanistan had a



record harvest of opium poppy; the total area under opium poppy was 209,000 hectares (as compared with 193,000 hectares in 2007). In 2013, Afghanistan produced 5,500 tons of opium (80 per cent of the global opium production).

According to US experts, the United States has spent US\$ 7 billion on drug control in Afghanistan. But all the US services together manage to intercept and seize pure heroin worth no more than US\$ 12.7 million. There are more than 410,000 persons working in Afghanistan's opium industry.

We should not disregard the fact that there is an international network for funding, manufacturing, transporting, and marketing illicit drugs, and that the network involves a significant portion of Central Asian states' elite. Another aggravating factor is that Afghanistan's border with neighboring states is not a major barrier to drug trafficking.

If the Taliban regains power in Afghanistan, a new round of civil war will be inevitable. Though we exclude the likelihood of the Taliban's aggression into Central Asia, it is quite possible that ethnic terrorist organizations in northern Afghanistan which have close contacts with underground terrorist groups in Central Asian states (especially in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan), will become more active. According to security agencies, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) has about 5,000 militants. So it is not unlikely that attempts will be made to set up criminal organizations similar to ISIS in Central Asia. Concern over that has been expressed by Mr. S.V. Lavrov, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, who believes that there is an uncontrolled "no man's area" on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, where militants, including those of IMU, come for training, recreation, reorganization and then leave in various directions, going south, or to Russia, to the Caucasus, via Central Asia.

In view of the partial withdrawal of US and NATO forces from Afghanistan, practical regional cooperation is required to build a safety barrier and an drug control belt in Afghanistan's border with Tajikistan (1400 km long), with Turkmenistan (744 km long), and with Uzbekistan.



In connection with this, I would like to draw your attention to the following. Central Asian states' trade statistics indicate that their leading trading partners are the European Union, Russia, and China. So those countries plus, of course, the United States, are the top foreign policy priorities for the region's countries.

But, in our opinion, that set of priorities should also include intraregional cooperation. It is probably too early to speak about regional integration, which causes concern in some members of the political elites, but it really is time to promote regional cooperation. It is clear that, first, the world has no shortage of other global and regional problems; second, no one will address these problems for us; third, it will be more effective to solve regional problems jointly, rather than on a bilateral basis; and, fourth, we should bear in mind that a change of governing elites in the region's countries is not so far ahead, and there will be a certain degree of unpredictability in the first steps of new elites in power. Interaction among the region's countries may mitigate the transition.

Therefore, Central Asia is certainly interested in studying the experience of political, economic, cultural and humanitarian cooperation of foreign states within existing regional organizations – the Vyšehrad Group (Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic), the Baltic Cooperation (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia), the Nordic Baltic Eight (Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia), and the Barents Cooperation Council (Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, and Russia).

Speaking at a workshop on International Experience of Successful Regional Cooperation (held in Almaty on 14 March 2014), the Hungarian Ambassador to Kazakhstan Imre Laszlocki said that cooperation, regular exchanges and meetings at the regional level play a significant and sometimes a crucial role in solving problems that are common to regions' countries. I. Laszlocki pointed out that the Vyšehrad Group was formed, among other things, in order to overcome historical enmity among the region's countries and based on the understanding that it was easier to handle tasks by joint efforts. In order not to burden regional



cooperation with red tape, it was decided not to set up dedicated organizational structures, but just to hold annual meetings of the heads of state, the heads of government, and experts.

According to J. Kluczkowski, Polish Ambassador to Kazakhstan, successful regional cooperation should be founded on the principles followed by Poland: inalterability of state borders; neighboring states should guarantee territorial integrity to each other, despite historical grudges (that is the way to avoid a replication of the Balkan, Yugoslav scenario in Central and Eastern Europe); regional cooperation as a form of policy coordination for joint accession to the European Union. At the same time, J. Kluczkowski said, for Russia, a major actor with which Poland has a common border in the Kaliningrad Region area, Poland initiated a minor cross-border movement area (a visa-free zone for Kaliningrad Region residents; promotion of trade, tourism, and cultural cooperation). So, outside big-league politics and various "major" geopolitical disputes, an "oasis" of practical cooperation between Poland and Russia was established in a region of Europe, which could promote an easing of relations in all the fields.

Baltic and Nordic countries have an NB8 regional cooperation format, through which they are jointly represented at the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and cooperate in the following key areas – finances, economy, energy and transport, defense, environment, research, education, and humanitarian cooperation. The joint Baltic/Nordic Power Market has enabled implementation of a Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan. Regional cooperation does not exclude bilateral projects. For example, Lithuania and Sweden are working on an East-West Transportation Corridor project, to lay ground transport routes to connect Asian and European markets.

The Barents Regional Council, established in 1993, is of practical interest to Central Asia as a regional cooperation example. As described by Norwegian diplomat V.V. Jensen, by building relations of trust, the region's countries moved from the Cold War to mutually beneficial cooperation. Thus the "Barents" identity emerged, in the region's countries' interest in cooperation for achieving common goals in various



fields: economy, trade, infrastructure, environment, culture, indigenous peoples, energy, tourism, etc. Despite under population and severe climate, V. Jensen said, the Barents Region is attracting increasing international attention, first of all, for the following reasons: a) promising prospects for commercial shipping (from Rotterdam to East Asia) due to the opening of the Arctic Sea Route; b) rich natural resources (minerals, energy, and fish); and c) the climate change.

The cooperation's results are in evidence, V. Jensen said. Twenty years ago, when the Barents Cooperation was founded, the Barents Region was a problem outlying area, poor, militarized, and underdeveloped, but today the situation is radically different, and the region in general is one of Europe's prosperous areas, with a very optimistic outlook.

The experience of the Wise Men group, established in 2010 and headed by the former Prime Minister of Latvia, is of practical interest for organizing regional experts cooperation in Central Asia. The Group was set up to study possible ways of strengthening NB cooperation and to develop recommendations for the region's governments.

In view of existing regional organizations' positive experience, the following conclusions can be formulated for use in Central Asia.

1. Confrontation areas can be converted to cooperation areas.
2. The region's states must mutually guarantee inalterability of the state borders and territorial integrity. The question of a potential revision of state borders must be closed in a final and conclusive manner. This will guarantee the establishment of trust-based, close, and partner relations among the region's states and provide a basis for successful regional policies.
3. Regional cooperation should focus on uniting and harmonizing factors, despite historical grudges of the past.
4. Some foreign policy matters can be delegated to the regional level.
5. It is necessary to work on specific projects of practical interest not only to the region's countries, but also to the world community (water and energy, transportation and communications, farming



- and food production, etc.), because regional projects are unlikely to be successful at the initial phase without external financing.
6. Flexible working teams should be established to manage regional projects, with specific tasks and objectives adapted to existing conditions.
 7. Regional cooperation has practical importance as a form of coordinating the region's countries' policies to advance common interests in relations with third-party countries and at international organizations.
 8. Regional cooperation does not exclude bilateral intraregional projects.
 9. The principles of regional cooperation do not rule out establishment of "oases" of bilateral cooperation with neighboring major states for expanding trade, economic, cultural, and humanitarian cooperation.
 10. In order to establish an atmosphere of trust, dialogue, and partnership, it is advisable to set up regional pools and networks (of politicians, business persons, experts, and journalists) to promote regional cooperation.



Tajikistan's Participation in the System of Central Asia's Regional Cooperation

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Development of mutually beneficial regional cooperation and deepening of integration processes in the region are the key priorities of Tajikistan's foreign policy.

- This position is based on the principle of good-neighborly relations and Tajikistan's peaceful foreign policy and is consistent with the country's real national interests.

- "The leadership of Tajikistan considers active regional cooperation as a major tool for addressing economic, social, and ecological problems as well as security issues in Central Asia, and that approach has been repeatedly demonstrated in our policy practices over the past 20 years. Acting along the lines of constructive cooperation and mutual trust, we will be able to counter existing global challenges and threats in our region. We are certain that constructive regional integration will benefit the states and peoples of Central Asia as a whole and each Central Asian country in particular" (President Emomali Rakhmon of Tajikistan. Policy Speech at the inauguration of a new building of the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Tajikistan, 15 March 2013).

At all times, Tajikistan has knowingly supported the idea of cooperation development and regional integration projects.

- Tajikistan welcomed the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS, 1991), actively supported the creation of the Central Asian Economic Community (CAEC, 1998) and later the establishment of a Central Asian Union (CAU).

- It actively participates in the major regional organizations – EurAsEC, OCAS, and SCO.

- Even after dissolution of several regional structures, Tajikistan actively supported President Nazarbayev's proposal to set up a new,



strictly regional organization – a Union of Central Asian States (UCAS, 2006).

- Tajikistan's leadership has repeatedly spoke in favor of establishing a special organization in Central Asia to strengthen and promote regional integration (one example is the 2008 Presidential address to the parliament of Tajikistan).

Tajikistan's steps to promote regional integration.

- The need for a strictly regional organization. There are a number of internal problems in the region that can only be resolved by the Central Asian states themselves (efficient management of water and energy resources and use of water facilities, coordination of transport and communication infrastructure management, joint efforts to resolve border issues, etc.)

- On 13 May 2008, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan agreed to set up a Coordination Council and a Council of Foreign Ministers of the UCAS.

- Similar agreements were signed between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

- But that structure has failed to become a fully functional regional organization and has never been realized in practice (one reason was that Uzbekistan refused to join the UCAS).

- Tajikistan continues to participate in various regional and transregional international organizations (CIS, SCO, OSCE, EurAsEC, OIC, ECO, CSTO, IFAS).

- Also, Tajikistan has focused on developing bilateral relations with Central Asian states; in the absence of a regional consensus and mutual understanding, bilateral relations remain the optimal format for developing interstate relations in Central Asia.

Tajikistan's trade with Central Asian countries is developing:

- It totals more than \$1.1 billion

- Kazakhstan accounts for 69.1% of Tajikistan's total trade with Central Asian countries; Kyrgyzstan, for 18.1%, Turkmenistan, for 11.6%, and Uzbekistan, for 1.2%



- Tajikistan's exports to Central Asian countries increased nearly 6-fold in 2010-2013

- Tajikistan's exports to Central Asian countries include primary aluminum, cotton fiber and cotton products, mining industry intermediate product concentrates, energy (in summer), mineral nitrogen fertilizers (carbamide), construction materials (marble and granite slabs, architectural wares, quarry stone), power transformers, farming products (tobacco, dried vegetables, root vegetables), wine materials, fruit juices, fresh fruit and vegetables, industrial products, etc.

Tajikistan has the potential for intensifying regional integration processes:

- Tajikistan is rich in hydropower resources, and their sustainable management in the interests of the region can help address the problem of providing affordable and environmentally safe power for the entire region and neighboring areas, such as Afghanistan and South Asia (Tajikistan owns about 60% of Central Asia's hydropower resources and is using only 5%).

- Transport and transit potential of Tajikistan can play a special role in the region's economic development. With the construction of a modern road transport infrastructure, highways and tunnels, Tajikistan may become a hub for the development of trade and economic cooperation between Central Asia and South Asia, Central Asia and China, and provide an access to international ports (in Pakistan and/or Iran) through its territory.

- Tajikistan could also contribute to regional economic development by tapping its rich mineral resources (gold, silver, uranium, coal, lead, mercury, marble, etc.). According to expert estimates, more than 4,000 mineral deposits have been discovered in Tajikistan, including 4,000 gold mines, with more than 600 tons of gold). Silver reserves are estimated at more than 100,000 tons, high-quality coal reserves, at more than 5 billion tons.

Tajikistan's role in maintaining regional security.



- The longest Afghanistan border is with Tajikistan, so it is at the forefront of countering threats to all the countries of the region, such as extremism, terrorism, drug trafficking, etc.

- Tajikistan's intensive efforts and significant experience in countering those threats is now a major factor of maintaining stability and security in Central Asia.

- Tajikistan's further economic development will certainly depend on deeper regional integration. At the same time, without Tajikistan's active participation, Central Asia's regional cooperation and integration cannot be implemented to the full extent.

Evaluation of Central Asia's regional cooperation prospects and strategic vision.

- Enhancing of regional cooperation and deepening of regional integration is a prerequisite for the development of the region as a whole and each CA country in particular, and a guarantee of the CA countries' national interests – political, economic, cultural, and security-related.

- In the short to medium term, however, the situation is unlikely to improve in favor of regional cooperation and integration. More likely, disintegration processes may continue or even intensify. If that occurs, the term “Central Asia” may lose some of its current meanings (as a community of countries with common or similar historical, political, economic, cultural, and mental parameters) and increasingly become a purely geographic term.

- One of the main obstacles impeding regional cooperation and integration in Central Asia is that the countries of the region give a limited definition to a notion “national interests”. Under the persisting influence of the period when the Central Asian countries acquired and strengthened their independence, some of them cling to a very self-centered and sometimes egoistic understanding of their national interests, which is often inconsistent with the national interests of the region's other countries. Such understanding of national interests will lead over time to mutual alienation and even to each country's self-isolation and weakening.

Conditions for Central Asia's regional cooperation development.



- Revise the methodology for defining national interests and, above all, define national interests in the context of common regional interests. When the CA countries realize that national and regional interests are inseparable and interlinked, they will be able to achieve substantial success in enhancing cooperation and integration but also in upholding their national interests.

- The CA countries should refrain from overpoliticizing the matter of integration and focus on economic and security cooperation. Economy and security (with due regard for the Afghan factor) are the fields where real advancement towards cooperation can be achieved.
- The CA countries should implement deep economic reforms, with economic mentality prevailing over ideological mentality, attracting significant external investment, implementing transregional infrastructure projects, deepening national economies' mutual links with the global economy, etc.

- The most realistic path for the Central Asian countries to come closer together is to move from economic to political integration.

Integration's uncertain prospects.

- Negative implications of the prevailing disintegration ideas and trends include the risk of perpetuation and institutionalization of those trends. This will make disintegration processes long-term and sustained.

- But, despite all the objective and subjective factors affecting integration in the short to medium term, in the longer run the Central Asian states will recognize the vital importance of all-round cooperation for social and economic development and full-scale realization of their national interests.

- New generation of Central Asian political and national elites will be guided by more pragmatic and realistic considerations and will make historical choices in favor of integration.

- This will be promoted not only by the need to realize the region's vital interests but also by the historical laws of development of the modern world, with integration seen as the only right way of economic and human progress.



Resolving Regional Problems Through Interaction of Central Asian Countries

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Present-day Turkmenistan is a neutral, independent, and dynamically developing Central Asian state. Under the leadership of President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, Turkmenistan is making intensive efforts to conduct comprehensive reforms and transformations to provide for sustainable development for many years to come. Turkmenistan is implementing large-scale investment projects of national and even international importance. Those include the construction of the Avaza National Tourist Area, the construction of a North-South transnational rail line, the construction of transnational gas pipelines, and some other projects. All that is intended to lay a solid foundation for sustainable and long-term development of Turkmenistan and to strengthen its positions when integrating its economy into the global economic system.

Turkmenistan's social and economic policy pursues multiple objectives, with a strong social emphasis, which is consistent with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Considering Turkmenistan's strategy aimed at innovative development, creation of knowledge-intensive industries, use of international best practices, and scaling up the production of products and services that meet international standards, Turkmenistan's relations with Central Asian countries are seen as an opportunity to enhance collaboration in a number of important areas, including trade and economy, fuel and energy, transport and communications, construction, agriculture, manufacturing industries, tourist industry, etc.



Central Asia is a region with which Turkmenistan's trade has been growing at high rates. In 2008-2013, Turkmenistan's trade with Central Asian countries increased by more than 50 per cent, with exports growing by 70 per cent, and imports, by 50 per cent. However, Central Asia's part in Turkmenistan's total trade has been consistently small: over the past six years, it ranged from 2.2 per cent in 2013 to 3 per cent in 2010.

In this connection, I should emphasize the significant opportunities for increasing trade among our countries. Turkmenistan's major trading partners in Central Asia are Kazakhstan (accounting for 43.5 per cent of Turkmenistan's trade with Central Asia in 2013) and Uzbekistan (42.0 per cent).

Turkmenistan attaches special importance to the revival of Afghanistan and consolidation of a lasting peace in that country. Turkmenistan is helping Afghanistan to restore its economy and to build social and humanitarian facilities. Turkmenistan's trade with Afghanistan totaled US\$997.8 million in 2013, up nearly five-fold from 2008. Much of that trade consists of exports from Turkmenistan. It should be noted that Turkmenistan delivers power and petroleum products to Afghanistan at preferential prices. Turkmenistan is willing to consider increasing power exports and expanding its power infrastructure into Afghan territory for connecting to Afghanistan's facilities. We are considering building a power line from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan in order to increase export of power to that country's northern provinces.

Turkmenistan is cooperating with Afghanistan in transport infrastructure development. The construction has been started of a rail line from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan, potentially to be extended to Tajikistan and Pakistan.

As the country hosting the headquarters of the United Nations Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, Turkmenistan is about to provide full support to the Center's work, which has been demonstrably effective. No wonder that during its session in August 2012, the United Nations Security Council emphasized the



importance of preventive diplomacy and early settlement of disputes and expressed support for the efforts of the Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia. In view of the current and future development of political, economic, environmental, and humanitarian processes in Central Asia and neighboring areas, the Center's mandate appears especially topical and relevant.

The increasing importance of a broad political dialogue is corroborated by the fact that in recent years Turkmenistan has significantly intensified its collaboration with major international organizations in particular, with includes the United Nations, the OSCE, the European Union, the Non-Aligned Movement, and other organizations.

In conclusion, I wish to point out that Turkmenistan's development strategy is focused on mutually beneficial partnership with all states, including the Central Asian countries. For this reason, participation in such seminars is fully consistent with the interests of our country's development and provides a good basis for designing mechanisms for further regional cooperation and finding mutually acceptable ways of implementing joint projects.



Major Problems Impeding Regional Cooperation in Central Asia and Recommendations to Overcome Them

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As a rule, problems impeding regional cooperation in Central Asia (CA) and, consequently, weakness or absence of political, economic, and social paradigm for such cooperation stem from:

- the weakness or absence of Central Asian states' elites/leaders' political will;
- the non-democratic and/or non-liberal nature of existing political and economic regimes;
- arguments pertaining to political psychology (difficult interpersonal relationships between CA countries' leaders, such as personal enmity, rivalry, etc.; the desire for absolute power, the elites' unwillingness to share/lack of readiness even a portion of their powers; the overall prevalence of personal and/or group (clan, family) interests over national, public, state interests, not to mention region-wide interests.

In general, such explanations seem superficial. On the one hand, they oversimplify perception of regional processes. On the other hand, most of them put subjective factors way above objectives ones. What is needed is a more systemic approach and, consequently, a multi-disciplinary one, to enable a focus on both analysis and prediction of all the key factors underlying the existing problems.

In our opinion, these problems are due, primarily, to the CA countries' lack of readiness for regional cooperation (real, deep-going, and large-scale forms of multilateral cooperation and integration). That lack of readiness stems from a complex combination of factors – the situations in which specific states of the region find themselves, their foreign and domestic policies, development models and vectors, interests and needs, capabilities and resources. First of all, there is no understanding

of the economic, political, and social gains/advantages to be generated by cooperation, not to mention integration. Even if there are certain elements of such understanding, at the theoretical level at least, in practice there are no real mechanisms to shape CA countries' common interests and to “convince” them on a regular basis of the need for regional cooperation.

First, in the political field, in the absence of any uniting idea/project, the CA countries have simply no choice but to develop narrow-scope national projects and corresponding mechanisms (for example, advancing ideas of national independence and national identity and being the “chosen” nation), but those ideas only serve to enhance national egoism. It seems that the CA countries' largely forced focus on strictly national interests pre-ordains their growing lack of readiness to trade those interests for common interests – those of regional cooperation. All that leads to the increasingly strong rejection by the region's states of the very idea of establishing supranational structures in any form and for any reason.

Second, in the economic field, the CA countries have to look mainly towards extraregional external economic relations, which are immeasurably more important for them than intraregional relations. We believe that it is the CA countries' objective and very strong dependence (for trade, finances, and technology) on extraregional relations, coupled with the absence of similar dependence on intraregional relations, that explains why the CA countries have very limited opportunities to develop regional cooperation (even if they were willing to).

Third, in the social field, because there is no political or economic foundation for regional cooperation, no uniting international social project is taking shape. In our opinion, that is the reason why the CA countries only support ideas and projects related to strictly national political projects and strictly national economic priorities, which involves promotion of national self-awareness and national pride in the people and in some cases – the concept of an “external enemy” (“one guilty of all the problems”).



As a result, the main problem, one that is solvable in this difficult situation, is, first of all, the absence of a stable mechanism of systemic analytical support for the regional cooperation process. Throughout the post-Soviet period, no meaningful efforts were made to organize and conduct even one-off substantial studies on the regional cooperation, much less to create mechanisms to promote cooperation and integration in CA; no CA state has ever set such objectives.

It is largely for that reason that the governing elites and even expert communities of the region's countries never had, do not have, and are unlikely to have an understanding of what specific algorithms should be followed to launch the regional cooperation process. The problem is further aggravated by the fact that the CA states have no strategic planning experience of their own, since in Soviet times that was the exclusively prerogative of the Moscow authorities, and local elites only implemented Moscow's directives and political and other prescriptions.

Recommendations regarding promotion of regional cooperation in Central Asia: from analytical support of efforts to fostering relationship

To counteract further disintegration and fragmentation of Central Asia to prevent implementation of negative and/or unfavorable scenarios in the region, an external engine is required able to mobilize the CA countries for regional cooperation. Any attempts to find such external engine inevitably lead to the United Nations: for one thing, it is equidistant from all the CA states and the contradictions between them; for another thing, it possesses the necessary political, financial, and intellectual resources, as well as the capacity to mobilize more. In the light of this, the Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (potentially, in conjunction with other UN programs) could play an essentially important role in developing regional cooperation if it implements the following set of proposed measures:

- **Recommendation 1:** create a permanent mechanism of analytical support for CA regional cooperation development efforts (as a basic condition);
- **Recommendation 2:** create mechanisms to support CA countries policies with regard to each other;



- **Recommendation 3:** create mechanisms to encourage bilateral cooperation in CA;
- **Recommendation 4:** create mechanisms to encourage multilateral cooperation in CA.

We believe this set of measures will enable implementation of the following consecutive actions:- slow down, stop, and, possibly, reverse the process of the region's disintegration and fragmentation;

- come to the level of practical regional cooperation;
- create prerequisites for cooperation and integration.

Otherwise, work to implement any one of the recommendations proposed is likely to be non-systemic and therefore less effective.

Recommendation 1 (the basic condition): create a permanent mechanism of analytical support for CA regional cooperation development efforts. It is proposed to create a dedicated regional think tank (hereinafter, the Center) for CA cooperation. The main objectives of this Center must be the following:

- provide analytical support to the Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia;
- develop programs, patterns, and algorithms to promote and encourage regional cooperation;
- find “engine projects” to promote regional cooperation and “breakthrough solutions” to the regions' existing problems;
- set up ad hoc analyst teams to study specific subjects and areas.

The Center should engage the most experienced and competent analysts among the leading regional experts on Central Asia, primarily those with considerable experience (at least 10 years) of conducting interdisciplinary studies for CA governments.

Recommendation 2: create mechanisms to support CA countries policies with regard to each other. It is proposed to create a number of mechanisms, that, on the one hand, will help to eliminate key obstacles impeding each CA country's development and, on the other hand, will lower the likelihood of conflicts in the region. The following potential mechanisms are proposed as working concepts (and working titles):



- a political and financial mechanism for cooperation in border matters;
- a permanent research mechanism for cooperation in resolving water and energy issues.

2.1. A political and financial mechanism for cooperation in border matters. The mechanism is proposed to provide financial incentives and, consequently, to speed up significantly (or even radically) the political process of border demarcation (or, at least, the most disputed and difficult portions thereof). The following (tentative) algorithm is proposed:

- organize and conduct a study to evaluate the status of the border demarcation process in CA, to identify, among other things, the most disputed and difficult areas (the study component being a basic condition of any mechanism's success and effectiveness);
- discuss with international financial agencies the possibility of mobilizing respective grant (!) funds for forming the mechanism's budget (for example, US\$ 1 million per kilometer of each disputed border segment);
- enter into agreements for a phased provision of grant funds to each (or a specific) national government for building border-guard and customs installations in disputed border segments while the demarcation is completed (for example, phased disbursement of 10-million-dollar tranches following demarcation of each 10 km of disputed border segments);
- organize financial monitoring of the grant funds use;
- discuss the possibility of mobilizing loans from international financial institutions for subsequent development of border-area (non-military) infrastructure.

We believe that during the first stage this mechanism can be tested in handling disputed border segments in the Ferghana Valley, involving only three countries – Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. After that, the mechanism can be applied in other border segments where border incidents regularly occur.



In general, it is quite obvious that any assistance (especially financial assistance) intended to promote a final solution to border problems as early as possible will certainly be welcomed by the CA governments, will significantly reduce the conflict potential of bilateral relations, and will give an important impetus to regional cooperation development.

2.2. A permanent research mechanism for cooperation in managing the water-energy problem. Considering that the CA countries' approaches to managing the water-energy problem are characterized by deep-going contradictions (actually impossible to overcome using traditional patterns), it is proposed to use this mechanism to permanently encourage and, consequently, gradually to speed up the process of shaping and harmonizing the CA countries' political positions. The following (tentative) algorithm is proposed:

- organize and conduct a study to evaluate the status of and prospect for cooperation on the water-energy problem, and to identify specialists in each CA country and to consult them;

- develop a standard form (!) of country reports (study and reporting approaches);

- set up appropriate interdisciplinary teams in each CA country and commence studies and report preparation work;

- conduct a workshop (for example, a two-week workshop in a neutral country that can be entered by CA citizens without a visa) to discuss and compare various results, identify similarities and differences of interests/approaches among CA countries;

- organize and conduct a separate study to identify plans/options for bringing closer together the positions reflected in the country reports and identified during the workshops;

- reiterate the main steps of this algorithm (study – workshop – develop plans/options to bring positions closer together), expanding and/or varying the participants, involving other specialists and representatives of the ministries and agencies concerned (as observers or resource persons).

We believe that the interdisciplinary and research aspects (even with an academic focus) of the proposed mechanism should make it



possible to avoid major political obstacles confronted by other international institutions, such as the World Bank (WB), in dealing with similar issues. This mechanism's budget could be formed using funds both of the United Nations, the World Bank and other financial institutions.

In general, if a competent and non-politicized approach is adopted, this mechanism will be beneficial for all CA governments: it will enable consequently, to speed up significantly (or even radically) the political process of border demarcation (or, at least, the most disputed and difficult portions thereof). The following (tentative) algorithm is proposed:

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2.2. A permanent research mechanism for cooperation in managing the water-energy problem. Considering that the CA countries' them to get prepared for and come closer to resolving the extremely difficult regional problem, which may give an impetus to regional cooperation or become a source of new contradictions and conflicts.

Recommendation 3: create mechanisms to encourage bilateral cooperation in CA. It is proposed to create a number of mechanisms to help lower bilateral tensions, at least in the initial phase, and thereby to shape a basis for potential cooperation. First of all, these mechanisms are to be applied in relations between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, and between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which are seen as holding the greatest conflict potential. The following mechanisms are proposed to be considered as working suggestions (with working titles):

- political and diplomatic mechanism the “Ambassador for Peace”;
- a funding and research mechanism for governmental analytical agencies.

3.1. The Ambassador for Peace Political and Diplomatic Mechanism. This mechanism is intended to be used “quietly” (without attracting public attention) to encourage “virtual bilateral dialogues” among the governments of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The facilitators should be UN-authorized reputable politicians with conflict-settlement experience and with credibility in the world and in CA. But, in contrast to previously used schemes, Central Asian Ambassadors for Peace should perform facilitation functions before specific bilateral relations reach a crisis, much less a conflict. The following (tentative) algorithm is proposed:

- organize and conduct a study to identify/justify the most acceptable candidates to serve as Ambassadors for Peace and candidates to serve



on the working groups in each of the two countries involved in a “virtual dialogue”;

- when the Ambassador for Peace nominees are approved by the United Nations, organize and conduct studies on bilateral relations' topics;

- when the Ambassadors for Peace have familiarized themselves with the study results, commence forming working groups to support their work;

- focus the Ambassadors for Peace and their working groups on finding effective schemes and algorithms for promoting cooperation in the most conflict-prone aspects of bilateral relations with a view to presenting them to the leaders of the CA countries in question.

We expect that the Ambassadors for Peace will have regular meetings with CA countries' leaders in order to receive recommendations and to propose compromises and optimum solutions to crisis situations that may occasionally arise in bilateral relations. The CA countries will thereby be focused, on an on-going basis, on the need to promote bilateral cooperation and to prevent conflicts.

In general, the reduction of bilateral tensions by international mediation efforts will be acceptable and beneficial to CA governments: such efforts will not require them to meet with their political opponents from other states, but nevertheless their positions will be harmonized, although in a virtual mode.

3.2. A funding and research mechanism for government analytical agencies. This mechanism is proposed to provide financial support to studies and, possibly, workshops on CA bilateral relations matters and, consequently, encourage the region's key think tanks and governments to focus more on bilateral cooperation. Monitoring and reporting of the work accomplished should be simple (for that is not an end in itself): for example, in one-page reports, considering that the study and workshop results will be reported to CA country leaders and influence policies. As a result, the mechanism can do a lot to help focus CA countries on developing a longer-term and, consequently, more cooperation/integration-oriented regional policies.

Recommendation 4: create mechanisms to encourage multilateral cooperation. It is obvious that encouraging multilateral regional cooperation in Central Asia on a pentilateral basis would now be very difficult or even impossible. Therefore, it would be essential to promote cooperation at least on a trilateral basis, which of itself would be a substantial breakthrough beyond the rigid boundaries of bilateral cooperation.

It seems that it would be the most realistic to promote trilateral cooperation in particular on the water-energy problem. Objectively, this is due to the fact that the rigid interdependence among the region's countries in connection with this problem exists in two trilateral sets of relations:

- Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan use the resources of the Syr Darya River basin; and
- Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan use the resources of the Amu Darya River basin.

Therefore, it is proposed to use the Ambassador for Peace political and diplomatic mechanism (as set forth in Recommendation 3.1) or a similar one, with the participation of reputable politicians and/or other United Nations representatives, to propose an initiative to address the region's water-energy problem in two trilateral formats:

- one involving Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan; and
- one involving Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan.

The study component for the proposed mechanism can be borrowed from Recommendation 2.2 and adapted for trilateral cooperation purposes.

A working idea proposed for consideration is, on the one hand, to involve Kazakhstan as a mediator in the water-energy dialogue between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan and, on the other hand, to involve Turkmenistan as a mediator in the water-energy dialogue between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

As a result, it is recommended to focus the CA countries to restore the Soviet-times trilateral water-energy exchanges between the providers of water (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) and the users of water



and providers of energy (Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan). All the more so since expanding water-energy negotiations from bilateral to trilateral formats would be much more effective and likely to succeed.

First, involving Kazakhstan as a mediator in the water-energy dialogue between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan can be effective, because Astana has a lot of influence with Bishkek and generally good-neighborly relations with Tashkent.

Second, involving Turkmenistan as a mediator in the dialogue between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan can be effective, because Turkmenistan is not strongly opposed to delivering gas to Tajikistan and has a lot of influence with Tajikistan and generally good-neighborly relations with Uzbekistan.

Third, arranging multilateral cooperation on the water-energy problem will be effective in itself, as it will pave the way for reviving Tashkent's and Astana's initiatives to set up a water-and-energy consortium in Central Asia.

In general, it would make sense to develop an effective model of mutual settlements among these countries within the relevant trilateral arrangements. Such model may use the energy barter principle, with the water resources excluded from the barter system.

For the trilateral arrangement involving Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, the best option for the water-energy exchanges would be energy barter arrangements as follows: gas, coal, and power to be delivered from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to Kyrgyzstan in winter in exchange for power to be delivered from Kyrgyzstan to Uzbekistan and to border regions of Kazakhstan in summer (the energy exchanges quotas can be agreed by trilateral commissions).

For the trilateral arrangement involving Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, the best option for the water-energy exchanges would be energy barter arrangements as follows: Turkmenian gas and power to be delivered from Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to Tajikistan in winter in exchange for power to be delivered from Tajikistan to Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in summer.



This will achieve the following important objectives:

- the demands of Kyrgyzstan (and, in future, of Tajikistan) to Uzbekistan regarding payments for water will not look so logical and convincing;

- the acute need for building the Kambaratinskaya HPP-1 will be eliminated, if Kyrgyzstan receives energy from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in winter;

- the acute need for building the Rogunskaya HPP will be eliminated if Tajikistan receives enough gas from Turkmenistan and enough power from Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in winter;

- Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan will have more water delivered in summer, which will lead to significant economic gains from agriculture on more irrigated land.

* * *

Obviously, Recommendations 2, 3 and 4 are sets of ideas, and actual and systemic work can only be organized if Recommendation 1 is followed and implemented, with the creation of a permanent mechanism of analytical support for CA regional development efforts. Until that recommendation is adequately implemented in practice, all talk about regional cooperation is likely to remain “wishful thinking”, in increasingly bitter conflict with hard reality...



**“Role of regional organizations in promoting cooperation in
Central Asia.
Importance of social and cultural ties.”**

Mr. Ali Resul Usul
Director
Center for Strategic Research
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkey

One of the interesting facts regarding the possibility of regional cooperation in the region, though there exist several regional organization in this regard, it seems that, few are really effective in terms of preventive diplomacy and conflict management. It seems that there is almost a consensus that the region needs an effective, robust and powerful regional cooperation to cope with the problems and challenges that could stabilize the whole region.

The reluctance that seems widespread among the policy makers in the region for more regional cooperation is a big obstacle and we have to see and understand this reluctance and figure out an effective and original ways to get rid of or reduce the unwillingness mentioned.

I see that one reason behind the reluctance is the low-level mutual trust and confidence among decision-makers and peoples in the region. Even the liberal concept win-win situation may not be helpful in this regard because policy-makers in the region could prefer “relative gain” instead of “win-win” concept.

Therefore, what we need now is to enhance the mutual trust at elite and popular levels. When we look at the some successful examples from the World political history about the regional cooperation and integration regarding a construction of mutual trust and confidence at elite and popular levels. When we look at the some successful examples in theWorld history about the regional cooperation and integration regarding the construction of mutual trust and confidence, the role and function of the societal factors come to the fore.



A good example in this regard the history of European integration. The EU is not a model per se for the Central Asian region, which is a quite different region, but there might be still some source of inspirations in the European history that we can draw. Two processes could be emphasized here: one is the famous idea in international relations, “doux commerce”, the soothing effect of trade, which is not my topic today; the other is the societal factors or transnational relations as a factor of regional cooperation/integration. I see that the term of transnational relations have some negative connotations in the region, like the transnational crime, drug trafficking or even transnational extremist groups. These are real threats to the regional security, stability, peace of course. On the other hand, transnational relations and interactions and increasing social mobilization across the borders can have potentials to eliminate social and cultural stereotypes and prejudices and help remove some historical baggage in the region.

In addition, increasing transnational activities among civil societies from different countries in the region could establish some transnational, not supranational, common identities that potentially lead to less fear, more trust and understanding among the peoples. More transnationalism should not be seen as an alternative to the national identities in the Central Asia. I strongly believe that strong national identities in the region are indispensable part of regional cooperation and integration. Some suggestions in this regard may include the student and academic exchange programmes, like the Erasmus program or regional cultural, social organizations, events and occasions from all Central Asian states.

The second issue today is the cultural ties that promoting cooperation in the Central Asia. My sincere belief is that common cultural and linguistic ties sharing by the peoples in the region could contribute to the popular psychology of mutual trust and understanding in a positive way if conducted properly and professionally. I differentiate the cultural policies in this regard as inclusive and exclusive. Promoting common history, language, culture and tradition should not be exclusive,



rejectionist and parochial but inclusive has universal appeals. I believe the Central Asian states share many common cultural and civilizational elements. One point here is important and quite sensitive: promoting common ties are not for construction of any kind of supranational identity but just for contributing to the mutual understanding among the nations in the region.

There exist, for example, many common historical characters that constitutes a common historical literature in the region, like Hoca Ahmet Yesevi, Hoca Nasreddin or Effendi, Korkut Ata or Dede Korkut, Köroglu or Göroglu, Manas, Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi, Ali Shir Nevai, Mahtumkuli, Fuzuli...etc. Let me repeat again that cultural policies should not produce enmity or “the other” in the region but emphasize common cultural ties.

The most serious challenges to the possibility of more cooperation between the Central Asian nations seem the lack of enough trust and confidence at the elite and popular levels. The robust translational linkages from people to people could be an important factor for further cooperation among the nations in the Central Asia.



Pragmatic Cooperation as a Major Incentive for Regional Development

Ms.Cheng Min
Senior Research Fellow
China Institute of International Studies

Central Asian countries are seen as close neighbors and important partners of China, and a prosperous and stable Central Asia is very important to China, so this seminar's topic, as defined by the organizers, the United Nations Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, is very relevant and important to both the region's countries and China. As a Chinese participant involved in Central Asia studies, I am pleased to have this opportunity to share my perspectives on Central Asian regional cooperation with my colleagues.

Cooperation gives a powerful impetus to regional development. All the Central Asian countries without exception are land-locked states, located close to several major developed and developing economies, and therefore there is no alternative to promoting regional cooperation for integrating the potentials of multiple countries and intensifying economic growth and trade in the region. Two things have been evident about Central Asia's interaction: the negative disintegration trend in the region and researchers' positive expectations of enhanced regional cooperation. Cooperation is the call of the globalization era; there is a Chinese proverb saying that flowing water is always fresh and vital. Enhancing interaction in the economic and social fields applies new energy to an economy, and China has benefitted from persistent and active cooperation with other nations over the past 30 years.

A pragmatic approach is the backbone of advancing regional cooperation. Various complex historical and actual issues, the water issue deadlock, ethnic and religious contradictions, territorial disputes between states always create barriers that impede cooperation, and no country in the world can avoid facing such issues. But, in the face of the real need for economic growth and the rapid global evolution, the most



reasonable approach is to achieve a common pragmatic understanding of cooperation, based on strengthened political confidence, cooling down differences and contradictions, efforts to find common interests, to create conditions for mutual benefits, and to gain valuable development time and economic growth opportunities.

Central Asian nations possess natural advantages for developing regional cooperation. These advantages are internal and external. All the countries of the region have historical, spiritual, social, and cultural links that provide a sound basis for interaction among nations. The region's states are mutually complementary in terms of resources and advantages. Externally, the Central Asia region is increasingly the focus of investment from countries and entities outside the region, and bilateral and multilateral cooperation among states within and outside the region in the fields of practical cooperation have positive prospects.

The stable economic growth in Central Asian countries indicates the economic development potential. In the years since the global financial crisis, as economic growth has been slowing down in advanced and developing nations worldwide, the Central Asian countries generally have maintained steady economic growth rates, even high ones: for example, in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan the GDPs increased by 6, 8, 10.2, and 10.5 per cent, respectively, in 2013. Furthermore, the region's states have been positively developing cooperation among them, as evidenced by the recent protocol for an economic corridor between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, other transportation corridors across the region's countries; there are similar trends in cooperation with countries outside the region, such as Russia, China, the United States, European countries, Japan, India, Turkey, South Korea, and other countries.

The regional structure and regional cooperation initiative create enormous economic cooperation opportunities in the region. This includes EAEC, the Regional Cooperation in Central Asia (the Asian Development Bank), the Customs Union, the SCO, and the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) initiative proposed by China in 2013. All the



above efforts made in Central Asia and the Eurasian area – as an integration project, multilateral cooperation beyond the organization, and a cooperation network based on infrastructure development projects, – all those efforts create opportunities and an impetus for the region's countries. One example is the SCO. Since its outset, pragmatic cooperation within the organization achieved appreciable results, trade among its member states increased more than 10-fold; accumulation of financial resources within the SCO provided strong support to its members, especially during the financial crisis; construction of transport infrastructure developed, including oil and gas pipelines, roads, high-speed railways, etc. As for the SREB, the initiative will give the region another impetus. This is an open-ended project, rather than a new mechanism or structure; it will make use of existing regional frameworks to develop and expand pragmatic cooperation in various areas, primarily infrastructure development, with a view to building a silk route and a cooperation network from China to Europe, with Central Asia playing a major role. In short, the SREB initiative means common thinking, joint construction, joint use, and shared benefits.

China is pleased to see this positive trend towards cooperation among Central Asian states and is prepared to create regional development prospects jointly with all the regional partners!



Dr. Najam Abbas

Senior Research Fellow on Central Asia – South Asia
EastWest Institute (Belgium)

Internal and External factors influencing Regional Cooperation in Central Asia

- Paradigm shift?
- Identifying opportunities
- Discussing Impediments & their implications lessons
- Developing a cooperation architecture
- Possible SCO role for stability and prosperity?
- Prospects for new opening 2015-2024
- Need to update gain-loss calculus

Vision, Leadership &Modality Framework

While discussing future cooperation, an important issue is to identify the main drivers that could help reframe and reshape regional relations. This requires that perceptions about potential economic engagement need to be improved through concrete measures that could help strengthen activities for closer coordination.

Thus, examining alternatives become a requisite. Indeed, in a study of human development factors in Central Asian countries, the United Nations found that the largest aggregate economic gains come from reductions in the cost of trade, and the largest losses comes from civil war. This study reported that over ten years, the GDPs of Central Asian countries could be 50 percent higher as a result of comprehensive and continuous regional cooperation!*

Collective Dividends

Through increased economic integration with the world beyond their regional borders, trading economies can acquire and diffuse new technologies from more advanced countries and help reduce poverty. A study estimates that improved road corridors can in turn help improve export and import prices in Central Asia between 7% and 10%.



Byrd, William, “Prospects for Regional Development and Economic Cooperation in the Wider Central Asia Region,” World Bank, Washington DC. January, 2006, p.55.

Lesson Learnt

Development vs. security scenario

If active participation in a regional setup is delayed, any potential benefit for participant countries to enjoy the dividends of their geographical location will remain elusive. There is a need to break the security-development link so that funds do not get diverted to predominantly ‘secure’ things

Geopolitical interests

There is a need to encourage participants to focus less on the obstacles and more on the opportunities.

There is a need to steer clear from making a snake and ladder like progress.

Ideological impediments and dogmas can cause some participants to cling on to past baggage. Furthermore, mutual misgivings, mistrust and blame apportioning which can only perpetuate uncertainty, indecision and inaction.

Policy differences

- Insufficient mutual trust among the key players pushes them to begin their discussions from divergent viewpoints. Lingering legacies of the mindset of the past obstructs the possibilities of progress. The key players start with opposite standpoints, ensuing from a position of deficient trust. Hence, much effort, energy and time is wasted on difficulties and disruptive factors. As a result, diverse ambitions, and ongoing differences of opinion between potential energy buyers cancel out the possible collective gains that could arise with timely action. Long delays due to continuing policy differences may cause investors’ interest to wane.

Institutional weakness

- Slow progress has been caused by passivity and misgivings owing to what is conceived as a potential compromise sovereignty by



Central Asian leaders.

- Stakeholders are yet to agree on sustainable solutions. The absence of any mechanism to resolve differences in priorities and plans for energy partnership retards potential progress. The political will to move forward is not mobilized adequately enough for effective decisions.

Infrastructure barriers

- In recent years the prospects of linking energy surplus Central Asian states with energy deficit South Asian markets remain hampered on grounds of unrest, insecurity, poor infrastructure and insufficient funding.

Capacity limitations

- Central Asian suppliers yet to meet South Asian energy deficit which remains a source of instability owing to poor funding and insufficient infra-structure

- There is a need to energetically raise more public and corporate funds to invest in regional association to facilitate energy solutions
- There is still a lack of sufficient interest from investors which needs to be addressed

Overcoming Obstacles

- Bringing all regional participants around an action based and result-driven approach requires:

- Beneficiaries need to be convinced of concrete benefits awaited if process goes ahead

- Quantify benefits of future energy trade respond to investors interest

- Encourage entrepreneurs to join a few cooperation initiatives

- There is also a need to jointly move on regional solutions for widely public-private partnerships.

- A way out could be wider and effective communication campaign may help to address any hesitations and prod respective government agencies into action



What role will the SCO play in the security situation in Afghanistan

• The post-2014 Afghanistan actually provides a very good platform for China's so-called creative engagement diplomacy. Afghanistan itself is highly interested in further integration with the economies and politics of Central Asia and South Asia. The current members of SCO including Russia and China are also highly interested in a prosperous and stable Afghanistan. So, in the near future SCO can potentially play a crucial role in helping Afghanistan in its post-crisis reconstruction, and in the long run, by bringing a more prosperous and stable Afghanistan into the broadly defined large heartland of Eurasia. We might see a very different geo-political landscape heartland of Eurasia. In this regard both China and SCO can play a very positive, constructive role.

Zhang Xin, researcher,
School of Advanced International and Area Studies at
East China Normal University to CCTV, 11.09.2014

<http://english.cntv.cn/2014/09/11/VIDE1410440278918215.shtml>

2015-2024: A new Opening?

- Arc of crisis?
- During 2001-2011 most US initiatives remained security-focussed to insulate Afghanistan from inside and also to seal it from any external potential risks to make Afghanistan as a pillar of security in the South Asian region bordering Central Asia.
 - Emphasis on countering security risks
 - Hub of trade, energy, transport?
 - Help Afghanistan embark on its transformation decade between 2015-2024
- Inspiration for long term vision for Afghanistan and its neighbours
 - Seeking a panacea to cure Afghanistan's economic ills which may lead the region to peace and stability



- Elements of projecting geo-political influence with stakes in energy supply pipelines, trans-border electricity lines

Extractive industry investment boosting infrastructure

- At the end of October, China hosted the Fourth Annual Ministerial Conference of the Istanbul Process for Afghanistan, an annual meeting of the Istanbul process - in which all Central and South Asian countries take part as well as Iran, Russia and China. Its aim called the "Heart of Asia" is to help stabilise Afghanistan, create peace and help economic aid to that war-torn country. China has committed \$327 over three years for Afghanistan and announced the start of 64 programmes to give the newly elected government a kick start, as western forces withdraw from the country

- A major Afghan coal and copper project is being developed by a Chinese consortium, led by state-run MCC China Metallurgical Group. The project, in Aynak, Logar province, involves building a rail link from Pakistan to Uzbekistan, which will require \$4.4 billion to execute.

China's largest oil company is starting commercial production of crude oil in Afghanistan shortly, heralding a resource boom that could transform the country's economy over the next decade, the country's mining minister said. Extraction of metals and oil could account for 45% of Afghanistan's gross domestic product by 2024.

Examples of Evolving Architecture of Cooperation

SM Krishna Indian foreign minister called at Delhi Investment Summit on Afghanistan 28 June 2012 for a “need to offer a narrative of opportunity to counter the anxiety of withdrawal In the development and reconstruction sphere, India can certainly play a “more active role”. Limiting itself to a language of commerce Krishna declared “Let the grey suits of company executives take the place of olive green or desert brown fatigues of soldiers; and CEOs, the place of generals,” he said.

So far, India has pledged assistance worth \$2 billion. Indian projects cover areas like road construction (the 218 km Zaranj-Delaram road), power (transmission line from Pul-e-Khumri to Kabul), Salma dam, construction of parliament, and many projects in the areas of



agriculture, telecommunication, education, health and capacity building throughout Afghanistan.

An Indian consortium and a Canadian firm would jointly invest \$14.6 billion (729.4 billion afs) in developing the Hajigak iron mine, an Afghan official said on 30 March 2013. The mine in central Bamyān province 130 km west of Kabul, which is estimated to hold 1.8 billion tonnes of high-quality iron ore deposits.

Some Indian companies are also planning to bid for copper and gold projects. There are also reports that India is planning to build a 900 km railway line between Iran's Chabahar port and the mineral rich Bamiyan province of Afghanistan where Indian companies may be making large investments.

Concrete benefits developing road corridors will bring:

An examination of the ADB study showed that, with Afghanistan the central hub, the construction of North-South corridors to and from Central Asia can increase trade by as much as 15% or \$12 billion if the new roads are matched by efforts to facilitate trade. Employment in the region could increase by 1.8 million jobs, in addition to the creation of 15 million person days of permanent employment for ongoing road and infrastructure maintenance. Reduced travel time will bring participating countries annual savings of over \$1.7 billion and continental trade through new southern ports can be expected to increase by 80%, to \$6.3 billion. As the benefits of the trade corridors are extensive and long-term relative to the total investment of only about \$5.6 billion, the initiative has an undeniably compelling investment return.

Masood Aziz,

<http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/publications/GCA/GCAPUB-02.pdf>



Key Economic Impact of the Road Corridors on the Region	In figures
Combined incremental regional trade growth 2002-2010 (in percent)	160
Corridor investment cost (in million dollars)	5639
Annual travel cost saving/\$ of investment 2010 (in dollars)	0.31
Incremental annual GDP/\$ of investment 2010 (in dollars)	1.05
Total incremental export growth 2002-2010 (in percent)	14
Incremental revenue in 2010 (in million dollars)	910

Source: Alamgir, Mohiuddin, "Report on the Economic Impact of Central-South Asian Road Corridors." Report prepared for the Second Ministerial Conference on Transport and Trade in Central and South Asia. ADB, Manila, March 3 and 4, 2005. p. iii.



Need to update gain-loss calculus

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Regional cooperation as a factor of sustainable development

Mr. Lilian Darii
Director General for Multilateral Co-operation
Ministry for Foreign Affairs and European Integration of Moldova
Former Deputy head of the OSCE Centre in Bishkek

I am both honoured and pleased to deliver these introductory remarks. The topic of the event, organised by the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia (UNRCCA), is a good opportunity not only to take stock of the experience in promoting regional co-operation in Central Asian region and the role played by various actors - state authorities, civil society, international organizations, think tanks and others, but also to identify the best way of enhancing this co-operation and direct it towards problem solving strategies.

I will focus my short remarks on the role and importance of regional co-operation in fostering sustainable development in Central Asian countries.

There are many definitions of sustainable development. I would refer to the World Commission of Development wording: Sustainable development is development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

In the extensive discussion and use of the concept since then, there has generally been recognition of three aspects of sustainable development.

Economic: An economically sustainable system must be able to produce goods and services on a continuing basis, to maintain manageable levels of government and external debt, and to avoid extreme sectoral imbalances which damage agricultural or industrial production.



Environmental: An environmentally sustainable system must maintain a stable resource base, avoiding over-exploitation of renewable resource systems or environmental sink functions, and depleting non-renewable resources only to the extent that investment is made in adequate substitutes. This includes maintenance of biodiversity, atmospheric stability, and other ecosystem functions not ordinarily classed as economic resources.

Social: A socially sustainable system must achieve distributional equity, adequate provision of social services including health and education, gender equity, and political accountability and participation.

All these aspects are equally important for all counties in the region. The main thing to be clearly understood is that it is impossible for any country in the region to attain progress in building up an economy based on the principles of sustainable development without engaging in an efficient regional co-operation.

For Central Asian countries to benefit from access to their big neighbouring economies they have to overcome the legacy of disintegration that haunted all of the former Soviet republics. As the Soviet Union broke up, the long-established intensive economic links between the republics were dramatically ruptured. This contributed to the deep and protracted economic downturn throughout the former Soviet Union, Central Asian countries, along with the rest of the former soviet states, recovered from the transitional economic recession beginning in the late 1990s, and indeed during the 2000s emerged as one of the most dynamic economic regions in the World.

The question is whether this positive economic development trend brings prosperity to the population of these countries. Equally, the economic growth is not reflected in the statistics of the intraregional trade co-operation. Here, I would like to make an observation. Modest figures in the trade exchanges between the countries in the region



allow drawing the conclusion that the negative phenomenon of illegal trade activities is a reality. This could have serious implications for the security situation in the region alongside with many other challenges.

The simple conclusion is obvious – regional co-operation could not be but beneficial for the overall development of the Central Asian countries and a way to integrate the region into the global economic processes.

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian region has gradually become a distinct part of various international and regional co-operation mechanisms. The states of the region joined the UN and benefit from UN global and regional cooperation programmes. The intraregional interaction has also developed, both bilaterally and multilaterally. The Central Asian countries are part of such organizations as CAREC, SCO, CSTO, OSCE. Co-operation was established with such regional players as EU and NATO. In terms of thematic co-operation, it covers such areas as security, economic development, ecological issues, cultural and social ties. These interactions contributed to maintain a certain level of stability and mutually beneficial developments.

However, more political will is needed to focus the co-operation efforts on solving the still existing ruptures in approaches to deal with problematic issues in such areas as border security, water and energy nexus, migration, trade. It is to be realised that security and economic development cannot be promoted at the expenses of neighbours.

A special attention is to be paid to experiences in other geographical areas. For instance, the EU integrationist mechanism proved to be a sustainable one. Its experience could be replicated in at least some areas of co-operation among the states in the region. Elimination of trade barriers, simplification of border crossing procedures could bring significant benefits to the development in various areas in Central Asian countries.



The situation in Afghanistan represents both a challenge and an opportunity to enhance co-operation of Central Asian states. Various initiatives in different areas offers ways to assist the neighbouring Afghanistan and expand intrastate co-operation of Central Asian region. The international actors invest a lot to connect Central Asia to Afghan initiatives. I would not name them. They are well known.

I would like to conclude with what in my view is an axiom - there is no alternative to co-operation in order to promote progress and development in the region. Central Asia is a distinct part of the world community and is a place where all global actors – bilateral and multilateral, could demonstrate the beneficial character of promoting regional co-operation for a sustainable development path for the countries of the region.

I want to express my certitude that the discussions will allow advancing of the co-operation among the state authorities, media community, civil society and international organizations in Central Asia and beyond in identifying the best practices for a better co-operation of the countries in the Central Asian region.



Factors That Influence Regional Cooperation in Central Asia

Mr. Murat Tashibaev
Deputy Director, Department for Cooperation
CIS Executive Committee

As a representative of the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States and, specifically, the Department for Security Cooperation, I would like to share our vision of the role of international and regional organizations in strengthening cooperation in Central Asia.

Threats and challenges to international peace and stability are now becoming universal and equally endanger the vital interests of states and their citizens.

We have to admit with regret that this applies to the CIS states, including those in Central Asia.

After the USSR disintegrated and the states became independent, the region evolved to become not only an active participant in international political and economic affairs (thanks to each Central Asian state's contribution), but also, again we have to note it with regret, one of Eurasia's geopolitically sensitive areas.

The major threats here include terrorism and extremism, huge volumes of drug trafficking and arms smuggling, transnational crime and illegal migration.

Under the influence of external and internal processes, conflict situations are still likely to emerge. Apart from those mentioned before, real threats (as mentioned by previous speakers) include differences in the national economies' development levels, which leads to continuing crisis trends in economic development. In a number of cases, regional cooperation is negatively affected by inter-ethnic and inter-confessional contradictions, unsettled border issues, tensions in relations regarding water-and-energy resource distribution.

The military and political situation in Afghanistan remains complicated, due to intensive activities of various reactionary forces (the Taliban, combatants of religious and extremist movement, and other such forces). That significantly impacts life in other countries, especially neighboring countries, and regional cooperation in Central Asia in general.

The long presence of US and other NATO military contingents in Afghanistan has not helped to establish national accord and promote peaceful construction or to eliminate the strong perception of Afghanistan as a global source of drug trafficking and terrorism.

In this difficult situation, one can view the Central Asian members of the CIS as being on the front line of countering the global threats coming from that country.

At the same time, we can state that, thanks to efforts by national security systems and diverse cooperation among CIS states, including cooperation within other international organizations, overall social and political stability and security (of the countries concerned) are at an acceptable level in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The region's states participate in varying formats in international organizations like CSTO, SCO, and OSCE whose efforts are aimed at strengthening security. Important cooperation-promoting factors are the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia and the work of the organizer and host of this superbly organized seminar, the United Nations Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia.

A visible contribution to strengthening overall capacity is certainly made by the European Union. In our opinion, the European Union's Strategy for Central Asia, adopted back in 2007, should become an engine in implementing European countries' initiatives.

In order to ensure effective solution of global problems of the third millennium, international organizations should work in a mutually complementary manner. Therefore, the task of developing effective forms of cooperation of states, both bilateral and within international



organizations is both topical and significant. It is extremely important not only to design efforts to counter threats, but also to create proactive mechanisms for adopting and implementing international and domestic political decisions and to make joint efforts in blocking and containing threats more efficient.

I wish to share our understanding of what we see as the current priorities of international organizations in this field.

Primarily, they include:

- efforts to help translate universal and regional treaty provisions into national legislation;
- efforts to raise the level of coordination in countering terrorism and organized crime in all forms, especially those that provide the financial foundation of international terrorism, trafficking in drugs, weapons, and persons;
- development and improvement of interaction at the sectoral cooperation level;
- support for pooling national capacity in training specialists and providing logistic support to the appropriate services;
- improvement of exchanges of information and practices in countering present-day challenges and threats, including preparation of security resources.

With the regard to the first of the above priorities, I will remind it to colleagues who attend such a seminar for the first time that an integrated legal and organizational system for joint countering present-day security threats and challenges has been established and is functioning within the CIS. Its development is conducted with due regard for the United Nations' universal documents, and all the CIS states of the region formally accede to those. The CIS states' accession to international law-enforcement treaties is regularly reviewed at the CIS's Interparliamentary Assembly sessions and by its other relevant bodies. Following such reviews, legal recommendations are normally passed regarding accession. The system's performance is improved using our partners' experience.



In this area, we maintain interaction with the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, the International Organization for Migration and its Moscow Bureau, the OSCE Secretariat, and the relevant bodies of the CSTO, the SCO, and other reputable international organizations. I wish to emphasize it once again that we view mutually rewarding cooperation as the most effective tool for handling existing global and regional problems.

As for joint efforts to counter terrorism and organized crime, I would like to remind you that those efforts are performed within the CIS according to relevant plans and, for many years now, under five interstate programs. At present, the CIS is implementing programs against terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime, illegal migration, and human trafficking (The Program for Cooperation in Combatting Terrorism and Other Violent Forms of Extremism is intended for the period from 2014 through 2016, other programs, for 2014-2018, and the Program for Countering Illegal Migration, for 2015-2019).

Overall, the CIS states' joint efforts in this field yield positive results.

Measures implemented in 2011–2013 reduced the CIS average number of registered crimes by 2 per cent, the number of grave and very grave crimes against persons, by 4 per cent, including murders and murder attempts, by 6.8 per cent, crimes involving intended infliction of grave bodily harm, by 3.5 per cent, theft offenses, by 1 per cent, robberies, by 10 per cent, assault and robbery offenses, by 7 per cent, and bribery offenses, by 9 per cent.

Information.

In 2011-2013, law enforcement agencies organized and carried out 35 integrated crime prevention operations and 6 special-purpose operations in CIS states, in which 163,800 crimes were solved and more than 40,000 wanted criminals were arrested, including 4,200 criminals on interstate wanted lists, the activities of 584 organized crime groups was curbed, 156 bases of illegal armed groupings were found and destroyed, and 18,000 pieces of firearms were confiscated.



Investigative operations were continued to counter drug trafficking, to bust drug trafficking channels, and to locate and close down illegal laboratories that manufactured narcotic and psychotropic substances.

87 illegal drug laboratories were busted, 167,664 drug-trafficking offenses were solved, 268 international drug-trafficking channels were barred, and more than 170 tons of illicit drugs were seized.

Information.

A survey of the drug situation conducted in the CIS in 2013 indicated a small increase of the number of registered drug trafficking offenses (up 0.54 per cent). The number of women prosecuted decreased by 25.7 per cent, with a gradual reduction of the percentage of women among the offenders prosecuted.

The number of minors among drug offenders also increased, although the growth was very small. The figures grew in all the CIS states, except for Moldova and Ukraine.

The number of opium seizures increased (except for Kazakhstan and Russia): more than 2-fold in Armenia, 8-fold in Kyrgyzstan, and 3-fold in Ukraine.

Analysis of the anti-drug trafficking measures confirms that a lot of the positive results were achieved in the course of integrated crime prevention operations and joint investigative operations. Therefore, anti-drug trafficking work should focus on expanding interstate crime prevention and deepening interaction among the law enforcement systems of all the states concerned.

We have obtained information about the results of the Dostyk-2014 joint border security operation which was performed from 20 August to 8 September 2014 to curb illegal activities in the external borders of the CIS states in Central Asia, with the participation of the border security agencies of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan.

In the course of the operation, 603 border law offenders, 1,348 illegal migrants, and 66 offenders on the wanted list were arrest; 17 pieces of firearms and more than 419 kilograms of drugs were seized.



A total of 10 joint crime prevention operations have been conducted under plans of the CIS Border Guards Commanders' Council in Central Asia since 2004, to bar smuggling of weapons, ammunition, and drugs from Afghanistan across CIS states' borders and to control illegal migration.

In view of the situation in the Tajikistan-Afghanistan segment of the CIS external border, the CIS Heads of State Council has adopted a decision to provide Tajikistan with support in strengthening the security of that segment of the CIS external border. That support will involve enhancing the border security agency's resource base and the quality of the border security measures.

A Program for the CIS States' Cooperation in Strengthening External Border Security in 2016-2020 currently being drafted, with the expert review nearing completion, is also intended to enhance the joint security potential of the CIS states, including Central Asian states.

Intensive work is in progress to implement the latest IT achievements to develop modern and high-potential communications systems, special-purpose IT systems and use thereof for information exchanges among CIS states' law-enforcement agencies.

Under an Agreement for Crime Control Information Exchanges, an Interstate Data Bank has been established; it is managed by the RF Ministry of Internal Affairs. The data bank contains all the investigation, reference, forensic, and wanted-list data, as well as statistics and records of the CIS states' law-enforcement authorities. The data bank now has online data exchange capabilities.

Information.

In the first half of 2014, the CIS states' Ministries of Internal Affairs conducted routine exchanges of information on terrorism control. As of the end of the first half of 2014, the terrorism-control division of the Specialized Data Bank of the Bureau for Coordinating Efforts against Organized Crime and Other Dangerous Crimes in the CIS States had information about 6,698 subjects, including information about 6,542 wanted offenders and 156 terrorist organizations, with 388 persons added to the wanted list since the start of 2014.



The Specialized Data Bank's division for organized crime control had data on 14,094 subjects as of the end of June 2014, 105 subjects were added in 2014.

Cooperation also developed in training, skill enhancement, and retraining of personnel. More than 1,500 specialists were trained at the CIS states' joint training facilities in 2011-2013.

Due to a number of objective reasons, one of the most topical matters for the CIS is effective regulation of migration. The common history, long-standing cultural and personal ties, and the lack of language barriers and, in most cases, the lack of visa barriers – all those factors provide for active movements of citizens across CIS states territories.

While in the early years, the CIS focused on migration vs. security issue, at present, the integrated approach to migration and development prevails.

That approach dictates the migration control objectives as formulated in the CIS Development Concept and the CIS Economic Development Strategy till the year 2020.

A Free Trade Area Treaty became effective in September 2012, adding new dimensions to economic interaction within the CIS and influencing migration processes.

The task to eliminate unregulated labor migrant movements and to make migration processes stable and predictable and corresponding to the interests of the CIS states' social and economic development retains its importance.

For those purposes, work is in progress to update and improve the treaty and legal basis for the cooperation.

Information.

The CIS states are now reviewing the draft Concept for Phased Development of a Common Labor Market and Labor Migration Regulation within the CIS States and the draft Priority Actions for Developing a Common Labor Market and Labor Migration Regulation.



The following documents have been provided to the CIS States for use in day-to-day activities: a System for Monitoring and Exchanging Information about National Labor Markets and Vacancies, the Employment Program and Job Creation Mechanisms and Priorities, the Mechanisms for Implementing Multilateral Intergovernmental Documents (Agreements and Conventions) On Protection of Labor Migrants' Rights. Documents being reviewed by experts for further approval by the CIS's supreme authorities include a draft Agreement for the Principles of Harmonizing Employment and Labor Migration Laws and a draft Agreement for Cooperation in Implementing a Labor Migrant E-Card System.

Work is in progress to develop a unified system for registering third country citizens and stateless persons entering the CIS states.

The backbone of the CIS's security organization consists of security cooperation bodies formed by and reporting to the supreme authorities of the CIS. They include a Coordinating Council of General Prosecutors, a Council of Ministers of Internal Affairs, a Council of Chief Executives of Security and Special-Purpose Agencies, a Council of Border Guards Commanders, a Council of Ministers of Defense, a Coordinating Council of the Chief Executives of Tax (Financial) Investigations Authorities, and a CIS Anti-Terrorist Center and a Bureau for Coordinating Efforts against Organized Crime and Other Dangerous Crimes in the CIS States. In the Central Asian region of the CIS, there are branches of the above Anti-Terrorist Center and the Coordination Bureaus. A number of the above-mentioned CIS authorities have good working contacts with similar-purpose divisions of other international organizations, including the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the United Nations Security Council, the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, the OSCE Secretariat, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's Regional Anti-Terrorism Center.

Each of the above-listed CIS bodies participates in implementing agreed security measures within its scope of authority. This significantly enhances coordination and effectiveness of the entire system.



We do not keep statistics by CIS regions, however, and it should be emphasized, the joint efforts are aimed at providing peace and equal security for all the states concerned and at protecting them from present-day challenges and threats.

We have sufficient reasons for a generally positive assessment of the results of the CIS states' international cooperation, especially in recent years, in providing security in the CIS region.



Role of regional organizations in promoting multifaceted sustainable development in the region

Meder Asseyinov
Senior Expert, SCO Secretariat

Four Central Asian countries are founding members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, as well as the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China. Therefore, I would like to present information about the SCO's practical activities and about multilateral interaction in the SCO area.

In the 13 years of its existence, the SCO has established itself as an influential international organization and a factor of regional and global politics. The SCO continues to focus on maintaining security and stability in its area, combatting the “three evils” – terrorism, extremism, and separatism, as well as countering drug trafficking and arms smuggling, other forms of transborder crime and illegal migration. The purposes of effective collective counteraction of global challenges and threats and providing for sustainable social and economic development in the SCO area are in the forefront now.

Meetings of the Heads of the SCO Members States are events of key importance to the Organization. A successful SCO summit took place in Dushanbe on 12 September 2014, under the Presidency of the Republic of Tajikistan. The SCO Presidency was assumed by the Russian Federation, and its priorities include putting in place an SCO development strategy up to 2025, further political consolidation of the SCO, expansion of practical partnership and collaboration in all fields, strengthening of the SCO's role as a forum for a broad dialogue on relevant matters of international affairs.

When adopted, the SCO development strategy up to 2025 will set new targets for the SCO, based on global and regional development forecasts. This important SCO document will cover the major aspects of multidimensional interaction within the SCO. And I wish to point out that



this seminar's findings and recommendations will also be thoroughly reviewed.

Another major result of the Dushanbe summit, no less important, is that it completed the creation of formation of a legal framework for admitting new SCO members. The “expansion” documents approved by the Heads of State are of historic importance. As of now, three countries - India, Pakistan, and Iran – have officially applied for the status of full fledged member of the SCO. The number is growing of countries wishing to be granted the status of an observer or a dialogue partner.

The SCO's trade and economic cooperation agenda is becoming increasingly practical. A major factor promoting this was the signing of the intergovernmental Agreement on Facilitation of International Road Transport for the SCO area. Work on the document involved constructive assistance from the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The Agreement provides for organizing through road routes from China's eastern coast to Europe and introduces unified legal conceptions for transport sectors of all the SCO members – Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, and opens a new phase in the development of interrelated partnership in the trade and economic sphere.

Work has begun on an updated version of the Plan of Action to Implement the Program for Multilateral Trade and Economic Cooperation. The SCO Heads of State Council, scheduled to meet in Astana in December 2014, is expected to give it much attention.

Active work is in progress to position the SCO at major international economic forums and fairs. An international high level conference on development of Central Asia's Road Transport Potential for the Period up to 2023 held in Dushanbe in September 2013 at the initiative of the government of the Republic of Tajikistan discussed road transport and transit development in Central Asia, the Almaty Program of Action devoted to international organizations' projects and initiatives' contribution to the development of trade and transit in the Central Asian region, and effective measures to develop the transit potential.



In May 2014, the SCO held a panel session at the Eighteenth St. Petersburg International Economic Forum. The participants made a number of proposals to expand practical collaboration in the fields of investment, transport, energy, and finance. At the Ninth International Conference on Transport and Transit Potential, TransEurasia-2014, held in Astana in the same month, SCO representatives participated in the discussion of economic cooperation in Eurasia and the revival of the Great Silk Road.

At the Twenty-Fifth Harbin International Trade Fair in July 2014, a roundtable with the participation of the heads of SCO Member States' regional areas put forward a proposal to set up a Council for Interregional Cooperation, as a pro bono institution of the SCO.

Thorough attention is being given to Chairman Xi Jinping of China's proposal to create a Silk Road Economic Belt. We expect our Chinese colleagues to submit an integrated proposal to the SCO Member States soon, which will help to pool the efforts of the parties and advance this global project, to operate for decades to come.

Investment projects should be promoted by the effective funding mechanisms. Therefore the SCO is giving meaningful attention to the establishment and operation of a SCO Development Fund and a SCO Development Bank, which are now at the stage of expert review.

The SCO's priorities include consolidation of partner relations with international organizations, with which MOUs have been signed. Those include, first of all, the United Nations and its agencies – the UN Office on Drug and Crime and ESCAP, as well as the EURASEC, the ASEAN, the ECO, the CSTO, the CIS, and a number of other organizations. At the Fourth Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia held in Shanghai in May 2014, a SCO-CICA Memorandum of Interaction was signed. So the SCO now has formalized relations with nine international organizations.

The SCO supports the work of the United Nations and its agencies. That work will be further enhanced by the resolution on the UN-SCO cooperation, adopted by the Sixty-Ninth Session of the UN General Assembly on 11 November 2014.



Allow me to express my confidence that this discussion will contribute to further consolidation of regional collaboration. Undoubtedly, in view of the existing challenges, threats, and realistic evaluations of the current global and regional trends, we should understand that our unity and interaction are one of the major factors of regional stability and security and of our people's prosperity and well-being.

Role of women in peace and security

Elaine Conkievich

Head of UN Women Multi-Country Office in Kazakhstan

The Central Asia region has certain zones with a destructive potential, which threaten regional stability and human security. Due to structural inequalities, women in Central Asia are excluded from opportunities to efficiently contribute to conflict prevention, resolution and peace building.

We need to recognize that women are particularly vulnerable in the situation of unresolved or protracted conflicts. Where peace has not been achieved, women and men are affected differently by instability, war, displacement etc. Often emphasized as a national and regional issue, the reality is that these conflicts appear at the local level where communities have to share resources, so that ultimately, local users are most often impacted.

Women are affected by violence of organized crime and trafficking of illicit drugs in the region. We observe that currently various incorrect interpretations of Islam that have been spreading in the region put specific emphasis of what should be the 'proper' behavior for women and they impact seriously on the worsening status and position of women in the family and society.

Another worrisome development is the migration of hundreds of thousands of men for economic reasons, mostly to Russia, leaving their wives and families behind for many years, sometimes without or with only scarce economic resources. In some countries, this led also to an increase in polygamy, early and forced marriages, violation of social and economic rights of women and girls. The different effects of economic insecurity have impacted women differently than men, with devastating ramifications on family and gender relations.

The rise of "anti-gender" movements and campaigns as well as attacks on organizations or protests against state laws promoting gender balance and equality in some participating States are worrisome.



It is therefore crucial that women are included in regional, national and local level processes aimed to support confidence building and conflict prevention. However, they are usually not invited to participate in the negotiations despite that including women's concerns and experiences can help ensure sustainable peacebuilding in the long term. The representation of women in the security sector, in conflict prevention and conflict resolution mechanisms remains disturbingly low. Globally women's participation in formal peace negotiations as well is minimal and ad hoc, averaging some 9% in 31 major peace processes between 1992 and 2011 for which such information is available. Sexual and gender-based violence in conflict is not being prosecuted and continues unabated whenever and wherever conflict erupts.

To date there are seven UN resolutions pertaining to Women, Peace and Security (WPS) adopted by the UN Security Council. The first UNSCR 1325, adopted by the Security Council unanimously in 2000, and subsequent resolutions represent the international legal framework calling for increased roles and representation of women in the security sector, in formal peace processes, in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as in transitional governments and post-conflict rehabilitation. They also stipulate taking into account gender analysis of peace and security issues as well as the prosecution of sexual violence as a weapon in war and conflict situations. More specifically, these resolutions established commitments and standards for:

- increasing women's representation in the security sector, in particular in senior management positions, to improve their impact in security related decision making;
- encouraging women to become an accountable part of peace and security structures;
- ensuring women's participation in and gender mainstreaming of peacekeeping missions, peace talks and processes aimed to prevent and resolve conflicts;
- involving women and gender perspectives in post-conflict rehabilitation and the rebuilding of societies after conflict;



- integrating gender aspects into curricula and resources for trainings of the security staff at all levels;
- creating national policies and plans with well-designed mechanisms for result-oriented implementation, monitoring and evaluation of UNSCRs and their commitments.

The increase of international commitments to fully recognize women's efforts in peace and security has gained momentum, not only on a global scale, but also on a regional and national level. There have been many positive factors in recent years influencing the enforcement of the WPS agenda and its relevant UN Security Council resolutions. At the end of 2013, UN Women undertook a Global Review of the national and regional implementation of global commitments on WPS. It assessed the legal, organizational and policy frameworks, the national strategies and the practical tools that national and regional actors have employed to implement the WPS agenda.

As at November 2014, national action plans were adopted in only 45 Member States. Effective implementation requires robust monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms, together with clearly allocated and well-funded budgets. It is obvious that the NAPs serve as a powerful tool for building national consensus and ownership in support of the respective UN Security Council Resolutions.

One of the widespread misconceptions related to 1325 is that it applies only to countries in conflict. However, 1325 and the subsequent resolutions are tools to gender mainstream any area related to peace and security. I am glad to point that at the end of 2013, Kazakhstan's Government expressed its intention to develop NAP on 1325. There are already national action plans for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Kyrgyzstan and in Tajikistan – which is a significant step towards recognition of the gendered impacts of conflict and for mainstreaming gender in the security sector and in peace processes. But there is still a lot to do to ensure the actual implementation of the international commitments in this area by the countries of Central Asia.



Since 2010, the issue of gender in conflict has become visible and debatable in the Central Asia region. Recent Sub-regional consultation on Beijing +20 touched upon progress and existing challenges for enforcement of WPS commitments, among them:

- Networks of women peace activists are an important resource in terms of developing a group of women with skills to serve as mediators in peace processes;

- The legislative framework necessary for the promotion of women's participation in peace building and conflict prevention processes is in place in all the Central Asian countries;

- However, there is inadequate attention to and a lack of application of the CEDAW Committee General Recommendation no. 30 on women in conflict and post-conflict situations as the key document that delineates recommendations for the realization of obligations under UNSCRs on WPS;

Women have a key role to play in peace and security:

- Women themselves have to take a leading role
- The participation of women should be guided by broader approaches for gender
 - There needs to be constant support and capacity development of women's networks/alliances
 - Focus should not be on women as victims but on their ability to be agents of peace.
 - Broader focus on the needs of vulnerable populations - refugees, returnees, stateless and IDPs
 - People-to people diplomacy between women affected by conflicts - skillful diplomacy and connections need to be supported
 - Women's role and participation and recruitment in security sector reforms must be formalized, and the recruitment of women in the security system, especially police officers should be prioritized
 - And it goes without saying that preventive diplomacy has to be applied to conflict prevention efforts in the region.



What we can suggest in the area of regional cooperation for security and stability:

- We suggest considering a comprehensive concept of SECURITY in the context of human security and include social, economic, political security, humanitarian and health security, etc.

- We highlight the need to recognize VAW as security threats and violation of women's human rights as security problems

- Since there is a need for a standardized and institutionalized approach, we would like to suggest regional and interstate organizations to develop concrete frameworks for how to practically implement UNSCR 1325 and the subsequent women peace and security resolutions

- To work closely with civil society organizations which are already undertaking initiative to support women in the peace and security agenda

- We see an importance of annual, open briefings on WPS issues by states with strong outreach to and engagement by civil society. A partnership with UNRCCA, UN Women, OSCE and other international development actors to enforce UNSCRs in conflict and post-conflict countries is highly important.

2015 provides us with good opportunities for advancing the WPS agenda: on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of UNSCR 1325, the Security Council will review the implementation of the resolution.

We call upon the countries of Central Asia to consider a strategy and action plan on how together to enforce WPS commitments and ensure gender responsive regional conflict prevention and stability.



Fact sheet on OSCE's added value on regional co-operation in Central Asia

1. OSCE's added value in Central Asia
 - OSCE in Central Asia is present through its Field Operations in all the five capitals, and in a number of Field Offices, which all together make up around 500 staff members.
 - This makes OSCE one of the largest international civilian presences on the ground.
 - We are in close contact with the host governments, and, by being present we gain a valuable first-hand insight into the needs of the host authorities and civil society as well as the actual day-to-day situation and developments.
 - Here in Kazakhstan, the OSCE is represented by the Centre in Astana with about 30 staff members.
 - Kyrgyzstan is the OSCE's second largest Field Operation in CA with nearly 200 staff members. The main office is in the capital Bishkek with a Field Office in the southern city of Osh and a Field Officer in Batken further south.
 - The OSCE Centre in Tajikistan is the biggest OSCE Field Operation in CA with almost 230 staff members. The Office has in total five field offices in Khujand in the north, Kurgan-Tyube in the south, Garm in the east, Kulyab in the south-east and Shaartuz further south.
 - In Uzbekistan, the OSCE has a Project Co-ordinator with about 20 staff members.
 - In Turkmenistan the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat employs about 25 staff members.
2. On the “CA region” or “Regional issues” or “regional co-operation”
 - There are a number challenges between Central Asian states that complicate their bilateral relations. These difficulties stem from an unresolved common history, competition over regional leadership, borders, water and energy.

- Therefore, finding a creative ways to encourage regional cooperation remains crucial, particularly in areas such transnational threats and common challenges. A good example is water.

- However, this is difficult because Central Asian states clearly prefer bilateral over multilateral approaches to co-operation in the region.

- The focus of the OSCE is therefore to promote regional wide initiatives, such as the OSCE Academy, BMSC, ICEXH and CA Youth Network.

- In particular, border management is important to promote regional relations, increase security and ease of trade; therefore the border management staff college in Tajikistan is a key initiative.

- Interaction between the new generations of young people who represent the leaders of Central Asia is a fundament for future regional co-operation.

- Both the OSCE Academy and the Central Asia Youth Network work precisely to bring together Central Asian students and challenge them to find new innovative solutions to common issues in their own region.

3. A highlight of four OSCE initiatives in the CA region

- Besides the large presence on the ground, the OSCE promotes regional co-operation through four major regional initiatives:

- The OSCE Academy in Bishkek;
- The Border Management Staff College in Tajikistan;
- The Central Asia Youth Network; and
- The Integrated Co-operation on Explosive Hazards Programme.

4. The OSCE Academy in Bishkek

- The Academy was established in 2002 and is today one of the OSCE's flagship projects in the region. The Academy was created to serve as a regional centre of postgraduate education and a forum for regional security dialogue and research.



- Today, two Masters Programmes are being taught at the Academy: Masters in Political Science with a focus on Central Asia (2004) and Masters in Economic Governance and Development (2011).
 - In addition to the Masters programmes, the Academy also provides professional training in areas such as journalism, public policy and conflict-sensitive development.
 - Since 2010, the Academy has successfully collaborated with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Afghanistan in arranging three-month internships for selected alumni of the Academy in the respective MFAs.
 - As of 2013, over 200 young professionals have graduated from the Academy's Masters programmes and over one hundred from its various professional skill-building training.
5. The Border Management Staff College (BMSC) in Tajikistan
- BMSC was opened in 2009 and is the first and the only international center for professional development of senior border officials from OSCE participating States and partner nations.
 - The BMSC works to enhance the knowledge of senior border security and management officials, while promoting greater co-operation and exchange of information among them.
 - The College serves the OSCE's 57 participating States and the OSCE partners for co-operation (11 countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Afghanistan and Australia).
 - The majority of OSCE participating States are facing border management challenges of a transnational nature. Therefore, sound border and security management is an increasingly important requirement.
 - The most common threats which BMSC deals with are terrorism, organized crime, trafficking of human beings, weapons and narcotics, difficult and long trade and transit routes and procedures, disputes that give rise to unresolved border delimitation and



demarcation, and challenges related to migration, asylum seekers and refugees.

- The College works to strengthen co-operation and capacities by ensuring and promoting open and secure borders across the OSCE area.

- It also serves as a centre of excellence and a vehicle for delivery of expertise and best practices in border management and security for the whole of the OSCE.

- Since 2009 nearly 2000 participants and experts from 40 different countries have been trained.

6. The Central Asia Youth Network (CAYN)

- CAYN is an annual Central Asian youth conference founded in 2004 to inspire and educate local youth by featuring speakers that bring new or rarely discussed ideas and perspectives.

- After several years of pause, CAYN was re-launched in 2009 at the initiative of the OSCE Centre in Astana to broaden the audience included in the security debate. In this respect, Centre in Astana has hosted CAYN events since 2009 including this year.

- CAYN was re-launched to raise awareness and promote research about threats to security and stability in Central Asia, which should not be limited only to government representatives and civil society professionals.

- Since its establishment it has allowed about 300 students from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Mongolia and Afghanistan come together.

- Students learn from prominent groups of experts, think tanks, representatives of civil society by engaging with them in an informal discussion about the challenges and security threats Central Asia is facing and on the role of youth in changing their communities.

7. The Integrated Co-operation on Explosive Hazards Programme (ICExH) in Tajikistan

- The ICExH was established in August 2013.



- ICExH is a system of mechanisms to support the participating States in Central Asia in addressing the concerns and challenges stemming from explosive hazards.
- Shared challenges and concerns regarding explosive hazards call for finding innovative approaches and synergies.
- Therefore, one of the key objectives of the ICExH is to develop capacity and technical assistance in responding to explosive hazards.
- The other key objective is to foster dialogue through technical cooperation, with and among individual participating States in Central Asia (CA).
- The potential of this interaction is that CA states may contribute to the stabilization of Afghanistan by addressing primarily explosive hazards-related issues, as well to exchange technical experience and best practices with Afghan experts.
- In training partnership with the US Army Central Command, the OSCE Office in Tajikistan has organized four regional training-of-trainers courses in 2014 including 40 students from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Armenia, Afghanistan and Tajikistan.
- Additionally, the OSCE Office in Tajikistan organized an exchange programme visit to Tajikistan in 2013, including 41 officials and professionals (both civilian and military) from Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, the United States, Lebanon, Tajikistan and international organizations (OSCE, ITF, FSD and UNMAS).



Final Report

Regional cooperation can be a guarantee of peace and security, and economic development. Countries that cooperate are less likely to experience major conflict with their neighbors, and people throughout the region are more able to benefit from shared resources. Analysts, economists, diplomats and civil society contend that greater cooperation in Central Asia will lead to increased development, prosperity and stability throughout the region. Yet, substantial regional cooperation in Central Asia remains frustratingly absent.

In order to examine this issue further, the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia (UNRCCA) brought over 30 experts and analysts from around the region and beyond together in Almaty on November 20 and 21, 2014, to review the current state of affairs of regional cooperation and to make recommendations about how to strengthen these relationships at a seminar on “Regional Cooperation as a Factor of Peace and Stability in Central Asia.” During the two-day seminar, participants discussed a range of topics such as lessons learned since independence, external and regional factors affecting cooperation, the links between cooperation and sustainable development, the role of regional organizations, the impact of Afghanistan, inter alia. They also came up with ideas and recommendations for strengthening cooperation in the region.

During the event, the experts discussed the challenges to cooperation. They highlighted the need to greatly increase the political will to work together, and to strengthen mutual trust. The participants identified issues that could help bring the countries of Central Asia closer together. They also examined examples of the role of regional organizations in promoting cooperation and cross-border programs and identified a number of fields for pursuing future, practical cooperation. This publication seeks to draw from, and summarize, those discussions, as well as make recommendations for further action by the governments of the region and by the international community.



Introduction

Central Asia is often called a region without a regional identity. Intra-regional competition for hegemony, preferences for bilateral over regional cooperation, and state- and nation-building processes offset incentives to work together and to deter common threats or even to profit from common benefits.

Indeed, today's independent countries fear that cooperation, or by extension, integration, would impede on their autonomy. They view closed borders and economies as markers of sovereignty. Part of this thinking stems from the fact that these five countries had been knit together into one larger economic unit as part of the Soviet Union, which was itself a closed system disconnected from the global economy. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the fabric knitting these countries together, so to speak, has come unraveled, while the weave (or, infrastructure) remains in place and generally oriented towards the past. Today, in order to fill this gap in cooperation, an "alphabet soup" of regional arrangements has materialized. The challenge, however, is not to propagate more and more organizations, but to foster cooperation through systemic restructuring, based on shared incentives, in order to integrate the countries of Central Asia as a region into the global economic system.

Cooperation on common issues is the key to meeting today's challenges in order to strengthen security and stability, as well as prosperity. As the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Central Asia, Miroslav Jenča put it at the workshop, "Many issues could be addressed through increased bilateral cooperation and closer ties with larger world powers, while other issues require a regional approach." The need for greater regional cooperation stretches beyond the boundaries of Central Asia.

Indeed, regional cooperation in Central Asia is an important aspect of the region's integration into the global system and economy. The region would become attractive for international investment and there would be positive incentives to strengthen democratic institutions and



rule of law. Since economic development must go hand-in-hand with stable democratic institutions, the region could become a hub of licit trade, rather than the abyss for illicit trade like it presently is. While a scenario of a prosperous, democratic Central Asian region at the cross roads of north-south and east-west trade routes is a long way off in the future, it need not be so with a strong vision and the willingness to work hard towards these aims.

The failure to cooperate, on the other hand, can have dire consequences for the region in terms of economic growth, the protection of human dignity, and security and stability. Competition for scarce resources, including political and economic power, can lead to internal strife, or trans-boundary conflicts. The disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, and resulting conflicts in the early- and mid-1990s is an extreme case in point. The countries of Central Asia themselves have not been without conflict: Tajikistan suffered a tragic civil war in the 1990s and Kyrgyzstan has twice experienced upheavals in government, for example. While the roots of these conflicts may differ, in all cases people were fighting for political power to control economic resources. Even Kazakhstan has recently experienced civil unrest in the form of riots in the western town of Zhanaozen in December 2011, when oil workers went on strike after police had fired on unarmed protestors. Likewise, there is no guarantee that Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan will not face some level of interstate conflict over access to water resources in the Ferghana Valley area.

While interstate conflict in Central Asia has been largely avoided thus far, the risk remains. Attention and valuable resources are devoted to protecting narrow interests rather than promoting broader growth. And, more to the point, the peoples and communities of Central Asia do not have the means to reach their full individual potential. For many, other than a small layer of economic and political elites, day-to-day life is a real struggle to get by. The challenges faced by Central Asia are numerous and well-known by anyone who is somewhat familiar with the area:



- Complicated electricity, hydropower and gas distribution arrangements
- Competition over resources such as land and water
- Climate change and environmental disasters
- The absence of economies of scale
- Insufficient, or no, access to global markets
- Illegal trade in drugs and small arms, and the trafficking of persons
- Weak democratic institutions, rule of law and respect for human rights
- Widespread corruption
- Organized crime
- The threat of terrorism from within and beyond the region
- The threat of violent (religious) extremism from within and beyond the region

Many of these issues will be touched upon in this publication as it explores how these challenges can be turned into opportunities for cooperation. All of these issues, of course, merit further examination, much of which has been done in many other fora too numerous and broad to list here.

Promotion of Regional Cooperation and Integration in the Future

So, how can cooperation in Central Asia be bolstered? And, what is actually meant by “regional cooperation” when speaking about the region? Is there a need for overarching structures and cooperation frameworks like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) or the European Union (EU)? Or, could a series of trade or issue-specific arrangements similar to the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) or the Central Asian Nuclear Free Zone (CANFZ) be sufficient?

Regional Cooperation in Central Asia: Time for a Paradigm Shift

After almost 25 years of independence and assorted efforts to strengthen cooperation, it is time to reframe the issue. The region's governments, international and regional organizations, civil society, and policy advisors within academia and think tanks need to think outside



the box in order to ask new questions and find new opportunities to pursue ambitious goals of regional integration into the global system. Policy makers need to look to the future rather than the past. The international community needs a paradigm shift in its thinking, and ultimately a fundamental reorientation of its policies and actions with respect to Central Asia. More attention needs to be given to fostering cooperation through systemic restructuring, based on common incentives, in order to integrate the countries of Central Asia as a region into the global economic system, and global networks. Strengthening regional cooperation will enable the peoples and countries of Central Asia to reach their individual potential and boost their prosperity by integration in to the 21st century global economy and networks. Success will not be easy, but the promise, and its foundation, are there.

Some areas that deserve greater attention include:

- *Promotion of regional cooperation through integration into global networks.* International organizations and financial institutions should focus on issues linking Central Asia into the global economy. Projects should have a regional and/or cross-border element in order to leverage economies of scale and make the region attractive to the global market. Exports need to be reoriented away from reliance on manufactured goods and natural resources, to include modern “soft supply” products. This approach will help the Central Asian republics integrate into global networks, and help counter the negative effects of climate change.

- *Greater cross-border cooperation through trade at both the micro and macro levels.* This should include working with the countries individually, as well as collectively, to promote open borders for legal trade, in order to make them unattractive for illegal trafficking, be it of drugs, people or weapons. Consideration should be given to the establishment of a Central Asian Free Trade Zone and a regional business chamber.

- *Prioritization of a new regional framework or agreement on energy transfer markets that include hydropower.* A broad spectrum of



international and regional organizations, including financial institutions, have worked with each of the Central Asian governments in the gas, electricity and hydropower sectors to help address energy needs – the key is to link these sectors into a more comprehensive regional framework in order to supply electricity to the entire region continuously. One way to do this could be to set up a Central Asian Energy Community that links water and energy and coordinates regional exchanges.

- *Integration of Central Asia into the global community through 21st century-oriented communications and greater connectivity.* Central Asia was at the heart of a profound exchange of ideas and goods during the days of the Silk Road. Today it should be a hub for a global trade and communication highway. Central Asia should receive more assistance to help these countries across the digital divide.

- *Maintenance of regional peace and stability.* Cooperation and integration are aspects of peace and stability. Strong democratic institutions, respect for rule of law, transparency and accountability, and civic participation are the basis for peaceful interstate relations. These principles should be at the core of any strategy to integrate Central Asia into the global system. It is time to establish a Central Asian dialogue on elaborating a set of guiding principles governing interstate relations to which each of the states could subscribe. Cooperation on security issues such as combating organized crime, various forms of trafficking, terrorism, and climate change, etc. will be easier if it is based on a set transparent of rules governing interstate relations.

- *The role of civil society and civic participation.* Civic participation, inclusive pluralism and social dialogue are essential to promoting regional cooperation and integration into global networks. Political parties, think tanks, NGOs, religious groups and other associations will seek to contribute to the policy-making process and shape its implementation. As women's groups, minority associations and other special-interest groups gain access to information and establish contacts across borders, they will demand greater accountability and transparency of their governments. Moreover,



investment in education will help train populations versed in the skills need to adapt and flourish in 21st century networks.

A Brief Look at the Past

Central Asia differs from most other regions of the world because today's independent states were part of one larger country for 70 years. The Soviet Union operated like a colonial empire and used industry, agriculture, finance, and communications networks to essentially knit its disperse territories into one large unit within a closed system, and to manage the transfer of resources from the periphery to the center. Thus, for example bauxite for the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic's (SSR's) aluminum plant came from the Ukrainian SSR, before being processed and then shipped on to Europe, with revenues going largely to Moscow. Apricots from the fertile Ferghana Valley were sold at markets in then Leningrad or Murmansk. Water in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan was exchanged for gas from Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan through a complex arrangement of water, hydropower, and gas exchanges. Over time, these connections proved highly durable, although highly problematic for independent countries as border and customs regimes – and politics – entered the picture.

When the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991, these systems were left essentially intact, and new trade routes grew up around these connections. Today, nearly 25 years after independence, cooperation between these independent countries is based largely on informal trade, supplemented by interstate exchanges. Tajikistan still obtains its bauxite from Ukraine and exports its aluminum to Europe via Russia. Apricots from the Ferghana Valley are still sold at markets in now St. Petersburg and Murmansk. And, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan still exchange hydropower for natural gas-based electricity from Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan in what has essentially become a barter system subject to political whims and intergovernmental relations.

People living in populous border communities with cross-border markets serving a larger area stand to gain a lot, but they also have a lot to lose. When times are good, border and customs officials are working



together, and inter-state rivalries are largely absent, economies and trade can flourish, and local traders can turn a tidy profit. Traders at the local market in Tajikistan's Free Economic Zone in Ishkoshim on the border with Afghanistan, or at the bazaar in Kyrgyzstan's Kara Suu on the border with Uzbekistan, for example, can generate a good income. But, even when times are good and there is cross-border cooperation, small-scale producers and traders face uncertainty and numerous challenges like when roads are in poor condition, foot paths and fields are strewn with landmines, or there is a scarcity of resources such as water. But, when borders are closed due to interstate disputes, or when customs and border officials extort "facilitation fees" (bribes), profits quickly dry up and people struggle to get by. Women are particularly hard hit by these problems because many men are away in Russia or elsewhere working as labor migrants.

Present-day "Alphabet Soup"

The need for cooperation is present at the local level. The challenge has been to promote cooperation between countries at the national level. Today, in order to fill the "cooperation gap" that opened in the wake of the Soviet Union's collapse, an "alphabet soup" of regional organizations cooperation initiatives has arisen, such as: the Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation countries (CAREC), the Central Asia Regional Information and Coordination Center (CARICC), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU)/Customs Union (CU), the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), inter alia (See Figure 1). Some of these organizations were established under pressure from Russia as Moscow tried to maintain its sphere of influence, while others are evidence of "balance of power" arrangements. Some of these instruments are backed by international organizations seeking to address a particular issue.

Additionally, there are a number of new "Silk Road" processes that the Central Asian countries participate in, and which help integrate them



into the broader neighborhood. These processes include: The Turkish-initiated Heart of Asia/Istanbul Process to promote security, political and economic dialogue and cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbors; the New Silk Road Initiative backed by the United States, which links Central and South Asia through building regional energy markets, fostering trade and transportation links, strengthening customs and border regimes, and promoting business and people-to-people contacts; and, more recently, China's Silk Road Economic Belt, which Beijing hopes will become a large trade and infrastructure network linking East Asia to Europe.

The presence of this “alphabet soup” raises some interesting questions. Have individual organizations and frameworks been effective up to this point in helping the countries of Central Asia address their various challenges through cooperation: Why or why not? The effectiveness of these organizations and initiatives varies. Some are proving useful, while others have seen their time pass – if they were ever relevant at all.

The approach to cooperation so far has been piecemeal. Is there a need for an overarching framework or organization? Kazakhstan, at various times, has proposed a Central Asian Union. The idea received lukewarm interest, at best. But, even if the political will among the five states could be generated, would an integrated union be useful and help the region tie into the global community? Is there a need (even if the political will were present) for a Central Asian version of the European Union or ASEAN? Or, could organizations like the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building (CICA), or Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation organization (APEC - in which none is a member) be sufficient for linking Central Asia into the broader world?

The European Union is certainly an interesting case study for Central Asia. Its foundation in the European Steel and Coal Community was a successful mechanism for building economic bridges between previously conflicting countries. Today, each of the 28 EU member



states trades largely with other member states. While finding ways to build economic bridges among the Central Asian countries and to promote regional cooperation is certainly useful, reliance upon other Central Asian states as primary trading partners would not likely bring the same benefits to each country because of the smaller size of markets and populations. In the author's view, increasing trade between the Central Asian republics is important and it should be supplemented by participation in regional organizations processes and issue-specific agreements. Participation in appropriate regional organizations will do more to help the Central Asian countries integrate both individually and regionally into the global system, provided that the organization is truly multilateral and not subservient to the interests or influence of one country.

Obstacles to Cooperation

A common theme heard in the Central Asian policy world is that each country is more willing to cooperate with external partners than with its regional neighbors. Yet, why do countries look for partners further afield when cooperation among neighbors is so crucial for each country individually, and the region as a whole, in order to benefit from access to global markets? Cooperation within the region is beset by a number of challenges ranging from: lack of political will and mistrust; absence of appropriate trade and market infrastructure, or conversely, trade and economic barriers; weak institutions and rule of law; democratic deficits; and the influence and competition of external actors.

Regional identity and hegemony

As noted at the outset of this publication, regional identity is very weak. The political will to work together or pool resources is absent, particularly from the countries with larger economies such as Uzbekistan, which finds it sufficient to merely subsist without much engagement with its neighbors. Uzbekistan's size vis a vis its neighbors like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan give it additional bargaining power that it would not have as part of a regional arrangement. Although Turkmenistan has opened up somewhat in the past few years, it remains



one of the most isolated countries in the world and has shown only limited interest in cooperating with its Central Asian neighbors. Kazakhstan pursues what it calls a “multi-vector” foreign policy that is focused on balancing its larger neighbors and seeking new partners further afield.

At the same time, Kazakhstan, has advanced some regional initiatives such as the Central Asia Nuclear Free Zone, although its 2007 proposal to establish a Union of Central Asian States never materialized – in large part because of a lack of interest and capacity among its neighbors to pursue a common goal. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are open to cooperation, but are constrained by their widespread poverty, poor infrastructure, geography and democratic deficits. In efforts to overcome their constraints, they back almost every donor initiative to create a new regional arrangement or organization, and clamor to join economic arrangements backed by Russia or other influential countries.

Rivalry between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan for hegemony has not made regional cooperation any easier. Over the years, their approaches to securing influence have differed. Kazakhstan seeks to position itself in the global arena, while Uzbekistan isolates itself through hardening its geographic and economic borders. In spite of their different paths, cooperation will not become any easier in the foreseeable future barring any major changes in policy, or even governance.

Low political will, high mistrust

Political will for regional cooperation is a scarce resource commodity. Each of these countries views cooperation as an encroachment on their national sovereignty. It appears that they believe cooperation is a win-lose situation, rather than a win-win opportunity. Indeed, basic interstate agreements, necessary for the functioning of any state, are often seen as “giving something up.” Thus, border demarcation and delimitation agreements in parts of the region have stalled since concluding an agreement would be tantamount to ceding territory to a neighbor – and with one that often cannot be trusted, according to common perceptions. Likewise, water-sharing agreements



at the local, national and regional levels are fraught with a win-lose mentality: “what goes to my neighbor cannot go to me.” Bargained agreements and power games such as these and others become the seeds of mistrust hindering broader cooperation.

Mistrust is a tool used by all the governments, and even peoples, of Central Asia to justify the lack of substantial regional cooperation. They contend that problems in neighboring countries such as the illicit drug trade and trafficking networks, organized crime, religious extremism, and the potential for terrorism hinder cooperation, rather than justify it. Indeed, these threats, coupled with varying capacities to address them, feed into the presence of mistrust and reduce the political will to work together. Working together to address these challenges, however, would actually build trust.

In reality, it is the root causes of these threats that are the real barriers to cooperation, both within the region and between regions. Networks of illicit drug trading and other types of trafficking are symptoms of a much greater sickness. Organized crime syndicates arise in societies suffering from kleptocracy, corruption, weak democratic institutions, and weak rule of law. The propensity for terrorism arises when individuals or groups become marginalized from mainstream public life and societal decision-making processes.

Weak Rule of Law

The “(mis)rule” of law, weak democratic institutions, and restrictions on civil society make countries unattractive as trade partners, both at the interstate and corporate levels. At the macro level, countries lack assurances that their trading partners will enforce agreements. At the micro level, businesses and investors do not have confidence that their contracts will be honored, or that they would be treated fairly in the event of a dispute. Additionally, the costs of doing business in countries with weak rule of law increase because of high corruption and the prevalence of organized crime. Corrupt officials and organized criminal syndicates often feed off the most vulnerable, or the most visible – in this case businesses – while often being tacitly condoned by officialdom.



Likewise, the profits from trade cooperation, which would normally be channeled back into the community or infrastructure, are siphoned off into private accounts.

Weak rule of law and democratic institutions also generate an environment of distrust, hampering the political will necessary to work together. As discussed above, mistrust and the absence of political will are two of the biggest obstacles to cooperation. Thus, efforts to strengthen the rule of law and democratic institutions must be undertaken.

Trade barriers and high economic borders

But, even if the political will to cooperate was present, the actual ability to do so at present is limited. The countries of Central Asia are not appealing for international trade or investment. One reason for this unattractiveness is the presence of significant trade barriers – both formal and informal – and high economic borders. The International Finance Corporation (IFC) gives Central Asia and Russia abysmal scores for trade across borders (See figure 1). Only Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan make it into the top 100 countries for doing-business, and yet they, along with the other Central Asian republics are more or less isolated from global trade networks.

Figure 1

Country	Trade Across Borders	Ease of Doing Business (overall ranking)
Kazakhstan	186	50
Kyrgyzstan	182	68
Tajikistan	188	143
Turkmenistan	NA	NA
Uzbekistan	189	146
Russia	157	92

Source: "Doing Business 2014: Europe and Central Asia."



Informal trade barriers constitute another reason why the region is unattractive for trade. Foreign trade is beset by many challenges or informal barriers, not the least of which are difficulties in starting and operating a small business, contradictory regulations, the misapplication of regulations for private economic gain, corruption, inefficient borders and customs procedures, high import and export tariffs – the list can go on. Highlighting these informal barriers is the example of the Canadian firm “Centerra Gold,” operating the Kumtor gold mine in eastern Kyrgyzstan, which faces dubious legal woes, in addition to the struggle of exporting gold out of the country through its isolated and dilapidated infrastructure.

Likewise, the region is unappealing for international trade and investment due to the lack of infrastructure and the small scale of its markets, both of individual countries, and of the region as a whole. The vast distances, rugged terrain, extreme weather and poor or absent road and rail links are also disincentives for trading or investing in Central Asia, particularly since local and regional markets are generally small and unprofitable. Thus, bringing Kazakhstani-manufactured goods to markets in India, for example, is prohibitively expensive (oil and gas exports are an exception). And, the reverse is also true, importing manufactured goods from the United Arab Emirates, for example, to Uzbekistan, is often cost prohibitive.

Road and rail links from Central Asia are centered primarily on Russia and some of the larger republics of the former Soviet Union – today's Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). These transportation routes reflected Russia's position as the center of internal trade during the Soviet Union, as well as production and manufacturing patterns. Today, many of these routes are still in place, showing Russia's still prominent role as a major trading partner of the Central Asian republics. Increasingly, however, new transportation links with China, as well as to the Caspian and Arabian Sea regions, are emerging as the countries of Central Asia seek new trading partners.



External factors

Russia, for its own political and economic reasons, wants to maintain its influence in Central Asia. Moscow has pushed for a number of arrangements such as the CIS political alliance, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) security association, and a plethora of economic groupings. The five countries of Central Asia have generally willingly or unwillingly joined Russian-backed initiatives. The Central Asian governments' uneasiness about pursuing structured relationships with “western” organization increased significantly after Russia's illegal occupation and annexation in 2014 of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula after talks on EU association, and its military intervention in Georgia in 2008 after Tbilisi announced its desire to join NATO.

The Russian-backed Customs Union (CU) or Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), like its forerunners, appears to be a trading bloc to promote the interests of Russia vis a vis China. Kazakhstan agreed to join the CU, which came into force in January 2015, as part of its “multi-vector” foreign policy to balance the interests of larger powers, but made it clear that it was only joining an economic union rather than a political bloc. Kyrgyzstan, afraid of isolation between Kazakhstan and Russia on one side and China on the other, clamored to join the CU too. While the CU purports to create a single economic market, there is evidence at this point that it will not reverse protectionist measures any more successfully than its predecessors.

China, for its part, is actively seeking new markets in Central Asia. Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed to establish a “Silk Road Economic Belt,” stretching from China to Germany via Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Russia, during a speech at the Nazarbayev University in September 2013. A Chinese analyst recently described the economic belt idea as, “an integration initiative to give greater impulse to regional cooperation through collaboration on infrastructure development.” And, in order to bring its vision to reality, China is bringing money to the table. Beijing has plans to establish an Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) by the end of 2015 and has



recruited nearly 30 other countries from the Asia-Pacific region and Europe to join the bank. The bank's mission would be to collaborate on and jointly fund infrastructure development projects in the Silk Road Economic Belt (as well as along the corridor of the Maritime Silk Road for the 21st Century). So far, none of the countries of Central Asia have signed up to join the AIIB, but presumably, they could become recipients of infrastructure investments once the bank is up and running.

In the meantime, how will the countries of Central Asia balance membership in trade alliances like Russia's economic union with participation in China's Silk Road initiative? The competing geopolitical agendas and economic priorities of these initiatives could eventually lead to a clash of interests. Will the Central Asian countries be able to align themselves with both initiatives? Or, will they have to choose one over another? Or, neither, in order to maintain balance-of-power relations with both Moscow and Beijing? Since the launch of the CU, Kazakh officials admit to having to negotiate its free trade deals with China with Russia and Belarus (also a member of the CU) in order to alleviate conflict of interest concerns.

Russia is also already nervous about competition from China and is likely to become more so if and when the SREB materializes. How will Moscow react when one or more countries in the region turn toward China? If the association goals of Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine with the European Union integration are any example, the Central Asian republics can expect a bumpy road ahead and roadblocks on global integration for the region.

Thus, it will be important to help the countries of Central Asia to develop links in many directions: north, east, west and southwards. Over the past 20 years, there have been many efforts to re-establish cultural, economic and political links with Afghanistan and south Asia. These endeavors have intensified in the past few years as Afghanistan takes on more responsibility for its own governance since the drawdown of the international security forces in 2014. Tajikistan, in particular, is building up its broad spectrum of political, economic and cultural ties.



Kazakhstan has provided humanitarian assistance. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, while seeking trade markets, have generally kept a certain distance from Afghanistan.

The U.S.-promoted New Silk Road seeks to strengthen relations between Central Asia and Afghanistan and beyond through promoting “physical connectivity” by developing transportation, communications and energy infrastructure and trade links. The EU's Central Asia strategy also seeks to promote stronger trade and economic relations between the two regions, as well as with Afghanistan. The Turkish-initiated Heart of Asia – Istanbul process has broad buy-in from countries in the region and beyond. One of its central tenets is to promote regional trade between Central Asia and Afghanistan. While the objectives of each of these initiatives varies, their common denominator is that the countries of Central Asia will have to open their markets and tear down trade barriers in order to really benefit from these initiatives.

Modern Approaches to Cooperation on the Silk Road

What are the prospects for regional cooperation in and with Central Asia? During the heyday of the Silk Road era, traders laden with exotic goods travelled in caravans, navigating with rough maps and guided by the stars. Since independence, the international community, including financial institutions and development banks and bilateral countries, has encouraged the Central Asian republics to cooperate. They have focused, for the most part, on a 20th century development agenda. Looking ahead, a modern concept for the Silk Road is needed. “What ... Central Asia may need ... is a fundamental re-conception of its 'business idea' in the world market and of its contribution to the global economy,” with the “business idea” being an overall strategy for entering global networks.

Today, with the benefit of experience and modern technology, it is possible develop a roadmap, or a “business idea,” with new concepts and objectives. But, the political will is needed – both among the governments and peoples of Central Asia, as well as within the international community – to embark upon such a path. As one



prominent Central Asia expert declared at the UNRCCA conference in Almaty on regional cooperation in November 2014, “there is a need to focus less on obstacles and more on opportunities.” Indeed, it is time now to focus on the benefits of opportunities, rather than the costs of challenges. This is not to say that challenges should be written off or forgotten. Rather, it is time to recognize that the costs of challenges will be offset by the benefits of opportunities. In other words, it costs more not to cooperate. An examination of the opportunities can point the way ahead for promoting regional cooperation and integration into global networks.

While the historical Silk Road era was famed for the transit of goods over vast distances, traders also exchanged ideas and innovations. The resumption of this latter role is needed in order to bring Central Asia into the 21st century and enter global networks. What do these networks look like? Global exchanges depend on a mobile labor force, digital connectivity, knowledge-based economies and “soft supply” chains. There is a need, therefore, to rethink regional cooperation, in order for the Central Asian countries to be competitive in such an environment.

Developing the Roadmap for the Future: Priorities for Regional Cooperation in Central Asia and its Integration into Global Networks in the 21st Century

“The world is changing and ... Central Asia must change with it.” Global networks are appearing, and characterized by decentralized production, the rise of services and knowledge-based economies, and growing interconnectivity. Central Asia needs to become a part of this development. To do so, the region needs to tear down its “economic borders, which are among the highest in the world in order to help the region's countries achieve ... four main economic goals: to maximize the potential of their energy resources, integrate into global supply chains, create a diversified economic base and develop a high-standard workforce.” Likewise, as efforts are made to tie Central Asia into modern global networks, the negative impact of climate change will have to be addressed.



So far, most efforts to promote regional cooperation in Central Asia has focused on cooperation within the region, or between the region and its immediate neighbors: Russia, China and Afghanistan. There have been some initiatives to promote cooperation with Europe as well, albeit to a lesser extent. Likewise, much of the attention has been on advancing the trade of manufactured goods, extractive resources and produce. Analysts from the World Economic Forum reframed the discussion on trade and asked whether “As the world economy grows increasingly immaterial under the effects of technological change, could Central Asia overcome its landlocked status by tapping into soft supply chains?” Indeed, the countries of Central Asia need to expand their export bases from limited manufactured goods, natural resources and produce to include “soft” exports necessary for a knowledge-based, digital, global economy.

Trade and Commerce

Trade both benefits from and drives cooperation. Thus, trade promotion is a key factor in linking Central Asia to the broader international community. Central Asia can benefit from intra- and inter-regional trade. But, is the reverse true? Is it beneficial for other regions to trade with Central Asia? The region is landlocked and has a difficult terrain. Markets are generally too small to be appealing for these countries to become important trading partners with its immediate neighbors, let alone for countries further afield. Markets for consumer and many manufactured goods may be small, but the countries of Central Asia have a number of resources that its trading partners want: hydropower (see below); gas and oil; minerals, rare earth elements and semi-precious stones; and cotton and grains or other agricultural produce. Efforts need to be directed to developing “soft” industries such as telecommunications. Several of the region’s present industries, such as resource extraction, for example, are not attractive to investors because of the presence of high corruption and low transparency and accountability. Therefore, efforts to promote natural resource extraction and other sectors need to go hand-in-hand with a strong push to combat



corruption, and to promote transparency, accountability and rule of law. These countries also need to develop advanced technology industries, the “soft supplies” in order to catch up and move into a knowledge-driven, digital, 21st century global economy.

In order to harness the power of trade and its corollary, investment, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan have been developing free trade zones (FTZ), primarily along their borders with China and Afghanistan. These young FTZ show varying levels of success. Tajikistan has set up several FTZ, including two along its border with Afghanistan at Nizhny Panj and Ishkoshim, and one in Sughd region near Tajikistan's borders with Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The Sughd FTZ, the longest in operation, is beginning to pay dividends. It attracted initial investment from Poland and Cyprus to manufacture solar water heaters and plastics. This free trade zone benefits from relatively well-developed infrastructure and its location along a historical trading route in the populous Ferghana Valley. In contrast, Astana has launched a pilot FTZ project called the Khorgos International Center for Boundary Cooperation in an isolated area on its border with China, which has not delivered positive results for Kazakhstan. While the success of individual free trade zones has been mixed so far, establishing a region-wide free trade zone or open market could help facilitate trade among the Central Asian republics, as well as make them collectively more attractive as a trading partner with other countries and regions. A region-wide open market could create economies of scale and generate substantial and sustainable economic growth. An impact assessment demonstrating the benefits of a regional free trade zone or open market is needed in order to generate interest among the business communities and the political will to pursue such an initiative.

Before trade can become central to promoting the region's entry into global markets, however, the Central Asian countries will need to do more than establish ad hoc free trade zones. These countries need to break down their “economic barriers” – both the formal, protectionist policies, and the informal practices. Practices such as: complex and



outdated import clearance procedures, time delays, and corruption, hinder trade and undermine connections with the broader international community. While Kazakhstan, and to a lesser extent Kyrgyzstan, has sought to bring down these barriers, all five countries need to make a substantial and concerted effort to reduce these barriers in order to benefit from greater trade volumes.

The establishment of a regional business chamber could help promote trade among the countries of Central Asia, as well as the need for a region-wide free trade zone. A regional chamber of commerce could also advocate for policies to reduce the formal and informal economic barriers to trade and commerce.

On a broader scale, there are some framework initiatives to integrate Central Asia into broader global networks that include trade components. Arrangements such as the “Heart of Asia” process, or the “New Silk Road,” have the potential to expand existing, and develop new, trade networks with Central Asia serving as a land bridge for east and west, north and south. The task will be to link these framework initiatives more broadly into regions in the Asia-Pacific or the Middle East and North Africa and other emerging markets, in other words, to tap into global networks, particularly as the world's economic center gravitates towards Asia.

Transportation and Transit

Transportation and transit links are the hardware that tie countries together. Governments of the region have sought substantial international investments to help rebuild and expand the physical links between their countries in order to build routes to export goods. The land routes of the fabled Silk Road are undergoing a renaissance and being adapted and modernized to accommodate trains and lorries rather than camels and horses.

INSERT MAP OF ROAD, RAIL LINES

Several international organizations and financial institutions are helping the countries of Central Asia to weave a modern-day Silk Road transit network: the Asian Development Bank's “Central Asia Regional



Economic Countries” (CAREC) program, the European Union’s “Transport Corridor, Europe, Caucasus and Asia” (TRACECA) program, and the newly-established, Russian-led “Eurasian Economic Union” (EEU) or Customs Union (CU). So far, most of the focus has been on connecting Central Asia with Russia, China, Afghanistan, and to a lesser extent with Europe. Many of these routes parallel historical or 20th century trading patterns stemming from the region’s landlocked geography and geopolitical location as part of the former Soviet Union. While it is impossible to change geography, it is possible to link Central Asia into emerging markets in the Middle East and North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Asia/Pacific through developing modern-day, technology-based industries.

Both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan can serve as transit hubs. They are the focus of most initiatives to expand north-south and east-west transit corridors. Turkmenistan, in spite of its neutrality, or, perhaps, due to its neutrality, has been quietly connecting with the broader community, through building roads, railways and pipelines. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan tend to be at the periphery of transportation and transit networks, largely due to the challenges of constructing roads and railways through mountainous terrain. The test for these two countries will not be to overcome their geography; rather it will be to construct an efficient and cost-effective transportation infrastructure to connect the northern and southern halves of each country, as well as to connect them with the larger inter-regional transportation networks.

These physical links of roads between countries and regions are essential, yet insufficient alone for tapping into global networks. Energy corridors through the expansion and construction of pipelines and hydropower connections will further connect the region into the global community. Likewise, modern telecommunications links will be essential for entering 21st century global networks.

Water and Energy Supplies

Water and energy are national security issues for each country individually, as well as collectively. Indeed, water supply, including



hydropower, and energy supply are politically sensitive issues in a region known for its zero-sum-game approach to inter-state relations, and often flashpoints of contention. While water and energy supplies are often a source of confrontation, they can – and should – also be a driver of cooperation.

Water and energy markets are treated as separate issues stemming from the frameworks and practices established during the Soviet Union period. Yet, they are flip sides of the same coin in Central Asia. In upstream countries like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, water is in large supply and converted to hydropower in the summer. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan depend on gas-based electricity from downstream countries like Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to meet their energy needs, especially during the winter. Downstream countries, in contrast, depend on the water during the summer for irrigation. The downstream countries, particularly Uzbekistan, use gas supplies as a bargaining tool to achieve other political aims and pressure the upstream states.

The current supply and distribution systems are unsustainable in the best case scenario, and the sources of interstate tensions and conflicts in the worst case scenario. The region faces two significant challenges in overcoming tensions over water and energy: first, the Central Asian republics need to move beyond the source of tensions arising from “all or nothing” thinking in which one country's gain is seen as another country's loss; and second, the water and energy markets need to be connected.

There is a substantial benefit to cooperation on water and energy issues that outweigh the costs of not cooperating. By integrating energy supply markets in the region, generating an energy surplus, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan can export sufficient oil and gas upstream, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan can export hydropower downstream, and Uzbekistan can reap the benefits of exports of both commodities in each direction.

An “Energy Community for Central Asia,” modeled on the Energy Community of South East Europe could help the region evolve from



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being energy deficient into being energy rich. A regional energy community could serve as a transparent platform for negotiating appropriate pricing for hydropower and gas electricity, as well as advocate for common policies to regulate markets, for example. Likewise, an energy community could help counter suspicions and build trust among the Central Asian countries.

The current state of affairs is far from moving in such a direction. Yet, there are some promising initiatives. The World Bank launched a regional energy-water development program in 2010 to provide policy-makers with data and tools to address water and energy comprehensively. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) launched an Energy Action plan under the auspices of its CAREC program in 2009 to promote the expansion of the existing networks and development of new sources of energy. Although the ADB's action plan focuses primarily energy derived from oil, gas and coal, it does address the links with hydropower. The UN's Economic Commission for Europe has also set up a regional dialogue on water and energy cooperation that promotes the efficient and sustainable use of water resources based on energy independence and cooperation.

Telecommunications and Connectivity

Central Asia is not only as a land bridge for trade or a source for natural resources. The region could be a potential link into a vast interconnected telecommunications network. Right now, however, the picture is bleak. Central Asia is more or less an empty space when it comes to connectivity with the broader world. As with the development of land connections, the advancement of digital connections faces immense challenges in terms of overcoming the region's isolated geography and difficult terrain. Infrastructure is currently limited or non-existent, and governments enforce strict controls over use of the Internet and digital communications. Digital connectivity is difficult to imagine in areas that suffer from power outages and widespread poverty. Yet, as investments are made in developing basic infrastructure, planning must take into account the needs of the 21st century and priority be given to hooking up the region into global telecommunications networks.



Initial attention to Central Asia's digital divide is emerging. As a starting point, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) conducted a study of broadband infrastructure in Central Asia and found that the region is at a distinct disadvantage for broadband infrastructure and access to cost-effective broadband due to higher actual cable infrastructure and transit costs. To counter this, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have joined a UNESCAP initiative to improve telecommunications connectivity with Afghanistan, Azerbaijan and Pakistan, called the Asian Information Superhighway Initiative. Further work needs to be done to draw in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Peace and Stability

Trade, resource extraction, efficient transit routes, energy markets and modern telecommunications infrastructure, in other words – the tools for integration into global networks – assume a certain level of transparency, accountability and rule-based order, which is not yet present in the region. Foreign investment necessary for such a fundamental restructuring is attracted to countries with stable economies, and increasingly towards emerging market countries. At present, however, none of the CA republics are considered emerging markets, which makes attracting large-scale investments, especially from bilateral countries or the private sector, difficult.

Indeed, the Central Asian republics tend to rate as some of the world's worst performers on transparency and human rights indices. Advancing the priorities set forth in this publication go hand-in-hand with strengthening democracy and rule of law, and combating corruption and organized crime. These areas are the focus of many organizations' work and publications – thus, this publication does not examine them in detail.

As noted at the outset of this publication, the challenges to peace and stability in Central Asia such as the threats of terrorism, illegal trafficking in drugs and people, and organized crime, inter alia, are often used as reasons not to cooperate, rather than as reasons to cooperate. Security cooperation, on issues such as these, is a crucial underpinning



for regional cooperation and integration into global networks, and ultimately, peace and stability in the region. Yet, regional security cooperation has been curiously lacking from the discourse about cooperation in and with Central Asia – due largely to the deep mistrust between countries, lack of political will and competition for influence.

Therefore, while there are multiple regional arrangements to promote general cooperation or trade, there are very few forums for promoting security cooperation in its broadest sense in the region. All five countries are members of the OSCE, which is premised on the 10 Helsinki principles of: sovereignty, restraint from the use or threat of force, inviolability of frontiers, territorial integrity, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-intervention in internal affairs, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, equal rights and self-determination, cooperation among states, and fulfilment in good faith international obligations. Both CSTO and SCO have limited security cooperation. Neither of these organizations has founding principles governing interstate relations, except the CSTO, which gives Russia the right to veto military arrangements of its member states with third countries. CICA has founding principles similar to those of its OSCE model, but without the wherewithal to implement its programs, in spite of regular high-level meetings and declarations.

In order to advance peace and security, and indeed, cooperation and integration, it is time to start an open-ended regional dialogue on basic principles governing interstate relations and security cooperation in Central Asia. The OSCE, CICA, and potentially, ASEAN, could be models. A formal structure is not necessary; rather there could be a multilateral agreement or framework as an ultimate goal.

Civil Society and Civic Participation

Civic society will have a greater role in the 21st century as interconnectedness grows, and especially because people have greater access to information, and to each other across borders. Non-governmental actors will continue to demand greater input into decision-making processes and policy – and they will continue to seek to hold governments accountable for their actions. Likewise, civil society actors

will increasingly engage with each other across borders and create international networks.

Currently, the Central Asian republics struggle with accepting the necessity of civic participation and the analogous role of civil society. Civil society and civic participation can be an essential motivator for the countries of Central Asia to cooperate and integrate into global networks – if allowed to do so. Many organizations, bilateral countries and non-governmental organizations are urging the Central Asian governments to accept civil society in a painstakingly slow process. This work, while beyond the scope of this publication, must continue.

Broadly defined here, civic participation consists of the opportunity and capacity for individuals and groups to contribute to shaping and implementing policy. Two underlying principles are the concepts of pluralism based on broad inclusion and diverse opinions, and social dialogue between the government and people. Thus, women's groups, minority associations, and special-interest organizations, will have greater roles to play in engaging governments in public dialogue on priorities for cooperation and advancement of cooperation policies. In other words, civic participation should incorporate a diverse spectrum of needs and views. Likewise, civil society will be instrumental in expanding broad people-to-people contacts between countries.

Likewise, effective education and knowledge transfers underpin civic participation. Investments into schools and universities will be crucial in order to keep up with the fast pace of change, particularly in the fields of science, technology and services.

A special word about climate change and green investment and economies

Climate change has already negatively impacted Central Asia and will continue to do so. The Aral Sea catastrophe is just the beginning of a downhill trajectory, unless climate change can be addressed and slowed down. While not fully discouraging manufacturing, land-based transportation and natural resource extraction, this publication has sought to promote a re-orientation of these industries towards services



and infrastructure necessary to succeed in the 21st century, many of which have a smaller environmental impact. The UNRCCA, financial institutions, and development organizations can and should be encouraged to urgently explore options for countering the negative impact of climate change, and for promoting green investment and economies.

In Conclusion

Promoting regional cooperation and integration into modern global networks is difficult. Competition for regional hegemony, preferences for bilateral over regional cooperation, state- and nation-building processes and security challenges offset incentives to work together to deter common threats or even to profit from common benefits. Overcoming these challenges is imperative because cooperation can be an important factor guaranteeing regional peace and stability in Central Asia. The failure to cooperate, on the other hand, can have dire consequences for the region in terms of economic growth, the protection of human dignity, and security and stability.

In order to help promote cooperation, an “alphabet soup” of regional organizations has materialized. The task now is to foster greater cooperation through a fundamental re-orientation of, and a systemic restructuring of, “cooperation infrastructure” based on shared incentives in order to integrate the region into 21st century global networks.

While the challenges are numerous, cooperation and integration are not impossible. Indeed, the promising foundations for regional cooperation and integration into 21st century networks are present. While a scenario of a prosperous, democratic Central Asian region at the cross-roads of north-south and east-west trade routes is at present a future aim, it need not be so with a strong vision and the willingness to work hard towards these goals.

In this context, several following priorities emerge:

- In order to help Central Asia integrate into global networks, attention should be given to developing new, 21st century industries such as telecommunications.



- Greater cross-border trade at the micro and macro levels should be promoted. Setting up a regional business chamber and developing a Central Asian Free Trade Zone are two ways to promote trade at both levels.

- Prioritization of a new regional framework or agreement on energy transfer markets that include hydropower. Consideration should be given to the establishment of a “Central Asian Energy Community.”

- Regional peace and stability should be promoted. It is time to establish a regional dialogue on principles governing interstate relations.

- The role for civil society and civic participation should be protected and promoted.

The time has come for a paradigm shift in how the international community and governments of the region pursue cooperation in Central Asia. It is time to reimagine the Silk Road as a 21st century hub in global networks.



Annexes/Presentations

Country	Major Imports	Major Import Partners	Major Exports	Major Export Partners
Kazakhstan	Machinery and equipment, metal products, foodstuffs	China – 28% Ukraine – 11% Germany – 8.5% U.S. – 8%	Oil and oil products, natural gas, ferrous metals, chemicals, machinery, grain, wool, meat, coal	China – 19% Italy – 18% Netherlands – 8% France – 7% Switzerland – 6% Austria – 6%
Kyrgyzstan	Oil and gas, machinery and equipment, chemicals, foodstuffs	China – 55% Russia – 17% Kazakhstan – 8%	Gold, cotton, wool, garments, meat, tobacco, mercury, uranium, electricity, machinery, shoes	Kazakhstan – 26% Uzbekistan – 26% Russia – 15% China – 7% UAE – 6% Afghanistan – 5%
Tajikistan	Petroleum products, aluminum oxide, machinery and equipment, foodstuffs	Russia – 22% Kazakhstan – 15% China – 15% Lithuania – 5% Kyrgyzstan – 4% Turkey – 4% Iran – 4%	Aluminum, electricity, cotton, fruits, vegetable oil, textiles	Turkey – 41% Russia – 11% Iran – 10% Afghanistan – 9% China – 7% Kazakhstan – 7% Switzerland – 7%
Turkmenistan	Machinery and equipment, textiles, foodstuffs	China – 20% Turkey – 17% Russia – 13% UAE – 7% Ukraine – 6% Germany – 5% UK – 4%	Gas, crude oil, petrochemicals, textiles, cotton fiber	China – 70% Italy – 5%
Uzbekistan	Machinery and equipment, foodstuffs, chemicals, ferrous and non-ferrous metals	Russia – 21% China – 17% South Korea – 16% Kazakhstan – 13% Germany – 5% Turkey – 4% Ukraine – 4%	Energy products, cotton, gold, mineral fertilizers, ferrous and nonferrous metals, textiles, food products, machinery and automobiles	China – 21% Kazakhstan – 16% Turkey – 16% Russia – 15% Bangladesh – 10% Kyrgyzstan – 4%

Information from the CIA World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>, accessed on April 1, 2015



Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AiIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
APEC	Asian Pacific Economic Council
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CAREC	Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation countries
CARICC	Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center for Combating the Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and their Precursors
CEFTA	Central Europe Free Trade Agreement
CICA	Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
CU	Customs Union
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
EURASEC	Eurasian Economic Community
FEZ/FTZ	Free Economic Zone/Free Trade Zone
IFAS	International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SPECA	Special Program for the Economies of Central Asia
SREB	Silk Road Economic Belt
SSR	Soviet Socialist Republic
TRACECA	Transport Corridor Europe, Caucasus, Asia
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNRCCA	UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia
WB	World Bank



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