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CENTRAL ASIA: Rising Islamism reshapes state relations



Monday, August 28 2006

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SUBJECT: Rising Islamist activity in the Ferghana Valley.

SIGNIFICANCE: A sharp rise in sporadic violence, most likely spurred by radical Islamist groups operating from the Ferghana Valley, has increased insecurity in Central Asia. However, it has also provided a stimulus for greater inter-state cooperation between the governments of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

ANALYSIS: Most of the Ferghana Valley falls within the territory of Uzbekistan, but some parts extend to southern Kyrgyzstan and northern Tajikistan. The area is densely populated, resulting in competition between various ethnic communities and clans for scarce land, water and housing.

Islamist movements. Although a number of splinter movements clustered around charismatic individuals have appeared over the past decade, the two most influential Islamist groups in the region have been the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT -- The Party of Liberation), which emerged in Jordan and Palestine in the early 1950s. Since 2002, the IMU has also been known as the Islamic Movement of Turkestan (IMT), reflecting its self-proclaimed pan-Turkic remit. Both the IMU and HT have the same ostensible aim: to create an Islamic caliphate across Central Asia, governed by sharia law. The IMU/IMT pursues this objective through armed resistance, while HT maintains that its methods rely exclusively on peaceful persuasion. Both organisations are banned in all three Central Asian states.

Revived IMU. The IMU's main focus in the late 1990s was to overthrow the regime of President Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan. However, the organisation was seriously weakened in late 2001, while fighting alongside the Taliban against US forces in Afghanistan's Kunduz province (see [UZBEKISTAN: Strikes signal growth of Islamic threat - August 5, 2004](#)). The remnants of the IMU have since reconstituted themselves as the IMT, and appear to be behind a series of small explosions in Bishkek and Osh in 2003. They have also linked up with the previously unknown Islamic Jihad Group that has claimed responsibility for suicide bombings against the US and Israeli embassies in Tashkent in July 2004. Recent IMU/IMT activities have focused on northern Tajikistan and southern Kyrgyzstan.

Government crackdown. The recent months have seen an escalation in violent shootouts on Kyrgyzstan's borders. In February, a group of suspected IMU activists freed several fellow militants from a detention centre in northern Tajikistan. On May 12, members of this group, comprising Tajik, Kyrgyz and Uzbek nationals, attacked a border post in

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[UZBEKISTAN: Strikes signal growth of Islamic threat - August 5, 2004](#)

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[KYRGYZSTAN: Revolution disillusion many one year on - April 4, 2006](#)

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[KYRGYZSTAN: State pursues a defined security agenda - December 28, 2005](#)

see [CIS: CSTO transformation targets Central Asia - July 28, 2006](#)

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Tajikistan, killing nine people before being eliminated by security forces two days later. A major security sweep that followed across southern Kyrgyzstan led to:

- the arrest of several suspected IMU members;
- the killing of five suspected IMU members in Jalalabad in July; and
- the shooting by security forces in early August of a group of people, including a popular imam from the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border town of Korasuv, Rafik Kamalov.

Kyrgyzstan's National Security Service initially said that Kamalov was an IMU militant, but it later suggested that he may have been killed by accident.

Patterns of radicalism. HT has been recruiting steadily in all three states of Central Asia. Occasionally, it has proselytised openly in markets and railway stations through leaflets and audio- and video-cassettes. Regional security agencies claim that there is close cooperation between HT and the IMU/IMT, but they have produced no substantive evidence of such collaboration:

- The IMU/IMT appears much more inclined towards violent criminality, trading in narcotics and small arms in Ferghana's urban centres.
- The appeal of HT lies more in conveying a sense of identity, purpose and routine to those who are skilled and educated, but underemployed and frustrated with local bureaucracy and corruption.

It is likely that while no formal pact exists between the IMU and HT, individual activists have drifted between these two groups, attracted by different cell leaders and offers of money.

HT and the IMU are not as monolithic and closely coordinated as Central Asian governments have tried to portray them. Cells are frequently linked by itinerant activists, some of whom have gained access to weapons and explosives from the armed forces. One such individual is Zhakshibek Biymuzayev, described in a Kazakh court as a "stateless" person involved in organising the 2004 suicide bombings in Uzbekistan. He was sentenced to 25 years in prison for setting up an underground terrorist network in southern Kazakhstan.

Rising militancy. The weakening of state structures in Kyrgyzstan following the ouster of former President Askar Akayev in March 2005 (see KYRGYZSTAN: Revolution disillusioned many one year on - April 4, 2006) has facilitated the proliferation of religious groups organised around clan and ethnic identity. HT, in particular, has witnessed a growing number of followers, concentrated primarily in and around Osh in Kyrgyzstan, Andijan in Uzbekistan and Khujand in Tajikistan. Other local pious groups with similar aims -- notably, Akramiya and Bayat -- have also enjoyed a dramatic increase in popularity.

The Ferghana region is excluded from networks of political power at the national level in all three Central Asian states:

- Karimov has balanced clans from Tashkent and Samarkand, but has consistently excluded Ferghana representatives from his inner circle.
- In Kyrgyzstan, the elite is principally drawn from northern clans; a sizable ethnic Uzbek community based in Osh and Jalalabad is not represented in the government.
- Tajik President Imomali Rahmonov has also kept the region in political isolation since the end of the civil war in 1997. This is despite the fact that Khujand was a locus of the country's political leadership

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during the Soviet era.

Inter-state cooperation. A sharp rise in violent activity apparently orchestrated by radical Islamist groups has led to shifting patterns of regional cooperation between the three governments. For instance, strengthened ties between Bishkek and Tashkent reflect both countries' perceptions that vital national and regime security interests are at stake. All three states have been keen to prevent the spread of Islamic radicalism, but Kyrgyzstan, as the most vulnerable of the three, has the most to lose (see KYRGYZSTAN: State pursues a defined security agenda - December 28, 2005).

In July, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan held bilateral consultations at the presidential and inter-ministerial level, followed by close cooperation in the Jalalabad operation. This prefigured an agreement to conduct joint counter-terrorism exercises and share information on HT and IMU/IMT activity in the region. Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev hopes that these measures will help to stop the flow of militants into southern Kyrgyzstan. It is likely that he has acceded to the deportation of Uzbek refugees to Tashkent in exchange for such security assistance.

Relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan remain poor. Yet even here, joint counter-terrorism operations conducted between Kyrgyz and Tajik forces in May suggest that enhanced capabilities could be effectively developed for rapid deployment forces, coordinated from Moscow (see CIS: CSTO transformation targets Central Asia - July 28, 2006). These force structures are likely to be encased within broader anti-terrorist formations of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation. In practice, this will mean much greater Russian influence in regional security management (see CENTRAL ASIA/RUSSIA/NATO: Competition set to intensify - August 24, 2006)

CONCLUSION: The rise in Islamist activity in Central Asia suggests growing cooperation between the IMU and HT. Some of this activity merges with wider patterns of criminality and is linked to the Ferghana Valley's political and economic marginalisation. At the same time, Islamist activity has induced greater security cooperation between regional governments. This may lead to the development of new institutional capabilities with the assistance of Russia and even China.

Keywords: EE, RUCIS, Central Asia, CIS, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, international relations, politics, social, assassination, civil war, crime, ethnic, finance, foreign policy, gas, government, integration, international law, investment, judicial, military, opposition, police, policy, population, poverty, private sector, public sector, rebellion, refugees, regional, security, terrorism

Word Count (approx): 1228



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CENTRAL ASIA/RUSSIA/NATO: Competition set to intensify



Thursday, August 24 2006

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SUBJECT: Russia-NATO relations in Central Asia.

SIGNIFICANCE: Central Asia may become a litmus test that will determine the ability of Russia and NATO to advance from paper cooperation to that on the ground. Both entities are pursuing competing agendas in many policy areas across the region.

ANALYSIS: NATO deepened its involvement in Eurasian security on July 31 by assuming command over operations in the southern province of Afghanistan. Along with eleven non-NATO states, the alliance's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has been operating in central and western Afghanistan since August 2003.

NATO/US in Central Asia. Afghanistan's security is strongly connected with that of post-Soviet Central Asia. In that region, NATO has signalled its willingness to promote a partnership with Kazakhstan. At the signing ceremony of an Individual Partnership Action Programme between NATO and Kazakhstan in January, NATO officials hailed Astana as one of the three most successful NATO partners, placing it on a par with Finland and Sweden.

At the bilateral level, the United States has maintained strong security ties with Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan at various times throughout this decade. However, these have now been weakened by the eviction of US troops from the Karshi-Khanabad (K-2) airbase near Tashkent, and protracted negotiations over the government's decision to demand a large rise in rental payments for the Manas airbase near Bishkek. Meanwhile, in Tajikistan, Washington has stepped up its involvement, after Russia withdrew from patrolling the Afghan-Tajik border in September 2005. Washington is currently providing assistance to Tajik border forces; in the fiscal year 2005, the US government allocated an additional 16.5 million dollars in aid to Tajikistan for this purpose.

Limits to NATO involvement. Common challenges in Central Asia, such as drug-trafficking, simmering extremist movements and proliferation risks, create ample grounds for an enhanced partnership between NATO and Russia-led security institutions, such as the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO). However, NATO has remained reluctant to engage in multilateral cooperation with Russia in Central Asia. This is the result of a number of factors:

- NATO's 'out-of-area' interests have not yet expanded to encompass Central Asia. Its primary concerns include the Balkans, Mediterranean, Afghanistan and -- to a lesser extent -- the Caucasus (see [NATO/CAUCASUS/RUSSIA: Moscow hinders NATO presence](#) -

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November 30, 2005). Central Asia, where NATO currently has a rather narrow focus on Kazakhstan, appears of secondary importance.

- Fearing Moscow's domination, the alliance seeks to avoid Russian multilateral involvement in the region. Russia's increasingly active role in Central Asia creates concerns that any initiative simultaneously involving NATO, Russia and Central Asian states would leave the alliance with little leverage.
- In areas where friction appears between the goals of stabilising Afghanistan and enhancing Central Asian security, NATO consistently prioritises the former. For example, one of the most effective ways to combat drug-trafficking from Afghanistan through Central Asia would be to destroy Afghan poppy plantations by spraying herbicides from the air. However, both ISAF and the US-led coalition in Afghanistan have refrained from such measures, as they would lead to social turmoil across Afghanistan.
- NATO's contemplated role in protecting energy infrastructure in Central Asia has yet to materialise, highlighting the uncertainty and an apparent lack of consensus about the need to become more involved in the area. Washington is the main advocate of greater regional presence; however, most of NATO's European members do not regard Central Asia as strategically important.

Russia's zero-sum vision. Over the last three years, Russia has been seeking to enhance its influence and limit the US presence in Central Asia. Two factors explain this shift in Moscow's Central Asia strategy:

- In the aftermath of 'colour revolutions', Moscow has developed an acute sense of vulnerability to Western activities in the post-Soviet space. The Kremlin now views any Western involvement in its 'near abroad' as a potential direct threat to Russia's interests and national security.
- Russia has become more active in asserting its interests in the development and transport of Central Asian energy resources to international markets. This adds momentum to the competition between Russia and the United States, as Washington seeks to diversify energy transport infrastructure in Central Asia. In particular, Washington is concerned to link Kazakh resources to the trans-Caspian pipeline network (see [AZERBAIJAN: BTC pipeline hails political triumph - June 13, 2006](#)).

Consolidation trends. Russia has taken several measures to consolidate its influence in the region:

- It has worked to extend the purview of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), which embraces Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as full members. The two most recent SCO summits show that Russia's initiative has led the organisation to adopt a more decisive, often anti-Western, foreign policy stance (see [CIS/CHINA: SCO touts cooperation amid diverging goals - June 20, 2006](#)). Together with China, Russia has provided political backing for demands by the Uzbek and Kyrgyz authorities that US troops evacuate the K-2 airbase and pay more rent for the use of Manas.
- Moscow subsequently forged an alliance with Tashkent and benefited from President Islam Karimov's squabble with the West over his regime's brutal handling of disturbances in Andijan (see [UZBEKISTAN: Stalemate forces alignment with Russia - May 22, 2006](#)). Russian officials argue that a fully democratic system is impossible in a region that faces a multitude of security threats, and

where clannish loyalties and opaque business relationships permeate all spheres of the polity and economy.

- Russia seeks to add substance to projects undertaken in the framework of the CSTO, including the creation of rapid deployment forces in Central Asia (see CIS: CSTO transformation targets Central Asia - July 28, 2006) and greater coordination between the regional states' security services. Moscow remains opposed to any cross-regional initiatives without its direct participation, such as linking the Central Asian and Afghan economies into a free trade area.
- Both the Russian authorities and large national energy companies seek to hinder the construction of transport routes for Central Asian hydrocarbons that would bypass Russia. State gas giant Gazprom, in particular, aims to preserve its dominant position and bargaining advantages as the main buyer of Central Asian gas (see RUSSIA: Gas pipelines show Gazprom's preponderance - May 15, 2006).

Outlook. The elements of Moscow's Central Asia strategy -- notably, its desire to minimise US presence in the region -- push Moscow closer to China, for which US military presence on its western borders is equally a source of concern. This rapprochement has been taking place despite clear differences between Moscow and Beijing on several key issues, such as the competition for access to Kazakh energy resources and freer trans-border trade in Central Asia, promoted by China.

Overall, the strategy of limiting Western influence in Central Asia is likely to benefit China more than Russia. Instability and social turmoil in the region will affect Russia more than China. Drug-trafficking from the region will also have greater negative implications for Russia. In the longer run, Beijing's strategy of quiet economic penetration will inevitably bring Central Asia closer to China, while Russia's position will be weakened by its shrinking demographic resources and possible frictions with the next generation of Central Asian leaders.

CONCLUSION: Over time, to hedge the risks from a rapprochement with China, Russia may become more willing to cooperate with the United States and NATO in Central Asia. Yet diverging views on policy priorities and the persistence of authoritarian regimes in Central Asia will remain major stumbling blocks for a genuine partnership between Russia and the West.

Keywords: EE, RUCIS, Central Asia, CIS, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, NATO, Russia, Tajikistan, United States, Uzbekistan, Western Europe, economy, industry, international relations, politics, social, arms control, border conflict, capital flows, construction, consumer, corporate, corruption, finance, foreign investment, foreign policy, foreign trade, gas, government, human rights, infrastructure, international law, military, natural resources, opposition, policy, population, public sector, regional, security, summit, talks

Word Count (approx): 1224

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ASIA: SCO will expand only cautiously, if at all



Monday, July 31 2006

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An Oxford Analytica In-depth Analysis

SUBJECT: The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), five years on, and the prospects for expansion.

SIGNIFICANCE: The SCO has evolved since it came into being in 2001, as has the geopolitical environment in which it operates. Beijing and Moscow in particular have had to rethink the strategic aims of their regional grouping, and this plays into questions of expansion.

ANALYSIS: The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) has become one of the most prominent regional cooperation organisations in Asia.

Key insights

- The SCO has evolved into a key regional cooperation organisation and a potential model for others who are unhappy with a western-dominated world order.
- It promotes security, military and economic cooperation, and more collaboration here is to be expected. Energy is also an issue.
- The SCO will be cautious about enlargement, which could prove destabilising. In particular, China would not want to see its influence diluted.

It is the most important one to be based on a partnership between Beijing and Moscow, and even though its official area of influence extends only to Central Asia, it is being widely seen as a potential model for international bodies that question or reject the assumptions of the western-dominated post-Cold War global order.

Emergence. In June, the SCO marked the fifth anniversary of its existence at its summit in Shanghai (see CIS/CHINA: SCO touts cooperation amid diverging goals - June 20, 2006). Its origins lay in the

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see CIS/CHINA:
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see EAST ASIA:
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framework ill-
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see IRAN:
Tehran needs 3-5
years to build
nuclear weapons
- May 18, 2006

Keywords

Chinese initiative that created the 'Shanghai Five' group in 1996 -- being China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan -- the aim of which was to ease the demilitarisation of the border between China and the former Soviet Union. In June 2001, the group was reconstituted formally as the SCO, and Uzbekistan joined.

As of last year, four other countries -- Mongolia, Iran, India, and Pakistan - have acquired observer status in the SCO. All have indicated an interest in full membership, but there is no specific timetable for them to be granted entry. Belarus has also requested observer status.

Purpose. The official purposes of the organisation are to encourage cooperation between members on security, economic and cultural issues. Its charter declares that it adheres to the principles of the UN Charter, stressing respect for the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of the other members, as well as non-interference in each other's internal affairs. China's Foreign Ministry characterises the 'Shanghai spirit' as one of "mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, cooperation, respect for diversified civilisations and common development".

Strategic imperatives. One primary motivation for the SCO's formation was concern in Beijing and Moscow about increasing US dominance in the post-Cold War world. This was strengthened by the determination of advisers close to the administration of President George Bush to redefine China as a "strategic competitor" rather than a "strategic partner". Chinese attitudes toward the United States also hardened in April 2001 with the collision and landing of a US spyplane on Hainan island.

By contrast, Russia seemed not to be attracting much attention from the United States, the former superpower feeling that its global influence was being discounted in the new world order. US priorities changed after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, which led to warmer relations with China and Russia. However, this change in emphasis, as well as the move to war in Iraq, did nothing to reduce the feeling in Moscow and Beijing that it would be to their advantage to create a multipolar world, free of the vagaries of US policy.

China driver. Although China and Russia are the two major powers in the SCO, it is Chinese priorities that have tended to drive it. This is largely a consequence of the relative position of the two countries in the world order. Although both were large regional powers with important economies:

- Russia was a former world power on the way down; whereas
- China was in the ascendant.

For China, a key purpose of the SCO beyond immediate strategic needs has been to cement a vision of its own role into the international community. In addition, China has sought to use its influence to lock in energy supplies from SCO members and reduce western opportunities to develop gas and oil reserves in central Asia and Russia (see INTERNATIONAL: National oil firms present challenge - July 7, 2006; and see KAZAKHSTAN/CHINA: Tensions rise over PetroKazakhstan - October 6, 2005).

Poor coordination. Initial signs were that the SCO was not good at coordinated action and responses. For instance, after September 11, 2001, the SCO states were not able to make a coordinated response with regard to counter-terrorism measures, and the United States was successful in persuading the organisation's Central Asian members,

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notably Uzbekistan, to allow US military bases on their territory.

This changed over time, in part because of changing US attitudes rather than active moves on the part of the SCO states. So-called 'colour revolutions' made the authoritarian governments of Central Asia aware that they might also be vulnerable to 'regime change'. In May last year, President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan put down an Islamist rebellion against his rule in the city of Andijan with great force, leading to protests from the United States and EU. Largely in reaction to these protests, Karimov ordered the removal of US bases from Uzbek territory, and reoriented his policy more toward Russia and China (see [UZBEKISTAN: Stalemate forces alignment with Russia - May 22, 2006](#)).

Military role? An important question is whether the SCO will become a regional military alliance on the lines of NATO. The foundation of the SCO around the time of the September 2001 attacks meant that from the very beginning, the core group was able to make anti-terrorism measures a prominent part of its agenda, with implications for shared security and military activity.

A Russian spokesman claimed last April that there was no need for the SCO formally to become a military bloc, but also stated that threats of "terrorism, extremism, and separatism" meant that a full-scale use of armed forces should be taken into account where necessary. In fact, since 2003, there have been several joint SCO military exercises. In addition, China and Russia have started large-scale military exercises outside the SCO framework (such as the 'Peace Mission' of August 2005), leading Russian officials to speak of joint SCO military exercises in future in which India may be invited to take part (see [RUSSIA: Kremlin exudes confidence and ambition in G8 - July 14, 2006](#); and see [EAST ASIA: Security framework ill-suited to demands - March 30, 2006](#)).

Economic cooperation. The most immediately obvious aspect of SCO cooperation has been to provide a regional forum for economic discussion outside the major global organisations:

- A general agreement on economic cooperation was signed in October 2003, in which China's Premier Wen Jiabao declared a long-term intention to establish a free trade zone within the SCO.
- Last October, the SCO summit in Moscow declared an intention to prioritise energy issues, including the use and exploration of gas and oil reserves and the distribution of water resources.
- In February, a first SCO Interbank Council meeting was held.

Iran. Over the last year, the issue of Iran's nuclear capability has become one of the most pressing matters for the SCO (see [IRAN: Tehran needs 3-5 years to build nuclear weapons - May 18, 2006](#)). The case illustrates both the growing prestige and influence of the SCO, but also of the way in which its agendas may be moving further away from Beijing's vision.

In 2005-06, it was repeatedly suggested that Iran would be granted observer status within the SCO, and President Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad attended last month's SCO's summit in Shanghai. However, Iran's interests in joining are not necessarily compatible with those of the major SCO powers. Essentially, Iran sees SCO membership as a bulwark against further outside interference from the western powers -- for example, in forcing it to abandon its nuclear ambitions.

Such an agenda is bound to cause unease in China and Russia. The ambition of those two states, shared with Iran, is to prevent further US influence in their immediate regions, and in particular, to prevent the kind

of regime change (the colour revolutions) that have taken place in Georgia and Ukraine. (Kyrgyzstan had its own, less comprehensive, revolution last year.) However, neither power seeks direct confrontation with the United States. Iran has a greater enthusiasm than the SCO core member states for active provocation in the international order. This would make it an unpredictable member of the SCO and in particular, could destabilise Beijing's ability to influence the group's direction.

Recent statements from the SCO have dampened down the prospects of any new states joining the organisation as full members. This is usually expressed in terms of the SCO needing time to settle down and solidify its role. However, it probably hides a greater nervousness about admitting states which may destabilise the organisation and force it to speak with more than one voice.

India. The admission of the two major states of South Asia, India and Pakistan, would add significant weight to the SCO, but would also move it away from dominance by its core members. In the post-Cold War world, China has been keen to demonstrate to Pakistan that Beijing's newfound warmth toward India does not mean a chilling of relations with its old ally, and it has encouraged Islamabad in its desire to join the SCO. However, Moscow has indicated that it will only support Pakistan's entry if it is simultaneous with India joining. This disagreement illustrates the sort of strategic tensions that underlie the rhetoric of cooperation between the two major SCO powers.

However, India's putative entry would bring about a significant change in the value-system of the SCO as an organisation. The six core states are all either authoritarian (China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan) or at best partially democratic (Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan). Of the candidate members, while Mongolia is largely democratic, it is a marginal power, and Pakistan and Iran are again only partially democratic. By contrast, India is a pluralist democracy and its values and interests are far less clearly sceptical of the West than those of the other SCO states. India has shown an active nationalism in the last decade or more, including periods of anti-foreign rhetoric, and it is as capable as the United States or the EU of playing 'realpolitik' with states whose systems it does not share.

However, it is hard to see that what moved Beijing and Moscow to form the SCO applies so unequivocally to India:

- India did not, unlike China and Russia, perceive the end of the Cold War as a fundamental destruction of its belief-system.
- India does not have any fear that US foreign policy is likely to bring about a 'regime change' that will end its parliamentary democracy.
- India's relations with Washington have improved in the last decade, whereas Beijing and Moscow's relations with the United States have recently cooled off.

India's membership must be seen by Delhi as part of a wider system of alliances in which the SCO has a significant, but not dominant role. Rather than regarding the SCO as a bulwark against a Washington-dominated international order, membership of the SCO would be a bonus in addition to India's growing role in other global and regional organisations. It would not be unreasonable for Washington covertly to encourage Indian membership in the SCO as a means of diluting its anti-western assumptions and values.

Structure. The core structure of the SCO is unusual. Unlike other organisations with which it might be compared, it is dominated by two powerful states with complementary but not identical interests at its core.

In contrast, ASEAN, originally established in the 1960s as an anti-Communist bulwark, now contains a variety of countries varying from democracies to authoritarian states both capitalist and communist. However, ASEAN has no single dominating state, and it continues to exist at least in part as a means of counter-balancing the increasing power of China. NATO is also dissimilar from the SCO, as it is still heavily dominated by one single power, the United States.

EU model. Perhaps the nearest point of comparison is the EU, which has been largely driven by the dual agenda of France and (West) Germany. The problems with EU development must weigh heavily on the minds of the SCO core members. The European Economic Community of the 1960s consisted of six members of which two were dominant, and while policy-making was hardly simple then, it has become infinitely more complex in an EU of 25 members. Rather like the France of the 1960s, China today may well wish to solidify its own leadership role in a relatively small SCO before seeking to open the organisation out.

Russia's role . The Russia of today also has some similarities with West Germany in the 1960s. As with Germany, defeat in war (the Cold War) was followed by a profound reduction in the country's global influence. However, unlike Germany, Russia does not perceive itself as a defeated nation, and finds itself somewhat resentful that Beijing, not Moscow, has become the capital on which the world's eyes have turned in the early twenty-first century. Accordingly, it has more of an interest than Beijing in widening the SCO membership to countries such as India, which would dilute Chinese influence.

Prospects. At present, the SCO's importance is mostly symbolic. One intriguing sign of its status as a perceived challenger to western global dominance is the suggestion of the Serbian Radical Party that Serbia should join, a statement which would be a powerful rejection of the EU and a sign of deepened friendship with Russia.

However, it is still clear that overall, Beijing's interests are paramount where it matters. For instance, last year the SCO opposed the bid by Japan, Brazil, Germany, and India to join the UN Security Council as permanent members. This flew in the face of wooing India as a potential new member, as well as being a putdown to India's ally, Russia. However, for Beijing it was more important to use the SCO to prevent a move that might dilute China's influence at a global level. The move did not prevent India from continuing to cooperate with the SCO, but it did indicate future problems with expansion of the group.

CONCLUSION: As the SCO develops and expands, it seems likely that China's core role will be harder to maintain without dispute, particularly if India becomes a member. Expansion would increase the organisation's prestige and influence, but simultaneously reduce the internal influence of China and Russia to set policy goals. In this sense, enlargement would be in the interests of the United States and the EU.

Keywords: AP, Asia, Belarus, China, EU, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, economy, industry, international relations, politics, banking, election, energy, foreign investment, foreign policy, foreign trade, government, military, nuclear weapons, regional, security, talks, terrorism

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KYRGYZSTAN/UZBEKISTAN: Refugee crisis draws criticism



Friday, August 25 2006

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US-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) stated today that the lives of Uzbek refugees suspected of having been abducted in Kyrgyzstan and returned to their home country, in what the Kyrgyz government has called "counter-terrorism sweeps", were in danger. HRW said it was aware of at least four people who had been forcibly returned to Uzbekistan. Earlier this week, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees provided information about two people who had been returned to Uzbekistan and placed in a detention centre in Andijan, the town from which they fled after the massacre of May 2005. Bishkek insists that it did not violate international law and will continue its joint efforts with Tashkent to fight "extremists and crime". **The current crisis will draw more international criticism to Bishkek, especially in view of the extradition of five Uzbek refugees earlier this month. Yet Bishkek will remain more responsive to pressures from Tashkent than from the international community -- the result of its economic weakness and dependence on Uzbekistan for supplies of cheap gas.**

See [UZBEKISTAN: Stalemate forces alignment with Russia - May 22, 2006](#)

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Rolling Assumptions

Economy: Continuing stagnation

The economy is likely to stagnate due to the absence of reform and the regime's clampdown on private business. Although some restrictions in bilateral trade with Kazakhstan were lifted in late 2004, regional cooperation remains extremely limited. Uzbekistan's WTO accession talks are still in very early stages, and Tashkent has so far made no real effort to undertake reform.

Politics: Dictatorial practices

Uzbekistan is heading towards a social and political collapse, and President Islam Karimov's reorientation towards Russia is his best and probably last chance of prolonging his rule. Karimov's increasingly authoritarian regime has accepted no criticism for human rights violations, including possible extensive use of torture. Political assassinations as a way to eradicate opposition cannot be ruled out.

Economic policy: Enterprise harassment

The Zarafshan-Newmont gold mining joint venture (JV), which has run the Muruntau open-cast mine in western Uzbekistan since 1992, faces bankruptcy over back tax and tax evasion claims totalling 48 million dollars. Tashkent has also revoked the licence of UK Oxus Gold to develop a precious metal, zinc and copper deposit at Sarasiya in the south-east. It is becoming more difficult for foreign investors to operate in Uzbekistan. This could be due to the reorientation of Tashkent away from the West and towards Moscow. However, it may be more to do with corrupt officials in an insecure regime trying to move in on lucrative assets while they still can.

Security: Regime paranoia

The regime is apprehensive of a popular uprising, similar to 'colour revolutions' in Ukraine, Georgia and even Kyrgyzstan. Hundreds of people have already been tried and found guilty of attempting to overthrow the government and set up an Islamic state in Uzbekistan. Mock trials are likely to continue, with more harsh prison sentences passed this year.

International relations: Qualified extraditions

The Russian authorities have frozen the extradition of CIS nationals -- twelve from Uzbekistan and one from Kyrgyzstan -- to Uzbekistan pending a ruling from the European Court of Human Rights. Tashkent says they are suspected of involvement in the 2005 Andizhan violence. Kazakhstan has transferred to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees an Uzbek national who fled in 1991 whom Tashkent has asked to be handed back this June. Kyrgyzstan has handed over five Uzbek citizens alleged to have taken part in Andizhan, but it appears that larger CIS countries can afford to risk annoying Tashkent over such issues.

Base Economic Data

Ratings

Fitch Ratings: **BB** measuring Sovereign Risk (long term bond debt)

[Fitch website](#)

Moody's Sovereign Risk: **N/A** measuring Sovereign Risk (long term bond debt)

[Moody's website](#)

Standard and Poors: **N/A** measuring Sovereign Risk (long term bond debt)

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Transparency International website

Series name	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
GDP, constant prices, growth (%)	4.1	3.1	1.5	7.4	7.0
Inflation (%)	47.5	44.3	14.8	8.8	21.0
Gross fixed investment (% of GDP)	19.57	22.03	19.52	17.95	N/A
Exports of goods (USD billions, fob)	3.17	2.98	3.73	4.85	N/A
Imports of goods (USD billions, cif)	3.14	2.71	2.96	3.82	N/A
Current account balance (% of GDP)	-0.1	1.2	8.7	10	10.8
Exchange rate (end of year against USD) (som)	682.1	712.3	969.4	969.4	969.4
Foreign direct investment (Millions of USD, inflow)	83	65	70	140	250
Unemployment (%)	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.4	N/A

e=estimate f=forecast P=provisional l=incomplete figure (treat with caution)

Politics and Government

Form

Authoritarian Republic.

Head of State

Head of State: President Islam Karimov; Head of Government: Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

Government

Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan, People's Democratic Party, Democratic National Rebirth Party, Social Democratic Party and others. None enjoys genuine independence.

Opposition

The main opposition groups, Unity and the Liberal Democrat Party, have been banned. There is no effective opposition.

Legislature

The Uzbek Supreme Assembly is bicameral. The upper house has 100 seats, with 84 members elected by regional governing councils and the rest appointed by the President. The lower house has 120 seats, to which deputies are elected by popular vote. Members of both chambers serve five-year terms.

Election Cycle

The last legislative elections were held in December 2004, and January 2005. The ext elections are due in late 2009. The last presidential election was held in January 2000, and is due again in December 2007.

Geography

Area (total land and water)

447,400 sq km.

Population growth rate^e

1.67 %

Population density

60.01 people/sq km.

Urban population

9.77 million

Literacy rate

99.3 %

Language

Uzbek, Russian

While Oxford Analytica has checked and proofed this information, no responsibility is accepted for any inaccuracy, although corrections will be gratefully received.

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