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THESIS

**THE BALANCING ROLE OF TURKEY FOR THE
INFLUENCE OF CHINA IN CENTRAL ASIA**

by

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December 2014

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**THE BALANCING ROLE OF TURKEY FOR
THE INFLUENCE OF CHINA IN CENTRAL ASIA**

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ABSTRACT

Today, there is a dynamic new ‘Great Game’ in Central Asia engaging multiple players and institutions who compete for influence in Central Asia, such as the Russian-dominated Collective Security Treaty Organization, the U.S.-dominated NATO Partnership for Peace Program, and the Sino-Russian-dominated Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Of all the players, China is clearly one of the most dominant.

China’s authoritarian regime, domestic problems, and huge energy demands hold potential threats for the long-term stability of Central Asia. To sustain the survival of the regime, Central Asia is open to the risk of aggression from China, especially if it diverts public attention from internal matters such as corruption, separatist movements, pollution, and particularly the Uyghur question. Since the Central Asian Countries (CACs) are not strong enough to withstand a possible Chinese aggression alone, they are more likely to accept Chinese-run policies. This will probably change into a win-lose game in which China becomes the sole hegemon in control of all Central Asia.

Turkey, as a bridge country between East and West, is in a position to balance China’s potential long-term aggression in Central Asia. To mitigate China’s influence, as a model country, Turkey should encourage the CACs to build a regional economic and security organization. A CACs-led institution with the mediation of Turkey would help resolve regional issues like water shortages and poverty, and foster long-term stability. More interaction with Turkey will enable CACs to perceive the benefits of democracy and get the support of the West, and this could prod them in the direction of democracy under a self-development objective without reliance on a sponsor, China.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CACs	Central Asian Countries
CAREC	Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
CIS FTZ	a free trade agreement signed by Russia and some Asian countries
CU-CES	Custom Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia- Common Economic Community
ECO	Economic Cooperation Organization
EU	European Union
EurAsEC or EAEC	The Eurasian Economic Community
FAGIA	foreign aid and government-sponsored investment activities
NABUCCO	a proposed natural gas pipeline from the Turkish-Bulgarian border to Austria
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PLA	People's Liberation Army's
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
TACIS	Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States
TAPI	Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline
TIKA	Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency
TRACECA	Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasia-Asia
TURKSOY	The International Organization of Turkic Culture
U.S.	United States
XUAR	Xinjiang Autonomous Region
WTO	World Trade Organization

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For those of you who read this, I hope it provides some insight—or at least some light reading.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

Can Turkey Balance the Influence of China in Central Asia?

This thesis will research the long-term stability of Central Asia and the potential role of Turkey to act as a balance against the influence of China in Central Asia.

Turkey's power in Central Asia is middle tier. This means Turkey attaches special significance to preventive diplomacy, generates large mediation efforts in an extensive geography, and strives actively for the peaceful resolution of conflicts in that region. Apart from historical and cultural links, and taking into account the dynamics of existing diplomatic, economic, development, and security cooperation in Central Asia, Turkey has significant influence in Central Asia.¹ Also, Turkey has very good potential assets to convert into influence in the region. For example, Ankara is dialogue partner of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Moreover, as a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member and a European Union (EU) candidate country, Turkey acts not only as a bridge between the EU and the SCO, but also between NATO and the SCO. Turkey is a 'center' country and a democratic model state for the Central Asian states. On the other hand, China is a rising global power that is increasing its economic influence and engendering political cooperation.

According to Cengiz Çandar and Graham Fuller, "an expansionist authoritarian China represents a challenge to Turkish interests in Central Asia and it is not in Turkey's interest to see China become the dominant force in Central Asia."² Furthermore, it is contended that, "nowhere do Turkish and Chinese interests diverge more sharply than in their attempts to secure reliable sources of energy."³

¹ Thomas Wheeler, "Turkey's Role and Interest in Central Asia," *Saferworld*, October 2013, 12.

² Cengiz Çandar and Graham E. Fuller, "Grand Geopolitics for a New Turkey," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (2001): 36.

³ John C. K. Daly, "Sino-Turkish Relations beyond the Silk Road," *China Brief* no. 4 (February 21, 2007): 12.

There are political, economic, security, and energy dimensions to China's interest in Central Asia. While China's concerns in Central Asia were initially driven by disputes related to border security and the desire to stabilize its minority provinces—particularly the Muslim province of Xinjiang—Beijing's connections with Central Asia today are mostly focused on issues related to energy and energy security, which directly affect China's political and economic goals.⁴ To some extent, the change reflects the notable growth of China as a potential global power.⁵ In the new world order, there has been a change from geopolitics to geo-economics in the international arena.⁶ This change forces states to act in terms of geography, economy, and technology, which China promotes in its pursuit of sensitive policies in Central Asia. Since it is important to remain current with technological-based life, the distribution of energy is very important for the balance of the world order.

China's foreign policy in Central Asia focuses on procuring natural resources, developing economic-trade relations, building a stable environment in the region, and cooperating with other powers against the hegemonic supremacy of the United States. Beijing focuses on increasing its engagement in Central Asia and gaining a dominant position in the region.⁷ Using a non-aggressive policy, Beijing is replacing Russia as the region's most influential and powerful actor. Beijing is already the largest trading partner of many countries in Central Asia, and its investments in the Central Asian energy infrastructure are substantial enough for it to be the hegemon in this region.⁸ China is attempting to strengthen relations with the five Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan (all of which, except Tajikistan, have a majority of ethnic Turks) for its economic and security interests. In addition,

⁴ Axel Berkofsk, "China's Strategic Involvement in Central Asia—Strategies, Results and Obstacles," *ISPI-Analysis*, no. 122 (July 2012): 2.

⁵ Zan Tao, "An Alternative Partner to the West? Turkey's Growing Relationship with China," Middle East Institute, <http://www.mei.edu/content/alternative-partner-west-turkey's-growing-relations-china>.

⁶ Edward N. Luttwak, "From Geopolitics to Geoeconomics: Logic of Conflict, Grammar of Commerce," *The Geopolitics Reader*, ed. Gearóid Tuathail, Simon Dalby, and Paul Routledge (London: Routledge, 1998).

⁷ Erkin Ekrem, *Central Asian Policies of China* (Cin'in Orta Asya Politikaları) (Ankara: SFN, 2011), 8, http://yayinlar.yesevi.edu.tr/static/kitaplar/cin_ortaasya_raporu.pdf.

⁸ Berkofsk, "China's Strategic Involvement in Central Asia-Strategies," 2.

significant communities of Uyghurs live in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, and a small group lives in Turkey.⁹ Therefore, China is also very sensitive in Central Asia in terms of the Uyghur population.

From a structural standpoint, history seems to have constrained the development of Turkish-Chinese relations in the following three ways. First, according to Deniz Ülke Arıboğan, the relations advanced primarily without the initiative of the United States; therefore, associations between Turkey and China failed to develop as effectively as they should have.¹⁰ Second, Turkish-Chinese relations have been constrained by factors ranging from the undesirable experiences of the Korean War, to the harsh mutual charges over the Xinjiang issue, to the rivalry in many industries (particularly the textile industry). Third, the redefined priorities of the Republic of Turkey were enhanced by Western policies. Arıboğan asserts that by encouraging Westernization policies both internally and as an international security instrument, and separating herself from the Islamic East, Turkey could neither engage in the Far East as a single body, nor distinguish between her interests in the Near and Far East.¹¹ Based on Turkey's historical experiences and preferences, it seems that Turkish foreign policy orientation had an adverse effect on Turkish-Chinese relations prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The collapse of the Soviet Union is a significant landmark for the Central Asian relationship between Turkey and China. Following the Cold War, both China and Turkey competed in Central Asia in order to balance or reshape the region. Due to the outcome of the Cold War, Turkey and China were both challenged under the umbrella of Western allies to develop their relations with the regional countries. The growing economic

⁹ Yitzhak Shichor, *Ethno-Diplomacy: The Uyghur Hitch in Sino-Turkish Relations*, Policy Studies 53, (Honolulu: East-West Center, 2009), 34.

¹⁰ Deniz Ülke Arıboğan, "Opening the Closed Window to the East: Turkey's Relations with East Asian Countries," 414, <http://books.google.com/books?id=vDzjkrTDKjYC&pg=PA457&lpg=PA457&dq=deniz+ulke+opening+east&source=bl&ots=5S7kqQnAKu&sig=neZKJHbAGvjIBbYEymudFaxqG8&hl=tr&sa=X&ei=KfyIU-XhOIbcoASD7ICgCQ&ved=0CDEQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=deniz%20ulke%20opening%20east&f=false>.

¹¹ Ibid., 403.

engagement and geographic position of China in Central Asia worked in favor of Beijing, because of the neutral and passive approach of the United States toward the region.¹²

In the 1970s, the United States developed its relationship with China to counterbalance the power of the Soviet Union, and after the collapse of USSR the United States made concessions to China, which was not a very strong country at that time. Apart from Turkey's emerging domestic problems, such as economic crisis and terrorism, Ankara did not get much support from the West for its policy in Central Asia. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the changes in policy between the United States and Central Asia have prompted advances in the dynamics of the regional countries.¹³

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Turkey promised the Central Asians a model of a secular democracy for a Muslim majority country, which was an attractive concept to the secular post-Soviet governments that were just emerging. Turkey focused on forming ties with these new states as a Turkic community under its own leadership, a concept adopted by Turkish President Turgut Ozal. This cooperation not only would benefit Turkey economically and politically, and would serve as a bridge to the Islamic post-Soviet world, but would also display Ankara's effectiveness to the West.¹⁴ This policy commonly met with some support; the United States supported this cooperation, but also assisted Turkey as a means of encouraging its efforts. Turkey provided a good example of a democratic country as a model for the countries in the region. The regional countries welcomed this approach because, unlike previous aggressive powers, it did not force a dominant strategy over the region.

After economic crises and terrorism issues in Turkey during the 1990s, the situation changed. The role of Turkey as a model and bridge country was unsuccessful. Aid from Turkey to Central Asia fell short of expectations, and economic cooperation

¹² S. Enders Wimbush, "Great Games in Central Asia," in *Asia Responds to Its Rising Powers China and India* (Canada: NBAR, 2011–2012), 257.

¹³ Elizabeth Wishnick, "Russia, China and The United States in Central Asia: Prospect for Great Power Competition and Cooperation in the Shadow of the Georgian Crisis," Strategic Studies Institute, February 2009, 43, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB907.pdf>.

¹⁴ RAND, *Fault Lines of Conflict in Central Asia and the South Caucasus: Implication for the U.S. Army* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2003), 201, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monograph_reports/2005/RAND_MR1598.pdf.

remained limited. Intentions of promoting democracy and political liberalization largely failed, and Turkey accepted local regimes as they were.¹⁵ Having just won independence, they were hesitant to embrace Ankara's role of leadership because of larger powers, such as China, who were courting the region.¹⁶

Recently, relations with China improved with the growing trade and aid within Central Asia, as well as frequent diplomatic exchanges, and Turkey's support of the creation of the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States.¹⁷ Turkey has deepened its economic relations with Central Asia through trade, infrastructure, energy, and communication.¹⁸ Since 1991, Turkey has sought a stable, independent, and prosperous Central Asia with free market economies and functioning democracies. Turkey is interested in Central Asia due to common historical, linguistic, and cultural ties.

B. IMPORTANCE

Since the collapse of the USSR in 1991, China has resurfaced as a major player in Central Asia. Beijing pursued, and still follows, a range of political, economic, and security objectives in the region, focusing on the recently independent states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The new countries of Central Asia not only developed relations with China, but also viewed the PRC as a sponsor to help them to develop economically and moderate Moscow's supremacy in the region.¹⁹

The newly independent Central Asian countries predominantly shaped the dynamics of the competitive dimension in Central Asia and the "dynamics sometimes overlapped, intersected, converged, or collided."²⁰ In addition to the influence of China,

¹⁵ B. Balci, "Turkey Lowers Its Sights on Central Asian Reform," *World Politics Review Op-Ed* 13 (June 2013).

¹⁶ Wheeler, "Turkey's Role and Interest in Central Asia," 3.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, "Turkey's Relations with Central Asian Republics," 2013, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-relations-with-central-asian-republics.en.mfa.

¹⁹ Stephen J. Black, *Central Asia after 2014* (Carlisle, PA: United States Army War College Press, 2013), 83–84.

²⁰ Wimbush, "Great Games in Central Asia," 260.

Russia, and India in Central Asia as external players, the United States, the Gulf Arab States, and Turkey—and to a lesser degree Europe—have also played crucial roles in the region. The strong economic engagement and geographic position of China in Central Asia has worked to the favor of Beijing.²¹ When turned to aggression, this influence can provide an imbalance to the regional stability and the new world order; thus, the influence of China in Central Asia should remain in balance. Due to its naturally close ties with the Central Asian countries, Turkey, with the cooperation or support of the West, should balance the influence of China in Central Asia.

C. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES

There are many studies about the influence of China in Central Asia. Since China is a potential global power, the United States has closely followed the development and influence of China around the world and in Central Asia. Despite the literature about China's involvement and counter arguments for balancing its influence in Central Asia, there remains a gap in research about the balancing role of Turkey for the influence of China in the region. Turkey has natural ties with the five Central Asian countries (i.e., historical, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic), and has a strong relationship with the West. Consequently, Turkey has the potential, more than any other actor, to influence Central Asia by promoting a non-aggressive model state for Central Asian countries. As a potential rising super power, the influences of China as a potential aggressor can cause imbalance in Central Asia and the world. Therefore, Turkey should play a significant role in promoting stability in Central Asia. This analysis will attempt to close the literature gap by focusing on the role of Turkey as a balancing influence against China in Central Asia.

The first hypothesis is that China heavily influences Central Asia, and when acting aggressively, this could cause imbalances in Central Asia and the international order.

²¹ Ibid., 257.

The second hypothesis is that Turkey has the potential to balance the influence of China in Central Asia, which would consolidate the balance between the West and East at the regional and global levels.

The third hypothesis is that since Turkey has very close ties with Central Asia, Turkey can become a model state for the Central Asian countries.

D. LITERATURE REVIEW

This thesis will describe the economic and political importance of Central Asia at a regional and global level. After this part, the second chapter of the thesis will explain the importance of Central Asia for China, including an overview of the economic and political relations China shares with the five Central Asian countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Since these states gained their independence after the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, this thesis will focus on the period between the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the current timeframe. The following literature sources will be used to define the influence of China in Central Asia.

Ramakant Dwivedi provides a detailed account of China's influence in his article, "China's Central Asia Policy in Recent Times." He argues that the collapse of the Soviet Union provided remarkable opportunities for China to use and influence the continuing political and economic developments in Central Asia.²² Richard Weitz also provides an overall perspective for the influence of China in his study *China's Military Goals, Policy, Doctrine, and Capabilities in Central Asia*. He explains that Beijing's major "security goal is to counter separatism, terrorism, and religious extremism in Central Asia since the PRC policymakers fear that these three evil forces could adversely affect Beijing's control over several Chinese regions seeking greater autonomy."²³ He adds that China's unstable Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, a mineral-rich area constituting one-sixth of the PRC, is very important to the region because of the Uighur population in the

²² Ramakant Dwivedi, "China's Central Asia Policy in Recent Times," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, no. 4 (2006): 139–159.

²³ Richard Weitz, *China's Military Goals, Policy, Doctrine, and Capabilities in Central Asia*, 85–87, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB1175.pdf>.

region. Yitzhak Shichor refers to the role of Xinjiang in the interest of China in Central Asia in his article *China's Central Asian Strategy and the Xinjiang Connection*. He explains that Beijing has tried to obtain “political influence, security guarantees, economic benefits, and accessibility to energy resources,” with the help of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.²⁴ The end of this chapter will analyze the dynamics that contribute to the influence of China in Central Asia.

The third chapter of the thesis will assess the importance of Central Asia for Turkey in terms of its historical, cultural, linguistic, and economic concerns with the bilateral/multilateral relations of Turkic countries after the end of the Cold War. Thomas Wheeler tells about the Turkish ties with Central Asian countries (CACs) in his article “Turkey’s Role and Interest in Central Asia.” He summarizes Turkey’s interest and relationship with the five countries and the importance of the bilateral connection for the development of the region.²⁵ The RAND study of *Fault Lines of Conflict in Central Asia and the South Caucasus* focuses on the analysis of why Turkey did not succeed as a model for the new countries in the 1990s.²⁶ The website of the Turkish Foreign Minister describes Turkey’s engagement and its relationship with the CACs.²⁷ In addition, Aram Karamyan, Tilak Istiaq, and Rizwan Naseer state the influence of Turkey in the region in their study of *Turkish Growing Influence in Central Asian Countries in Post-Cold War Era*.²⁸ At the end of this chapter, I will show how Turkey influences and affects the region.

The fourth chapter will discuss the involvement and interest of the major players in Central Asia, and will emphasize how these multifaceted relations affect Turkey’s balancing role over the influence of China in the region. S. Enders Wimbush argues that

²⁴ Yitzhak Shichor, “China’s Central Asian Strategy and the Xinjiang Connection,” *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 6, no. 2 (2008): 55.

²⁵ Wheeler, “Turkey’s Role and Interest in Central Asia,” 3.

²⁶ RAND, *Fault Lines of Conflict in Central Asia and the South Caucasus*.

²⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, “Turkey’s Relations with Central Asian Republics.”

²⁸ Aram Karamyan, Tilak Istiaq, and Rizwan Naseer, “Turkish Growing Influence in Central Asian Countries in Post-Cold War Era,” *Berkeley Journal of Social Sciences* 2, no. 5 (May 2012).

China and India heavily influence Central Asia in his study of *Great Games in Central Asia*.²⁹ Turkan Budak argues the influence of external actors in the region in her study of *Turkey and Global Geo-economic Competition in Central Asia*.³⁰ It focuses on the other actors' roles in the region, and how Turkey benefited from its alliances in Central Asia to balance the effect of China in the region.

Finally, the thesis will present an image that takes into account the advantages and disadvantages of Turkey's ability to balance the influence of China in Central Asia. The conclusion of the thesis will focus on whether Turkey will be able to balance China by itself, or will require assistance from the West in balancing its involvement with China and Central Asia.

E. METHODS AND SOURCES

To analyze whether Turkey can balance the influence of China in Central Asia, I will use a comparative study analyzing the capability and capacity of Beijing and Ankara for influence in Central Asia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The thesis will reveal the current impact and the influence of China and Turkey in Central Asia in the context of economy, politics, security, culture, history, and geography. Next, I will assess the ability of Turkey to balance the influence and contribution of external players with China in Central Asia. The study will also focus on additional cooperation of the West with Turkey, if Turkey cannot counter the involvement of China in the region by itself.

This thesis will make use of English and Turkish sources and regional research study groups who have focused on Central Asian issues for many years. Because there is no direct study assessing the ability of Turkey to balance its influence over China in Central Asia, this study will use different sources that discuss the Turkish influence in the region, including academic journals, articles, newspaper articles, and books.

²⁹ Wimbush, "Great Games in Central Asia," 257.

³⁰ Turkan Budak, "Orta Asya'da Küresel Jeoekonomik Rekabet ve Türkiye" (Turkey and Global Geo-economic Competition in Central Asia), <http://www.bilgesam.org/incele/174/-orta-asya'da-kuresel-jeoekonomik-rekabet-ve-turkiye/#.U4-Saty4ISU>.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW

The thesis will focus on answering whether Turkey, by itself or with the cooperation of West, can balance the influence of China in Central Asia. After this chapter, the Chapter II of the thesis will explain the importance of Central Asia for China, including the overview of economic and political relations of China with the five CACs: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. It will give a historical background for the Chinese involvement in Central Asia after the collapse of Soviet Union. This section will also show the degree of influence of China in Central Asia with the help of Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Then, in Chapter III, the thesis will try to assess the importance of Central Asia for Turkey in terms of its historical, cultural, linguistic and economic concerns with the bilateral/multilateral relations of Turkic countries after the end of Cold War. In Chapter IV, the study will discuss the involvement and interests of the major and second-tier players in Central Asia and will emphasize how these multifaceted relations affect Turkey's balancing role for the influence of China in the region. Finally, the thesis will draw a picture taking into account the advantages and disadvantages of Turkey to balancing the influence of China in Central Asia. The thesis will conclude by answering whether Turkey can balance China by itself, or whether it will require the help of the West to accomplish this balance.

II. THE INFLUENCE OF CHINA IN CENTRAL ASIA

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will demonstrate that the Chinese influence in Central Asia has the potential to turn into an aggression against CACs in the long run. The study will present a deductive big picture of China's foreign policy and an enlarged image of Central Asia. Apart from its security concerns, Chinese interest in Central Asia shows more than just a win-win policy with CACs. As General Liu Yazhou of China's People's Liberation Army states, "Central Asia is the thickest piece of cake given to the modern Chinese by the heavens."³¹

The world is witnessing a significant "shift of wealth and power from the North Atlantic to the Asia Pacific region" with the rise of new powers at the regional and global level.³² In the past, the transition of superpowers indicated that the rise of a new superpower influences the world not only with the competition between that riser and the current superpowers, but also by the changes in international politics and the new world order. As a potential rising superpower, China is increasing its overall influence in the world. In the new world order, there has been a change from geopolitics to geo-economics in the international arena.³³ In addition to security, this change forces states to act in terms of geography, economy, and technology, which China promotes in its pursuit of sensitive policies in Central Asia. The distribution of energy is very important for the balance of the world order. As a rising global power, China is increasing its economic influence, looking for alternative ways to gain direct access to energy and engendering political cooperation. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, China tried to build and consolidate its ties with the CACs. Beijing's interests in Central Asia are symbolic of and

³¹ "Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO): A Real Force for Change," China in Central Asia, <http://chinaincentralasia.com/2014/08/05/shanghai-cooperation-organisation-sco-a-real-force-for-change>.

³² Kenneth B. Pyle, "International Order and the Rise of Asia: History and Theory," in *Strategic Asia 2011–12 Asia Responds To Its Rising Powers China and India* (Canada: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2011), 33–34.

³³ Luttwak, "From Geopolitics to Geo-economics."

have important implications for its desire to be a global power. China's clear geographic relationship to the CACs is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. China's geographic relationship with Central Asia.

There are political, economic, security and energy dimensions to China's interest in Central Asia. While China's concerns in Central Asia were initially driven by disputes related to border security and the desire to maintain the stability of its minority provinces—particularly the Muslim-majority province of Xinjiang—Beijing's connections with Central Asia today are mostly focused on issues related to energy and

energy security, which directly affect its economic and political influence.³⁴ Also, as a rising power, China intends to secure its geographic periphery by forging mutually beneficial ties with its neighbors. In this context, the CACs' democratization process has stumbled. The CACs have endeavored to find the best kind of regime to adopt, but thanks to China's appearance in the post-Soviet region, they find themselves still in between two blocs of East and West. Due to the emergence of the SCO, Beijing has consolidated its economic influence in Central Asia by building stronger economic bilateral/multilateral relations with each country in the region. Since Central Asia is fragile with its regional common domestic problems, such as corruption and Uyghur identity, economic influence turns out to be a key factor affecting political relations of the region; this is compatible with the policy of the peaceful rise of China in Central Asia. To some extent, this influence reflects the notable growth of China as a potential global power.³⁵

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Beijing has generated an audacious initiative to develop its ties with the CACs and to expand its influence in Central Asia. These efforts have gained success as of 2014 because China has good relations with every state in Central Asia and is a constructive and essential partner in terms of diplomacy, economy and security.³⁶ Today, extensive and newly built networks of transportation and oil and gas pipelines connect Beijing to the CACs. Between 1992 and 2012, China's total trade with the CACs enlarged 100-fold.³⁷ There are big bilateral projects, such as the Central Asia gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to China, the Atyrau-Alashankou oil pipeline from Kazakhstan to China, energy transport and communication in Uzbekistan, the building of new roads and tunnels in Tajikistan, and the enlargement of road networks between Kyrgyzstan and China.³⁸ All these strengthen the ties of China with the CACs.

³⁴ Berkofsk, "China's Strategic Involvement in Central Asia," 2.

³⁵ Zan Tao, "An Alternative Partner to the West? Turkey's Growing Relationship with China." Middle East Institute. <http://www.mei.edu/content/alternative-partner-west-turkey's-growing-relations-china>.

³⁶ Andrew Scobell, Ely Ratner, and Michael Beckley, *China's Strategy toward South and Central Asia: An Empty Fortress* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014), xi.

³⁷ Bernardo Mariani, "China's Role and Interest in Central Asia," *Saferworld*, October 2013, 2.

³⁸ Ibid.

Central Asia is one of the regions where China enjoys its deepest influence, and China has the capability and capacity to protect its regional interests via the SCO. What is more, the Central Asia region also established the ground for a rising market for Beijing's merchandise and an alternative energy supply source. China is gaining a robust position of influence in Central Asia thanks to its enormous investments in the CACs: giving loans and completing strategic infrastructure such as pipelines, hydropower plants, bridges, roads, and airports.³⁹ China also wants to change the SCO into a more security-focused institution to sustain stability in Central Asia in case of any possible external aggression or terrorist expansion by organizations like Al-Qaeda.⁴⁰ In this context, China gets the opportunity to exhibit its capabilities to external counterparts by the periodic military exercises practiced by the members of SCO, and through these exercises, Beijing underlines its ability to defend the CACs from external or internal threats. This reduces the influence of the West in Central Asia through China's persuasion of SCO allies that they need not trust NATO and the U.S. for their protection.⁴¹ Additionally, Beijing is developing an alternative successful political model for the CACs, which could be compared to the democratic models of the West; China has proven capable of synchronizing its economic growth with a powerfully centralized political model of governance. Thereby, China combines and intertwines the political, economic, energy and security dimensions of influence in Central Asia to be an unmatched player.

To analyze the influence of China in Central Asia, first this study examines Beijing's overall strategy to be a superpower and the repercussions of this in Central Asia. Second, this study presents China's relationships with the CACs in terms of bilateral/multilateral political, economic, and security ties. Finally, the thesis evaluates China's influence in Central Asia.

³⁹ Fabio Indeo, "The Rise of China in Central Asia," <http://temi.repubblica.it/limes-heartland/the-rise-of-china-in-central-asia/1928>.

⁴⁰ Sarah Lain, "Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO): A Real Force for Change?" China in Central Asia, <http://chinaincentralasia.com/2014/08/05/shanghai-cooperation-organisation-sco-a-real-force-for-change>.

⁴¹ Richard Weitz, "SCO Military Drills Strengthen Russian-Chinese Regional Hegemony," CACI Analyst, <http://caci-analyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13054-sco-military-drills-strengthen-russian-chinese-regional-hegemony> htm.

B. CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY AS A RISING POWER AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS IN CENTRAL ASIA

Chinese foreign policy mostly focuses on following strong strategies to develop its own economy. For nearly the last two decades, as a rising global power with an amazing economic growth rate, China has been the largest importer of main industrial elements such as coal, iron ore, copper, nickel and aluminum. It is also the second-largest importer of crude oil—just after the United States—and the largest global energy consumer since 2010.⁴² As of 2014, more than 85 percent of Chinese trade is transferred by sea, and more than 80 percent of its energy is imported via sea-lanes, which make China heavily dependent on the safety and security of the sea.⁴³ Sea lanes are important not only for transporting Chinese-produced merchandise to consumers such as the United States, Middle East, Europe, and others, but also for carrying the raw materials that China can no longer source domestically.⁴⁴

The rising concern over the security ramifications of the bilateral dependency on sea-lanes has led China to seek alternative trade links. Thus, on the one hand, China has started to promote its naval power; on the other hand, it develops ground transportation to get access to energy and varies the trade routes with the intent of reviving the ancient Silk Road. Recently, to decrease the vulnerability of its overseas energy supply, China has begun increasing its energy projects in Central Asia and transport links connecting the Chinese inland with South and Central Asia, and on to Europe and the Indian Ocean Basin.⁴⁵ The Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR), which has a border of 3,700 kilometers with Central Asia, plays an important role in providing the only feasible direct land bridge between Beijing and the rest of southern Eurasia. This corridor encompasses the Karakoram Pass; it is China's only overland way to Pakistan and to the Chinese-run

⁴² U.S Energy Information Administration, "China: Overview," <http://www.eia.gov/countries/cab.cfm?fips=ch>.

⁴³ Stratfor Global Intelligence, "China's Growing Interest in Central Asia," <http://www.stratfor.com/video/chinas-growing-interest-central-asia#axzz3HDte2dgY>.

⁴⁴ Temuri Yakobashvili, "A Chinese Marshall Plan for Central Asia?," CACI Analyst, <http://cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12838-a-chinese-marshall-plan-for-central-asia?.html>.

⁴⁵ Stratfor Global Intelligence, "China's Growing Interest in Central Asia."

Port of Gwadar. XUAR's geo-economic and geo-political significance points to Xinjiang's ancient legacy as a home to the legendary and modern Silk Road trading routes; Xinjiang connects the Uyghur people to the Turkic communities of Central Asia and beyond through ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious ties.⁴⁶ Today, the geo-economic importance of Xinjiang is at the core of China's geopolitics in terms of access to energy and trade routes. Similarly, energy is the central interest of China in Central Asia. China imports more than half its total natural gas from Turkmenistan (Figure 2); it imports oil from Kazakhstan, and plans to import some natural gas from Uzbekistan. Correspondingly, Beijing is trying to convert Xinjiang into a resource base for recently developing provinces in the Chinese hinterland.⁴⁷

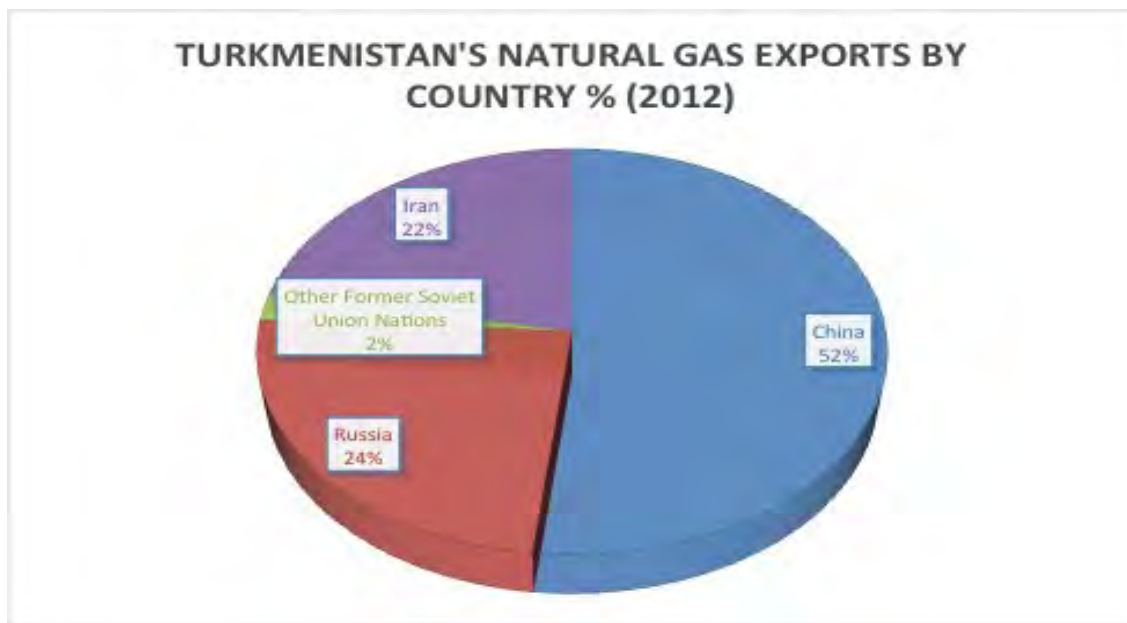


Figure 2. Turkmenistan Gas Export Rates.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Stratfor Global Intelligence, "China's Growing Interest in Central Asia."

⁴⁸ Alex Gupta, "Central Asia - 5 Critical Issues," <http://www.scribd.com/doc/236701256/Central-Asia-5-Critical-Issues>.

To understand Beijing's interest in Central Asia, it is essential to keep in mind the five principles of Chinese foreign policy declared in 1954: "respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in other's [domestic] affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence."⁴⁹ The Chinese government not only follows the guidelines of this policy in Central Asia, but also in other regions around the world. Beijing enjoys portraying itself as a rising power, but is different from the United States or many other countries in that it seems not to seek hegemony or to impose its political will on other countries.⁵⁰ Since the hegemony of the United States in the world is widely accepted, Beijing has to pursue a non-aggressive policy to increase its influence by not disturbing Washington. Correspondingly, China assures the CACs that its economic and military growth will not be a threat, but rather an advantage to its neighbors and allies in terms of a win-win policy.⁵¹ Since China is a rising power in need of vast energy resources, it only focuses on supplying its energy demands. Therefore, China sweetens its policy in Central Asia with investment and aid, which currently make the CACs feel they are sharing in a current illusion of win-win policy with China. There can be a win-win game in that "Beijing provides funding and Central Asia satisfies China's enormous energy thirst...if [the CACs] are not prudent [however] they could find that they have escaped the grip of one great power, only to replace it with the dominance of another."⁵² As of 2013, with a \$9.2407 trillion economy and a population of 1.36072 billion, China cannot engage Central Asia on equal footing with a win-win policy when the CACs have a total combined economy of only \$338.7 billion and a population of 66.26 million.⁵³ It may end up as a great win for China and a minor win for Central Asia. Consequently, this situation can turn into a winner-loser game and be risky for the long-

⁴⁹ Mariani, "China's Role and Interest in Central Asia," 3.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ "China GDP," Trading Economics, <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/china/gdp>.

⁵² Michał Romanowski "Central Asia's Energy Rush," *Diplomat*, July 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/07/central-asias-energy-rush/>.

⁵³ Compiled by author from Asian Development Bank, "Basic Statistics," 2014, <http://www.adb.org/publications/basic-statistics-2014>.

term stability of Central Asia in terms of their independence in using their energy resources and maybe a 'resource curse.'⁵⁴

China pursues a sensitive foreign policy to sustain the stability of its regime, and thus aims to consolidate the support of its public with successful external progress. China's foreign policy and its implications are directly interrelated with its domestic policy. China is reemerging as a major power in the world. Since 1978, China has surfaced as an economic world power by undertaking central planning, building a market economy, and opening its gates to the West.⁵⁵ To be a superpower, China must overcome its main domestic problems such as corruption, unemployment, water shortage, violation of human rights, pollution, and separatist movements. China's internal problems are important driving forces behind its desire for a peaceful rise. A peaceful rise strategy helps China earn extra time to deal with and postpone its internal issues. China has its own troubles to undertake, and it is vulnerable to criticism for these problems. Thus, Beijing endeavors not to involve itself or take sides in any conflict or domestic problems of other countries in the world. For example, since Beijing is very sensitive to domestic separatist movements, like those in Tibet and Xinjiang, as a permanent member of Security Council of United Nations, China typically does not cast its veto or negative vote in other bilateral/multilateral conflicts, but abstains in order not to dissatisfy any other country.⁵⁶ On the one hand, Beijing aims to solve its own troubles by increasing its wealth; on the other hand, China portrays a neutral and respectful status in the international arena in order to gain the sympathy of other nations, thereby preparing its place as a superpower. To understand Beijing's foreign policy, it is vital to be aware of China's domestic problems, which influence directly the foreign policies that Beijing chooses.

⁵⁴ International Relations and Security Network, "Curse or Cure – Natural Resources and the Great Game in Central Asia," ISN ETH Zurich, Special Issue, August 2010, 2.

⁵⁵ Susan L. Shirk, *China Fragile Superpower: How China's Internal Politics Could Derail Its Peaceful Rise* (New York: Oxford, 2008), 4.

⁵⁶ Yitzhak Shichor, "China's Voting Behavior in the U.N. Security Council," Asian Research, <http://www.asianresearch.org/articles/2947.html>.

Corruption is a very sensitive issue for China's administration.⁵⁷ After the street protest at Tiananmen Square in 1989, Beijing put forth a great effort to prevent top-level corruption. Nevertheless, local corruption is the most significant cause of the Chinese public's loss of faith in their government; examples include "poorly constructed infrastructure projects that collapse, contamination of food due to poor industrial oversight, and a general lack of faith in the justice system."⁵⁸ On October 28, 2014, China published a document to show the importance of rule of law and also revised the constitution, indicating that President Xi aims to use the constitution to control the local authorities.⁵⁹ At the same time, Beijing attaches high importance to keeping the top officials and military leaders free from corruption to sustain the public's trust, for the good of both its regime and military. In this context, in 2014, Zhao Keshi—the head of the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) General Logistics Department—stated that a new financial arrangement will ensure that military funds are efficiently transferred into combat capability, and Xu Guangyu—a senior consultant at the China Arms Control and Disarmament Association—declared that their renewed structure will also "make military spending more transparent and scientific and reduce corruption in the army."⁶⁰ To be a superpower, China must overcome its internal issues. This will build the public's confidence in its governments. To become a world superpower, "Beijing needs to keep doing more to create a pervasive anti-corruption culture in all levels of government, not just catch the big fish."⁶¹ China tries to suppress its domestic problems by inundating its public with proactive external success. Being viewed as a rising global power provides self-esteem to the Chinese people, most of whom have not yet enjoyed the common benefits of modern life.

⁵⁷ Shirk, *How China's Internal Politics Could Derail Its Peaceful Rise*, 36–40.

⁵⁸ Alexander Bowe, "China's Main Internal Challenges in the Next Decade," Korbel Report, <http://korbelreport.wordpress.com/2013/10/09/chinas-main-internal-challenges-in-the-next-decade>.

⁵⁹ Economist, "Politics: Rules of the Party," November 1–7, 2014, 43.

⁶⁰ BBC News China, "China Media: Military Spending," <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-29782734>.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Since the PRC perceives its people's social unrest to be a threat to both its identity and the integrity of China, the Central Asia region is open to China's aggression because of the unrest of the Uyghur population, and because it distracts the focus of the Chinese people from their other domestic problems. Leaders usually desire to hold on to power, and domestic unrest sometimes threatens their position. While leaders undoubtedly have a number of appropriate alternatives to deal with threats, one of the most theorized and tried options is the manipulation of the 'rally around the flag' effect through the diversionary use of force.⁶² According to the Diversionary Theory of war,

Diversionary uses of force can have a positive effect for the leader in four main ways. First, successful actions abroad may win support at home. This increased backing gives the leader a reprieve in which to revitalize their regime. Second, the conflict abroad and the tension it creates at home could justify a crackdown. If targeted correctly, the offensive may quickly eliminate any vociferous opposition to the regime and its leaders. Third, international conflict may divert the public's attention away from the issues that caused the dissatisfaction. Last, conflict with another state in the international systems may rally support to the regime through an in-group/out-group effect.⁶³

Since Central Asia is vulnerable to China's aggression vis-à-vis the unrest of the Uyghur population, or perhaps as an excuse to get more direct access to energy in Central Asia—and keeping in mind that the CACs are not strong enough to oppose China by themselves—China can abuse these issues in order to hide its domestic problems while also gaining more access to and advantageous control over Central Asian energy resources. On the other hand,

Relying in part on the ethnic conflict research and Levy's observation that the diversionary literature ought to consider the suitability of real or imagined ethnic adversaries as targets of diversionary action ... the embattled leader may have a domestic diversionary option.... By militarily targeting disliked and relatively powerless groups within his/her own country—such as ethnic minorities—the leader can elicit public support for his/her rule. Because a person's ethnic identity may be a loyalty inducing force as strong as, if not stronger than, citizenship, mobilization

⁶² David Sobek, "Rallying around the *Podesta*: Testing Diversionary Theory Across Time," 31, <http://jpr.sagepub.com/content/44/1/29.full.pdf+html>.

⁶³ Ibid.

of public support through the use of ethnic, as opposed to state, symbols becomes a feasible alternative for the leader. This in turn allows the leader to portray a domestic ethnic minority, rather than a foreign entity, as the source of the threat that needs to be dealt with. In doing so, the leader aims to create an ethnically based in-group, out-group dichotomy and boost the level of loyalty to him/her among those who are ostensibly a part of the in-group ... policy implications of the findings that ethnic groups can fall victim to government attacks in times of government unpopularity.⁶⁴

Since Xinjiang is a fragile part of China in terms of ethnic identity, the XUAR is a probable target of separatist aggression, which will influence negatively the stability of Central Asia in terms of the Uyghur question.⁶⁵ The strategic importance of Xinjiang makes China internationalize the Uyghur question, which is correlated with three interconnected security dimensions.⁶⁶ The first one connects Beijing to the whole of China with an internal control, the second spreads over neighboring countries, and the third extends security concerns to regional and international organizations and beyond.⁶⁷ Therefore, either as an internalization or externalization diversification theory of war, China's domestic problems are important for the long-term stability of Central Asia.

C. THE ROLE OF THE XINJIANG UYGHUR AUTONOMOUS REGION IN CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY

Xinjiang region has strong ties with CACs regarding Uyghur ethnicity. Since the Uyghur population is a sensitive issue for China in terms of a separatist movement. Xinjiang region plays an important role for the influence of China in Central Asia. China directly relates its national security and territorial unity with the stability of Xinjiang and its connection with Central Asia. Thus, Xinjiang interconnects China's domestic policy to its foreign policy in Central Asia.

⁶⁴ Jaroslav Tir, "Domestic-Level Diversionary Theory of War: Targeting Ethnic Minorities," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (October 1, 2008): 648.

⁶⁵ Gardner Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs: Strangers in their Own Land* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 145,146.

⁶⁶ Andrew J. Nathan and Andrew Scobell, *China's Search for Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 56.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

The Xinjiang region is populated by almost all of China's 56 ethnic groups, with the two largest population groups being about ten million Uyghurs—which amounts to half the total population of XUAR—and about 8.5 million Hans. The Uyghurs in XUAR are culturally and ethnically close to the CACs in terms of a Muslim and Turkic identity. Thus, China was not only interacting with the newly independent CACs, but also connecting directly with the Muslim world to build a good relationship. Xinjiang is of central importance for China in terms of geo-politics. Xinjiang is a strategic door for China to open to Central Asia and beyond (Figure 3).

XUAR is of strategic significance from different standpoints. First, it encompasses one-sixth of China's mainland (reaching almost the size of Iran), it is the country's largest administrative region, and it shares its borders with five Muslim countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. It also borders Russia, Mongolia, and India. Thus, Xinjiang links China to Central Asia in terms of geography, geopolitics, Islam religion, Turkic culture, and Turkic ethnicity. In this respect, while Central Asia is an intermediate step in China's policy for keeping a strong alliance with Pakistan by "building a long-term partnership with Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Afghanistan."⁶⁸ It is also a meeting point for China and India to embrace both competition and cooperation.⁶⁹ Second, the XUAR is an important exit to the countries along the Silk Route and the Muslim countries. Third, XUAR has about 250 million cubic meters of timber reserves, two-fifths of the nation's coal reserves, and is China's second highest oil and highest natural gas producer.⁷⁰ Moreover, it is planned to be Beijing's largest oil and gas production and storage base by 2015.⁷¹ XUAR is vital for China in terms of energy and energy security. Energy and multilateralism persist as central elements in China's global standing, though, "Beijing's interest in Central Asia will still be primarily driven by domestic stability in Xinjiang, good neighborly relations

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Marlene Laruelle, "Russia Facing China and India in Central Asia: Cooperation, Competition and Hesitations," 9–14, http://www.cerium.ca/IMG/pdf/Laruelle_-_Russia_facing_China.pdf.

⁷⁰ Charlotte Langridge, "Security Dilemma and Securitization in China's Uyghur Issue in Xinjiang Province," Security Observer, <http://securityobserver.org/security-dilemma-and-securitization-in-chinas-uyghur-issue-in-xinjiang-province/#prettyPhoto>.

⁷¹ Ibid.

with local governments, and the transformation of Xinjiang and Central Asia into areas of transit for the conquest of new markets.”⁷² Therefore, Central Asia is an essential to both China’s domestic stability and its foreign policy vis-à-vis the Uyghur question.



Figure 3. Xinjiang Region of China.⁷³

D. THE PLACE OF CENTRAL ASIA IN CHINA’S GLOBAL RISE

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States has held a nearly unchallenged status as the world’s only superpower. According to historical examples of superpower transitions, this unipolar period will unavoidably terminate as new powers rise and challenge the existing global order. Therefore, the United States will face the challenge of a rising China in the short/middle term. China’s economy has developed to exceptional levels since the implementation of market reforms, and some experts forecast that in the next 50 years Beijing could become the world’s biggest economy. China has

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ted Thornton, “Why China Worries about Tibet and Xinjiang,” *Social Studies Blog*, March 2, 2014, <http://oakmeadowblogs.com/social-studies/2014/03/02/why-china-worries-about-tibet-and-xinjiang>.

used its stunning economic growth to increase influence in the world, particularly in Central Asia.⁷⁴

Since the end of the Cold War, China has resurfaced as a major player in Central Asia. Beijing pursued, and still follows, a range of political, economic, and security objectives in the region, focusing on the recently independent states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The new countries of Central Asia not only developed relations with China, but also viewed the PRC as a sponsor to help them to develop economically and to moderate Moscow's supremacy in the region.⁷⁵ The newly independent CACs predominantly shaped the dynamics of the competitive dimension in Central Asia and the "dynamics sometimes overlapped, intersected, converged, or collided."⁷⁶ In addition to the influence of China, Russia, and India in Central Asia as external players, the United States, the Gulf Arab States, and Turkey—and to a lesser degree, Europe—have also played crucial roles in the region. The strong economic engagement and geographic position of China in Central Asia has worked to the favor of Beijing in this respect.⁷⁷ If ever transformed into aggression, this influence could provide an imbalance to the regional stability and the new world order.

According to realists and liberal intuitionists, China's rise will end up either in a conflict with the United States—or in some kind of cooperation towards a new world order.⁷⁸ These traditional theories are narrow and inadequate to frame China's rise within the larger context of the political development and stability of rest of the world.⁷⁹ There are also resource constraints, external effects like pollution, and big climate changes that have a big impact on the political, security and economic environment of the modern

⁷⁴ Michelle Murray, "Identity, Insecurity, and Great Power Politics: The Tragedy of German Naval Ambition before the First World War," Academia.edu, https://www.academia.edu/440998/Identity_Insecurity_and_Great_Power_Politics_The_Tragedy_of_German_Naval_Ambition_Before_the_First_World_War.

⁷⁵ Black, *Central Asia after 2014*, 83–84.

⁷⁶ Wimbush, "Great Games in Central Asia," 260.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 257.

⁷⁸ Helge Luras, "The Strategic Consequences of China's Economic Growth," SISA Report no. 23, May 28, 2014, 24.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

era.⁸⁰ Without inexpensive energy resources like oil, which rose fourfold in price between 2005 and 2006, there is only a slight possibility of overall economic growth in the world; reducing economic growth will generate severe competition and aggression between states. What is more, climate change will cause more dislocations, refugees, food insecurity, and health issues, leaving states with only more reasons to start conflicts; this line of thinking is consistent with a realistic analysis.⁸¹ Since it is the world's largest energy consumer, China's rapid rise will bring about a time of resource scarcity and environmental crisis sooner rather than later.⁸² China's energy demand is therefore a potential threat in the long run for the stability of Central Asia, but a must for its global rise.

E. CHINA'S POLITICAL ECONOMY IN CENTRAL ASIA

China is a major player in Central Asia, particularly in terms of economics, security, energy, and politics. Of all the regions on China's periphery, in no place has it been more proactive than in Central Asia since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Beijing perceives Central Asia as fragile region full of internal and external sources of instability, and it worries that instability in Central Asia could destabilize China's western periphery. China's policy toward Central Asia focuses on procuring natural resources, developing economic and trade relations, building a stable environment in the region, and cooperating with other powers against the hegemonic supremacy of the United States.⁸³ Beijing focuses on increasing its engagement in Central Asia and gaining a dominant position in the region. Using a non-aggressive policy, Beijing is replacing Russia as the region's most influential and powerful actor. Beijing is already the largest trading partner for many countries in Central Asia, and its investments into the Central Asian energy infrastructure are substantial enough for it to already be considered a

⁸⁰ Economist, "China and the Environment: The East is Grey," <http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21583245-china-worlds-worst-polluter-largest-investor-green-energy-its-rise-will-have>.

⁸¹ Luras, "The Strategic Consequences of China's Economic Growth," 24.

⁸² Economist, "China and the Environment: The East is Grey," <http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21583245-china-worlds-worst-polluter-largest-investor-green-energy-its-rise-will-have>.

⁸³ Ekrem, "Central Asian Policies of China," 8.

hegemon in the region.⁸⁴ Apart from Uzbekistan, China is the biggest trading partner of 80 percent of Central Asian countries. Of note, however, is that China has increased its economic relations with Central Asia because of Russia's unfair authoritarian market policies. Russia still controls a good amount of Central Asia's energy exports; its relative economic weight in the region, however, is decreasing. Russia has purchased oil and gas at below-market rates through Soviet-era pipelines, and resells this vital energy source for a higher price. This type of unjust practice is what led Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to cooperate with China.⁸⁵

Today, there are extensive newly built networks of transportation infrastructure and oil and gas pipelines that connect Beijing to the CACs. Between 1992 and 2012, China's total trade with the CACs grew 100-fold.⁸⁶ There are massive bilateral projects like the Central Asia gas pipeline between Turkmenistan and China, the Atyrau-Alashankou oil pipeline between Kazakhstan and China, new energy transport and communication networks in Uzbekistan, the construction of new roads and tunnels in Tajikistan, and the enlargement of road networks between Kyrgyzstan and China.⁸⁷ These and other projects serve to strengthen the ties between China and the CACs. What is more, Central Asia has also been established as a growing market for Beijing's domestically-produced merchandise.

China's growing energy demand is a key driving force behind its increasing interest and involvement in Central Asia. In addition to its decreasing proportion of internal energy production, Beijing's flourishing economy has increased China's import of oil and natural gas. China meets the big part of these energy needs from the Persian Gulf and Africa, but the PRC is aware that it is vital to diversify its external energy suppliers. It also knows that oil transfers from the Middle East are susceptible to intervention from terrorism, local conflicts, and other regional instability. Thanks to its

⁸⁴ Berkofsk, "China's Strategic Involvement in Central Asia," 2.

⁸⁵ Economist, "China in Central Asia: Rising China, Sinking Russia," <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21586304-vast-region-chinas-economic-clout-more-match-russias-rising-china-sinking>.

⁸⁶ Mariani, "China's Role and Interest in Central Asia," 2.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Energy Eastward Transportation Program, Beijing has been supporting the construction of oil and gas pipelines to transport Central Asian energy resources directly into China. As opposed to the PRC's energy transportation by sea from Africa and the Persian Gulf, China can acquire energy through land-based pipelines from Central Asia and the Caspian region. This alternative leads China to attribute high significance to Central Asia, since sea-lanes are vulnerable to pirates or foreign navies.⁸⁸

The CACs are pursuing a multi-pronged approach in their energy policies. They are interested in not only alternative transportation options, but also in foreign exporters willing to construct pipeline projects that will help to diversify their supply chains, which have been historically very dependent upon Russia.⁸⁹ A 2013 tour by Chinese President Xi Jinping to all the CACs ended up with strong energy contracts, including tens of billions of dollars' worth of loans to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.⁹⁰ China is supplanting Russia's previously superior position in Central Asia. The International Energy Agency estimates that if the influence of Beijing in Central Asia continues at its current pace, China will be importing almost half of Central Asia's gas by 2020.⁹¹ Seemingly, this trend could draw a happy picture as a win-win policy in which Beijing offers funding and the CACs try to satisfy China's enormous energy demand for a fair price. Nevertheless, the CACs have to be careful not to fall into the grip of yet another great power, a scenario which is very possible.⁹²

China also wants to improve commerce with Central Asian countries to promote the economic development of Xinjiang, Tibet, and other provinces, the development of which have all remained behind China's booming eastern cities. Though Beijing's trade with Central Asia forms only a small segment of China's total commerce, it symbolizes a significant part for western China because of its geographic position. Therefore, China is improving new rail, pipeline, and infrastructure bonds that would strengthen networks

⁸⁸ Weitz, *China's Military Goals*, 86–87.

⁸⁹ Reid Standish, "Hungry for Gas, China Muscles onto Russian Turf," Foreign Policy blog, June 19, 2014, http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2014/06/19/hungry_for_gas_china_muscles_onto_russian_turf.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Romanowski, "Central Asia's Energy Rush."

⁹² Ibid.

between Xinjiang—abundant in coal and natural gas—Central Asia, and the rest of China. More than half of Xinjiang’s external trade is with Central Asian countries.⁹³ Chinese investment in Central Asia encourages this by developing living standards and stability in a region that shares a 1,750-mile border with Xinjiang. Chinese firms are flooding into Central Asia, building roads and pipelines, and in Tajikistan’s capital, Dushanbe, even the government constructions.⁹⁴ Table 1 details China’s recent trade with the region.

Table 1. China’s Trade Value with Central Asia in 2012.⁹⁵

Article I. Article II. Country Article III.	Trade Value (U.S.\$1,000)	Trade Value (China exporter) (U.S.\$1,000)	Import Value (China importer) (U.S.\$1,000)	Import % from China	Export % to China Article IV.
Kazakhstan	25,676,790 Article V.	11,001,670 Article VI.	14,675,120 Article VII.	28%	19.3% Article VIII.
Kyrgyzstan Article IX.	5,162,470 Article X.	5,073,510 Article XI.	88,960 Article XII.	55.2%	7.0% Article XIII.
Tajikistan Article XIV.	1,856,700 Article XV.	1,747,870 Article XVI.	10,883 Article XVII.	41.2%	9.5% Article XVIII.
Turkmenistan Article XIX.	10,372,710 Article XX.	1,699,330 Article XXI.	8,673,380 Article XXII.	19.5%	69.6%
Uzbekistan	2,874,680	1,783,050	1,091,630 Article XXIII.	16.6%	21.0%

Chinese trade volume with the CACs indicates that Beijing is replacing Russia’s previous superiority and dominating in Central Asia. In 2012, except for the imports between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and Russia, and the exports between Kyrgyzstan and Russia, China now dominates trade with all the CACs (Figures 4 and 5).

⁹³ Weitz, *China’s Military Goals*, 87.

⁹⁴ “China in Central Asia: Rising China, Sinking Russia,” *The Economist*, <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21586304-vast-region-chinas-economic-clout-more-match-russias-rising-china-sinking>.

⁹⁵ Mariani, “China’s Role and Interest in Central Asia,” 10.

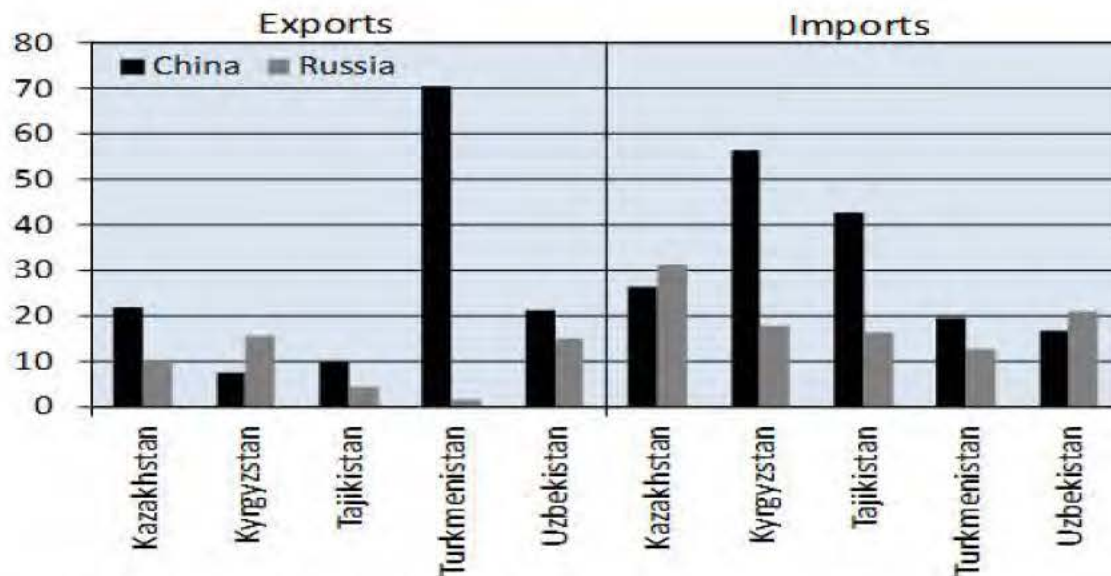


Figure 4. Trade of Central Asian Countries with China and Russia in 2012, Percentage Share of Exports and Imports.⁹⁶

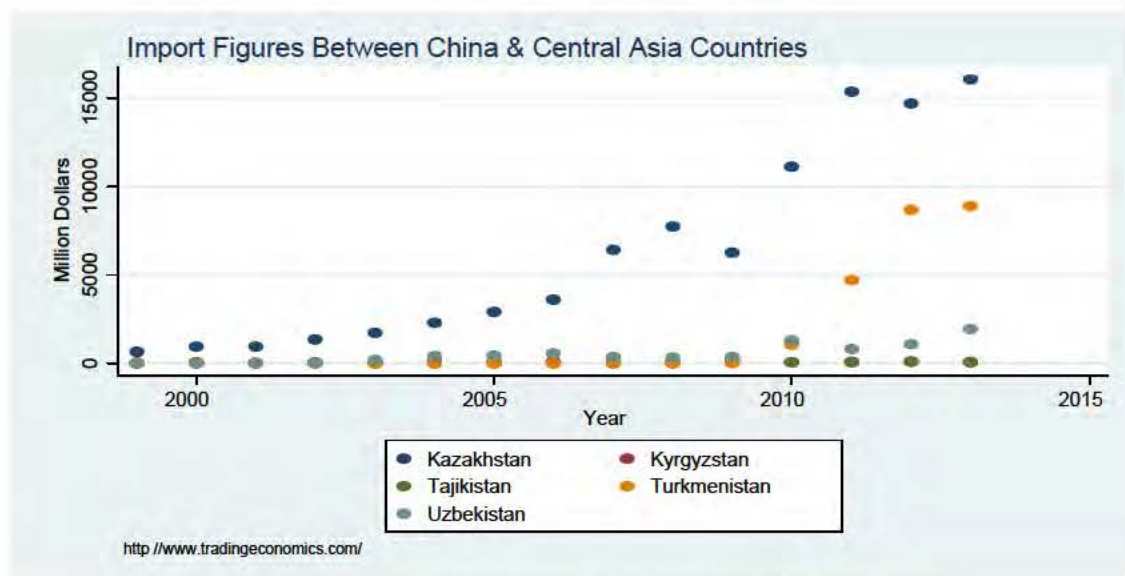


Figure 5. China's Import Volume with CACs.

⁹⁶ Bofit Viikkokatsaus, "China Surpasses Russia as Top Trading Partner for Central Asian Countries," http://www.suomenpankki.fi/bofit_en/seuranta/seuranta-aineisto/pages/vw201339_5.aspx.

Central Asia has a vast supply of natural gas. Based on British Petroleum numbers, the natural gas reserves of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are estimated to be over 700 trillion cubic feet; they are among the largest suppliers in the world. Turkmenistan holds the world's fourth largest natural gas proven reserves, with 17.5 trillion cubic meters.⁹⁷ Turkmenistan is China's leading external supplier of natural gas with over 21.3 billion cm in 2012, which amounts to 51.4 percent of China's imports.⁹⁸ This capacity is nearly three times more than the exports of Qatar to China, which is Beijing's second largest natural gas supplier. The overall volume of Turkmen gas to China will rise to 65 billion cm by 2020.⁹⁹ Turkmenistan and China also initialed a "Joint Declaration on Establishing a Strategic Partnership" towards increasing collaboration in infrastructure, telecommunications, the chemical and textile industries, agriculture, healthcare, high technologies, and the execution of big joint projects. China has established strategic partnerships with all five CACs. The ties between Beijing and the CACs have all grown stronger over the last two decades. Trade capacity between China and the CACs enlarged from \$460 million in 1990 to \$46 billion in 2012 (Figures 6 and 7).¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ The World Factbook," Central Asia: Turkmenistan," Central Intelligence Agency, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tx.html>.

⁹⁸ Alex Gupta, "Central Asia: Five Key Issues," 4, American Security Project, August 2014, <https://www.americansecurityproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Ref-0165-Central-Asia-5-Critical-Issues.pdf>.

⁹⁹ "China Deal Sees Turkmenistan Emerge as Energy Player," *Journal of Turkish Weekly*, May 20, 2014, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/167007/china-deal-sees-turkmenistan-emerge-as-energy-player.html> Accessed 14 November 2014.

¹⁰⁰ Gupta, "Central Asia: Five Key Issues."

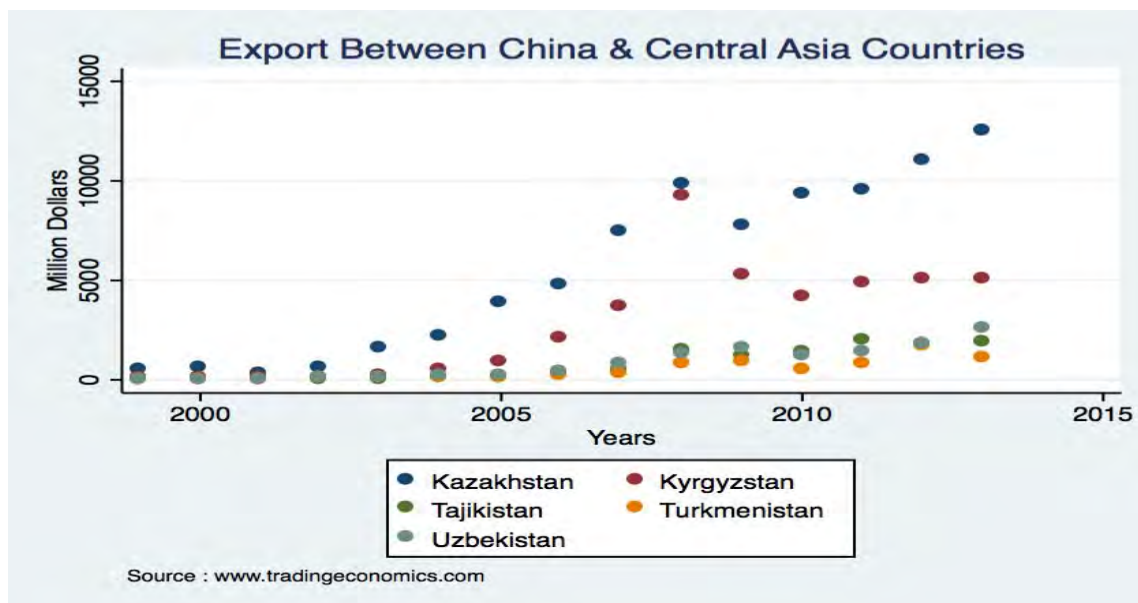


Figure 6. Export between China and CACs.¹⁰¹

In the last decade, China gained an average annual increase of 30 percent in trade with the CACs. For example, in Kazakhstan, more than 3,000 Chinese firms have invested a combined total of over \$20 billion, making it the third largest partner with China in terms of foreign investment.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Compiled by author from www.tradingeconomics.com.

¹⁰² Pacific Forum CSIS, "Comparative Connections: A Triannual E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations," ed. Carl Baker and Brad Glosserman, 126, http://s3.amazonaws.com/zanran_storage/csis.org/ContentPages/2601770169.pdf.



Figure 7. Oil and Gas Pipelines.¹⁰³

Kazakhstan owns 45.7 trillion cubic feet of proven gas reserves, which is almost 1 percent of the world's total gas reserves, and Uzbekistan holds an estimated 39.7 trillion cubic feet of proven natural gas reserves. China is the biggest customer of Central Asian natural gas. Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and, predominantly, Turkmenistan are major suppliers of natural gas to China. The China-Central Asia Natural Gas Pipeline has three pipelines, which span Central Asia delivering natural gas to China and one is projected (Table 2, Figure 8).

Table 2. Turkmenistan-China Natural Gas Lines Capacity.¹⁰⁴

Gas Lines*	Capacity/Year	Construction Begins	Commissioned
Line A (T,U,K)	20 billion cm	2007	2009
Line B (T,U,K)	10 billion cm	2009	2010
Line C (T,U,K)	25 billion cm	2012	2014
Line D (T,U,T,Ky)	25 billion cm	2013	2016 (projected)

*T=Turkmenistan, U=Uzbekistan, K=Kazakhstan, T=Tajikistan, Ky=Kyrgyzstan

¹⁰³ U.S. Energy Information Administration, "Caspian Sea Region," 24, http://www.eia.gov/countries/analysisbriefs/Caspian_Sea/caspian_sea.pdf.

¹⁰⁴ Pacific Forum CSIS, "A Triannual E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations," 124.

Country	Major project	Location	Production, 2012	Year of commissioning/ production start-up	Developing companies
Kazakhstan					
	Kashagan	Caspian Offshore	developing	2013	North Caspian Operating Company (ENI, Shell, Total, ExxonMobil, KazMunaiGaz, ConocoPhillips, Inpex)
	Tengiz	Caspian Onshore	480,000 bbl/d oil, 430 Bcf gas	1991	Tengizchevroil (Chevron, ExxonMobil, KazMunaiGaz, LUKOil)
	Karachaganak	Caspian Onshore		phase 1 - 1985, phase 2 - 2000	Karachaganak Petroleum Operating (BG Group, ENI, Chevron, LUKOil)
	Kurmangazy	Caspian Offshore	developing		Rosneft, KazMunaiGaz
Turkmenistan					
	South Yolotan (Galkynysh)	Onshore*	developing	2006	Turkmengaz/CNPC
	Dauletabad	Onshore*	1.4 Tcf gas	1983	Turkmengaz
	Cheleken	Caspian Offshore	74,000 bbl/d oil	1950	Dragon Oil, Turkmenneft

Figure 8. Central Asia Pipeline Projects.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ U.S. Energy Information Administration, "Caspian Sea Region."

At the same time, China is diversifying the sources of and lanes for its natural gas pipelines to reduce geopolitical influence and promote Chinese influence across Central Asia.¹⁰⁶ China and Russia signed a 30-year \$400 billion natural gas deal in 2013, which helps Russia enlarge its European energy market and provides them a new customer in the Far East. China benefits by diversifying the sources of its natural gas imports and also by improved overall economic ties with Russia.¹⁰⁷ In response to China's increasing influence, in December 2010, the leaders of Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India (TAPI) signed an agreement on the construction of a natural gas pipeline to run from Turkmenistan to India; this will be called the TAPI Pipeline, and the United States strongly backs this pipeline to diversify the flow of Central Asia energy output.¹⁰⁸ The United States has also approved the construction of a trans-Caspian natural gas pipeline to link Central Asia natural gas with the European energy market, and the United States continues to state the importance of the expansion and diversification of Central Asia natural gas pipelines so as to balance world energy needs and protect the stability of Central Asia.¹⁰⁹

Central Asia is vital for China, primarily due to its enormous hydrocarbon resources. China has started to get access to those supplies thanks to extensive oil and gas pipeline construction in the early 2000s, and additional pipeline capacity is still under construction. Xi Jinping made a tour of Central Asian countries to improve relations in September 2013, and the trip was clearly focused on energy deals. The most important deal concerns the massive Kashagan offshore oil ground, situated in the Kazakh part of the Caspian Sea; China provided financing for the development of the oil field in exchange for future oil supplies. In Turkmenistan, Xi committed China to assist in the exploitation of the newly developed Galkynysh gas field; most of the resulting gas will go to China, and the Chinese have been broadly involved in developing the infrastructure

¹⁰⁶ Ruoxi Du, "Central Asian Energy: A Point of Contention or Collaboration in Russia - China Relations," Foreign Military Studies Office, 8, http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/Collaboration/international/China/AsiaEnergy_International.pdf.

¹⁰⁷ Gupta, "Central Asia: Five Key Issues," 4.

¹⁰⁸ Nick Snow, "ADB: TAPI Gas Pipeline Making Steady Progress," Oil & Gas Journal, June 2014, <http://www.ogj.com/articles/2014/06/adb-tapi-gas-pipeline-making-steady-progress.html>.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

of the field. Turkmenistan's exports consist nearly entirely of natural gas, most of which goes to the Chinese market. In Uzbekistan, some energy-related deals were signed that amounted to \$15 billion. The projects relate to the improvement of Uzbekistan's oil and gas reserves, as well as the management of its uranium reserves. The two countries also decided to construct a railway running from Uzbekistan through Kyrgyzstan to China. China granted a \$3 billion loan to Kyrgyzstan. Half of the money is reserved to fund construction of a new gas pipeline going from Turkmenistan via Kyrgyzstan to China, and the rest will be assigned to several projects like the restoration of an electric power plant, highway construction, and the expansion of an oil refinery.¹¹⁰

Even though Beijing imports a great deal of energy from Central Asia, the region together only amounts to 1.3 percent of China's entire goods imports, and only about 1 percent of China's exports go to Central Asian countries (Figure 9).¹¹¹ This is because China is a very big economy compared with that of the CACs. Beijing's average economic growth rate between 1978 and 2012 was around 10 percent per year, which means that the Chinese economy doubled every seven years; the Chinese economy is almost 25 times larger in 2014 than it was in 1978 when Deng Xiaoping launched market reforms.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Viikkokatsaus, "China Surpasses Russia as Top Trading Partner For Central Asian Countries."

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Luras, "The Strategic Consequences of China's Economic Growth," 22–23.

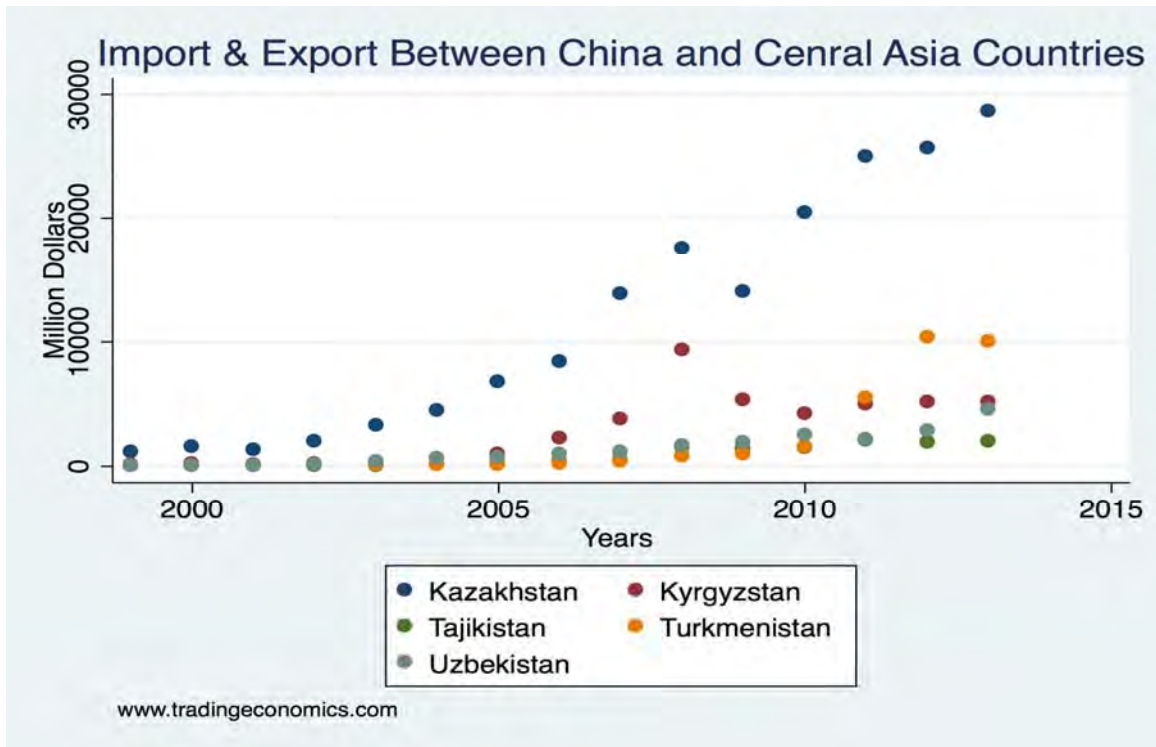


Figure 9. Import and export between China and CACs¹¹³

Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the United States has only paid a few high-level visits to the CACs. On the other hand, China attributes high significance to such visits and arranges regular visits to the CACs, which makes those nations feel important in the global system. In a visit to Central Asia in 2013, Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang announced China's Silk Road strategy towards neighboring states and generated "the Chinese version of the Marshall Plan."¹¹⁴ Then, in September 2013 on a trip to Kazakhstan, Xi stated that Beijing aimed to build the "Silk Road Economic Belt" together with the CACs.¹¹⁵ In support of this, highway/road networks will be enlarged first, and a plan is being considered to facilitate transportation links by building up a line from the Pacific Ocean to the Baltic Sea under the auspices of the SCO, which will connect East Asia, West Asia, and South Asia, and reach into Europe. Second, the Silk

¹¹³ Compiled by author from www.tradingeconomics.com.

¹¹⁴ Yakobashvili, "A Chinese Marshall Plan for Central Asia?"

¹¹⁵ Wang Yizhou, "China's New Foreign Policy: Transformations and Challenges Reflected in Changing Discourse," ASAN Forum, <http://www.theasanforum.org/chinas-new-foreign-policy-transformations-and-challenges-reflected-in-changing-discourse>.

Road plan will promote trade efficiency and improve the quality of the regional economy, which will be a win-win policy for each country. Third, this plan will strengthen currency flows by establishing monetary exchanges and account settlements between China and the CACs vis-à-vis both current and capital accounts. Correspondingly, monetary circulation costs between China and the CACs will be significantly reduced, the regional financial system of Central Asia will become more immune to risk, and the regional economy will become more competitive internationally.¹¹⁶ The Silk Road network is shown in Figure 10.



Figure 10. The Silk Road Network.

1. China's Development Strategy and the Role of Central Asia

China has devised an analytical discourse in terms of security and development interaction, initially based on domestic issues, but afterwards interconnected with foreign policy. At the 17th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 2007, Hu Jintao,

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

then president of China, declared the notion of a harmonious society, in which development and security are connected.¹¹⁷ With the recent dramatic growth rate in China, Chinese society is now highly differentiated and contains multiple conflicting interests and a severe escalation in the economic and cultural differences between not only the peasants, workers, middle classes, and elites, but also between the maritime and continental regions.¹¹⁸ The CCP believes that a better distribution of wealth is needed for political stability; without it, the current situation might destabilize the regime and endanger China's long-term interests. As for where the XUAR fits into harmonious society, Beijing believes that the political and ethnic tensions among the Uyghurs will weaken as their economy grows and as they become increasingly integrated into the overall Chinese political system.¹¹⁹ Therefore, Beijing pursues a controversial policy in XUAR. On the one hand, China aims to increase economic development of Xinjiang with \$300 billion of planned investments by 2015.¹²⁰ On the other hand, they repress any possible action that has the potential to turn into a separatist movement. Ethnic riots in 2008, 2009, and 2011 revealed the inadequacy of the Chinese approach; investing enormously in the local economy and infrastructures of XUAR is not enough to neutralize secessionist tensions and identity conflicts.¹²¹

CCP also wants to be perceived as one of the great global powers. Beijing therefore endeavors to undertake larger responsibilities, like the improvement of cooperation between regional institutions and international donors, and attempts to communicate as an equal with other major powers in international affairs. Hereafter, as a rising global power, China wishes to be a reliable contributor in its dealings with Africa,

¹¹⁷ Sebastian Peyrouse, Jos Boonstra, and Marlene Laruelle, "Security and Development Approaches to Central Asia: The EU Compared to China and Russia," EUCAM Working Paper No. 11, May 2012.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Naser M. Al-Tamimi, *China-Saudi Arabia Relations, 1990–2012: Marriage of Convenience or Strategic Alliance?* (London: Routledge, 2013), 92, [http://books.google.com/books?id=tYuwAAAAQBAJ&pg=PA92&lpg=PA92&dq=of+Xinjiang+with+a+\\$300+billion+of+planned+investments+by+2015.&source=bl&ots=LgWrDhY_mU&sig=Zlnfcn63T0e_gPzjPxHYxbmMbOo&hl=tr&sa=X&ei=cmNtVPH8IoH8igKBsIHIDA&ved=0CD0Q6AEwBA#v=onepage&q=of%20Xinjiang%20with%20a%20%24300%20billion%20of%20planned%20investments%20by%202015.&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=tYuwAAAAQBAJ&pg=PA92&lpg=PA92&dq=of+Xinjiang+with+a+$300+billion+of+planned+investments+by+2015.&source=bl&ots=LgWrDhY_mU&sig=Zlnfcn63T0e_gPzjPxHYxbmMbOo&hl=tr&sa=X&ei=cmNtVPH8IoH8igKBsIHIDA&ved=0CD0Q6AEwBA#v=onepage&q=of%20Xinjiang%20with%20a%20%24300%20billion%20of%20planned%20investments%20by%202015.&f=false).

¹²¹ Ibid.

Latin America and Central Asia, within a discourse of “mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence, but also via mechanisms of development aid.”¹²² China does not have an official definition or institution for its development aid and prefers to see it as cooperation. Beijing wants to be an alternative to other major international donors; China not only participates financially in the Asian Development Bank and in some of the UN Development Program’s African programs, but also in the CAREC program in Central Asia.¹²³ China emphasizes the “good neighborhood principal” in Central Asia by involving itself in the construction and upgrading of extraction infrastructures, transport facilities and communication systems. China perceives poverty to be the main source of destabilization in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, to which it now delivers the lion share of its aid.¹²⁴

2. China’s Foreign Aid to Central Asia

Being the second largest economy in the world, China has the capability and capacity to grant development assistance and provide government investment in developing countries. In the early years after 2010, China increased its development assistance in 93 states, for both the benefit of the beneficiaries and its own interests.¹²⁵ Chinese foreign aid and government-sponsored investment activities (FAGIA) are also effective in Central Asia. FAGIA assistance in Central Asia grew from \$27 million in 2001 to \$7.8 billion in 2011 (Figure 11) and spurred further growth from \$1.4 billion in 2008 to \$6.3 billion in 2009; this increase was due in part to several great projects for building oil and gas pipelines and exploratory mining for copper.¹²⁶

¹²² Peyrouse, Boonstra, and Laruelle, “Security and Development Approaches.”

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Nargis Kassenova, “China as an Emerging Donor in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan,” 11–17, http://www.ifri.org/files/Russie/ifri_China_Central_Asia_kassenova_ENG_January2008.pdf.

¹²⁵ Charles Wolf, Jr., Xiao Wang, and Eric Warner, *China’s Foreign Aid and Government-Sponsored Investment Activities: Scale, Content, Destinations, and Implications* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp., 2013), iii.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

Chinese development aid is delivered either by sponsorships in terms of distribution of goods and materials to prevent the risks of corruption, or in the form of partisan credits. The money for loans is granted to the recipient state, which is thereafter assigned to the business/enterprise in charge of the project in order to keep the money within Chinese banks.¹²⁷ China is very successful in its aid policy. First, Beijing does not grant assistance conditionally; it does not require reforms as a precondition for aid like many countries in the West do. Second, China offers loans at helpful rates, and the turnkey services of Chinese companies are relatively economical.¹²⁸ On the other hand, Chinese aid does not help the CACs' economies to become self-sufficient players in their own progress; Chinese aid simply intensifies the target country's economic reliance on Chinese aid and products. China thereby generates new markets for its merchandise by "landing contracts for its companies, which are the main benefactors of its bank loans; guaranteeing itself new energy supplies; and making Central Asian governments its 'debtors' or even its 'vassals.'"¹²⁹

The SCO has played an important role in China's plans in Central Asia. Until 2010, the SCO generated projects totaling less than \$100 million; this number was considerably increased after 2010 by the Chinese government when it provided \$8 billion to the SCO Development Bank to finance energy, natural-resource development, and infrastructure projects.¹³⁰ Figure 11 details this.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Peyrouse, Boonstra, and Laruelle, "Security and Development Approaches."

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Wolf, Wang, and Warner, *China's Foreign Aid and Government-Sponsored Investment Activities*, 41.

¹³¹ Ibid.

Annual and Cumulative Estimates of Pledged and Delivered FAGIA to Central Asia

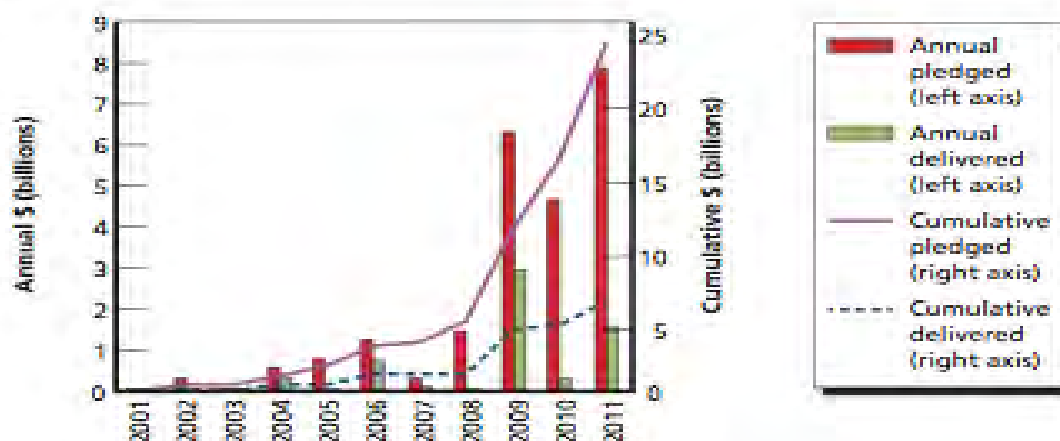


Figure 11. China's Aid to Central Asia.¹³²

After several substantial oil and copper projects commenced in 2009, natural resource development in Central Asia has seen intense upsurges (Figures 11 and 12). FAGIA exerted a vital development surge with its aid to Kazakhstan for oil and copper development, two large contracts in Kyrgyzstan for building two hydropower plants, one large natural gas investment in Uzbekistan, and small physical infrastructure improvements in Tajikistan, most of which were initiated within the SCO framework to promote the multilateral economic cooperation among the SCO member states.¹³³

¹³² Wolf, Wang, and Warner, *China's Foreign Aid and Government-Sponsored Investment Activities*, 41–43.

¹³³ Ibid.

Annual Pledged Plus Delivered FAGIA Estimates to Central Asia by Category, 2001–2011

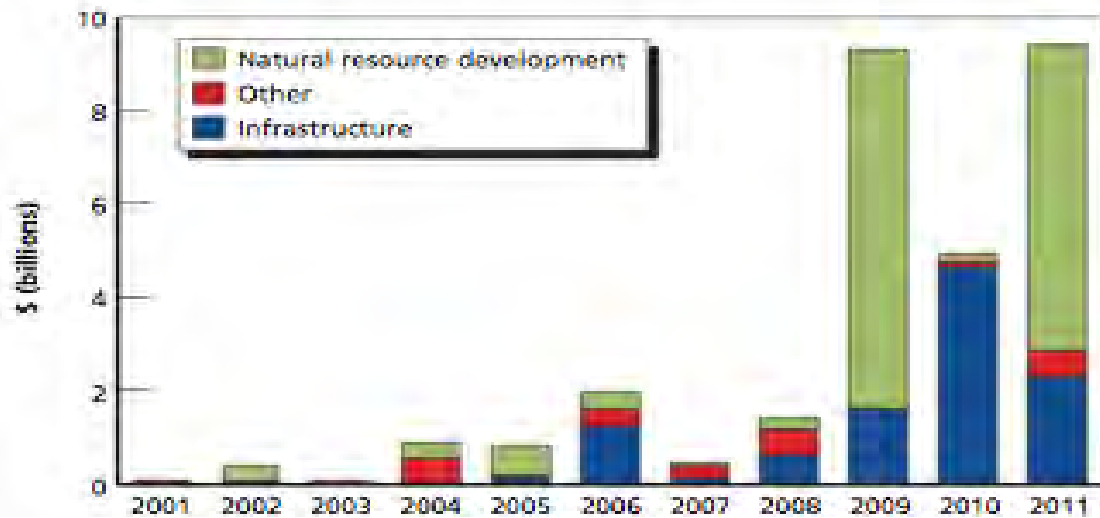


Figure 12. China's Aid to Central Asia by Category.¹³⁴

F. CHINA'S SECURITY INTEREST IN CENTRAL ASIA

Security is another dimension of China's influence in Central Asia. While China's overall interests initially based on border security just after the Soviet Collapse, today, China has enlarged its influence in terms of securing its political, economic and energy interests in Central Asia (Figure 13). China also combines its domestic security of Xinjiang with Central Asia in terms of Uyghur population. There is no foreign place more promising than the Central Asia region in which Beijing has the capability and capacity to enjoy its power under SCO to secure its interest. In this respect, China represents an image of regional power in Central Asia to prepare itself as superpower.

Beijing's national security strategy is also affecting Chinese foreign policy. Despite China's growing military and economic power within a relatively stable and peaceful neighborhood, Chinese leaders still focus on security and feel increasingly vulnerable for two reasons. First, they have intimately tied regime security to overall national security, and second, they are heavily focused on national unity. The Chinese Communist Party is integral to the unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of the PRC.

¹³⁴ Wolf, Wang, and Warner, *China's Foreign Aid and Government-Sponsored Investment Activities*, 41–43.

While national security is related to internal stability and security for any government, China is particularly worried about preventing domestic unrest and suppressing political opposition. The CCP's rulers are most afraid of "unrest in the heartland—the eastern seaboard and inland plains and river valleys where the overwhelming majority of the country's populace are concentrated."¹³⁵ National unity is also very important to Chinese leaders, and they are accordingly afraid of unrest or greater autonomy or independence on the island of Taiwan or in the far west.¹³⁶ The wealthy population of Taiwan remains mostly ethnic Han Chinese; Beijing, however, is primarily concerned by the ethnic minorities who are sparsely populated in remote areas and economically backward parts of westernmost China. Tibetans are primarily focused on the Tibetan Autonomous Region and Qinghai Province, and the Uyghurs are concentrated in the XUAR, which borders Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. The greatest fear of China's leaders, though, lies in the interconnections between domestic challenges and external threats. Therefore, any suggestion of foreign help for dissidents and demonstrators or any kind of unrest movement in the motherland rings alarm bells in China. Both the Tibetan and Uighur diasporas flow out of China's national borders, and Beijing is most sensitive to these groups' aspirations for greater autonomy or separatist movements.¹³⁷

China views that any increase in independence or rights by the Uyghur endangers the territorial integrity of China by risking a regional loss of strategic significance. Additionally, any suppressive policy on basic human rights also builds a tense environment and any increase in Han immigration decreases the security of the Uyghur identity.¹³⁸ For example, if the Uyghurs' right to practice their religion is restricted, their identity is directly imperiled. Recently, Chinese state law has enlarged the right of practicing religious guidelines. This is inconsistent, however, with the bans and restrictions imposed upon a Mosque in Keriya, such as forbidding access for government

¹³⁵ Scobell, Ratner, and Beckley, *China's Strategy toward South and Central Asia*, 5–6.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Langridge, "Security Dilemma and Securitization in China's Uyghur Issue in Xinjiang Province."

workers and youth under age 18, and time limits constraining Friday prayers to 30 minutes.¹³⁹ On the other hand, apart from Han immigration to Xinjiang, increasing economic inequality is also related to minority language rule. Since Uyghurs do not speak Mandarin—a requirement in order to get a skilled job—they have limited employment opportunities. The aforementioned restrictions offend the culture and identity of the Uyghur people and make them feel insecure, but the Chinese government perceives a need for these actions in order to maintain its territorial integrity. Beijing tries to control the Uyghur identity by limiting their religious rights and increasing Han immigration—which “skyrocketed from 6.7 percent in 1949 to 40 percent in 2008”¹⁴⁰—to Xinjiang, which in turn causes Uyghur protest. As the CACs increase their political and economic ties with China, they observe Beijing’s actions toward Muslim and Turkic identity in XUAR very carefully. China’s peaceful and soft foreign policy does not match its hard and aggressive policy on domestic issues. China’s foreign policy of non-interference and non-aggression are in contrast with Chinese domestic policy, and this makes the CACs suspicious about China’s ideals of non-interference and non-aggression.¹⁴¹

China perceives separatist movements as a serious threat to its territorial integrity. Therefore, Beijing has difficulties in finding a balance between providing comprehensive human rights to its minorities and preventing a potential uprising. Social protests are a common way in democratic regimes for people to express themselves. On the contrary, in the Chinese authoritarian regime, social protests are considered to be an insurgency against the security of the state. Therefore, “ethnic conflict and Uyghur protest in XUAR have been securitized by the Chinese state as terrorism.”¹⁴² China rationalizes the use of extraordinary measures against Uyghur protests and alleged attacks under the principles of securitization. Beijing has also adopted a policy of global war on terror in order to detect, prevent, and remove terrorism from anywhere in the world. Beijing lumps Uyghur

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Al Jazeera, “The Harsh Reality of China’s Muslim Divide,” October 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/10/201210493210185606.html>.

¹⁴¹ Fabio Belafatti, “Chinese Engagement in Central Asia: Logic and Impact,” *Geopolitika*, <http://www.geopolitika.lt/?artc=6433>.

¹⁴² Sébastien Peyrouse, “Security and Islam in Asia: Lessons from China’s Uyghur Minority,” 3, http://fride.org/descarga/PB_87_Security_and_Islam_in_Asia.pdf.

activists together with Al-Qaeda when it announces that “the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) has become an arm of Al-Qaeda, receiving funding and training from them.”¹⁴³ China tried to get support from the United States for its policy against terrorism in XUAR. Washington opposed that narrative, however, and recognized the difference between fighting against terrorism and non-violent separatist activities.¹⁴⁴ Since most of the Uyghurs show no interest in Salafist Islam—a requirement for participation in the terrorist organization, ETIM—it is implausible to connect Uyghur activists to Al-Qaeda. Additionally, Uyghurs do not support violent action, let alone the fact that the separatist groups are “too small, dispersed and faceless, to be a threat to the Chinese state.”¹⁴⁵ To divert public attention from its internal social policies and problems, Beijing connects Uyghur activists to Al-Qaeda and thus alleges an external cause as the source of unrest in XUAR.¹⁴⁶ On the other hand, Chinese media frames the Uyghur people as a criminal “other,” and contrasts violent illegitimate Uyghur protestors to peaceful, law-abiding Han citizens, leading to a social division.¹⁴⁷ By characterizing ethnic conflict in XUAR as terrorism, China has followed a hard policy and passed anti-terror legislation against the Uyghur minority that authorizes 24-hour police patrols, identity checks, and street searches after the deployment of counterterrorism units in Kashgar and Hotan.¹⁴⁸ Consequently, human rights action and legislation has become increasingly scarce and the situation of decreasing human rights, the growing Han Chinese population in Urumqi and rising hard policies only provides an environment of insecurity for the Uyghur people.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴³ Langridge, “Security Dilemma and Securitization In China’s Uyghur Issue In Xinjiang Province.”

¹⁴⁴ Wall Street Journal, “China Says Terrorism, U.S. Says Prove It,” China Real Time blog, May 2, 2014, <http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2014/05/02/china-screams-terrorism-u-s-says-prove-it>.

¹⁴⁵ Langridge, “Security Dilemma and Securitization in China’s Uyghur Issue in Xinjiang Province.”

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Frank Hohmann, “China to Deploy More ‘Anti-terrorism Forces’ to Counter Attacks in Xinjiang,” <http://www.dw.de/china-to-deploy-more-anti-terrorism-forces-to-counter-attacks-in-xinjiang/a-6590088>.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

There are legitimate reasons why ethnic conflict is being fomented by both China and among the Uyghur people. First, from China's perspective, XUAR is of geostrategic importance, with its access to trade roads and enormous natural resources. Second, the possible separation of Xinjiang may cause Tibet—another autonomous region in China that neighbors XUAR—to pursue independence more enthusiastically. Third, as a rising superpower, losing land will contribute to discredit of the regime in the eye of the Chinese public and international arena. Fourth, since separatism is one of the evils to which Beijing attaches high importance, the authority of the existing Chinese regime will start to be questioned by its own public. Fifth, once a separatist movement starts in XUAR and China tries to suppress this action, China's actions will inevitably lead to instability in Central Asia in terms of economy, energy security, immigration and ethnic conflict. Thus, China views Xinjiang's separatist intention as a catalyst for insecurity, which threatens the integrity of the Chinese state.

On the other hand, the Uyghur people have numerous reasons to feel insecure. First, their identity is under attack by the Chinese government, and in particular their religious freedom is threatened. Second, the minority language policies prevent the Uyghur people from getting skilled jobs, and thus they cannot enjoy the economic development of Xinjiang by getting higher incomes or the kind of skilled jobs that their Han neighbors have access to. Third, by linking Uyghur activists to external terrorist threats like Al-Qaeda, China has made Uyghurs very uneasy.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Jeremy Luedi, "China, Uighurs and Central Asia: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization & Beijing's Internationalization of Domestic Security Concerns," Accentuate Asia, <http://www.accentuateasia.com/2014/07/china-uyghurs-and-central-asia-shanghai.html>.



Figure 13. Post-Soviet Central Asia.

In the context of China’s rise to global power, its treatment of Islam is important for Central Asian countries to see—in broader terms it shows China’s level of tolerance toward other identities—especially how China treats “the Islam extant among restive national minorities such as the Uyghurs.”¹⁵¹ The ethnic uprisings in Xinjiang in July 2009, and violence in the region in July 2011, both tend to confirm that the problem is not going away. Due to strong religious, linguistic, and cultural ties with the Uyghurs, Central Asia is directly involved in China’s domestic concerns. China’s Uyghur population in Xinjiang is perceived by Beijing as being more of a separatist threat than a connective regional opportunity to integrate Central Asia with China. The Chinese stance on the Uyghur issue is very firm yet subtle. China does not want the CACs to be involved in the Uyghur conflict and interfere in this issue, and Beijing pressures them to stop their support for the Uyghurs.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Peyrouse, “Security and Islam in Asia,” 3.

¹⁵² Jenny L. Phillips, “Uyghurs In Xinjiang: United Or Divided Against The PRC?” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, 2012), 41.

At the same time, Beijing attaches high importance to Central Asia in terms of security. An unstable Afghanistan creates a challenging environment for China, and Beijing fears that problems in Kabul will spill over into Central Asia, which could potentially disrupt Chinese access to energy and interrupt its trade in Central Asia. For example, Beijing concluded an agreement with Turkmenistan in 2011 covering natural gas that will supply 65 billion cubic meters of gas per year to China and meet a great part of China's gas demand.¹⁵³ China's concern about Afghanistan makes it to meet at the same security base with United States and West.

Since the mid-1990s, China's overall strategy in Central Asia has been focused on resource extraction and trade, securing ground energy routes by importing gas from Turkmenistan and both gas and oil from Kazakhstan, and safeguarding China's western lands from any insurgencies.¹⁵⁴ Consequently, China has struggled for regional security cooperation under the institution of the SCO, which amounts to half of the world's population, including the observer states.¹⁵⁵ Thanks to the SCO, member states have consolidated their political and economic ties in terms of building strong mutual trust in the military perspective through cooperation among their defense ministries. Under SCO, many exercises have been conducted, ranging from collective drug trafficking mitigation, fighting organized crime, border security improvement, peace missions, and collaboration to anti-terrorism (Table 3). China seeks to develop the SCO into a more security-based organization. In this context, in 2014, Wang Yi—Chinese foreign minister—stated that “there is opportunity to build the SCO into a community of interest by expanding the scope of collaboration and to build up a security shield to detect and handle various security threats.”¹⁵⁶ Consequently, this strategy points out Chinese deviation from the policy of non-interference and non-aggression.

¹⁵³ Peyrouse, Boonstra, and Laruelle, “Security and Development Approaches.”

¹⁵⁴ Richard Ghiasy, “Central Asian Fortune in Chinese Hands,” *Diplomat*, December 2013, <http://thediplomat.com/2013/12/central-asian-fortune-in-chinese-hands>.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Table 3. China's Participation in Multilateral Military Exercises under the Framework of the SCO, 2001–2013.¹⁵⁷

Codename	Dates	Participants	Location	Troop Strength
Exercise 01	October 10–11, 2002	China, Kyrgyzstan	Near the Irkeshtam crossing on both sides of the Kyrgyz-Chinese border	400 troops from each side's border defense units were involved in preparations for and in the holding of the exercises. Approximately 175 troops from China and 75 from Kyrgyzstan directly participated in the exercises
Cooperation 2003	August 6–12, 2003	China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan	Kazakhstan's border city of Ucharal; and Yiliin China's northwest Xinjiang province	More than 1,200 troops participated in the exercise. In Kazakhstan, the 500 participating troops included a Kazakh mobile infantry unit, a Russian motorized infantry company, and a Kyrgyz paratroop assault platoon. In China, 700 Chinese troops participated, including mobile riflemen, armored infantry, artillery infantry, helicopter elements, elements of a special unit of armed police, and special support forces belonging to the Xinjiang Military District. They were joined by a 33-man Kyrgyz special warfare platoon.

¹⁵⁷ Scobell, Ratner, and Beckley, *China's Strategy toward South and Central Asia: An Empty Fortress*.

Codename	Dates	Participants	Location	Troop Strength
Peace Mission 2005	August 18–25, 2005	China, Russia	Vladivostok in Russia's Far East, and east China's Shandong Peninsula	8,000 Chinese and 1,800 Russian troops.
East (Vostok) Anti-Terror 2006	March 2–5, 2006	China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia; Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	Tashkent region, Uzbekistan	Undisclosed number of security and law enforcement forces.
Tianshan-1 2006	August 24–26, 2006	China, Kazakhstan	Kazakhstan's eastern Almaty region; and Yining in China's northwest Xinjiang province	Over 700 Chinese frontier troops participated, including anti-terror reconnaissance troops, horseback police, and technical reconnaissance troops. ^e Kazakh forces were drawn from their border patrol, the Interior Ministry, and the Emergency Situations Ministry.
Collaboration (Xiezu) 2006	September 22–23, 2006	China, Tajikistan	Kulyab, Tajikistan	150 Chinese and 300 Tajik troops.
Issyk Kul Anti-Terror 2007	May 29–31, 2007	China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	Northeastern Kyrgyzstan	Up to 1,000 Kyrgyz servicemen together with officers of special forces from other SCO countries.

Codename	Dates	Participants	Location	Troop Strength
Peace Mission 2007	August 9–17, 2007	China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	Chelyabinsk in Russia's Ural mountains; and Urumqi, the capital of China's Xinjiang province	Over 4,000 total troops participated: 2,000 from Russia, 1,600 from China, and the rest from other military units of the SCO member states. ^j
Norak Anti-Terror 2009	April 17–19, 2009	China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan	Fakhrobod training ground in Khatlon province, some 50 kilometers to the south of Dushanbe, Tajikistan	A total of about 1,000 servicemen took part in the exercises. The forces included subdivisions of Tajikistan's State Committee on National Security, the Defense Ministry and the Interior Ministry; task-force subdivisions of the Russian 201st Military Base deployed in Tajikistan; and rapid-reaction groups from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and China.
Peace Mission 2009	July 22–26, 2009	China, Russia	Shenyang Military Area Command in China's northeast Jilin Province	2,600 army personnel (1,300 from each side) including special forces from both sides.
Peace Mission 2010	September 9–25, 2010	China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan	Matybulak training range in southern Kazakhstan	Over 5,000 personnel reportedly participated, including 1,000 troops each from China, Kazakhstan, and Russia, and 150 each from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Codename	Dates	Participants	Location	Troop Strength
Peace Mission 2012	June 8–14, 2012	China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan	Khuzhand, Tajikistan	2,000 total troops, including 369 Chinese personnel. China sent army aviation troops as well as ground forces.
Peace Mission 2013	July 27–August 15, 2013	China, Russia	Chebarkul, Russia	1,500 total, including 600 Chinese and 900 Russians.

G. CONCLUSION

China is a dominant player in Central Asia in political, economic, security, and energy terms, and China's influence is increasing progressively towards making it the greatest power in the region. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, China's concerns in Central Asia were initially related to border security with Central Asia and the stabilization of its minority Muslim province of Xinjiang. Today, Beijing's connections with Central Asia are mostly focused on issues related to the extraction of energy and the creation of a secure region; China's attempts to revive the Silk Road can be viewed in terms of providing China an alternative trade route to reduce its heavy dependence on the sea lanes. Also, as a rising global player, China is showing its power with military exercises under the SCO, and is thereby consolidating its economic influence in Central Asia by building higher economic bilateral and multilateral relations with each country in the region. Since the CACs are considered developing economies and have proven willing to cooperate for the sake of growth, China's economic influence directly affects the political relations countries in the region in a manner which, on the surface, appears to be consistent with China's peaceful rise policy towards Central Asia.

China does not have an independent foreign policy in Central Asia. Since it is very sensitive towards its territorial integrity, China's domestic policy—particularly as it relates to XUAR and its Uyghur population—informs Beijing's overall strategy in Central Asia. Central Asia's energy resources and alternative trade routes also provide access to the West and lead China to engage heavily in the region. What is more, as a

rising global power, China's approach towards its Muslim minority in Xinjiang influences its overall policy towards the Muslim world, which is important for China's acceptance in the international arena as a superpower, and in terms of competition with the United States and gaining the sympathy of Muslim nations. Therefore, as a rising global power, China's influence in Central Asia is interconnected with its domestic policy and foreign policy. Since the Xinjiang Autonomous region is vulnerable to separatist movements and ethnic conflict, Xinjiang is a key area for Beijing to build and consolidate its foreign policy in Central Asia; similarly, Central Asia is a key area for China to showcase an attractive program to the overall Muslim world and beyond.

The economic influence of China's role in Central Asia is dominant in each of the five Central Asian countries for which China has become a major economic partner through natural resource extraction projects, investments in infrastructure, low-interest loans, and foreign aid. More than ten percent of China's oil and gas imports now comes from Central Asia. To diversify its energy suppliers, and to keep stability and security in its Xinjiang region, China's economic engagement with Central Asia has generated the 'the New Great Game' that directly influences the interests of Russia, Europe, and the United States. To some extent, Beijing's economic dynamism and expansion have the potential to be a win-win solution in the region. With the help of economic relations and cooperation, the CACs' foreign currency reserves have increased, their finances have become more secure, and there has been a corresponding rise in investment and development.¹⁵⁸ Not only has China benefitted from such economic cooperation, but the CACs also view increasing Chinese trade and investment as a catalyst for their growth.¹⁵⁹ Additionally, since the CACs do not have a sponsor—as the United States is for a country like South Korea—and even though they are aware of their heavy reliance on China, they try to follow a correct strategy for the benefit of their nations, on that is relatively more useful than their relations with Russia. What is more, the United States does not focus enough on Central Asia, despite the increasing influence of the rising global power of China.

¹⁵⁸ Mariani, "China's Role and Interest in Central Asia," 10.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 16.

In this context, China's authoritarian regime, domestic problems, and huge energy demand hold potential threats for the long-term stability of Central Asia, particularly in terms of the diversification theory of war. To sustain the survival of the regime, China may risk open aggression in Central Asia to divert domestic public opinion from internal matters such as corruption, separatist movements, pollution, etc., particularly under the pretext of the Uyghur question. Since the CACs are not strong enough to withstand the possibility of Chinese aggression alone, they are more likely to cooperate with or accept Chinese-run policies in Central Asia in order to achieve a win-win policy. This will gradually violate the legitimacy of the CACs in terms of adopting Chinese policies about the Uyghur population and Beijing's everlasting demand for energy in the long run. Consequently, unless the CACs take strong steps now to balance against Chinese influence by cooperating with the West, China's win-win policy in Central Asia will likely turn out to be a win-lose game in which China becomes the sole hegemon in control of all Central Asia.

III. THE INFLUENCE OF THE TURKISH REPUBLIC IN CENTRAL ASIA

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will show the influence of the Turkish Republic in Central Asia and, as a model country for the CACs, the degree of contribution of Ankara to the long-term stability of Central Asia.

Turkey's power in Central Asia is middle-tier. This means that Turkey attaches special significance to preventive diplomacy, generates important mediation efforts in an extensive geographic area, and endeavors actively for the peaceful resolution of conflicts in that region. Given the historical, ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural links, and taking into account the dynamics of existing diplomatic, economic, development, and security cooperation in Central Asia, Turkey has significant influence in Central Asia.¹⁶⁰ Also, Turkey has very good potential assets to convert to influence in the region. For example, Ankara is a dialogue partner of the SCO. As a significant member of NATO and a European Union candidate country, Turkey functions not only as a bridge between the EU and the SCO, but also between NATO and the SCO. Turkey is not only a multidimensional intersection between East and West at the global level, but also a center country and democratic model state for the CACs at the regional level. If Turkey can combine its strong natural ties to the CACs with its potential assets under a joint effort of the CACs, this will contribute to the long-term stability of Central Asia in the context of economy, development, politics, and security. Since the CACs have always been influenced and directed by external actors, to promote and maximize the development of Central Asia at the regional level, Turkey should help the CACs to act with their own will and with a joint effort.

To analyze Turkey's influence and potential role in Central Asia, first, this chapter examines Turkish relations and interactions with the CACs after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The reasons behind Turkey's unsuccessful attempt to be a model

¹⁶⁰ Wheeler, "Turkey's Role and Interest in Central Asia," 12.

country in Central Asia are identified. Second, information is provided about Turkey's and the CACs' ties within bilateral/multilateral relations and the level of their cooperation in the context of economy, security, education, and geopolitics. Third, the chapter considers how Turkey can be a model country under the joint effort of the CACs.

B. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TURKEY AND THE CACS AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION

Turkey's foreign policy burst forth in the 1990s just after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Turgut Ozal, president of Turkey between 1990 and 1993, played an important role in this political spurt as the architect of Turkey's neo-liberal economic reforms. Turkey was the first to recognize the independence of the CACs in 1991. This step was followed by strong bilateral diplomatic efforts to forge close ties. During the Cold War period, Turkey had a critical geostrategic position in the Western alliance and NATO, standing as a bulwark against Soviet aggression in the south.¹⁶¹ At end of the Cold War, Turkey got new opportunities and constraints. Following the Soviet Union's disintegration, Turkey's geostrategic value to the West was not as precise as it had been.¹⁶² Furthermore, the rejection of Turkey's request to become a full member of the European Union could be correlated, to some extent, with the uncertain/undefined role of Turkey after the Cold War. Turkey's embrace of the CACs also represented an essential psychological dimension. Turkey would prove its importance to itself and understand its own value in an active role of reshaping Central Asia. Thus, Turkey would be a rational regional actor and gain its self-confidence after the long tiring years of the Cold War. It was also anticipated that an active guidance role in Central Asia would help to refresh Turkey's strategic importance to the West and, thereby, develop its own economic and security relations.

The Soviet Union's collapse and the appearance of newly independent states in Central Asia gave remarkable opportunities to Turkey in building a new status as an

¹⁶¹ Ziya Onis, "Turkey and Post-Soviet States: Potential and Limits of Regional Power Influence," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 5, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 66, <http://www.gloria-center.org/meria/2001/06/onis.pdf>.

¹⁶² Ibid.

influential regional power. Turkey focused on ethnic, cultural, and linguistic ties with the five Central Asian states (linguistically less so with Tajikistan) to construct their economic development, political direction, and international relations. The model of Turkey as a modern, secular, Westernized, and market-oriented country was an attractive example for these states for a new start. Theoretically, the United States and Europe supported this policy out of fear of the spread of an unwanted Iranian Islamist model in Central Asia, which was a needless anxiety since Iran had substantial kinship only with Tajikistan, and then only in terms of the nearly identical Farsi and Tajiki languages. Contrary to Turkey's model, the West has never appreciated the regime of Iran. Therefore, the CACs were reluctant to accept any stronger influence of Iran. To some extent, the West's support of Turkey weakened proportionately with the emergence of the fragile influence of Iran in the region.

Turkey endeavored to construct new policies on the robust cultural and linguistic links with the CACs. In this context, the Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) was established, and the first annual summit including the presidents of Turkey and the CACs met in Ankara in October 1992.¹⁶³ Thereby, this organization represented an effort to institutionalize the relationship of Ankara with the CACs. On the other hand, in Turkey, non-governmental organizations tried to build and consolidate close cultural and economic ties with the new states of Central Asia. Turkish entrepreneurs built businesses and non-governmental organizations focused on cultural activities such as forming educational organizations to grow up the future elites, with the aim of promoting their close ties with Ankara.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Onis, "Turkey and Post-Soviet States," 66–68.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

C. THE REASONS FOR TURKEY'S FAILURE TO BE A MODEL COUNTRY FOR THE CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Turkey was a good model of secular democracy for a Muslim majority nation, which was an agreeable notion to the newly built governments of the young CACs. Ankara intended to increase its relationship with the CACs as a Turkic community under its own leadership, an idea adopted by former Turkish President Turgut Ozal. For Turkey's part, this cooperation not only would benefit Turkey economically and politically and would serve as a bridge to the Islamic post-Soviet world, but also would display Ankara's effectiveness to the West.¹⁶⁵ As for the CACs, they would develop not only with their own dynamics, but also with a supportive and helpful process under a regional teamwork. Turkey provided a good example of a democratic country as a model for the countries in the region. The CACs welcomed this useful approach that was not offending and exploiting them, which was different from the previous/current aggressive powers.

In the first several years, more than 300 agreements were signed between Turkey and the CACs.¹⁶⁶ Ankara established the TIKA under its Foreign Ministry in 1992 to bolster Turkish relations with the CACs. Thousands of students and public servants from Central Asia went to Turkey for education and training. Turkey enhanced its ties with the Turkic world with Turkic summits. Hundreds of Turkish firms came to these countries and many joint projects have been formed in different areas.¹⁶⁷ Thousands of students were granted scholarships by the Ankara. The volume of trade between the two sides reached almost \$4 billion.¹⁶⁸ On the other hand, the Turkic states offered opportunities for Turkey to reduce its energy dependence on the Middle East in terms of oil and natural gas. Turkey promised to assist the CACs to develop them economically. As a result, "the

¹⁶⁵ RAND Corp., *Fault Lines of Conflict in Central Asia and the South Caucasus*, 201.

¹⁶⁶ Gert Brojka, "Turkey in the Post Cold War Era from Kemalism to Post Kemalism in the New World Order," 9, https://www.academia.edu/2203484/TURKEY_IN_THE_POST_COLD_WAR_ERA_FROM_KEMALISM_TO_POST_KEMALISM_IN_THE_NEW_WORLD_ORDER.

¹⁶⁷ Muhittin Ataman, "Leadership Change: Özal Leadership and Restructuring in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Alternatives Journal* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 134–135, http://www.alternativesjournal.net/volume1/number1/ataman.pdf?origin=publication_detail

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

Ozal leadership considered Turkey as the “power center” for the Turkish world to be one of the “major league countries.”¹⁶⁹

After economic crises and terrorism issues in Turkey during the 1990s, the situation changed. The role of Turkey as a model and bridge country was interrupted. Aid from Turkey to Central Asia fell short of expectations, and economic cooperation remained limited. Intentions of promoting democracy and political liberalization largely failed, and Turkey accepted local regimes as they were.¹⁷⁰ Having just won independence, CACs were hesitant to embrace Ankara’s role of leadership because of larger powers, such as China, who were courting the region.¹⁷¹ Also, Turkish President Ozal’s death in 1993 contributed much to the decreasing influence of Ankara in terms of strong leadership in Central Asia. What is more, Russia found its identity in a very short time after changing from the Soviet Union, and showed its eagerness to be an active player in Central Asia. Correspondingly, the economic, political, and military organization of the Shanghai Five was established in 1996 by the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan. After the joining of Uzbekistan in 2001, it changed its name to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Since Turkmenistan declared its permanent neutrality, it did not enter this organization. Thus, China and Russia started to increase their influence after just five years from the independence of the CACs, which were mostly relying on the insufficient policies of both the West and Turkey to fill the power vacuum in Central Asia. The former dominant supremacy of the Soviet Union in Central Asia started to be mostly shared between the two nuclear powers of China and Russia, with an institutionalized organization against/alternative to NATO and the EU. Thus, Central Asia gained a potential role as a military, economic, and political frontline between the West and East in a redesigned world order.

On the other hand, misperception about the CACs’ rapid transition to democracy was a mistake of the West. The effort of the West to inject the democratic principles in the guidance of Turkey without building any institutions to help the new CACs to

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Balci, “Turkey Lowers Its Sights on Central Asian Reform,” 13.

¹⁷¹ Wheeler, “Turkey’s Role and Interest in Central Asia,” 3.

promote democratic rule backfired. What is more, SCO made the basis for CACs to sustain a similar regime of Russia or China, a kind of authoritarian administration. The transition of the CACs to democracy would bring democracy to the border of China and Russia. In addition to energy resources and trade routes in Central Asia, to some extent, China and Russia took initiative to prevent the democracies from being promoted to the East, to the very border of their motherland. Thus, economic loans, seemingly as indirect influence, from China to Central Asia encouraged and inspired the CACs to follow authoritarian regimes. After suffering the long years of the Cold War, under a closed system in terms of restriction of free communication, those countries, particularly their public, could not find a chance to learn the benefits of democratic regimes, which was not consistent with the expectation of the West. Since the cognitive awareness of the public of the CACs for democracy was not high, they could not show their expected desire for democratic regimes. Turkey and the West failed to direct the CACs into a truly democratic pathway. It was disregarded that democracy takes some time to be integrated with its values into the system of a country. The impatient unprepared action plan of redesigning Central Asia and misperception of the West for the CACs created opportunities for the influence of China and Russia in Central Asia.

The reluctance and cold approach of the West for a potential Turkic Union, or a misperception of the so-called new Ottomanism of Turkey, also caused the CACs to come closer to Russia and China.

It is wrong to fear the perspectives of building good relations between Turkey and Central Asia allegedly thinking that these relations would lead to pan-Turkism or even (more absurdly) to pan-Islamism. There are not any viable chances of creating 'pan-Turkism.' Moreover it is not only non-viable but it would be like 'pure fantasy,' since as a result of modernistic transformations of all Turkic societies experienced in the course of 20th century...¹⁷²

In addition to their lack of strong and sustainable support for Turkey's being an active player, the EU and NATO failed to envisage the future projection of Central Asia.

¹⁷² Galym Zhussipbek, "What Defines Turkey and Central Asia Relations," Washington Review, August 2013, <http://www.thewashingtonreview.org/articles/what-defines-turkey-and-central-asia-relations.html>.

As part of the West and with/without the assistance from it, Turkey was also unsuccessful in building a strong union in Central Asia under a regional institution as a unified regional power next to two nuclear powers, Russia and China. The failure of the West led to the building of the SCO, to a large extent, as an alternative to the West. Actually, given the robust ties of Turkey and the CACs, these links should necessitate and justify Turkey to build a union more than any other organization and play an active role for the overall benefit of Central Asia, and this union would be beneficial for the West in terms of their alliance with Ankara.

D. THE PROGRESS OF TURKEY'S RELATIONS WITH CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES

Central Asia is not only strategically and geopolitically crucial for providing the security and stability for the Euro-Atlantic region, but also is important with energy resources for world energy security and distribution with the gas and oil pipelines, as well as trade routes. After their independence, the CACs have made considerable advancement in numerous fields, predominantly in consolidating their sovereignty, strengthening their institutions, and stimulating the degree of integration and interaction with the international arena. Ankara was the first country to recognize the independence of the CACs. Turkey expected the CACs to build free market economies and functioning democracies. Given historical, linguistic, and cultural ties, Ankara wanted to enhance engagement with the CACs both bilaterally and multilaterally.¹⁷³ Thus, Turkey initiated the High Level Strategic Cooperation Council with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and the Cooperation Council with Tajikistan to provide a basis for developing cooperation. Turkey is very pleased with the peaceful democratic change in Kyrgyzstan and supports the launching of democratic rule in Bishkek.¹⁷⁴ The strong step of Kyrgyzstan toward democracy is very crucial for the democratization process of all Central Asia as a region. A successful democracy among the CACs would highly influence the rest of the states to pursue a similar path, which will contribute heavily to regional peace and security.

¹⁷³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, "Turkey's Relations with Central Asian Republics."

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

Correspondingly, Kazakhstan also made progress in creating a multi-party system with general elections on January 15, 2012. Ankara supports democratic advances because a democratic and stable Central Asia will not only develop the CACs but also will integrate the region with Eurasia and the rest of the world in terms of modernity.

Turkey's economic ties with the CACs have advanced swiftly, particularly in the areas of trade, transportation, and communication. Ankara assisted the CACs with loans of around 1 billion USD through Eximbank. Since the independence of the CACs, Turkey has also granted about 1 billion USD in foreign aid to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan, which corresponds to one-fourth of Ankara's overall foreign aid of for the same term. The trade of Turkey with the CACs was 6.5 billion USD in 2010, and the overall investments of Turkish companies in Central Asia surpassed 4.7 billion USD.¹⁷⁵ Turkish companies have exceeded 50 billion USD of trade volume. Two thousand Turkish firms now operate, or have operated, on the ground in Central Asia. Ankara signed multiple bilateral agreements in customs, energy transportation, tourism, and technical assistance. More than 1,000 Turkish companies attained a substantial market share in the construction, telecommunication, banking, textile, and retail sectors.¹⁷⁶ Thus, Turkey has become a significant investor in Central Asia. Ankara also endeavors to serve as a door for CACs' trade and energy transit via the TRACECA and NABUCCO cooperation network.¹⁷⁷

Export volume from Turkey to the CACs increased from 509.7 million USD in 1996 to 2,124.0 million USD in 2009. Its economic status, however, differs from country to country. Turkmenistan ranks first in the percentage of this aid received. In 2009, it imported Turkish goods for a total value of 944.9 million USD.¹⁷⁸ Turkish businessmen have high influence on transportation, construction and communication, tourism and retail trade in Turkmenistan. Over the past two decades, Turkish constructions firms

¹⁷⁵ Farrukh Suvankulov and Yunus Guc, "Who is Trading Well in Central Asia? A Gravity Analysis of Exports from the Regional Powers to the Region," *Eurasian Journal of Business and Economics* (2012), 28–29, <http://www.ejbe.org/EJBE2012Vol05No09p021SUVANKULOV-GUC.pdf>

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

finished more than 600 projects valued at 21 billion USD. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan also succeeded in attracting important sectors of Turkish businesses.

Turkey has also built up significant bonds with the CACs in terms of culture and education. The International Organization of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY) was established in 1993 in order to promote Turkic values in culture, art, language, and history. TURKSOY aims to transfer values to the younger generations and introduce them to the world. Ankara also has been running a comprehensive scholarship program, Great Student Project, for students in the CACs. There are many Turkish schools under the Ministry of Education or private organizations in the CACs. The Turkish-Kazakh International Hoca Ahmet Yesevi University functions in Turkestan, Kazakhstan, and the Turkish-Kyrgyz Manas University operates in Bishkek. Turkey initiated “The Summits of Turkic Speaking Countries’ Heads of States,” held since 1992 to enhance solidarity among the Turkic-speaking countries and to strengthen cooperation with this organization. Thanks to the Nakhichevan Treaty for the Establishment of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (Turkic Council) signed on October 3, 2009, the organization was embodied as an institution and the Secretariat of the Council was established in Istanbul.¹⁷⁹

E. WHAT KIND OF ROLES CAN TURKEY UNDERTAKE IN CENTRAL ASIA?

Following the Cold War, Turkey acted on its interest in Central Asia in order to assist those newly independent countries in their nation-building process. Due to the outcome of the Cold War, Turkey was asked by its Western allies to develop its relations with the regional countries. Because of the neutral and passive approach of the United States toward this region, the growing economic engagement and geographic position did not work in favor of Ankara.¹⁸⁰ In addition to Turkey’s emerging domestic problems just after the Cold War, such as an economic crisis and terrorism, Ankara also did not get sustainable support from the West for its policy in Central Asia. Since the terrorist attacks

¹⁷⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, “Turkey’s Relations with Central Asian Republics.”

¹⁸⁰ Wimbush, “Great Games in Central Asia,” 257.

of September 11, 2001, the changes of policy between the United States and Central Asia have caused shifts in the dynamics of the regional countries.¹⁸¹ To a large extent, the United States acts according to its own interests instead of cooperating with Turkey as an intermediary country in Central Asia.

Some countries can even build strong relationships with shared historical events such as United States and South Korea. The Turkish Republic has more commonalities with CACs than any other interstate relations. Cultural characteristics at the national level influence interstate negotiations and cultural similarities influence the attitudes of the countries toward each other along two related dimensions: affinity and trust.¹⁸² When countries have friendly and cultural-based relations, they are more likely to cooperate, settling their differences peacefully through conciliation.¹⁸³ Similarly, Turkey has strong incentives to cooperate with Central Asian countries since it has very strong ties under the sense of brotherhood. Turkey refers to these countries as brother states. According to Turkish culture, brothers do their best for each other and sacrifice their interest on behalf of their brothers. Since there are potential aggressors, Turkey is required to help and promote CACs. Turkey aims to build strong relations with CACs without selfish motives. Turkey's foreign aid and its willingness to embrace Iraq's immigrants during the Gulf War and some two million Syrian immigrants in 2014 shows that Turkey follows a humanitarian foreign policy in terms of collaboration and cooperation. Turkish development cooperation of its foreign policy can be viewed as a "type of 'trust-building measure' that serves the overriding goals of developing good relations with the neighboring regions and enabling the country to profile itself as a regional power."¹⁸⁴ In this respect, Turkey proves itself to undertake extra economic cost without disregarding realistic and pragmatist interests. In this context, most of the countries admire Turkey's

¹⁸¹ Wishnick, "Russia, China and the United States In Central Asia," 43.

¹⁸² Patrick M. Regan and Russell J. Leng, *Culture and Negotiations between Rival States* (New York: Binghamton University, 2008), 5, <http://evolution.binghamton.edu/evos/wp-content/uploads/2008/04/Regan-Leng.pdf>.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Jeannine Hausmann, *Turkey as a Donor Country and Potential Partner in Triangular Cooperation* (Bonn: Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik, 2014), 5, http://www.die-gdi.de/uploads/media/DP_14.2014.pdf.

complimentary generous aid and assistance to the foreigners who are in need of help. In 2013, Turkey ranked first with \$1.6 billion in the list of donations when compared to gross national income.¹⁸⁵ Thus, Turkey verifies its well-intentioned and friendly approach not only in the world but also in Central Asia. Therefore, for CACs, Turkey is the best model and counterpart to cooperation. As can be understood from the Turkish foreign policy of ‘Peace at home and abroad,’ Turkey wants to contribute the development of Central Asia without causing harm to any country.

Today, since Turkey gives special importance to Central Asia for being the land of its ancestors, and thanks to Ankara’s robust historical, ethnic, linguistic, religious, and cultural ties with the CACs, Turkey can play an important role in the overall development of Central Asia, with the cooperation of the CACs. First, as a good example of a secular democratic regime, Turkey can demonstrate the benefits of democracy with its institutions—acting as simply a model that the other nations can emulate if they choose. Thus, Turkey will be a bridge between the West and the CACs in terms of increasing the wealth of these countries. The positive aspects of the West can be transferred from Turkey to these countries. Second, Turkey can be a mediator to solve the current disputes in Central Asia, such as the matter of the Fergana Valley¹⁸⁶ among Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan or the potential water problems that all the CACs face.¹⁸⁷ It can also act as a balancer, with the cooperation of the CACs, against the potential aggressive influence of China and Russia or other actors. In this respect, Ankara has already proved itself to the outside World as a secure and non-interfering regional player and thus plays a teaching role not only to the CACs, but also to the powerful, and meddling external actors.¹⁸⁸ Third, Turkey can be an economic model to the CACs; thus, these states can develop on their own with cooperation and sponsorship. Fourth, parallel

¹⁸⁵ Hurriyet Daily News, “Turkey Ranks Third in International Aid Donations List,” September 2014, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-ranks-third-in-international-aid-donations-list.aspx?PageID=238&NID=71653&NewsCatID=510>.

¹⁸⁶ Stratfor, Global Intelligence Analysis, “Central Asia: The Complexities of the Fergana Valley,” 2013, <http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/central-asia-complexities-fergana-valley#axzz3BztaHzkN>.

¹⁸⁷ David Muckenhuber, “Breaking the Dam Water Politics In Central-Asia,” Global Observatory, <http://theglobalobservatory.org/analysis/436-breaking-the-dam-water-politics-in-central-asia.html>.

¹⁸⁸ Patrick Frost, “Turkey’s ‘New Policy’ in Central Asia,” Foreign Policy Association blog, June 2008, <http://foreignpolicyblogs.com/2008/06/25/turkeys-new-policy-in-central-asia/>.

to the CACs' democratization process, Turkey can help the CAC states to build their new modern armies with the cooperation of the West. Finally, Turkey can be an educational model to the CACs, which is vital to raise the next generation of these countries.

Friendly relations between Central Asian states and Turkey can be seen as 'win – win' situation for every party/ side—it is the truth which is usually overlooked. It is beneficial for Central Asian states as they can find more opportunities to increase their competitiveness, build more pluralistic and democratic societies and integrate with the outside world; it is beneficial for Turkey as it can increase the number of partners sharing some common values and find new markets for its economy. It is beneficial for Russia, as it has been seen that the friendly relations and sustainable partnership between Turkey and Central Asia tend to be rested upon inclusive identity building within which Russia as a power, civilization and culture is an indispensable component in Central Asian and Eurasian context; all in all Moscow should not 'worry' that its 'near abroad' is contested by 'pan-Turkic alien power' which represent unviable and unrealizable scenario. It is beneficial for the Western powers as they will see the Central Asian states developing to the direction of building sustainable economies and societies lucrative for pouring investments and not producing extremists and narcotics, the last is also very important for Russia and China.¹⁸⁹

F. CONCLUSION

After the independence of the CACs in the early 1990s, Turkey showed remarkable diplomatic efforts in assisting the newly independent countries to build up functioning modern states in a stabilized region, and to integrate those states into the international system. This was done under the leadership of former Turkish President Turgut Ozal. Within this framework, Turkey was the first country to recognize the independence declarations of all the CACs. Ankara started to develop relations through increasing the number of high-level visits that promised trade agreements and free capital flow to improve bilateral economic cooperation. Students from the CACs were accepted in Turkey for their education and new schools built up in Central Asia. Air transportation increased. TIKA was created to assist the CACs at an institutional level. To show its interest, Turkey allocated the majority of its overseas aid to the development of Central

¹⁸⁹ Galym Zhussipbek, "What Defines Turkey and Central Asia Relations," Washington Review, August 2013, <http://www.thewashingtonreview.org/articles/what-defines-turkey-and-central-asia-relations.html>.

Asia. Meanwhile, regular summits of the leaders of the Turkic-speaking states were organized from 1992 onward.

The death of former Turkish President Turgut Ozal—who had functioned as the prime motivator for the overall development of Central Asia—and Turkey’s economic and terrorism problems in its own southeastern region caused an interruption in the influence of Ankara in the late 1990s. External actors such as China and Russia made use of this power gap in Central Asia to increase their influence through methods such as the SCO. In the reshaped order of Central Asia, old neighbors appeared with new roles to influence the region, either with institutions or multilateral/bilateral cooperation.

Starting from the 2000s by developing its institutions with the interaction of the West, Turkey has become a more obvious international actor. With a population of almost 80 million, which is about equal to all the CACs combined, Turkey’s economic growth developed positively. Ankara enjoyed a significant GDP growth rate of 6 percent, on average, between 2002 and 2011. Correspondingly, per capita income increased to over 10,000 USD in 2011, up from 3,500 USD in 2002. The Turkish economy achieved a growth rate of 9.2 percent and 8.5 percent in 2010 and 2011, respectively. According to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, Turkey today is the 17th largest economy in the world, with a GDP of over 800 billion USD.¹⁹⁰ In addition to its economic strength, Turkey is a model country because of its geographic, religious, ethnic, cultural, and historical ties with the CACs. In this context, Turkey’s development process fits best for the CACs. Nevertheless, Turkey needs a new applicable, feasible, and realistic action plan for the long-term stability of Central Asia.

Overall, Turkey should unite its strong natural ties to the CACs with the common desire of those countries for change and development, which will make a big positive change for the long-term stability of Central Asia. Since external large players have always influenced the CACs according to their own interests and the CACs have improved themselves a lot until now, Turkey should follow the course of helping to develop Central Asia at the regional level according to its own dynamics. Functioning as

¹⁹⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, (2013), “Economic Outlook of Turkey,” <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/prospects-and-recent-developments-in-the-turkish-economy.en.mfa>.

a model country, Turkey should guide the CACs with a shared action plan of development under their own joint efforts.

IV. THE INFLUENCE OF RUSSIA, THE UNITED STATES, THE EU, INDIA, IRAN, AND PAKISTAN IN CENTRAL ASIA

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will review Russian, American, European Union, Indian, Iranian, and Pakistani political, economic, and security influences in Central Asia to make an overall judgment in Chapter V to answer whether Turkey can balance Chinese influence in Central Asia.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, 15 new states emerged. Among these, the five CACs have faced stormy challenges. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have also made considerable advances since 1991, however. They have built independent states with free governments, and generated new national traditions and social life. The CACs have built foreign relations and joined international organizations such as the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, NATO's Partnership for Peace Program, and the SCO, just to name a few. Despite economic and initial nation-building difficulties, the CACs succeeded in surviving; Central Asia, however, "remains fragile and sometimes volatile [and] requires greater attention and a more sustained focus."¹⁹¹

The Central Asia region, including the energy-rich Caspian Sea and Xinjiang, is important due to its vast economic resources and geo-strategic location.¹⁹² Central Asia is a strategic region for connecting East to West on the ground, where the legendary Silk Road has provided and still offers trade routes. At each different timeframe of history, Central Asia has earned a strategic importance. External actors have seen Central Asia as an economic and strategic window to other parts of the world, and thus this region has

¹⁹¹ Project 2049 Institute, Report of the Central Asia Study Group, "Strengthening Fragile Partnerships: An Agenda for the Future of U.S. –Central Asia Relations," Armitage International, 1, http://www.armitageinternational.com/news/documents/strengthening_fragile_relationships_central_asia_f_eigenbaum.pdf.

¹⁹² Zehra Akbar, "Central Asia: The New Great Game," Washington Review, <http://www.thewashingtonreview.org/articles/central-asia-the-new-great-game.html>.

been a conduit for trade, competition and sometimes conflict.¹⁹³ For almost the last two centuries, Central Asia has been a pawn in the “Great Game,” due to the struggle of external players to influence and balance each other in this geostrategic field. Thus, South and Central Asia have been disconnected by Great Power policies in terms of trade and culture, which caused the peoples of the region to lose their sense of commonality.¹⁹⁴ India’s colonization by Britain and Central Asia’s annexation by Russia led to dramatic changes in each region. The former shifted trade direction toward the sea and the latter almost stopped the Silk Road from existing.¹⁹⁵ Although Central Asia was mostly disregarded during the Cold War, its significance was shortly rediscovered in terms of energy, energy security and ground trade routes.¹⁹⁶ Energy resources in Central Asia make the CACs important partners for foreign powers. Today, there is another pending game between new players—mainly Russia and China but also the United States, EU, Turkey, India, Pakistan and Iran—for influence in Central Asia.¹⁹⁷ Meanwhile, the newly independent countries of Central Asia try to manage and balance the external players by building bilateral/multilateral cooperation. Since this region is open to potential aggressors and security threats such as from Al-Qaeda, internal and external players meet mostly on the security basis to maintain the stability of Central Asia in order, mostly, to guarantee access to energy. Figure 14 shows this vital region.

¹⁹³ Simbal A. Khan, “Iran’s Relations with Central Asia – A Strategic Analysis,” 46, <http://sam.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/4.-Simbal-A.-Khan.pdf>.

¹⁹⁴ FPRC Journal-10, “India and Central Asia,” 7, <http://www.fprc.in/pdf/J-10.pdf>.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Tamara Makarenko, “Central Asia: Where Power, Politics And Economics Collide,” NATO, http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2009/Asia/central_asian_geopolitics/EN/index.htm.

¹⁹⁷ Irina Sinitsina, “Economic Cooperation between Russia and Central Asian Countries: Trends and Outlook,” Working paper no. 5, 2012, 6, <http://www.ucentralasia.org/downloads/UCA-IPPA-WP5-RussiaInfluence-Eng.pdf>.



Figure 14. Central Asia.¹⁹⁸

B. THE INFLUENCE OF RUSSIA IN CENTRAL ASIA

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia—as a new country—initially was interested in Central Asia primarily for security reasons, such as securing its southern borders, denuclearization, rental of the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, sustaining its dominant stakeholder status of natural gas, and sending peacekeeping troops to the Tajik civil war in the early 1990s.¹⁹⁹

The late 1990s brought the Primakov Doctrine, which viewed Central Asia as a part of Russia’s “near-abroad” for regaining Russia’s international position by placing Central Asia at the center of influence over former-Soviet states.²⁰⁰ The framework of this policy remained vague since official discourse was mostly concentrated on building a

¹⁹⁸Jeffrey Mankoff, “The United States and Central Asia after 2014,” iv, Center for Strategic and International Studies, http://csis.org/files/publication/130122_Mankoff_USCentralAsia_Web.pdf.

¹⁹⁹ Sébastien Peyrouse, Jos Boonstra, and Marlène Laruelle, “Security and Development Approaches to Central Asia,” 6.

²⁰⁰ Anna Beitāne, “Sources of Russia’s Strategic Thinking towards Central Asia (2014),” <http://www.lai.lv/lv/blogs/sources-of-russias-strategic-thinking-towards-cent>.

Euro-Atlantic alliance.²⁰¹ Nevertheless, this strategy allowed Russia to regain strong influence in Central Asia.²⁰² Russian economic and security interests in Central Asia were redesigned and flourished in the beginning of the 2000s, focusing mainly on Kazakhstan and to a lesser extent Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.²⁰³ Moscow's objective in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan was "to gain a firm hold over the sale of highly profitable oil products," while Gazprom, a Russian company selling natural gas, undertook the exploration of Tajik gas deposits in Sargazon and Rengan, as well as in Kyrgyzstan's south.²⁰⁴

Since Central Asia lacks access to seaports, being landlocked, Russia is geographically very important for the CACs for the transportation of merchandise to nearby countries.²⁰⁵ Russia's economic commitment to Central Asia reaches into different fields such as mining, construction, military merchandise, communications, transport, and agriculture.²⁰⁶ Thus, Russia became the dominant economic player in Central Asia until the late 2000s. Nevertheless, Russia has failed to remain the number one trade partner of the Central Asian countries. China now holds this place.²⁰⁷ Russia still holds the dominant energy trade in Central Asia and mostly in Kazakhstan, however, and Moscow wants to control the Central Asian hydrocarbon resources, raw materials and assets. Therefore, Central Asia is vital for Russian interests.

There are different organizations strengthening Russia's relationship with the CACs in terms of security and economy. Four of the CACs joined the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) but Turkmenistan, the fifth one, suspended its membership and holds observer status (Table 4). In 2010, Kazakhstan entered the Customs Union (CU)

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Akbar, "Central Asia: The New Great Game."

²⁰³ Peyrouse, Boonstra, and Laruelle, "Security and Development Approaches to Central Asia," 6.

²⁰⁴ Akbar, "Central Asia: The New Great Game."

²⁰⁵ Sinitsina, "Economic Cooperation between Russia and Central Asian Countries," 6.

²⁰⁶ Craig Oliphant, "Russia's Role and Interests in Central Asia," *Saferworld*, October 2013, 3.

²⁰⁷ Baktybek Besimov and Ryskeldi Satke, "The Struggle for Central Asia: Russia vs. China," February 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/02/struggle-central-asia-russia-vs-201422585652677510.html>.

with Russia and Belarus; the three CU member states form a Common Economic Space (CES) based on the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles and open for the accession of other states. Four CA countries are currently members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO); Uzbekistan suspended its membership in June 2012 and Turkmenistan, having announced its neutrality in 1995, never joined. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan are members of the EuroAsian Economic Community (EurASEC), while Uzbekistan also suspended its membership in this organization.²⁰⁸ These bilateral/multilateral relations not only help Russia to cooperate with the CACs and to increase its influence in Central Asia, but also serve as stabilizer institutions to balance the region against the other external players.

Table 4. Participation of CACs to Organizations.²⁰⁹

	CIS	EurAsEC	CU-CES	CIS FTZ	CSTO	SCO	WTO	CAREC*
Russia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	
Kazakhstan	+	+	+	+	+	+	Request for accession-1996	+
Uzbekistan	+	Membership suspended since 2008		+	Membership suspended since 2012	+	Request for accession-1994	+
Tajikistan	+	+		+	+	+	Request for accession-2011	+
Kyrgyzstan	+	+		+	+	+	+	+
Turkmenistan	**							+

*Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC), **Associate member since 2006

²⁰⁸ Sinitsina, "Economic Cooperation between Russia and Central Asian Countries," 6.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

Since Russia is the former colonizer of Central Asia and Russian culture and language still hold sway in the area, Moscow has significant influence in Central Asia, and the CAC elites see the Russian regime as a possible model for their countries, which facilitates the role of Moscow as a leading strategic, military, and trade partner.²¹⁰ Russia also has significant soft power tools in Central Asia. First, Russian is the most spoken international language in Central Asia and has official status in three countries, in Kyrgyzstan as a bilingual language and in Tajikistan and Kazakhstan as an interethnic language.²¹¹ Second, there are significant Russian minorities in the CACs, particularly in Kazakhstan, which increases Russian interest and interaction. Third, Central Asian political and intellectual elites were mostly educated in Russia. Fourth, the CAC militaries originated from former Soviet entities, particularly in terms of education. Similarly, Russia-CACs military cooperation contains the provision of military equipment and collaboration between military-industrial organizations.²¹² Therefore, Russia has gained strong ties with the CACs, and is still vying for influence in Central Asia like the other international actors.²¹³

Today, controlling energy resources and sustaining regional security are Russia's main goals in Central Asia.²¹⁴ Russia has a significant influence in Central Asia in terms of security and economy, which is difficult for other actors such as India, Iran and Turkey to challenge in the foreseeable future.²¹⁵ Russia places high importance on maintaining political influence over the CACs through the control of resources and continuing to gain

²¹⁰ Emilian Kavalski, *The New Central Asia: The Regional Impact of International Actors*, 149, <http://books.google.com/books?hl=tr&lr=&id=nNToccp0XPIC&oi=fnd&pg=PA149&dq=russia+and+central+asia&ots=IRDSyAKkXV&sig=YMdnIFomlpWM2bx6mmhSBwXIUUo#v=onepage&q=russia%20and%20central%20asia&f=false>.

²¹¹ Marlène Laruelle and Sébastien Peyrouse, "China as a Neighbor: Central Asian Perspectives and Strategies," Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, 23, May 2009, http://www.asiacentral.es/docs/MarleneSebastien_China_CA_may2009.pdf.

²¹² Akbar, "Central Asia: The New Great Game."

²¹³ Kavalski, *The New Central Asia*, 150.

²¹⁴ Peyrouse, Boonstra, Marlène Laruelle, "Security and Development Approaches to Central Asia," 6.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

substantial transit revenues from these landlocked states.²¹⁶ Correspondingly, to balance the emergence of competing export roads from Central Asia to China, Iran and Turkey and to meet rising European energy demands, Moscow wants to sustain its influence over the CACs. Nevertheless, the geo-strategic atmosphere of Central Asia encourages new routes to disrupt the monopoly of Russia.²¹⁷

C. THE INFLUENCE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IN CENTRAL ASIA

Central Asia was a far away, low-priority region for the United States in the 1990s.²¹⁸ At the close of the Cold War, U.S. presence in Central Asia in terms of financial aid and international support showed the promise of a strong relationship. The United States established embassies in all five CAC capitals and offered billions in assistance, educated thousands of students from this region, and assisted in the founding of the American University of Central Asia in Kyrgyzstan.²¹⁹ U.S. security aid has facilitated to create militaries and found operative counter-narcotics agencies, and thus, intelligence and law enforcement support have assisted area administrations to start dealing with international terrorism and organized crime.²²⁰ Nevertheless, the CACs did not get enough help from Washington, not even as much as South Korea. Thus, the opportunities for democratization of these countries have been neutralized by Russian and Chinese authoritarian models.²²¹ The United States did not build a strong relationship with the CACs and gain a dominant influence in Central Asia, certainly not as much influence as one would expect from a superpower. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the United States increased its influence in this region mostly because of Afghanistan.²²² The

²¹⁶ Laruelle and Peyrouse, “China as a Neighbor,” 60.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 60–62.

²¹⁸ Matteo Fumagalli, “The United States and Central Asia,” in *The New Central Asia*, ed. Emilian Kavalski (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2010), 177.

²¹⁹ Project 2049 Institute, Report of the Central Asia Study Group, “Strengthening Fragile Partnerships: An Agenda for the Future of U.S. –Central Asia Relations,” 12.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Jos Boonstra, “Democracy in Central Asia: Sowing in Unfertile Field?” EUCAM Policy Brief No. 23, 2, http://www.eucentralasia.eu/uploads/tx_icticontent/PB-EUCAM-23.pdf.

²²² Fumagalli, “The United States and Central Asia,” 177–185.

United States built military bases and signed security cooperation agreements with all CACs. On the one hand, Washington has endeavored to engage the authoritarian regimes of the CACs in a regional security arrangement against terrorism, while on the other hand calling for domestic reforms in the form of democracy.²²³ The CACs viewed U.S. desire for democracy as a late interest and viewed the intention of the United States as a pretext to increase its influence in this region.²²⁴ After the Tulip Revolution and collapse of Askar Akaev's regime in Kyrgyzstan, U.S. democratization policy in this region was perceived as a threat by the current regimes of the CACs.²²⁵ Correspondingly, Uzbekistan's government evicted U.S. forces from the Karshi-Khanabad (K2) base showing that external demand for democratization would not be accepted, even at the cost of the Afghanistan-related security cooperation.²²⁶ This showed that there are other external players dominating in Central Asia. Therefore, the United States stopped demanding political reforms from CAC regimes and focused on increasing its influence on regional security and economic ties. Originally, U.S. interests stemmed from Central Asia's closeness to Russia and China, and American commitment in Central Asia mainly focused on strategic policy and was "not primarily associated with access to energy or an attempt to democratize the region, as is often alleged."²²⁷ At the regional level, the policy of the United States in Central Asia has focused on its cooperation with the CACs in order to stabilize the efforts of NATO in Afghanistan and to fight against terrorism; proliferation; and trafficking in arms, drugs, and people.²²⁸

U.S. policy objectives concerning energy resources in the CACs have supported CACs bonds with the West, encouraging U.S. private investment, promoting NATO and

²²³ Alexander Cooley, "Great Game Local Rules," in *The New Great Power Contest in Central Asia: Washington's Central Asian Detour to Afghanistan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 30.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid., 49.

²²⁶ Fumagalli, "The United States and Central Asia," 177–180.

²²⁷ Stephen Blank, "The Strategic Importance of Central Asia: An American View," 78, Strategic Studies Institute, Spring 2008, <http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/Articles/08spring/blank.pdf>.

²²⁸ Jim Nichol, "Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests," Congressional Research Service, 1–40, <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33458.pdf>.

European energy security through varied providers, helping NATO's ally Turkey, and "opposing the building of pipelines that transit energy competitor Iran or otherwise give it undue influence over the region."²²⁹ The United States works to build robust bilateral/multilateral trade and investment links with the CACs, developing Central Asian economies into growing markets for U.S. exports and services and strategic destinations for investment in fields such as oil, gas, mining, manufacturing, and food processing.²³⁰ U.S. initiatives involve efforts to increase regional integration and trade among the CACs themselves and with neighboring Afghanistan, in support of the U.S. aim of stabilizing Afghanistan's economy.²³¹

D. THE INFLUENCE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN CENTRAL ASIA

In the 1990s, the European Union was busy with different matters such as German reunification, the promotion of the Schengen agreement, the wars in Yugoslavia, adopting the Central European countries for membership, and generating new ties with Moscow; therefore, Central Asia was a second-tier issue on the EU agenda.²³² In 1994, the first European delegation—known as Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS)—was opened in Kazakhstan, and partnership and cooperation agreements were signed with the CACs in 1996 in order to offer assistance in terms of economic and commercial reforms and state building.²³³ After 9/11, the EU changed its policy toward Central Asia and attributed high importance for the regional security of this region. Consequently, in 2006, the EU adopted a new strategy focusing on human rights, democratization, good governance, rule of law and eradication of poverty in Central Asia.²³⁴ By the late 2000s, there had been a gradual increase between the relationship of the EU and the CACs.

²²⁹ Nichol, "Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests," 55.

²³⁰ Office of United States Trade Representative, "Central Asia," <http://www.ustr.gov/countries-regions/south-central-asia/central-asia>.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Peyrouse, Boonstra, and Laruelle, "Security and Development Approaches to Central Asia," 15.

²³³ Ertan Efegil, "The European Union's New Central Asian Strategy," in *The New Central Asia*, ed. Emilian Kavalski (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2010), 72.

²³⁴ Ibid.

Central Asia is vital for the EU as it tries to maintain its status as an important player in the international arena.²³⁵ At the same time, the energy resources of Central Asia are very important for the EU to break Russia's stranglehold as the EU's dominant energy supplier. The European Union's engagement with Central Asia consists of different economic dimensions such as bilateral trade, development aid, energy relationships and technical assistance. The EU faces different challenges in its commitment to the region; its aid programs remain comprehensive and affluent as compared to those of other players in Central Asia.²³⁶ Correspondingly, the EU made significant shift in its policy over Central Asia. In 2007, the EU accepted the "Strategy for a New Partnership with Central Asia" to strengthen its cooperation with the CACs. EU policy highlights seven priorities for Central Asia, and its main interests are sustaining regional stability, countering harmful spillover influence from Afghanistan, and securing energy resources (particularly gas from Turkmenistan and oil from Kazakhstan).²³⁷ EU security interest in Central Asia has been carried out under NATO, which is mostly focused on Afghanistan, securing its access of energy and encouraging the CACs to make a transition from authoritarian regimes to transparent and open governance.²³⁸ As a security institution, NATO has difficulties in convincing the autocratic regimes of the CACs to loosen their grip on power. Similarly, the EU wants to promote democratic values and human rights. Since the EU is following a strategy for securing energy resources and building up relationships with the CACs—a late initiative, compared to Russia and China—its approach for growing democratic values can often be considered a hindrance.

²³⁵ Rajeev Lala, "European Union–Central Asia Relations After the Lisbon Treaty," Academia.edu, https://www.academia.edu/1453159/European_Union_Central_Asia_relations_after_the_Lisbon_Treaty.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Peyrouse, Boonstra, and Laruelle, "Security and Development Approaches to Central Asia," 15.

²³⁸ Simon J. Smith and Emilian Kavalski, "NATO's Partnership with Central Asia: Cooperation a la Carte" in *The New Central Asia*, ed. Emilian Kavalski (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2010), 29.

E. THE INFLUENCE OF INDIA IN CENTRAL ASIA

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Indian foreign policy had conceptual tensions, strategic uncertainty, and geopolitical constraints until the country's successful nuclear tests in May 1998 caused a policy change in its dealings with Central Asia.²³⁹ India is developing its bilateral and multilateral relations with the CACs; its main interest in Central Asia is related to Afghanistan, which affects its policy on Pakistan.²⁴⁰ In 2012, New Delhi adopted a new 'Connect Central Asia' policy to build stronger political ties and strengthen strategic and security cooperation with the CACs.²⁴¹ India plans to engage in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and, to a large extent, to found a new Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement to develop economic relations with the CACs through cross-regional energy infrastructure; new flight connections; and development of the IT, banking, and pharmaceutical industries.²⁴²

Central Asia is very import for India's economy in terms of energy and energy security. India imports nearly three quarters of its oil, much of it from the volatile Middle East region; therefore, securing its access to energy and diversifying its energy sources has become a key element of Indian national security and foreign policy.²⁴³ Recently, India's state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation has acquired sizeable stakes in the Kazakh Alibekmola and Kurmangazy oilfields of the Caspian Sea.²⁴⁴ On the other hand, India has engaged in a prolonged plan regarding the 1680-km-long TAPI pipeline, which is intended to carry 30 billion cubic meters of gas from Turkmenistan via Afghanistan and Pakistan to India.²⁴⁵ Despite this, India suffers from commercial and geographic constraints that prevent it from having significant influence in Central Asia.²⁴⁶ In 2009,

²³⁹ Emilian Kavalski, "India and Central Asia: The No Influence of the 'Look North' Policy," in *The New Central Asia*, ed. Emilian Kavalski (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2010), 240.

²⁴⁰ Akbar, "Central Asia: The New Great Game."

²⁴¹ Ivan Campbell, "India's Role and Interests in Central Asia," *Saferworld*, October 2013, 1.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Campbell, "India's Role and Interests in Central Asia," 1.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Cooley, "Great Game Local Rules," 170.

India's trade with all CACs amounted to 2 percent of Russian or Chinese volumes of the same year. This shows that India cannot compete with the other major players in terms of economic influence in this region.²⁴⁷

India also attaches high importance to Central Asia in terms of religious extremism and terrorist threats. Given the transnational nature of terrorist groups, including links with the Taliban and other militant groups in neighboring countries, New Delhi is very cautious about the spillover of this danger to its territory, especially in the contested state of Kashmir.²⁴⁸ This concern is worsened by the condition in Afghanistan, which may spread to and destabilize the fragile CACs and later on counter India's interests. These security fears combine with the proliferation of drug trafficking in Central Asia. Weak border management and high levels of corruption, coupled with the failure to stop opium manufacture in Afghanistan, have made drug trafficking a tremendously profitable business.²⁴⁹ In this context, India tries to increase its influence in Central Asia in terms of security. New Delhi has sought to improve its security assets in the region, particularly through the acquisition of a foreign military outpost in Tajikistan.²⁵⁰ Nevertheless, as the big security player in the region, Russia is unwilling to let India establish a permanent military base in Tajikistan.²⁵¹ In this respect, India's own perception as a regional great power seems to be failing against the challenge of Russia and China in Central Asia.²⁵²

F. THE INFLUENCE OF IRAN IN CENTRAL ASIA

Iran is connected to the CACs by the bonds of geographical closeness, religion and, regarding Tajikistan, ethnicity. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Tehran followed a policy of three phases. First, Iran read the independence of CACs as an opportunity to provide an avenue for dissemination of Islamic principles—Iran's

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Campbell, "India's Role and Interests in Central Asia," 1.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Cooley, "Great Game Local Rules," 170–171.

²⁵² Ibid.

ideological perception of Islam—in Central Asia under the leadership of Tehran.²⁵³ Tajikistan was the only case where religious actions actually influenced the political field. Although Tehran was not involved directly in the upsurge of the Tajik Islamist movements, it had closer relations with the leading Islamic Renaissance Party. Consequently, neo-communists recaptured Tajikistan and Russia increased its influence here in terms of security, which negatively affected the democratic development of this country. Iran discovered the obvious dissimilarities in the socio-cultural and religious practices of the majority of the Central Asians, as well as political advances—particularly the eruption of the Tajik civil war and the rise of the Taliban.²⁵⁴ Iran failed to export its administrative model to the CACs because of its ideologically driven foreign policy.²⁵⁵

At the same time, in the 1990s, Europe and the United States supported Turkey as a democratic model country for the CACs instead of Iran, which also reduced the influence of Tehran and caused Iran to change its policy over Central Asia.²⁵⁶ Thus, Tehran moved to a different phase of its policy, a second stage, with a pragmatic assessment of Iran's interests in Central Asia that obviously went beyond Tajikistan.²⁵⁷ Iran focused on developing cultural ties with the CACs, such as scholarly exchanges, cooperation in education, scholarship offers, and student exchanges.²⁵⁸ In the final stage, Tehran concentrated on economic cooperation by building roads, rail, and energy pipeline networks. Thus, Iran plans to be a transit state for exports of oil and gas out of Central Asia.²⁵⁹

²⁵³ Simbal A. Khan, "Iran's Relations with Central Asia – A Strategic Analysis," 48, January 4, 2012, <http://sam.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/4.-Simbal-A.-Khan.pdf>.

²⁵⁴ Khan, "Iran's Relations with Central Asia – A Strategic Analysis," 48.

²⁵⁵ Pierre Pahlavi and Afshin Hojati, "Iran and Central Asia: The Smart Politics of Prudent Pragmatism," in *The New Central Asia*, ed. Emilian Kavalski (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2010), 234–235.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 235.

²⁵⁷ Khan, "Iran's Relations with Central Asia – A Strategic Analysis," 48.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Today, Iran is not a politically dominant player, but is an essential economic actor in Central Asia.²⁶⁰ Tehran pursues a policy based on the development of bilateral/multilateral economic and political relations with the CACs under the organizations of SCO and the Economic Cooperation Organization.²⁶¹

G. THE INFLUENCE OF PAKISTAN IN CENTRAL ASIA

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Pakistan has attached high importance to Central Asia, not only for cultural and religious commonality but also for geo-political and geo-economic interests.²⁶² In the early years of the 1990s, Pakistan had good ties with the CACs after they gained their independence; internal and external challenges in Islamabad, however, prevented progress in this regard. In contrast to the other main players in Central Asia—such as China, Russia, India, Turkey, Iran, and the United States—Pakistan’s political instability and fragile economy were the main obstacles that slowed down the pace of ties between the CACs and Islamabad, and as an external effect the unrest in Afghanistan has disturbed bilateral bonds, as well.²⁶³ In the framework of Pakistan’s bonds with the CACs, Afghanistan’s security is vital since Kabul includes the most direct access for the CACs to ports and markets in South Asia and the Persian Gulf.²⁶⁴ Afghanistan can also serve as an appropriate field for Central Asian oil and gas to South Asia and Iran. Such benefits, for both Pakistan and Central Asia, however, are viable only when secure land access is possible through Afghanistan.²⁶⁵ The events of 9/11 made important shifts both in domestic politics and inter-state relations. Pakistan has appeared as a frontline country in the war on terror. Pakistan is trying to cooperate with the CACs to sustain the regional stability between South and Central Asia and thus

²⁶⁰ Pahlavi and Hojati, “Iran and Central Asia,” 237.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 226.

²⁶² Akbar, “Central Asia: The New Great Game.”

²⁶³ Farhat Asif, “Pakistan Ties with Central Asian States Irritants and Challenges,” Pak Institute for Peace Studies, January–March 2011, 1.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

endeavor to save itself from the perception of giving support to extremist groups in Afghanistan.²⁶⁶

Central Asia is very significant for Pakistan in terms of regional security and energy access. Pakistan tries to increase its influence in the energy-rich and land-locked Central Asia to provide the shortest route for the CACs (via the port of Gwadar) to the Arabian Sea and get access to energy in this region.²⁶⁷ Since there is disorder in the Pakistani provinces of Baluchistan and FATA along the border with Afghanistan, and no shared border with any of the CACs, Pakistan faces difficulties in getting access to oil and gas from Central Asia.²⁶⁸ Pakistan and the CACs are members of the Economic Cooperation Organization—Turkey and Iran are also members—and Islamabad has observer status in the SCO.²⁶⁹ Pakistan and China have common interests regarding Central Asia, particularly in trade and energy. Beijing’s backing in creating the multi-billion-dollar Gwadar port pointed at directing trade between the eastern parts of Central Asia and Pakistan through Xinjiang.²⁷⁰ The development of the port and its associated international airport, and the formation of a “transport corridor connecting Gwadar to China’s easternmost province of Xinjiang, is a game changer for the Central Asian region.”²⁷¹ Additionally, Pakistan wants to meet its electricity needs from the abundant Kyrgyz hydroelectric power.²⁷²

Apart from economic interests, the greater driving force behind Pakistan’s efforts in Central Asia is the political and strategic benefits. Pakistan views the CACs as valuable supporters against India and also as a means of forming brotherhood in terms of

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Akbar, “Central Asia: The New Great Game.”

²⁶⁸ Asif, “Pakistan Ties with Central Asian States,” 2.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Christopher Ernest Barber, “The Pakistan-China Corridor,” *Diplomat*, February 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/02/the-pakistan-china-corridor>.

²⁷² John C. K. Daly, “Central Asia to Power Afghanistan and Pakistan with Electricity,” *Sil Road Reporters*, October 30, 2014, <http://www.silkroadreporters.com/2014/10/30/central-asia-power-afghanistan-pakistan-electricity>.

a common religion extending from Turkey to Pakistan.²⁷³ Thus, Pakistan wants to be an important regional player, develop military partners, “create religious allies and most importantly, gain leverage vis-à-vis India, especially on the Kashmir issue.”²⁷⁴

H. CONCLUSION

Today, there is a stunning new Great Game in Central Asia, a game with many players. The main difference between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ game is the involvement of these many players. The older game was ‘great’ because there were two external great powers—Britain and Russia—competing for influence in Central Asia. The new game is ‘great’ since it has active internal, external, and multilateral organizational players with constantly changing and interconnected bilateral/multilateral policies, not only in rivalry for influence in Central Asia but also power struggles among each other. The Great Game of today is mostly related to the discovery of auspicious reserves of oil and natural gas, which inspire the interests of external players because they are vital for modern life.²⁷⁵ The current standing of Central Asia is a very good example of globalization. It is the site of a competition for influence by global and regional players, in an energy-rich environment, for their own interests. The new great game is still pending and is very dynamic, much like the old one. As Lord Curzon described in his memoirs: “in Central Asia the position of affairs changes not every hour, but every minute.”²⁷⁶

Since Central Asia has serious internal problems such as corruption, poverty, etc., none of the external players has a genuine interest in physically dominating the area. Geopolitical rivalry in Central Asia appears more virtual and symbolic than real.²⁷⁷ International organizations are more important than individual players to balance the

²⁷³ Akbar, “Central Asia: The New Great Game.”

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Charlène Ancion “Central Asia and the Great Games: Different Times, the Same Game?” <http://www.scribd.com/doc/189017099/Central-Asia-and-the-Great-Games-Different-Times-the-Same-Game>.

²⁷⁶ Emilian Kavalski, “The International Politics of Fusion and Fissure in the Awkward States of Post-Soviet Central Asia,” 3, http://www.ashgate.com/pdf/SamplePages/Stable_Outside_Fragile_Inside_Ch1.pdf.

²⁷⁷ Peyrouse, Boonstra, and Laruelle, “Security and Development Approaches to Central Asia,” 23.

stability in Central Asia. Thus, the CACs have the ability and capacity to play active roles to balance the potential external aggressive actors through joining in these institutions. Participating of the CACs in the Russian-dominated CSTO, U.S.-dominated NATO's Partnership for Peace Program, or Sino-Russia-dominated SCO is a consideration of balancing major players and protecting themselves against the changing strategic environment. There is no regional organization consisting of just the CACs to pursue their own interests for the long-term stability of Central Asia. Therefore, external disputed inputs do not work in favor of the CACs. For example, "the European debt crisis limits allocations and means, while U.S.-Russia tensions over missile-defense or over the Syrian crisis may contribute to Moscow's rejection of Western-based projects in Central Asia."²⁷⁸ Thus, the CACs do not fully trust multilateral relations.

Meanwhile the competition patterns between external actors are encouraged by the local governments as they enable them to enforce multi-vector strategies by pitting these actors against each other. This results in multiple uncoordinated initiatives over which they can exert a greater control. The established elites will therefore probably regard proposals for joint strategies with suspicion. Moreover, do Europe, Russia and China want to cooperate together in the interests of the Central Asians or only to avoid patterns of competition arising amongst themselves? Concerns over competition largely arise from the energy reserves the region has to offer. None of the external actors are eager to take on direct security involvement unless its own vital territorial interests are at stake.²⁷⁹

Apart from its geopolitical importance, Central Asia is reemerging as a vital region in terms of energy resources and ground trade routes—today a new Silk Road connects East to West. Since every new game player competes for influence in Central Asia, taking its own route with bilateral/multilateral relations and under some institutions, the region is rife with interconnected and multifaceted struggles. Every player has its own cause and reason to be actively involved in Central Asia. Nevertheless, security dimension emanating from Afghanistan force all actors to meet at the same basis of energy security and regional stability in Central Asia.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Peyrouse, Boonstra, and Laruelle, "Security and Development Approaches to Central Asia," 23.

The new Great Game is reshaping Central Asia, not only in terms of political and territorial influence, but also in gaining access to the energy of this region. Given the pipeline network, Russia is getting much of the energy from Central Asia and reselling it at a good profit to Europe or using it for its own domestic needs. Moscow still enjoys its influence over the region and gains political and economic leverage, not only in Central Asia but also in Europe.²⁸⁰ In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the CACs tried to reduce Russia's firm control. Thanks to the efforts of China and some other international actors to break the monopoly of Russia in Central Asia by transporting the resources outward via different routes, alternative pipeline systems were built, and there are some still under construction.²⁸¹ For example, Kazakhstan is the leading oil producer in Central Asia with production of about 1.6 million barrels per day, and 90 percent of this amount is exported.²⁸²

As the old colonizer of the CACs, Russia continues to exert its influence in this region, politically and economically, while planning to keep its stranglehold on its backyard. Russia has a strong relationship with the CACs thanks to some influential organization such as the SCO and CSTO, as well as its cultural, ethnic and historical ties in Central Asia. Russia is very effective in Central Asia in terms of security with its forces and bases in this region. Moscow wields both hard power and soft power to protect its economic and security influence in Central Asia, which makes it an important leading competitor against China.

The United States has not only focused on developing bilateral ties with the CACs, but also built cooperation with the U.S. and NATO stabilization struggles in Afghanistan and their efforts to combat terrorism, proliferation, and trafficking in arms, drugs, and persons. U.S. policy has mostly focused on Afghanistan and regional security in Central Asia. At the same time, the United States wants the CACs to adopt liberal democratic values and free market systems. The EU has, since 2007, substantially

²⁸⁰ Michael Romanowski, "Central Asia's Energy Rush," *Diplomat*, July 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/07/central-asias-energy-rush>.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

²⁸² *Ibid.*

increased its activity and presence in Central Asia in the context of security, access to energy resources in the region and development interests. The EU focuses on democratic values and human rights, which is seen by Russia and China as interference in the CACs' internal affairs or as tactics to increase their own influence.²⁸³

Iran is a middle-tier power in Central Asia. Tehran tries to economically influence this region with its lucrative trade and pipeline routes to the Indian Ocean, which are attractive to the CACs. Since Europe and the United States do not approve of Iran's system of government, Tehran's regime is the main obstacle to increasing its political influence in Central Asia.²⁸⁴ Pakistan strives to advance its position in the New Great Game to realize its energy and trade needs, while also preserving its political and regional importance, particularly against its rival India. India vies for influence in the region in terms of energy and security, but Chinese and Russian influence outweighs New Delhi's effect in Central Asia. India attaches high importance to regional stability in terms of the spillover of terrorists/radicals from Afghanistan to its territories and losing relative power in Central Asia in comparison to Pakistan.

²⁸³ Peyrouse, Boonstra and Laruelle, "Security and Development Approaches to Central Asia," 23.

²⁸⁴ Akbar, "Central Asia: The New Great Game."

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V. CONCLUSION

Today there is a dynamic new ‘Great Game’ in Central Asia with the engagement of multiple players. The main difference between the ‘old’ and ‘new’ game is the interests of the players involved in the game. The original game was ‘great’ because it involved only Britain and Russia competing for influence in Central Asia. The new game is ‘great’ since it has several active internal, external, and multilateral organizational players with ever changing and interconnected bilateral/multilateral policies in rivalry for influence in Central Asia. In addition to Central Asia’s geopolitical importance, the region’s oil and natural gas reserves are at stake in the current great game. On the other hand, their indispensable need for energy makes the new players cooperate in order to sustain the security of Central Asia.

The current standing of Central Asia is a good example of globalization. It is the space for the competition among global and regional players to gain influence in energy-rich Central Asia for their own interests. The new great game is still pending and is just as vigorous as the old one. As Lord Curzon described in his memoirs “in Central Asia the position of affairs changes not every hour, but every minute.”²⁸⁵

Central Asia is reemerging as a vital region in terms of energy resources and ground trade routes—today a new Silk Road connects East to West. Since every new player competes for influence in Central Asia, taking its own route with bilateral/multilateral relations and under some institutions, there are interconnected and multifaceted struggles in Central Asia. The new game is reshaping Central Asia not only in terms of political and territorial influence, but also in gaining access to energy of this region. Given a vast pipeline network, Russia is getting much of the energy from Central Asia and reselling it at a good profit to Europe or using it for its own domestic needs. To break down the monopoly of Russia in Central Asia for transporting the resources outward with different routes, alternative pipeline systems have been built, and there are

²⁸⁵ Emilian Kavalski, “The International Politics of Fusion and Fissure in the Awkward States of Post-Soviet Central Asia,” 3, http://www.ashgate.com/pdf/SamplePages/Stable_Outside_Fragile_Inside_Ch1.pdf.

some still under construction through the efforts of China and some other international actors. Nevertheless, Moscow still enjoys its influence over the region and is gaining political and economic leverage not only in Central Asia but also in Europe. Russia has a strong relationship with CACs, as the old regional colonizer and thanks to some influential organizations, such as SCO, CSTO, and its cultural, ethnic, and historical ties in Central Asia. Russia is very effective in Central Asia particularly in terms of security with its forces and bases in this region. Moscow has both hard power and soft power instruments to protect its economic and security influence in Central Asia, which makes it an important leading competitor against China.

As for other players, the United States has not only focused on developing bilateral ties with the CACs but also built cooperation with NATO stabilization scheme in Afghanistan and their struggles to combat terrorism, proliferation, and trafficking in persons, arms, and drugs. U.S. policy has mostly focused on Afghanistan and regional security in Central Asia. At the same time, the United States wants CACs to adopt liberal democratic values and free market systems. The EU has significantly increased its activity and presence in Central Asia in the context of security, access to energy resources in the region, and development interests since 2007. The EU focuses on democratic principles and human rights, which is viewed by Russia and China as interference in CACs' internal affairs or as policies to increase their own influence. Iran is a middle-tier power in Central Asia. Tehran tries to economically influence this region with its trade routes, which attract the CACs for lucrative trading and pipeline options available through Iran. Pakistan strives to advance its position as well to satisfy its energy and trade needs, while also sustaining its political and regional importance, especially against its rival India. Similarly, India is vying for influence in the region in terms of energy and security basis; however, Chinese and Russian influences outweigh New Delhi's effect in Central Asia. Yet India attaches high importance to regional stability in terms of spill over of terrorists/ radicals from Afghanistan to its territories and fears losing relativist power in Central Asia against Pakistan. The different interests of multiple players in Central Asia have formed a complicated and malleable environment with multiple inputs. Among the all players, China clearly comes to the forefront.

China is a dominant player in Central Asia in political, economic, security, and energy fields, and China's overall influence is progressively promoting it as a greater power in this region. The economic influence of China's in Central Asia is dominant in each of the five Central Asian countries for which China has become a major economic partner through natural resource extraction projects, investments in infrastructure, low interest loans, and foreign aid. Central Asia is important to China for a number of critical reasons. Today, 85 percent of China's trade and 80 percent of its energy imports are seaborne, which makes China perilously dependent on the safety and security of sea-lanes. China's attempts to revive the Silk Road can be viewed in terms of it providing China an alternative trade route to reduce its heavy dependency on the sea-lanes. Central Asia's energy resources and alternative trade routes also provide access to the West and lead China to engage heavily in the region. Energy and regional security are the heart of China's interests in Central Asia. Beijing controls around 20 percent of Kazakhstan's oil production and imports more than half of its gas from Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. It is estimated that if the Chinese expansion into the region continues at the current pace, Beijing will be importing half of the region's gas by 2020. Also, as a rising global player, China is showing its power with military exercises under the SCO, and is thereby consolidating its economic influence in Central Asia by building stronger economic bilateral and multilateral relations with each country in the region.

At face value, China's engagement is a win-win situation in which Beijing provides necessary capital and the CACs satisfy China's enormous energy thirst; however, if the CACs are not prudent, they could find that they have escaped the grip of one great power, Russia, only to replace it with another. Since China is a rising power in need of vast energy resources, it narrowly focuses on supplying its energy demand and disregards the CACs' need for development. Currently, Central Asia does not have a framework for regional cooperation that can be used to increase these states' leverage when dealing with the rising power. Since the Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan economies mostly depend on resource exports, they are overwhelmed by externally invested infrastructure, corruption, poverty, and inequality. In addition to having a neighbor border with China, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are not hydrocarbon-rich

countries. However, they have enough water resources to turn them into economic benefits, which may cause a regional water shortage. Furthermore, CACs do not have viable tax systems, a situation which has negative effects on governmental representation, and thus democratic reforms have been stalled or reversed, except in Kyrgyzstan. Currently, economic gains from energy resources play an illusionary role to ensure survival of the authoritarian regimes, but they are endangering political security and regional stability in the long term. The increasingly disputed distribution of wealth and power in Central Asia is prone to trigger social tensions. As a consequence, China is able to pressure these governments into accepting its increased involvement in these countries on its own terms.

Since Central Asia has serious internal problems such as corruption, poverty, water shortages, etc., none of the external players has a genuine interest in dominating Central Asia. Geopolitical rivalry in Central Asia appears more virtual and symbolic than real. Currently, international organizations are more important than individual players to balance the stability in Central Asia. Thus, CACs have the ability and capacity to play some active roles to balance the potential external aggressive actors through joining in these institutions. The participation of CACs in the Russian-dominated CSTO, the U.S.-dominated NATO Partnership for Peace Program, or the Sino-Russia-dominated SCO is a consideration for balancing major players and for protecting CACs in the changing strategic environment. However, there is no regional organization consisting of only the CACs to pursue their own interests in the long-term stability of Central Asia. Therefore, externally disputed inputs do not work in favor of CACs. With the help of economic relations and cooperation of China, CACs' foreign currency reserves have increased, their finances have become more secure, and there has been a corresponding rise in investment and development. Not only has China benefited from such economic cooperation, but CACs also view increasing Chinese trade and investments as a catalyst for their growth. Additionally, since CACs do not have a sponsor—as the United States is for a country like South Korea—and even though they are aware of their heavy reliance on China, they try to follow a correct strategy for the benefit of their nations, which is relatively more useful than their relations with Russia. What is more, the United States

does not focus enough on Central Asia, despite the increasing influence of China, a rising global power. Correspondingly, Central Asia remains fragile and requires greater attention and a more sustained focus. Unless transparent political reforms are undertaken, CACs' energy reserves may become a 'resource curse' and some of these countries risk becoming a 'rentier state' due to the heavy influence of external powers, particularly China.

To diversify its energy suppliers, and to keep stability and security in its Xinjiang region, China's economic engagement with Central Asia has triggered the 'New Great Game,' which directly influences the interests of other players. China's domestic policy regarding XUAR informs Beijing's overall strategy in Central Asia. Prominent Kazakhstani sinologist Konstantin Syroyezhkin says that China views Central Asia as a strategic rear, since the problems that take place in the region have significant impact on China's *Achilles' heel*: Xinjiang.²⁸⁶ As a rising global power, China's approach towards its Muslim minority in the XUAR influences its overall policy towards the Muslim world, which is important for China's acceptance in the international arena as a superpower, and in terms of competition with the United States and gaining the sympathy of Muslim nations. Therefore, China's influence in Central Asia is interconnected with its domestic policy and foreign policy. Since the XUAR is vulnerable to separatist movements and ethnic conflict, XUAR is a key area for Beijing to build and consolidate its foreign policy in Central Asia; similarly, Central Asia is a key area for China to enact an attractive performance to the overall Muslim world and beyond. Consequently, Beijing's interests in Central Asia are symbolic of and have important implications for its desire to be a hegemon in the region in the long run.

To balance China's current heavy influence and its potential aggression in the long run for the stability of Central Asia, the Turkish Republic holds a critical position. Turkey not only has an important role in its strong ties with CACs but also in its ties with Uyghur population in terms of ethnicity, language, history, and religion. This means

²⁸⁶ Malika Tukmadiyeva, "Xinjiang in China's Foreign Policy toward Central Asia," *Quarterly Journal* 12, no. 3, (2013): 87–108, <http://connections-qj.org/article/xinjiang-chinas-foreign-policy-toward-central-asia>.

Turkey attributes special significance to preventive diplomacy, generates large mediation efforts in a vast geographical area, and endeavors actively for the peaceful resolution of conflicts in that region. Apart from historical and cultural links, and taking into account the dynamics of existing diplomatic, economic, development, and security cooperation in Central Asia, Turkey has significant influence in Central Asia. Also, Turkey has very good potential assets to turn into influence in the region. For example, Ankara is a dialogue partner of the SCO. Moreover, as a NATO member and an EU candidate country, Turkey acts not only as a bridge between the EU and the SCO, but also between NATO and the SCO. Turkey is a 'center' country between East and West and a secular democratic model state for the CACs. Turkey is a model country because of its geographic, religious, ethnical, cultural, and historic ties with the CACs. In this context, Turkey's development process fits best for the CACs with a feasible and realistic action plan for the long-term stability of Central Asia.

Turkey should bring together its strong natural ties to the CACs with its potential assets under a common desire of CACs, which will make a significant and positive change for the long-term stability of Central Asia. Since external large players have always influenced CACs according to their own interests and CACs have improved themselves considerably until now, to develop Central Asia at regional level with its own dynamics, Turkey, as a model country, should guide CACs with a shared action plan of development under the joint effort of CACs. Turkey wants to promote cooperation with the CACs for the long-term stability of Central Asia. Turkey feels a responsibility for the CACs since it has very strong ties as part of a brotherhood. Turkey usually sees these countries as brother states. According to Turkish culture, brothers do their best for each other and sacrifice their own interest on behalf of their brothers. Since there are potential aggressors, Turkey is required to help and promote CACs. Turkey aims to build strong relations with CACs with no selfish motives. Turkey's foreign aid and its willingness to embrace Iraq's immigrants during the Gulf War and some two million Syrian immigrants in 2014 shows that Turkey follows a very humanitarian foreign policy in terms of collaboration and cooperation. In this respect, Turkey proves itself to undertake extra economical cost even disregarding realistic and pragmatist interests. In this context, most

of the countries admire Turkey's complimentary generous aid and assistance to foreigners who are in need of help. In 2013, Turkey ranked first with \$1.6 billion in the list of donations when compared to gross national income. Thus, Turkey verifies its well-intentioned and friendly approach throughout the world as well as in Central Asia. This policy does not include any aggressive agenda like that of other external players. Therefore, for the CACs, Turkey is the best model and counterpart with which to cooperate. As can be understood from the Turkish foreign policy of 'peace at home and abroad,' Turkey wants to contribute to the development of Central Asia without causing harm to any country.

Today, since Turkey gives special importance to the Central Asia region for being the land of its ancestors, and thanks to Ankara's robust ties with the CACs, in terms of history, ethnicity, language, religion, and culture, Turkey can play an important role for the overall development of Central Asia with the cooperation of CACs. First, as a good example of secular democratic regime, Turkey can prove the benefits of democracy with its institutions just representing its model to CACs—without forcing them but letting them see the potential in adopting the institutions of democracy. Thus, Turkey will bridge the West and CACs in terms of increasing the wealth of these countries. The positives of the West can be transferred from Turkey to these countries. Second, Turkey can be a mediator to solve the current disputes in the Central Asia, such as the matter of the Fergana Valley among Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, the potential water problem in the Central Asia, or as a balance in the cooperation of CACs against the potential aggressive influence of China and Russia or other actors. Third, Turkey can be an economic model to CACs; thus, these states can develop on their own with cooperation but a sponsor. Fourth, parallel to the CACs' democratization process, Turkey can help CAC states to build their new modern armies with the cooperation of the West. Finally, Turkey can be an educative model to CACs, which is vital to bringing up the next generation of these countries.

Overall, China's authoritarian regime, domestic problems, and huge energy demands hold potential threats for the long-term stability of Central Asia, particularly in terms of the Diversification Theory of War. To sustain the survival of the regime, Central

Asia is open to the risk of aggression from China, which may seek to divert public attention from its internal matters such as corruption, separatist movements, pollution, and particularly the Uyghur question. Since the CACs are not strong enough to withstand the possibility of Chinese aggression alone, they are more likely to cooperate or accept Chinese-run policies in Central Asia in order to achieve a win-win policy. Ultimately, though, this will gradually violate the legitimacy of the CACs in terms of adopting Chinese policies in regard to the Uyghur population and Beijing's unending demand for energy. China's win-win policy will likely turn out to be a win-lose game, in which China becomes the sole hegemon in control of all Central Asia. Therefore, CACs should act as a union and implement strong reforms to balance Chinese influence by cooperating with West.

Turkey can balance China's current heavy influence and potential long-term aggression in Central Asia with the joint will and cooperation of the CACs, drawing on their strong ties. CACs' standpoint is the key point for realizing Turkey's balancing role against China. The China-led SCO is deeply influential in Central Asia in terms of security and economy. To mitigate China's influence in Central Asia, as a model country, Turkey should encourage the CACs to build a regional economic and security organization, which should include only them and run under CACs' leadership to collaborate for the growth of Central Asia and work for their own interest. Joint cooperation would help address pressing issues like water shortages, assist with the region's development, and overall, foster long-term stability. Using its stronger ties under Social Constructivism, Turkey can play a mediator and unifier role to build self-confidence at the national and regional level, without asking for help from a sponsor, China, to survive. Since Turkey is a member state of NATO, a security organization including Turkey and the CACs will also shield and secure the CACs. At the same time, it will neutralize China's potential aggression in the long run. Similarly, Turkey's joining the SCO will contribute much to protect the CACs' rights and disrupt China's one-sided policy. Therefore, CACs should support Turkey's joining the SCO. In this respect, more interaction with Turkey will enable the CACs to perceive the benefits of democracy, and this will encourage them to move in the direction of democracy. In this respect,

Kyrgyzstan's experience with democratization can also be a catalyst and provide a contagious effect for the all CACs, which will gain the support of West.

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