CHAPTER -III

POLITICAL AND SECURITY COOPERATION
3.1 Political Understanding

In analysing the process of regional cooperation in Central Asia from the political perspective, three distinct stages are seen. First stage is from the end of 1991 till July 1994. During this period despite the centrifugal trends in CIS, the Central Asian Republics made attempts to formulate mechanisms of coordination. Since July 1994, the second stage of regional cooperation began in Central Asia. The strong regional core was formed, which was not joined by Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. Turkmenistan took a neutral position on regional affairs in Central Asia, whereas Tajikistan was involved in bloody civil war. The period 1998 onwards witnessed third phase of regional cooperation in Central Asia with Tajikistan beginning to show keen interest in the regional affairs.

From a political perspective, it should be noted that the Almaty Declaration of December 1991 emphasized the open nature of the cooperation project. The three heads of state namely, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan not only issued non-binding declarations of intent but also took concrete action by forming an Interstate Council consisting of the Presidents and Premiers of the members states. In addition to creating this supreme executive body, they resolved to establish the following forums:

- The Council of Premiers that would meet four times per year,
- The Council of Defense Ministers,
- The Council of Foreign Ministers.

Of particular relevance is the simultaneous decision to form an Executive Committee headquartered in Almaty, it being an indication of the strong commitment to regional cooperation. As evidenced by the experiences of the European Union and other integration projects, the establishment of supra-national organizations with independent legal personalities, budgets, and adequate staffing can significantly contribute to the success of the entire project.

The provisions for the Executive Committee indicate the desire to succeed. Its Chairman enjoys the same privileges as a minister of the government of Kazakhstan, the seat of the Executive Committee. The committee’s mandate has
stated that it was not simply formed to make a joint political statement, but as a vehicle for promoting long-term regional cooperation. It is very apparent that the majority of the responsibilities that have been transferred to this body are representative of the economic problems experienced by its member countries. In other words, the Executive Committee is expected to provide solutions to the problems of economic policy that the individual states have been unable to resolve on their own. Since, in the short term it is unlikely that the Executive Committee will be able to accomplish such a comprehensive task, there is a potential risk of unjustifiably discrediting the entire cooperation process.¹

The Executive Committee commenced operations immediately after 8 July 1994. The Interstate Council appointed Serik Primbetov, a Kazakh, as the Committee’s first chairman. Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are each represented by one Vice-Chairman.

However, a review of the functioning of Inter-state Council reveals that the body is facing many challenges. Redistribution of land and water resources are among the reasons of tension and potential conflicts between members of Interstate Council. Much of these problems have their origin in the post-1924 years of Soviet rule. During the period of 1992-97 the Central Asian states signed numerous agreements within the framework of Interstate Council while adhering to the existing borders and from the possible aggravation of inter-ethnic relations and struggle of nationalities for predominance in every country of Interstate Council.

Perspectives of Interstate Council depend directly on ability of member countries to tie up together natural process of national consolidation, development of national state system with guarantees of national minorities rights.² Internal structure of political forces has more influence on its future. Relatively stable situation in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan may be exasperated by the struggle for predominance of main ethnic groups, entering into ruling coalition or being in opposition. Thus we may assume that it is theoretically possible for the left out state of Turkmenistan to join other states of the region in the integration process.

Soon after Central Asia's independence, Kazakhstan's President, Nazarbaev suggested a new alliance of the former republics, called Euro-Asian Union, that would be a confederation of twelve nominally independent former Soviet republics grouped within the CIS. But this proposal found support from only one other Central Asian leader, Kyrgyzstan's Akayev. At the same time, calls to restore one united and indivisible Turkestan were quite unpopular in Central Asia, with the exception of some circles in Uzbekistan. Despite Turkey’s current attempt to create something similar to a Turkic commonwealth (or at least a Turkic cultural entity), ideas of pan-Turkism remain more popular in Turkey than in Central Asia.

During their first years of independence, Central Asian states were quite reluctant to develop greater cooperative partnerships among themselves. This is especially true with regard to more powerful Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and richer Turkmenistan. Modest steps towards a common agenda and the search for cooperation among members of the Central Asian “trinity” (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan) were made in order to prevent contradictory policies or even confrontation. In 1994, the presidents of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan formed an Integrated Economic Area, establishing an Interstate Council and Councils of Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers as has been mentioned above. Agreements were signed to cover industrial cooperation, the legal basis for free movement of labour among the three countries, policy coordination on migration, and other issues. However, this cooperation exists more in theory than practice and is limited to a few common economic rather than political issues. The Central Asian Bank, with a symbolic capitalization of $10 million, seems intended more to please the public than to resolve practical and urgent economic and trade problems.

The same three states signed a Treaty on Eternal Friendship at the Bishkek summit in January 1997 and also agreed to form a Central Asian peacekeeping battalion, linked to UN and NATO's Partnership for Peace program; the battalion, which will include more than five hundred troops, will be located in Chymkent, Kazakhstan. The existence of this battalion symbolizes the future diminution of Russia’s role in the region.

The presidents of all five states also proclaimed 1998 as the Year of Environmental Protection in Central Asia under UN auspices. They also urged all interested countries to support the idea of declaring Central Asia a nuclear-free zone. The last Soviet nuclear warheads in Kazakhstan were dismantled or shipped back to
Russia in 1995; however, there is fissile material in the country that could be purchased or stolen by radical powers or groups. The Soviet nuclear testing site in Kazakhstan is also seen as the source of many health related problems throughout the region. These initiatives are significant, since environmental degradation (exemplified by the gradual destruction of the Aral Sea) and the proliferation of nuclear material and technology contribute to interstate and interethnic tension.

Despite these accomplishments, many factors impede genuine cooperation, including the lack of a normative-legal basis for policymaking, problems with mutual conversion of currencies (especially the Uzbek sum), discord over customs and tax regulation, and, most important, the lack of political will. While rapidly developing the involvement of external powers, the Central Asian states are still very cautious about promoting cooperation among themselves. During 1993-94, all countries in the region left the “ruble zone” and introduced their own national currencies. This decision had a profound impact on the economic, social, and political dimensions of cooperation among the Central Asian states.

3.2 Political and Institutional Dimensions of Regional Cooperation

The political and institutional aspects of regional cooperation are varied. Some are rooted in Soviet legacies and some in the post-Soviet period. The Soviet system created a distinctive array of institutions, actors and interests. These have carried over in terms of setting the immediate agenda of nation-building and state-building for the political elites that emerged in Central Asia during the process of independence and transition.

The particular political economy of state socialism in the late Soviet period helped determine which actors and institutions would have power and interests once the Union fell apart. The presidential systems that have emerged in Central Asian and many other CIS countries, involving a high concentration of power in the President and in his centralized administrative apparatus, are rooted in the Soviet-era executive apparatus of the Communist Party system, and in the security forces and the strong presidencies that were created in 1990 and 1991. Key Soviet-era economic elites, such as enterprise and farm directors, or those with control over cadre policy, were embedded in and bolstered by clan-based patronage networks that persisted into the post-Soviet era and became the basis of new, informal interest
groups and political networks. This system also largely prevented the emergence of other pluralist interest groups that have often been advocates of reform in other regions.

Yet the Soviet legacy alone does not explain the political interests of the Central Asian leaders or the political challenges to regional cooperation. Several other factors are at work. Security issues, domestically, regionally and internationally, have changed dramatically in the past 15 years, but state security remains at the forefront of political decision-making about issues of regional cooperation. Related to this is the apparent fear of further disintegration of the new post-Soviet republics, which motivates the leaders of many CIS countries, who lived through the shock of the sudden and unexpected dissolution of the Soviet Union.3 Finally, the process of transition has in many cases led to the emergence of strengthening of certain interest groups at all levels—sometimes outside the state, sometimes within it, as will be discussed further in this chapter. But first, we will delve somewhat more deeply into the process of transition from Soviet rule.

From Soviet integration to independence and nation-building

The legacy of Soviet policy in Central Asia has been critical in shaping the perspectives and interests of the post-Soviet rulers. The Soviet Constitution embraced the principle of ethno-federalism and included a nominal right to sovereignty for each constituent republic. Although for nearly 70 years most ethno national elites from the Soviet republics did not seek fulfillment of this right, a tide of nationalism emerged in the late 1980s. Many specialists argue that Soviet policies themselves fostered this wave of nationalism and anti-Soviet sentiment.4

Soviet nationalities policy, designed in the 1920s, was essentially an affirmative action policy for the titular or majority ethnic group within each republic. The regime promoted a cadre of Communist Party members from the titular group, and instilled the notion of self-rule, despite constant and close monitoring by ethnic Russians and by Moscow, and the repression of open nationalism. Although feelings of domination varied across Central Asia and over time, and were less visibly oppositionist than elsewhere in the former Soviet Union

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(such as in the Baltics and the Caucasus), some nationalist groups and some Central Asian elites—especially Uzbek elites—saw the Soviet Union as something akin to a Russian colonial empire. Under Stalin, massive purges, particularly harsh in the Muslim Republics, bred resentment. Ironically, Gorbachev's reform policies of 'glasnost' and perestroika were accompanied by a new purge, including the removal or arrest of tens of thousands of members of the party and state apparatus in most of the Central Asian republics.

These policies created several serious problems for Central Asia in the wake of the Soviet collapse. First, until its demise, the Soviet Union prevented the development of nation-states. When the Republics became independent in 1991, they had to secure their boundaries, territory and legitimacy. In other words, they had to build nationalism and nation-statehood more or less from scratch. The 'national' identities created and imposed by the Soviets formed the basis for the new nation-states, but they were incomplete and accompanied by many contradictions. Ethno-national identities had been accepted most strongly among intellectual elites, party members and the urban population. Yet the primarily rural population continued to identify with traditional community/neighborhood, village, residential, kinship, clan, and regional groups and loyalties. Although no longer identical with the tribal communities of the pre-Soviet era, these networks had adapted and persisted in various forms throughout Central Asia as an unintended consequence of Soviet policies in the region. In particular, collective farms had not obliterated clans and tribes, but had become the new tribe. Intra-ethnic clan networks of solidarity groups became the informal basis of social and economic organization. Some were poised to become vested interest groups within and around the transitional regimes.

These local communities did not necessarily feel a loyalty to or identification with the new states, nor did they prioritize the states over their local group interests.

10 Ibid.
The new Central Asian leaders therefore saw the need to develop a new ideology of nationalism as a foundation for their new nation-states. Thanks to moderate nationalist policies, this ideology did not take the virulent form of ‘ethnic nationalism’, seen, for example, in post-communist Yugoslavia. Nonetheless, the new nationalism did alienate members of ethnic minorities within each state, and resulted in emigration and fears of inter-ethnic conflict, especially in the early years after independence.

Closely related to the challenge of state-building and nationalism was the problematic legacy of the Soviet delimitation of the ‘national’ borders in Central Asia between 1924 and 1936. The Soviet regime demarcated, complicated and seemingly irrational borders between the republics, cutting through linguistic, ethnic and familial groups, poorly dividing natural resources and complicating trade. Major problems have resulted for Central Asia and for the Fergana Valley in particular, as borders ‘hardened’ after independence.

The first of these problems is the existence of enclaves where the territory and population belong to the neighbouring country. Territorial enclaves exist within Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, making both transit and governance issues in these areas very difficult, and the potential for border conflict high. Second, significant ethnic minorities exist within the Fergana Valley region of each independent republic. In Kyrgyzstan, it is estimated that ethnic Uzbeks comprise between 25 and 30 per cent of the population in the Osh and Jalal-Abad regions. In Tajikistan, a large percentage of people in the Sughd region are also ethnic Uzbeks. In Uzbekistan, Kyrgyz and Tajik minorities live in the Fergana Valley, the Surkhandarya region, and the cities of Samarkand and Bukhara. Besides, during the Soviet period, movement across republic borders was easy and common for both familial and economic reasons. There was little consciousness of borders among local populations. Extended families lived on both sides and were free to visit at will. Traders likewise moved with ease from Osh to Andijan or Khodjent, and back. Similar situations existed along the Kazakhstan-Uzbek and Turkmen-Uzbek borders. After independence, however, new border posts disrupted many traditional ties.

The creation of independent states and international state borders within Central Asia has created difficulties for both local populations, and the regimes that seek to secure these borders and defend their territorial sovereignty. The new Central
Asian governments have feared that their neighbours would play the 'ethnic card', inciting protest or secession among their ethnic brethren, or fomenting ethnic conflict within the Fergana Valley region. Fears of ethnic secessionism have been fueled by overwhelming international attention on the possibility of ethnic conflict. Both the new national governments and international community worried that the ethnic riots and pogroms in the Fergana Valley in 1989 and 1990 were a prelude to another state collapse along ethno-national lines in the manner of the Soviet or Yugoslav collapse. Given the high concentration of ethnic minorities in certain geographical regions of each of the Central Asian states, this fear is understandable. National leaders therefore also understandably felt the need to solidify their borders.

More often, however, political rivalries between the regional leaders, economic disputes over water and gas, and a desire to control trade flows have exacerbated latent border disputes, and the erection of barriers has frustrated and harmed the local populations on all sides. The placement of harsh border posts and guards and barbed-wire fences on the borders between Andijan, Osh and Khodjent, the restriction and harassment of traders, the frequent closing of the Tajik-Uzbek and Kazakhstan-Uzbek roads and borders, and the Uzbek mining of parts of its Kyrgyz and Tajik borders are all measures that have had negative social and economic consequences.

The nation-building goals of the Central Asian leaders have been closely linked to other security concerns in the post-Soviet era. Although none of the Central Asian leaders had initially sought independence from the Soviet Union, which subsidized a large portion of their budgets and provided an overall political and security umbrella for the local elites, after the Soviet break up, relations with Russia quickly soured in some cases, especially for those leaders who believed they had prospects for region-wide leadership and for economic success irrespective of Russia. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan preferred to keep Russia at a distance, while Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan saw it either as a benign neighbour or as an unavoidable dominant force in the region. This latter group also viewed a greater engagement with Russia as a suitable counterweight to the increased presence of China in the region, and supported Russian-led regional organizations. In contrast,

11 Olcott, 1996.
12 Ibid.
during the 1990s, Uzbekistan tended to stress its national independence and fostered closer relations with the United States, distanced itself from the CIS and the CSTO, and was slow to join the SCO.

Another major issue that has shaped the view of regional leaders was the potential for insecurity to spill over from neighbouring countries. This was the case especially for Tajikistan vis-à-vis Uzbekistan, first because of the Tajik Civil War and then because of the fear of terrorist groups based in Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Of particular concern to Uzbekistan was a religious opposition movement. It had initially emerged after independence under the leadership of Tohir Yuldosh, who demanded an Islamic state and fostered close ties to both Tajik and Afghani Islamist groups. Yuldosh and his followers had fled the Uzbek regime’s suppression and set up a base first in the Tavildara Valley of Tajikistan in the 1990s and later in northern Afghanistan. Known as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the group radicalized its agenda over time, adopting guerilla violence as its means of overthrowing the secular Uzbek regime and creating an Islamic state. It was responsible for guerilla incursions into the Fergana Valley in 1999 and 2000.\textsuperscript{13} The Uzbeks accused the Tajik Government of harboring the movement on their territory, while the Tajiks countered with the claim that the Uzbek Government was harboring an insurgent group under the leadership of Makhmud Khudoberdiyev in order to destabilize Tajikistan.

There have been other security threats, real and perceived. During the 1990s, the Mujahideen leaders of Afghanistan laid claim to Samarkand and Bukhara, causing Uzbekistan to fortify its southern border. With the subsequent war in Afghanistan, concern about refugees, often thought to be associated with the flow of weapons and narco-trafficking, gave Uzbekistan further reason to solidify its frontiers. Since 2000, Uzbekistan has also been the heart of a new Islamic opposition movement in Central Asia—\textit{Hizb-ut-Tahrir}, which professes to pursue radical goals with non-violent means. Its stated aim is the creation of an Islamic caliphate for all of Central Asia, and it particularly targets the Uzbek regime. By some accounts, tens of thousands of Uzbeks now support this underground movement despite repeated Government crackdowns. More recently, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have begun to

fear that Hizb-ut-Tahrir’s Islamic extremism is spreading to their territories because of the crackdown in Uzbekistan. Finally, the Rose Revolution in Georgia in November 2003, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in December 2004, the overthrow of President Akaev of Kyrgyzstan in March 2005, and the violence in Andijan in Uzbekistan in May 2005 reinforced the notion among Central Asian leaders that domestic grass-roots opposition and religious movements pose threats to national security and prevailing regimes.

All these perceived and real cross-border and domestic security threats, in the absence of an effective regional security framework, have helped to reinforce the tendencies of the post-Soviet Central Asian governments to further harden their mutual borders. In Uzbekistan, this has taken particularly harsh forms, including the mining of some of its borders—with some deadly effects for border farming communities—construction of border fences and watchtowers, and intermittent border closures.

In recent years, however, some new elements have begun to shape the mutual security relations among Central Asian countries. First, the long-standing rivalry between the presidents of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan over leadership in the region, which negatively affected the scope for regional cooperation in the past\textsuperscript{14}, seems to have abated somewhat. Second, shared concerns over Islamic movements and now the ‘colour revolutions’ in various CIS countries have led to greater cooperation on security issues among the Central Asian states, together with China and Russia. Third, apparent disappointment by the Uzbek leadership over human rights-related criticism from the United States, and over the lack of significant financial institutions and from the Western donor community—due to the slow reform process—has led Uzbekistan to look for closer partnership with China, Russia and its Central Asian neighbours. Security cooperation has mainly taken the form of bilateral or trilateral agreements, or has been pursued within the framework of the SCO.\textsuperscript{15} It will be dealt with in detail later in this chapter. Successful progress on cooperation on security issues diminishes one major obstacle to regional cooperation overall, and may prove the basis for cooperation in other areas.

\textsuperscript{14} Olcott, 1996.

3.3 Successes of the Post-Soviet Period in Preserving Regional stability

Despite significant hurdles faced by the newly independent states of Central Asia, their leaders and their people; despite the strong centrifugal forces at work after the collapse of the Soviet Union; and despite the various security threats, these states have had some major successes in keeping a lid on what might have been potentially explosive political forces.

The need to build cohesive nation-states, national loyalty and international borders respected by their own populations, their neighbours and the international community is a phenomenon common to many states emerging from imperial collapse. Central Asian leaders have been relatively successful both in creating a sense of national identity and the idea of legitimate nation-states in countries where only minimal nationalist movements and no history of a nation-state had existed before 1991.16 Nationalism rapidly replaced communism as the ideology of the new elites, and the new regimes have been drawing on symbols, literature and their newly written histories to imbue youth with a sense of national pride and sentiment.17

At the same time, the post-Soviet elites have successfully averted two extreme outcomes since independence: the new nationalism turning violent, or ethnic differences leading to violent ethnic secessionism. Central Asian nationalism has usually taken a relatively tolerant form. There is no legal discrimination against ethnic minorities; legislation and its implementation mostly meet international standards on the treatment of ethnic minorities. In general, tolerant ethnic and nationalist policies have fostered stable inter-ethnic relations. Surveys suggest an improvement of inter-ethnic relations since the early 1990s, when the shock of ethnic riots in the towns of Osh, Uzgen and Fergana still reverberated in the Fergana Valley. This has over time led to a significant decrease both in ethnic out-migration as well as in the fear of potential ethnic conflict.

In large part because of tolerant ethnic and nationalist policies, the Central Asian states have nationalist policies, the Central Asian states have also avoided inter-state conflict over borders. The boundaries of the Fergana Valley have not been challenged in a conflictual way. Boundary disputes between China and Kazakhstan,

17 Roy, 2000, p.181.
China and Kyrgyzstan, and China and Tajikistan have not led to war. And despite frequent border closures between Uzbekistan and its neighbours, no inter-ethnic or inter-state violence has erupted.

Even water disputes among countries have been handled in a non-violent manner. Although the governments and international organizations generally recognize that the current year-to-year agreements over water usage are not the optimal solution, these agreements have at least eased the situation for agriculturalists and have prevented the outbreak of inter-state conflict. Local officials, with the aid of donor programmes such as the UNDP Preventive Development Programme and efforts by international and local NGOs, have become increasingly engaged in solving water and other border problems at a local level.18

Overall, the relatively stable and peaceful conditions that have prevailed in the region during most of the turbulent post-Soviet years have been impressive. Unfortunately, this stability has not been accompanied by the development of democratic political institutions, and has been used to justify considerable repression of important human rights in some of the countries. And regional cooperation has fallen far short of reaping the benefits that would come from economic integration among the countries of the region, with their big neighbours and with the rest of the world. In order to better understand the continuing political obstacles to closer cooperation, it is crucial to attempt an analysis of the key political actors, interests and institutions in Central Asia.

The Role of the Presidency

Strong presidencies emerged from the institution of the Communist Party’s First Secretary in each Republic at the end of the Soviet era. Presidential elections took place in all the new states shortly after independence, but their competitiveness was severely circumscribed. Subsequent presidential referenda, constitutional changes and presidential elections were designed to increase and consolidate the power of the chief executive. Even those regimes that had initially liberalized the political and economic spheres in the early post-Soviet years increasingly followed the more autocratic political model of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. According to constitutional experts, by 1996, all the Central Asian regimes had become ‘super-

presidential' systems, in which the President and his administration (the 'apparat') control political decision-making while the parliament and courts are only nominally independent.\textsuperscript{19} Even in Kyrgyzstan, which had the most democratic track record after independence, the legislature and the opposition within it has had relatively little power since 1996, although it has maintained some autonomy and functional roles.\textsuperscript{20}

A direct hangover from the Soviet system and political culture is the centralized level of control with which the Central Asian presidents seek to manage domestic political and economic systems and relations with their neighbours. Although the ideological belief in communism has all but disappeared, the belief in the need for state-directed and state-managed economic activity has persisted. The presidents characteristically have a high level of distrust of their counterparts in the region, despite a significant number of shared interests. They are concerned that their neighbours’ actions- whether in the area of political liberalization or economic reform or security measures-will impede the security, sovereignty and legitimacy of their own state and regime.\textsuperscript{21}

Moreover, the general perspectives of the Central Asian leadership on key foreign policy issues have varied substantially, while shaping the framework within which they view issues of regional cooperation and integration. The Uzbek leadership had since early 1990s been opposed to Russian presence on Uzbek territory, although most recently Uzbekistan has turned more towards Russia in an apparent reversal of its earlier position. At the same time, it has favoured bilateral regional relations over multilateral approaches, and generally has not played a lead role in any of the regional institutions. Since 2004, however, Uzbekistan has become more active in supporting the work of Central Asia Cooperation Organisation (CACO) and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and has made significant proposals for more intensive regional cooperation, including the creation of a Central Asian Common Market.

Kazakhstan, with its large ethnic Russian minority (37.7 per cent in 1989, but down to 29.9 per cent in 1999), was initially very susceptible to Russian

\textsuperscript{20} Nations in Transit annual reports at \url{www.freedomhouse.org}
\textsuperscript{21} “UNDP Country Background Studies”, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.
influence. As Kazakhstan’s president has consolidated institutional power, a process aided by substantial FDI and revenues from the oil sector, Kazakhstan has become a more influential player in the region, establishing close ties both with Russia, as well as with China and the United States, and attaining greater influence with Central Asian neighbours. Kazakhstan’s leadership has generally been supportive of various regional institutions, especially the CIS, EEC and CACO, and with a relatively open border regime has in effect applied a policy supportive of regional economic integration. At the same time, Kazakh leaders see Kazakhstan at the intercept of Europe and Asia, and have pursued very deliberately a ‘multi-vector’ foreign policy in which big powers, especially China, Russia and the United States, occupy the highest priority.

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have both been strapped by limited economic resources, and are highly dependent on Russia for economic and political stability. They also need Russia to balance the potential influences of China and Uzbekistan. While Tajikistan agreed with Russia in late 2004 to phase out the presence of Russian border guards on its border with Afghanistan, it continues military cooperation with Russia in other ways. Kyrgyzstan’s first post-independence president had initially sought close ties with the West, but then increasingly resisted external pressure to democratize political processes. The presidents of both states have welcomed the establishment of regional institutions and played an active role in their development.

The president of Turkmenistan has insisted on ‘constructive neutrality’ and has engaged primarily in narrowly focused bilateral relations dealing with key commercial and security issues, rather than seeking to participate in regional or multilateral agreements.

Presidentialism and authoritarianism per se have not impeded regional cooperation among states in other regions, such as East and South-East Asia. Although the vision of the Central Asian executives has been highly influenced by their command-style communist experiences and subsequent 15-year quest for sovereignty and security, there are indications that some Central Asian leaders

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23 Summary of World broadcast, BBC, March 19, 2005.(online)
24 Ibid.
would in principle be ready to engage in greater economic reform and regional cooperation. President Karimov’s proposal in 2004 for a regional Common Market and President Nazarbayev’s call for closer economic integration in February 2005 are prominent examples of promising new regional initiatives. The question remains, however, whether this new thinking will be translated into effective action to open up regional economic relations and to tie themselves into regional agreements that may be seen as compromising the new-found sovereignty of their countries. One major obstacle for action may be that even in these super-presidential systems, the presidency and executive apparatus are neither as consolidated nor as powerful as observers often assume.26

Power in Central Asian countries is informally held by the leaders of groups or clan networks based partly on business interests, and partly on shared family, kin and regional ties. Even under the Soviet system, despite the appearance of totalitarian control exercised from Moscow, party power in fact reflected local historical realities of sub-national factions, and intra-ethnic division and balancing of power.27 Post-Soviet power is also informally decentralized among patronage networks.28 In policy-making and implementation, leaders therefore have to allow for the powerful groups that surround them. The extent of this diffusion of power varies in the states across the region, and takes on somewhat different forms in each country, but generally combines Soviet-era reliance on institutions of state control with a local tradition of reliance on personalistic ties and patronage. The president patronizes and balances various informal networks in order to maintain control, loyalty and legitimacy. The system of informal rule intensified during the transition process, allowing existing informal patronage networks to become vested interests with significant leverage over the state, which consequently weakened the formal state institutions, especially those outside the president’s office.

One strand of the political economy literature of transition has argued that the major challenge and obstacle for successful completion of liberal economic reforms is the emergence of elite interest groups.29 These actors, including enterprise

directors, some government officials, bankers and mafias, surfaced during the initial phase of political and economic partial liberalization. They took advantage, often through illegal or non-transparent means, of the opportunities presented by the collapse of communism and initial reforms to establish monopolistic economic interests, and then became vested in a system that allows them a certain amount of economic freedom, but does not hold them politically or economically accountable. They bolstered the transitional regimes, which had allowed them to make such illicit gains, so as to have an ongoing political cover for their wealth and power. They blocked further political reforms, including further economic liberalization, which would have forced them to compete with a wider set of economic actors or share the wealth of their monopolies.

These 'winners' of the transition process did not oppose initial reform, nor did they seek to reverse reform and return to a communist system. Rather, "they have frequently attempted to block specific advances in the reform process that threaten to eliminate the special advantages and market distortions upon which their own early reform gains were based." As they gained concentrated rents (i.e., abnormal profits) from their positions, and then stalled further reform, the initial winners created a 'partial reform equilibrium'. The rest of their economies and societies meanwhile suffered high costs from market distortions, but lacked the political and economic power to change the equilibrium and continue reforms that would distribute economic benefits to society more broadly. This outcome aptly characterizes the problems faced by the partial reformers of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan (after signing the peace accord in 1997) and Ukraine. Each of these countries faces the accompanying problems of monopolistic groups, concentrated rents, dispersed costs, high corruption and resistance to further reforms.

The partial reform equilibrium trap, according to the same theory, contrasts with two alternative scenarios. Under the first alternative, full and rapid economic and political liberalization leads to short-term losses, but in the medium to long term produces widely dispersed gains. This model of reform was adopted by most

30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
33 Hellman, Joel, "Winners Take All: The Politics of Partial Reform in Post-Communist Nations" World Politics 50(2) 1998, pp.203-234
countries of post-communist Central Europe, including the Baltic republics, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia. Although one effect of this model has been government turnover—in some cases, in the first elections after the implementation of radical economic reforms that caused high unemployment—these countries have persisted with economic reforms under subsequent governments, resulting in a significant economic recovery over the medium to longer term. They do not face extensive problems from monopolies and the capture of state policy by a few vested interests.

Under the second scenario, there is no reform or only very limited economic liberalization without political liberalization. Theory and some empirical evidence suggest that this case avoids the establishment of vested interests and is consistent with some recovery of economic growth. In Central Asia, two countries would fit this category. Turkmenistan has exhibited virtually no reform and Uzbekistan is characterized by minimal economic or political reform.\(^{34}\) Theoretically, in these countries there should be fewer and less powerful vested interests and therefore there should be less if any special-interest resistance to the executive’s economic policy-making, including decisions about regional integration.

This political economy argument offers some useful insight for understanding the politics of reform in post-communist Central Asia, as well as the constraints on regional economic cooperation. The initial winners of transitional reforms gain monopolistic control over industries and economic sectors, and then are likely directly or indirectly to block regional economic cooperation. There are two reasons for this. First, because the very willingness to adopt and implement regional economic cooperation measures depends in large part on the willingness to liberalize one’s border, currency and trade policies. Greater trade liberalization and integration in turn means greater competition, and therefore is a threat to the monopolies and rent-seeking potential of leading firms and agencies in the protected sectors of the economy. Second, regional economic cooperation and integration policies demand a certain amount of centralized and coordinated state economic policy. In order to be effectively implemented, and for individuals and businesses to gain from them, these policies also demand a relatively well-trained, honest and

\(^{34}\) The Wall Street Journal and Heritage Foundation Index of Economic Freedom, 2003 and 2004, at www.cf.heritage.org
effective state bureaucracy, civil service, judiciary, customs agency and police force to protect the property rights of individual economic actors as they engage in economic transaction in their own countries, as well as in other countries within their region.

3.4 Security Cooperation

The most significant dynamics within the CIS with far reaching security implications was the treaty on collective security signed between Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Russia and Armenia at the Tashkent Summit on May 15, 1992. There is one clause in the treaty, which binds the signatories not to enter into military alliances or participate in any groupings of states, nor in action directed against another participating state of the treaty. On the eve of the Tashkent Summit, President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan commented that “two months of confrontation in Tajikistan have opened the eye of a lot of people. Realistically thinking politicians must do and reach conclusion.”

The Tashkent summit, attended by the Heads of the Government of all the participant members and chaired by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, negotiated a five year collective security aggression providing for a collective response to aggression against any of its signatories. Other agreements signed by all participants at the summit included:

1. Agreement for reducing armed forces of the former Soviet Union,
2. Reducing chemical weapons in accordance with international agreements,
3. Creating a single air space, a single information space, and in principle, a CIS television and radio company,
4. Agreement on border troops,
5. Social provision for servicemen,
6. Provision for formation of a collective security council consisting of the heads of participating states and the Commander-in Chief of the CIS Joint Armed Force.

The recent events show the need for a serious and an eventually enduring security system. Article 1 and Article 4 of collective security treaty prohibit the

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35 Moscow Central Television, 4 May, 1992, Cited in FBIS,SOV-92-009, 19 May, 92, pp.31-32.
participating states from entering into any military alliances or taking part in any grouping of states or actions directed against another participating states. General Leonid Ivashov, head of the working group on denfence issues, and one of the key participants in preparation of the documents for the Tashkent Summit, argued that the treaty confirms already established views, particularly within the military circle of the CIS governments, that the establishment of a system of collective security, or more accurately its preservation, is a practical necessity and an objective requirement. The Chief of the CIS joint armed forces General Staff, General V. Samsanov, pointed to the political significance of the treaty in an article which was published by Krasnaya Zrezda. The treaty on collective security is the basis for forming a defence alliance and the first and probably most complex step towards creating an effective military and political structure capable of being a guarantee of security for the successful political and economic development of the subjects that constitute the CIS.36

The treaty on collective security has not defined the exterior border of the participant states, as the border of the CIS and its defence within the jurisdiction of CIS armed forces. “We now have common external border which was declared by General Leonid Ivanshov. Both Marshall Shaposhnikov, the then commander in chief of the CIS Joint Armed Forces, and General V. Samsnov, the CIS Chief of the General Staff reaffirmed that the quick reaction to the threat posed against the outside borders of the commonwealth is one of the key tasks of the CIS Collective Security agreement.” Uzbekistan’s forceful presentation of the border and ethnic conflict issues in Moscow was reinforced by a critical report given by Rakhman Nabiyev, President of Tajikistan, on the serious border problems with Afghanistan.

Thus, the Tashkent summit of the collective security provided the main security dimension of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The significance of the agreement did not primarily lie in its internal provision, but in the fact that it provided an essential precondition for the more detailed bilateral military agreement which Russia subsequently signed will all the Central Asian Republics including Turkmenistan.

Immediately after the Tashkent summit, two agreements, equally if not more significant, were reached among the participant states in Moscow (July 6, 1992) and

Tashkent (July 16, 1992), which provided more substantive support to the previous collective security agreement. The two meetings specifically addressed the twin significant issue-mechanism of the creation of CIS Peace Keeping Force (blue helmet) for rapid deployment in the areas of regional conflict within the CIS, and the issue of security of the southern border of the CIS. The Moscow summit also defined 'the exterior border of the participant states as the border of the CIS and its defence within the jurisdiction of CIS joint Armed Forces.' Both Marshall Shaposhnikov, the Commander-in-Chief of the CIS joint Armed Forces, and General V. Samsanov, CIS Chief of the General staff, re-affirmed that the quick reaction of the threat posed against the 'outside borders of the commonwealth' is one of the key tasks of the CIS collective security agreement.37

Another important summit of leaders of the Commonwealth of Independent States with far reaching security implications was held in the Belarussian capital, Minsk, on January 22, 1993. After prolonged debate, a charter for closer political, economic integration, and defence alliance was prepared. The charter was signed by seven of the ten former Soviet Republics represented at the meeting namely Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Ukraine, Moldova and Turkmenistan refused to sign. A commitment was made within the CIS framework that Russia would be ready to guarantee the security and territorial integrity of Central Asian states and to defend them against external attack and internal instability.38 The Charter of this Conference may be looked upon as a 'multilateral treaty' consisting of fifty articles. Article 3 maintains that the member states ought to build their relations on the principle of 'non-interference in one another's internal and external affairs'. Article 4 and 29 stipulate 'the coordination of foreign policy activity' and 'cooperation in the field of the defence industry and the protection of external borders'. The third section of the Charter envisages 'Collective Security and Military Political-Cooperation'. Article 4 may be viewed as an extension of the Collective Security Treaty signed at Tashkent.39 An extraordinary meeting of the Heads of Government of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was again held in Minsk on April 16, 1993. The summit was attended by all CIS heads of states except Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan. Both

Boris Yeltsin and the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, emphasized security cooperation and the need to check growing intrigues of anti-government forces in Tajikistan. The concept of collective security within the CIS appears to have gained ground since the Minsk Summit. On August 7, 1993, Russia and the Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, decided to set up a regional security system ‘in accordance with the agreement of collective security of the CIS states and bilateral agreements with Tajikistan’. President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan justified the security pact on the ground that the militant Islamic fundamentalist forces were working overtime to turn Tajikistan into a ‘springboard’ for spreading militant fundamentalism in the Central Asian Republics and other CIS states and that, therefore, it was necessary to ‘prevent in their territories the activities of persons, groups and organizations’ aimed at violating the security of those states’. It was also emphasized that the borders of Tajikistan were ‘part of the common borders of the CIS’, and Russia has a historic duty to guard the Tajik –Afghan border.

Keeping in view the security of the exterior border of the Commonwealth of Independent States, particularly, Tajik-Afghan border, a communiqué was issued by the Foreign Ministers of Russia, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan following their meeting in Dushanbe on March 15, 1994. It demanded that peacekeeping forces of CIS in Tajikistan should be granted UN status. Even Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev insisted that CIS’s peace-keeping role did not require ‘international approval’ and that Russia has ‘a historic duty to guard the Tajik Afghan border’.

Another impotent CIS Summit was held in Moscow on January 19, 1996. President Boris Yeltsin, while addressing the meeting of the CIS Heads of State proposed concentrating efforts on creating a single defence space and stronger system of collective security in the CIS. Boris Yeltsin stated: “it is virtually impossible for the countries of the Commonwealth, acting individually, to ensure their national security, but we can achieve this through a system of collective security”. The Russian President also stressed the importance of preserving the military systems which previously protected the territory of the Soviet Union,
particularly the single air defence system, and of restoring joint production in the military-industrial complex.

The Declaration on CIS Guidelines of Development adopted on April 2, 1999, by the Moscow meeting of Heads of States mentioned among others the "confirmation of our resolution to settle armed conflicts in Commonwealth member countries as soon as possible by peaceful means and with the use of UN and OSCE mechanisms and resources on the basis of undeviating compliance with territorial integrity, inviolability of state frontiers, and other universally recognized international legal norms and principles".

The main benefit of security cooperation under the CIS umbrella is that it gives the Central Asian states access to the anti-terrorist centre that has been functioning in the CIS since 2001. They can also be part of the activities of the CSTO, including planned cooperation in a united air defence system; in assessing radiological, biological and chemical threats; in the organization’s Rapid Deployment Forces stationed in Kant in Kyrgyzstan; and in joint military exercises. However, the organization’s membership (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan, but not Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) limits its scope. The CIS summit held in Astana in September 2004, a month after the terrorist attacks and tragic bloodshed at the school in Beslan in Russia, had as an overarching theme a common stance against terrorism. Summit participants also issued statements and signed documents expressing their intention to combat illegal migration, organized crime and drug trafficking.44

Till date more than one hundred agreements within the framework of Commonwealth of Independent States have been signed by all its constituent members, but in practice, very few provision of the agreements has been implemented. Furthermore, President Islam Karimov openly declared in February 1999 that it would not renew its membership and gave formal notice for withdrawal of Uzbekistan from the Treaty. Moreover, the changing perception of leaders and the regional groupings and alliances by the members of the CIS, has also greatly affected the Commonwealth of Independent States as a collective organization to look after collective security as well as various issues of the CIS Republics.

3.5 Interstate Security Cooperation in Central Asia

All the states of Central Asia before independence were located in the Turkistan Military District of former USSR. The Soviet-era troops were primarily charged with the security of the long southern Soviet frontier. Following the disintegration of Soviet Union, three military and security issues emerged immediately. These were the status of strategic forces that were deployed around the USSR, procedures to divide the assets, that is, the troops themselves and military equipment, and the status of weapons production and testing facilities. These issues were the most pressing issues in the immediate aftermath of their independence and dominated the agendas for the meetings in Minsk (February 1992), Tashkent (May 1992), Moscow (July 1992) and Bishkek (October 1992).

But by the time of the Bishkek meeting, the issue of civil unrest in Tajikistan had forced its way onto the agenda. Over the following years that agenda grew, each new issue linked to the others, and each adding new levels of complexity to the regional security debate. First, in connection with the Tajikistan problem, the influence of guerrillas from Afghanistan and the broader question of the role of Russia in the future of Central Asia gained significance. Second, in connection with the role of Russia in Central Asia, the issue of military cooperation with the outside world arose as the Russian position hardened around NATO enlargement plans and, later, US military action in Kosovo. Third, after the Taliban captured Kabul, the issue of Central Asian relationships with the Indian sub-continent arose. The threats from Afghanistan necessitated Central Asian unity, and simultaneously it also provided motivation to convince the warring sides in Tajikistan to reach a peace accord. Finally, with regard to the revival of Islamic sentiment and the politicization of cultural, social and economic issues, there were growing fears of ‘Wahhabism’ and the establishment of a Caliphate uniting the Moslem faithful throughout all Central Asia. The fears of Islamic extremism gave rise to counterinsurgency measures throughout the region, particularly in Uzbekistan.

The CIS Collective Security Treaty adopted at the May 1992 summit in Tashkent provided that aggression or threat of aggression against one country would be regarded as aggression against all participants in the treaty. The agreement also paved the way for the abolition, on 30 June 1992, of the Soviet-era Turkistan...
Military District. Even as the Soviet military was being dismantled piece by piece, confrontation was growing in Tajikistan.45

In August 1991, Tajik president Kahar Makhamov was forced to resign. The former Tajikistan communist party first secretary, Rakhmon Nabiev, assumed power after defeating Davlat Khudonazarov in the November 1991 presidential election. Soon pro-Russian Nabiev lost control to crowds in the street and resigned under force of arms in September 1992. Tajikistan was caught in a wave of escalating tension that resulted in a division between armed groups vying for the streets of the capital. Civil war ensued.

By September 1992 the capital was under the control of the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP). The IRP represented various groups and regions, but was heavily oriented to the Garm valley to the north-east of the capital. Armed opposition to the takeover of the capital was organized by a coalition of forces from the southern regions of Kurgan-Tyube and Kulyab and the northern industrial region in Leninobad oblast. These forces attacked the capital in the early morning hours of 24 October 1992. Sporadic but intense fighting continued until December. Thousands of civilians and soldiers were killed and 1,00,000 persons fled to neighbouring countries while as many as 6,00,000 Tajikistan citizens fled their homes as internal refugees.46 This early violent phase of the civil war was resolved in favour of a coalition based in the valley region centered in the city of Kulyab and led by Emomali Rahmonov.

Following the conflict, the fighters displaced by the recapture of the capital—the groups that eventually gained the name UTO, the United Tajikistan Opposition—were scattered in the mountain areas to the north and east of the capital. Large areas of the country remained under military control, as the victorious commanders in the war divided the territory among themselves. The Tajikistan government and opposition leaders sought outside assistance in the resolution of disputes. A UN brokered negotiated settlement of the civil conflict took place in June 1997 when the Tajik government and the UTO signed a national peace accord. The two sides agreed to share power in a unified government, merge their armed forces and make

preparations to hold presidential and parliamentary elections. Emomali Rahmonov was re-elected president in November 1999. In both military and diplomatic efforts, Russia and Uzbekistan originally supported the Rahmonov coalition during the civil war. Russian troops were stationed in Tajikistan throughout the fighting.

Uzbekistan was the country most directly affected by disorder in Tajikistan. Like Russia, Uzbekistan supplied military assistance to the Rahmonov faction during the war. Uzbekistan was intensely aware that Russia’s commitment to Tajikistan was out of proportion to any apparent commercial or national security interests in the region and was motivated primarily by Great Power pretensions. Uzbekistan’s response was to steer toward bilateral arrangements that would include arms-length relations with Russia and, at the same time, to seek a loose security community that was regionally focused. Uzbekistan’s support for the Rahmonov government was driven by fear the civil war would spread outside Tajikistan’s borders. But after 1995 Uzbekistan sought increasingly to align itself in security relationships that gave it more flexibility than an alliance with Russia. In 1996 Uzbekistan announced its intention to join the Partnership for Peace (PfP). In 1997 Centrasbat ’97 created a 500 strong battalion of Kazak, Kyrgyz and Uzbek troops under the aegis of the United Nations. The leaders of Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova (GUUAM) met in Washington in April 1999 to form a group aimed at boosting economic and security cooperation in close cooperation with the Western alliance. The GUUAM agreement was immediately interpreted by Russia as a provocative step.

In 1996 the Taliban, a group of Afghan Mujahedeen originally formed in the Afghan refugee camps of Peshawar, Pakistan, had pushed through southern and eastern Afghanistan, uniting the ethnic Pashtun areas, and then other areas, under strict Islamic rule. They succeeded in capturing Kabul in September 1996. The Taliban’s zealotry quickly united Iran, Russia, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in opposition to them. As a result, the Taliban gave impetus to a new cooperativeness among the parties engaged in the inter-Tajik peace talks, as both sides and their foreign patrons recognized the need for a united front against the Taliban.

Uzbekistan’s support for the Rahmonov government diminished after the 1997 Peace Accord adopted a power-sharing formula giving legitimacy to the Islamic opposition groups. In early November 1998 a military group led by Tajikistan civil war colonel Mahmud Khudoiberdiev led an insurrection to capture the government offices in the town of Khujand in northern Tajikistan. After intense fighting, the Tajikistan government repulsed the coup attempt. President Rahmonov later asserted that the government of Uzbekistan had rendered assistance to former Tajikistan Prime Minister Abdumalik Abdollojonov, who, he claimed, had been the mastermind of the coup attempt. President Islam Karimov denied that Uzbekistan had any links to rebels.

The threat of traffic in drugs and weapons has come to be recognized by Central Asian leaders, in the words of Kyrgyzstan’s Akaev, as ‘problem Number One.’ According to the annual report of the UN Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, in 1998 the expansion of poppy cultivation in Afghanistan was particularly evident in the northern part of the country, which, the report concluded, might ‘result in a further preferred use of Central Asia as a transit zone for opium and heroin trafficking.’ Cultivation was reported to have increased during the 1999 growing season to such an extent that ‘in 1999 Afghanistan...represented 42% of global cultivation and 79% of global production.’ The Central Asian states have teamed up to form a Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA). As Kazakhstan’s Deputy Foreign Minister Kairat Abuseitov observed, ‘the drug trade, terrorism and international crime are problems that have no borders.’

With the fading of the fears of a restoration of the USSR, and in the light of the dangers of extremism, terrorism, drug trafficking and separatism, there is an appearance of a new regional enthusiasm for strategic partnerships with Russia. In November 1999 Tajikistan’s Rahmonov told Vladimir Putin that Tajikistan would always be Russia’s ‘strategic partner’.

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54 UNDCP, Global Illicit Drug Trends 2000 (New York, UN, 2001), p.31
Akaev, addressing the Assembly of Peoples of Kyrgyzstan in Bishkek on 30 June 2000, said 'Russia always has been and will remain Kyrgyzstan’s principal strategic partner.'\(^{57}\) In December 1999, as Putin and Karimov signed a military cooperation agreement in Tashkent, Putin described Uzbekistan as ‘Russia’s strategic partner.’\(^{58}\) In April 2000 Sergei Yastrzhembsky reiterated that Uzbekistan was Russia’s ‘strategic ally’ and pledged that Russia would help Uzbekistan in the event of any attack on its territory by international terrorists and would engage in joint measures to combat terrorism, banditry, religious extremism and drug trafficking.\(^{59}\) While these announcements are politically significant, the fact remains that, with the exception of the Russian-Tajik partnership these arrangements are almost certainly misnamed. They are tactical agreements that came into being as a result of a confluence of interests; when the interests change the alliances can be expected to shift. The recent developments in Central Asia bears testimony to this as these states have tried to diversify their security relationship with West, NATO, OSCE and the UN.

3.6 Diversification of Security Relationship of Central Asian states with West, NATO, OSCE and the UN

The Tashkent Collective Security Treaty and the separate bilateral and multilateral security arrangements within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States with Russia have already provided security guarantee to all newly independent Central Asian Republics. But in the wake of active Russian foreign policy based upon the newly formulated Russian military doctrine in the ‘near abroad’ of 1993, aimed at creating ‘zones of influence’ and declaring the whole of the former Soviet Central Asian territories as an area of ‘vital interest’ for Russia, the leaders of the Republics started exploring other avenues to ensure the security and stability of the Central Asian states.

While addressing 48th Session of the UN General Assembly, President Islam Karimov emphasized on the regional security in Central Asia beyond the unified security structure of the Commonwealth of Independent States, and proposed to set up in Tashkent a ‘permanent United National Seminar’ on issues of ‘Regional

\(^{57}\) RFE/RL Newsline, 3 July 2000.
\(^{58}\) RFE/RL Newsline, 13 December 1999.
\(^{59}\) RFE/RL Newsline, 11 April 2000.
Security and Cooperation. Subsequently, a seminar on ‘security and cooperation in Central Asia’ was held on September 15-16, 1995, in the Uzbek capital, Tashkent, which was attended by the delegations representing the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as well as representatives from the permanent member states of United Nations Security Council, and also from the neighbouring states of Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and India. While addressing the seminar, Islam Karimov emphasized the need for international organizations and institutions to take an active interest in ensuring peace and security in Central Asian regions.

After the Tashkent Seminar, a two-day international seminar on ‘Regional Security in Central Asia’, was organized in the Kazakh Capital Almaty, on December 7, 1995. It was attended by the Foreign Ministry officials from the Central Asian Republics and experts from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, the USA, Russia and Britain. It discussed the role of the Central Asian states with regard to major regional and international issues. The seminar was sponsored by the Kazakh Foreign Ministry, Strategic Research Institute of Kazakhstan, and the International Institute for Strategic Studies, London.

Subsequently, a two day international conference on ‘Security, Cooperation and Confidence Building Measures in Asia’, was held in the then Kazakh capital, Almaty, on February 7, 1996. Representatives from Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, China, India, Iran, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan participated. Observes from ten other countries including Vietnam, Egypt Indonesia and Japan also attended this conference along with representatives of United Nations, the OSCE, and a number of other international organizations. Participants in this conference mainly discussed three draft documents, including a ‘Declaration on the principles of relations between the member states of the Conference on Interaction and Measures of Trust in Asia (CIMTA)’, ‘Rules and procedures of conferences on interaction and measures of trust in Asia’ and the ‘structure and institutions of CIMTA’.

To eliminate the possibilities of Russian domination over Central Asian Republics and to chart out an independent course of foreign policy which would be

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61 Ibid, P. G/2.
63 SWB, SU/2530, P. G/3, February 8, 1996.
free from Russian influence, the Central Asian leaders have tried to create a broader security space which would include the United Nations, Organizations for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and other western international security structures. This could be participation in the Partnership for Peace (PFP) programme as well as in the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) of the NATO, and staging of numerous NATO military exercises on the territory of Central Asia. These are indicative of their desire to become self-reliant and independent from Russia’s strategic security umbrella. Having gained full political sovereignty, the Central Asian regimes perceive the involvement of these various international institutions in their region as one of the basic guarantees for their stability and impendence. On the other hand, the strategic objectives of NATO and Partnership for Peace Programme are to involve Central Asian states in the European Security structure based on cooperative processes and on mutual consultations in case of threat, increase military cooperation and information exchange, to contribute to stability in the region through democratic control over the military and balanced civil military relation and to increase interoperability for peace-keeping operation on the basis of a common conceptual approach.\(^{64}\)

**Central Asian Republics and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)**

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, in the vast space stretching from the Caucasus to Central Asia, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has been very active. Its role and responsibility on the territory covering Euro-Asian Russia, Trans-Caucasia and Central Asia (by geographic proximity one could describe this as the Euro-Central Asian region) has been active. The leaders of the Central Asian states believe that Euro-Central Asian system of security may place the Central Asian region in the European processes of security and extend to its territory the common principles of inviolability of frontiers and territorial integrity. The Central Asian states would like to enter into broader security space, which could reduce the domination of Russia in the Central Asian region, and increase opportunities of the OSCE to implement or control peace-keeping operation.

on its territory. Further, it is argued that the Euro–Asian system of security may stop disputes about the possible expansion of NATO, diminish frictions between Russia and NATO, Russia and the USA, Russia and the West as a whole, in connection with Russia's policy in Eastern Europe and the post–Soviet space. The border between the 'far' and 'near' abroad would be eliminated in favour of the single Euro-Central Asian space of security and after that there would emerge a reasonable balance of mutual relations between the OSCE, NATO, EU and CIS, which as a whole under the aegis of the UN might characterize the Euro-Central Asian system of security.

To come closer and to integrate within the OSCE security structure, a seminar sponsored by the OSCE on 'Security and Confidence-Building Measures in Central Asia' was held in the Tajik capital Dushanbe on 24 April, 1996. In the summit of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) subsequently organized in Lisbon on 2 December 1996, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Uzbek President Islam Karimov participated. While addressing a press conference soon after the Lisbon Summit, President Karimov disclosed that 'our primary purpose in participating in this Organisation is to get security guarantees for Uzbekistan—for our people, for our country'.

After a few months the Secretary-General of the OSCE, Giancarlo Aragona, visited Uzbekistan on July 14, 1997, to discuss with President Islam Karimov issues of regional and international security, the situation in Afghanistan and the prospects for cooperation between the OSCE and Uzbekistan. Subsequently, the Chairman-in-office (CiO) of the OSCE Polish Foreign Minister Bronislaw Geremek, visited the countries of Central Asia on 14-20 April, 1998. It was the first CiO visit to the region. In each of the five countries he visited-Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the Chairman-in-office emphasized the importance of Central Asia as an integral part of the OSCE community, in accordance with the principle of indivisibility of the security in the OSCE area. He stressed the importance of their active participation in OSCE work, in all its dimensions. He also invited them to participate actively in the work on a document charter on European security in order to ensure a proper link between European and Central Asian security, in his final report, CiO pointed out that OSCE is very much

65 SWB, SU/2598 P. G/1, April 27, 1996.
66 SWB, SU/2787, P.G/4, December 5, 1996.
concerned about Central Asia’s internal and cross-border conflicts, inter-ethnic tensions, religio-political extremism, menaces of drug trafficking and international criminal activity, which are major possible threats for regional security of Central Asia. The gravity of these problems and others raised in his report suggest that the security situation in Central Asia and efforts to integrate more closely with the states of the region and also with other members of the OSCE would be given higher priority in the OSCE, including the document / charter on European security.

In her opening statement, the next OSCE Chairman –in-Office, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria, Mrs. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, at the “International Conference on Enhancing Security in Central Asia: An Integrated Approach to Counter Drugs, Organised Crime and Terrorism”, held at Tashkent on 19th October 2000, emphasized the need for cooperation and coordination of OSCE in the security aspects of Central Asia. She also called for coordination at a national, regional, inter-regional and international level in order to adopt measures to prevent, control and eliminate the interrelated phenomena of drug trafficking, organised crime and terrorism.

After its initial focus on human rights and democratization, including support to government-NGO relations, judiciary and police reforms, elections and ombudsperson offices, the OSCE has expanded its activities in Central Asia to focus on economic issues, human security and counterterrorism.67 In December 2001, it organized a major conference on terrorism in collaboration with UNODC – the Bishkek International Conference on Enhancing Security and Stability in Central Asia: Strengthening Comprehensive Efforts to Counter Terrorism – which issued the Bishkek Platform for Action. This statement called for joint activities to prevent and fight against terrorism, building on the approach stipulated in the OSCE Charter on Preventing and Combating Terrorism.68

In 2002, the OSCE created the Action against Terrorism Unit as the focal point for action against terrorism carried out by OSCE bodies, institutions and field missions. It responds to requests for assistance from OSCE member states, and delivers practical assistance and guidance to field activities. In its work, the OSCE

68 OSCE. “Programme of Action”, From the International Conference on Enhancing Security and Stability in Central Asia: Strengthening Comprehensive Efforts to Counter Terrorism, Bishkek, December 13-14, 2001,
stresses the need to balance human rights and human security considerations with national security needs. For example, in its report on the Andijan violence in Uzbekistan in May 2005, the OSCE warned that “while states have legitimate security concerns in the current fight against terrorism, caution must be applied to avoid excessively broad and indiscriminate use of the terms ‘terrorism’ and ‘extremism’. Otherwise this would present negative consequences for legitimate political opposition, ethnic and religious minorities, and the effective enjoyment of human rights such as freedom of expression and association”.

Central Asian states and NATO’S Partnership for Peace Programme

Relations with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) have bearing on Central Asian states’ strategic relations with the west. Soon after the dissolution of the Soviet Union Kazakh President Nazarbayev declared that:

...... The North Atlantic Treaty has a suitable goal for our rapprochement to assist the democratic development of the states of Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS, and to prevent regional conflicts as far as possible....... NATO member-states for the purposes of cooperation with these states have committed themselves to providing their accumulated experience and considerable expert potential in defence policy... considering all this, we will broaden contacts with NATO, provided their sphere and limits are strictly determined and they are not damaging for military cooperation within the CIS framework or bilateral military ties.

In December 1991, as part of strategy to integrate members of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet successors state within the Western security structure, NATO heads of states and government responded by establishing the North Atlantic Cooperation Council. Later on this basis a completely new form of cooperation programme ‘Partnership for Peace’ was lunched at the initiative of the American President Bill Clinton at the NATO summit in January 1994 at Brussels. NATO has devoted considerable efforts to implement these objectives. Within a year, NATO invited the Central Asian Republics to cooperate under the Partnership for Peace Programme, and a framework document was signed with Central Asian states who participated in this programme. Thus NATO, for the first time, directly reached beyond the Ural Mountains through the participation of Central Asian Republics in

the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) and Partnership for Peace Programme. 72

Since the Partnership for Peace Programme was initiated, military and civil representatives of the newly Central Asian states have taken part in the majority of events conducted within its framework—in seminars and conferences concerning security problems and the principles of constructing armed forces democratic societies, and in various NATO training activities during which the objectives of peace-keeping activities have been elaborated. Military officers from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have also been invited to different military schools of NATO member states.

Central Asian units of armed forces have, for the first time, taken part in exercises in the State of Louisiana, USA, under NATO’s Partnership for Peace programme. The military units from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan took part in the official opening of the exercises on August 8, 1995, alongside their counterparts from other European countries, USA and Canada. 73 Afterwards, a 60-man battalion of Central Asian peace-keepers participated in the Cooperative Osprey Exercise in North Carolina, USA, on 16 August 1996 in accordance with the NATO Partnership for Peace military exercise.

Further to deepen cooperation with NATO, the Uzbek and the US military personnel held joint military maneuvers on June 6-9, 1997, in the Ferghana Valley in Eastern Uzbekistan, the Ultra Balance-97 exercises were held in accordance with a 1995 bilateral agreement between the Uzbek Defence Ministry and the US Defence Department, Uzbek Foreign Minister, Abdulaziz Kamilov, held talks with the US Secretary of State, Madeline Albright, in Washington on June 12, 1997, and the two sides agreed to form a joint commission to expand cooperation in the areas of defence. 74

The first stage of multi-national peace-keeping exercises under the NATO’s Partnership for Peace programme involving troops from three Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, which has agreed to create a Central Asian peace-keeping battalion under UN auspices, as well as troops from Russia, the USA, Turkey, Denmark, Ukraine, Georgia and the Baltic States, began

73 SWB, SU/2379, P.S1/2, August 11, 1995.
74 SWB, SU/2942, P.S1/12, June 11, 1997.
in southern Kazakhstan on September 15-17, 1997. The second stage of multinational peace-keeping exercise with participation of a total of 1,400 troops from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, the USA, Russia, Turkey, Georgia and Latvia, began near the Uzbek capital, in the NATO’s Partnership for Peace Programme. This special peace-keeping exercise ended on September 21, 1997.

The second bilateral joint Kazakh-US military exercise— the Balance-Kayak-98—began on June 6, 1998 and lasted until June 27, 1998, outside Almaty. According to a senior Kazakh military spokesman, a Kazakh paratroops brigade and members of a group of US special service troops participated in this military exercise. A long peace-keeping exercise—The Centrasbat-98 was also held in Central Asia, near Tashkent on September 22, 1998. As a part of the NATO’s Partnership for Peace programme, more than 700 servicemen from Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, the United States, Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan participated in this exercise.

Besides military cooperation and peace-keeping exercises under the Partnership for Peace Programme, the Central Asian states have also established diplomatic relations with NATO by exchanging envoys mutually on regular basis. A US military delegation, led by the US permanent representative to NATO, Robert Hunter, on the diplomatic mission to the Central Asian states, visited the Kazakh capital Almaty on 3 April 1996. He met the Kazakh Defence minister Alibek Kasymov and First Deputy Foreign minister Nurlan Danenov, and expressed deep concern over regional security. He conveyed the US willingness to assist financially the creation of a battalion of peace-keeping forces of Central Asian states under UN auspices.

To develop further military cooperation and transparency in relation with the newly independent Central Asian states, NATO Secretary General Javier Solana in his second visit to these Republics, arrived at Almaty on March 11, 1997. Both Javier Solana and President Nazarbayev agreed to broaden cooperation with NATO within the framework of the Partnership for Peace programme. Solana expressed NATO’s readiness to training of Kazakh military officers. Javier Solana also had talks with the Uzbek Defence Minister Rustom Ahmedov and Foreign Minister

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75 SWB, SU/3026, P. S1/2, September 19, 1997.
76 SWB, SU/3028,P. S1/2, September 23, 1997.
77 SWB, SU/3247, O. S1/5, June 8, 1998.
78 SWB, SU/2581, P. G/2, April 5, 1996.
79 SWB, SU/2581, P. G/2, April 5, 1996.
Abdulaziz Kamilov in Tashkent on March 13, 1997. Kamilov clarified the stand of Uzbekistan to the visiting NATO Secretary General stating that Uzbekistan in accordance with its foreign policy principles would not join any military or military-political blocs.

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001 the support rendered by the Central Asian states for the US led coalition to fight terrorists based in neighbouring Afghanistan is, in fact, the realization of the NATO-Central Asian Republics’ strategic partnership. In his well-publicised tour in the context of the US anti-terrorist campaign in Afghanistan, Donald Rumsfeld, the US Defence Secretary, visited Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The Central Asian states along with Russia have strongly supported the US efforts to form an international anti-terrorist coalition, launched after 11 September attack on Washington and New York. The Central Asian states (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan) offered several strategically important air bases to US war planes for military campaign and air strikes in Afghanistan.

All Central Asian countries have engaged in the Partnership for Peace programmes with NATO\(^{80}\) and are in the process of developing individual partnership action plans. Partnership programmes include activities and consultations for improved national defence planning and budgeting, and provide equipment and training.\(^{81}\) Other projects include disaster preparedness and scientific and technical cooperation. NATO has also encouraged its member nations, partner countries and other international donors to set up Partnership for Peace Trust Funds in order to assist partner countries in coping with their old stockpiles of weapons and ammunition. In Tajikistan in 2004, a trust fund helped to destroy the last remaining stockpile of approximately 1,200 antipersonnel landmines left over from the civil war.

Other NATO plans include appointing a special representative for the region and opening NATO training centres. However, the scope for enhanced regional cooperation among Central Asian countries under NATO-sponsored programmes is limited at best. Central Asian capitals appear to look to NATO principally to procure new supplies of modern weapons and equipment, and to a lesser extent for help with their own internal defence reform programmes.

\(^{80}\) NATO Signatures of Partnership for Peace Framework document at www.nato.int/pfp/sig-cntr.htm.

\(^{81}\) See online www.nato.int/issuep/pfp May 19, 2005.
3.7 Shanghai Cooperation Organization

As a formal multilateral forum, Shanghai 5 was formed on 26 April 1996 as a joint border agreement between China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Russia. In the beginning, the aims and objectives of the grouping were rather vague, the said document committed the leadership of the above nations to establish collectively a range of confidence-building measures in the field of military co-operation along their common borders.

Since its inception the organization has steadily increased its focus on the development of regional security situation, following violence and unrest in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In fact, in recent years, the member nations have unanimously stated that non-traditional threats to their national interest and internal security could destabilize the existing ethno-religious harmony within their borders and endanger their territorial integrity. Indeed, the fear of secessionism is the main reason behind Shanghai 5 objective of regional co-operation in the military sphere. The initial Shanghai 5 agreements on strengthening confidence building measures, in 1996, brought a reduction of tension and initiated demilitarization along the border.82

Central Asia, due to the prevalence of volatile ethno-nationalist politics, intra group confrontation and competing authority, has been long described as a 'frontier of anarchy'. Clearly, the affront against the state and state sovereignty in all the five member nations of Shanghai 5 suggests an anarchical situation. The traditional argument hold that, faced with such challenges, states are likely to prefer insularity to stem challenges from within and outside. Yet, thanks to the growing acceptance of regionalism, it is also possible that states encountering such threats may actually come together to act in concert on a particular issue. To understand the working of Shanghai 5 as a framework for regional security, relevant to the area, it must be kept in mind that it operates within the neo-realist paradigm. Shanghai 5's resolve to combat international terrorism, drug trafficking, separatism and religious extremism again confirms the neo-realist argument that faced with an anarchical

situation, states are likely to opt for common foreign policy arrangements, if that helps to maintain national security.83

Although it might appear that Shanghai 5 is primarily a forum to facilitate Sino-Russian interest, other partners in the grouping are also expected to receive significant gains. For example, although Central Asian Republics have asserted their right to independence from the Soviet Union in recent years, they have refused to recognize any group or region’s right to secede from the main unit.84 Threats to national sovereignty and challenges to majority group dominance have in fact prompted the regimes in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to seek regional cooperation against secessionism. Therefore, there exists a healthy and positive interest among Shanghai 5 members to strengthen the organization. In sum, parties to the contract appear to be giving strategic partnership their most pointed expression. Still, the broad objective of Shanghai 5’s could be construed as a mechanism to bolster Sino-Russian dominance in Central Asia.

Russia’s current engagement in Central Asia is broadly based on its Military Doctrine on Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) of November 1993. The broad outlines of this doctrine pushed forward the argument that; (a) Russia as a great power has both regional and global responsibilities; (b) The territory of the former Soviet Union is a geo-strategic area in which Moscow has special interests; (c) Russia has extra-territorial responsibilities when it comes to the security and well-being of ethnic Russians, Russian citizens and Russian-speaking communities throughout the CIS.

The successful projection of these objectives largely depends on both regional as well as external factors. So far, Moscow has managed to maintain its status quo by relying heavily on China and arguably it can garner a sizeable support from among the Central Asian Republics due to the complementarities of interests. More plausibly, Russia’s goals are to keep the region within its area of influence.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) formed in June 2001 can be described as a regional structure at the beginning of the road. As a direct descendant but not a legal successor of the Shanghai Five it has a five-year-long history behind it. At the same time, the Shanghai Five was a result of thirty years of the

Soviet/Russian-Chinese dialogue on the border and territorial issues and the security problems. By mid-1990s when three new states appeared in the zone of the former Soviet-Chinese border, the bilateral mechanism of negotiations had to be transformed into a multilateral instrument. This document and the Moscow Agreement on Mutual reduction of Armaments in the Border Area provided an impetus for setting up a permanent consultative mechanism of five countries known as the Shanghai Five. This was followed by the summits in Almaty in July 1998, Bishkek in August 1999, and Dushanbe in July 2000, at which the five leaders agreed, in principle, on specific trends of multilateral cooperation, extension of the format of the Shanghai process and its institutionalization.

It was in 1999 that the sides started translating into reality the 1996 and 1997 agreements. They set up a Joint Control Group (JCG) based on the “China – Russia +3” formula to conduct mutual inspections within the 100 Km.-wide “zone of predictability and transparency of military activity” on both sides of the former Soviet-Chinese border. The group met for its first sitting in November 1999 in Beijing. It was in the Chinese capital in November 2001 that a JCG meeting registered a planned reduction of military equipment made by Russia according to the 1997 Agreement. The joint group retained its five-member format after the SCO was formed. This was caused by a fundamentally important joint decision by Russia and China that neither the number of the participants in the 1996-97 agreements should be increased nor similar agreements should be concluded within any extended format of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. With the inclusion of Uzbekistan all the six member states of Shanghai Cooperation Organization have joined efforts to oppose international terrorism, illicit drug and arms trafficking, illegal migration and other forms of trans-border crimes.

The SCO was created as a regional security agreement for Central Asia and retains the security agenda at the core of its mandate, even as its activities have broadened to include economic cooperation issues. To ramp up its regional security activities, the organization established a Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure in Tashkent in January 2004, and its first multilateral military exercise (called Interaction-2003) took place in August 2003 in China and Kazakhstan. With its members pledging to fight terrorism in the region, to abide by the rule of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, to refrain from interfering in each other’s internal affairs and from using or threatening to use force against each other,
and to avoid seeking unilateral military superiority in contiguous regions, the SCO provides a platform for close security cooperation. Perhaps more importantly, it encourages joint leadership of China and Russia in ensuring stability, security and protection from terrorist threats in the region.

At their summit meeting in Astana in July 2005, the organization’s leaders agreed to reinvigorate the common fight against terrorism, separatism and extremism. Their joint declaration said that “the heads of states believe the joining of efforts of the member countries is needed to effectively counter new challenges and threats to international and regional security and stability. The leaders also promised close cooperation among law enforcement agencies, special services and defence ministries to jointly plan and conduct anti-terrorist operation, to combat drug trafficking and to harmonize national legislation in security areas.85 Given the unequivocal support of the SCO leaders for the Uzbek Government’s actions in Andijan in May 2005, it appears that members are unified in what is generally seen as a more repressive stance towards domestic and regional security threats.

To sum up policy coordination in matters of security is important determinant of interstate cooperation in Central Asia. There are important linkages between security concerns and other areas of cooperation in Central Asia. Of particular relevance is cooperation in the areas of sharing of river waters and energy resources of the region. Cooperation in these areas has a policy dimension, which need to be explored, as political obstacles and conflicting national interests are the main reasons behind the slowness of cooperation projects in the areas of sharing of water and energy resources of the region, which is illustrated in the next chapter.