

Beyond the Battle of Talas: China's Re-emergence in Central Asia¹

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In October 2002, China held its first military exercise in decades with another nation: the Central Asian republic of Kyrgyzstan. Aimed at training border forces on both sides to respond to a terrorist insurgency, this event highlighted the growing importance of Central Asia to China. Moreover, this exercise took place with a country that already had American and Russian forces deployed just outside of the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek. Today U.S.-led counterterrorism coalition forces are located at Manas Airbase, and the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Rapid Deployment Forces (RDF) are at Kant Airbase. The presence in one Central Asian nation of Chinese, Russian, and U.S. military and security forces underscores the convergence of Great Power interests in Central Asia.

While Russia has maintained a strong presence in the region for more than a century, China and the United States are relative newcomers. Over the past 12 years, Central Asia has moved from a strategic to a vital interest of the United States, particularly given the events of September 11, 2001 and subsequent operations in the region. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, the newly independent states of Central Asia—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—have become increasingly important on the global strategic landscape. In the wake of World Trade Center and Pentagon terrorist attacks against the United States, the countries of Central Asia have become integral allies in the war against terrorism with ongoing operations in Afghanistan and throughout Central Asia to stabilize the region and clean up the remnants of al Qaeda and other hostile groups.

While U.S. and Russian involvement in Central Asia is not surprising, one of the more intriguing developments in the region over the past decade has been China's diplomacy. China's interest in building relations with Central Asia is not startling, given the country's long history in the region dating back to the foundations of the "Silk Road." Included in this history are such revolutionary events as the Battle of Talas in 751 and the Chinese conquest of Xinjiang beginning in 1757.² The agility and creativity China has exercised in orchestrating its "re"-emergence has taken many by surprise though. China has moved rapidly from the difficult task of delineating and disarming its borders with Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan to building a multilateral organization and growing economic and security ties, all while working to alleviate traditional suspicions among Central Asian states about the true intentions of its government.

The prominence of China in Central Asia will grow over the next decade, particularly if the Russian position continues to wane and the strategic attention of the United States is drawn elsewhere. On the basis of geography and economic realities alone, China appears well placed to expand its influence in the region over the long run. Central Asian states will continue to seek robust engagement with China as their transportation infrastructure and developing economies become more intertwined. China likely will continue to exercise a light touch with its diplomacy to assure stable, productive relations along its interior frontiers, while dispelling fears that it is seeking regional hegemony.

Over the near- to medium-term, increasing activity by China in Central Asia does not present a pressing challenge to American interests in the region. Beijing appears to be attuned to U.S. sensitivities in this region in the post-September 11 environment and likely will try to avoid perceptions of a "rising China" as a regional hegemon. Instead, Beijing will seek a productive and cooperative relationship with Washington in this part of the world, as elsewhere around its periphery. At present the United States and China share similar goals in Central Asia, particularly with regard to combating terrorist activity emanating from the region. Even as the United States has moved counterterrorism forces close to China's border—a fact that has not altered Beijing's overall Central Asia policy—China has responded with restraint, seeing the current circumstances as an opportunity to improve its overall relationship with the United States. Beijing recognizes that its national priorities require benign engagement in Central Asia and will eschew balance-of-power games.

However, looking further ahead, Washington and Beijing could find themselves competing for influence in this region, as their regional priori-

ties move beyond immediate security concerns to encompass such fundamental questions as Great Power influence, political change, and reform in Central Asia, as well as economic development and energy extraction. Moreover, China maintains a long-standing concern with “strategic encirclement” by the United States, and Washington remains wary of China’s long-term rise and its implications for U.S. interests.

China’s emergence in Central Asia has implications that go beyond bilateral U.S.-China relations. How the outside powers coordinate their policies in Central Asia and whether there is a common agreement as to the best method to combat regional security issues, which extend beyond terrorism to such factors as drug trafficking, political unrest, HIV/AIDS, and border security, will be a central determinant for the future of diplomatic relations between the United States, China and Russia, as well as the stability of the region. In addition, China’s continued emergence in Central Asia will impact the ongoing efforts to rebuild Afghanistan; the success of Partnership for Peace (PfP) and the role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the region; the development and export of Caspian energy resources; and the future of U.S. relations with the countries of the region.

Overall, China, aided by the convergence of vital interest with Russia and the United States, has been extremely pragmatic in its approach to Central Asia. Over the next decade, it can be expected that China’s influence in Central Asia will rise. This does not have to be a threat to the United States’ global position, but it is critical to recognize China’s interests and priorities now, in order to prepare for such an eventuality, and begin to initiate policies that will decrease future tension, before they adversely affect Sino-U.S. and Sino-Russian relations.

China’s Interests and Policies in Central Asia

Understanding the immediate and long-term goals of China in Central Asia is the key to understanding its actions and intentions there, as well as how it plans to interact in the region with Russia and the United States. China has four principal sets of interests and policies in the region. First, China’s strategic and diplomatic goals in Central Asia, and how they play out vis-à-vis Sino-U.S. and Sino-Russian relations, are key aspects in China’s overall foreign policy. Second, and most pressing, China’s interests in Central Asia revolve around issues of national security, specifically the cutting of external support for separatists in Xinjiang, and ensuring radical forces in Central Asia do not destabilize friendly governments in the region. A third key interest for China has been the demarcation, demili-

tarization, and stabilization of its borders with Central Asian nations, a goal that has been largely achieved, but will remain important to Beijing in the years ahead. Finally, Chinese economic and trade interests in the region, including the development of energy resources, are of growing importance.

Strategic Positioning

In its relations with Central Asia, China seeks to achieve key strategic and diplomatic interests on three fronts. First, at the broadest level, China's approach to Central Asia helps promote its overall diplomatic strategy of establishing a more peaceful and constructive external environment, while fostering an image of China as a responsible power. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)³ is a concrete manifestation of this overall foreign policy effort, giving substance to China's widely-touted "new security concept" and its emphasis on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.⁴ The SCO also assists China in promoting other key principles of its foreign policy. For example, it provides Beijing an opportunity to demonstrate the value of a multilateral, consultative process versus unilateral or alliance-based approaches to regional security. The SCO also provides a prominent platform from which Beijing can voice, and in some cases act, on foreign policy on a range of issues, such as opposition to the "three evils" of terrorism, separatism and extremism. Moreover, in establishing and shaping the agenda for the SCO, Beijing has demonstrated its regional leadership and determination to contribute constructively to alleviating tensions and promoting mutual benefit.

Second, China's relations with Central Asia help Beijing meet broader strategic and diplomatic interests such as establishing stable and productive relationships with foreign partners and especially those on its closest periphery, so that it can focus on pressing domestic and external challenges elsewhere. The specifics of China's bilateral relations with Central Asian states will be discussed shortly; however, by and large Beijing's approach to the region has succeeded in establishing a stable and productive security environment, as well as political and economic ties that are likely to endure.

Third, China's policies in Central Asia assist Beijing in managing its bilateral relationships with the other two major powers in the region, Russia and the United States. On one hand, China seeks to use common interests in Central Asia to strengthen its relationship with Russia, the traditional "big brother" to the region, and foster a strategic environment that matches both their worldviews. On the other hand, China's bonds

with Central Asia provide a certain strategic leverage in dealing with the U.S. presence in the region. As to Russia-China relations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization represents both the cooperative and competitive nature of that relationship. The advent of the SCO demonstrated Russian self-understanding that it can no longer single-handedly maintain Central Asian stability and that China has a positive role to play in the region. It also provides Russia a mechanism by which to monitor and restrain Chinese activity in Central Asia. In addition, SCO-related security activities may give China the opportunity to provide a potential alternative to the Russian dominated Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which serves as the collective defense arm for several of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).⁵

China also carries out its policies in Central Asia with an eye on managing and influencing Sino-U.S. relations. Beijing's concerns over a growing American presence in Central Asia—beginning with NATO PfP initiatives in the early-1990s, the 1997 U.S.-led CENTRAZBAT military exercises in the region (which transported elements of the 82nd Airborne Division non-stop from Ft. Bragg, North Carolina to the middle of Kazakhstan), and the post-September 11 U.S. deployments to Central Asia, which now include a military presence in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan—underscore its longer-term interests in establishing stronger ties with its Central Asian neighbors and countering a potentially antagonistic American presence on China's western doorstep. However, in the post-September 11 environment, Beijing's tactics have changed. Throughout the late 1990s and prior to the fall of 2001, China often would beat the "anti-hegemon drum" within the SCO, without taking on the United States directly. By using the SCO to call for a "new security concept" and a more just and fair international order, Beijing held up its foreign and security policy as a preferable alternative to the U.S.-led security order. Today, however, China has toned down this rhetoric in general, and within the SCO in particular, as it seeks a "constructive and cooperative" relationship with the United States.

By and large, Beijing has been successful in leveraging its relations in Central Asia and within the SCO to achieve these three key strategic and diplomatic interests. However, Beijing's interests and policies in Central Asia still face challenges. First, to date, the SCO has been mostly a "talking shop," with few substantive mechanisms putting words into practice. That may change since the SCO has become a "full-fledged" international organization in 2004, including a secretariat in Beijing, a budgetary mechanism, and an operating counterterrorism center in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.⁶

Second, it should be noted that China has not entirely given up all of its heavy-handed ways and has used its size, power, and economic might to gain advantage in negotiations, particularly in discussions over border demarcation and security assistance to monitor the Uyghur diaspora in Central Asia. Central Asians continue to harbor concerns as to China's long-range intentions in the region, which may ultimately limit Beijing's room to maneuver. Most important, though, is the understanding that while China may offer great potential for economic and security cooperation in Central Asia, the United States and Russia will continue to offer more in the way of concrete security and economic benefits over the near- to medium-term.

National Security

While China's broad strategic and diplomatic interests provide longer-term direction to its Central Asian policies, national security concerns present the most pressing and immediate factors shaping China's approach in the region. These challenges include what Beijing terms "the three evils" of terrorism, separatism and extremism, and involve developments within and beyond Chinese borders. These national security concerns include separatist-minded Uyghur groups in China's Xinjiang province, instability arising in Central Asian states, and elicit transborder activities, such as trafficking in drugs, guns and people. By strengthening its relationships with the Central Asian states and within the SCO, Beijing hopes to combat these pressing problems.

China's northwestern province of Xinjiang, known officially as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, presents a unique problem for Beijing.⁷ It is a province of roughly 12 million Uyghurs, a predominantly Muslim Turkic people, who were conquered by China in the mid-eighteenth century but not brought under full Chinese dominion until the Communists came to power in 1949. Over the last 50 years, China has exercised a policy of internal colonization, manifested in a three-pronged approach. China exercises political control under the nominal title of autonomy by tightly controlling many elements of politically active or organized civil society, especially religion. It supports investment, development, and Han migration to Xinjiang in order to both serve the needs of the entire nation (particularly with its large energy reserves)⁸ and strengthen the bonds between Xinjiang and the rest of China. It also exerts total control on the region by the constant presence and use of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), People's Armed Police (PAP), and the paramilitary Xinjiang Production and Construction Corp (XPCC), or Bingtuan. For their part, the

Uyghur people have not welcomed Han rule of Xinjiang and many would like to see an end to Beijing control or, at the very least, a greater measure of autonomy in their own affairs. While there is no unified Uyghur resistance movement, several small groups do exist, though coordination is poor. Still, Uyghur terrorists do, in fact, pose a legitimate security threat to the Chinese government.⁹

The central fear of Beijing regarding the Uyghur resistance is the organizing ability of Islam, and mosques in particular. This fear underscores the lengths China has gone to prevent Muslim community groups from interacting with each other and operating beyond the most local level. Islam in Xinjiang, though much less conservative than that practiced in the Middle East, is still the biggest threat for China's control of the region. China's nightmare—one actually shared by many Uyghur leaders—is that radical Islamic groups, such as those who moved from the Middle East to Central Asia throughout the 1990s, will infiltrate Xinjiang and provide aid to the Uyghurs. Thus China's primary goal in Central Asia is to cut off external support to its own internal problem.

To this end, China has sought common cause with Central Asian governments to counter Uyghur separatism and terrorist threats. The Central Asian states have large Uyghur populations of their own, the vast majority of whom are relatively peaceful and productive members of society. However, some groups maintain ties to militant Uyghurs in Xinjiang and to Pan-Turkic or Pan-Islamic radicals operating throughout Central Asia, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT), though the full nature of these ties is still unclear. China also is interested in ensuring these Pan-Turkic or Pan-Islamic groups do not destabilize the leadership of Central Asian states, and, in doing so, threaten Chinese interests in the region. If these nations cannot maintain their own sovereignty, the spread of Islamic fundamentalism, refugees, drugs, and terrorism would be devastating for the region.

The threat of Islamic radicals and militants is thought to be pervasive in the region, despite the widespread practice of more moderate and liberal forms of Islam throughout Central Asia. Though U.S. forces have dispersed al Qaeda and Taliban forces, many elements of these groups remain and are reconstituting. Moreover, recent reports indicate that Turkic groups, such as the IMU and HT, are gaining new strength across Central Asia. HT, an ostensibly non-violent political group that seeks to establish a theocratic caliphate across the Muslim world, has several thousand members throughout Central Asia, where it is proscribed by the ruling regimes, as well as in Russia and Europe. While there is no evidence that HT has

committed any terrorist activities, it is supportive of these activities and has reportedly agreed to be a partner with the IMU if either came to power in Uzbekistan.¹⁰ The goal of the IMU, based primarily in the Ferghana Valley, is the overthrow of the Uzbek government, though it is not as radical in its practice of Islam as HT. The IMU, which launched insurgencies against the Karimov regime in 1999 and 2000, has taken on a much stronger pan-Turkic identity, and has increased its operations in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, including a bombing in Bishkek on May 24, 2003, that killed eight and injured more than 20. The IMU has also recently turned its attention against Western targets, such as U.S. government installations and travelers.¹¹

Of particular significance to China have been reports that the IMU, al Qaeda, and other radical groups have ties to Uyghur separatists, including the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM). ETIM recently was placed on the U.S. Department of State Foreign Terrorist Organization list, as well as on the UN terrorist organization list. Although ETIM primarily operates in Central Asia, it appears that the IMU also has ties to some groups within Xinjiang itself. Moreover, between 300 and 700 Uyghurs were detained in Afghanistan during the U.S.-led war and occupation to oust the Taliban regime, some of whom were transported to Guantanamo Bay for further questioning.¹² This should not be seen as surprising, or as an Uyghur affinity for the politics of al Qaeda, but as the result of Chinese policies that leave little opportunity for peaceful resistance in Xinjiang, and diplomacy that has cut off support for the Uyghurs in neighboring Central Asia.

To stop cross-border cooperation between the Uyghurs in Xinjiang and those outside the country, as well as between pan-Turkic or pan-Islamic groups in Central Asia, China has developed bilateral and multilateral approaches to combating these terrorist threats, aimed to bolster both the Central Asian regimes and Beijing's rule in Xinjiang. Through the SCO, China has pushed for the establishment of a counterterrorism center in Tashkent. It is unclear whether the center will be primarily an information exchange hub such as Interpol, or if it will have some sort of rapid response mechanism. Since the 1999 Bishkek summit when first proposed, the idea of using the SCO to fight terrorism and other regional security threats has become a centerpiece of the organization, and the most salient factor in building practical cooperation and moving the SCO beyond being a discussion forum. The SCO also has announced new initiatives to address security issues beyond terrorism. Plans are underway to cooperate on emergency response activities, drug trafficking, and law enforcement.

Perhaps most significantly, the nations of the SCO, except Uzbekistan as of now, hosted a major, multi-day exercise in early August 2003 simulating responses to various counterterrorism scenarios in Kazakhstan and China. This exercise, held in eastern Kazakhstan and Xinjiang, included over 1000 troops, many of them special operations forces, and was much more prominent in scope, size, duration, and media coverage than the October 2002 exercise held between only Kyrgyzstan and China.

Much of China's bilateral aid to Central Asia consists of security assistance, particularly in the area of border control, military aid, and intelligence sharing. China recently donated 40 prefabricated border outposts to Kyrgyzstan. In addition, China is assisting Tajikistan to take over more responsibility for guarding its own border from the Russian 201st Motorized Division. In 2000, when Uzbek forces faced an IMU flare-up, China was the first to provide Uzbekistan with emergency military equipment, including flak jackets, night vision equipment, and sniper rifles. China gave 10 million Yuan (U.S. \$1.2 million) worth of military-technical assistance to Kyrgyzstan in 2002, including firearms and telecom systems to combat terrorism, and, in February 2003, China donated police facilities to the Internal Affairs Ministry of Kazakhstan. In addition to this material aid, China has provided training for various Central Asian militaries. There is also intelligence sharing between the Central Asian republics and China, most of which is focused on counterterrorism.

Among the most notable developments for China-Central Asia security cooperation was the October 2002 joint border exercise held between China and Kyrgyzstan. The exercise—simulating an operation against terrorist cells within the mountainous region which forms the countries' shared border—was relatively small in size and scope: it involved about 100 soldiers from each side, operating at high elevations and using light weapons, such as anti-tank guns, helicopters, and armored personnel vehicles. The exercises took place in southern Kyrgyzstan near the Irkeshtam border crossing with China, and involved military and border troops from China's Xinjiang Military Region and the Kyrgyz military, as well as some observers from the other four SCO member states.¹³ Most intriguing, this exercise marked the first peacetime joint military exercise China is known to have conducted. It signals a significant change in the way China understands the role of force, intervention, and international military cooperation in the face of transnational threats; it also marks an important advance in Chinese-Central Asian relations.

It is important to be reminded that currently Chinese aid to Central Asia in no way compares to the amount being provided by Russia and

the United States. Russian forces have historically operated throughout the region and continue to be present in Tajikistan. The United States has become vital to Central Asia. Not only has the U.S. military campaign struck a devastating blow against many of the groups challenging regional security in Afghanistan, but material and economic assistance provided by the United States has been a huge windfall for the Central Asian states. The U.S. military maintains a presence in several Central Asian nations,¹⁴ all of which bring these areas millions of U.S. dollars in the form of building and local spending. This is in addition to official U.S. assistance to the Central Asian states, which is substantial. Totaling almost \$600 million in fiscal year (FY) 2002 (up from \$230 million in FY2001), the Central Asian nations have begun to rely on this money heavily, as well as on the material support, in terms of food, medicine, security training, and more. While this overall amount will decrease in 2003 and 2004, pledged security assistance in 2004 will increase.

Finally, it is important to understand how the Uyghur diaspora living in Central Asia plays into Chinese diplomacy in the region. The diaspora is predominantly concentrated in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, with 50,000 and 180,000 Uyghurs respectively, many of whom are entrepreneurs who have achieved middle class status. Most Uyghurs in Central Asia are not politically active, but those who are make up a vocal minority, often petitioning the government to protect their rights in the face of Chinese pressures. Many also provide aid to groups operating within Xinjiang itself, with most interaction occurring along very active shuttle trade routes. The Central Asian states are loath to offend China and have been proactive in appeasing Chinese worries about the Uyghur populations living in their countries. As one analyst put it, China is having the Central Asians do its "dirty work" in the region.¹⁵ During the lead up to the first Shanghai Five summit in 1996, the Kyrgyz Justice Ministry prohibited one Uyghur group, Ittipak (Unity), from political activism for three months for failing to curb its "separatist activities," sighting the public association provision of the constitution and the non-interference clause of its 1992 communiqué with China.¹⁶ This has been a balancing act between domestic and international pressures though, with the Central Asian regimes not wanting to appear to be suppressing a fellow Turkic people. Uyghur gangs operating in Central Asia, particularly Kyrgyzstan, also have been involved in sensational murders and robberies of both Han Chinese and Uyghur peoples, including prominent businessmen and diplomats, keeping this issue center stage for the Chinese and Central Asian authorities.

Stability Along the Border

A third important set of goals and policies shaping China's active Central Asian diplomacy concerns the settlement of border disputes. Reaching settlements on disputed borders, which had been sources of tension during the Cold War, was important for Beijing both in order to move forward on its cooperative agenda with Central Asia and so that it could devote more attention to greater post-Cold War strategic challenges. Delineating and demilitarizing the borders with its Central Asian neighbors (including Russia) was a priority issue for China in the early 1990s, and became the foundation on which Sino-Central Asian relations were built. In retrospect, settling border disputes and reducing military personnel along these borders has been a major accomplishment of Chinese-Central Asian diplomacy. It has given China and its Central Asian neighbors a measure of peace and security, allowing them to expend their energy on more critical and worrisome issues, such as internal development and diplomatic crises, while setting out a model for cooperative security relations among former adversaries. The Shanghai Five played a critical role in legitimizing and institutionalizing these agreements and continues to do so.

The most significant accomplishment of the group is its package of military confidence building measures, including a pullback of some troops and equipment to 100 kilometers (km) off the common borders, verification procedures along the border, and pre-notification of exercises and other military activities. These steps largely were achieved by the mid to late 1990s, as border talks eventually led to the 1996 Shanghai Five "Agreement on Confidence-Building in the Military Field Along the Border Areas" and the 1997 "Agreement on Reducing Each Other's Military Forces along the Border Regions." The 1996 agreement stipulates that: military forces in the border regions will not be used to attack one another, military exercises will not be aimed at one another and will be limited in frequency and scale, major military exercises within 100 km of the border require notification and invitation to the neighboring Shanghai Five states to send observers, and friendly military-to-military exchanges will be established. The 1997 agreement took steps to implement these measures more fully. By the July 2000 Shanghai Five summit, the five parties announced that implementation of the 1996 and 1997 agreements had "helped build for the first time, in the border belt of more than 7,000 km, a region of trust and transparency where military activities are predictable and monitorable."¹⁷ The SCO continues to focus on border settlement issues, including a meeting as recently as April 2003 to expand border CBMs.

However, not all border differences have been settled, or settled to all parties' satisfaction. Negotiations continue on a bilateral basis between China and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. China's border negotiations with Kyrgyzstan have caused many domestic political problems for the tiny republic. In March 2002, protests erupted in the Asky region of Kyrgyzstan in response to the signing of a border treaty with China. The demonstrators, calling for the resignation of President Akaev, claimed that he had ceded too much to China and had sacrificed Kyrgyz sovereignty. In response to these protests, police tried to quash the demonstration; six persons were killed and 60 injured in the melee. This event eventually led to the resignation of the Kyrgyz Prime Minister and a government investigation.

Still, the way China has handled its border negotiations with the Central Asians has been remarkable, both for its deftness and for its efficiency. While China often has received the better bargain, due to its size and power, rarely has it been seen as heavy handed or offensive, helping to allay fears held by many Central Asian elites of China's true regional intentions. With border demarcation and demilitarization between China and its Central Asian neighbors virtually complete, remaining border security issues can be placed on the "cooperative security" column of their relationships.

Energy and Trade

China has important economic goals behind its growing interest and presence in Central Asia. During the visit by then-Premier Li Peng to Kazakhstan in 1994, he called for the construction of a new "Silk Road," connecting Central Asia with China and acting as a conduit for trade between Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. To date, this plan is still in the developmental phase. Nevertheless, many analysts see significant promise in economic and financial relations between China and Central Asia over the medium- to long-term, especially in the development of the region's enormous energy resources to fuel China's anticipated economic growth and burgeoning energy demands.

In 2015, China's projected oil needs will be 7.4 million bb/d (up from 3.4 million bb/d in 2002), 50 percent of which will be made up by imports. Natural gas, which is not yet imported, will also be a much-needed foreign produced commodity in the years ahead. In order to diversify its sources of supply and increase its energy security, China wants to establish Central Asia, particularly Kazakhstan and to some degree Turkmenistan, as guaranteed sources of oil and gas. In addition, Central Asia offers a potential

market for China's export driven economy. This is particularly true as China aims to develop its vast, remote western regions, which would find a natural outlet for exports further west to Central Asia.

Chinese firms have made some investments in Central Asia. But such financial arrangements have been limited by the risky, cumbersome and, given the heavy-handed presence of gangs and mafia-like extortion rackets, even hostile investment environment in Central Asia. Current Chinese investment includes: a processing factory in Tekeli, Kazakhstan; a major stake in the Kyrgyz cloth market; an investment in the primary mine at Batken, Kyrgyzstan; a hotel in Taldy-Korgan, Kazakhstan; and cardboard box and noodle factories in Kyrgyzstan. In Kazakhstan, according to official sources, there are now more than 20 accredited Chinese companies and some 600 joint ventures.¹⁸

The most significant area of economic cooperation has been China's investment in the Kazakh energy sector. As mentioned above, Chinese future energy demands will be enormous. To help meet that demand, the China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) invested \$4.3 billion in the Kazakh state oil company Aktyubinskneft in June 1997, entitling China to a 60 percent (now 63 percent) stake in three fields with a total estimated oil reserve of one billion barrels. Also as part of this agreement, China and Kazakhstan agreed to build a 3,000 km pipeline from the Caspian Sea area to Xinjiang. This project is expected to cost over \$3 billion and, at this point, has been deemed by most experts as uneconomical. Its current status is in limbo, though construction on some segments has begun and there is strong political pressure to make this pipeline a reality, especially as it fits into other plans to build a pipeline bringing oil and gas from Xinjiang's Tarim Basin to China's East Coast (a plan whose own future is also uncertain). At the same time, China and Russia have begun forging serious energy ties, including a pipeline from Angarsk to Daqing. If these plans fully materialize, Russian oil and gas may become more important to China than its Central Asian investments.¹⁹

While these projects are still taking shape, Kazakhstan is exporting small amounts of oil to China. In 2002, China imported nearly 19,600 barrels a day of crude oil, representing 1.4 percent of its total imports. This oil, imported primarily by rail, underscores the importance of building more transportation links between China and Central Asia. Projects to achieve this goal include a new rail link being built between Xinjiang and Uzbekistan, which will pass through Kyrgyzstan and possibly another that will include Tajikistan. This connects with the \$250 million European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) sponsored Transport

Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia (TRACECA) project to build the new Silk Road from China to Europe. Additional infrastructure projects include the already completed Urumqi-Almaty rail line and a new 360 km road between Lake Issyk-Kul in Kyrgyzstan and Aksu in Xinjiang, to be built by China at a cost of \$15 million.²⁰

Overall, China's trade with Central Asia has been a boon to the region, and while the amounts are relatively low, the potential for growth is enormous. China's dynamic economy could be a powerful engine for Central Asian development, and its close proximity could provide Central Asian states with an export route to the burgeoning markets of the Pacific.

The Future of the SCO

China's future successes and failures in Central Asia will be determined, in large part, by the viability of the SCO. To date, the SCO has been little more than a discussion forum, but that appears to be changing with the formalization of the SCO as a "full-fledged" international organization in 2004. This includes an actual budgetary mechanism, a permanent secretariat to be located in Beijing (led by Zhang Deguang, the former Chinese Ambassador to Russia), and a counterterrorism center to be located in Uzbekistan. Still, many doubts remain. The member nations will have to commit even more resources, energy, and political capital to make this organization viable, a first in the history of Central Asian multilateral organizations. The political will seems to be there, but it remains to be seen if Russia and China actually will commit their scarce resources to this effort, though recent Russian actions and statements stressing the importance of the SCO and the newly reconstituted CSTO appear promising.

Three early tests will help determine the future of the SCO. The first is the formation of the Tashkent counterterrorism center. To be effective, this center will have to be able to coordinate responses to new terrorist threats, with special attention to de-conflicting the roles of China, Russia, and the United States. This center should not be expected to house a new rapid reaction force, but it has to be more than an information clearinghouse if the SCO expects to be a respected player on regional security issues. Second, the establishment of a permanent secretariat and budget mechanism will demonstrate the political and material commitment that members are willing to provide. A functioning budget and empowered bureaucracy are central to the success of any international organization, particularly one bringing together such diverse players. Finally, the SCO must prove that it can accomplish limited economic cooperation, a point

stressed with unusual frequency and detail at the last SCO summit in May 2003. If the SCO can commit to a transportation pact by next year's summit, it will have proven that it is more than a "talk shop" and can assist in practical economic integration in a troubled region.

Though it is clear that the problems of Central Asia are region-wide and cannot be solved by any state alone, Central Asian states seem reluctant to embrace the promise of multilateral collaboration. The May 2003 SCO summit offered some hope that the region can pursue concrete and practical cooperative projects, an important step toward tempering interstate conflict, great power rivalries, and nationalist tendencies. In the short to medium-term the SCO represents China and Russia's cooperative nature, as well as Russia's understanding that it can no longer single-handedly maintain Central Asia stability. China also has a positive role to play in the region, particularly in funding security endeavors. However, with a new Russian push to establish the CSTO RDF to be stationed at Kant Airbase in Kyrgyzstan, tension between Russian and Chinese regional interest will become more apparent. Yet much of the future success of the SCO will be determined not by the outside powers, but by the cooperation of the Central Asian states, particularly Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, a mighty feat that is currently nowhere near to being achieved.

Bilateral Relationships

As previously discussed, Beijing has established a coherent regional strategy in Central Asia, best illustrated by Chinese leadership in the SCO. However, each Central Asian nation has its own set of circumstances, and Chinese policy faces different challenges in dealing with each of them. Moreover, the future of Central Asia's relations with external powers will be determined in large measure by the dynamic between the various Central Asian states.

Kazakhstan

The China-Kazakh border stretches some 1,533 km, the longest frontier between China and the five Central Asian states. China's relationship with Kazakhstan is probably its strongest in the region and best represents China's most basic interests. Though Kazakhstan and Russia enjoy an extremely close relationship, Kazakh exports to China reached nearly \$1 billion in 2001 (with a goal of \$2 billion in 2003). With total official Central Asian exports to China equaling about \$1.3 billion in 2001, Kazakh exports represented some 77 percent of that figure, further indicating the importance of China-Kazakh ties in the overall China-Central

Asia relationship. Moreover, Chinese President Hu Jintao's June 2003 trip to Kazakhstan, only his third abroad as president, after Russia and the G8 summit in France, indicates the high priority China places on its relationship with Kazakhstan. This relationship, which includes security and intelligence cooperation, as well as educational and cultural exchanges, likely will continue to grow in the coming years. Much of this growth will be fueled by increased Chinese investment in Kazakh energy and gas, as well as the long-expected construction of a pipeline between the two countries. Also, with roughly one million ethnic Kazakhs living in Xinjiang, in addition to the 180,000 Uyghurs living in Kazakhstan, Astana takes a particular interest in developments in China's west, especially as the two populations make up a large segment of the shuttle traders.

Kyrgyzstan

Hosting military and security personnel from multiple outside powers, Kyrgyzstan stands out among Central Asian countries. With the U.S.-run base at Manas and Russian-led forces at the CSTO Rapid Deployment Force base at Kant Airbase, not to mention a shared 858-km border, China has focused much of its strategic attention on Kyrgyzstan. China's first external military exercise in decades was held with Kyrgyz border forces, and China likely will post some security-related personnel to Tashkent to take part in the new SCO counterterrorism center. In addition, Kyrgyzstan is one of the main transit routes for Chinese goods and a key recipient of Chinese infrastructure investment, including new rail and road links. It is also a source of concern for China on issues including drugs, organized crime, Islamic radicalism, Uyghur sympathizers, and perhaps most-worrisome in the long-run, the presence of U.S. forces just over the border. Kyrgyzstan sees China as a potential engine for economic growth and a source of foreign aid. China was one of the few countries that would engage in barter trade with the Central Asian nations after independence, winning their early gratitude. Kyrgyzstan takes its relationship with China very seriously, and, despite some tensions over the Uyghur diaspora and border negotiations, sees China as a strong and important partner. Its Beijing embassy is equal in size to that of the United States, and Muratbek Imanaliev, Kyrgyzstan's two time former Foreign Minister and current ambassador to China, speaks fluent Chinese and is a central player in building relations between all of Central Asia and China.

Tajikistan

Having suffered through a long civil war and still relying heavily on Russian forces to help stabilize its borders, Tajikistan does not yet have the ability to forge a more balanced foreign policy. It is possible that the presence of “gas-and-go” U.S. air operations in Tajikistan signals some closer ties to Washington. However, Tajikistan is in dire need of assistance from all quarters, and accepts aid from countries such as Iran as well as China. With a 434-km shared border, China has provided Tajikistan with significant security assistance, as well as limited economic aid, including a recent \$3 million aid package. According to first-hand accounts, China’s defense attaché office in Dushanbe is one of the most active of its Central Asian missions. Economically, Tajikistan has little to offer China beyond a limited marketplace, but Beijing is keenly interested in making sure Tajikistan’s black market—including the massive trade in drugs—does not penetrate China. And while China has a theoretically historic claim to nearly one-third of Tajikistan’s territory, China has managed to negotiate its remaining border issues with Tajikistan in a constructive way. Overall, Tajikistan’s vital ties to Russia dictate much of the relationship, but China still maintains active diplomacy there, with an eye on the future and its own security needs.

Uzbekistan

Among Central Asian states, Uzbekistan has charted a fairly distinctive course in its foreign policy, clearly moving away from Russia and aligning itself more closely with the United States. As the only SCO member not sharing a border with China, its relationship with China has evolved much differently from the others. With a very active embassy in Tashkent, China has enjoyed fairly good security ties with Uzbekistan, highlighted by the aid provided to Uzbekistan during the 2000 IMU flare-up. However, there have been reports that this aspect of the relationship has soured in the last years due to a Chinese sale of mortars and side arms to Uzbekistan that performed poorly, as well as the rise of significant U.S. security aid to the country. In economic terms, Uzbekistan’s harshly protectionist trade policy has blocked many Chinese exports to the region and the Tashkent government has increased its complaints about shuttle traders bringing cheap Chinese goods into the country. Uzbekistan’s self-appointed expectations to become the premier regional power may put it at odds with Chinese interests, particularly its obstinacy in committing more fully to the cooperative security agenda of the SCO. However, the two have

succeeded in establishing a practical relationship built on individual needs and pragmatic gains.

Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan also does not share a border with China, and is even further west from China than is Uzbekistan. In addition, Turkmenistan's adherence to a policy of "positive neutrality" has kept it out of the SCO along with many other international organizations. It appears Beijing will keep Turkmenistan and its leader, Turkmenbashi, at arms length. China has invested moderately in Turkmenistan's oil and gas sector, but has limited its ties overall. Turkmenistan has little to offer China. Export routes for its oil and gas are not conducive to shipment to China and, politically and diplomatically, it is very difficult to deal with. China likely will only seek engagement with Ashkabat if it fits into its overall regional plans.

China and Other External Powers in the Region

The presence of other external powers, particularly the United States and Russia, provide China both partners and competitors for its goals in Central Asia. While China does not yet rank near the United States or Russia in terms of influence, its presence is growing. Because all three nations share the same vital interest in Central Asia—the elimination of the terrorist and radical Islamic threat—balance of power activities are limited. Still, China's fear of "strategic encirclement" by the United States persists. China can count on Russia to resist a long-term U.S. military presence in the region, although China and Russia should not be mistaken as true allies. In fact, the two countries are becoming increasingly competitive for influence in the region. Russia's deployment at Kant and its reinvigoration of the CSTO are primarily seen as countering a mounting U.S. and NATO presence in Central Asia, though it also can be viewed as solidifying Moscow's ties to Central Asia in the face of growing Chinese influence via the SCO.

China also must take other important regional players into account for their growing influence in Central Asia. These players include Europe, India, Pakistan, Turkey and Iran. Europe's presence is felt through the European Union, as well as NATO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the EBRD. European projects in Central Asia are specific and aimed at building stability. They include developing transportation infrastructure, combating drug trafficking, and making limited investments, in addition to Caspian energy operations. By and large, however, Central Asia does not "identify" with Europe. Similarly, ties with India and Pakistan are principally economic, though there is an

Islamic link to Pakistan and growing military and counterterrorism ties to India. As long as Central Asia can avoid getting entangled in the Kashmir problem, this relationship should continue to widen. Iran and Turkey share deeper cultural ties with Central Asia, but the prospects of close ties after the collapse of the Soviet Union have floundered. Turkey was unable to provide the material aid the Central Asians had hoped for, and many leaders felt that Turkey treated them as inferiors. Similarly, Iran has provided little to Central Asia, though this is also a reflection of U.S. policy towards Iran. In addition, Central Asian regimes are fearful of Iran-style Islamic fundamentalism. Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan are members along with all five Central Asian republics of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), which has not developed much beyond the discussion phase. For most of the Central Asian states, relations with China probably hold out more promise than with any other external powers, excepting Russia and the United States.

In both its regional and bilateral policies in Central Asia, China is committed to steadily expanding its presence and has taken a long-range approach to its engagement in the region. Central Asians at the official level generally welcome China's involvement, though there are some lingering suspicions of China as a hegemon-in-waiting. There are also concerns, not without reason, about Chinese migration to their nations, much as their Russian neighbors have. On the other hand, all Central Asian states are too much in need of assistance to say no to such an important and growing regional power as China, and see their large neighbor as a future driver of economic growth.

Nevertheless, China's long-term interests in the region will meet with a number of obstacles in the coming years, not the least of which is competition within Central Asia itself. These regional rivalries—including unfair trade practices, harsh border regulations, sovereignty disputes, and a failure thus far to truly institutionalize cooperative action—do not bode well for any enduring external presence, let alone a Chinese one. Attempting to exercise influence through the SCO has its challenges as well: the past decade has demonstrated that multilateral organizations have achieved few concrete gains, as self-serving national interests have trumped collective endeavors. China's main regional entry point, the SCO, may very well fail, in which case China will have to continue its bilateral relationships individually with the Central Asian states or through another forum, if it hopes to achieve its regional goals.

China's relations with Central Asia, in and of themselves, are not major foreign policy priorities for Beijing. For the foreseeable future,

Beijing's Central Asian diplomacy and strategy is more of a means to other ends, including: the promotion of its "new security concept" and constructive regional and international image, management of Sino-American and Sino-Russian relations, continued domestic economic development, and dealing with security concerns in Xinjiang. By and large, China pays close attention to Central Asia so it does not become a problem. On the other side of the coin, Central Asian nations, at present, have more to gain from the United States and Russia than from China, making their ties with China a lower priority for them as well.

Taking these points together, it seems unlikely that China will be able to exert anywhere close to as much influence in the near- to medium-term as Russia or the United States. Beijing appears well aware of this, and is proceeding in a cautious and balanced way: on the one hand highlighting shared interests in the region with Washington and Moscow, while on the other avoiding the appearance of trying to "oust" either from Central Asia. Over the longer-term, China is likely to promote its interests and policies in Central Asia and its prominence will increase, especially as the U.S. presence diminishes and the Russians continue to focus their energies internally and toward the West. In this context, it is critical for the United States to understand and respond to China's continuing emergence in Central Asia.

Issues on the Horizon

At this early stage, Chinese leaders and strategists appear to have been quite successful in identifying and pursuing their interests in Central Asia. However, several issues on the horizon will present some difficult challenges for China in Central Asia in the years ahead, particularly HIV/AIDS, drugs and organized crime, and water.

HIV/AIDS cases are growing at an ever-increasing rate on both sides of the China-Central Asia border, especially in Xinjiang, which is China's second-most infected region. Both Central Asia and Russia also face a looming problem with HIV/AIDS that will likely affect cross-border trade, security, and stability in the coming years.

China, Russia, and Central Asia all have problems with narco-trafficking and the terrorist activities it often funds. The majority of the drug trade follows two separate routes, one from Central Asia west to Russia and Europe, and one from South East Asia up through China. There are indications of new collaboration between these groups, particularly where organized crime is involved, and reports that Chinese Triads are now operating in Kyrgyzstan.

Water is one of the scarcest resources in both Central Asia and western China and will likely be an increasing source of tension as supplies diminish and downstream demand increases, particularly from the growing industrial and agricultural centers of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Xinjiang. Currently, China has plans to siphon up to 1.5 billion cubic meters of water per year from the Ili and Irtysh Rivers for oilfield development regions in Xinjiang. Both rivers originate in China and the Ili flows through Kazakhstan and terminates in Lake Balkhash, a body of water already devastated by decreasing water levels and increasing pollution from agriculture run-off. This issue alone has the potential to sour relations between China and Central Asia.

Conclusions

China's emergence in Central Asia will continue to grow, and likely will have a more natural and longer-term fit relative to that of the United States, based on a long history of interaction and clearly defined interests. China has rediscovered its place in the region and is developing pragmatic channels to achieve its interests there. Successes are growing, particularly in the fields of security and natural resources extraction, and a future of intense interaction looks more certain. Still, China's priority in Central Asia is maintaining stability along its borders, so that it can focus on more pressing matters elsewhere. Its objective is strategic denial; act to deny the rise of elements that will challenge China's internal security, deny the use of Central Asia by the United States to contain China, and deny a Russian monopoly of influence on its border.

China will most likely give significant attention only to those problems that directly affect its vital interests, such as counterterrorism and other border security questions. Central to this will be the attention paid to the role of the Uyghurs and Xinjiang in China-Central Asia relations. It is also clear that China's goal is to foster regional cooperation only to the point that it fits into its own national interest. If China can achieve its aims bilaterally and not through the SCO, it will, though the SCO provides a very useful vehicle to address transnational threats. Moreover, continuing problems in Central Asia and the region's inability to use collective action will minimize China's region-wide reach, leaving open the likelihood that Beijing will have considerable influence in some states, such as Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, but considerably less in others. China's region-wide presence will be most affected, though, by the action of the United States and Russia. The United States is the most important near-term ally of the Central Asian states and can dictate the future shape of the regional

security situation to a significant degree. Russia, too, has enduring importance to the region and can undermine many of China's goals if Moscow so chooses.

In sum, China is on the rise in Central Asia and the United States will have to deal with a more comprehensive Chinese presence in the region in the years ahead. Diplomatic and strategic hedging by external powers has already begun, and Central Asia has become an important piece on the global chessboard. All sides are using it to advance their international agendas. This is not a return to the "Great Game" of the nineteenth century, however. China, Russia, and the United States are too integrated with each other to threaten a clash over what is still a second-tier priority when compared to more pressing issues like North Korea, Iraq, and the proliferation of WMD. However, given the intermingling of Great Power interests in this region, increased tension is possible. There is room for cooperation in Central Asia and no need for restrictive alliances. In the best scenarios, the United States, China and Russia will recognize their convergence of interests, and work together to shape a more secure, prosperous and stable Central Asia.

Notes

¹ This chapter is drawn from a larger monograph published in August 2003 by the Freeman Chair in China Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies entitled, *China's New Journey to the West: China's Emergence in Central Asia and Implications for U.S. Interests*.

² In the late 740s, the expansionist Tang spread its influence as far westward as Kabul and Kashmir, eventually coming into direct conflict with the Muslim people of greater Turkestan. At Talas River, in 751, a predominantly Muslim army of Arab, Tibetan and Uyghur forces defeated Chinese troops led by Kao Hsien-chih. The ramifications were significant. The Arabs were able to extend their Islamic influence throughout Central Asia and the major trading routes. Tang expansionary tendencies were halted, beginning a trend of military decline. Thus, the Battle of Talas became a demarcation line between the Muslim-Turkic and Chinese worlds and remains an important touchstone for China-Central Asia relations today. The area known as the Uyghur Kingdom of East Turkestan, created by the migration of Uyghurs from Mongolia and Central Asia during the first millennium, was invaded by the Manchus in 1757 but was not brought under the control of the Qing Emperor until 1877 when it was named Xinjiang (meaning "New Territory"). Even then, resistance against Chinese dominion continued until 1949, including the establishment of an independent Uyghur State on two occasions, most notably from 1944-1949.

³ The Shanghai Cooperation Organization—made up of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan—is a Chinese-initiated international forum that evolved from the border demarcation and demilitarization process, known as "the Shanghai Five" and not including Uzbekistan, begun after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The SCO became a "full-fledged" international organization in January 2004 with a secretariat in Beijing and a regional counterterrorism center in Tashkent.

⁴ Mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; mutual nonaggression; mutual non-interference in their respective domestic affairs; mutual benefit; and peaceful coexistence

⁵ The CSTO was recently reformed in 2002 from the ashes of the Collective Security Treaty (CST), the near-defunct collective security apparatus of the Commonwealth of Independent States. While the CST has some enduring success in the maintenance of a region-wide extended air defense, it has largely failed to materialize as a collective-defense organization, and the overall military capabilities of the members have decreased. The CSTO is another attempt to pull together these disparate militaries, this time by focusing on practical and specific tasks, particularly counterterrorism and rapid crisis response.

⁶ This center was originally to be located in Bishkek, but it was announced in September 2003 that it would be built in Tashkent. It is reported that Uzbekistan, a relatively apathetic member of the SCO, demanded the presence of the center in exchange for continued involvement.

⁷ For a more detailed description of the Xinjiang issue, see the forthcoming Xinjiang Project book being published by the Central Asian-Caucasus Institute, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Fall 2003.

⁸ Encapsulated as the "Go West: campaign," Beijing has encouraged the migration of Han Chinese to Xinjiang and the development of the western economies to benefit both the development of China's interior and the continuing east coast boom. Beyond the eastern seaboard, Xinjiang represents the most developed and dynamic economy in the nation. It has become a center of trade and industry for both China's west and Central Asia. Xinjiang's greatest potential for growth lies in its natural resources. In particular, while estimates vary, nearly all experts agree that the Tarim Basin holds enormous potential as a source of energy resources. A 2000 study from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) states the Tarim Basin holds at least three billion tons of oil in proven reserves and possibly 510 billion cubic meters of natural gas, all thus far untapped. Bringing Xinjiang's potential wealth east will be critical to developing China's interior and spreading the benefits of economic growth across the country.

⁹ In response to Beijing's repressive policies in Xinjiang, including several violent crackdowns that, according to some reports, left hundreds dead and thousands imprisoned, and emboldened by the independence achieved by its Central Asian neighbors in the early- to mid-1990s, the Uyghur separatist movement took a more aggressive and violent direction. On February 27, 1997, three bombs were set off in the Xinjiang capital of Urumqi, killing nine people. Two weeks later, on March 7, a bomb exploded in Beijing, the seat of Chinese authority, killing 30. In September 1997, Chinese authorities disclosed that approximately 40 small uprising occurred, with Uyghur activists occupying a half dozen government buildings across China. The forced evictions left 80 dead and 200 injured. Eight hundred Uyghurs were arrested. Fifteen bomb attacks occurred over a five-month period in 1998 and seven attacks in the first six weeks of 1999, but it is unclear if these were Uyghur actions or just another challenge to the government from some other group, possibly laid-off workers. According to Justin Rudelson, author of *Oasis Identity*, there have been more than 200 militant actions over the past decade, resulting in 162 deaths. These include attacks on police stations, communications and electric power infrastructure, the bombings of buses, movie theaters, department stores, hotels, markets, and trains, assassinations of judges, and strikes against military bases. In taking these actions, it appears elements of the Uyghur separatist movement have shifted to more blatant and violent expressions of protest and the expansion of targets from government infrastructure and instruments of their control to include innocent civilians.

¹⁰ Interviews with Central Asian security officials on background.

¹¹ "Islamists Staged Explosion, Kyrgyz Says," UPI, May 25, 2003; "Kyrgyz Republic Public Announcement," U.S. Department of State, May 6, 2003; "Uzbekistan Public Announcement," U.S. Department of State, April 5, 2003; Alexei Igushev, "Hizb ut-Tahrir Remains Active in Central Asia," *Eurasianet*, February 5, 2003.

¹² Thomas Sanderson, "China's War on Terrorism," presented at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 5, 2003.

¹³ Description of this exercise drawn from "China Ends War Games with Kyrgyzstan," *Associated Press*, October 11, 2002; "China, Kyrgyzstan Hold Joint Anti-terror Military eExercise," *Xinhuanet*, October 12, 2002; "Joint War Games Boost Terror Fight," *South China Morning Post*, October 12, 2002.

¹⁴ Two airbases in Uzbekistan in Khanabad and Kokaida, two “gas and go” operations in Tajikistan in Dushanbe and Kyulyab, and one major base in Kyrgyzstan at Manas outside of Bishkek, with a possible new locale at Shymkent Airport in Kazakhstan.

¹⁵ Off the record conference.

¹⁶ “Temporary Ban on Uyghur Society in Kyrgyzstan,” *OMRI Daily Digest*, April 9, 1996.

¹⁷ In July 1998, China and Kazakhstan reached a final agreement resolving remaining border disputes along their 1,700 km border; the first full border dispute resolution between China and one of its “Shanghai Five” partners. “China: Jiang Zemin on Nuclear Arms Race, Sino-Kazakh Border Pact,” *Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report: China*, FBIS-CHI-98-187, July 6, 1998. The July 2000 quote is drawn from “Xinhua: ‘Full Text’ of Dushanbe Statement of ‘Shanghai Five.’”

¹⁸ “Chinese Business Interests in Central Asia: A Quest for Dominance,” *Central Asian-Caucasus Analyst*, June 18, 2003; “Chinese Leader Hu Jintao Visits Astana,” RFE/RL, June 07 2003; and information provided by Fred Starr, Chairman of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute at the School for Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University.

¹⁹ Wu Kang, “China’s Quest for Energy Security and the Role of Central Asia,” presented at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, April 22, 2003.

²⁰ “Chinese President Urges SCO Economic Cooperation,” *People’s Daily*, Friday, May 30, 2003.