

University of Oxford
Department of Politics and International Relations

Understanding regional co-operation in Central Asia, 1991–2004

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
DPhil in International Relations in the Department of Politics and
International Relations at the University of Oxford

Number of Words:
100 317

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July 2007

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July 2007 (Trinity Term)
DPhil in International Relations, University of Oxford

Abstract

This thesis analyses regional co-operation in Central Asia and asks why the Central Asian states so often failed to co-operate effectively in the period 1991-2004. The thesis assesses the usefulness of international relations theories in accounting for this pattern, and finds that theories stressing conflicting national interest among the local states offer, on the whole, a plausible account for *why* regional co-operation failed. It is, nevertheless, essential also to pay attention to two important features of the Central Asian states – authoritarian rule and state weakness – in order to provide a full understanding of why and *how* regional co-operation proved unsuccessful.

The exploration of failed regional co-operation in Central Asia also sheds light on a number of related questions. The thesis offer insights on the nature of Russian hegemony in the post-Soviet area and also illustrates the ways in which the character of post-Soviet states mattered for the kind of inter-state politics that unfolded in the post-Soviet space. With regards to international relations theory, the thesis highlights the possible implications of state-weakness for foreign policy. Lastly, the thesis offers new insight on Central Asia: it encourages a move away from Great Game analysis and introduces instead the concept of 'patchwork geopolitics'. The thesis also argues that rather than forming part of an 'arc of instability', the intra-regional relations of

Central Asian states embodied many typical regime-like features: while regional co-operation failed, the states nevertheless interacted in predictable and rule-bound ways.

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List of abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASBP	Aral Sea Basin Programme
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BCM	One billion cubic metres
BOMCA	Border Management Central Asia (EU project)
BVO	Basin-wide agencies for water management, <i>Basseynoe Vodnoe Ob'edinenie</i>
CICA	Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States, <i>Sodruzhestvo Nezavisimykh Gosudarstv</i>
CST	Collective Security Treaty
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organisation
DCA	Drug Control Agency
DEA	US Drug Enforcement Agency
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ECO	Economic Co-operation Organisation
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
EvrAzES	The Eurasian Economic Community, <i>Evraziiskoe Ekonomicheskoe Soobshchestvo</i>
GBAO	Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast
Gossnab	State Committee for Material Technical Supply, <i>Gosudarstvennii Komitet po material'no-tekhnicheskomu snabzheniiu</i>
Gosplan	State Committee for Planning, <i>Gosudarstvennii komitet po planirovaniu</i>
GUUAM	Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova ('GUUAM Group')
GW	Gigawatt
ICAS	Interstate Council on the Aral Sea Basin Problems
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICWMC	Interstate Co-ordinating Water Management Commission
IFAS	International Fund for the Aral Sea
IDCC	Interstate Drug Control Commission
IDB	Islamic Development Bank
I&D	Irrigation and Drainage
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
ISI	Import Substitution Industrialisation
IWPR	Institute for War and Peace Reporting
Kolkhoz	Collective farm, <i>kollektivnoe khozyaistvo</i>
MVD	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MLRWR	Ministry of Land Reclamation and Water Resources of the USSR
MW	Megawatt
Obkom	Province (<i>oblast</i>) party committee
O&M	Operation and Maintenance
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PfP	NATO Partnership for Peace programme

RBF	Russian Federation Border Forces
RFE/RL	Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
RSCT	Regional Security Complex Theory
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SCO	Shanghai Co-operation Organisation
SNB	National Security Service, <i>Sluzhba Natsional'noi Bezopasnosti</i>
Sovkhoz	State farm, <i>Sovetskoe khozyaistvo</i>
Sovnarkhoz	Development Council, <i>Sovety narodnogo khozyaistvo</i>
TAS	Central Asian Co-operation Organisation, <i>Tsentral'no-Aziatskoe Sotrudnichestvo</i>
TsAES	Central Asian Economic Community, <i>Tsentral'no-Aziatskoe Ekonomicheskoe Soobshchestvo</i>
TsARS	Central Asian Regional Co-operation Organisation, <i>Tsentral'no-Aziatskoe Regional'noe Sotrudnichestvo</i>
TRACECA	Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia
UES	Unified Economic Space
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNECE	UN Economic Commission for Europe
UNODC	UN Office on Drugs and Crime
USAID	US Agency for International Development
US CENTCOM	US Central Command
UTO	United Tajik Opposition
WB	World Bank
WEC	Water and Energy Consortium
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WUA	Water User Association

Acknowledgements

The kind assistance and advice given to me by persons in Central Asia has been invaluable for the writing of this thesis. Special thanks go to Marzhan Atakulova, Kamol Atoev, Matluba Azamatova, Olga Dosybieva, Firuza Ganieva, Almaz Ismanov, Bakhtiyor Naimov, Alexander Sadikov and Alisher Saipov. There are also a number of other persons holding government-affiliated positions in Central Asia to whom I would very much like to express my gratitude - their names cannot, however, be listed here.

I have been very fortunate to write this thesis in the stimulating environment of St. Antony's College. The late Paul Bergne was a true source of inspiration, especially in his enthusiasm for Central Asia. It was a privilege and good learning experience to help him promote the work of The Oxford Society for the Caspian and Central Asia (TOSCCA), which he founded. Dr. Alex Pravda offered in-depth and constructive guidance at key junctures in the writing process. Dr. Christian Thorun has provided valuable comments on the thesis and essential help with EndNote. Elizabeth Angell has also given important copy-editing assistance.

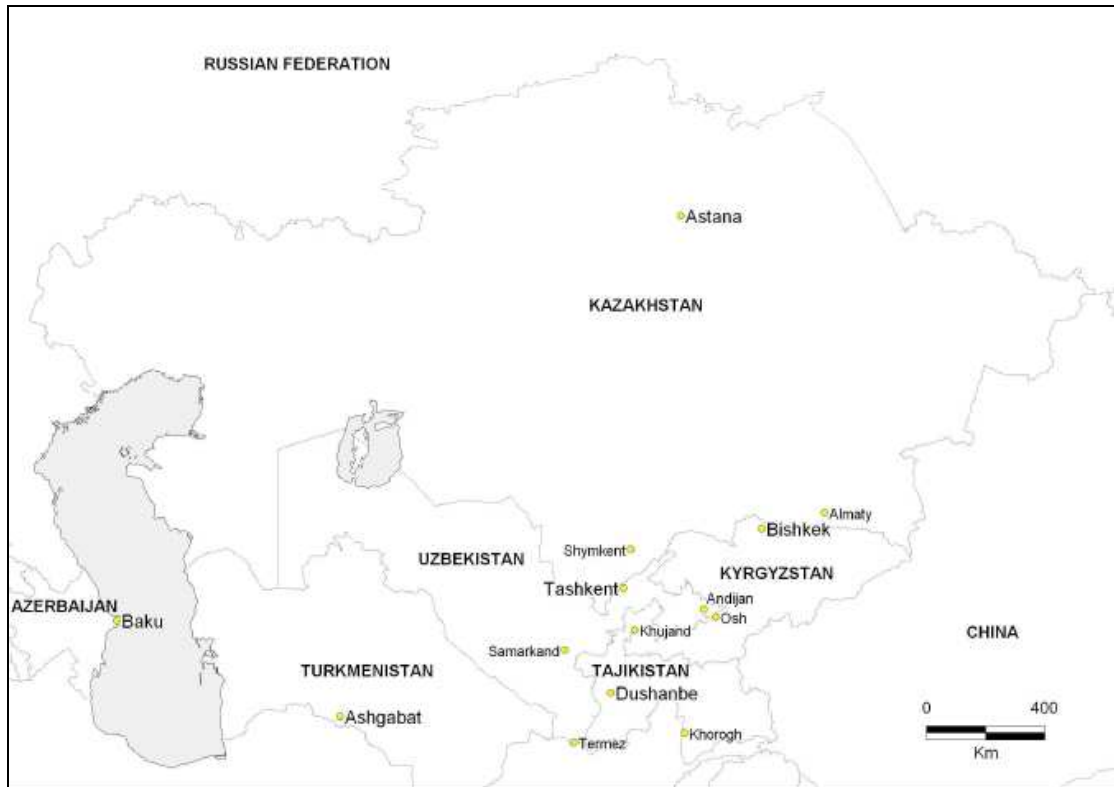
It has been enjoyable and gratifying to work under the guidance of my supervisor Professor S. Neil MacFarlane. Professor MacFarlane has persistently encouraged me to pursue the aspects of Central Asian relations that I found the most interesting. I am grateful for the academic liberty this gave me, as well as for the challenging yet supportive feedback he provided to me over the last four years. Moreover, the opportunity that Professor MacFarlane gave me to work alongside him on a number

of other projects was very valuable, and taught me, among other things, important lessons about academic integrity and precision.

In the last two years I have enjoyed the support of my colleagues at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI). In addition to in-depth comments and corrections on my thesis from several colleagues, I am thankful of Helge Blakkisrud and Frode Lovik for enabling me to focus on completing the D.Phil thesis. Susan Hoivik has substantially enhanced the quality of the thesis with her excellent copy-editing skills. Dr. Elana Wilson has eased my NUPI work burden kindly and efficiently. Dr. Indra Overland also deserves thanks for having continued to serve as an inspiring mentor on a range of academic and professional issues.

The group of friends in Norway associated with Generator Magazine has been an important source of encouragement and comfort, in particular my trusted friend Elen Midtveit. I am also thankful to my dear Kristina Brunsson Holmblad who, aside from cleverly ‘coaching’ me into completing the D.Phil thesis, has made my life in Oslo so enjoyable. Finally, my stepfather David Stamnes and my mother Eirin Timenes deserve my sincerest gratitude for their persistent and unconditional support throughout my university years – and it is to my mother that I dedicate this thesis.

Map 1: Central Asia



Source: Map created in MapInfo using Batholomew Digital Data (2002)

Introduction

This thesis presents a comprehensive analysis of the distinct patterns of regional co-operation in Central Asia. It seeks to answer the following question: why did regional co-operation fail in Central Asia in the period 1991–2004? In so doing, it explores the possible significance of state weakness for inter-state relations in Central Asia and sheds light on the nature of Russian hegemony in the post-Soviet area. An underlying theme of the thesis is whether the character of post-Soviet states mattered in shaping the kind of inter-state politics that unfolded in the post-Soviet space.

The question of why the Central Asian states failed to act together is interesting since local and outside leaders vigorously stressed the need for co-operation in dealing with the serious challenges facing post-Soviet Central Asia after independence in 1991.

There seemed to be good reasons for states in Central Asia to work together in solving common problems in the region. Yet the absence of any meaningful co-operation among the states in Central Asia remained striking.

The question becomes even more complex if we consider the plethora of organisations that entered the arena of inter-state relations in Central Asia in the 1990s, professing to enhance regional co-operation.¹ One of these, the Central Asian Co-operation Organisation (*Tsentral'no-Aziatskoe Sotrudnichestvo*, TAS), was initiated by the Central Asian leaders themselves and (unlike other organisations in the area) was composed solely of states from the region. Throughout the 1990s, the

¹ Other organisations encouraging regional co-operation included the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO).

TAS member countries continued to agree on extensive co-operation schemes, which, if enacted, would have solved many of the challenges facing the region. Indeed, for every regional problem in Central Asia, the state leaders could draw on a range of agreements. At summit meetings, the state leaders continued to proclaim their firm willingness to initiate co-operation. Effective co-operation, however, did not ensue. An internal and frank briefing paper by a Central Asian foreign ministry noted that ‘today’s state of co-operation may be characterised as a major failure to use the opportunities available [*Neispol’zovannii potentsial vozmozhnosti*]’.²

The thesis draws on international relations theories in accounting for the distinct pattern of failed co-operation in Central Asia. It analyses co-operation in three key spheres drawn from ‘high’ and ‘low’ politics: trade, water and security.³ In short, I find that conventional international relations theories, in particular those that stress conflicting national interests among the local states, overall, offer a plausible account of *why* regional co-operation failed. It is, nevertheless, essential also to pay attention to two important features of the Central Asian states – authoritarian rule and state weakness – in order to provide a full understanding of both *why* and *how* regional co-operation proved unsuccessful.

² *Internal briefing paper* (City: Confidential, published by a Central Asian Foreign Ministry 2005).

³ J. S. Nye, 'Patterns and catalysts in regional integration', *International Organization* 1965, vol. 19, no. 4.

Contributions and implications

By arguing that issues such as state weakness and the incompatibility of interests among the states within the region are central factors in determining policy patterns in Central Asia, I am putting forward a new interpretation of regional affairs.

I am rethinking Central Asian politics in three ways. First, the inter-state politics of the region is often understood with reference to the Great Game, i.e., outside competition by great powers such as the US and Russia. In this thesis, I demonstrate that in many issue areas, the Great Game is an unhelpful and at times even misleading analytical concept. Instead I suggest that ‘patchwork geopolitics’ is a term that better captures the dynamics of outside involvement in Central Asia. Second, the international relations of Central Asia are often portrayed as inherently unstable, forming, as Zbigniew Brzezinski noted, part of an ‘arc of instability’.⁴ By contrast, I argue that relations among the Central Asian states were often guided by formal and informal principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures.⁵ As such, inter-state politics sometimes resembled a regime-like structure. This argument contains an important nuance: although there was predictability in the conduct of inter-state relations, it did not follow that inter-state co-operation was carried out successfully. Put differently: regional co-operation failed, but in acting out this policy pattern, states nevertheless interacted in predictable and rule-bound ways. Finally, Central

⁴ Z. Brzezinski *The grand chessboard: American primacy and its geostrategic imperatives* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

⁵ This argument follows the definition of regimes set forward by Andrew Hurrell: ‘explicit principles, norms, rules and decision making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations’. A. Hurrell, ‘Regionalism in theoretical perspective’, in Fawcett and Hurrell eds, *Regionalism in world politics: regional organization and international order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 42. Hurrell draws on S. D. Krasner’s ‘Structural causes and regime consequences: regimes as intervening variables’, in Krasner, ed., *International regimes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 1.

Asian societies are often portrayed as being on the brink of Balkan-like scenarios of violent internal instability.⁶ I argue that in the period 1991–2004, with the exception of Tajikistan, the weak states of Central Asia were remarkably persevering. Even when state institutions operated in a malfunctioning or distorted manner, they often managed to generate considerable stability and order within their respective countries.

The thesis has relevance for broader issues in international relations. It sheds new light on the implications of state weakness for foreign policy. This is an issue which is understudied in international relations. The thesis also provides important insight on Russia's foreign policy behaviour towards former Soviet states.

Lastly, this thesis makes a key contribution by providing substantial new empirical material. There are only a handful of academic books in the English language that comprehensively assess the intra-regional relations of Central Asia.⁷ By providing a systemic discussion of inter-state co-operation in the cases of trade, water and security, I uncover and make available to a broader academic community new and important material on a region that nearly equals Western Europe in territorial extent.

Data for this thesis have been collected not only in the capitals of Central Asia, but also in the peripheral areas of the region, including remote border areas and regional administrative centres. Most studies approach the international relations of Central Asia through the analysis of online news bulletins, national newspapers and

⁶ N. Lubin and B. R. Rubin, *Calming the Ferghana Valley: development and dialogue in the heart of Central Asia* (New York: Century Foundation Press, 1999). P. v. Tongeren, H. v. d. Veen and J. Verhoeven, *Searching for peace in Europe and Eurasia: an overview of conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002).

⁷ These include T. Dadabaev, *Towards post-Soviet Central Asian regional integration* (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 2004) and E. Weintal, *State making and environmental cooperation: linking domestic and international politics in Central Asia* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002).

interviews in state capitals. However, these methods and focuses may well miss important points related to foreign policy conduct. This thesis represents a rare attempt to look beyond the limits of capital cities for data on international relations.

Co-operation in the post-Soviet space: existing literature

The existing literature on the inter-state relations of the post-Soviet space is limited. There are also some inconsistencies and gaps in the literature's explanations of the type of co-operation patterns found in the post-Soviet area. Below I discuss the two central works in this field and the analysis they present of co-operation failures.⁸

In *Getting it wrong: Regional cooperation and the Commonwealth of Independent States*. Martha Brill Olcott, Anders Aslund and Sherman Garnett assess the performance of the Commonwealth of Independent States (*Sodruzhestvo Nezavisimykh Gosudarstv*) in the 1990s.⁹ While primarily offering a narrative of the CIS's malfunctioning, they also put forward three main explanations of why inter-state co-operation failed in the CIS framework: incoherent and poor institutional design; suspicion of Russia and coercive and intimidating actions by Russia towards the new states; and reluctance on the part of state leaders to yield newly-won sovereignty and decision-making power to supranational institutions.¹⁰

⁸ Other works on this topic include R. M. Cutler 'Integration within and without the CIS' *Association for the Study of Nationalities Monthly. Analysis of Current Events* 1997 Vol. 9, no. 3. Irina Kobrinskaya 'The CIS in Russian Foreign Policy: causes and effects' in Smith ed. *Russia and its foreign policy influences, interests and issues* (Helsinki: Alexantri Institute Helsinki, 2005). M. Webber, *CIS integration trends: Russia and the former Soviet South* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs 1997). M. Webber and R. Sakwa, 'The Commonwealth of Independent States, 1991-1998: stagnation and survival' *Europe-Asia Studies* 1999, vol. 51, no. 3.

⁹ M. B. Olcott, A. Aslund and S. W. Garnett, *Getting it wrong: regional cooperation and the Commonwealth of Independent States* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999).

¹⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 11–28.

Olcott, Aslund and Garnett also briefly mention state weakness as a reason for failure. In the introduction they comment on the failure of sub-regional groupings within the CIS, such as TAS, noting that new groupings under the CIS umbrella have not worked because weak states co-operating with other weak states usually fail to form effective unions.¹¹ Later, in the chapter on security co-operation, they note that ‘all post-Soviet states are too weak, distracted and poor to be able to integrate’.¹² However, they provide no follow-up explanation of these reasons for failure pertaining to weakness. It is unclear precisely what type of weakness Olcott, Aslund and Garnett have in mind, and how they think that weakness has played out in relation to the other principal factors discussed in their book.

Mark Webber, in *The International politics of Russia and the successor states*, notes that there is ‘something distinctive about international relations within the FSU [Former Soviet Union]’.¹³ He attributes this to the deep interdependence between the new states due to their common Soviet past. He also notes how the shared Soviet past shapes present outlooks: while Russia is concerned about losing its empire, the non-Russian states are wary of Russian intentions precisely because of the history of domination. This environment has spurred two contrasting trends: on the one hand, an impulse towards co-operation stemming from interdependence; on the other hand, a counter-tendency towards suspicion and disagreement.

¹¹ Ibid. pp. 2–31.

¹² Ibid. p. 95.

¹³ M. Webber, *The international politics of Russia and the successor states* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 15.

These contradictory processes have affected co-operation. Webber outlines the emergence of the CIS and illustrates how the organisation has been beset by failure. He argues that the reason for the malfunctioning of the CIS lies in the inherent limitations and contradictions in the design of the organisation, as well as in its member states' scepticism towards proposals that might recall the USSR.¹⁴ There have also been profound differences between states in their conception of the CIS and its purpose: while some (among them Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) have been supportive, others have been coerced into joining (Moldova, Georgia) or have viewed membership in purely instrumental terms (Armenia, seeking to secure support in its conflict with Azerbaijan and vis-à-vis Turkey).¹⁵ Webber notes that regional co-operation in Central Asia was initially successful in promoting the collective influence of the Central Asian states in the CIS, but also that it has faced limitations. He suggests the explanation lies in the rivalry for regional leadership between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and in differences in political systems.

Interestingly, Webber presents the distinct political trajectory of the states not only of Central Asia but also of the CIS as a whole as a central challenge to co-operation in the post-Soviet space. Political diversity has precluded the emergence of shared norms that might bind co-operation; Webber holds that differing choices as to political system – authoritarianism versus democracy – prevent the emergence of shared norms and thus hinder co-operation.

The two works discussed above agree that there is something distinctive about international relations in the post-Soviet space, and that this distinctiveness has

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

important implications for co-operation patterns. However, neither of the books stresses the particular make-up of the post-Soviet states as a reason for the failures of co-operation. Any state with recently acquired statehood, high levels of interdependence and a differing political trajectory would, according to this view, be likely to experience something like the Eurasian pattern of post-1991 inter-state relations. Is this a viable assumption? An underlying aim of this thesis is to shed light on whether the nature of the post-Soviet states is relevant for understanding why these states have failed to work together.

Both of the above works put considerable emphasis on reluctance to yield sovereignty and fear of Russian domination. What about cases of failed co-operation where loss of sovereignty was not an issue? Or cases where there was no ‘suspicion of Russian intentions’? The history of co-operation in Central Asia includes several incidents where neither of these issues played an important role. How can we best account for failure in these cases? Moreover, neither of the books attempts to offer a coherent approach to the following puzzling question: why is there such a wide discrepancy between the high number of agreements and the poor rate of successful implementation of these agreements? Lastly, Webber stresses diverging political trajectories and the resulting absence of shared norms as hindrance for co-operation. In the following I shall argue that the political trajectories of the post-Soviet states have differed more in degree than in kind. Moreover, while authoritarianism is important for understanding co-operation patterns, it is a mistake to assume that shared norms have not prevailed among the state leaderships in Central Asia.

The brief discussion above indicates that there are a number of interesting questions still unanswered in relation to co-operation in the post-Soviet space. In this thesis I want to shed light on some of these by giving an account of why regional co-operation failed in one post-Soviet region: Central Asia. Existing literature on co-operation in Central Asia will be discussed in Chapter 1.

Understanding and explaining regional co-operation

Understanding the failure of co-operation in Central Asia is not an easy task. The two studies discussed above provide a number of likely reasons for failure. To these, one could add other context-related challenges to co-operation, such as the economic collapse and profound political uncertainty of the early and mid-1990s. From this perspective, it may seem that co-operation was doomed to fail. This has informed my decision to provide a comprehensive understanding rather than simply an explanation of failed regional co-operation.

Ngaire Woods draws a distinction between explanation and understanding, and stresses that explanation in the strict sense of the term is ‘concerned with identifying what caused a particular event or state of affairs’ and entails ‘generating and testing hypotheses such as “a change in x caused y”’.¹⁶ The complex nature of failed co-

¹⁶ N. Woods 'The use of theory in the study of international relations' in Woods ed. *Explaining international relations since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 11. Woods draws on Martin Hollis and Steve Smith (1991) when stressing that there is an important difference between explanation and understanding. Explaining entails rigorously asserting that a particular factor caused a particular outcome by studying several cases so as to test whether the factor singled out was indeed the likely cause, or merely a coincidental occurrence. By contrast, according to Woods, understanding focuses on grasping meaning and working with data in a narrative form. This distinction resonates with Bruno Bueno de Mesquita's (1996) notion of historical method: a focus on understanding particular events and a search to evaluate which variables were relevant in a given past case or sequence of events. By contrast, a social scientist (an 'explainer', in Woods' terminology) will have as a key aim to 'identify relations among critical variables that explain classes of events or phenomena'. N. Woods,

operation makes it difficult to single out individual and defining causal variables. Therefore, this thesis does not attempt to test a set of falsifiable hypotheses on causal relationships. Since many causal factors are likely to have been in operation, it is more relevant to analyse how the various potential causal effects relate to each other, and how particular combinations of factors may account for why and how a distinct pattern of inter-state co-operation manifested in Central Asia. This is an exercise more akin to understanding than to strict explanation. The approach seeks to construct a plausible narrative for the state of affairs in the region with regard to regional co-operation, with an emphasis on grasping meaning as well as noting causal patterns. It incorporates into the analysis an appreciation of the origins, evolution and consequences of the phenomenon in question.¹⁷

This thesis will assess co-operation in three cases – trade, water and security issues. In the sphere of trade, Central Asian states have made pledges of trade liberalisation and trade facilitation. In reality, however, the period under study saw an increase in trade barriers, and minimal co-operation. In water management, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan struggled to agree on principles and procedures for sharing the limited water resources of the region. In the security sphere, the states faced

'The use of theory in the study of international relations', in Woods, ed., *Explaining international relations since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 11; B. B. de Mesquita, 'The benefits of a social-scientific approach to studying international affairs', in Woods, op.cit.. See also M. Hollis and S. Smith *Explaining and understanding international relations* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991).

¹⁷ Hedley Bull similarly argued for 'a scientifically imperfect process of perception or intuition characterised above all by explicit reliance upon the exercise of judgement': H. Bull, 'International theory: the case for a classical approach', in Knorr and Rosenau eds, *Contending approaches to international politics*: Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 20. John Lewis Gaddis, in a similar vein, argues for the fruitfulness of narratives in accounting for key aspects and events of international relations, J. Lewis Gaddis 'History, science and the study of international relations' in Woods ed. *Explaining international relations since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). These arguments form part of a larger debate on scientific method in the social sciences; see the methods section in Chapter 1 and P. Winch *The idea of a social science and its relation to philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1988); E. H. Carr *What is history?* (London: Macmillan, 1961); M. Hollis, *The philosophy of social science: an introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); C. Tilly, *Big structures, large processes, huge comparisons* (London: Russell Sage Foundation, 1984).

military incursions by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Moreover, the flow of drugs through Central Asia increased dramatically in the 1990s, and migration to neighbouring countries within the region rose. Many Central Asian migrants headed for Russia also passed through neighbouring countries. While these challenges triggered formal efforts at co-operation and co-ordinating actions by the military and the law enforcement agencies, there were few signs of effective co-operation.

Defining regional co-operation

The thesis employs a narrow definition of regional co-operation that follows one of Andrew Hurrell's typologies for regionalism: regional inter-state co-operation.¹⁸

Hurrell notes that this type of co-operation can be more or less formal and may have varying degrees of institutionalisation. The purpose of such inter-state co-operation is to respond to external challenges, solve a common problem or secure welfare gains. When successful, such co-operation reasserts and extends state authority by enabling it to tackle key challenges.¹⁹

The focus of this thesis relates to the latter part of Hurrell's definition: it assesses issues that local state leaders have frequently defined as major problems, for which they have often recommended common solutions. The key task of the thesis is to analyse efforts at inter-state co-operation in the region and to assess how the outcome

¹⁸ Hurrell delineates several additional types of regionalism, including regionalisation, regional awareness and identity, state-promoted regional integration, and regional cohesion. See A. Hurrell, 'Regionalism in theoretical perspective'.

¹⁹ Ibid. It is important to stress that even if this type of regional co-operation may secure welfare gain and extend state authority, it will still, as is the case with most forms of co-operation, necessitate active attempts by states 'to adjust policies in order to meet the demands of others'. This is Robert Keohane's primary definition of co-operation. R. O. Keohane, *After hegemony: cooperation and discord in the world political economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 12.

of such initiatives can best be understood. The thesis is concerned primarily with multilateral co-operation, but will also discuss bilateral co-operation where relevant.²⁰

Andrew Hurrell and Louise Fawcett signal an important caution, relevant for research on co-operation as well as regionalism. They note that studies of regionalism tend to slide from description to prescription, whereby regionalism becomes a moral doctrine as to how international relations *ought* to be organised. This thesis does not put forward a normative argument for co-operation or regionalism in Central Asia. It merely assesses instances where the Central Asian states themselves have identified the need to work together, but have failed to realise such co-operation.²¹ The focus is not on how this co-operation could be successfully resurrected, but on the interesting analytical issues that arise from an understanding of why it has been such a difficult goal to achieve.

The literature on 'new regionalism' forms an important backdrop to the thesis.²² New regionalism attempts to capture the rise of regional institution building since the end of the Cold War.²³ Much of the enthusiasm for regional groupings that studies on

²⁰ Many issue areas in Central Asia are covered by multilateral agreements as well as bilateral agreements. In cases where bilateral agreements are relevant for an understanding of a particular issue or where they are directly linked to multilateral initiatives, I will assess them as well.

²¹ Fawcett and Hurrell, *Regionalism in world politics*.

²² Andrew Hurrell notes that there was a previous 'wave' of regional schemes in the late 1960s, discussed by among others J. S. Nye *Peace in parts: integration and conflict in regional organization* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1987). The term 'new regionalism' has been used by several writers, including Norman D Palmer, in *The new regionalism in Asia and the Pacific* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1991). A. Hurrell, 'Explaining the resurgence of regionalism in world politics', *Review of International Studies* 1995, vol. 21.

²³ Bjørn Hettne places regionalisation directly in the context of globalisation and argues that the new approach sees regionalisation as 'part of a global structural transformation, or globalization, in which also a variety of non-state actors were operating at several levels'. Similarly, Richard Falk found that the regional dimension of the world order could both be seen as 'containment of negative globalism' and a 'renewal of positive globalism as a world order project'. R. Falk 'Regionalism and world order', in Soderbaum and Shaw, eds, *Theories of new regionalism: a Palgrave reader* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 70–71 and B. Hettne 'The new regionalism revisited', in Soderbaum and Shaw eds, *Theories of new regionalism*, pp. 23–24. .

‘new regionalism’ have shown to exist in many areas of the world can also be found in the rhetoric adopted by the foreign policy elites of Central Asia. Indeed, state leaders in Central Asia often make explicit reference to such regional initiatives as the European Union or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations countries in explaining the rationale for regional diplomatic initiatives.²⁴

While the phenomena and literature associated with ‘new regionalism’ form an important backdrop, this thesis also highlights an important limit of its reach, since Central Asia is a region where substantial co-operation failed. The Central Asian states projected the image of co-operation, and established institutions to undertake regional co-operation efforts, but little actual co-operation ensued. This thesis tries to understand both why there were such extensive diplomatic efforts at generating ‘regionalism-like’ phenomena, and why the global trends of regionalisation did not fully take hold in Central Asia.

International Relations theory: approaches to understanding regional co-operation

Regional co-operation can be assessed with reference to varying levels of analysis or ‘images’ in international politics.²⁵ Explanations at the systemic level may involve the

²⁴ Leaders increasingly stress that the challenges posed by globalisation in Central Asia – such as survival of domestic industries and food production, international drug trafficking and labour migration flows – are best dealt with through regional organisations. See N. Nazarbaev *Kazakhstan na puti uskorennoi ekonomicheskoi, sotsialnoi i politicheskoi modernizatsii*, (Speech in Astana, 2005); S. Primbetov, ‘EvrAzES i Vsemirnaia torgovaia organizatsia’, *Kazakhstan Spekter* 2004, no. 3.

²⁵ Kenneth Waltz introduced three levels of analysis: the individual, the state (unit) or the inter-state system (systemic); the state is the ‘second image’ while the systemic is the third image. In this thesis I focus on two of these – the unit and systemic levels. I am excluding attention to the ‘first image’ and the associated strategies and behaviours of state leaders since, even if likely to offer some interesting perspectives, this approach would necessitate a unduly narrow focus for analysis. K. N. Waltz, *Man, the state and war: A theoretical analysis*: Columbia University Press: New York, 1959) and D. Singer,

sum of interactions between states, including external imposition on a region by a hegemonic power; or it may refer to other systemic processes, such as region-wide economic interdependence or trans-national elite networks. By contrast, there are also explanations of international affairs that emphasise unit level or domestic aspects within states. These factors may be the consequences of the type of political system, the interests of domestic social groups or varying degrees of state capacity.

Below, I present five different approaches to understanding failed regional co-operation in Central Asia. These approaches often surface, explicitly or implicitly, in the literature on Central Asia – either as stand-alone accounts or bundled together. Here I present ‘crystallised’ versions of these approaches and link them to distinct theories of international relations. In the next chapter I will assess key works in the literature on the region that relate to Central Asian co-operation.

Systemic level (3rd image) approaches

Realism I: Great-power engagement

The most common way scholars assess the international relations of Central Asia is by viewing the region as an arena for great-power competition. A crude yet widespread version of this approach is the notion that the region is returning to the dynamic of the historical ‘Great Game’ of Central Asia in the 19th century and the associated geopolitical competition between outside powers.²⁶ This Great Game

'The level-of-analysis problem in International Relations', in Knorr and Verba, eds, *The International System. Theoretical essays*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 237.

²⁶ Great Game approaches dominate the English as well as Russian and Chinese academic literature on Central Asia. Rossen Vassilev notes: ‘Since the break up of the USSR in December 1991, Russia

approach uses a realist starting point: the international system is anarchic and states are concerned with their survival, which introduces competition and rivalry between states. The Great Game approach is underpinned by a central geopolitical postulate: spatial dispositions of continents and oceans and the distribution of natural and human resources are central to the way the international system is structured.²⁷ States with the greatest material capabilities are the ones most likely to survive in the international system. This system triggers competition for resources on a global scale by the most powerful states. It follows that great powers like Russia and the US have natural, conflicting interests in controlling the territories and resources of Central Asia.²⁸ Moreover, since the outside actors are enormously more powerful than the local states, their struggle and strategies will matter most in determining political developments in the region – including patterns of co-operation. In other words, outside competition drives the international relations of the region. If intra-regional co-operation fails, this – as all other international relations of the region – is seen as due to great-power competition.²⁹

Turkey, and Iran, the historic regional powers, have been vying for predominance... as each regards the oil rich region as within its traditional sphere of influence. But now a fourth player, the West, has joined the competition in this remote, but strategically located corner of the former Soviet Union.' R. Vassiliev, 'Caspian Oil – the new Great Game', *Jamestown Monitor Prism*, 12 January 1996. See also F. Starr, 'Making Eurasia stable', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 75, no. 1, January/February 1996; Z. Brzezinski *The grand chessboard*; X. Xu, *Oil and gas linkages between Central Asia and China: a geopolitical perspective* (Houston: James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, 1998); R. Menon, 'The new Great Game in Central Asia', *Survival*, vol. 45, no. 2, 2003.

²⁷ J. A. Agnew *Geopolitics: re-visioning world politics* (London: Routledge, 2003).

²⁸ Arguments such as these mirror points put forward by Harold Mackinder, who noted in a 1904 essay that domination of the Eurasian Heartland was essential for states aiming to control world affairs, H. J. Mackinder, 'The geographical pivot of history', *Geographical Journal*, vol. 23, 1904.

²⁹ While variations of this approach are common in the literature on the international relations of Central Asia, there have also been some critics: see L. Jonson 'The new geopolitical situation', in Chufrin, ed., *The security of the Caspian Sea Region* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) and B. Z. Rumer, *Central Asia: a gathering storm?* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2002).

A more sophisticated version of this approach uses some of the conceptual tools in Barry Buzan and Ole Waever's 'Regional Security Complex Theory'.³⁰ Buzan and Waever argue that the international system encompasses several regional security complexes.³¹ Central Asia may constitute one such regional security complex. External powers can re-define the power structure in a region by supporting particular states, whether militarily or economically.³² Buzan stresses that the greatest effect of external powers is on the underlying distribution of power in a region (structure), and that there is less impact on the pattern of local hostilities (process).³³ Moreover, Buzan supports Cantori and Spiegel's findings from 1970: 'in general the experience of intrusive powers has been that it is easier to impose conflict than cooperation upon members of a subordinate system'.³⁴ In other words, penetration by outside great powers may act to amplify structural divisions within a region, thereby making co-operation difficult.

The only conditions under which outside penetration by great powers would not enhance structural divisions is one of 'overlay' by one power.³⁵ Buzan and Waever note that overlay may either take the form of imperialism or of unequal alliances, in which case 'local security concerns are subordinated to the security orientation of the dominating power, and this orientation is reinforced by the stationing of that power's

³⁰ B. Buzan and O. Waever, *Regions and powers: the structure of international security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

³¹ Buzan defines a regional security complex as 'a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently to closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another'. B. Buzan, *People, states and fear: An agenda for international security in the post-Cold War era* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 190. Interestingly Buzan and Waever are unsure what the precise label for Central Asia should be: a regional security complex or a sub-regional security complex.

³² *Ibid.* pp. 212–13.

³³ *Ibid.* pp. 214–15.

³⁴ L. J. Cantori and S. L. Spiegel, *The international politics of regions: a comparative approach* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970), pp. 30–31.

³⁵ B. Buzan, *People, states and fear*, pp. 214–15.

military forces directly within the local complex'.³⁶ European and Japanese relations with the US are one typical example, according to the two authors. There is a fine line between 'heavy penetration' of a regional security complex by great powers, and 'overlay'. Buzan and Waever hold that the central difference with mere penetration is, that in contrast to overlay, with penetration it is still the local states that shape the main security dynamics - not outside powers. Overlay will normally mean that the outside powers have substantial military forces in the region.³⁷ In any case, where there is penetration by more than one great power, or where there is overlay by more than one power (as was the case with the East/West division of Europe during the Cold War), structural divisions are enhanced – and co-operation is rendered more difficult.

By contrast, overlay by one power should provide fertile ground for co-operation, since divisions between states would be suppressed. In this sense, Buzan and Waever's notion of overlay by one outside power bears a strong resemblance to the concept of hegemony. Indeed, Buzan and Waever seem to use the two concepts synonymously.³⁸ Many key works in the international relations literature on hegemony focus on co-operation. Robert Keohane notes that hegemony is likely to foster co-operation, and also that hegemonic rule benefits from increased co-operation

³⁶ Buzan and Waever add, 'The local states acquiesce in their own subordination either because they collectively fear some other power or because they fear the further unrestrained operation of their own security complex' (*Regions and powers*, p. 220). The authors also note: 'The likely result of overlay is that the suppression of the local security dynamic and/or protection against another external power is gained at some, perhaps considerable cost in entanglement with the larger security dynamic of external powers' (idem.)

³⁷ Buzan and Waever *Regions and powers*, p. 63.

³⁸ The two authors note for example that '... semi-voluntary acceptance of overlay [is] when local states agree to subordinate themselves to a significant degree to an outside hegemon, and accept the stationing of its forces on their territory' (Ibid.)

between subordinated states.³⁹ As I will discuss further in the next chapter, for Keohane, a hegemon is a state that is powerful enough to maintain ‘the essential rules’ governing inter-state relations.⁴⁰

The above approaches provide two different accounts of why co-operation has failed in Central Asia. In the first version, competition between outside states has introduced or aggravated structural differences in the region, making it impossible for Central Asian states to work together effectively. In turn, co-operation in trade or water can be said to have halted due to competing outside schemes, or because the level of hostile relations has ruled out co-operation on ‘soft’ issues like trade. In security co-operation, military deployments and military alignments with outside powers have provided the primary focus for the states of the region, and precluded the establishment of viable co-operation mechanisms.

In the other version, that of overlay by one outside power or hegemony, there should in theory be fertile grounds for co-operation. However, the converse might also be true: whether due to insufficient engagement by an outside dominant power, or to the inability of this power to provide sufficient ‘essential rules’, co-operation could be undermined. Thus a structurally predominant power like Russia may be unable to bring all states in Central Asia fully into its sphere of domination with regard to trade, water and security. According to this approach, Russia might be unwilling or too weak to be able to impose ‘essential rules’ concerning these issues.

³⁹ R. O. Keohane, *After hegemony: cooperation and discord in the world political economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 46.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Realism II: local power competition and safeguarding the national interest

An alternative realist approach is one that stresses the importance of local powers and their rivalry, rather than the role of outside powers, as the key to explaining failed inter-state co-operation. In this approach, local small states have leverage over and, to some extent, manage great-power intervention in the region.⁴¹

Assuming that local states hold sway in the affairs of the region, they may still compete among themselves according to a realist logic. Classical realism in the version presented by Hans J. Morgenthau offers a useful starting point here.

Morgenthau argues that countries and their state leaders 'act in terms of interest defined as power'.⁴² The struggle for influence and control lies at the heart of international politics. In pursuing a rational foreign policy, a state will attempt to minimise the risks and maximise the benefits in order to entrench its power.⁴³ Co-operation between states is not impossible, according to Morgenthau, but most states will still act in a rational manner to maximise benefits that serve national interests.⁴⁴

Realists, both classical and neo-realist, are generally sceptical about the prospects for

⁴¹ M. Efrat and J. Bercovitch, *Superpowers and client states in the Middle East: the imbalance of influence* (London: Routledge, 1991).

⁴² H. J. Morgenthau, *Politics among nations: the struggle for power and peace* (New York: Knopf 1973), p. 5.

⁴³ Ibid. pp. 7–10. Morgenthau's stress here on 'rational' behaviour is interesting: the use of rationality as a starting point unites classical realism and neo-liberalism. The neo-liberal perspective holds that certain forms of co-operation may be the most rational way for states to accommodate national interests and that maintaining co-operative relationships and regimes becomes part of a state's long term interest because this path best mitigates transaction costs. See R.O. Keohane and J. S. Nye, *Power and interdependence: world politics in transition* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977); D. A. Baldwin, *Neorealism and neoliberalism: the contemporary debate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

⁴⁴ The issue of co-operation in Morgenthau's *Politics among nations* is complicated. Morgenthau avoids dealing with co-operation by excluding it from his definition of 'international politics': 'International politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power. Whatever the ultimate aims of international politics, power is always the immediate aim. [States] may also further its realisation through non-political means, such as technical cooperation with other nations or international organisations. But whenever they strive to realise their goals by means of international politics they do so by striving for power.' Morgenthau, *Politics among nations*, p. 29.

co-operation. If there are issues that call for co-operation, states might engage – but a key premise of realist approaches is that attention to state interests trumps all other concerns. When inter-state co-operation does not fulfil this criterion, states will disengage from co-operation. The fear of losing sovereignty in co-operation schemes also fits a realist approach – in a realist perspective, state survival is the primary concern, and any initiatives that might lessen sovereignty could be viewed as threats to the continued existence or independence of a state.⁴⁵

The central and underlying premise of realism, that states maximise benefits and pursue national interests, is shared by neo-liberal institutionalism.⁴⁶ In this way, the approach I have labelled ‘realism II’ may equally well be termed ‘rationalist’. The concept of national interest, which figure prominently in most ‘rational’ approaches, is, of course, also a problematic notion.⁴⁷ While recognising the limitations to the following version of the concept, in this thesis I take national interest to be ‘what the nation, i.e. the decision maker, decides it is’.⁴⁸

Finally, a key difference between realist and neo-liberalist assessment of co-operation worth noting, is that realists argue that states are likely to disapprove of relative gains

⁴⁵ The case for the relevance of threat perception is put forward by Stephen Walt, *The origins of alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

⁴⁶ Keohane and Nye, *Power and interdependence*; Baldwin *Neorealism and neoliberalism*.

⁴⁷ James N. Rosenau stresses the problems with the concept of national interest by noting that ‘What is best for a nation in foreign affairs is never self-evident. More important, it is not even potentially knowable as a singular objective truth. Men are bound to differ on what constitute the most appropriate goals for a nation. For, to repeat, goals and interests are value-laden. They involve subjective preferences, and thus the cumulation of national interests into a single complex of values is bound to be as variable as the number of observers who use different value frameworks’. J. N. Rosenau ‘National interest’ in D. I Sills ed. *International encyclopedia of the social sciences vol. 11* (New York: Macmillan Company & the Free Press) p. 36

⁴⁸ E.S. Furniss and R. C. Snyder, *An introduction to American foreign policy* (New York: Rinehart, 1955) p.17

by other states and that this can easily halt co-operation efforts.⁴⁹ Neo-liberal approaches portray states as striving for the greatest absolute gains from co-operation, with little concern about whether or not other states gain relatively more in co-operative relationships.

How would an approach that emphasises the rational pursuit of national interest help in understanding the three cases examined in this thesis? Two of them – water and trade – pertain to issues where national interests are relatively easy to identify. Here realism may offer a coherent approach, in which lack of co-operation is attributable to profoundly conflicting state interests or an unwillingness to allow counterparts to obtain absolute or relative gains. In security issues, concerns for survival and loss of sovereignty, including efforts to counter-balance a threatening and structurally dominant state within the region, might act to undermine co-operation.

Interdependence

A third systemic perspective on co-operation in Central Asia takes economics as its starting point. Richard Cobden and Josef Schumpeter have argued that the interconnections between economies in capitalist systems serve as a strong incentive to avoid conflict and war, and as a result, the international economic system may affect degrees of inter-state co-operation.⁵⁰ Economic interdependence, Keohane and

⁴⁹ J. Grieco, 'Anarchy and the limits of cooperation: a realist critique of the newest liberal institutionalism' *International Organization*, vol. 42, no. 3, 1988.

⁵⁰ R. Cobden *The political and economic works of Richard Cobden* (London: Routledge,); J. A. Schumpeter *The theory of economic development: an inquiry into profits, capital, credit, interest, and the business cycle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934).

Nye likewise noted, has spurred co-operation.⁵¹ In Andrew Hurrell's words, neo-liberals like Keohane and Nye stressed that increasing levels of interdependence created a 'demand' for international co-operation. Institutions were purposely generated solutions to collective action problems.⁵²

In a post-Soviet context, according to Mark Webber, high levels of interdependence have provided a strong impetus towards co-operation. Interdependence, he argues, has promoted co-operation – the problem is that other factors have intervened to obstruct these initiatives. By contrast, writers like Friedrich List have noted that market-based economic systems can also generate conflict.⁵³ Similarly, John Mearsheimer has argued that interdependence makes countries vulnerable, and given such insecurities, states will attempt to gain better control or self-sufficiency by force.⁵⁴ Such moves may hinder co-operation.

What light might these assertions shed on co-operation in Central Asia? According to Mearsheimer, countries faced with interdependence will be inclined to emphasise unilateral strategies. Countries are expected to undertake actions that would decrease their dependence on neighbouring countries. Regarding trade, the Central Asian states might see interdependence as a threat to control and self-sufficiency, and thus opt to prioritise domestic production over regional trade co-operation and upholding interdependence. In the case of water, the lack of control over water flows could be defined as a threat; states may react by creating new unilateral mechanisms for control,

⁵¹ Keohane and Nye defined dependence as 'being determined by or significantly affected by external forces', and saw interdependence as 'mutual dependence'. Keohane and Nye, *Power and interdependence*, pp. 7–8.

⁵² A. Hurrell, 'Regionalism in theoretical perspective', pp. 61–62.

⁵³ F. List, *Natural system of political economy* (London: Frank Cass, 1983).

⁵⁴ J. J. Mearsheimer, 'Back to the future: instability in Europe after the Cold War', *International Security*, 1990 vol. 15, no. 5, p. 45.

such as dams and reservoirs for water storage. Such a focus on unilateral mechanisms might, in turn, have damaged regional co-operation solutions to managing trans-border water flows. In the sphere of security, the countries of the region might prefer to rely on and build on their own military capacity rather than emphasising co-operation. Worries about trust, control and loss of sovereignty underpin this approach.

Domestic level (2nd image)

Domestic political systems

The above explanations emphasised systemic factors in the international system, such as the distribution of power or economic relations. Other strands of international relations theory argue that domestic features of individual states matter more for the kind of interaction that takes place between states in the international arena.⁵⁵ Liberal theory is usually associated with this view, although it is possible to interpret other theoretical frameworks, such as constructivism or Marxism, as offering a similar outlook on international relations.

Liberalism may either be a normative theory or an analytical framework, although at times the boundary between the two seems blurred. As a normative theory, liberalism advocates the adoption of democratic or constitutionally just political arrangements within states, claiming that this will ensure progress (i.e. peace) in international

⁵⁵ M. F. Elmann, 'The foreign policies of small states: challenging neorealism in its own backyard', *British Journal of Political Science* 1996 vol. 25, no. 2, April; D. Skidmore and V. M. Hudson *The limits of state autonomy: societal groups and foreign policy formulation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993).

relations.⁵⁶ As an analytical framework, liberal theories assess how domestic political factors, like institutional features or constellations of interest groups, affect the conduct of foreign policy. In contrast to neo-realists, liberal theorists hold that the predicaments of the international political system do not provide a sufficient basis for interpreting state behaviour in the international arena.

Michael Doyle notes there is no canonical description of liberalism; moreover, that it is not immediately apparent how liberalism translates into international theory.⁵⁷ In his view, the one essential and unifying liberal principle is the importance of the freedom of the individual. This principle, in turn, generates in liberal states a commitment to democratic institutions and the protection of freedoms. Liberal states differ from non-liberal states, because they need first and foremost to respond to the demands of the population. These demands, such as increased welfare, may be different from the demands imposed on states from the international system, such as the propensity to compete for military power. This makes liberal states unlikely to fight each other – a central argument of Democratic Peace Theory. If a conflict of interests arises, two liberal states will prefer to solve the problem by peaceful means. ‘Second image’ liberalism therefore would explain the preference for co-operation over conflict by reference to the democratic political institutions in a country.

⁵⁶ N. Angell, *The great illusion* (London: Heinemann, 1912); D. Mitrany, *A working peace system: An argument for the functional development of international organization* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1943).

⁵⁷ M. W. Doyle, *Ways of war and peace: realism, liberalism, and socialism* (New York: Norton, 1998), pp. 206–09.

Charles Tripp offers an interesting explanation of why the non-liberal states in the Middle East have failed to establish co-operative regimes amongst themselves.⁵⁸ Many leaders in these states have constructed political systems that prevent power sharing. The head of state has gathered all power in his office, leaving other institutions or political actors devoid of real political influence. Moves toward regional co-operation might open up a space for pluralism in decision-making processes, or for criticism of the leaders, because a range of different actors and institutions would need to be involved in the realisation of such co-operation. Tripp's insights indicate that non-democratic states are likely to dismiss co-operative mechanisms, and that their institutional cultures are generally averse to negotiation and compromise. Etel Solingen offers a similar analysis of Middle Eastern affairs. Solingen holds that the statist-nationalist regimes of the region, which favoured Import Substitution Strategies (ISI), state intervention and an important role for the armed forces, viewed effective regional co-operation as threatening.⁵⁹

The Central Asian states are nominal democracies. Their constitutions prescribe strong presidential power. Officially, checks on presidential powers exist through the parliaments, supreme courts and the constitutions themselves. Nevertheless, as I will highlight in Chapter 2, the political processes in Central Asia have been distinctly undemocratic. Some of the states have also avoided economic liberalisation. These tendencies, coupled with the concentration of presidential power may affect inter-state

⁵⁸ C. Tripp, 'Regional organisation in the Arab Middle East' in Fawcett and Hurrell eds, *Regionalism in world politics*.

⁵⁹ E. Solingen, *Regional orders at century's dawn: global and domestic influences on grand strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 3-16; and M. Barnett and E. Solingen, 'Designed to fail or failure of design? The origins and legacy of the Arab League', in Acharya and Johnston, eds, *Crafting cooperation: the design and effect of regional institutions in comparative perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2007.

co-operation in Central Asia in a manner similar to that observed by Tripp and Solingen in the Middle East.

This view would expect that the lack of co-operation on water issues might be due to reluctance to seek compromise and delegate control over water management issues to supranational institutions. Similarly, concerns about the potential loss of the regime's control over the economy might prevent Central Asian state leaders from initiating trade co-operation as well as trade liberalisation. For security issues, it might be argued that authoritarian regimes that rely heavily on organs of law enforcement avoid co-operation between neighbouring branches of law enforcement – both due to distrust of neighbouring regimes, and because they seek to protect the secrecy aspects of their law enforcement work.

State weakness

Another unit level (2nd image) approach to understanding Central Asian regional co-operation stresses the state structure itself, rather than type of regime. In this perspective, as Fareed Zakaria notes, foreign policy becomes partly a function of state strength.⁶⁰

A defining feature of state practices in Central Asia in the period under study was the tendency of state officials to blur the boundary between private and state interests.

These practices went beyond mere rent-seeking for the purpose of personal gain.

Indeed, 'greed' does not adequately capture the logic behind these practices. Rather,

⁶⁰ F. Zakaria *From wealth to power: the unusual origins of America's world role* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 3-13.

the decentralisation of formal and informal revenue generation enabled local level state representatives to maintain positions of authority and retain some degree of oversight and control in contexts of large-scale societal and state transformations. The central leadership tacitly tolerated, endorsed or acquiesced in nominally irregular practices at the local level. They did so because it was these very practices that generated allegiance of powerful local level leaders to the central leadership. In this way, informal and nominally illegitimate practices were part and parcel of efforts to maintain political control at local and central levels.

In the next chapter I will elaborate further on this phenomenon, drawing on Max Weber's concept of 'indirect rule'.⁶¹ Here at the outset, however, it bears stressing that while this tolerance for irregular practice was a reasonably effective way of maintaining authority, the system created two serious difficulties for regional co-operation initiatives. The flaws in the state's formal taxation system exacerbated grave shortfalls in state budgets. As a result, the states were unable to muster funds for the implementation of joint regional activities.

Moreover, inter-state co-operation efforts that called for lower-level state agents to set aside their private interests were likely to run into considerable difficulties. By contrast, initiatives that corresponded to both private and state interests, or did not interfere with private interests, enjoyed a greater likelihood of success.

From a 'weak state' perspective, trade co-operation foundered because trade liberalisation efforts ran counter to bribe-seeking by officials within the state structure.

⁶¹ M. Weber, 'The profession and vocation of politics', in Lassman and Speirs, eds, *Weber: political writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 315.

With regard to water, the state machinery for managing water flows was not functioning smoothly, partly due to the manipulations of local-level officials, which in turn made it difficult for states to monitor and allocate water shares amongst themselves. In the case of security, the inability to control and pay lower-level officials may have created a symbiotic relationship with organised crime groups, facilitating the flows of drugs and illegal migration; and this might have acted to undermine officially proclaimed strategies of co-operation. Military structures might have proven too weak financially to initiate forceful action against security threats – let alone possessed the resources to maintain regular co-operation activities with other states in response to these threats.

In this way, attention to state weakness might help us to understand why regional co-operation has so often failed. It can also offer insights into another puzzle in regional co-operation in Central Asia, one that the other approaches generally fail to explain: why was there such extensive commitment to and rhetoric in favour of inter-state co-operation, and yet so little follow-up? As I will discuss later, the reliance on symbolic state-making, or façade-making, might be another characteristic feature of the foreign policy conduct of weak states in the post-Soviet area.

Methods and research design

Case studies

The research presented here has been organised around three case studies. Each case is an example of failed co-operation between the Central Asian states, but in a

different sphere of co-operation: water, trade, and security. This selection of cases is useful: there is good variance between them, in particular with regard to the level of great-power engagement and degrees of interdependence. All of these cases represent issues of vital significance to the Central Asian states, but they vary between cases focused on 'high' or 'hard' politics' like security, and those dealing with 'low' or 'soft' politics like trade and water – although water could also be said to be central to the economic security of the Central Asian states, and thereby comprise 'high' politics.⁶²

J.C. Mitchell defines case studies as 'a detailed examination of an event (or series of events) which the analyst believes exhibits (or exhibit) the operation of some identified theoretical principle'.⁶³ A study of cases is useful because it allows for 'process tracing' – for the researcher 'to examine the process whereby initial case conditions are translated into case outcomes'.⁶⁴ As noted earlier, this approach allows me to assess a range of variables in forging an *understanding* of regional co-operation patterns.

This thesis will assess international relations involving all Central Asian states except Turkmenistan. While it may have been relevant to include Turkmenistan as well, the difficulties involved conducting primary research in that country ruled out its inclusion. The other countries offer interesting variation. Uzbekistan is a country with high degrees of interdependence but has promoted regional co-operation alternatives

⁶² On 'high' and 'low' politics see J. S. Nye 'Patterns and catalysts in regional integration'.

⁶³ J. C. Mitchell, 'Case and situational analysis', *Sociological Review*, vol. 31, 1983, quoted in H. Rose 'Case studies' in Allan and Skinner, eds, *Handbook for research students in the social sciences*. (London: Falmer, 1991).

⁶⁴ S. Van Evera, *Guide to methods for students of political science* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 54.)

less vigorously than neighbouring Kazakhstan. Both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are considerably larger in population size and economy, than the smaller states Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

The period of study is 1991-2004. This allows me to trace co-operation patterns for the whole post-Soviet period. The main bulk of my field work was undertaken in early 2005, thereby making 2004 the most appropriate cut-off point for my assessment. An epilogue to this thesis comments on developments in the region after 31 December 2004.

Challenges

Central Asia is a challenging setting for conducting research, for at least two reasons. One is the post-totalitarian nature of the region's regimes. The new countries in Central Asia possess state machineries that developed in Soviet times and are staffed predominantly by personnel who received their training and formative work experience during the Soviet era. This legacy endows the institutions with a set of practices that pose definite challenges to an international relations researcher wishing to interview representatives of the state. Under the Soviet system, access to state officials was very limited for anyone not affiliated with official organisations. Even today, there is still no culture of responsiveness to requests for information, nor a sense of being at the service of a larger public. This institutional culture makes it difficult for the researcher to come into contact with state officials and civil servants. High-level official approval is necessary for a meeting, and meetings with foreigners must theoretically be facilitated and registered with the protocol department in the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs. If a foreigner has no official accreditation in the country or is not attached to a diplomatic or international mission, the protocol department will frequently turn down a request for a meeting or delay the application indefinitely.

I had no diplomatic affiliation to draw on, and also faced time constraints. I solved the problem of access by relying on my own network of contacts to set up informal meetings with state officials. The officials agreed to meet with me as a friendly favour to my contacts and after assurances on my part that this would not be an official meeting (in which case the official would have needed to file a report to his superior). This is one reason why my respondents are not listed by name, although, as discussed below, there are also other considerations related to confidentiality and ethics. In some cases I asked a particularly well-connected acquaintance to assist me – that person's main contribution being to organise a set of meetings with members of his/her network. My level of access increased substantially as a result of this strategy in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan – though less so in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Clearly, as I discuss below, this strategy had implications for sampling procedures.

The second reason why conducting research in Central Asia is a challenge also relates to the post-totalitarian nature of the new state, but centres specifically on the handling of information. The information that state officials possess is often treated as the special property of the civil servant in question. It is seen as good bureaucratic practice to reveal as little as possible of this information (even if it is of a seemingly commonplace nature) to outsiders.

Corruption and ethics

Corruption, however, also affects the conduct of officials. At relatively little expense, one may purchase various crucial statistics and government reports. These reports might give the researcher substantial new insights into the international relations of Central Asia and render the politics of the region more intelligible. In my case, the foundations for this thesis could be solidified with such data. However, the purchase of information in this manner is by law criminal, and could put the researcher in danger. It would also mean engaging in a practice (corruption) that is seriously undermining the economic development of the region. Any participation in bribery would, on the micro-level, lend support to trends of continued underdevelopment. I categorically turned down every opportunity I had to purchase information – even when the alternative was to receive no information.

Façade-making: methodological implications

There is a further dimension to gathering information in Central Asia. Even if the researcher gets complete access – whether to a report, statistics or a full-scale oral account of an issue by an official – this information usually matches the prevailing ‘official line’ of state dogma. The information given in official reports and in interviews with officials pertains solely to the official activities and opinions of the state machinery. These sources rarely, if ever, admit that there exist any processes, facts or practices that, if acknowledged, would fundamentally undermine the official account. This practice relates to a theoretical point to be made later in this thesis: that Central Asian states made laborious and serious efforts at creating an official façade in the 1990s.

Government statistics, official reports or an official's meeting with a foreigner are precisely the type of social arenas in which façade construction takes place. We can therefore expect interviews and document analysis to yield only information that reflects state dogma or the official description and position on an issue, while any information indicating negative trends or failure will routinely be omitted or suppressed.⁶⁵ This problem has represented a challenge for my research, since I have wished to include both formal and informal aspects of state practices. I have therefore complemented official reports and interviews with state officials with my own immediate observations and interviews or written accounts by individuals who encounter the two versions of the state, both the façade and the informal practice, in their everyday lives.

Discourses

I should also mention another dimension to information and knowledge in Central Asia. This issue pertains to information produced and communicated by foreigners in the region. Given the restrictions on state information, diplomatic missions, multilateral organisations and international NGOs are useful sources for the researcher. Reports and interviews with representatives of such organisations can provide a complementary third perspective – different from that of both the state and the citizens who encounter the state in their everyday lives. It is important to stress, however, that there may be serious limitations or biases in the information communicated by these external and often apparently impartial agents.

⁶⁵ D. Mikosz, 'Poverty: learning to say the P word', *Transitions Online (TOL)*, 5 March 2004.

A study by S. Neil MacFarlane and Stina Torjesen found serious shortcomings in the understandings of conflict potential and weapons proliferation in the region put forth by foreign development practitioners and academics. The study argued that the prevailing discourse in relation to investigations and intervention in the sphere of conflict prevention and weapons proliferation prevented practitioners and academics from taking into account important aspects of Central Asian societies.⁶⁶ A ‘discourse’ can be defined as both a body of knowledge and a set of conditions and procedures that regulate how people may appropriately communicate and use that knowledge.⁶⁷

The choice of topic and the distinct challenges involved in doing research in Central Asia have compelled me to include non-traditional approaches that differ from usual methods of international relations research concerning Central Asia. This approach arguably represents a positive innovation for international relations research on Central Asia. The innovation is two-fold. First I have deliberately focused not only on data collection in the capitals of the Central Asian states, but have also travelled to and lived in peripheral border areas and regional centres near borders, in order to assess inter-state practices that manifest themselves in these areas. Secondly, I have used research methods not usually applied in international relations. I have conducted participant observation in border areas and, as noted above, instead of relying solely on interviews with people who *represent* the state, I have also included interviews with people who *encounter* the state in their everyday activities.

⁶⁶ S. N. MacFarlane and S. Torjesen, ‘Awash with weapons?: the case of small arms in Kyrgyzstan’, *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 24, no. 1, March 2005.

⁶⁷ This is the definition given in the entry for ‘Discourse’ in A. Barnard and J. Spencer *Encyclopedia of social and cultural anthropology* (London: Routledge, 1996).

Triangulation

The use of a wide range of methods and sources provides ample scope for triangulation. In this thesis I have combined qualitative interviewing with document analysis and participant observation. Alan Bryman defines triangulation as ‘the use of more than one approach to the investigation of a research question in order to enhance confidence in the ensuing findings’.⁶⁸ Triangulation can mean both within-method triangulation and between-method triangulation. The former implies the use of varieties of the same method to investigate a research issue, while the latter denotes the use of contrasting research methods such as interviews and participant observation. I have employed both types of triangulation, interviewing various categories of individuals while inquiring about similar kinds of topics. Combining participant observation with interviews and document analysis allows between-method triangulation in the analysis of research results. Nevertheless, the mere use of triangulation itself is no guarantee that my research results and analysis are sound. The degree of rigor applied in each individual method will still be decisive for whether my research is credible. Moreover, I do not subscribe to an epistemological approach that argues for the possibility of a single definitive account of the social world (see discussion below).⁶⁹ That is to say, I do not believe that, if the results from my multi-method approach are mutually corroborative, I will have discovered the true or real pattern of co-operation in Central Asia. However, I argue that the use of triangulation has added richness and complexity to my inquiry – thereby also enhancing the plausibility and credibility of the research.

⁶⁸ A. Bryman, *Social research methods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Allan and Skinner *Handbook for research students in the social sciences*; G. Allan, ‘Qualitative research’, in Allan and Skinner eds, *Handbook*, p. 179.

⁶⁹ A. Bryman, *Social research methods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Fieldwork

The time and financial resources at my disposal allowed me to undertake four months of fieldwork in the winter and spring of 2005. I spent approximately one month in each of the four countries, with research in the capitals and the border regions. In the capitals, I collected documents and statistics and undertook interviews with members of the foreign policy-making community of the particular country. I also collected newspaper articles from library archives. In the regions, I interviewed lower-level state officials or representatives of state agencies, as well as ordinary members of the public and others with insights concerning inter-state practices in the regions – such as journalists, village elders, international and local NGO representatives and opposition activists.

This four-month fieldwork stay represented a continuation of previous extensive fieldwork in the region that I had undertaken for the Small Arms Survey on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) proliferation.⁷⁰ In that connection, I spent two months in Kyrgyzstan in 2003 and four months in Tajikistan in 2004. Much of my time in Kyrgyzstan was spent in the southern border areas (Jalalabad, Osh and Batken provinces). In Tajikistan I spent considerable time in Tajikistani–Uzbekistani border areas in Khatlon and Sughd Oblast, and in Kyrgyzstani–Tajikistani border areas like

⁷⁰ The Small Arms Survey (SAS) is a research project under the Graduate Institute of International Studies, University of Geneva and is directed by Professor Keith Krause. The field work in Central Asia resulted in the two SAS occasional papers: S. N. MacFarlane and S. Torjesen *Kyrgyzstan: a small arms anomaly in Central Asia?*, Small Arms Survey Occasional Paper no. 12 (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, 2004). and S. Torjesen, C. Wille and S. N. MacFarlane *Tajikistan's road to stability: the reduction in small arms proliferation and remaining challenges*, Occasional Paper no. 17 (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, 2005). And also: S. N. MacFarlane and S. Torjesen *Small Arms in Kyrgyzstan: Post-revolutionary Proliferation*, Occasional Paper No. 12 (Geneva: Small Arms Survey 2007) revised and updated, 2nd edition.

Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast, the Rasht Valley and eastern parts of Soghd Oblast (Isfara district). A key focus of this research was to assess potential cross-border flows of weapons and drugs as well as the role of law enforcement agencies in preventing, or alternatively facilitating, these flows. As part of the Tajikistan study I developed a focus-group methodology and arranged for the conducting of 76 focus groups with ordinary citizens across Tajikistan. I also undertook over 260 interviews during my SALW research (many of these were set up by the UNDP). Most of these interviews were with representatives of the state, in particular those of law enforcement agencies such as the state prosecutor's office, the police, the security services, the border guards, the customs agencies and the army. The focus-group findings and the interviews provided unique insights into cross-border activities in Central Asia and into how state agencies in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan function. These insights were of key importance in defining the research topic for this doctoral thesis. The network of contacts established during my SALW research also proved useful in gaining access to officials as well as generating high levels of trust when interviewing persons outside the state system and probing about informal – often nominally illegal – activities in an area.

Qualitative interviews

Each method employed in the fieldwork for this doctoral thesis posed distinct challenges. Interviews were my main method, and here I found the most helpful form to be semi-structured interviews. In semi-structured interviews, the respondent is allowed to expand on answers to questions, while interviewers may use their

knowledge to probe beyond ‘yes’ or ‘no’ responses.⁷¹ This technique has the advantage of allowing the researcher to uncover actor perceptions about given social phenomena. For this thesis, I asked state officials with some relation to foreign policy-making in Central Asian states, as well as foreign policy experts, to share their views on why co-operation has tended to fail. In addition, I interviewed several other individuals in the capitals and in the border regions. The prevailing perceptions of those interviewed are of course subjective opinions and should not be seen as accounts of what ‘really’ happened (indeed, it might well be questioned whether *any* method in the social sciences can uncover what society is ‘really’ like). These subjective opinions may involve a motivated bias. Interview objects will tend to present versions that shed a favourable light on their actions, in turn shaping an account of an issue. Alternatively there may be an audience bias, where the interviewee presents versions of events he or she thinks the interviewer wants to hear. A mapping of differing subjective opinions may nevertheless be useful. I attempted to cover the same topics systematically with most respondents, and made every effort to explore in similar detail each occurrence of significant phenomena.⁷² This method provided a range of explanations and accounts, which I later assessed for plausibility in relation to each other and against findings from other data sources (cf. point on triangulation above).

Beyond the issue of subjectivity, however, there is a further problem: that of the interviewer, and the relationship between interviewer and interview object. The literature on interviewing technique discusses relationships in which the interviewer is perceived as more powerful than the interview object, noting the potential for abuse

⁷¹ C. Jones, 'Qualitative interviewing' in Allan and Skinner, eds., *Handbook*, p. 203.

⁷² *Ibid.*

and data distortion as a consequence.⁷³ During interviews with officials, however, I was often faced with the reverse situation. As a young, female foreign student, I rarely made the usually older, influential and mostly male bureaucrats and experts feel disempowered. Still, this inequality could cause difficulties. It further increased the likelihood of being denied access. Occasionally it meant that the topics I raised were dismissed or rejected as insignificant by the interviewee. Moreover, as a Norwegian citizen I was labelled a 'foreigner' by my interviewees. For bureaucrats and experts in post-Soviet foreign policy establishments, this identification sometimes induced caution as to what kinds of information they were willing to share. As a general rule, they perceived matters of state strategy as something not to be shared with foreign nationals, especially not with 'Westerners'. In addition, many interviewees had a general inclination to stick to state dogma and to gloss over any embarrassing failures, in particular when there was exposure from the outside.⁷⁴

A key purpose in most of the interviews, especially with respondents outside the state apparatus, was to gain insights on informal practices that ran counter to official state strategies. Sometimes these informal practices were illegal. An interviewee would share insights on this only if there was a high level of trust between us. To this end, I employed some or all of the following strategies: I set up meetings with acquaintances of friends or contacts of these who trusted my integrity as a researcher and who 'vouched' for me; I met with people outside the public sphere (in their homes or the houses of friends); I guaranteed anonymity; I never started an interview by asking direct questions; I handed out business cards printed in Russian indicating that I was a

⁷³ A. Oakley, *Telling the truth about Jerusalem: a collection of essays and poems* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

⁷⁴ D. Mikosz, 'Poverty: learning to say the P word'; and S. N. MacFarlane and S. Torjesen 'Hunting Guns' *Transitions Online (TOL)* 5 March 2004.

doctoral student from the University of Oxford; and only in exceptional cases did I tape the interviews. The literature on interview techniques strongly recommends the use of a tape recorder since it increases the level of accuracy and allows for more detailed analysis of statements and discourses.⁷⁵ However, tape recorders are regarded with suspicion in Central Asia; using a tape recorder would have lessened the likelihood of obtaining material on issues central to my study. Instead I took extensive notes while interviewing and typed up an electronic version of the interview immediately afterwards. The interviews were conducted in Russian, a language that I speak fluently.

The challenges associated with access highlighted earlier as well as the importance of establishing trust discussed above have limited the sampling strategies available to me. Constraints on research in Central Asia compelled me to use a nonprobability sampling technique, that is, using personal contacts in order to create a referral (or snowball) sample.⁷⁶ This precludes the possibility that interviews with particular individuals can be seen as representative of the opinions of a larger group. The referral sampling technique also raises the likelihood that there are non-random errors such as an unbalanced set of interviews and an unbalanced type of data being produced. These potential shortcomings have elevated further the importance of triangulation. By contrasting interview findings with the results of document analysis and participant observation I have been able to better guard against biases in my overall research results.

⁷⁵ Bryman, *Social research methods*.

⁷⁶ S.W. Rivera, P.M. Kozyreva, E.G. Sarovskii 'Interviewing political elites: lessons from Russia' *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 35, no 4, 2002.

In interviews where trust levels were low, or in particular when interviewing state officials or members of state agencies such as the law enforcement, I often encountered statements that sounded clearly implausible and which an observer with some knowledge of Central Asian societies would recognise as highly questionable. In most cases, these statements could be explained by reference to attempts at ‘state façade-making’, or simply self-protection. On the other hand, such behaviour may not always have been conscious or deliberate. If so, such statements would indicate exceptional degrees of cognitive dissonance on part of the interview object, or exceptional degrees of motivated biases equivalent to self-denial. When researching the informal exchange of favours (*blat*) in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia, Alena Ledeneva discovered that individuals who obviously engaged in such activities would sometimes still deny having done so, and tended to define the activity differently. To Ledeneva this re-labelling amounted to self-deception or a form of lying.⁷⁷ Regardless of the reasons or forms of these implausible statements, they made me particularly cautious in analysing the material generated in interviews. I always checked for compatibility and probability in relation to other interview statements and other source material.

Finally, a note on the confidentiality of my interviewees. I noted above that since most state officials could not meet with me formally, I am not identifying my interviewees by name – only by date, type of position and city. A further reason, however, and this applies also to individuals not affiliated with state structures, is that the topics discussed were quite frequently of a sensitive kind. Given the illiberal political climate in Central Asia, some individuals could face repercussions if I were

⁷⁷ A. Ledeneva, *Russia's economy of favours: blat, networking and informal exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

to identify them as sources. By withholding the names of all my interviewees I am conforming to standard ethical guidelines for social research, which stress that a researcher should ‘protect research participants and honouring trust’ and that ‘informants and other research participants have the right to remain anonymous and to have their rights to privacy and confidentiality respected’.⁷⁸ In two of the interviews I have gone beyond withholding names, and also withheld place and type of position. One interview was diplomatically controversial and it was therefore important not to indicate the city. The other contained exceptionally sensitive material related to subversive actions against one of the regimes in Central Asia, and it was therefore important to give extra protection to this specific source.

Document analysis

The second main method, document and newspaper analysis, involved some similar problems. The main documents I assessed were official state reports and press statements pertaining to inter-state co-operation in the region, as well as reports and assessments by international organisations on regional co-operation. I had to treat official state reports and statistics with caution, as they were likely to reveal only material adhering to state dogma, rather than material questioning it or shedding light on issues beyond the official line. Additionally, as I argued above, international organisations have distinct discursive practices. These shape the material published in reports.

⁷⁸ Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth *Ethical guidelines for good research practice*, 1999. pp. 2-4

I undertook an extensive review of the press in the four countries. In some cases I hired a student to select and photocopy newspaper articles in the national libraries, as time constraints prevented me from doing this myself. Access to national libraries was also sometimes a problem.

The media face constraints in all four countries, although to highly differing degrees. There exists direct censorship and at times repression of journalists, as well as high levels of self-censorship in the states of the region. It has also been claimed that journalists sometimes accept money to write favourable stories on particular issues. These aspects of news-making in Central Asia will shape the type of news stories selected and how they are covered, which again calls for caution in analysing the material. Kyrgyzstan has been characterised by a comparatively free press, in particular during the mid-1990s. For example, Kyrgyzstani newspapers frequently mentioned illicit informal practices and the likelihood of state involvement in them. I have therefore found it constructive to assess the country's main newspaper, *Vechernii Bishkek*, in greater detail. I examined *Vechernii Bishkek* from 1993 to 2004, while papers in other countries (*Pravda Vostoka* in Uzbekistan, and *Biznes i Politika* in Tajikistan) only from 1998–2004. In Kazakhstan I surveyed the monthly current affairs magazine *Kontinent* from 2000 (when it started) to 2004. *Kontinent*, compared with other media outlets in Kazakhstan, incorporates a relatively strong focus on regional affairs and regional co-operation. All of these were major, mainstream publications that enjoyed some degrees of independence from the government. In the media survey, I selected stories related to the following topics: trade, water, border issues, drugs, migration, security, regional organisations, and bilateral relations.

Participant observation

The third method was that of participant observation. This method, usually adopted by anthropologists or sociologists, embodies strict and demanding criteria. The researcher is expected to spend considerable time in a particular community, integrate with its members and speak the language. Given my time constraints and the need to cover all four countries, I was not able to meet all these criteria – but I have generated many insights by using a method similar to participant observation. During my four months of fieldwork, I often lived in the family homes of state officials. In Dushanbe (capital of Tajikistan) I stayed with a recently retired adviser to the Minister of Industry, who was also a former high-ranking officer in (what he himself labelled as) the former Soviet propaganda ministry. In Tashkent (capital of Uzbekistan) I stayed with the deputy head of the international relations department in the Ministry of Culture. In Astana (capital of Kazakhstan) I stayed with a young First Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and spent time socialising with the First Secretary's colleagues, including one who was working on TAS and Central Asian affairs. Taking part in the daily lives of these officials (for example, sharing long weekend breakfasts or evening teas) provided ample opportunities for long, informal and relaxed talks on the nature of the person's work, the state structures in Central Asia, the objectives of the states and individuals within the states, and the relationship between formal and informal practices. These talks greatly enhanced my understanding of Central Asian society and enabled me to assess the material generated through the other methods in a more sophisticated manner.

In the border areas I usually lived alone in rented flats, but spent considerable time with individuals who had in-depth knowledge on local cross-border issues, like local journalists, political advisers or activists. Socialising with these people enabled me to probe further into issues that interested me, in a relaxed and informal setting. In the border areas of the Fergana Valley I also spent some time travelling with two journalists from the region along the Uzbekistani–Kyrgyzstani border and was able to observe in detail the many illegal crossing points for migrants and contraband goods. For an assessment of trade co-operation and trade patterns in Central Asia, the large-scale retail market in the in Uzbekistani–Kyrgyzstani border town Kara Suu was particularly important. Through friends I was able to arrange to spend half a day in one of the market stalls with the family who owned it. Relatives of those owning this stall also staff one of the large truck bases and warehouses adjacent to the market, which enabled me to ask in detail about regional trading patterns.

Scope and credibility

In each country I attempted to interview similar categories of people, gather similar kinds of reports and statistics, and make similar kinds of participant observation. This effort has not, however, resulted in an equal amount of research material from each country. The amount of material has been shaped by the level of contacts I had in advance and, more importantly, by the degree of openness in the political system. I attempted to apply a unified sampling strategy for all four countries, but access and openness, two factors beyond my control, have been key determinants in the generation of material. The materials I gathered in Kyrgyzstan are significantly better (in the sense of a broader range of information as well as greater detail) than for the

other countries, especially when it comes to the informal aspects of state practice. This asymmetry has an important bearing on the analysis presented in the subsequent case chapters. Frequently material from Kyrgyzstan will form the key foundation of an argument, but I have taken care to complement such material with findings from the other countries.

To what extent is my account of Central Asian relations valid? Alan Bryman notes that LeCompte and Goetz see validity as encompassing four components: external reliability (degree to which a study can be replicated); internal validity (or inter-observer, if more than one researcher, consistency); internal validity (match between researcher's observations and theoretical ideas developed), and external validity (degree to which the study can be generalised to other social settings).⁷⁹ These criteria often also determine validity in quantitative research. My research in Central Asia may be low on external reliability and external validity, but it is high on internal validity. Given the low external reliability, should my research findings be deemed invalid? In my view, the criteria of LeCompte and Goetz are inappropriate for the kind of qualitative research I have undertaken, and reflect an understanding of social reality – a positivist belief in the possibility of one definite account of social reality that is 'out there' – with which I disagree.⁸⁰ Lincoln and Guba hold that qualitative social sciences should be judged not according to validity but according to trustworthiness.⁸¹ Credibility is an important criterion in trustworthiness. As Bryman notes: 'if there can be several possible accounts of an aspect of social reality it is the feasibility or credibility of the account that the researcher arrives at that is going to

⁷⁹ Bryman, *Social research methods*, pp. 271–72.

⁸⁰ For a debate on epistemology in the social sciences see P. Winch, *The idea of a social science and its relation to philosophy*, (London: Routledge, 1988).

⁸¹ Bryman, *Social research methods*, p. 272; Y. S. Lincoln and E. G. Guba, *Naturalistic inquiry* (London: Sage, 1985).

determine its acceptability to others'⁸² Given my use of multiple sources and the richness of my research findings, I am confident that I can present a credible account of Central Asian affairs – although ultimately, neither the data nor the conclusions can be seen as totally incontestable. In this respect, the thesis is no different from any other social science research, for which, as King, Keohane and Verba put it: 'certainty is unattainable'.⁸³

A note on transliteration

In this thesis I am following the US Library of Congress transliteration table for Russian. However, when commonly used spellings for names of places and individuals deviate from the Library of Congress table I have allowed for use of these standard versions.

Structure of the thesis

The next chapter assesses key debates in international relations and political science, so as to situate the arguments of this thesis in broader theory debates. I analyse the concept of state weakness and the possible implications of weakness for foreign policy formation. This discussion provides important conceptual tools for understanding the political affairs of Central Asia. There then follows a historical outline of the political, economic and administrative legacies from the Soviet Union in Chapter 2. The chapter discusses the political and economic transition strategies of

⁸² Bryman, *Social research methods*, p. 272.

⁸³ G. King, R. O. Keohane and S. Verba, *Designing social inquiry: scientific inference in qualitative research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 10.

the four Central Asian states and presents evidence that there were considerable degrees of ‘indirect rule’ in these states. This discussion further substantiates four of the five approaches to understanding Central Asian regional co-operation outlined in the Introduction. The chapter also provides a survey of the regional co-operation architecture in Central Asia and the extensive diplomatic efforts that underpinned this structure. This supports my assertion that the intra-regional relations of Central Asia embodied regime-like features: even if co-operation failed regional relations were embedded in dense networks of norms and procedures for inter-state interaction. Chapter 3 assesses the nature and degree of great-power engagement in Central Asia and outlines the international context in which intra-regional co-operation took place. The outline sheds further light on the approach for understanding regional co-operation that stresses great power rivalry and lends support to my assertion that regional relations are best conceptualised as ‘patchwork geopolitics’ rather than as a Great Game.

My focus then shifts to empirical assessments, and the next three chapters discuss the pattern of failed co-operation in three separate cases: trade, water and security. In the conclusion, I discuss findings from the case chapters in relation to the key theory debates indicated in the Introduction and in Chapter 1. An epilogue assesses the reconfigurations in Central Asian regional relations in the period from 31 December 2004 to 1 May 2007 and discusses their implications for co-operation patterns.

Chapter 1: Key debates: state weakness, international relations and hegemony

In the introduction I spelt out the key argument of this thesis: that, while theories stressing conflicting national interest by the local states offer a generally plausible explanation of *why* regional co-operation failed in Central Asia, incorporating attention to domestic-level issues like state weakness and regime type makes it possible to account better for both *why* and *how* regional co-operation was unsuccessful.

Interestingly, attention to potential links between state weakness and foreign policy is relatively uncommon, and I will therefore explore this approach theoretically here at the outset. This assessment enables me to draw out and develop important conceptual tools, which will advance my analysis later in the thesis. Three separate fields in the literature are of particular relevance: concepts of state weakness; international relations and state weakness; and existing works on co-operation patterns in Central Asia.

In the introduction, I also signalled that the thesis will offer insights into the nature of Russian hegemony in the post-Soviet area. Moreover, there is a close conceptual link between hegemony and co-operation. For these reasons, this chapter includes a brief assessment of central works of international relations theory on hegemony, which will be of use in the discussion of Russia's role in Central Asia.

The chapter starts with a discussion of what state weakness entails. I argue that, in the Central Asian setting, weakness is best understood as encompassing two things:

‘indirect rule’ and façade-making. My subsequent assessment of the international relations literature pertaining to state weakness reveals that there are no readily available conclusions as to whether state weakness affects foreign policy in specific ways. Then I discuss key works on hegemony and co-operation, followed by an outline of the existing literature on co-operation in Central Asia.

State weakness as indirect rule

State weakness in Central Asia in the period 1991–2004 was linked to the blurring of private and state interests by state officials, which in turn formed part of efforts to generate and maintain political authority.⁸⁴ This phenomenon can be illustrated using theories of state rule as a starting point.

Margaret Levi’s theory of predatory rule holds that ‘rulers maximise the revenue accruing to the state subject to the constraints of their relative bargaining power, transaction costs and discount rates’.⁸⁵ Levi draws an important distinction between the central executive, the ruler, and the agents who enact the ruler’s demands. The state at any particular time is the product of bargains and disputes between all state-affiliated agents. Interestingly, as Alan Smart notes, there may be cases where ‘revenue maximising rulers...accept a situation where subordinates are regularly

⁸⁴ This definition differs from more common definitions of weakness that often equate state weakness with the failure to maintain a monopoly of violence: see for example A. Hurrell, 'Regionalism in theoretical perspective', in Fawcett and Hurrell eds, *Regionalism in world politics: regional organization and international order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 67. Barry Buzan shares this notion, but also sees weakness as linked to identity issues and the absence of social and political coherence: Buzan, *People, states and fear: An agenda for international security in the post-Cold War era* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 101. Max Weber’s full definition of ‘state’ reads as follows: ‘...a state is that human community which (successfully) lays claim to the monopoly of legitimate physical violence within a certain territory, this territory being another of the defining characteristics of the state’ – from M. Weber, 'The profession and vocation of politics', in Lassman and Speirs, eds, *Weber: political writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 310–11.

⁸⁵ M. Levi, *Of rule and revenue* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 2.

siphoning off what they can for their own purposes'.⁸⁶ Reasons for this acceptance, according to Smart, could be that rulers fear that suppressing such activity will undermine their coalition of support; that the rulers' relative bargaining power is too weak against subordinates; or that the transaction costs of monitoring the activities are too high. Or it could be the case that representatives of the central executive also receive, informally, a portion of the 'siphoned' income.

A situation where rulers allow subordinates to siphon off what they can bears similarities to what Max Weber terms 'indirect rule'. Any form of rule, Weber stresses, requires an administrative staff and material means of administration. He maintains that all such staff are bound to the ruler not only by the ruler's legitimacy, but also by self-interest, and in particular by material rewards and social honour.⁸⁷

Forms of state order can be grouped into two categories:

In the first, the staff of men, be they officials or whatever, on whose obedience the holder of power must be able to rely, *own* the means of administration *in their own right*, whether these consist of money, buildings, war material, carriage parks, horses or whatever. In the other case the administrative staff is 'separated' from the means of administration, in just the same way as the office worker or proletarian today is 'separated' from the material means of production within a capitalist enterprise.⁸⁸

Where the dependent administrative staff has complete or partial control, 'the lord' will necessarily *share* rule with his subordinates.⁸⁹ This principle of separation of servants from ownership of the means of governance lies at the very heart of Weber's

⁸⁶ A. Smart, 'Predatory rule and illegal economic practices', in Heyman, ed., *States and illegal practices* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), p. 100.

⁸⁷ M. Weber, 'The profession and vocation of politics', pp. 313–14.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 315.

understanding of the ‘modern state’.⁹⁰ Moreover, a state that does not maintain this separation will have difficulties upholding ‘rationally devised rules’ and a mode of governance defined by ‘modern bureaucratic administration’.⁹¹

Weber’s notion of ‘indirect rule’ is helpful in highlighting the connection between ‘siphoning off resources’ and the maintenance of political authority in Central Asia. Contrary to conventional definitions of corruption and rent-seeking, private greed is not sufficient to account for the corrupt activities of subordinate officials.⁹² It seems more fruitful to acknowledge a blurred state of affairs, where the upkeep of an office is often achieved by the private means of an official, while the public office is often used to generate private funds. Bribe-seeking by subordinate officials in Central Asia helped bolster their local power, control and oversight, and the tacit approval or

⁹⁰ Weber argues that ‘the development of the modern state is set in motion everywhere by a decision of the prince to dispossess the independent, “private” bearers of administrative powers who exist alongside him’ Ibid.

⁹¹ Six key features ideally define ‘modern bureaucratic administration’. First, jurisdictional areas exist whereby, through official laws or administrative regulations, ‘the authority to give commands required for the discharge of...duties is distributed in a stable way and is strictly delimited by rules.’ Second, there is a principle of office hierarchy that stipulates ‘a clearly established system of super- and subordination in which there is a supervision of the lower offices by the higher ones’. Third, the management and execution of duties are ‘based upon written documents’ or record-keeping, and the civil servant segregates ‘official activity from the sphere of private life’ Fourth, bureaucracies that are ‘specialised’ presuppose relevant training of state officials. Fifth, ‘official activity demands the full working capacity of the official’ rather than ‘being discharged as a secondary activity’. Sixth, the activities of the bureaucracy follow general rules, which are more or less stable. Weber stresses that the application of office management to rules is deeply embedded in its nature. Even if a specialised agency has been ‘granted authority to order certain matters’, this does not mean it is not rule-bound and can ‘regulate a matter by individual commands for each case’. For Weber, this tendency stands in sharp contrast to regulations of all relationships through individual privileges and bestowals of favour, which he sees as a dominant feature of patrimonialism. M. Weber, *Economy and society: an outline of interpretive sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 954–58.

⁹² Corruption is commonly defined as the abuse of public office for private gain, while rent-seeking is associated with making money by manipulating the economic environment – often through formal or informal government intervention – rather than through trade or production of wealth. Development agencies like the World Bank and scholars writing within political science or economics tend to favour a distinction between ‘private’ and ‘public’ spheres. By contrast, key works in political anthropology question the private–public dichotomy and see it as ‘an arbitrary and ambiguous cultural category’. See C. Shore and D. Haller ‘Introduction’, in Haller and Shore eds, *Corruption: anthropological perspectives* (London: Pluto, 2005), pp. 1–6; also S. Rose-Ackerman *Corruption: a study in political economy* (New York: Academic Press, 1978); S. Rose-Ackerman *International handbook on the economics of corruption* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2006).

acquiescence of central authorities forged an allegiance between central rulers and subordinate officials.

This allegiance was important. The Soviet system and its collapse made it possible for those occupying positions *within* the state to generate substantial political as well as economic power. According to Steven Solnick, Soviet state structures, though hierarchically organised, favoured lower-level officials because these actors controlled the flow of information.⁹³ ‘Actors obeyed directives from higher levels because they were able to do so on their own terms – often in a manner that undermined the very policy goals they were supposed to be promoting’.⁹⁴ Solnick’s key point is that the decentralisation reforms under *perestroika* – and one may assume, further reform and political uncertainty in Central Asia after 1991 – exacerbated the information asymmetries and the lack of central control in state and party institutions. It follows that some individuals *within* the state structure were in highly favourable positions in 1991, and their allegiance mattered to central rulers. This situation helped to promote systems of ‘indirect’ rule.

Interestingly, this system also permitted the continued pervasiveness of some – though not all – Soviet state institutions.⁹⁵ Solnick stresses that corrupt agents need

⁹³ S. L. Solnick, *Stealing the state: control and collapse in Soviet institutions*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ A crucial insight offered by Solnick is that different institutions were affected in different ways. Institutions with highly specific assets did not disintegrate as easily as those with fungible assets. Military draft commissions had always been susceptible to corruption, which probably increased, according to Solnick, in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The assets available to the agents running this service (bribes for exemption from military service) were intrinsically connected to the state and depended on the continuation of call-ups to the army. The officers and bureaucrats maintaining this service therefore had strong incentives to ensure the survival of the institutions that organised the military draft. Solnick notes that institutions with assets that were less specific (money or property) were susceptible to full-scale collapse. Here agents rushed to secure their own shares before others got

the state to survive, in order for their rent-seeking to continue. This interest threatens the rational functioning of the state, but according to Solnick, it also serves to enhance regime stability and institutional continuity. In Central Asia, many institutions continued to permeate social life even if their modes of operation changed profoundly from how they were originally intended to function.⁹⁶ Political authority was maintained, but the state's capacity to implement central policy initiatives greatly weakened.

While it is not directly relevant in this context, it bears mentioning that the notion of powerful yet semi-independent state agents operating *within* state structures offers an interesting challenge to conventional studies of state weakness.⁹⁷

there first. The *Komsomol* organisation was one institution which collapsed readily. (Solnick, *Stealing the state*.)

⁹⁶ This behaviour resonates well with Christoph Stefes' findings from studies of corruption in the south Caucasus in the post-Soviet period. He stresses that the decline of formal rules does not necessarily mean anarchy, as informal rules and norms rise in importance and structure the interactions between state officials and citizens. C. H. Stefes, *Understanding post-Soviet transitions: corruption, collusion and clientelism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

⁹⁷ 'Weakness' has commonly denoted weak state capacity. 'Capacity', in turn, has been closely linked with autonomy. Theda Skocpol (1985) defines capacity as the ability to implement state goals – in particular, the ability to implement goals that diverge from those of powerful social groups. This definition relates to her notion of autonomy, which exists when a state does more than merely reflect the demands and interests of social groups. It presupposes that there exists a clear boundary between state and society, and that assumption is problematic when it comes to Central Asia. The work of Joel Migdal on 'state in society' or 'weak states–strong societies' illustrates this dilemma. Migdal notes that states in the Middle East and Africa are weak because state resources must be used to pay off 'big men' *outside* a fragile state structure, often individuals who enjoy traditional authority. In Central Asia, however, the 'big men' tend to be the former winners from the Soviet planning system, and they are likely to be found *within* the state administrative structures, or have close connections to these. See J. S. Migdal *Strong societies and weak states: state–society relations and state capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); T. Skocpol 'Bringing the state back in: strategies of analysis in current research', in Evans, Rueschemeyer and Skocpol, eds, *Bringing the state back in* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

Façade-making and symbolic statecraft

In addition to ‘indirect rule’, a further defining feature of Central Asian state weakness was the practice of ‘façade-making’. The tendency towards duality between experienced reality and the official state discourse was an important Soviet legacy. Anna Zelkina notes that in Soviet times: ‘An inherent contradiction [of the Soviet system] is the dichotomy between ideologically motivated declared goals and aims, and the actual political, social and economic practices the system bred’.⁹⁸ Olivier Roy similarly holds that duality was a central feature of politics in the Soviet republics: ‘Sovietism is a form, an apparatus, a technique of power and an organisation of the social which is permanently out of step with the ideology on which it is supposedly based, like a film out of sync with its sound-track.’⁹⁹

Jeffrey Brooks shows how state mass media in the Soviet Union presented a ‘stylized, ritualistic and internally consistent public culture that became its own reality’,¹⁰⁰ helping to breed a ‘performative culture’ in social and political life. Performance replaced reality.¹⁰¹ Brooks’ findings in Soviet history have been further developed by Andrew Wilson, who has assessed the pervasiveness of ‘virtual politics’ in the post-Soviet period. According to Wilson, in the domestic politics of many post-Soviet states, we have witnessed the creation of a spectacle of ‘pseudo-democracy’.¹⁰² In this way, performance as reality has continued in post-Soviet politics after independence.

⁹⁸ A. Zelkina, ‘Continuity and change in the societies of Central Asia – a theoretical approach’, in Cummings ed. *Oil, transition and security in Central Asia* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

⁹⁹ O. Roy *The new Central Asia: the creation of nations* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), p. xv.

¹⁰⁰ J. Brooks, *Thank you, comrade Stalin!: Soviet public culture from revolution to Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. xvi.

¹⁰¹ ‘Performance substituted for reality; performance was reality’: A. Wilson *Virtual politics: faking democracy in the post-Soviet world* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005) p. 8.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

Bhavna Dave, in her study of the implementation of language policies in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, links reliance on performance or symbolic achievements to the weakness of today's Central Asian states.¹⁰³ She found that in Kazakhstan the state implemented few pro-active, on-the-ground strategies aimed at enhancing language abilities. There was, consequently, little change in the actual language skills of the population (the creation of more Kazakh speakers). The state nevertheless claimed that the language issue had been 'solved' and was 'a success' via the adoption of laws and nominal targets. In this case, state statistics (the national census) were manipulated by altering the definitions for 'proficiency'.

Dave's findings, in combination with Wilson and Zelkina's insights, indicate that after 1991 Central Asian state leaders were concerned, despite (or maybe precisely because of) state weakness, with creating distinct state façades – façades that had little to do with the day-to-day practices of the state and its citizens. Performance in the arena of foreign policy, including the sphere of regional co-operation, may have been an important part of this kind of symbolic statecraft. In this way, insights related to post-Soviet symbolic statecraft, serves as an important compliment to concepts of 'indirect rule' in accounting for state practices in Central Asia. The notion of state weakness as 'indirect rule' helps us understand better why co-operation pledges was so difficult to implement. Attention to state weakness explains why the states leaders, knowing how unlikely implementation was, would still make such extensive efforts at *pledging* co-operation.

¹⁰³ B. Dave, 'A shrinking reach of the state? Language policy and implementation in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan', in Luong, ed., *The Transformation of Central Asia: States and Societies from Soviet Rule to Independence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

State weakness and international relations

Does state weakness shape the conduct of inter-state relations in particular regions?

In Thucydides' Melian dialogue it is asserted that 'the strong do what they have the power to do' – but what, one might ask, do the weak do?¹⁰⁴

Since the late 1990s, awareness of the growing relevance of weak states to global security has been accompanied by a marked increase in political interest as well as academic literature on weak states, failed states and state-building.¹⁰⁵ However, this increase in focus has not generated extensive assessments of the foreign relations of weak states. In fact, the impact of state weakness on foreign policy still seems under-specified.¹⁰⁶

Dependency perspectives on weak states

One strand of relevant international relations literature, mostly from the 1970s and 1980s, involves comparative assessments of the foreign policies of 'Third World' or 'developing states'. While many of these works caution against applying generalisations to a heterogeneous group of countries, they tend to single out certain

¹⁰⁴ In the Melian dialogue the Athenians assert: 'the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept'. The question for this thesis then becomes: what do the weak states do, beyond accepting the terms imposed by stronger states? Moreover, what do the weak states do vis-à-vis other weak states? Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian war* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), p.402.

¹⁰⁵ J. Straw, *Failed and failing states* (Speech at the European Research Institute, University of Birmingham, 2002); *Foreign Policy: The failed states index* (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 2006); R. Paris, *At war's end: building peace after civil conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹⁰⁶ This assertion needs qualifying. There is an extensive literature in international relations on system level weak states, or what is commonly referred to as 'small' states (i.e. Norway or Iceland). The focus in this thesis, however is on how deficiencies in internal state capacity matters for foreign policy formation.

commonalities – like the problem of weak foreign policy-making bureaucracies, the tendency towards idiosyncratic and reactive foreign policy, and the personalisation and domination of the foreign policy-making process by the head of state.¹⁰⁷ This body of literature views the dependency of the poor, newly-emerging states on the richer, industrialised ‘metropolitan’ countries as a key structural determinant for the foreign policy of the former.

In his *Africa and the International System*, Christopher Clapham provides a contemporary reformulation of the dependency argument. He argues that many African states have increasingly become ‘monopoly states’ with clientelistic systems.¹⁰⁸ Such a system is unable to generate a sense of moral community among the people who participate in it (let alone those who are excluded), and is not conducive to generating domestic growth and production. This failure has implications for foreign policy-making: regime security becomes a central concern, as does the need to acquire outside funds through international credits or trade.

The ‘Third World’ literature sheds some light on how weaker states may relate to stronger states outside a given region. However, it says little about how weak states relate to each other and whether weakness matters for how the international relations of particular regions develop. A similar shortcoming can be found in works assessing the foreign policies of weak states in relation to the international relations of the Cold

¹⁰⁷ C. Hill, 'Theories of foreign policy-making for the developing countries', in Clapham, ed., *Foreign Policy Making in Developing Countries* (Farnborough: Saxon House, 1977); A. G. Frank, *Capitalism and underdevelopment in Latin America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967); C. Clapham, *Third World politics: an introduction* (London: Croom Helm, 1985).

¹⁰⁸ C. Clapham, *Africa and the international system: the politics of state survival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

War.¹⁰⁹ These discuss weakness of the states in the context of domination by the superpowers, but do little to explain policy patterns *among* weak states.

There are, however, some central and relatively recent works in international relations that provide more detailed insights.

Quasi-states

In *Quasi-states: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World*, Robert Jackson focuses not so much on how weakness affects the international relations of a region, but on how the international system lends support to weak states.¹¹⁰ Quasi-states, he argues, are states which are recognised as sovereign and independent units by other states within the international system, but do not meet the requirements of ‘empirical statehood’. These states enjoy ‘negative sovereignty’: a formal-legal condition that allows freedom from international interference. At the same time, they do not meet the criteria for ‘positive sovereignty’, such as the ability to provide ‘political goods’ for their citizens and collaborate with other governments in defence alliances and similar international arrangements. Jackson shows how powerful international norms help to uphold and ensure the continued survival of quasi-states. Clapham, building on Jackson, shows how many African rulers, given their shared predicament of quasi-statehood, have also shared a similar ‘idea of the state’. The results include a common commitment among state leaders to judicial statehood and the preservation of previous (colonial) state boundaries.

¹⁰⁹ J. E. Stremlau, *Foreign policy priorities of Third World States* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982); R. L. Rothstein, *The weak in the world of the strong: the developing countries in the international system* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).

¹¹⁰ R. H. Jackson *Quasi-states: sovereignty, international relations, and the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

A second recent contribution to international relations literature is Mohammed Ayoob's *The Third World Security Predicament*.¹¹¹ Ayoob argues that security concerns lie at the heart of the foreign relations of third world states. These states are new and still in the process of state-making – and this situation produces domestic insecurity, which 'intermeshes' with inter-state antagonisms and other post-Cold War insecurity phenomena like global arms flows. Moreover, Third World states confront an 'autonomous dynamic of regional conflict', which, according to Ayoob, often centres on the aspirations of pre-eminent regional powers.

Taken together, both the older dependency-inspired literature on Third World states and the more recent international relations contributions offer useful illustrations and some explanations of the international relations of weak states. The points about weak foreign policy-making bureaucracies, the need to acquire external funds and its implications for alliance formation and 'acquiescence', reactive and personalistic foreign policy-making, a commitment to international norms safeguarding negative sovereignty, and attention to both internal and external security, may all provide insights into the foreign-policy workings of the Central Asian states. Nevertheless, the literature discussed above provides little insight into how weak states relate to each other on specific, substantive issues. Are weak states likely to relate to each other differently than strong states? Do we, for example, expect weak states to co-operate on trade, water sharing and security issues in a different way from strong states?

¹¹¹ M. Ayoob, *The Third World security predicament: state making, regional conflict, and the international system* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995).

International relations in the 'periphery'

James M. Goldgeier and Michael McFaul argue that there is a fundamental difference between the international relations of states in the wealthy 'centre' and those of poorer states in the 'periphery'.¹¹² While there are strong indications that international relations among the developed countries of Europe and North America are evolving according to liberal principles, the international affairs of poorer countries are likely to involve power maximisation and security dilemmas. This is because the high economic interdependence and trans-national elite linkages typical of developed states are not present to the same degree in poorer areas. Thus realist approaches provide a better understanding of international relations for these regions.

How useful is this analysis for understanding how weak states relate to each other? Goldgeier and McFaul's account is more effective at explaining why we should expect the 'centre' to fit a liberal vision, than why the periphery should conform to realist expectations. The reasons for the state of affairs in the 'periphery', these authors note, are lack of nuclear deterrence and continued reliance on military power for influencing outcomes; sovereignty is often recent and state leaders are reluctant to yield control; the process of state formation gives rise to internal as well as external threats; and dissimilar economic systems and the existence of security systems with a range of radically different governments preclude predictability based on shared norms. These are all pertinent observations – but Goldgeier and McFaul say precious little about why and how these particular features should result in realist behaviour, and what that behaviour would consist of. More importantly, how should we

¹¹² M. McFaul and J. M. Goldgeier, 'A tale of two worlds: core and periphery in the post-Cold War Era', *International Organization*, vol. 46, no. 2, 1992.

understand those ‘periphery’ inter-state relations that do not match the bleak picture painted by these two authors?

An interesting counterpoint is provided by Amitav Acharya’s work on ASEAN.¹¹³ Acharya notes that, despite the absence of regional economic interdependence and the presence of illiberal policies, relations similar to a security community have evolved among the ASEAN member states since its formation in 1967.

Andrew Hurrell, drawing on Weber in one of the few assessments in the international relations literature on the correlation between weak states and regional co-operation, holds that state incoherence may hinder regional co-operation in the following way: ‘the absence of viable states (both in terms of effective state apparatuses and mutually accepted territorial boundaries) makes the process of region building difficult, if not impossible. If the state collapses it is all the more likely the warlords and the drug barons will move in’.¹¹⁴

Hurrell may be correct in stressing the centrality of effective state apparatuses and state cohesion. Nevertheless, in the Central Asian context, given the distinct post-Soviet make-up of the state, the issue of state capacity is not necessarily one defined by ‘state collapse’, ‘warlords’ and extra-state ‘drug lords’. Rather the issue is one of how the presence of a pervasive state machinery marked by practices of ‘indirect rule’ and the corresponding conflation of private and state interests renders co-operation difficult.

¹¹³ A. Acharya, ‘Collective identity and conflict management in Southeast Asia’, in Adler and Barnett eds, *Security communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

¹¹⁴ A. Hurrell, ‘Regionalism in theoretical perspective’.

Thus the literature and empirical track record are inconclusive as to what kind of international relations we should expect for weak states – or, for that matter, what the relationship is between co-operation and state weakness. Moreover, very few of the works discussed above, with the exception of Andrew Hurrell's, actually explore the foreign-policy implications of weak state structures as such. Instead, they discuss general features often affiliated with state weakness, like poverty, recently acquired statehood and underdevelopment. In this thesis I argue that state weakness in Central Asia is best conceptualised as 'indirect rule'. The subsequent case chapters will shed light on whether, indeed, this type of state weakness makes it more difficult for regional co-operation to succeed in Central Asia.

Hegemony and co-operation

Aside from exploring the link between state weakness and propensities for regional co-operation, this thesis also seeks to provide insights on hegemony in Central Asia: in particular, it asks whether Russia played the role of a hegemon and considers how hegemony may potentially affect co-operation patterns.

In his assessment of co-operation in Central Asia, Roy Allison holds that there is a 'legacy or presence of Russian regional hegemonic influence', and that this legacy has had important implications for regionalism.¹¹⁵ Allison is not the only analyst to refer to the condition of hegemony in Central Asia, nor should the prevalence of analyses that use the conceptual framework of 'hegemony' in the region come as a surprise. Simply defined, a hegemon is a state with predominant power in the international

¹¹⁵ R. Allison, 'Regionalism, regional structures and security management in Central Asia' *International Affairs* 2004 vol. 80, no. 3

system, measured in terms of GDP or other material resources.¹¹⁶ If we use the context of Central Asia in the 1990's as a starting point, then Russia readily matches this description: in terms of material resources, it had predominance over the other successor states.

Table 1 : Defence expenditure and size of armed forces, 2004

Country	Defence expenditure in million USD	Defence expenditure as percentage of GDP	Number in armed forces (000)	Estimated reservists (000)	Paramilitary (000)
Russia	61,500	4.4	1,027	20,000	415
Kazakhstan	1,680	1.5	66	0	35
Kyrgyzstan	255	2.6	13	0	5
Tajikistan	160	2.1	8	0	5
Uzbekistan	2,400	4,9	55	0	36

Source: IISS The military balance 2006 (Oxford, Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2006)

Essential rules and co-operation

Hegemony is often linked with the emergence of co-operation. As noted in the introduction, Robert Keohane sees a complex link between co-operation and hegemony: 'cooperation may be fostered by hegemony, and hegemons require cooperation to make and enforce rules. Hegemony and cooperation are not alternatives; on the contrary they are often found in symbiotic relationships with one another.'¹¹⁷ He similarly stresses the benevolent provision of goods by the hegemon, but notes that not all dominant powers are hegemons: A hegemon is a state that 'is powerful enough to maintain the essential rules governing interstate relations and is *willing* to do so'.

¹¹⁶ R. Pahre, *Leading questions: how hegemony affects the international political economy*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), p. 4.

¹¹⁷ R. O. Keohane, *After hegemony : cooperation and discord in the world political economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 46

Robert Gilpin also anticipates co-operation under conditions of hegemony. In his view, an ‘international system’ in which a single powerful state dominates lesser states or provides ‘governance’ rests on three forms of control.¹¹⁸ First, the distribution of power among states enables the dominant state to ‘establish and enforce the basic rules and rights that influence their own behaviour and that of the lesser states’.¹¹⁹ Second, the authority or ‘prestige’ of the dominant power ensures that lesser states in a system obey the commands of the great power.¹²⁰ Gilpin notes that dominant states ‘supply public goods (security, economic order, etc.) that give other states an interest in following their lead’. According to Gilpin, though, authority and the ‘hierarchy of prestige’ among states will ultimately rest primarily on military power and other states’ perceptions of a country’s capacity and willingness to use it.¹²¹ Gilpin’s third component of control is a ‘set of rights and rules that govern or at least influence the interactions among states’.¹²² He lists three types of rules: diplomatic rules; rules of war; and ‘[those that] cover economic or other areas of intercourse among states’.¹²³ In the modern world, ‘the rules or regimes governing international commerce, technical co-operation, and such matters are among the most important rules influencing interstate behaviour’.¹²⁴ Gilpin stresses that the primary foundation of rules is the power and interest of dominant states. They are imposed in order to advance their interests and can be regarded as the ‘pattern of ruler practices’.

¹¹⁸ R. Gilpin, *War and change in world politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 29–30.

¹¹⁹ In Gilpin’s account, the hegemonic system is one of three possible systems, the others being bipolar and great-power systems Ibid. p. 30.

¹²⁰ Ibid. pp. 30–31.

¹²¹ Gilpin *War and change in world politics*, p. 34.

¹²² Gilpin, *War and change in world politics*, p. 35.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid. p. 36.

Keohane and Gilpin's conceptions of hegemony touch on co-operation in important ways. Both expect the hegemon to provide vital 'public goods', and both stress the likelihood that the rules provided will foster inter-state co-operation. Also Stephen Krasner has emphasised this in his assessment of post-war US hegemony. In his view, the structural predominance and interests of the US provided a distinct international order, which enabled economic co-operation and trade liberalisation.¹²⁵

Andrew Hurrell notes that although vast amounts of effort have been expended on analysing the general relationship between hegemony and co-operation, links between hegemony and regionalism remain under-theorised.¹²⁶ He suggests four ways in which hegemony may act to stimulate regional co-operation: regional subgroups develop as a response to a threatening outside hegemon; the power of a hegemon within a region is curtailed through attempts to lock it to regional multilateral mechanism (Germany in the EU); weaker states will tend to seek accommodation (bandwagon) with a hegemon in order to seek rewards, from which in turn regional co-operation would emerge; and finally, a hegemon may itself become active in constructing institutions in order to better manage the affairs of a region.

In a Russia–Central Asia setting, as I will discuss later, the two latter effects seem relevant. The notion of public goods features prominently in both concepts. Hurrell also notes that there is a belief that a hegemon in decline will be particularly inclined to create common co-operation mechanisms for a region, because these might compensate for a decline in overall influence and structural predominance.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ S. Krasner, 'State power and the structure of international trade', *World Politics* vol. 28, no. 3, 1976.

¹²⁶ A. Hurrell, 'Regionalism in theoretical perspective'.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

Benevolent and malign hegemons

The notion of a hegemon as a provider of public goods raises two further questions: Why does a hegemon provide public goods? Are there different ways of doing so? Charles Kindleberger notes that a 'benevolent despot' provides certain necessary public goods (like maintenance of the gold standard regime) in order for the international free trade regime to operate. The hegemon will have sufficient interest in such a good that it will be willing to bear the full cost of its provision. The dominant state benefits from the situation (it turns a net 'profit' from providing the good) but smaller states stand to gain even more: they bear none of the costs but share fully in the benefits.¹²⁸

Keohane agrees that the dominant power would essentially be benevolent in providing goods to free-riders. However, Keohane also admits the possibility of choice and capacity on part of the hegemon: recall that to Keohane a hegemon is a state that 'is powerful enough to maintain the essential rules governing interstate relations and is *willing to do so*'.¹²⁹ A structurally predominant power may be more – or less – capable and more – or less – willing to take on the job of generating international order and supplying public goods.

In contrast to Keohane's and Kindleberger's conceptualisations of the benevolent hegemon, Robert Gilpin stresses the coercive aspects of hegemony. As explained by

¹²⁸ C. P. Kindleberger *The world in depression, 1929–1939*, (History of the world economy in the twentieth century. vol. 4.); London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1973). The notion of public goods employed by Snidal refers to M. Olson *The Logic of collective action. Public goods and the theory of groups* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1971).

¹²⁹ R. O. Keohane *After hegemony : cooperation and discord in the world political economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005) New ed. p. 46

Duncan Snidal, a central thrust of Gilpin's argument is that a dominant power may not only provide the goods, it is also capable of extracting contributions toward the good from subordinate states.¹³⁰ So while smaller states in Gilpin's scheme might benefit from the stability of an international order, they are also vulnerable to the hegemon and its potential coercive capacity, and its quest to extract contributions.

Thus there may be various types of hegemons: benevolent providers of public goods to free-riders, or coercive hegemons that use the international order they have established to extract contributions from others. A third version is also possible: some hegemons (like the US in the 1920s) may be structurally powerful enough to act as either a coercive or benevolent leader – but nevertheless be unwilling or unable to play their part. In 'The limits of hegemonic stability theory' Snidal stresses the possible inabilities of hegemons and calls for more research on the 'differential capacity to organise collective interests'.¹³¹

The discussion above raises several questions for Central Asia. Is there a hegemonic condition in Central Asia? Russia is a predominant power – but is it acting as a hegemon? What is the role of the US in the region? Is it 'organising collective interests' or competing with Russia to be the hegemon? What are the implications for co-operation? In Chapter 3 and in the case studies I assess these questions directly. I turn next, however, to the literature on co-operation in Central Asia.

¹³⁰ In Duncan Snidal's words: 'the model presumes that the (military) dominance of the hegemonic state, which gives it the capacity to enforce an international order, also gives it an interest in providing a generally beneficial order so as to lower the costs of maintaining that order and perhaps to facilitate its ability to extract contributions from other members of the system' D. Snidal 'The limits of hegemonic stability theory' *International Organization* 1985 vol. 39, no. 4, pp. 589–590., p. 614.

¹³¹ Snidal proposes that the degree of capacity might matter for whether a leader is coercive or benevolent; he makes the assumption that a relatively weaker hegemon will be less coercive, *Ibid.*

Co-operation in Central Asia

The introduction mentioned five approaches to understanding regional co-operation patterns in Central Asia, and many of these ‘ideal type’ arguments are found in the literature. Indeed, the approaches listed in the introduction can be seen as crystallised versions of the differing and often contradictory ways scholars have accounted for failed co-operation in Central Asia. Below, I present some central works on Central Asian regional politics that discuss co-operation. As a result, the subsequent discussions in this thesis can become better rooted in the literature on the region and can easily draw upon already existing insights.

The main body of literature on co-operation in Central Asia deals with security and energy issues. Studies have generally assessed co-operation between the outside and local powers, and rarely examined that between or among local states. Many of the outside–local power studies focus on small states dealing with great powers like the US or Russia. Roger McDermott and Stephen Blank, among others, have provided much insight on how Russia, the US and China have initiated co-operation in security issues.¹³² In the field of energy, the co-operation of local states with outside states in oil and gas transportation dominates international relations assessments.¹³³ There are certainly good reasons for paying attention to local–outside co-operation as opposed to co-operation between states in the region on these issues, since many energy and

¹³² S. Blank, *U.S. Military engagement with Transcaucasia and Central Asia* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2000).; R. N. McDermott, *Countering global terrorism: developing the antiterrorist capabilities of Central Asian militaries* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2004);

¹³³ S. N. Cummings *Oil, transition and security in Central Asia* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003). IISS, *The politics of oil in the Caucasus and Central Asia* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1996); A. Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, oil and the new Great Game in Central Asia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000). O. Roy, *The new Central Asia: the creation of nations* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000).; A. Rashid *Taliban: the story of the Afghan warlords* (London: Pan, 2001); L. Kleveman *The new great game: blood and oil in Central Asia* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003).

security matters do tend to unfold along the inside–outside axis of the international relations of the region.

Regionalism in Roy Allison's work

By contrast, Roy Allison's *International Affairs* article 'Regionalism, regional structures and security management' offers a substantial discussion of regional security co-operation among the Central Asian states.¹³⁴ Allison includes an assessment of co-operation in the structures provided by what he regards as Russia's hegemonic presence (through the CIS Collective Security Treaty Organisation, CSTO) as well as an analysis of the 'fractured efforts at creating a security consensus' by the Central Asian states themselves. Surveying the dismal record of security co-operation in the region since 1991, he offers little optimism for improvements in the future.¹³⁵ In his view, Central Asia can be seen as a 'sub-region' similar to those identified by William Tow in Third World countries, and as a 'peripheral zone' plagued with economic stagnation and political turbulence.¹³⁶ Allison summarises his explanation of the failure of security co-operation as follows:

The weakness of security related regionalism in Central Asia, except in forms relying on hegemonic sponsorship, reflects factors largely beyond the control of the local states: first the legacy or presence of Russian regional hegemonic influence, which may be displaced over time by the projection of US global hegemonic power into this theatre; second the related phenomenon of the varied effects of the competitive engagement of the major powers in the region; third, the exhausting demands on local states of seeking to consolidate national sovereignty in a peripheral zone in the world system. State capacity has been a crucial influence on the sustainability of regional projects. And aside from all these factors, a great deal still depends on the political

¹³⁴ R. Allison 'Regionalism, regional structures and security management in Central Asia' *International Affairs* 2004 vol. 80, no. 3, p. 473.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ W. T. Tow, *Subregional security cooperation in the third world* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1990).

commitment of state leaders to regional frameworks which rely on top-down security planning.¹³⁷

Allison provides a valuable outline of the main features of the Central Asian political landscape that render co-operation difficult. Interestingly, he attributes the greatest explanatory weight to forces outside the region ('The weakness of security related regionalism in Central Asia... reflects factors largely beyond the control of the local states'). This implication resembles the first 'great power engagement' approach outlined in the introduction. A key problem with Allison's article is that it focuses primarily on extra-regional factors. The intra-regional factors that hinder co-operation are mentioned but not assessed to any extent.

Moreover, Allison, like many other international relations researchers, does not deal with actual state practices in the sphere of security. He limits his scope to an assessment of the diplomatic manoeuvring of the state leadership in the form of international agreements and joint statements. This approach provides limited grounds for assessing actual political and military developments within the region.¹³⁸

Rather than calling Central Asia a 'peripheral zone' in a globalising world, it seems more accurate to say that Central Asia is a peripheral zone in global academic security research. Little in-depth research or analysis has been conducted on intra-regional political and security issues in Central Asia. This lack, in turn, may have allowed analytical priority to be apportioned to more familiar factors, like the involvement of Russia and the US in the region.

¹³⁷ R. Allison, 'Regionalism, regional structures and security management in Central Asia', p. 481.

¹³⁸ Articles written by scholars from Central Asia often offer more details on political and military developments, but these rarely go beyond dogmatic assertions that the region is at the mercy of Great Power competition. See for example R. M. Alimov, S. R. Arifkhanov, S. R. Risaev and F. F. Tolipov *Tsentrāl'naiia Aziia. Geoekonomika, geopolitika, bezopasnost* (Tashkent Shark, 2002).

Roy Allison has also provided an overview of regional organisations and assessed their viability.¹³⁹ His work is useful in that it points to the lack of potency on the part of most organisations focused on Central Asia. Allison's assessment differs from much of the other literature on regional organisations, which tends to focus on individual organisations and area studies. These studies often lack rigorous assessment of how viable such organisations are.¹⁴⁰ Writings on these organisations in Central Asia by academics from the region are particularly prone to such shortcomings – perhaps because the authors are often government employees charged with pursuing their country's policies towards the organisation in question, or are affiliated with such regional structures.¹⁴¹

Water management literature

The literature on inter-state water management is extensive. This field is of use not only for the water case in this thesis, but also as general input for developing a broader understanding of why regional co-operation tends to fail. This body of literature is particularly relevant since, by geographic default, it is the Central Asian states and not outside actors that need to take centre stage in discussions of inter-state water management. Writings on water in Central Asia therefore tend to highlight

¹³⁹ R. Allison, 'Structures and frameworks for security policy cooperation in Central Asia', in Allison and Jonson, eds, *Central Asian security: the new international context* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2001).

¹⁴⁰ M. Arunova, 'The CIS: summing up the past decade and future prospects', *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, vol. 3, no. 15, 2002, R. Ultanbaev, 'Eurasian Economic Community: thorny path of development', *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, vol. 3, no. 15, 2003; and N. Ushakova, 'Central Asia co-operation: towards transformation', *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, vol. 3, no. 21, 2003.

¹⁴¹ See for example the article by the section head and a consultant of the Economic Analysis Department, CIS Executive Committee A. Askolsky and L. Bezzubova, 'Analysis of socioeconomic development in regional associations of CIS countries (1991 and 2000) and stages of their formation', *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, vol. 1, no. 13, 2002.

agency on part of the states involved, and make serious attempts to understand the outcomes of attempts at regional co-operation.

According to Stuart Horsman, efforts at managing water through regional co-operation in Central Asia have largely failed.¹⁴² He notes that Daniel Bedford and Phillip Micklin independently demonstrate how weak political commitment and financial and legal constraints have hindered co-operation through regional institutions.¹⁴³ Horsman adds that zero-sum thinking and efforts to protect sovereignty have further weakened co-operation, alongside conflict of interests between (in terms of water policy) 'revisionist' states (Kazakhstan) and 'status quo' (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) ones. The latter two states are deemed 'status quo' since they control the water sources and have sufficient water quotas. By contrast, the quality, quantity and timing of water flows to Kazakhstan are sub-optimal, and Kazakhstan could stand to gain from a re-working of water management in the region. Horsman's approach is distinctly realist: he highlights diverging national interests between the Central Asian states as a key reason for the failure of co-operation.

In *State making and environmental co-operation*, Erika Weinthal offers a significant contribution to the literature on water management.¹⁴⁴ She highlights the difficulties facing the Central Asian states in 1991, when the water regimes managed by the USSR Ministry of Water Resources and Land Appropriation suddenly disappeared.

¹⁴² S. Horsman, *Environmental security in Central Asia*, (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2001); also S. Horsman 'Water in Central Asia: regional cooperation', in Allison and Jonson, eds, *Central Asian security: the new international context* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2001), and S. Horsman, 'Transboundary water management and security in Central Asia'.

¹⁴³ S. Horsman, 'Transboundary water management and security in Central Asia', in Sperling, ed., *Limiting Institutions?: The Challenge of Eurasian Security Governance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003)

¹⁴⁴ E. Weinthal, *State making and environmental cooperation: linking domestic and international politics in Central Asia* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002).

Weinthal demonstrates that the Central Asian states initially showed great willingness to co-operate: there was widespread consensus in favour of maintaining mechanisms and institutions for water management like those developed during Soviet times. This choice affected the shape of co-operation as it developed in the 1990s. Weinthal also assesses the role of international actors (multilateral organisations and international NGOs) as well as new domestic actors like local environmental NGOs. The participation of these new agents in the water politics of Central Asia has profoundly affected efforts at reaching consensus and developing viable mechanisms for water-sharing. Weinthal concludes by stressing the conservative nature of the Central Asian regimes and their unwillingness to implement reform in micro-level water management. While it is difficult to categorise Weinthal's narrative of water relations within a particular international relations approach, this latter point on reform reluctance corresponds with the main thrust of the 'regime-type' account highlighted in the introduction.

The case study chapter on water will return to many of these issues in greater detail. At this stage, it is important to note that Weinthal offers two useful points: First, the impulse of the Central Asian states in 1991 was to work together. This challenges the notion that Central Asia is a 'peripheral' region where conflict rather than co-operation should be expected *a priori*. Second, co-operation in Central Asia after 1991 has not developed in a void empty of institutional legacies. Inter-state actions are embedded in a dense web of earlier institutional practices, which created principles and norms for interactions among the states of the region.

'Virtual' regional relations

Most scholarship on inter-state co-operation in Central Asia, including the literature on water, lacks attention to a striking feature in the international relations of the region: why were there so many pledges of co-operation, but so little action? One author nevertheless stands out for bringing this issue to the forefront: Annette Bohr, in the special issue of *International Affairs* on the 'Changing International Order in Central Eurasia' (edited by Roy Allison),¹⁴⁵ stresses the discrepancy between proclaimed regional co-operation and actual policies. She labels this Central Asian version of regionalism a 'virtual regionalism'. She argues that regional integration efforts of the Central Asian states had largely stalled long before the events of 11 September 2001. After the initiation of the US–Uzbekistan 'special relationship', the distance between Uzbekistan and other countries in the region increased, making regional coherence even less attainable.¹⁴⁶ Bohr lists four underlying reasons why regionalism has failed to take root. First, the rise of Uzbek military power has antagonised weaker states and encouraged them to balance against Uzbekistan. Second, the emphasis placed by the political elites on constructing a national identity has lessened the states' ability to embrace compromise and regional integration. Third, trade flows among the Central Asian states are minimal, and this factor lessens the need for economic integration. Fourth, the repressive tendencies of the regimes have made leaders unwilling to cede political initiative to regional bodies. Here, Bohr also cautions that these repressive regimes have been conducive to the rise in trans-national criminal networks and militant Islamic groups.

¹⁴⁵ A. Bohr, 'Regionalism in Central Asia: new geopolitics and old regional order', *International Affairs*, vol. 80, no. 3, 2004.

¹⁴⁶ S. Neil MacFarlane offers a similar argument in the *International Affairs* issue edited by Roy Allison. S. N. MacFarlane, 'The United States and regionalism in Central Asia', *International Affairs*, vol. 80, no. 3, 2004.

The first cause noted in Bohr's account corresponds to the 'local power' realism account of failed co-operation discussed in the introduction, while the second and fourth are 'regime-type' arguments. Her third point, on trade flows, corresponds to accounts that stress the links between interdependence and co-operation.

In other words, Bohr's four reasons for the absence of regionalism in Central Asia corresponds well with several of the key approaches presented in this thesis. The points raised in her short article deserve to be assessed in greater detail, to see how they apply to various spheres of co-operation and how they might relate to each other. It is also worth noting that Bohr does not discuss the institutional make-up of the Central Asian states, except in her reference to repressive and nationalising regimes. In this, she comes close – as do Webber and Brill Olcott and Aslund – to seeing Central Asian states as like any other states facing certain external (power discrepancies, trade patterns) and internal (nationalising and authoritarian regimes) constraints.

Gregory Gleason and trade patterns

In his assessment of the failure of economic co-operation and integration, Gregory Gleason further emphasizes Bohr's third reason (trade patterns) and discusses notions of interdependence. He attributes the failure of co-operation to the centripetal effects of the differing economic development strategies of the Central Asian countries.¹⁴⁷ I will return to the points highlighted in Gleason's work when discussing the

¹⁴⁷ G. Gleason 'Inter-state cooperation in Central Asia from the CIS to the Shanghai Forum' *Europe-Asia Studies* 2001 vol. 53, no. 7.

consequences of the diverging economic policies of the four Central Asian states included in this study. However, while the hypothesis that differing economic reform paths have hindered co-operation may provide valuable insights in the sphere of trade and possibly migration, it is likely to have less explanatory power in the sphere of water management and drug control. This limitation reduces the overall usefulness of Gleason's approach.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented an overview of academic debates that are relevant to the arguments put forward in this thesis. This survey has also shown that several key issues have been under-explored in international relations work on Central Asia. In the following, I seek to bring new insights to some of these issues, in particular by showing how 'indirect rule' and symbolic statecraft might matter for regional-co-operation in Central Asia. First, however, I must establish that there *was* 'indirect rule' in Central Asia. This task, among others, is undertaken in the next chapter, which assesses historical and regional contexts.

Chapter 2 : Legacies and policy choices: implications for co-operation patterns

Inter-state relations in post-Soviet Central Asia unfolded in distinct regional and historical contexts, which influenced the ways states enacted co-operation. This chapter provides an overview of key Soviet legacies and post-Soviet policy challenges that had implications for co-operation patterns.

In relation to the local power realism approach signalled in the introduction, this chapter discusses how differing reform choices after independence may have shaped definitions of national interests in the countries of the region. The chapter assesses the differing regime types that emerged after independence and evaluates the degrees of interdependence that Soviet development strategies created in the region. The chapter also sheds light on the weak state approach by assessing whether state structures in Soviet and post-Soviet times were characterised by 'indirect' rule.

In the introduction I signalled that Central Asian relations embodied regime-like features. This chapter describes the considerable diplomatic efforts invested in the creation of a regional co-operation architecture for Central Asia. I argue that these efforts, even if failing in terms of policy implementation, nevertheless indicate shared norms, agreed procedures and convergence in expectations among policy-makers in the region.

The chapter starts with a brief history of pre-Soviet and Soviet Central Asia. The key purpose of this section is to illustrate the emergence of national identities during the Soviet period and show how the territories of the Central Asian republics were

defined. This process resulted in the post-independence emergence of nation-states, which guarded their new-found sovereignty. The following section provides a historical examination of how Soviet administrative structures, as well as formal and informal governing practices in the Union Republics, developed into a system that entrenched the position of regional officials. The section describes how many Soviet arrangements continued after 1991, and how this persistence fostered considerable degrees of state weakness and 'indirect rule'. The chapter then examines the legacy of Soviet economic legacies, and assesses key political developments and choice of economic strategies after independence. The chapter ends with an overview and discussion of regional co-operation initiatives.

Historical overview: pre-Soviet and Soviet Central Asia

Pre-Soviet Central Asia

Beatrice F. Manz notes that at the beginning of documented history the population of Central Asia was Persian.¹⁴⁸ From the sixth century AD onwards, however, Mongolian nomads expanded their settlement of, and control over, Central Asia and beyond. The peak of nomadic power came with the expansion of the Mongol Empire in the 13th and 14th centuries, when agricultural centres in Asia and even in Eastern Europe came under Mongol control.

Manz describes how the traditions of the Mongol ruling class started to merge with local customs in Central Asia from the 13th century onwards, while at the same time,

¹⁴⁸ B. F. Manz, ed., *Central Asia in historical perspective* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), p. 46.

the Turkic-speaking tribes that formed part of the Mongol Empire's army rose to power. However, the culture and tradition of the sedentary Persian population of Central Asia remained an important influence in the region. Therefore, Manz argues, the Mongol Empire left behind a society with dual cultural loyalties, and the interaction between the two lifestyles and populations – nomad and sedentary – dominated the history of Central Asia well into the 19th century. Political rivalry stimulated the process of differentiation within the Turkic-speaking groups, which brought into being some of the ethnic identities of present-day Central Asia.¹⁴⁹

In 1730, the Russian Empire expanded into Central Asia by imposing indirect control over Abu'l-Khayr, the khan of one of the Kazakh groups ('the lesser horde').¹⁵⁰ It was only in the mid- to late 19th century, however, that the Russian Empire made a full-scale bid for domination in Central Asia.¹⁵¹ Russia constructed new forts in the southern Kazakh territories and launched attacks on the Khanates of Kokand, Bukhara and Khiva. All three Khanates were ruled by ethnic Uzbeks, and were entangled in internal rivalries. By 1876, Russia had obtained complete control over Central Asia, through conquest and unequal treaties.¹⁵² The Kazakh hordes and the Khanate of Kokand were submerged into the Russian Empire, while the Khanate of Khiva and Bukhara remained quasi-autonomous as much-diminished protectorates of Russia.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. pp. 7–9.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 12. See also S. Akiner, *The formation of Kazakh identity: from tribe to nation-state* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995); M. B. Olcott, *The Kazakhs* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

¹⁵¹ H. C. d'Encausse, 'Organizing and colonizing the territories', in Allworth, ed., *Central Asia: 130 years of Russian dominance: a historical overview* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).

¹⁵² Manz, *Central Asia in historical perspective*, p. 12; See also H. C. d'Encausse, 'Systematic conquest 1865 to 1884', in Allworth, ed., *Central Asia: 130 years of Russian dominance: a historical overview*.

¹⁵³ B. F. Manz, 'Historical background', in Manz, *Central Asia in historical perspective*, p. 13.

Soviet period: delineation of Soviet Socialist Republics

Turkestan and the Steppe experienced indigenous uprisings followed by subsequent repression prior to the events of the 1917 Revolution.¹⁵⁴ After the revolution, both Central Asians and Russians became new power-holders in the region through membership in the Moscow-led Bolshevik Party. Nevertheless, the new communist regime met considerable resistance, especially from the Basmachi movement.¹⁵⁵

The subsequent delineation of Central Asian territory into national republics has often been seen as a divide-and-rule strategy devised by Stalin to quell indigenous unity and capacity for resistance.¹⁵⁶ By contrast, Soviet historians argued that the Basmachi movement was an inevitable reaction from the bourgeois and feudal classes to the imposition of socialist policies.¹⁵⁷ Haugen differs from both and sees the delineation strategy as an effort to improve administration and control in Central Asia.¹⁵⁸

In 1924 the regime formed the Turkmen, Uzbek and Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republics, their borders corresponding largely to those of today. The Tajik area became an Autonomous Soviet Republic within the Uzbek Republic, and the Kyrgyz area became the Kara-Kirgiz Autonomous Oblast in 1924. Both were transformed

¹⁵⁴ d'Encausse 'Organizing and colonizing the territories', p. 210.

¹⁵⁵ A. Khalid, *The politics of Muslim cultural reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 286. see also A. Haugen, *The establishment of national republics in Soviet Central Asia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

¹⁵⁶ Steven Sabold, for example, has argued that the delineation was intended to counter calls for an independent pan-Turkestan or pan-Muslim state: S. Sabol, 'The Creation of Soviet Central Asia: the 1924 national delimitation', *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 14, no. 2, 1995. Other recent assessments also stress the participation of local elites in the process and their manipulation of the administrative solution: see, for example, S. Akiner, *Tajikistan: disintegration or reconciliation?* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999).

¹⁵⁷ Haugen, *The establishment of national republics in Soviet Central Asia*, p. 83.

¹⁵⁸ Haugen points out that the strategy also reflects the overall character of the Bolshevik regime in this period (the years of New Economic Policy) as one open to compromise and adjustments.

(and the Tajik Republic slightly enlarged) into union-level republics in 1929 and 1936, respectively.

The Soviet period brought substantial change to the societies of Central Asia.

Collectivisation altered agricultural production throughout the region and forced most remaining Kyrgyz and Kazakh nomadic tribes into settled farming, at great human and material cost. Major new areas were irrigated and transformed into farmland in the 1950s and 1960s under the Virgin Land scheme.¹⁵⁹ The state also initiated large-scale industrial production— some of which stemmed from the re-location of factories and manpower from industrial centres in western Russia during the Second World War. An influx of skilled Slavic industrial labourers accompanied the industrial growth. The region also became host to other new ethnic groups, among them the Volga Germans and Chechens who were exiled by Stalin in the 1930s and 1940s. As in other areas of the USSR, the local political and religious elites suffered under the purges of the 1930s. Many of the indigenous Bolshevik leaders from the time of the revolution were executed or disappeared. However, the post-war period saw a new generation of Central Asians promoted to key administrative and party leadership posts in their republics.

Soviet period: Identity formation

Above, I noted the multi-ethnic character of the political entities in Central Asia prior to the Russian conquest. Nationalism was not a potent force in Central Asia prior to

¹⁵⁹ S. Akiner, *The formation of Kazakh identity: from tribe to nation-state* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995).

1917.¹⁶⁰ Haugen, however, argues that after 1917 group identities began to solidify, in particular among the various segments of the indigenous Bolshevik party members, where notions of being Uzbek, Kazakh and Turkmen came to overshadow such identities as being of a tribe, a city, or ‘Turkestan’. A nationalisation of the political debate transpired – further stimulated by the role of concepts of equality and self-determination in communist discourses.

The appearance of nationalised group identities came to serve as a basis for the national delineation process. The situation remained complex, and it is unclear to what degree the general population of the Central Asian republics identified with or fit into the new national categories, maintaining instead localised and mixed identities.¹⁶¹ Moreover, the peculiar process by which the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and later the union-level Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic was formed testifies to the continued fusion of Tajik and Uzbek urban elites in this period.¹⁶²

Olivier Roy argues that, once the republics had been formed, the Soviet state machinery actively promoted a sense of nationality.¹⁶³ The Soviet ‘implant’ succeeded in establishing a sense of nationhood among the peoples of Central Asia.

¹⁶⁰ A. Haugen, *The establishment of national republics in Soviet Central Asia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) p. 33, and Khalid *The politics of Muslim cultural reform*, p. 188. Groups stressing ethnic identity could be identified, but Haugen voices doubt as to whether they would conform to contemporary anthropological concepts of ethnic community. The tribal conglomerates, with the possible partial exception of the Kazakhs, lacked the idea of attachment to a wider territory and a sense of solidarity with a given population. Immediate connections seemed more important, such as affiliation and solidarity with a particular tribe – or, among the Kazakhs, with one of the three hordes or *zhuz*. Haugen also notes that the Kazakh population came to experience the common challenge of land problems following the influx of Russian settlers: this development increased the relevance and awareness and relevance of a common Kazakh identity. See Haugen, *The establishment of national republics in Soviet Central Asia*, p. 46.

¹⁶¹ A. Haugen *The establishment of national republics in Soviet Central Asia*, p.119.

¹⁶² *Ibid.* See also S. Akiner, *Tajikistan: disintegration or reconciliation?*

¹⁶³ O. Roy, *The new Central Asia: the creation of nations* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000) p. ix.

After independence in 1991, politicians and intellectuals continued to construct identity in a manner similar to that employed in the Soviet period, using the same instruments and modes of production. As a result, in the 1990s the region's populations identified strongly with a particular nationality or ethnicity, and within each state there also were sizable minorities who were aware of their distinct ethnicities.¹⁶⁴

Soviet period: administrative structure

While traditional judicial and administrative structures remained largely intact in the Tsarist period, the rise of Bolshevism marked the start of large-scale societal change. Olivier Roy argues that this period saw neither the continued existence of traditional society, nor a full-scale modern transformation of social relations: what occurred in the 1920s and 1930s was a re-composition of traditional society.¹⁶⁵ Prior to Bolshevism, Central Asian societies were made up of a web of solidarity groups – kinship groups, clans, or *mahallas* – all of which Roy defines as ‘grouped habitats of families having links with one another’.¹⁶⁶ These groups managed to maintain their existence until – and to some extent after – the era of Sovietisation. By contrast, the traditional rural elites or notables were mostly eliminated through the communist responses to the Basmachi, the campaigns against the wealthy peasant property owners (kulaks), and the collectivisation and purges of 1937. With collectivisation and the establishment of *kolkhozes* (collective farms), a new type of rural notable arose: the chairman of the collective farm. Traditional solidarity groups were re-

¹⁶⁴ A. Bohr, *Uzbekistan: politics and foreign policy*: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1998).

¹⁶⁵ Roy, *The new Central Asia*, p. xi.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

shaped into units within the *kolkhoz*, or as Roy puts it: ‘the Soviet system fixed the basic local communities within the framework of the *kolkhoz*’.¹⁶⁷

In parallel to this re-composition of solidarity groups at the local level, according to Pauline Jones Luong there occurred a build-up of regional political identities and regional political elites.¹⁶⁸ She argues that the creation of internal administrative boundaries in the republics, such as the establishment of districts and regions, transformed pre-existing tribal and local identities into regional ones. The creation of regional administrative units (provinces – *oblasti* in Russian) institutionalised a principal leader: the *oblast* party committee (*obkom*) first secretary. The *obkom* first secretary had the power to select and replace local party and government personnel in the fields of politics and economics, and to monitor the performance of cadres. Moreover, it was through the *obkom* that many of the economic resources for the region were channelled. In a planned economy beset with shortages, the ability to secure centrally distributed resources greatly enhanced the role of the *obkom* first secretary. The vast political and economic authority vested in this position had the effect of supplanting the authority of tribal and local leaders: ‘The institutionalisation of this authority alone formed a “natural” basis for the redefinition and extension of existing clan and tribal based networks to the regional level. Through his position as the chief executive in a given territory the *obkom* first secretary became the primary dispenser of political and economic resources at the regional and local level, and

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. p. xii. Ironically, collectivisation ‘while campaigning against traditional society... fostered the basic kernel of that society, the solidarity group, as a mediator of relations between the individual and the state. It thus immediately recreated similar forms of [rural] notables, who were no longer the old time tribal chiefs, but representatives of a new tribe: the *kolkhoz*’.

¹⁶⁸ P. Jones Luong, *Institutional change and political continuity in post-Soviet Central Asia: power, perceptions, and pacts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 66.

skilfully used this position to build loyalty and support throughout his oblast'.¹⁶⁹ The new *kolkhoz* leaders, as described by Roy, became important members of the *obkom*'s network, serving as vital links between the re-composed solidarity groups and the new regional leadership.

Jones Luong notes that with the institutionalised relevance of regions, the new leaders chose to enhance regional identities over Islamic or local ones. The emphasis on the regional level deepened further within the Soviet republics of Central Asia because of Soviet cadre policy. Very few, if any, party or state officials could expect to serve at the union level in Moscow. The best that local-level leaders could hope for was promotion to the regional level, while regional leaders could hope to serve at the level of the republic. According to Jones Luong, this system gave the Central Asian elites an incentive to remain in their own republics and regions, where they could build and maintain a viable local power base. Regional leaders could strengthen their chances for further promotion by developing 'close personal ties and professional networks within their regions, to build loyal followings among local leaders as well as the regional population, and to form a strong allegiance toward and affinity for their oblast.'¹⁷⁰ Leaders in regions particularly important for meeting the republic's planned productions target set by Moscow (such as cotton quotas) became especially influential. Interestingly, Jones Luong notes, these regional leaders were often 'beyond the reproach of both Moscow and the republic-level government because they controlled local institutions and enjoyed local popular support'.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 67.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 70.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

The findings of Roy and Jones Luong highlight three important aspects of the Central Asian administrative structure. First, through the re-composition of traditional structures and the rise of regional state leaders, the Soviet Union prevented traditional leaders or power loci from existing outside the state machinery. While Joel Migdal argues that some Middle Eastern states are weak because they need to ‘pay off’ traditional leaders outside the state, the Central Asian states before 1991 had no such extra-state leaders. Instead, central leaders ‘shared’ rule with subordinate agents.¹⁷² Second, Jones Luong’s findings on the role of the *obkom* point to the likelihood of strong regional foci of power. Third, the arguments of both Jones Luong and Roy correspond with findings from other studies that clientelism and corruption were widespread in the Soviet administrative system.¹⁷³

The post-Soviet period: administrative evolution and ‘indirect’ rule

Jones Luong notes considerable continuity in internal political structures after 1991.¹⁷⁴ In all republics, the new institutional structures entrenched a central role for

¹⁷² The idea of limits to central control corresponds with Roy’s observation that ‘the Soviet system is more totalising (bringing within its order and its registers) than totalitarian (gathering the whole of society into the State)...the myth of the omni present party has led people to think that there was no space for independent activity, but in the rural areas the party itself was entirely captured by traditional solidarity groups, as were the KGB and the militias’. Roy, *The new Central Asia*, p. xiii; Jones Luong, *Institutional change and political continuity in post-Soviet Central Asia*.

¹⁷³ Christoph Stefes argues that it is appropriate to label corruption in the Soviet Union systemic: ‘corruption was both widespread, as most public officials and citizens regularly engaged in illicit activities like bribery, embezzlement, etc...[was also institutionalised in that]..informal rules and norms guided the illicit behaviour...[and these]..rules and norms were embedded in myriads of patronage and collusive networks that linked higher to lower officials, officials to citizens...corruption under Soviet rule built an informal system parallel to the formal structures of communist rule.’ C. H. Stefes, *Understanding post-Soviet transitions: corruption, collusion and clientelism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 2–3. For a discussion of the ‘cotton scandal’ and clientelism in Uzbekistan in the 1980s, see J. Critchlow, *Nationalism in Uzbekistan: a Soviet republic's road to sovereignty* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 39–57.

¹⁷⁴ She details the central role played by regional representatives, in particular the *obkom* first secretaries, in devising new election laws and political structures. A bargaining game unfolded whereby the regional elites negotiated – among themselves and with the central leadership – new

regional leaders and regional structures, which enabled administrative functions and practices to continue in much the same way as in Soviet times.¹⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the post-1991 transitions also entailed profound changes for regional administration. I described above how the post of *obkom* first secretary was the hub through which supplies were distributed in the planned economy. The regional leaderships enjoyed power in relation to the republican and union-level government because they played a vital role in enabling the region to deliver on planned production targets. The networks of loyalty and clientelism were largely centred on exchanges of favours in a setting of resource scarcity. Democratisation, privatisation and introduction of market reform altered the logic behind these informal practices.

Jones Luong notes that at republic-level as well as in local elections in 1991, regional leaders were entrusted with selecting candidates for the legislatures. The regional leaders were also ‘able to influence electoral outcomes by manipulating their ability to appoint local-level administrative heads and state and collective farm persons, as well as to “get out the vote” through their control of often scarce resources to local areas’.¹⁷⁶ The new states also entrusted regional leaders in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan with considerable power to advance privatisation and market reforms. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, the regional leaders hindered the ‘development of independent farms and purposely misallocated funds to foster their own commercial interests....local heads of government interfered in private economic activities.....private businessmen were summoned to the regional administration head

political mechanisms to secure the greatest possible political power for themselves. These bargaining rounds resulted in varying degrees of central control over the regions (less so in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan than in Uzbekistan). Jones Luong, *Institutional change and political continuity in post-Soviet Central Asia*, pp. 106–55.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 103.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 73.

quarters where they were ‘encouraged’ to invest in firms that [regional head] privatized in his own name...[the regional leaders] also established a monopoly over authorization for new businesses.’¹⁷⁷

This phenomenon indicates a state of affairs in Central Asia similar to Weber’s notion of indirect rule. The transition to independence, the move away from the planned economy and the economic collapse of the early 1990s rendered the new central governments incapable of ensuring the ‘separation’ of the material means of administration from the administrative staff. Local-level officials exploited the power and opportunities that their positions provided in order to safeguard the economic sustainability of their jobs. On the other hand, as Weber suggests, such a shift meant that the central government essentially *shared* rule with the lower-ranking officials, rather than maintaining full top–down control. It also meant that a key priority of lower-ranking officials was to sustain arrangements that provided optimal income generation. Furthermore, policy initiatives initiated at the top level that ran counter to economic interests at the lower level became very difficult to realise.

One interview during my fieldwork was with an editor of an Uzbek-language newspaper in southern Kyrgyzstan. The person described the events of 30 March 2004, when a series of major bomb explosions struck Uzbekistan’s capital Tashkent and the government declared a national emergency. The interviewee gave a powerful testimony of the prevalence of ‘indirect’ rule in the person’s area. According to my notes of the account, the editor recalled:

After the explosions in Tashkent the border was completely closed. My sister

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. pp. 115–16.

from Andijan had come to visit me [in Osh] some days before and that day she really needed to go home. I decided to go with her to help her cross the border at an unofficial crossing. We took a minibus; there were 40 of us. When we crossed the border there was a border guard waiting for us. He demanded 200 Uzbek *som* from each, and all of us paid. I had brought a camera and dictaphone with me. I took a picture just as one person handed over the 200 *som* to the guard, and on the dictaphone I recorded the voices of the people in the group. Some of them had complained over the fuss and shouted ‘Down with Karimov!’ [the president of Uzbekistan]. Then, after we had crossed the border, the SNB [National Security Service] took me. They stopped me only, nothing happened to the others that had bribed themselves through the border. I alone was stopped because the border guard had seen me take a picture. I was taken to a place called [unclear] and the [National Security Service] station there. From here they called their superiors in Andijan and Tashkent to find out what to do with me... Then the head of the Andijan office, a superior, came and told them to let me go; we have some acquaintances in common. He told the others that they should let me go because otherwise the journalists from Kyrgyzstan would write so negatively about them. He also arranged for them to drive me all the way to the border that night. I was still given this stamp in my passport—it says 31.03.04 – the day when I was expelled from Uzbekistan.¹⁷⁸

The episode highlights a number of everyday state practices associated with ‘indirect’ rule in Central Asia: National priorities (in this case, the decision to close the border for security reasons) are often subverted at local levels; corruption is widespread and well-organised (the border guards collaborate with the security service in carrying out and covering up illicit procedures); bureaucratic practices are arbitrary and personalised (the final response by the state institution was determined by the fact that the editor and the superior officer of the security service had mutual acquaintances), and traditional symbols and artefacts of state rule continue to be relevant amidst extensive conduct subversive of the state by a pervasive state machinery (due to the stamp in her passport, the journalist is unable to re-enter Uzbekistan legally). Finally, despite widespread illegal activities by state agents, they nonetheless create a distinct *order*, partly through extra-legal activities (illegal border crossings are facilitated and

¹⁷⁸ Interview, Newspaper editor, Osh, 2 March 2005.

monitored by state agents, but these very agents also forbid certain forms of behaviour, in this case photos of bribe-taking).

Two qualitative studies from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan lend support to these findings. Alisher Ikhamov argues that centre–periphery relations in Uzbekistan constitute a paradox: ‘although it is a highly centralized regime, it nonetheless faces serious challenges from regional elites.’¹⁷⁹ The centre’s core policies were not implemented and revenue generation was compromised.¹⁸⁰ Regional elites were ‘compelled to raise their personal income...through imposing various levies in the form of unpaid wages, fines for traffic violations, marketplace duties...’¹⁸¹ Moreover, regional elites – at least up until 2001 – under-reported the cotton harvest and diverted cotton output to the black market for private gain.¹⁸² As for Kazakhstan, Pauline Jones Luong finds that even if it was *de jure* a centralised state, there was a high degree of *de facto* economic ‘decentralisation’.¹⁸³ Regional administrations, formerly the *obkoms*, controlled a large share of revenue collection, generation and distribution, often in contravention of the national tax code.¹⁸⁴ This outcome, according to Jones Luong, indicated a weakness on the part of the central levels in relation to the regional administrations.¹⁸⁵

An analysis of customs and tax revenue flows for the four Central Asian countries provides further evidence of the prevalence of ‘indirect’ rule in the region. As seen

¹⁷⁹ A. Ikhamov, ‘The limits of centralization: regional challenges in Uzbekistan’, in Jones Luong, ed., *The transformation of Central Asia: states and societies from Soviet rule to independence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 161.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 161.

¹⁸³ Jones Luong, ‘Economic “decentralisation” in Kazakhstan: causes and consequences’, in *The transformation of Central Asia*, pp. 183–84.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 187–88.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

from the table below, in these countries tax revenue as percentage of GDP was relatively low compared with other post-communist countries.¹⁸⁶

Table 2: Tax revenues (% of GDP)

Year	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Afghanistan	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2.42	3.4
Estonia	21	19.6	17.7	18.5	17.9	16.8	16	15.4	–	–	–
Kazakhstan	–	–	–	6.7	7.2	7.75	10.2	9.6	12.1	13.1	13.9
Kyrgyzstan	14.68	15.06	12.59	12.51	14.2	12.2	11.7	12.4	–	–	–
Poland	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	16	16.8	16.8	15.5
Russian Federation	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	13.6	13.3	13.25
Slovenia	21.4	20.4	20.9	21.2	21.7	22.7	21.2	21.2	19.5	21.5	21.3
Tajikistan	–	–	–	–	7.6	8.2	7.7	8.2	–	9.7	9.8
United Kingdom	–	–	–	–	28.4	28.7	29.1	28.8	27.6	26.9	27.4
Uzbekistan	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

Source: World Bank World development indicators 2006 (Washington: The World Bank, 2006)

While tax revenue generation was low, the total number of times that businesses in Central Asia were required to pay taxes was very high. In Uzbekistan a record number of 118 times was listed, compared with 95 times in Kyrgyzstan and 35 in Kazakhstan. By comparison, the figure for Estonia was 11.

¹⁸⁶ In an interview for this thesis, a representative of Kyrgyzstan's Committee for Revenue under the Ministry of Finance, also a former Customs Committee employee, claimed that the share of customs revenue as part of overall tax revenue was very high, possibly as much as fifty per cent. Interview *Representative of the Committee for Revenue under the Ministry of Finance* Bishkek 23 February 2005. The generation of customs revenue is less challenging than inland tax generation and requires less administrative capacity. See M. Levi, *Of rule and revenue* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); C. Tilly, *Coercion, capital, and European states, A.D.990–1990* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

Table 3: Tax payments 2005 (number of times businesses are required to make payments)

Country	Number of payments
Afghanistan	2
Estonia	11
Kazakhstan	34
Kyrgyz Republic	95
Poland	43
Russian Federation	27
Slovenia	29
Tajikistan	–
United Kingdom	22
Uzbekistan	118

Source: World Bank World development indicators 2006 (Washington: The World Bank, 2006)

These figures indicate that the central levels of government were unable to ensure that much of the money generated by lower-level officials fed into the formal national budgets. One likely explanation is that tax revenue was diverted by local-level officials, making the official revenue base of the central government significantly weaker than it might otherwise have been. Moreover, the lack of available revenue further weakened the government's provisions of public services and its ability to allocate the means necessary for administration, so that the administrative staff could be dissuaded from engaging in this function. Salaries of government employees remained low in all four countries. In short, the limited revenue volumes of inland tax generation, combined with what seemed to be assertive tax pressure from local-level officials, serves as an powerful illustration of weak state capacity – or what Weber would term 'indirect rule' – in Central Asian states.

A detailed assessment of customs figures in the region reveals the extent of the failure of the central administration to appropriate revenue. Comparisons between recorded trade flows by China and the Central Asian states are illustrative. In 2003 China reported exports to Kyrgyzstan of USD 245 million. Kyrgyzstan, however, reported

import flows of only 72 million, or 29.3 per cent of the flows reported by the Chinese side.¹⁸⁷ Kazakhstan reported imports from China to be USD 524 million in 2003, whereas China stated that its exports to Kazakhstan were USD 1,566 million.¹⁸⁸ If the Chinese figures are correct, then Kazakhstan registered only 33 per cent of the imports from China in 2003. The remaining 77 per cent entered without registration and probably without formal customs arrangements, but possibly with considerable bribe-taking by customs officers.

It is likely that there are some significant differences in *degrees* of weakness among the Central Asian states. In particular one might *a priori* expect Kazakhstan to perform better than the other states given its recent growth in GDP and improvement in government service provisions such as health care and payment of pensions. While such a difference in degree is likely to be the case, the data available is still indeterminate on this point. Using the custom data above the reporting errors for Kazakhstan's trade with China are as bad as those for Kyrgyzstan's trade with China. In this thesis, while I acknowledge that significant degrees of weakness are present, I choose to emphasise the more basic finding that considerable levels of weakness as indirect rule prevailed in all four states.

Interdependence

I have argued that the Soviet economic planning system was highly relevant to the development of the administrative structure of the Soviet Union. The economic system under communism also affected levels of interdependence. This factor is

¹⁸⁷ IMF *Direction of trade statistics yearbook* (Washington, DC: IMF, 2004).

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

important for later discussions of regional co-operation, since, as indicated in the introduction, the literature makes frequent reference to levels of interdependence in explaining co-operation trends in the CIS in the 1990s.¹⁸⁹ Interdependence denotes the degree to which a given unit is dependent upon other units to execute and complete its activity. In economic terms, interdependence is linked primarily to flows of goods between units. It may also, however, denote dependence on the infrastructure of other units— like road and railway transport networks, or the supply of water flows through transborder rivers. I will argue that the flow of goods between producers in Central Asia was relatively limited in the Soviet economic system. Water flows, irrigation systems and infrastructure, on the other hand, crossed the borders of the various Soviet Socialist Republics, constituting a significant degree of interdependence.

Flow of goods

In the late Tsarist and Soviet periods, economic activity in Central Asia centred on cotton production. As noted in the previous chapter, the Tsarist Russian expansion in Central Asia was driven in part by a quest for raw materials, first and foremost for cotton. Under the tutelage of the Russian state, Russian merchants sought to enhance production and exports from Turkestan.¹⁹⁰ However, as was the case in other agricultural and industrial branches, major expansion in cotton production did not take place until the Soviet period, when the state made economic development of the region a top priority. In 1913, there were 543,000 hectares of agricultural land producing 646,000 tons of cotton in present-day Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Thanks to large-scale irrigation projects, by 1976 there were

¹⁸⁹ M. Webber, *The international politics of Russia and the successor states* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996).

¹⁹⁰ H. C. d'Encausse, 'Organizing and colonizing the territories'.

2,623,000 hectares of land and cotton production had reached 7,439,000 tons, constituting 90 per cent of total Soviet production.¹⁹¹ The Soviet state made significant efforts to develop other agricultural and industrial sectors as well. The Kazakh SSR saw a major expansion in grain production and livestock. Large gas reserves were tapped in the Turkmen SSR (especially the area around Mary) and the Uzbek SSR (near Bukhara). Some of the gas was channelled to urban households and industries in Central Asia, but most of it was transported through pipelines to the western parts of the USSR. The generation of hydropower expanded greatly in the 1970s and 1980s. Machine building and chemical industries, in particular fertilisers, were significant to total Soviet output, and in Northern Kazakhstan mineral extraction and industrial production were as well.¹⁹²

The primary economic significance of Soviet Central Asia within the USSR lay in its deliveries of raw materials. Industrial processing was mostly geared towards first-stage handling of these raw materials (such as oil refineries or cotton-cleaning factories). The end products were refined and prepared in industries situated in the Western parts of the USSR. This arrangement created high levels of interdependence between the Central Asian republics and other areas in Soviet Union, but relatively little among them. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, for example, figures indicate that 63 per cent of its exports went to industrially developed republics in the western and northern parts of the USSR.

¹⁹¹ B. Z. Rumer, *Soviet Central Asia: 'a tragic experiment'* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

¹⁹² I. M. Matley, 'Central Asia and Kazakhstan', in Koropeckyj and Schroeder eds, *Economics of Soviet regions* (New York: Praeger, 1981).

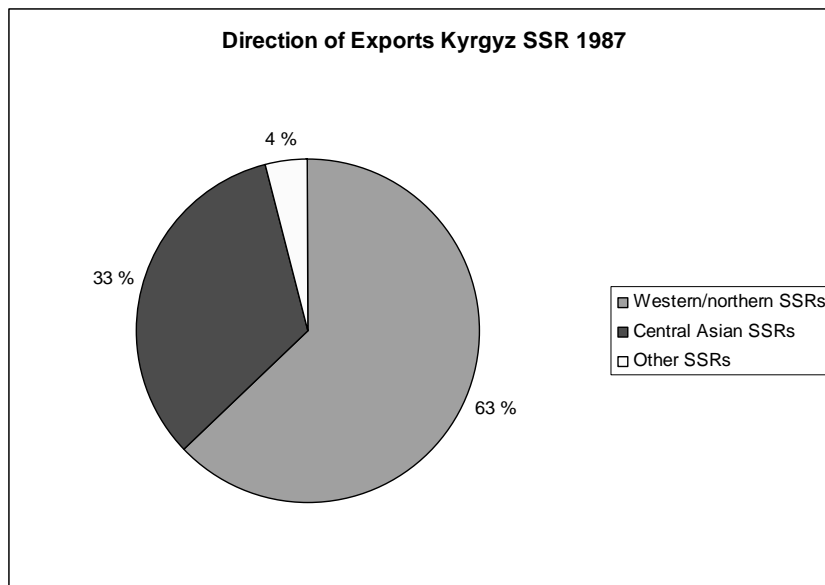


Figure 1: intra-USSR export from the Kyrgyz SSR, 1987

Source: World Bank Statistical Handbook, *Studies of economies in transition* (Washington The World Bank, 1994) p. 327

The main reason for this low regional interdependence was that Moscow deliberately prioritised – as evident in flows of capital investment – further industrial expansion in the already industrially developed parts of the USSR.¹⁹³ Central Asia was thus dependent on links to industries in the Soviet west and north.

Other factors promoted low levels of interdependence among the Central Asian states. Their similar comparative advantages (in soil, water resources, and weather conditions) led to the development of identical products rather than complementary ones. Capital investment to the economic region (see below) of Kazakhstan went mostly to the northern regions, which were linked to industrial production in the southern Urals in the RSFSR.¹⁹⁴ The little industrial development that did occur was often channelled to specific areas within a republic. In the early 1970s, the Tashkent

¹⁹³ Boris Rumer notes that even if the overall goal was always stated to be making the Union Republics equal in production levels and income, significant differences nevertheless existed, especially regarding investment levels in social and industrial capital. See Rumer, *Soviet Central Asia: 'a tragic experiment'*.

¹⁹⁴ The area which is today South Kazakhstan province had production similar to the other Central Asian republics, i.e. in agriculture and cotton, some of these linked with cotton production in the Tashkent area.

area alone was responsible for two-thirds of the total industrial production of the Uzbek, Turkmen, Tajik and Kyrgyz SSRs.¹⁹⁵

Soviet economic planning mechanisms further reinforced the pattern of low regional interdependence. The Soviet plan economy operated according to five-year plans, which listed the economic input and output needed in order to reach production targets. The State Committee for Planning (*Gosudarstvennii komitet po planirovaniuu, Gosplan*) and the State Committee for Material Technical Supply (*Gosudarstvennii Komitet po material'no-tekhnicheskomu snabzheiiu, Gossnab*) provided detailed projections for how and where resources and capital should be procured and utilised. The individual ministries responsible for the implementation of all activities within the various branches of the economy also played a central role in this process. There were three kinds of branch ministries: union-level ministries (with no republic equivalent), republic-union level ministries (identically-named ministries at the centre and in all or some republics) and republic-level ministries.¹⁹⁶ The union-level ministries, governed from ministerial head offices in Moscow, were the most important.¹⁹⁷ Alec Nove noted that 'evidently the all-union ministries are in a stronger position to bypass the republic level since there is no ministry (and therefore no expertise or "powerpoint") at that level'.¹⁹⁸ These ministries were frequently accused of empire-building and excessive vertical integration. Due to overall shortages and delays, the ministries tended to expand control over the production chain so that they would not have to depend on other branches for vital deliveries. This tendency

¹⁹⁵ I. M. Matley, 'Central Asia and Kazakhstan'.

¹⁹⁶ A. Nove, *The Soviet economic system* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1986) pp. 59–64.

¹⁹⁷ In 1984, 55 per cent of the value of industrial production was produced under all union ministries, 38 per cent under union-republican ministries and 7 per cent under republican and local Soviet authorities. (Nove, loc. cit.)

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

entailed massive transport costs, as products were shipped from one ministerial production unit to another, across the USSR. It also meant disregard of the potential for local economic integration in regions such as Central Asia.

When Nikita Khrushchev rose to power in the post-Stalin years, he set about re-organising economic activity by abolishing the branch ministries and ‘regionalising’ planning, in part to reduce inefficiency. Instead of branch ministries, economic activity was to be controlled by regionally based economic councils (*Sovety narodnogo khoziaystva, Sovnarkhoz*).¹⁹⁹ The administrative functions of the branch ministries were transferred to the 105 regional councils (which were later pared down to 47). For Central Asia, a *Sovnarkhoz* was established in each republic. Later, they were replaced with one office each for the two economic regions created in 1961: the Kazakh SSR, and Central Asia (the combined Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Tajik and Turkmen SSRs).²⁰⁰

The *Sovnarkhoz* experiment led to several large-scale industrial projects and to the establishment of a new industrial sub-complex in southern Tajikistan. Some of Central Asia’s large-scale hydropower projects and steel mills were initiated in this period. However, the *Sovnarkhoz* experiment proved short-lived. If a key problem in the earlier Soviet economy had been ministerial empire-building, the new system led to regional empire-building and ‘localisms’: attention only to the developmental needs of the immediate region, and not to those of the USSR as a whole. In 1964, the Soviet Union reverted to a system in which branch ministries controlled much of the

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. p. 54.

²⁰⁰ Rumer, *Soviet Central Asia: ‘a tragic experiment’*, pp. 11–20.

economic production and initiative. This shift resulted in renewed trends of limited economic integration among the Central Asian republics.

Many of the trading patterns of the Soviet period lingered throughout the 1990s. A glance at Kyrgyzstan's exports reveals that Russia and Ukraine retained a dominant position. The importance of Uzbekistan lessened while that of Kazakhstan increased.

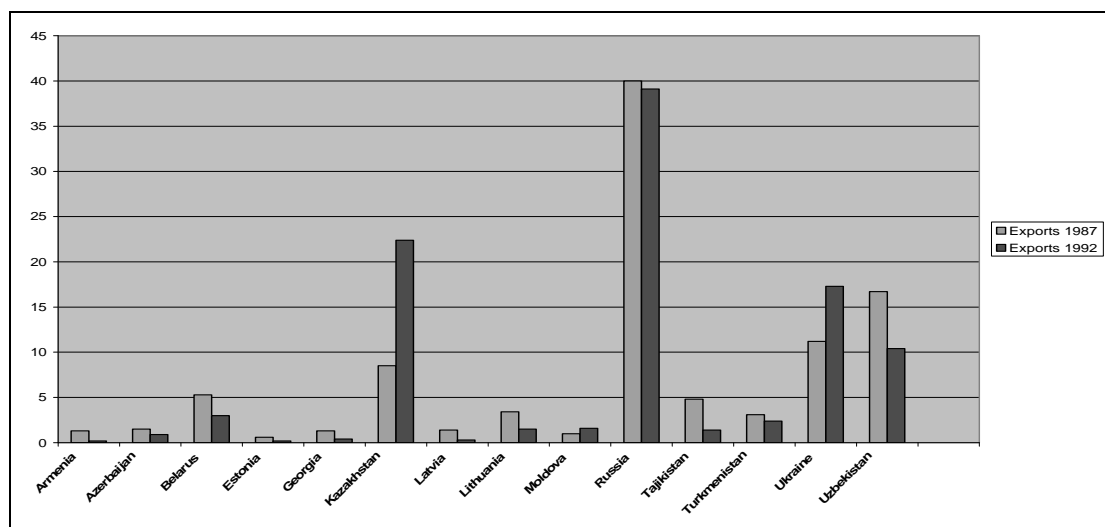


Figure 2: Kyrgyzstan: exports to (former) Soviet republics 1987 and 1992, in per cent²⁰¹

Source: World Bank Statistical Handbook, *Studies of economies in transition* (Washington The World Bank, 1994)

After independence in 1991, the overall contraction in trade and production further decreased economic interdependence. Branches that earlier constituted the basis of intra-regional trade declined markedly. In the period from 1990–1994, electric power trade fell from 60.3 to only 13.3 million kilowatt/hours. Natural gas trade dropped by a factor of 1.6 in the period 1991–1992, mineral fertilisers trade by a factor of 4.2 in the period 1991–1994, and coal by a factor of 3.5 times in the same period.²⁰²

²⁰¹ World Bank, *Statistical Handbook*, *Studies of economies in transition* (Washington D.C: The World Bank, 1994).

²⁰² B. Z. Rumer and S. V. Zhukov, *Central Asia: the challenges of independence* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1998).

The economic patterns fostered by Soviet development strategies and the post-1991 contraction led to relatively low interdependence in the form of trade exchanges in Central Asia. This finding is confirmed by the trade statistics for the region. The chapter on trade co-operation provides a more in-depth assessment on intra-regional trade flows, but the table below offers a preliminary overview.

Table 4: Share of inter-regional trade in export and imports of TAS countries (in million USD)

Type	1994		2001	
	Trade with TAS countries	Trade with CIS countries	Trade with TAS countries	Trade with CIS countries
<i>Kazakhstan</i>				
Export	5.8	10.0	3.4	11.3
Import	10.6	15.3	1.8	3.5
Turnover	8.6	13.3	2.7	6.9
<i>Kyrgyzstan</i>				
Export	41.7	63.6	19.7	55.7
Import	37.7	53.4	32.1	58.4
Turnover	39.6	58.1	25.8	57.3
<i>Tajikistan</i>				
Export	9.0	40.2	14.2	43.6
Import	47.1	72.8	32.1	45.7
Turnover	35.1	68.3	25.2	45.1
<i>Uzbekistan</i>				
Export	28.2	41.3	9.3	27.2
Import	7.4	13.8	12.8	34.5
Turnover	18.7	30.5	11.0	30.9
<i>TAS countries in total:</i>				
Export	15.0	28.7	6.0	19.6
Import	16.2	23.1	8.6	17.3
Turnover	15.6	25.6	7.2	18.1

Source: G. G. Rakhmatulina Dinamika razvitiia integratsionnykh protsessov v gosudarstvakh SNG i perspektivy formirovaniia edinogo ekonomicheskogo prostranstva (Almaty: Kazakhstanskii Institut Strategicheskikh Issledovaniia pri Prezidente Respubliki Kazakhstan 2004) p. 101

Physical interdependence

Soviet development strategies promoted physical interdependence among the various Soviet Socialist Republics. The dominance of union-level ministries meant that much infrastructure was built according to all-union needs rather than republic-level

specifics. Electricity grids, gas pipelines and road networks were constructed as parts of larger union-wide systems. Below is a map indicating the inter-connectedness of the road network in Central Asia. The irrigation system was developed according to a similar logic, as the chapter on water will discuss.

The question of interdependence is a complex one, varying according to issue area. In trade, the degree of interdependence created in the Soviet era was low, while for water, it was high. I will further discuss these case-specific differences in the three case chapters.

Map 2: Central Asian road and railway network



Source: Map created in MapInfo using Batholomew Digital Data (2002)

The post-Soviet period: Political and economic reform

The new states faced serious economic challenges after independence and the collapse of the Soviet planned economy. Each of the four developed its own approach for dealing with the crisis, and its own ways of making the transition to a market economy and independent statehood.

Economic strategies

Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan adopted an economic strategy radically different from those of the other three countries. The state made every effort to protect its industrial sector in order to avoid a contraction in the economy and large-scale industrial unemployment.

Uzbekistan's strategy is often referred to as Import Substitution Industrialisation (ISI), but it should be stressed that even if Uzbekistan clearly aimed to increase domestic industrial production, a considerable segment of its economy was already industrial by 1991.²⁰³ Industrial protection was as much part of ISI as was industrial expansion.

ISI complemented the regime's strategy of ensuring full economic self-sufficiency for Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan's economy in 1991 entailed a diverse mix of industry, natural resources and agriculture, which provided an economic setting fairly conducive to this strategy. Moreover, with its population of 27 million, Uzbekistan had a large domestic market to draw upon. Still, politics seems to be the key factor underpinning this

²⁰³ EIU *Country profile Uzbekistan 1997* (London: Economist Intelligence Unit, 1997).

choice. Uzbekistan faced several serious threats to its stability in the early 1990s. ISI made it possible for the regime to avoid the potential social and political strains associated with rapid economic reform.²⁰⁴

Moreover, in the 1980s the country's political elite had been subjected to a large-scale and public purge initiated by reformist forces in Moscow led by Mikhail Gorbachev and Yuri Andropov. An anti-corruption investigation found that central elite members in the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic, as well as key political figures in Moscow, had for years been involved in an elaborate forgery scheme involving production and shipment figures of Uzbek cotton for Russian processing plants, enabling extensive private profit-making by those involved. In 1986 the entire Uzbek SSR cabinet was dismissed save for one minister, and numerous arrests and suicides came in the wake of the Moscow-led anti-corruption campaign.²⁰⁵

The arrests triggered deep resentment towards Moscow and the reformist sections of the Russian elite in particular. When Islam Karimov came to power in 1989, he at once initiated the rehabilitation of discredited elite figures. Many subsequently returned to government service, including family members of former Party Secretary Sharaf Rashidov.²⁰⁶ According to the Economist Intelligence Unit, Karimov also played a role in relation to the August 1991 coup in Moscow: 'there are credible

²⁰⁴ There was a broad-based student and Uzbek nationalist movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which escalated into a large-scale student riot in January 1992 triggered by price rises. The government quelled the demonstration through harsh measures. Similarly, the early 1990s were marked by radical religious activism; in the Fergana Valley the Islam-inspired movement Adolat constituted a parallel government for a brief period, until it was repressed by the central government. Its leaders Tahir Yuldashev and Juma Namangani fled to Tajikistan, where they later formed the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Gleason, *The Central Asian states*; A. Rashid, *Jihad: the rise of militant Islam in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); A. Volosevich, 'Neutralization of student disturbances in Tashkent in 1992: what it was like', *Fergana.ru*, 24 January 2006.

²⁰⁵ J. Critchlow, *Nationalism in Uzbekistan: a Soviet republic's road to sovereignty* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991).

²⁰⁶ Gleason, *The Central Asian states*. See also EIU *Country profile Uzbekistan 1997*.

allegations that Mr Karimov backed the [conservative] Moscow plotters, which placed him at odds with the Russian president Boris Yeltsin'.²⁰⁷ These factors helped to spark a push for Uzbek self-reliance, especially in relation to Russia, so as to keep the country from being subjugated to any further political manipulation from outside.

Two important pillars of the self-sufficiency strategy were expansion of the oil and gas sector and enhancement of wheat production. The former experienced considerable success: by 1995 Uzbekistan had increased its extraction rates to the point where the country was self-sufficient in energy. However, it proved considerably more difficult to step up wheat production.

Cotton production was a crucial aspect of both the economy and political system of Uzbekistan. The regime maintained arrangements with *goszakaz* (state order) and fixed government price-setting until 2001, and continued with similar arrangements after this point – despite IMF pressure.²⁰⁸ Prices were set significantly below world market rates, and farmers were forced to grow and sell cotton to the state. This policy ensured large export revenues that were managed by the central government. The system rested on a complicated web of coercion and control of farmers, maintained by regional and local state officials.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ EIU *Country profile Uzbekistan 1997*. It bears stressing that the motivation for backing the conservative forces in 1991 might not have been so much a reaction to the onslaught by Moscow's reformists in the 1980s as a bid to help to preserve the Soviet Union and the high levels of subsidies from Moscow – 19.5 percent of GDP in 1991: EIU *Country profile Uzbekistan 2001*.

²⁰⁸ ICG *The curse of cotton: Central Asia's destructive monoculture* (Bishkek/Brussels International Crisis Group, 2005) p. 4.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 12–14.

ISI in Uzbekistan embodied a complex set of policy measures. High trade barriers on imports were introduced alongside export taxes.²¹⁰ The government continued to set the prices of consumer goods and maintained subsidies on important items like fertilisers. Currency regulations were also crucial components of the state's economic management strategies. Uzbekistan maintained a multiple exchange rate system from 1994 until 2003, when its *som* finally became fully convertible.²¹¹ Until 2003, Uzbekistan had an official exchange rate and a commercial bank rate that were kept artificially strong, but to which only priority firms, mainly in the industrial sector, had access. In this way, the state subsidised imports of needed 'capital goods' and attempted to restrain imported inflation.²¹² Alongside these official rates, a weaker 'bazaar rate' or free-market rate co-existed illicitly. This informal exchange rate diverged from the official one by over 50 per cent from 1996 onwards; by 2000 the spread between the two rates had widened to 411.9 per cent.²¹³ In effect, Uzbekistan used centrally controlled export income from the cotton sector and gold mining sector to maintain its official exchange rate as well as a range of other subsidies to the industrial sector, thereby giving a temporary boost to uncompetitive domestic production.²¹⁴ In turn, the government dubiously claimed that the economy had experienced 'one of the shallowest recessions in the former communist bloc'.²¹⁵

²¹⁰ Barriers were kept high from independence onwards, with a temporary reduction in 1995 due to IMF pressure. With a worsening economic situation in 1996 however, most levies were re-introduced, EIU *Country profile Uzbekistan 2001*.

²¹¹ EIU *Country profile Uzbekistan 2001*; EIU *Country profile Uzbekistan 2006* (London: Economist Intelligence Unit, 2006).

²¹² The EIU notes, however, that 'the strong official exchange rate had caused a surge in consumer goods imports, imported as capital goods, by making them artificially cheap, thereby pricing some of the local production encouraged by ISI out of the market', EIU *Country profile Uzbekistan 2001*.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

Kazakhstan

The three other Central Asian countries covered in this thesis chose greater economic liberalisation and export promotion as key economic strategies. Kazakhstan undertook a rapid and ambitious privatisation programme from 1994 onwards. Although it suffered hyper-inflation of 3,126 percent in July 1994, it made its currency, the *tenge*, convertible in 1996.²¹⁶ Starting from 1995, Kazakhstan maintained a strict fiscal policy and cut government spending. This approach curbed inflation but also entailed major delays in the disbursement of wages and pensions, as well as reducing public investment in infrastructure. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit, the country suffered one of the worst economic contractions in the former Soviet republics in the early 1990s.²¹⁷ Unlike Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan did not seek to protect uncompetitive industries. Part of the rationale behind its privatisation programme was the goal of ridding the government of loss-making enterprises and spurring enterprise re-structuring or closures. Kazakhstan liberalised consumer prices and removed most export taxes in the early 1990s.

Kyrgyzstan

In May 1993, Kyrgyzstan left the Russian rouble zone and introduced its own *som*. The new currency became convertible for most current account transactions shortly afterwards.²¹⁸ Like Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan launched an ambitious programme of

²¹⁶ EIU *Country profile Kazakhstan 1997* (London: Economist Intelligence Unit 1997).

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ EIU *Country profile Kyrgyzstan 1997*.

privatisation, cut government subsidies and liberalised prices. It retained only three export taxes – on hides, wool and cotton fibre.²¹⁹

Tajikistan

Because of the 1992–1997 civil war, Tajikistan's economic reform strategies were slower and more muddled than those of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. The country eventually chose a strategy similar to those two countries. It introduced its new currency in May 1995 and liberalised prices on consumer goods in the same year. Since then, most other industrial and agricultural prices have been liberalised as well.²²⁰ In 1996 trade was partly liberalised and export tariffs reduced.²²¹

Political reform

All four countries adopted democratic constitutions and held elections after independence. The former party secretaries – or, in the case of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, former Communist Party members – were elected as presidents. International election observer missions, such as that of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), noted serious shortcomings in elections in all Central Asian countries in the 1990s.²²² Leaders of opposition parties and NGOs faced some difficulties in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, but a certain degree of open debate over political alternatives was tolerated in both countries.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ EIU *Country profile Tajikistan 1997*.

²²¹ Ibid

²²² Gleason, *Markets and politics in Central Asia: structural reform and political change*.

Diverging opinions on political arrangements in Tajikistan combined with strong regional divisions and unrest at the grassroots level to bring about the outbreak of civil war in 1992.²²³ Five years later, a peace agreement that included a power-sharing arrangement with the United Tajik Opposition was signed. After 1997, political debate in Tajikistan was relatively free and open. Nevertheless, President Rakhmonov increasingly sought to entrench his position by placing relatives and regime loyalists in core economic and political posts.

Uzbekistan moved early to suppress moderate political and radical religious opposition to President Karimov. The media were kept under tight government control. The regime continued mass persecution of members of religious organisations and opposition groups. This repression intensified after the Tashkent bombings in 1999 and the military incursions in 1999 and 2000 of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.²²⁴

²²³ Akiner, *Tajikistan: disintegration or reconciliation?*

²²⁴ Gleason, *Markets and politics in Central Asia*.

Table 5: Political rights and civil liberties: Freedom House scores²²⁵

Country	1991			1994			1997			2000			2003			2004		
	PR	CL	Status	PR	CL	Status	PR	CL	Status	PR	CL	Status	PR	CL	Status	PR	CL	Status
Kazakhstan	5	4	PF	6	5	NF	6	5	NF	6	5	NF	6	5	NF	6	5	NF
Kyrgyzstan	5	4	PF	4	3	PF	4	4	PF	6	5	NF	6	5	NF	6	5	NF
Tajikistan	3	3	PF	7	7	NF	6	6	NF	6	6	NF	6	5	NF	6	5	NF
Uzbekistan	6	5	PF	7	7	NF	7	6	NF	7	6	NF	7	6	NF	7	6	NF

Source: Freedom House *Freedom in the world historical rankings* (Washington D.C: Freedom House 2006)

Regional co-operation

All four countries have undertaken major diplomatic efforts at initiating co-operation.

The states stressed early that inter-state co-operation and multilateral solutions were crucial to their strategies for tackling the regional challenges they faced. The case chapters will take up the specific details of these initiatives and demonstrate that the overwhelming majority of these diplomatic initiatives did not result in tangible co-operation. The purpose of this section is to give an overview and also highlight the considerable scale of the efforts.

²²⁵ Freedom House provides a comprehensive survey of the political systems of Central Asia, which, even if there may be some concerns with data reliability, provides a useful overview. Political rights (PR) Civil Liberties (CL) are rated by the NGO Freedom House using a scale from 1 to 7, in which 7 denotes countries where 'political rights are virtually non-existent'; 6 denotes countries that allow only a 'minimal manifestation of rights' and inhabitants experience 'severely restricted rights of freedom of expression and association'; 3, 4 and 5 denote countries that have considerable levels of oppression and conditions undermining freedom – although some elements of political rights may co-exist. PF stands for the Freedom House characterisation 'partly free' ('limited respect for political rights and civil liberties). Freedom House, *Freedom in the world historical rankings* (Washington DC: Freedom House, 2006).

Multilateral co-operation among the Central Asian states can be divided into five phases:

- co-operation among the Soviet Socialist republics of Central Asia in Soviet times;
- the search for multilateral co-operation formats 1991–1993;
- the agreement on and early efforts at developing a Central Asian common market 1993–1998;
- the inclusion of Tajikistan and continued development of plans for economic integration 1998–2000;
- the shift towards greater focus on security co-operation and re-naming of the organisation 2000–2004.

In Soviet times, co-operation among the Central Asian republics was co-ordinated from Moscow. Nevertheless, the late Soviet period saw some inter-republican agreements between Central Asian states – notably water agreements (14 July 1981 and 22 August 1989) and the 1990 agreement ‘On Economic, Scientific, Technical, and Cultural Co-operation’.²²⁶

Still, there was no multilateral co-operation in any meaningful sense until the USSR was facing its demise. In reaction to Boris Yeltsin’s meeting with Stanislau Shushkevich (Belarus) and Leonid Kravchuk (Ukraine) in the ‘Belovezhskaya accords’ in early December 1991, the five heads of state in Central Asia met in

²²⁶ N. Ushakova, ‘Central Asia co-operation: towards transformation’ *Central Asia and the Caucasus* vol. 3, no. 21, 2003.

Ashgabat (Turkmenistan) to discuss a common response.²²⁷ Two policy options were debated: to endorse the 'Belovezhskaya accords' and press for the inclusion of Central Asian states into the new CIS structures; or opt out of a joint CIS structure and form a close-knit Central Asian union. The leaders chose to enter the CIS, which in turn paved the way for the CIS Almaty Declaration of December 1991. Alongside the CIS, however, the Central Asian states still continued to search for ways of institutionalising their own co-operation. Some analysts see the Ashgabat meeting as a 'fact of recognition and moment of creation of regional community'.²²⁸ In 1992 the five Central Asian states formed the regional organisation Central Asian Regional Co-operation Organisation (*Tsentral'no-Aziatskoe Regional'noe Sotrudnichestvo*, TsARS) but both Turkmenistan and Tajikistan soon withdrew.

The landmark event in regional co-operation came with the agreement on the formation of a common market in 1993, signed first by Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in Tashkent January 1993 and Kyrgyzstan in February 1993, and then later jointly by all three countries in 1994. The agreement spurred intense efforts at establishing institutions and legal frameworks for co-operation and the facilitation of a common market. In 1994 the states agreed to form an Inter-State Council consisting of heads of states from the three countries, which was to serve as the main forum for decision-making. A council of prime ministers, a council of defence ministers and a council of foreign ministers were formed to supplement the Inter-State Council. The three states also established a permanent implementing committee (*Ispolnitel'nii komitet*), first

²²⁷ The initial step towards the abolition of the USSR was taken by Stanislau Shushkevich (Belarus) Boris Yeltsin (Russia) and Leonid Kravchuk (Ukraine) in the 'Belovezhskaya accords' in early December 1991. See Gleason, *The Central Asian states: discovering independence*.

²²⁸ V. I. Belokrenitsky, 'Tsentralnoaziatskoe edinstvo – mif ili real'nost?', *Vostok*, no. 5, 1996, quoted in F. Tolipov, 'Regional integration in Central Asia: theory and practice', *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, vol. 2, no. 14, 2002.

located in Almaty, and later on rotational basis in the capitals of the member states. The implementing committee had four representatives from each state, and was tasked with organising and co-ordinating the work of the organisation, developing analyses, generating and disseminating information related to integration and maintaining control over expenditures of the organisation.²²⁹

In the same period, the member states decided to establish the Central Asian Development Bank (*Soglashenie ob uchrezhdenii Tsentral'no-aziatskogo Banka Sotrudnichestva i Razvitiia*, 8 July 1994, Cholpon Ata) and adopted an extensive five-year plan for the realisation of the common market (*Odobrena programma ekonomicheskoi integratsii mezhdu Respublikoi Kazakhstan, Kirgizskoi Respublikoi i Respublikoi Uzbekistan do 2000g. i pervoocherednie investitsionie proekti*, 14 April 1995, Shymkent).

The fourth phase of regional co-operation, from 1998–2000, was marked by a re-affirmation of the goals of 1993 and 1994 and an attempt to develop implementation mechanisms. In 1998, the member states adopted a programme of action for the formation of a common market and a programme of action for the integration of the TsARS countries.²³⁰ In the same year, Tajikistan joined the organisation and it was renamed Central Asian Economic Community (*Tsentral'no-Aziatskoe Ekonomicheskoe Soobshchestvo*, TsAES).

²²⁹ G. G. Rakhmatulina *Dinamika razvitiia integratsionnykh protsessov v gosudarstvakh SNG i perspektivy formirovaniia edinogo ekonomicheskogo prostranstva* (Almaty: Kazakhstanskii Institut Strategicheskikh Issledovaniia pri Prezidente Respubliki Kazakhstan 2004).

²³⁰ Ibid.

From 2000 onwards diplomacy within TsAES became more focused on security-related issues. The Taliban seizure of Kabul in 1996 had spurred considerable worry as to the external security of the region (in addition to concerns over Tajikistan), but security issues assumed real urgency after the incursions of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan into Kyrgyzstan in 1999, and into Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in 2000. In April 2000, the states signed the Agreement on Fighting Terrorism, Extremism, and Transborder Organised Crime, to facilitate intelligence-sharing, covert operations and co-operation among their armed forces. The turn towards security was codified during the Tashkent meeting in December 2001 and a subsequent meeting held in Almaty on 28 February 2002: TsEAS was officially transformed into Central Asian Co-operation Organisation (*Tsentral'no-Aziatskoe Sotrudnichestvo*, TAS). The change also entailed a major re-structuring of the organisation. The executive committee, which had consisted of 16 staff members, was abolished in favour of four national co-ordinators. One Kazakhstan-based observer has noted that the 'the liquidation of the whole apparatus of the implementing committee...did not fully correspond to the tasks given of strengthening control over the realisation of the inter-state agreements...'.²³¹ A former high-ranking representative of the TsAES implementing committee similarly commented in an interview for this thesis that 'they wanted to make the organisation wider, [but] I think it was a step back; without an institutional structure [*apparat*] you cannot do anything'.²³²

Despite the shift towards security issues, efforts towards economic integration continued. In 2000, at the Dushanbe summit of heads of state adopted a strategy for integrated development for the period 2000–2005, while in 2002 President Islam

²³¹ Ibid. p. 95.

²³² Interview, high-level representative of the EvrAzES secretariat/formerly representative of TsAES implementing committee, Almaty- 4 May 2005.

Karimov of Uzbekistan threw his weight behind new plans for a common market. Uzbekistan has since taken the lead in developing a concept for three-stage realisation of a common market, to be completed in fifteen years.²³³ In parallel with this process, President Nursultan Nazarbaev of Kazakhstan initiated a re-launch of the 1998 consortium plans. Donors like the Islamic Development Bank, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank were invited to assist in the development of three consortia: on hydropower, transport and food production. These bodies were meant not only to serve as forums for inter-state co-operation on these specific issues, but also as a means to enable participation by the private sector – especially in the cases of the food and hydropower consortia. However, work on establishing the consortia had not moved beyond the planning stages by 2004, with the partial exception of the consortium on transport. It is uncertain what synergy there could be between the consortium plans and Uzbekistan’s common market proposal.²³⁴

²³³ Interview, representative of Pragma Corporation (Trade Facilitation and Investment Project) Tashkent, 28 March 2005.

²³⁴ Ibid.

Table 6: overview of main events and agreements in the TAS framework

	Event or Agreement
1981	Agreement on Water, 14 July 1981.
1989	Agreement on Water, 22 August 1989.
1991	Ashgabat meeting.
1992	Declaration of prime ministers on continuation of existing arrangements for water management, February 1992, Almaty.
1992	Regional organisation TsARS formed by all five Central Asian countries; Tajikistan and Turkmenistan withdraw shortly afterwards.
1993	February 1992 declaration on water affirmed by heads of states meeting in Nukus, Uzbekistan.
1994	<i>Dogovor o sosdanii eginogo ekonomicheskogo prostranstva</i> , 30 April Cholpon-Ata (on the basis of preliminary agreements signed in January and February 1993), functioned as a legal basis for the organisation later named ' <i>Tsentral'no-Aziatskoe ekonomicheskoe Soobshchestvo</i> ' – TsAES.
1994	States agree to found an inter-state council of heads of states and a council of prime ministers, council of foreign ministers and council of defence ministers, as well as an executive organ in continuous function: the 'implementing committee' (<i>Ispolnitel'nyy komitet</i>), 8 July, Almaty.
1994	Central Asian Development Bank established.
1995	Member states agree on a five-year integration plan, 24 April, Bishkek.
1996	December joint council of defence ministers decides to create tripartite defence unit 'Centrasbat'.
1996	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan sign treaty of eternal friendship.
1997	Heads of state meeting discuss implementation of agreement on common economic space; agreement adopted on the formation of consortia in spheres like water, food and communications discussed for the first time.
1998	26 March: Tajikistan joins the 1994 agreement; the organisation is officially named ' <i>Tsentral'no-Aziatskoe ekonomicheskoe Soobshchestvo</i> ' – TsAES.
1998	UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPEKA) is launched in the context of the March TAES heads of state meeting; SPEKA is to include development of transport, energy and water co-operation; international economic conference on development in Tajikistan; re-structuring of industry.
2000	April Agreement on combating terrorism, extremism, and transborder organised crime, intended to facilitate intelligence sharing, covert operations and armed forces co-operation. Council of heads of states meet with a Special Representative of the Russian President.
2000	August 2000: Kyrgyzstan proposes a joint taskforce for the destruction of militant bases in Tajikistan – proposal not agreed to by the other states.
2001	Statement of intention by heads of states on transforming the structure and emphasis of TAES, Tashkent 29 December.
2002	TAES officially transformed into <i>Tsentral'no-Aziatskoe Sotrudnichestvo</i> – TAS, on 28 February 2002. Implementing committee is abolished and an institute of national co-ordinators established.
2002	President Karimov of Uzbekistan launches idea of common market.
2004	Idea of consortium re-launched, President Nazarbaev of Kazakhstan calls for support from World Bank, ADB and IDB.

Source: compilation by D.Phil candidate

I have already preliminarily indicated that these co-operation initiatives proved largely ineffective. Does this mean that they were insignificant? The considerable number of meetings every year by state officials and leaders facilitated an ongoing dialogue between the countries in the region. The meetings also happened according

to fixed schedules and followed predictable and standard agendas. This indicates the existence of shared norms and commonly agreed procedures of state conduct. In this way the co-operation efforts outlined, even if failing to yield practical results, are indicative of regime-like features in the inter-state relations of the region.

The Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICA)

The Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICA) was another co-operative framework that emerged from within the region. In 1995, Kazakhstan took the initiative to form CICA. According to President Nazarbaev, it was intended to serve a similar role to that of the OSCE, by providing a forum for discussion of political and security issues in Central Asia and the larger region.²³⁵ Leaders and policymakers voiced hopes that the region's states could co-ordinate responses to drugs trafficking, arms trafficking and illegal migration. In June 2002 Kazakhstan hosted a forum attended by state leaders or high-level representatives from the member states, including (remarkably at that time) both President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan and Prime Minister of India Atal Behari Vajpayee.²³⁶ Aside from providing a forum for discussions, however, CICA launched few concrete initiatives, and its future viability and necessity would appear open to question.²³⁷

²³⁵ President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbaev, launched the CICA initiative at the 47th session of the UN General Assembly. The member states of CICA are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Palestine, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan; observer-states: Indonesia, Japan, Korea (South), Lebanon, Malaysia, Thailand, Ukraine, USA, Vietnam and three international organisations: the League of Arab States, OSCE and UN. Kazakhstan *CICA: prospects of the process* (Astana: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005).

²³⁶ F. Khamraev, 'Conference on interaction and confidence-building measures in Asia: prospects and potentials', *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, vol. 5, no. 17, 2002, pp. 54–58.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have highlighted some important points that have direct relevance for four out of the five approaches to understanding regional co-operation outlined in the introduction. First, the differing economic policies adopted by the Central Asian states shaped their outlook on co-operation and created important parameters for how national interests could be defined (relates to the local-power realism approach). Second, there were considerable degrees of interdependence in Central Asia, but more so for infrastructure and water than for trade. Third, there were considerable differences in regime type among countries. While none of the states could be classified as democracies, Uzbekistan had more authoritarian policies than the other three states (regime-type approach). Fourth, the post-independence evolution of the Soviet administrative system created structures similar to Weber's notion of 'indirect rule' (weak-state approach). I will discuss points related to the final approach to understanding Central Asian relations, the great-power realism approach, in the next chapter on great-power involvement in the region.

Chapter 3: Great-power engagement

This chapter provides an overview of the international actors that operated in Central Asia in the period from 1991 to 2004. The key argument put forward here is that Central Asian relations of this period are better described as being shaped by ‘patchwork geopolitics’ than as subjected to a Great Game. Russia and the US engaged substantially in the region on some issues – but there were also areas where great-power engagement was largely absent. This absence has implications for the viability of the ‘great-power realism’ approach: its potential relevance for explaining regional-co-operation is likely to vary according to the level of great-power engagement in specific issue areas.

Below I discuss the Russian and the US presence in the region, and assess whether their engagement affected prospects for Central Asian regional co-operation.²³⁸ After outlining the involvement of China, Turkey and Iran, I end by concluding that the activities of outside countries proved varied and did not easily fit the template of a Great Game scenario.

²³⁸ As I will discuss later in this chapter, China became an increasingly important actor in Central Asian affairs, especially after 2004. Before that time, Russia and the US held the centre-stage. Both powers professed the ambition to influence internal developments and regional relations, and both had a type of presence in the region distinct from that of other large outside powers. China, Turkey, and Iran engaged in the region, but without the same comprehensive agenda as leaders in Moscow and Washington, D.C.

Defining outside engagement

What indications can serve as criteria for determining degrees of outside involvement by foreign powers in Central Asia? And when can a power be said to be acting as a hegemon in a given region? Simply defined, a hegemon is a state with predominant power in the international system, as measured in terms of GDP or other material resources.²³⁹ Depending on how one defines ‘international system’, this approach could reveal two alternate hegemons in Central Asia: Russia and the United States. If ‘international system’ is taken to mean the global state system, then the US is the predominant power – and hence functions in Central Asia, as in other regions of the world, as the global hegemon. On the other hand, if ‘international system’ is taken to mean the web of inter-state relations encircling the region, then Russia figures as the central power – as well as a state that greatly exceeds its Central Asian neighbours in terms of material power.

There are some problems with this manner of defining hegemony. Throughout history, various powers have been ‘predominant’ in terms of ‘material resources’ – but they may not have behaved in particularly ‘predominant’ ways. China in the Middle Ages is one example, and the US in the 1920s and 1930s is another. In other words, structural power may not necessarily translate into behavioural dominance. Robert Keohane’s more specific definition of hegemony and the activities associated with it provide a more useful starting point. As noted previously, Keohane defines a hegemon as a state that ‘is powerful enough to maintain the essential rules governing

²³⁹ R. Pahre, *Leading questions: how hegemony affects the international political economy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998) p. 4.

interstate relations and is *willing* to do so'.²⁴⁰ In the following I seek to determine whether either Russia or the US was *willing* to maintain the 'essential rules of the game' in Central Asia, and whether their engagements with the region actually contributed to the provision of 'essential rules'.

With regards to Russia, I should stress that this chapter is primarily interested in saying something about Russia's potential hegemonic role in light of its possible effects on Central Asian regional co-operation. In the conclusion to this thesis, I will discuss what light my analysis sheds on broader issues associated with Russia's potential hegemonic condition.

United States

Interests

Several key interests underpinned US engagement in the region. First, Central Asia formed part of Washington's overall policy towards, and interests associated with, the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union. In the wake of the collapse of the USSR, Washington saw an interest in supporting and entrenching the independence of the former Soviet republics. It was concerned about Russian influence, as well as the prospect of the new southern republics falling 'under the sway of Iran'.²⁴¹ US Secretary of State James Baker toured the new Central Asian states in 1992 and ensured that the US was one of the first countries to open

²⁴⁰ R. O. Keohane, *After hegemony: cooperation and discord in the world political economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 34–35. R. O. Keohane and J. S. Nye, *Power and interdependence: world politics in transition* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977) p. 44.

²⁴¹ 'US to counter Iran in Central Asia', *New York Times*, 6 February 1992.

diplomatic missions in them.²⁴² A second US concern in the period immediately following independence was to reduce the threat posed by the former Soviet nuclear arsenals in Kazakhstan. After extensive dialogue, Kazakhstan decided to become a nuclear-free state; this decision was rewarded by substantial US aid and support for nuclear disarmament activities through the US Cooperative Threat Reduction Program.²⁴³

While the Bush (Sr.) administration was relatively actively engaged in the region, it also took pains not to challenge Russia in the former Soviet republics, seeking instead to endorse Moscow's policies. By contrast, the Clinton administrations adopted a more independent line.²⁴⁴ By 1994, Russian interference in the internal affairs of CIS states had given rise to concern in Washington.²⁴⁵ At the same time, US companies were becoming increasingly involved in energy extraction in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Both developments were relevant to central US strategic concepts at the time.²⁴⁶ The Clinton administration saw a need to integrate the former Soviet states,

²⁴² 'US names envoys to five republics', *New York Times*, 7 February 1992.

²⁴³ E. E. Daughtry, 'Forging relationships, preventing proliferation: a decade of cooperative threat reduction in Central Asia', in Burghart and Sabonis-Helf, eds, *In the tracks of Tamerlane: Central Asia's path to the 21st century* (Washington DC: Center for Technology and National Security Policy 2004).

²⁴⁴ Amy Jaffe notes that the US had a 'Russia First' strategy from 1991 to 1994, where the concerns of Russia had to be taken into account so as to entrench the new Russia; and Central Asia was seen largely as part of Russian affairs. A. Jaffe, 'US policy towards the Caspian Region: Can the wish-list be realised?', in Chufirin, ed., *The security of the Caspian Sea Region* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

²⁴⁵ P. Kubicek, 'Russian foreign policy and the West', *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 114, no. 4, 1999–2000, p. 556.

²⁴⁶ First, access to energy was a vital US interest. This factor enhanced the strategic importance of Central Asia, since the region could serve as an important back-up to the unstable Persian Gulf and promote diversification in the global oil market. Second, according to the 1998 National Security strategy, 'the United States will not allow a hostile power to dominate any region of critical importance to our interests': W. J. Clinton, *A national security strategy for a new century* (Washington, DC: The White House, 1998) p. 5. In other words, the US committed itself strategically to curbing any attempts by other outside powers at hegemonic dominance in any region of importance. Since Central Asia was a region of rising importance, the new states' independence had to be strengthened so as to prevent excessive Russian or Iranian power projection in Central Asia. S. Blank, *U.S. Military engagement with Transcaucasia and Central Asia* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2000); W. J. Clinton, *A national security strategy for a new century* (Washington D.C.: The White House, 1999).

and those of Central Asia, into the military, economic and political institutions of the West.²⁴⁷ To that end, Washington pursued four concrete objectives. First, the US aimed to strengthen the independence of the new states. Second, it aimed to bolster US energy security by ensuring access to and transportation of energy reserves. Third, the US wanted to mitigate regional conflict; and fourth, it wanted to enhance commercial opportunities for the US and other countries.²⁴⁸

It was initially expected that the administration of George W. Bush would share the Clinton administration's outlook, though with some reduction of the relative strategic importance of the region for the US.²⁴⁹ But following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the Bush administration vastly expanded the US commitment to, and involvement in, the region. With the US-led military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq, the difficult location of the Central Asian republics – landlocked and far removed from key markets – became a major strategic asset. Stephen Blank explains this new significance:

..the importance of Central Asia and the Caucasus to the United States lies not only in the presence of abundant energy resources, but also in these zones' geographic proximity to key theatres in Europe, the Middle East and across Asia. Military power can be projected back and forth from any one of these theatres; (...) the Caucasus and Central Asia [are] pivotal to any such exercise. Access to these zones has become an issue of great strategic and policy importance, in view of America's global responsibilities and vital interests.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ W. J. Clinton, *A national security strategy for a new century* (1999). From 1994 onwards the US firmly dismissed Moscow's explicit calls for a Russian sphere of military and political influence in Central Asia as well as demands for a Russian monopoly in the energy sphere. S. Blank 'The United States and Central Asia', in Allison and Jonson, eds, *Central Asian security: the new international context* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2001).

²⁴⁸ J. S. Wolf, 'Wolf tells Caspian region "oil and gas story" at Senate hearing', *Washington File*, 12 April 2000.

²⁴⁹ A. Jaffe, 'US policy towards the Caspian Region: Can the wish-list be realised?'. A. Jaffe and R. A. Manning, 'The myth of the Caspian "Great Game": the real geopolitics of energy', *Survival*, vol. 40, no. 4, 1998. C. Rice, 'Campaign 2000: promoting the national interest' *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 79, no. 1. 2000

²⁵⁰ S. Blank, *After two wars: reflection on the American strategic revolution in Central Asia* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2005).

Strategies and activities

From the early 1990s onwards, the US had clear interests in Central Asia spurring its involvement. How can we best characterise the scope of this engagement? Did it constitute an attempt at setting the essential rules of the game in the region, or was it more limited? What hegemonic tools, if any, did Washington have at its disposal, and what activities did US engagement entail?

The key activities of the US corresponded with its proclaimed interests. It initiated a range of programmes aimed at economic reform, democratic reform, humanitarian assistance, law enforcement and security support. Most of this support was channelled through USAID, the US Agency for International Development, although the Department of State, Department of Defense, Department of Energy and Department of Agriculture also managed substantial initiatives and funding. In the sphere of democratic reform, the US provided support to civil society and independent media, while in economic reform the US worked to improve the legal-economic framework and foster business development. Support to security and law enforcement centred on training and material support in order to enable the local law enforcement agencies to tackle nuclear proliferation and drug trafficking. Increasingly it also included support for the 'professionalisation' of the military forces. The nuclear dimension was particularly important in the early years, especially in efforts targeted at Kazakhstan, to ensure the dismantling of its nuclear facilities and nuclear weapons.

Table 7: Total cumulative US government funds budgeted 1992–2000

	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Million USD, total	721.74	497.92	292.20	233.59
Million USD, average per annum	90.2	62.2	36.5	29.1

Source: USAID Information Budget (Washington, DC: USID, 2006)

Table 8: Fiscal Year 2005 US government budgeted funds by sector in million USD

	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Humanitarian	0	3.42	18.97	1.80
Security and law enforcement	55.69	15.78	27.24	39.95
Economic reform	9.20	12.25	4.75	5.62
Democratic reform	11.50	14.95	8.06	16.25
Total	76.39	46.4	59.0	63.6

Source: US Congressional budget justification for foreign operations fiscal year 2005 (Washington DC: US Department of State 2005)

These bilateral support programmes were implemented in tandem with multilateral organisations in which the US enjoyed significant influence, especially the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The US played an important role in facilitating the entry of the Central Asian states (alongside other former Soviet republics) into the IMF and the WB in 1992.²⁵¹ This step enabled them to access credit and financial support from these institutions. It also made it possible for the institutions to work closely with the new state leaders – providing advice and encouragement on economic transition policies to ensure similarities in economic management with Western states, while also helping the new states participate more fully in the global economy.

In the mid-1990s, the US invited the Central Asian states to join the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme. However, PfP activities were limited in size and scope compared to the bilateral security support and co-operation arrangements

²⁵¹ '6 ex-Soviet states gain US support for tie to lenders', *New York Times*, 4 January 1992.

the Central Asian states had with the US.²⁵² Aside from the multilateral PfP, the US also encouraged the Central Asian states to form Centrasbat – a regional peacekeeping force affiliated, though not formally linked, with TAS and NATO. Centrasbat conducted annual military exercises with US troops under the US CENTCOM.²⁵³ Nevertheless, whenever the Central Asian states participated in missions outside the region (as was the case with Kazakhstan’s contingents in Afghanistan and Iraq) these have been national rather than Centrasbat missions. Thus, Centrasbat seems to have been activated solely in connection with training exercises initiated and sponsored by the US, and has not performed any real peacekeeping or operative military tasks within or outside the region.

US security relations with Uzbekistan were particularly close. Uzbekistan gave strong support to the US ‘war on terror’ after 2001 and the two countries signed a strategic partnership agreement in 2002.²⁵⁴ This agreement committed the US to safeguard Uzbekistan’s security and assist economic development, in return for Uzbekistan’s pledge of economic and political reform. In practice, the surge in US economic and military support may have further enabled Uzbekistan to adhere to its unilateral

²⁵² Robin Bhatti and Rachel Bronson stress: ‘in many cases national assistance to [NATO] partner countries is wrapped in the guise of a PfP activity, when in fact it has nothing to do with the programme. NATO has labelled these programmes “in the spirit of PfP”.... Such activity is distinct from PfP activity and purely bilateral assistance....in private discussions Central Asian military officials have given the impression that they concluded that bilateral agreements with the US and Turkey offer more political and operational benefits than do PfP programmes.’ R. Bhatti and R. Bronson, ‘NATO’s mixed signals in the Caucasus and Central Asia’, *Survival*, vol. 42, no. 3, 2000, pp. 132–33.

²⁵³ S. N. MacFarlane, ‘The United States and regionalism in Central Asia’, *International Affairs*, vol. 80, no. 3, 2004, p. 456., T. Kuzio and S. Blagov, ‘GUUAM makes a comeback bid with US support’, *Eurasianet Insight*, 7 July 2003.

²⁵⁴ Uzbekistan had allegedly providing assistance to the US in monitoring radical Islamic groups in Afghanistan since 2000. After the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and the initiation of the Enduring Freedom campaign, the US established a base at Karshi-Khanabad (K2) in October 2001. Some 1,300 US army service personnel and troops were stationed at the K2 base by August 2002. The US paid USD 15 million for use of the airfield and in 2002 provided USD 120 million in military equipment, 82 million to Uzbekistan’s National Security Service and 55 million in credits from the US Export-Import Bank. See A. Cooley, ‘Base politics’, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 84, no. 6, 2005; ‘Khanabad, Uzbekistan Karshi-Kanabad (K2) airbase Camp Stronghold Freedom’, *GlobalSecurity.org*, June 2005.

polices and entrenched its refusal to join the Russian-dominated Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO).²⁵⁵ The US also established a base at Manas airport in Kyrgyzstan, but did not initiate military co-operation of similar proportions to that provided for Uzbekistan.²⁵⁶ French NATO forces supporting the ‘Enduring Freedom Campaign’ also established a base at Dushanbe Airport in Tajikistan.²⁵⁷

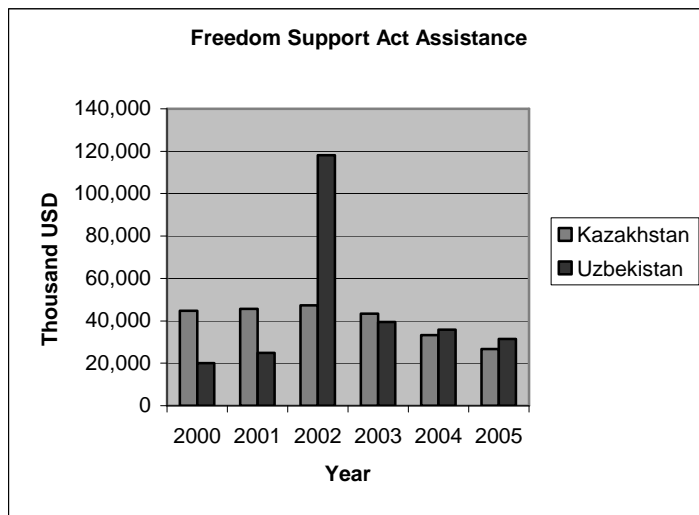


Figure 3: US Freedom Support Act assistance to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan

Source: Compiled from figures from US Congressional budget justification for foreign operations for the following fiscal years: 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 (Washington DC: US Department of State 2000–2005).

²⁵⁵ After Uzbekistan left the Collective Security Treaty (CST), Russia put considerable pressure on Uzbekistan to re-join. 'CIS official urges Uzbekistan to join collective security', *Times of Central Asia*, 27 May 2000.

²⁵⁶ 'Manas International Airport Ganci Air Base Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan', *GlobalSecurity.org*, December 2004.

²⁵⁷ 'French military will remain in Tajikistan until the situation in Afghanistan improves', *Regnum news agency*, 9 January 2007.

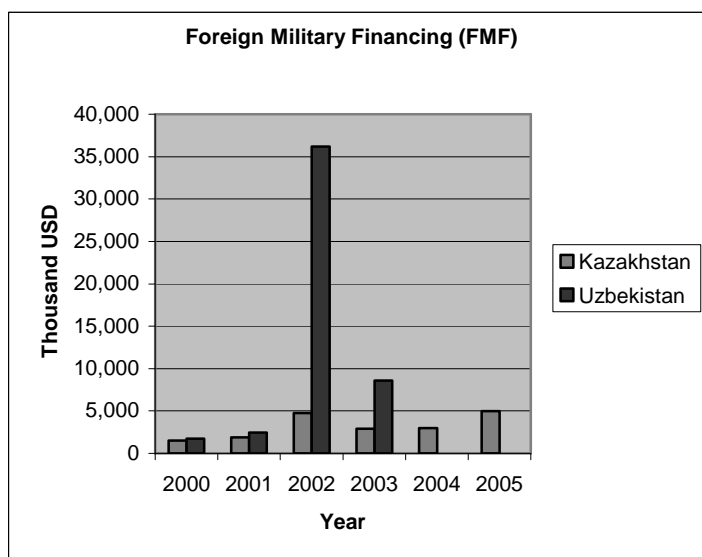


Figure 4: US Foreign Military Financing to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan

Source: as listed for figure on US Freedom Support Act assistance to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan

Additionally, the US worked to prepare and lobby for Central Asian membership in the WTO. It endorsed and helped to facilitate the early entry of Kyrgyzstan to the WTO in 1998. It has operated technical support programmes through USAID to the other three states, advising them on the preparation of national economic frameworks for WTO entry and on the application and negotiation process.²⁵⁸

G(U)UAM is the final multilateral organisation that bears importance in the context of the US engagement in Central Asia. The organisation, which received active support from the US, consisted of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova and (on and off) Uzbekistan. It was formed in 1997 by CIS states that sought to lessen their engagement with Russia and professed an interest in working together on Western transport routes and market access, notably in the TRACECA Eurasian transportation corridor. Uzbekistan joined in 1999 during a meeting in Washington. A free trade agreement, the ‘Yalta GUUAM Charter’, was adopted in July 2002. However,

²⁵⁸ Interview, representative Pragma Corporation (Trade Facilitation and Investment Project), Tashkent, 28 March 2005.

Uzbekistan criticised the organisation for lack of relevance and operability, and temporarily suspended its participation in June 2002, while also refraining from signing the free trade agreement.²⁵⁹ The US has contributed financially to the organisation on a regular basis since its inception. In 2002 the organisation received a boost when the US provided USD 46 million for improving trade and customs procedures.²⁶⁰

Preliminary assessment

Did the above activities constitute an engagement that entailed setting the essential rules of the game in Central Asia? In some ways, the answer is yes. US efforts to enable Central Asian states to participate in key global mechanisms, like lending through the IMF system, provided a set of similar state practices that mattered for how the states related to each other and to countries beyond the region – in this case, an acceptance of the global economic order and basic international credit and trading arrangements.

On the other hand, the US engagement also brought about unevenness – and in some cases was it marked by superficiality and relative insignificance. As to the first point, some initiatives enhanced splits in the region rather than providing unifying rules of the game. The support to GUUAM encouraged Uzbekistan to drift away from its neighbours, and failed to provide any common arena or ‘rules’ for all of the Central Asian states. Similarly, the facilitation of Kyrgyzstan’s early entry into the WTO

²⁵⁹ L. E. Aune and D. Linotte, 'The Guuam July 2002 Free Trade Agreement: a preliminary assessment', *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, vol. 1, no. 19, 2003.

²⁶⁰ S. N. MacFarlane, 'The United States and regionalism in Central Asia', *International Affairs*, vol. 80, no. 3, 2004; T. Kuzio and S. Blagov, 'GUUAM makes a comeback bid with US support', *Eurasianet Insight*, 7 July 2003.

created, in the short and medium term, a potential for more unevenness in regional trade arrangements, rather than provision of 'essential rule'. In the longer term, however, it may be that WTO membership for all the Central Asian states will lead to new and common trading rules – a prospect to be discussed further in the chapter on trade. In the sphere of security, Centrasbat included only three of the states. Tajikistan was not a member; moreover, it waited until February 2002 to join the NATO Partnership for Peace. Thus, neither Centrasbat nor PfP can be said to have provided 'essential rules of the game' relevant for the whole region. Moreover, both were relatively insignificant in practice.

The steep increase in support to Uzbekistan after 2001 might, as argued above, have facilitated greater unilateralism for the country. This support drove a significant wedge through the region in terms of security and military alignment patterns. After 2002, the common perception among analysts from within and outside the region was certainly one of two blocs – one camp constituting of the US and Uzbekistan, and the other of Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.²⁶¹ In terms of security alignments, this interpretation is justified for the period 2002 to 2004. However, the overall situation is considerably more complex. Kazakhstan, one of Russia's closest and most important allies, also maintained high levels of co-operation with the US throughout the period from 1991 to 2004 – including during the years 2002 to 2004. For 1991–2000, US assistance to Kazakhstan was almost three times higher than that to Uzbekistan (cf. table above) and US-based multinational oil companies played a key role in Kazakhstan's important energy sector throughout the period. The increased US support to Uzbekistan in 2002 massively outweighed the support given

²⁶¹ R. Abdullo, 'Central Asian countries and the United States: ups and downs in their relationships', *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, vol. 6, no. 36, 2005.

to Kazakhstan in that year, but in other years the countries received relatively similar amounts of support.

In the years from 1991–2004, the US did not succeed in inducing the emergence of democratic, economically prosperous and fully market-based economies in all the Central Asian states. Although the US applied a similar set of tools and incentives to all four states, their reform paths proved to be highly uneven. It is debatable whether the difference in regime type – differing economic policies and degree of political plurality – can be attributed to failures in US efforts. The important point here is that by 2004 the US had not managed to foster the emergence of fully democratic and market-based states – in fact, the differences in regime type were a cause of friction, rather than a provision of the ‘essential rules of the game’ that might have been brought about by similar and high levels of democratic norms.

The track record of the US presence is a mixed one. What conclusions can be drawn from this record concerning the effects of the US presence on regional co-operation? For Washington, promoting greater regional co-operation was an explicit reason to engage in the region. The stated aim was to encourage the countries to be ‘good neighbours’: the furthering of regional co-operation was seen as important for generating peace and stability.²⁶² The US also considered regional co-operation central in ensuring that energy resources could be shipped across a multitude of national borders to reach European markets – and it viewed many serious developmental and security challenges of the Central Asian countries, including drugs

²⁶² US federal government, ‘Kazakhstan’, *Congressional budget justification for foreign operations fiscal year 2004* (Washington DC: US Department of State 2004), p. 33.

and weapons proliferation, as being regional in character.²⁶³ These perceptions triggered support from USAID, the Department of Defense and the State Department in such issue-specific areas as regional water management, regional mechanisms for combating drugs trafficking and improving border controls. The US brought some positive change to these issue areas, as I will discuss in greater detail in subsequent case chapters. Nevertheless, it failed to provide an overall impetus for regional co-operation. Moreover, the wedges that the US drove into the region by further encouraging Uzbekistan's unilateralism in security matters and supporting Kyrgyz WTO membership, as well as Tajikistan's absence from Centrasbat and PfP, may have reduced the impetus for regional co-operation.²⁶⁴ Eventually, Washington reassessed the prospects for regional co-operation. A US representative based in the region stressed in 2005 in an interview that such co-operation was difficult due to Uzbekistan's history of not being a 'constructive neighbour', and added that this rethinking on the part of US had taken place in 2004.²⁶⁵

Russia

Interests

It is common for analysts to identify two central trends in Russian foreign policy thinking: 'Atlanticism' and 'Eurasianism'.²⁶⁶ Elements of the Russian foreign policy-

²⁶³ S. Sestanovich, 'US policy toward Central Asia', *Remarks to the Asia-Pacific subcommittee House International Relations Committee*, 11 March 1999.

²⁶⁴ S. Neil MacFarlane similarly notes scant concern on the part of the US for developing genuine regional co-operation in security issues: see his 'The United States and regionalism in Central Asia'.

²⁶⁵ Interview, representative of the US Embassy in Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 22 April 2005.

²⁶⁶ H. Adomeit, 'Russia as a 'Great Power' in world affairs: images and reality', *International Affairs*, vol. 71, no. 1, 1995; A. G. Arbatov, 'Russia's foreign policy alternatives', *International Security*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1993; G. Chafetz, 'The struggle for a national identity in post-Soviet Russia', *Political*

making community usually supported various strands of these two main policy outlooks, one arguing for close co-operation with the West, and the other cautioning that such co-operation was against Russian national interests, advocating instead a focus on entrenching Russia's position in the Eurasian heartland. While neither approach has denied the importance of the West or Eurasia, the two diverged concerning the appropriate balance between the two concerns, with differing ideas about what the main focus of Russia's foreign policy should be. Nevertheless, relatively soon after coming to power, such advocates of Atlanticism as Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev and President Boris Yeltsin increased their attention to the former Soviet republics. This reorientation (or rather 're-inclusion') was the result of disillusionment with Europe and North America combined with the eruption of armed conflicts in the Southern areas of the former Soviet Union. The shift had implications for the foreign policy strategies advocated by the new leadership in the early 1990s. In 1994, Foreign Minister Kozyrev stressed that Russia had a special responsibility for maintaining order in the former Soviet Union.²⁶⁷ He singled out the presence of ethnic Russians living in the former Soviet republics as an especially important factor.²⁶⁸

These distinctively 'Eurasian' concerns were consistently reiterated in Russia's foreign policy concepts, military doctrines and national security concepts. The first draft Military Doctrine of 1992 embodied the assumption that the CIS would become

Science Quarterly, vol. 111, no. 4, 1996–1997; A. Sergounin, 'Russia and the world: changing paradigms of Russian foreign and security policy under Yeltsin and Putin', in Godzimirski, ed., *The Russian Federation – ten years of statehood: what now?* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2003).

²⁶⁷ At the 48th session of the UN General Assembly, Kozyrev also proposed to the UN that the organisation should give Russia a special mandate for peacekeeping, which spurred discussion on whether Russia was embarking on a strategy similar to the historical US 'Monroe Doctrine': D. Danilov, 'Russia's search for an international mandate in Transcaucasus', in Coppieters, ed., *Contested borders in the Caucasus* (Brussels: VUBPRESS, 1996).

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

a cohesive military mechanism, while a main goal of the 1993 Foreign Policy Concept was to create a belt of security and good neighbourliness around Russia's borders.²⁶⁹

The National Security Concept of 2000 defined the weakening of the integration process in the CIS as a threat and also stressed the danger posed by an outbreak of conflict near Russia's border. The safety of ethnic Russians outside Russia was consistently enumerated as a concern in all these documents. The Foreign Policy Concept signed by President Vladimir Putin on 28 June 2000 gave top priority to the CIS area. Like the earlier concepts, it grappled with the loss of great-power status, looking for ways in which Russia could continue to be a central player in world affairs.

The concern with maintaining great-power status served as a powerful motivation for Russia's engagement in Central Asia, where it has historically had strong influence. On the other hand, there were also several 'objective' reasons for this involvement. Lena Jonson stresses that Russia's own security is in many cases directly linked to that of Central Asia.²⁷⁰ The absence of patrols and fortifications at the border between Central Asia (Kazakhstan) and Russia gave the latter a vital stake in dealing with security threats facing the Central Asian states. Of particular concern was the potential spread of radical Islamic ideas and movements, from Afghanistan to the Muslim populations in Central Asia as well as in Russia itself. According to Jonson, the strong security dimension in Russia's engagement with Central Asia has also been fortified by policy-makers' belief that Russia can offer the right military tools for dealing with the challenges facing the region.

²⁶⁹ A. Sergounin, 'Russia and the world: changing paradigms of Russian foreign and security policy under Yeltsin and Putin', in Godzimirski, ed., *The Russian Federation*; Russian Federation, *Kontseptsiia vneshnei politiki Rossiskoi Federatsii* (Moscow: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1993).

²⁷⁰ L. Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia: the shaping of Russian foreign policy* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004).

Russia expressed a relatively constant and clear interest in acting as a hegemon in the former Soviet space. It certainly seems to have *wanted* to provide the essential rules of the game in the post-Soviet space, including in Central Asia. While this willingness is not difficult to document, whether Russia actually effectively engaged in the region in the manner envisaged is a more complex question. Bobo Lo argues that the policy doctrines referred to above were devised mainly in order to provide the illusion of vision and policy coherence in Moscow's foreign policy – a surrogate for policy action.²⁷¹ The declared primacy of the CIS was a 'foundation myth' perpetuated by the Yeltsin administration; according to Lo, it testified to the 'potemkinization' of Russian foreign policy in the 1990s. The case for effective Russian policy action in the CIS and Central Asia in the period 1991–2004 thus remains to be proven.

Strategies and activities

Lo's interpretation may be especially relevant for the 1990s; the ascent of Vladimir Putin to power brought important changes.²⁷² Putin built on and enhanced former Foreign Minister Yevgenii Primakov's preference for bilateral rather than multilateral (CIS) mechanisms with the Central Asian states, which may have enabled more concrete initiatives from Moscow. The 'economisation' trend in foreign policy under Putin may have made the Russian presence more tangible.²⁷³ This trend assigned

²⁷¹ B. Lo, *Russian foreign policy in the post-Soviet era: reality, illusion and mythmaking* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 6–7, 66–98

²⁷² A. Brown and L. Shevtsova, *Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Putin: political leadership in Russia's transition* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2001); L. Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: myths and reality* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999).

²⁷³ Bobo Lo notes that the economisation trend under Putin has come not only from the realisation that any great power needs a strong economic basis, but also as a response to the impact of globalisation and primacy of economic power: i.e. that Russia must function effectively in the global economic

particular importance to economic priorities and instruments.²⁷⁴ Economic power and instruments are often fungible, which may enhance their effectiveness.²⁷⁵

With these differences between the Yeltsin and Putin administration in mind, how can we best characterise the scope of Russia's actual engagement in Central Asia? Was Moscow able to provide the essential rules of the game in the region in the period 1991–2004? What hegemonic tools, if any, did it employ, and what were Russia's key activities?

In the economic sphere, the early 1990s saw the catastrophic downfall of Russia as a hegemon, clearly manifested in its inability to keep the Central Asian states within the rouble zone. While the Central Asian states had been very willing to remain within the Russian currency sphere, demands put forward by Moscow (such as Russian control over gold reserves) made the Central Asian states opt out.²⁷⁶ The economic collapse after the break-up of the USSR caused a dramatic drop in trade flows between Russia and the Central Asian states, although the volume of trade exchanges saw a partial recovery in the mid- and late 1990s, particularly for Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (see statistics in subsequent trade chapter). The CIS and in 1995, the Customs Union introduced low and unified tariffs for trade between signatory states (Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and, later, Tajikistan). This system was

system. See B. Lo, 'Evolution or regression? Russian foreign policy in Putin's second term', in Blakkisrud, ed. *Towards a post-Putin Russia* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2006), pp. 62–63.

²⁷⁴ Ibid. See also C. Wallander, 'The economization, rationalisation and normalisation of Russian foreign policy', *PONARS Policy Memo* 1997, no. 1. Lo also draws attention to Vitalii Tretyakov's assertion that the Russian leadership aims to 'maintain maximum non-military control over ...territory of historical responsibility': V. Tretyakov, 'Gipoteza o bol'shom treugolnike', *Politicheskii klass*, no. 10, 2005.

²⁷⁵ Lo, 'Evolution or regression?'; D. A. Baldwin, 'Power analysis and world politics: new trends versus old tendencies', *World Politics*, vol. 31, no. 2, 1979.

²⁷⁶ G. Gleason, *The Central Asian states: discovering independence* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997).

indeed an important set of 'essential rules' in the economic sphere, but these rules were mere 'starting points' – various additional bilateral tariffs by members were added, and high informal trade barriers were in operation. After 2000, Russia attempted to co-ordinate negotiations for WTO membership of customs union member countries, but was unable to follow through. Russia, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan shared information on their respective WTO talks, but in the end each country conducted its own entry negotiations individually.

In the energy sphere, Russia held a central position by default, since it controlled the pipelines transporting oil and gas out of the region to Russian and European markets. This position provided important leverage over Kazakhstan, the main energy exporter of the four countries. In hydropower and gas, the contours of a Russian push to secure a large-scale presence became increasingly evident during Putin's first term. Still, it was only after 2004 that Russia gained a major foothold in the region with regard to gas and hydropower.²⁷⁷

Russia attempted to introduce a comprehensive international settlement on the delineation of the Caspian Basin, but did so without success. One of Vladimir Putin's first initiatives as president was to appoint former Minister of Energy Viktor Kalyuzhny as Special Envoy to the Caspian, in May 2000. Kalyuzhny proposed a multilateral regime that would comprise all the littoral states (Russia, Iran, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan) – but all (except Russia) were unwilling to endorse an international framework dominated by Russia.²⁷⁸ Instead, the fallback

²⁷⁷ T. Sabonis-Helf, 'Power, influence and stability: the Unified Energy Systems of Russia in the southern tier FSU', *Central Eurasian Studies Review*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2005.

²⁷⁸ 'Foreign Ministry official on Russia envoy's remarks on Caspian sea status', *FBIS-NES* 30 July 2000.

option of bilateral agreements between some of the countries (Kazakhstan–Russia, Azerbaijan–Russia) came to constitute the international legal framework for oil and gas exploration in the northern section, while delineation issues in the southern section remained unresolved and continued to generate inter-state tensions and prevent extraction.

On the whole, Russia's efforts to build viable multilateral institutions in the region met with scant success – the Commonwealth of Independent States being the main case in point here. The elaborate institutional framework of this organisation and its wide-ranging mandate make it in some ways the most central multilateral framework in which the Central Asian states are involved. The CIS was launched when the majority of the former Union Republics signed the 'Alma Ata declaration' on 21 December 1991. The Council of Heads of States (CHS) is the key locus of decision-making, but various other structures have also developed.²⁷⁹ Richard Sakwa and Mark Webber argue that the CIS had two underlying and often conflicting purposes, and that these countervailing pressures undermined the effectiveness of the organisation. On the one hand, the CIS was originally conceived by its members as a vehicle that would facilitate a departure from the former Soviet structures, promoting independence on the part of the former Soviet republics. On the other hand, the CIS was also intended to develop associational qualities that could help to prevent conflict,

²⁷⁹ Sakwa and Webber note that in 1998 the CIS had the following structure: '... [The CHS]... is defined in the 1993 Charter as the 'leading organ' of the CIS. Its meeting in April 1998 was the 21st since 1991. The CHS grants or denies approval to measures worked out at lower levels and co-ordinates its work closely with the Council of Heads of Government (CHG); – inter-ministerial committees which exist inter alia for defence, foreign affairs, internal affairs, special services, and state security, and foreign economic relations; – 54 departmental councils to co-ordinate sectoral co-operation between corresponding departments and ministries in CIS states; – an executive secretariat set up in September 1993 headed by an Executive Secretary; permanent working agencies in the field of defence.....– organs of economic competence such as MEK, an Inter-State Bank (inaugurated in December 1993), and Economic Court (July 1994) and a CIS Currency Committee (February 1996); – the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly.' R. Sakwa and M. Webber, 'The Commonwealth of Independent States, 1991–1998: stagnation and survival', *Europe-Asia studies*, vol. 51, no. 3, 1999, pp. 394–95.

avoid a total breakdown in links and stimulate mutually beneficial co-operation.²⁸⁰

The CIS launched several major co-operation initiatives – but very few of the signed agreements were actually implemented.²⁸¹ In consequence, the CIS organisational framework cannot be said to have constituted the main arena, or indeed provided essential rules, for interactions among the states of Central Asia.

Preliminary assessment

To what extent does the failure of the CIS indicate Russia's failure to fulfil its hegemonic potential? In the early years after the break-up of the Soviet Union, Moscow supported the institutional development of the CIS organisational machinery and stressed the importance of viable multilateral mechanisms to underpin inter-state politics in the former Soviet space. The malfunctioning of the CIS in this period paints a picture of a large power unable to realise its vision of a hegemonic role. But with the emergence of Yevgeni Primakov as Foreign Minister in 1996, the Russian leadership gave priority to developing bilateral, and not multilateral, relations with the former Soviet republics, and avoided using CIS mechanisms in important policy matters. Given Moscow's lack of interest, the CIS's problems alone cannot be used as evidence of a failure on the part of Russia to supply the essential rules of the game after 1996.

By contrast, two other sub-groupings under the CIS umbrella received more attention from the Russian leadership: the customs union that later became the Eurasian

²⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 379.

²⁸¹ Sakwa and Webber (ibid) note that Aman Tuleev, Russian minister for co-operation with the CIS states, acknowledged in 1996 that of the approximately 600 agreements signed within the framework of the CIS, most had not been implemented.

Economic Community (*EvrAziskoe Ekonomicheskoe Soobshchestvo*, EvrAzES), and the Collective Security Treaty (CST), re-named the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) in 2002. These organisations will be discussed in greater detail in the trade and security chapters, respectively. EvrAzES provided a framework for trade co-operation, but with mixed results. The CSTO, on the other hand, did provide an overarching security framework that delivered ‘essential rules’ as well as several public goods to the states of Central Asia.

The CST joined all four Central Asian states into one common defence alliance. Shared membership and Russia’s dominating position in security affairs may have been an important factor precluding hostile military relations among the Central Asian states. This success is an example of ‘essential rules’ in its most vital form, and shows how Russia fulfilled an important hegemonic function. CST membership also provided various important benefits – such weapons purchases at lower cost, deployment of Russian border guards, and wide-ranging admission of Central Asian officers to Russian higher police and military academies.²⁸² Russia’s role in forging peace in Tajikistan in 1997 increased stability in the region and testified to both its diplomatic and military might.²⁸³ True, Uzbekistan’s withdrawal from the alliance in 1999 undermined the unity that the defence alliance had provided for the region. Still,

²⁸² Russia maintained a border-guard training unit in Kyrgyzstan after withdrawing troops in the early 1990s. In Tajikistan, Russian border guards patrolled the Afghanistan–Tajikistan border until Russia agreed to a gradual withdrawal in 2004. See S. N. MacFarlane and S. Torjesen *Kyrgyzstan: a small arms anomaly in Central Asia?* (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, 2004); S. Torjesen, C. Wille and S. N. MacFarlane, *Tajikistan’s road to stability: the reduction in small arms proliferation and remaining challenges*, (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, 2005).

²⁸³ Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeni Primakov played a key role in ensuring a successful outcome to the peace negotiations between the warring sides in Tajikistan’s Civil War, which started in 1994. The agreement resulted in a power-sharing mechanism between the government faction and the Islamic and democratic opposition faction. Uzbekistan protested the inclusion of the Islamists in the government and sought to undermine the new unity government. In this way, Moscow’s policies towards Tajikistan ignored Uzbekistan’s concerns and represented a case where Russia pushed through a solution and undercut Uzbekistan’s position as a regional player in Central Asia. See Torjesen et al., *Tajikistan’s road to stability: the reduction in small arms proliferation and remaining challenges*.

the security guarantee provided by Russia for the three other states may have helped to further rule out military hostility between Uzbekistan and the rest in periods of soured relations.

As with the US, the track record of the Russian hegemonic presence is mixed. On most issues, and for most of the 1991–2004 period, Russia's economic presence was limited, although towards the end of that period and since 2004 Russia has managed to regain an important economic foothold. Russia failed in forging viable multilateral institutions, but the consequences of its military engagement for defining inter-state security in the region provided important essential rules in military affairs.

What conclusions can one draw concerning the effects of Russia's presence on regional co-operation? Unlike the US, Russia did not have the specific policy aim of enhancing indigenous regional co-operation. Rather, Moscow sought to link the Central Asian states into structures where Russia played the leading role – and as a side effect, co-operation among the Central Asian states might have been enhanced. From the outline above, however, it seems clear that in most issue areas, Russia simply had no major effect on regional co-operation. On the other hand, the provision of an important favourable and underlying condition for co-operation – the absence of military hostilities – could have allowed the states of the region to initiate their own regional co-operation.

China

China became an increasingly relevant player in the region in the period from 1991–2004, although the scope of its engagement was not as significant as that of the US or Russia. Security concerns were the initial pull factor, with two issues dominating the agenda: border delineation, and Uighur separatism in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. China's rising energy consumption also gave it a strong interest in Central Asia's oil and gas reserves, alongside the growing interest in the region as a market for Chinese consumer products.²⁸⁴ This push into Central Asia coincided with the adoption of a new security concept in China, first launched in 1997 and officially adopted in 2001.²⁸⁵ The new concept stressed 'mutuality' or interdependence in security, and envisioned the use of multilateral security co-operation and dialogue. This vision has served as an underlying principle of China's multilateral efforts in Central Asia since the late 1990s. A keen interest in seeking co-operation and a mutual understanding with Russia has also underpinned China's approach to Central Asian affairs.²⁸⁶

It is important to stress that China's approach in the period 1991–2004 was primarily limited to confidence-building and increased inter-state dialogue and co-operation. Its

²⁸⁴ China is expected to import 70 per cent of the oil it consumes in 2020: R. Dongfeng, *The Central Asia policies of China, Russia and the USA, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization process: a view from China*, (Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2003), p. 7. Ren Dongfeng holds that China's 'strategic intentions' towards Central Asia included: "strengthening security co-operation with Central Asian states and promoting the stability of both Central Asia and China's own Western territory by cutting off the cross-border links between terrorist organisations; extending economic and trade relations with Central Asian countries and establishing a source of energy to meet growing domestic demand; broadening the co-operative dimension with Russia; creating a new diplomatic image for China by establishing a local model for multilateral co-operation (the SCO); and promoting an international process of political multipolarity." Ibid, p. 6

²⁸⁵ W. Baiyi, 'The Chinese security concept and its historical evolution', *Journal of Contemporary China*, vol. 10, no. 27, 2001.

²⁸⁶ Dongfeng, *The Central Asia policies of China, Russia and the USA, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization process*, p. 6.

role in the region after 2004 has been substantial, but, in view of the limited goal and scope of China's engagement prior to 2004, it does not seem useful to discuss China in the context of potential hegemonic roles that it might have played. On the other hand, China has certainly been a key outside player in regional affairs since 1991, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (to which China belongs, as do Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) has been an important arena for inter-state contact in the region.

With the break-up of the Soviet Union, Russia and the Central Asian states inherited several unresolved border disputes with China. Five states (Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) set up a negotiating mechanism, the 'Shanghai Five', which resulted in an agreement on military confidence-building along the border areas in 1996, and a 1997 agreement on reducing military forces along the border regions. These agreements enabled the initiation of further confidence-building measures and provided the framework for various bilateral agreements on specific disputed territories.

The increasing institutionalisation of diplomatic activity involving China, Russia and the Central Asian states coincided with the intensification of Uighur separatist activity. China was concerned about cross-border activities of the separatist groups, and this worry spurred further co-operation. Uighur separatists were receiving training in Afghanistan, so China shared the Central Asian states' fear of militant movements operating in this area. Since 1999, the 'Bishkek group' led co-ordination of efforts to deal with separatism and 'cross-border crime', with regular information-sharing

meetings involving the heads of the law enforcement and special services of the five states.

Shared regional security challenges thus acted as the key rationale and driving force for increasingly close diplomatic relations among the five (later six) states.

Uzbekistan participated in the group as an observer since 2000, and officially joined in June 2001, when the states formalised their co-operation and formed the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Security co-operation became more marked and tangible. Kyrgyzstan and China held joint military exercises in October 2002, and a five-state anti-terrorism exercise (which excluded Uzbekistan) took place in August 2003.²⁸⁷ In the years up to 2004, the member states discussed ways of strengthening the institutional framework and launched the first outlines for expanding co-operation into the economic sphere. They adopted a plan for multilateral economic and trade co-operation was adopted in 2004, and launched an SCO secretariat the same year.²⁸⁸

The events of 11 September 2001 and the subsequent US deployment of troops in Central Asia had a mixed effect on the SCO. The organisation initially expressed support for the US-led war on terror and offered a qualified endorsement of the temporary deployment of US troops. On the other hand, the forceful US removal of the Taliban from power also exposed the limited nature of the SCO's security relevance and its resolve against threats emanating from Afghanistan.²⁸⁹ Later, the continued presence of US troops in Central Asia became an increasing concern for Russia and China. In those circumstances, the SCO provided a useful platform for the

²⁸⁷ 'China, Tajikistan to hold military exercises', *Xinhua News Agency*, 19 September 2006.

²⁸⁸ China, People's Republic of, *Shanghai Cooperation Organization* (Beijing: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2004)

²⁸⁹ S. Blank, 'The Shanghai Co-operation Organisation and its future', *Central Asia - Caucasus Analyst*, 22 May 2002.

two countries to argue for US withdrawal, which in turn strengthened the relevance of the organisation.²⁹⁰

From 2002 onwards, China heightened its engagement in bilateral and multilateral terms through the SCO, with greater investments in the oil and gas sector of Kazakhstan and increased aid to the other states. New rail and road routes opened, and trade flows expanded.²⁹¹ The SCO annual summits became important events, where China and the Central Asian states could forge major bilateral deals on the sidelines. In 2004, China gave Uzbekistan a loan of USD 950 million.²⁹² In the near future, as I will discuss in the epilogue, China might reach a level of involvement in the region that could make it relevant in terms of ‘predominance’ and providing the ‘rules of the game’. Moreover, Central Asian leaders seem increasingly appreciative of China’s support for regime stability.²⁹³

Turkey

In the early 1990s, Turkey envisioned a Turkic commonwealth, complete with a common market and Turkish development bank. The newly independent states, however, were concerned that such close ties would limit their new sovereignty. The

²⁹⁰ S. Blagov, 'Shanghai Cooperation Organization suggests new Russia–China links', *Jamestown Foundation Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 6 July 2005.

²⁹¹ I. Bobokulov, 'Alternative transport routes begin to emerge in Central Asia', *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, 20 April 2005.

²⁹² A. Ilkhamov, 'Profit, not patronage: Chinese interests in Uzbekistan', *Jamestown Foundation China Brief*, 27 September 2005

²⁹³ A former top-level Uzbekistani government official noted in an interview for this thesis that the SCO had served as a forum for leaders to discuss responses to the political upheaval in Kyrgyzstan in 2005. President Askar Akaev had requested moral and financial support from the SCO member countries when faced with domestic challenges, but had been refused due to the other state leaders’ disapproval of his poor handling of the political situation. (Interview, former high-ranking Uzbekistani foreign ministry official, Tashkent, 30 March 2005.) China, however, did give direct financial assistance to Uzbekistan in the wake of the demonstrations and subsequent government crack-down in Andijan, 13–14 May 2005.

Central Asian states dismissed the Turkish vision at the first Turkic summit in 1992.²⁹⁴ Moreover, Turkey's financial resources proved far too limited to allow it to exert significant influence in the new Central Asian states. Turkey has nevertheless been an important actor in some issue areas. It holds a key stake in energy transportation, and has lobbied actively for the use of Western routes crossing Turkish territory. This concern with energy issues prompted relatively close relations with Kazakhstan. Relations with Uzbekistan turned problematic, however, following Uzbek accusations in 1999 that Turkey was harbouring Uzbek opposition leaders. Turkey has lent substantial support to multilateral initiatives in the security sphere. It was a focal point for activities under NATO's PfP programme and has also provided military assistance, such as officer training and military equipment, to the Central Asian states.²⁹⁵ Otherwise, however, Turkey has not been actively involved in developments related to trade co-operation or water issues.

Iran

A lack of resources prevented Iran from playing a dominant role in Central Asia after 1991.²⁹⁶ It pragmatically chose neither to promote an Islamic agenda nor to seek military involvement in Central Asia, stressing diplomatic and economic co-operation instead. Along with Turkey, it was a founding member of the Economic Co-operation Organisation (ECO), which invited the Central Asian states to join after they gained their independence in 1991. The organisation aimed to facilitate economic co-

²⁹⁴ G. M. Winrow, 'Turkey and Central Asia', in Allison and Jonson, eds, *Central Asian security: the new international context* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2001).

²⁹⁵ Ibid. See also R. Bhatti and R. Bronson, 'NATO's mixed signals in the Caucasus and Central Asia', *Survival*, vol. 42, no. 3, 2000.

²⁹⁶ H. Peimani, *Regional security and the future of Central Asia: the competition of Iran, Turkey, and Russia* (London: Praeger, 1998).

operation, but functioned mainly as a forum for dialogue and diplomatic exchanges. Edmund Herzig concludes that ‘the ECO’s concrete achievements are considerably less impressive than its declaratory record’.²⁹⁷

Iran worked together with states in the region to end the Afghan civil war, settle the conflict in Tajikistan and counter terrorism in post-Soviet Central Asia. However, Iran provided little financial investment to Central Asia, except for several infrastructure projects.²⁹⁸ Iran was of some importance as a trading partner, but it also acted as much as a competitor to the Central Asian states.²⁹⁹ Importantly, Iran – like Turkey – could potentially offer a vital transport route for goods and energy resources.³⁰⁰ However, due to its hostility to the Tehran regime, Washington sought to undermine the Iranian option, which reduced the viability of the Iranian routes.³⁰¹ Similarly, since Iran’s ‘strategic predicament’ – that of hostile relations with the US – was different than those of the Central Asian states, Iran’s co-operation with states in the region was more difficult – in particular vis-à-vis Uzbekistan.³⁰²

²⁹⁷ E. Herzig 'Regionalism, Iran and Central Asia' *International Affairs* 2004 vol. 80, no. 3, p. 513

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 514-515

²⁹⁹ R. W. T. Pomfret, *Central Asia turns south?: Trade relations in transition* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999).

³⁰⁰ A key objective of Iran has been to secure Central Asian commitment to a southern pipeline. Turkmenistan shipped a small percentage of its annual gas export via a new 200 km-pipeline between Korpodzhe (Turkmenistan) and Kord-Kuy (Iran). Kazakhstan similarly exported a small percentage of its oil via Iran by means of energy swaps. As yet, there has been no firm commitment by Kazakhstan or Turkmenistan for larger quotas through Iranian territory. Iran had particularly extensive relations with Turkmenistan in the period 1996–2001. See E. Herzig, 'Iran and Central Asia', in Allison and Jonson, eds, *Central Asian security: the new international context*.

³⁰¹ US policies prevented US firms from working with Iran. US government restrictions on the Iranian route were not always welcomed by representatives of the US oil industry. At a US Senate hearing, Conoco representative Mike Stinson, referring to the disincentives to working with Iran, stressed that ‘in effect, our government is asking industry to subsidize the sanctions imposed against Iran. This is an exercise in private sector subsidization of government’. (‘Oil Companies unwilling to invest in mammoth pipeline’, *Washington File*, 9 April 1999.)

³⁰² E. Herzig 'Regionalism, Iran and Central Asia' p. 507

Conclusion

The mixed record of US and Russian engagement, as well as that of China, Turkey and Iran, has implications for my interpretation of the nature of geopolitical competition in the region. In contrast to the common view of the region as an arena for a new Great Game between Russia and the US, a more fruitful approach might be to recognise that on many issues, the region was an arena of symbolic and rhetorical clashes between the great powers, rather than one of a genuine race for presence and control— although energy and, in part, security were important exceptions.

Russia was rhetorically committed to being the main provider of essential rules in Central Asia, but failed to deliver in several areas. Meanwhile, US engagement was marked by unevenness and, at times, insignificance. The great powers had several shared interests – including curbing drug flows, stemming radical Islamic groups, combating terrorism, enhancing border controls and preventing weapons proliferation. In some issue areas, there were signs of ‘peaceful co-existence’ and even co-operation between the outside powers. Kazakhstan’s close co-operation with both Russia and the US illustrates well the multifaceted nature of the international relations of Central Asia. In the period from 1991–2000, Kazakhstan received three times more assistance than Uzbekistan from the US, and continued to receive large volumes of assistance afterwards. And yet, alongside this substantial US support, Kazakhstan remained a vital and close ally of Russia.

Outside engagement in Central Asia was a patchwork phenomenon, embodying both great-power presence and great-power absence. Pronounced tendencies towards competition, co-operation and co-existence existed simultaneously in the approaches

of the outside states. This dynamic has important implications for the relevance of systemic approaches to understanding regional co-operation in Central Asia. The relevance of outside engagement for regional co-operation varied according to issue, since only some spheres experienced substantial great-power involvement. Security may have been one area where outside powers created important parameters for inter-regional co-operation. By contrast, neither the US nor Russia had strong interests on water issues. Moreover, the particular great-power constellation (co-operation or competition) on a given issue might have had differing effects for different topic areas. In the sphere of trade, two sets of rules were on offer from the outside –those of EvrAzES and WTO – but these may have complemented each other, rather than challenging the states to choose one, or undermining regional trade co-operation.

The influence of great powers on co-operation in Central Asia from 1991 to 2004 remains an open issue. It is impossible to deduce *a priori* from the interests and strategies of the outside states the impact in specific issue areas. The three subsequent case chapters will provide good testing grounds for the relevance of outside powers in relation to specific areas of regional co-operation. In the next chapters, I assess patterns of regional co-operation in three spheres: trade, water and security.

Chapter 4: Trade co-operation

After independence in 1991, Central Asian state leaders promised co-operation and openness in regional trade. However, little trade facilitation and trade liberalisation actually materialised in the region. Despite diplomatic initiatives, trade flows generally decreased, and several formal and informal barriers to trade were established. These barriers prompted a considerable increase in smuggling and bribery activities, which in turn formed part of the practices associated with ‘indirect rule’.

The key argument of this chapter is that conflicting national interests provide the best overall account of why regional co-operation in trade stalled. However, this factor was closely linked with that of diverging economic reform policies, which shaped the states’ interests in relation to trade co-operation. Moreover, attention to ‘indirect rule’ can shed light on how co-operation patterns failed, while attention to façade-making can help to account for the wide discrepancy between supportive rhetoric and destructive state policies in the sphere of trade.

Organisations with members inside and outside the region, including ECO, EvrAzES, TAS, the Unified Economic Space (UES) and the WTO, proclaimed their intentions of promoting free trade in Central Asia. The ECO free trade agreement never progressed beyond the ratification stage, while the UES initiative (Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine) halted after Victor Yushchenko became the president of

Ukraine in December 2004.³⁰³ For these reasons, I will focus primarily on TAS, EvrAzES and the WTO.

The chapter starts by discussing officially recorded trade flows and listing the types of commitments Central Asian leaders made towards trade liberalisation and co-operation after 1991. It then outlines the various formal and informal barriers to trade that developed in the region. I also discuss smuggling, including new findings on illegal trade flows to and from Uzbekistan. These original data indicate exceptional degrees of collusion by state agents in smuggling, and show the prevalence of bribe-taking. This account also covers EvrAzES and the WTO, including past and potential future implications for trading arrangements in the region. The chapter concludes by discussing how one can best understand the distinct pattern of regional co-operation failures in the sphere of trade.

Defining trade co-operation

Co-operation on trade issues in Central Asia is defined in this chapter as co-operation in setting intra-region tariff policies and harmonising and co-ordinating trade facilitation. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) defines trade facilitation as encompassing ‘the systemic rationalisation of procedures and documentation for international trade, where trade procedures are the activities,

³⁰³ ADB, *Central Asia: increasing gains from trade through regional cooperation in trade policy, transport, and customs transit* (Manila: Asian Development Bank, 2006).

practices and formalities involved in collecting, presenting, communicating and processing data required for the movement of goods in international trade'.³⁰⁴

There are various types of regional co-operative mechanisms in the sphere of trade. In a *free trade area* (FTA), trade restrictions among member countries are removed, but each country retains its own tariff structure against outsiders.³⁰⁵ A *customs union* entails a free trade area coupled with common external trade policies. A *common market* is a customs union that also allows for free movement of factors of production. Lastly, an *economic union* is a common market that includes some degree of harmonisation of national economic policies of member states.³⁰⁶ The states of Central Asia have primarily engaged in free trade area and customs union initiatives.

Officially recorded trade flows

In Appendix 1 I outline officially recorded on trade flows in Central Asia. The figures show that the trend in intra-regional trade flows was predominantly negative. Most states saw a drop in the volume of trade with neighbouring states in this period. Exchanges involving Uzbekistan had a particularly bleak trend, but some minor improvements were visible in Kazakhstani – Kyrgyzstani exchanges and in Kazakhstan's exports to Tajikistan. Overall, the states in Central Asian traded less and less with each other in the period from 1991–2004, although some of decline in

³⁰⁴ UNECE TRADE/2002/21, quoted in L. Annovazzi-Jakab, 'Cross-border trade facilitation issues in the Central Asian region', *Central Asia at the crossroads of foreign trade – opportunities and challenges* (Geneva, 2003), pp. 33–36.

³⁰⁵ B. Hoekman and M. M. Kostecki, *The political economy of the world trading system: the WTO and beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 347.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

reported trade flows was also due to the fact that traders in Central Asia were increasingly operating outside the formal economy.

The overview in Appendix 1 also indicates that Russia remained a key trading partner, although export markets outside the region and beyond Russia grew in importance for the four countries. This growth can be attributed to the predominance of Central Asian states' raw material exports. Key export flows to markets beyond the former Soviet Union consisted of oil, gas, cotton, aluminium and minerals. The Central Asian states shared an over-reliance on the export of raw materials. This reliance made for low trade compatibility, as they appeared as competitors on world markets in similar product categories. In this way, the pattern of trade exchanges was a further indication of the low levels of interdependence among the states of Central Asia.

Of the four states, Uzbekistan had relatively high trade interdependence with its neighbours and also with the CIS. In the introduction, I noted that writers such as Mark Webber have stressed that interdependence generates a push towards co-operation. In Central Asia, however, this was not the case. Uzbekistan has lagged behind in trade facilitation and liberalisation, with regard to both the CIS and Central Asia. Kazakhstan, by contrast, has been a diplomatically keen supporter of CIS and regional free trade arrangements – even though CIS and Central Asian export and imports are much less significant for its economy than for Uzbekistan's. Policy choices, and not trade flows, seems to underpin diplomatic co-operation initiatives.

Official initiatives on trade facilitation and trade liberalisation since 1991

Considerable diplomatic efforts have been undertaken to establish a framework for a free trade area in Central Asia. As noted in Chapter 2, on 10 January 1994 Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan signed the 'Agreement on the formation of a single market' in Tashkent,³⁰⁷ while Kyrgyzstan followed suit six days later in Bishkek. This agreement was the basis for the establishment of the Central Asian Economic Co-operation Organisation (*Tsentral'no Aziatskoe Ekonomicheskoe Soobshchestvo*, TsAES), re-named the *Tsentral'no-Aziatskoe Sotrudnichestvo*, TAS, on 28 February 2002.³⁰⁸ Tajikistan joined the organisation in 1998.

The 1994 agreement led to intense efforts to establish institutions and legal frameworks for co-operation and the facilitation of a common market. In Article 4 of the 1994 agreement, the countries pledged to introduce joint customs procedures, regulate import duties (*poshlina*), lower taxes, simplify customs procedures, harmonise customs legislation, and introduce uniform documentation requirements.³⁰⁹ In 1995 they adopted an extensive five-year plan for the realisation of the common market. (*Odobrena programma ekonomicheskoi integratsii mezhdu Respublikoi Kazakhstan, Kirgizskoi Respublikoi i Respublikoi Uzbekistan do 2000 g. i pervoocherednie investitsionie proekti*, 14 April 1995, Shymkent). This plan was followed by another in 1998, when the member states adopted a programme of action for the formation of a common market and for the integration of the TsAES

³⁰⁷ Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan *Dogovor o sozdanii edinogo ekonomicheskogo prostranstva mezhdu Kirgizskoi Respublikoi, Respublikoi Kazakhstan i Respublikoi Uzbekistan* (Tashkent 10 January 1994).

³⁰⁸ G. G. Rakhmatulina, *Dinamika razvitia integratsionnykh protsessov v gosudarstvakh SNG i perspektivy formirovaniia edinogo ekonomicheskogo prostranstva* (Almaty: Kazakhstanskii Institut Strategicheskikh Issledovaniï pri Prezidente Respubliki Kazakhstan, 2004), p. 94.

³⁰⁹ 'Cherez granitsu bez poshlin', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 23 February 1994.

countries.³¹⁰ During a working visit to Tashkent by Kyrgyzstan's Prime Minister in July 1999, joint measures to realise a Central Asian economic free zone by the year 2000 ranked high on the agenda. In 2000, at the Dushanbe summit of heads of state, the leaders adopted a strategy for integrated development for the period 2000–2005. Uzbekistan's Islam Karimov used the TAS meetings in 2001 and 2002 to re-work and re-launch a strategy for achieving a common market – this time to be realised in three stages over a fifteen-year period.³¹¹ Since then, Uzbekistan has retained the lead in developing a concept for this proclaimed three-stage realisation.³¹²

As with most TAS agreements, the common market initiative was accompanied by ambitious rhetoric from Central Asian state leaders. At a TAS summit in 28 May 2004, Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov noted:

..the significance of [TAS] as one of the important institutions of Central Asian cooperation is growing immensely... our capabilities and interests for our region will...increase immensely if we unanimously declare and make a critical decision regarding our aim gradually to create the Central Asian single market. In our opinion it should be a common, large and capacious market of commodities, services, workforce and funds. Only a market that is not divided into narrow national borders is able to sustainably attract a significant inflow of investment into all branches of the economy.³¹³

Initiatives for creating a free trade area were complemented by efforts to establish regional institutions. As noted in Chapter 2, the states agreed in 1994 to form an Inter-State Council consisting of heads of states of the three countries to serve as the main forum for decision-making. They also established a permanent implementing

³¹⁰ Rakhmatulina, *Dinamika razvitiia integratsionnykh protsessov*.

³¹¹ Interview, ADB Regional Co-operation Specialist, Tashkent, 23 March 2005.

³¹² Interview, representative Pragma Corporation (Trade Facilitation and Investment Project) Tashkent, 28 March 2005.

³¹³ 'Uzbek leader warns of strategic uncertainty', *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 30 May 2004.

committee.³¹⁴ The member states agreed in 1994 to establish the Central Asian Development Bank (*Soglashenie ob uchrezhdenii Tsentralnoiazziatskogo Banka Sotrudnichestva i Razvitiia*, 8 July 1994, Cholpon Ata). They decided that the Central Asian Development Bank should be provided with USD 3 million in starting capital from each of the three member states. However, a high-ranking representative of the TsAES implementing committee, noted in an interview for this thesis that Uzbekistan had actually refused to pool its contribution into a joint fund and had considered only Uzbekistan-based investment prospects. From the start, the activities of the bank were very limited, and they remained so in subsequent years.³¹⁵

Formal trade barriers

Despite formal initiatives and ambitious rhetoric, few improvements in regional trade flows ensued. I have already indicated that the trade trends for the region were predominantly negative after 1991. Moreover, there were no upswings in trade following the key initiatives under the TAS umbrella, such as the introduction of Article 4 in the 1994 agreement or the programme of action on establishing a common market in 1998. This inaction indicates that efforts at trade liberalisation and trade facilitation through TAS had little or no effect. Indeed, in interviews, representatives from trade ministries in the region stressed that TAS agreements were largely disregarded by policy-makers and had thus been irrelevant for trade flows throughout the period in question.³¹⁶ Instead of moving towards liberalisation and facilitation,

³¹⁴ Rakhmatulina, *Dinamika razvitiia integratsionnykh protsessov*, p. 94.

³¹⁵ Interview, high-level representative of the EvrAzES secretariat/formerly representative of TsAES implementing committee, Almaty 4 May 2005.

³¹⁶ Interview, representative, Ministry of External Trade and Industry Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, 21 February 2005; interview, representative, Ministry of Finance, Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, 25 February 2005;

trade exchanges were increasingly hampered by unilaterally imposed formal and informal barriers.

There were two types of formal barriers to trade: import tariffs, and additional state regulations pertaining to trade flows.

Despite professions to the contrary at TAS summits, each state adopted its own unilateral tariff structure. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan developed relatively liberal tariff structures, while Uzbekistan opted for high tariff levels.

Table 9: Average import tariffs, in percent

	1997	1998	1999	2001	2002
Kyrgyzstan	11,0	11,0	9.2	5.2	5.2
Tajikistan	5,0	5,0	8,0	8.3	8.3
Uzbekistan	21,0	29,0	29,0	19,0	19,0
Kazakhstan	13.3	13.3	7.8	7.9	7.9

Source: World Bank Trade performance and regional integration of the CIS countries, Economic Sector Work (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2004), p. 9

The EBRD rated the movement towards trade liberalisation by Kazakhstan and Tajikistan as ‘fairly good’. Kyrgyzstan received a mark close to the top score, whereas Uzbekistan was given a low score denoting ‘widespread import and/or export controls’.³¹⁷

interview, representative, Department of Foreign Economic Relations, Ministry of Industry, Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 12 April 2005.

³¹⁷ The EBRD index ranges from 1.0 to 4.3, where 1.0 denotes widespread import and/or export controls and very limited access to foreign exchange, and 4.3 denotes standards and performance norms of advanced industrial economies. EBRD *Transition report 2005: business in transition* (London: European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, 2005).

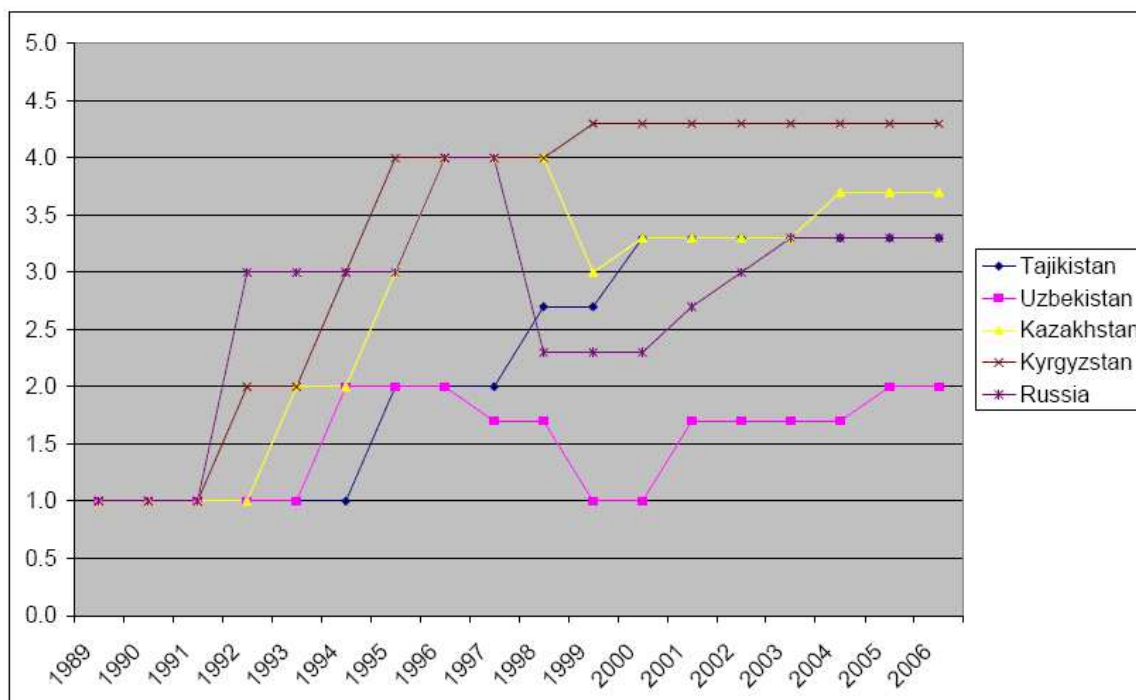


Figure 5: EBRD index of foreign exchange and trade liberalisation

Source: EBRD Transition report 2005: business in transition (London: European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, 2005)

Some of the Central Asian countries concluded bilateral free trade treaties among themselves (outside of the TAS framework) that stipulated duty-free bilateral trade. In addition, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan formed a customs union in 1995 with Belarus and Russia, where they committed themselves to remove import tariffs (see below).

Tajikistan joined the customs union in 1999.

Table 10: Bilateral Free Trade Agreements

	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan	Kazakhstan
Kyrgyzstan	–	No	Yes	Yes
Tajikistan	No	–	No	Yes
Uzbekistan	Yes	No	–	No
Kazakhstan	Yes	Yes	No	–

Source: World Bank Trade performance and regional integration of the CIS countries, Economic Sector Work (Washington DC.: World Bank, 2004) p. 1

However, these bilateral treaties and the customs union opened the way for unspecified potential exemptions, temporary protections and anti-dumping

measures.³¹⁸ Some treaties were from the outset accompanied by side protocols specifying exemptions for certain goods.

Both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan had additional taxes on imports that were not levied on domestically produced goods. In Kazakhstan, the coverage of excise taxes on imported goods and domestically produced goods was identical, but the rates of the former were considerably higher.³¹⁹ In Uzbekistan, a wide range of imported products were subject to excise tax, but similar goods produced domestically were exempt. These goods included: ice cream (200 per cent excise tax), mineral water (100 per cent), most types of juices (70 per cent), poultry meat (70 per cent), cheese (50 per cent), yogurt (50 per cent), plastic tableware and kitchenware (50 per cent) and soap (20 per cent).³²⁰

The extensive use of temporary measures made the trading environment uncertain and less conducive to long-term planning.³²¹ Temporary measures were particularly prevalent during the 1998 Russian financial crisis. In 1998 and 1999, both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan introduced several additional temporary measures. In April 1999 Uzbekistan increased the number of goods subject to special licences (*pod aktsizm*), which entailed additional taxes of 10 to 100 per cent of the value of these goods. Similarly, in February 1999 Kazakhstan raised its import duties (*poshlina*) on goods from Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. According to *Vechernii Bishkek*, these measures

³¹⁸ World Bank, *Trade performance and regional integration of the CIS countries* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2004), p. 2.

³¹⁹ ADB, *Central Asia: increasing gains from trade through regional cooperation in trade policy, transport, and customs transit* (Manila: Asian Development Bank, 2006), p. 27.

³²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 37.

³²¹ Findings from economic theory stress that the likelihood of future tariffs and regulations, even if not actually adopted, can have serious detrimental effects on trade expansion. See Hoekman and Kostecki, *The political economy of the world trading system*.

increased by 100–200 per cent the import prices of common Kyrgyzstani and Uzbekistani export goods like rice, flour, margarine, alcohol, tobacco and cement.³²² Kazakhstan's Minister of Trade, Industry and Energy, Mukhtar Abliasov, explained these measures as follows: 'In the conditions of currency devaluations in practically all of our CIS neighbours we are put at risk of having all our industrial production disappear.' He stressed that with the new measures Kazakhstan could maintain the competitiveness of its producers, while at the same time 'money would be earned for the state budget'.³²³

Kazakhstan later abolished some of its additional 1999 tariffs on imports from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Uzbekistan, however, retained much of its complicated system of high levies.

Frequent border closures by Uzbekistan also made trade more difficult. The border with Tajikistan was kept closed throughout most of the late 1990s, and commercial air traffic between Dushanbe and Tashkent was banned, ostensibly in an attempt to halt drugs smuggling and guard against Islamic extremism.³²⁴ In 2002 Uzbekistan temporarily closed its border with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan— according to the UNDP, 'officially to protect against an epidemic, but in fact also preventing people from visiting, shopping, or working in the neighbouring countries'.³²⁵

³²² 'Glava Uzbekistana kritikuet sostoiavshuiusia v Moskve vstrechu rukovoditeli stran tamozhennogo soiuza', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 3 March 1999; 'Kazakhstan vvodit tamozhennuiu poshlinu v 200% na tovary iz Uzbekistana' *Vechernii Bishkek*, 12 February 1999; 'V Uzbekistane prinimaiutsia dopolnitelnye mery dlia uporiadocheniia vvoza i vyvoza potrebitel'skikh tovarov', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 29 December 1998.

³²³ 'Kazakhstan, vozmozhno vvedet zashchitnie meri v otnoshenie importa', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 2 February 1999.

³²⁴ UNDP *Central Asia Human Development Report 2005*, p. 63.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

Exports from the four Central Asian states to neighbouring countries and elsewhere have been subject to extensive certification rules. Tajikistan, for example, continued to use the comprehensive system of mandatory standards from Soviet days. The World Bank, however, argued that Tajikistan was unable to properly administer such a system, which 'requires well equipped laboratories, highly qualified staff and effective enforcement'.³²⁶ This disjuncture caused delays and increased opportunities for rent-seeking among government officials. Bribes usually helped speed up the certification process.³²⁷

The range of regulations in each of the Central Asian countries was extensive and puzzling, making it difficult for civil servants and traders alike to navigate the system effectively. In Kazakhstan, in the 1990s there were more than 1000 laws, instructions, decrees and orders issued, amended or overruled, all relating to various specific aspects of customs regulation.³²⁸ The regulative framework in Kyrgyzstan provided another illustration. Gulja Osmonbaeva, president of the firm 'Interpravo', which works with trade issues, argued in September 1997 that:

An interesting situation has occurred with regard to tariffs and taxes: the state organs do not know which [of the regulations] they should follow, while the enterprises do not know according to which customs tables they should pay. Because we have Acting Provision of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic of 30 December 1993 N 613 edited with Provision N 26 of 21 January 1994, N 358 of 26 May 1994. And in the Provision N 358 there were introduced the changes Provision N 789 of 24 October 1994, N 662 of 18 August 1994, N 901 of December 1994, N 56 of February 1995, N 112 of 26 February 1997. In the N 901 there were introduced changes with the Provision of 14 August 1995, and N 352 of 1 July 1996. In this way in four years there have been so many changes that from the original provisions only the name remains.³²⁹

³²⁶ World Bank, *Tajikistan trade diagnostic study* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2005), p. 11.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*

³²⁸ L. Annovazzi-Jakab, 'Cross-border trade facilitation issues in the Central Asian region'.

³²⁹ 'Tamozhennii soiuz: blef ili real'nost', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 17 September 1997.

A final formal measure that posed serious difficulties for Central Asian trade was the imposition of transit regulations. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan introduced high fees for goods transit through their territories, which created a serious challenge for Kyrgyzstani and Tajikistani exporters.³³⁰ Uzbekistan's transit fee was USD 300.³³¹ In 1997, Kazakhstan's total costs of fees were claimed to amount to USD 1000, but this was later reduced to 300.³³² In 2004, Kazakhstan also removed its transit fee for Kyrgyzstani drivers in a bilateral agreement.

The poor facilitation of transit also resulted in disproportionate time costs on routes crossing Uzbekistan. A World Bank survey found that average journey time from Khudjand in Tajikistan to the Benelux countries was two days longer than road transport from Tashkent to the Benelux countries – even though the two cities are only three hours apart in driving distance.³³³

The persistence of transit fees in the two largest countries in the region for much of the period under study is striking. The transit of goods did not directly challenge domestic producers or domestic markets. Nor would economic security considerations justify these measures. It seems more likely that they reflected a disregard for the regional benefits that might accrue from enhanced overall regional export levels, and instead indicated a strategy aimed at maximising national income in the short term.

³³⁰ IMF, *Republic of Tajikistan: selected issues and statistical appendix* (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2005).

³³¹ This is particularly problematic for Fergana Valley trade, where many roads still cross the territory of Uzbekistan. The distance could be only a few kilometres, but fees were still demanded.

³³² 'Kyrgyzstan v blokade?', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 7 July 2000; 'Uzbekistan predprinial otvetnie meri na vvedenie Astanoi sbora sa v'esd avtotransporta na territorio Kazakhstana', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 20 May 1999; interview, representative, Ministry of External Trade and Industry Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, 21 February 2005.

³³³ World Bank. *Tajikistan trade diagnostic study* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2005), p. 37.

These measures stood in stark contrast to key pledges made in the 1994 free trade agreement.

Thus it is clear that the Central Asian states failed to implement their commitments to trade liberalisation and trade facilitation. This failure, in turn, precluded the development of a regional common market. Uzbekistan's choice of high import duties was a key deterrent to the development of region-wide trade, but the other countries introduced various formal trade barriers as well. Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan introduced preferential import duties for each other, but this move was facilitated through their membership in trade organisations outside of the region. Moreover, when combined with all the other formal barriers to trade, preferential treatment on tariffs had limited positive impact.

Unilateral tariffs and the plethora of regulations pertaining to trade created uncertainties and confusion. Moreover, as I will be discuss below, the multiplicity of regulations opened the way for interpretation and agency on the part of government institutions dealing with trade flows, such as the customs agencies. This served to fuel the rise in informal barriers that came in addition to formal ones.

Uzbekistan's trade policy and pledges had a strikingly dual nature. As noted above, Uzbekistan has claimed the lead in re-developing the concept of a Central Asian common market. However, a senior official in Kyrgyzstan's Ministry of External Trade and Industry commented that Uzbekistan's commitment to free trade seemed dubious in light of its history of trade restrictions on Kyrgyzstani goods. Similarly, the representative directly responsible for TAS issues in the foreign ministry of another

Central Asian country argued in a confidential interview that Uzbekistan's new common market initiative was merely a way for Islam Karimov to obtain control over the process while ensuring that real implementation of a common market would happen only in the distant future, if at all.³³⁴

Informal barriers to trade

All border crossings in Central Asia were manned by representatives of at least two government branches: customs agencies and border guards. In addition, at major crossing points there was often a road police station located prior to the actual crossing, a sanitary inspection post, an ecology post as well as vehicle and weight inspection near the crossing.

These agencies were regularly accused of corruption — more precisely, they allegedly offered reductions in prevailing customs fees as defined by the inspectors, in return for in-kind or monetary rewards to the inspector.

A study by Pragma (see table below) found that average official and non-official payments at Kazakhstani customs posts for Kazakhstani drivers came to the equivalent of USD 54. Kyrgyzstani truck drivers, by contrast, had to pay an average of USD 142. Some of the discrepancy may stem from official extra charges levied on Kyrgyzstani trucks. Nevertheless, the size of the gap and the variations between maximum and minimum payment for Kazakhstani and Kyrgyzstani drivers is striking, and indicates that customs officials levied fees in an arbitrary and irregular manner.

³³⁴ Interview, representative, Ministry of External Trade and Industry Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek 21 February 2005; interview, representative of a Central Asian Foreign Ministry, city: confidential, 13 May 2005.

This behaviour was confirmed in interviews for this thesis and in newspaper reports.³³⁵ One Kyrgyzstani truck driver noted that a major share of the expenses incurred on the Bishkek–Almaty route were bribes. He stressed that international agreements regulating trade between the two countries were irrelevant and did not affect the volume of expenses on that route.³³⁶ A businessman who was based in Osh province, exporting nuts to and importing factory-made carpets from Turkey by trucks, stressed that customs tariffs always were ‘negotiable’.³³⁷

Table 11: Total payments (official and non-official) by Kazakhstani and Kyrgyzstani truck drivers at inspection posts in Kazakhstan (currency 152 Kazakh tenge = 1 USD)

Type of check point	Kazakhstani truck drivers			Kyrgyzstani truck drivers		
	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Minimum	Maximum	Average
Customs post	800	20,000	8,325	7,000	30,000	21,596
Sanitary post	–	–	–	2,000	5,000	3,250
Traffic police	850	10,000	5,395	750	7,500	3,563
Ecology post	–	–	–	2,000	3,000	2,500
Transport weight inspection	–	–	–	5,000	15,000	15,000

Source: Pragma-Corporation *Transport barriers between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan* (Bishkek: Pragma Corporation, 2002)

³³⁵ 'Tamozhnia pod deputatskim okom', *Vechernii Bishkek* 4 April 2002

³³⁶ Interview, Truck driver (anonymous), Bishkek, 21 February 2005.

³³⁷ Interview, Businessman (anonymous), Jalalabad City, 10 March 2005.

Table 12: Time spent by Kazakhstani and Kyrgyzstani truck drivers at inspection posts in Kazakhstan

Type of check point	Kazakhstani truck drivers		Kyrgyzstani truck drivers	
	Number of inspection posts	Total time (hours)	Number of inspection posts	Total time (hours)
Customs post	From 2 to 7	1 to 3.5	From 3 to 9	From 46.5 to 139.5
Sanitary post	1	-	From 1 to 4	From 0.5 to 2.0
Traffic police	From 4 to 9	0.2 to 4.8	From 10 to 20	From 5 to 10
Ecology post	From 1 to 2	0.2 to 0.3	From 2 to 4	From 0.6 to 1.2
Transport weight inspection	From 1 to 3	0.5 to 4	From 4 to 8	From 9 to 18

Source: Pragma-Corporation Transport barriers between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan (Bishkek: Pragma Corporation, 2002)

A World Bank survey of truckers transiting Uzbekistan found that unofficial transit payments were higher than official fees and truck operation costs. Official and unofficial border crossing and transit payment in Uzbekistan made up more than 30 per cent of the overall costs of road transportation from Dushanbe to Moscow.³³⁸ Uzbekistan had considerably higher unofficial costs than Kazakhstan and Russia.

³³⁸ World Bank, *Tajikistan trade diagnostic study*, pp. 38–39.

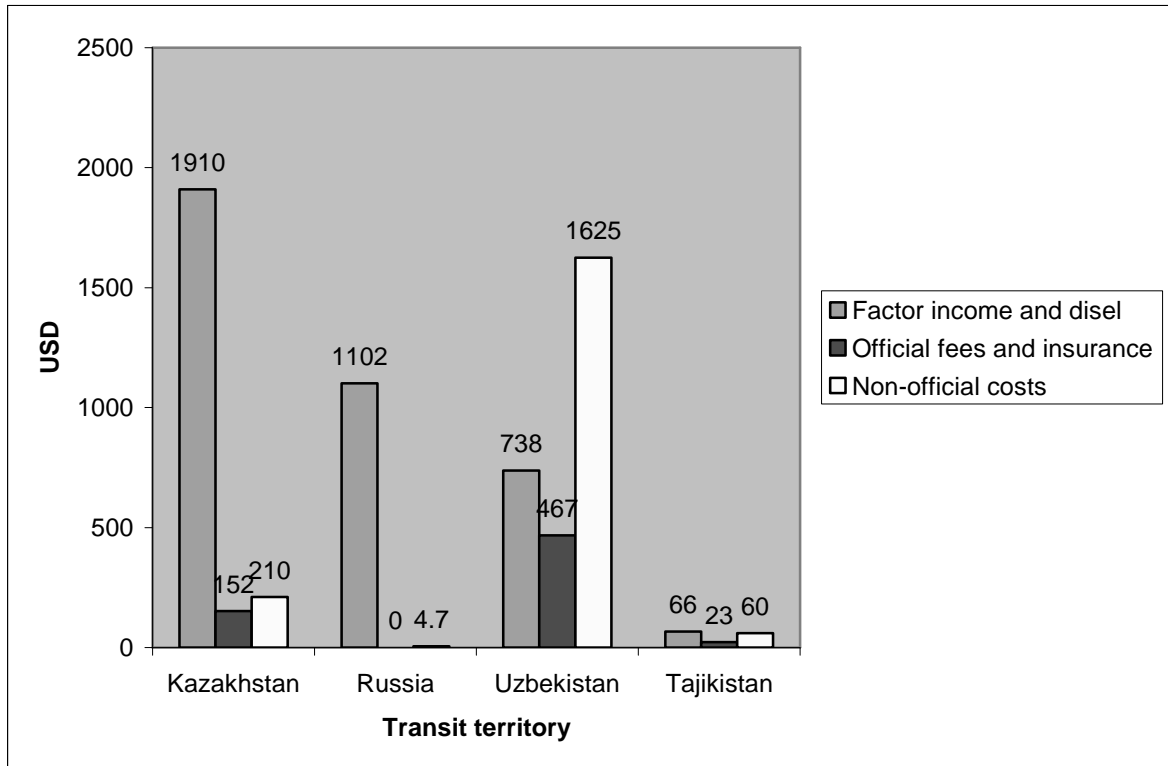


Figure 6: Dushanbe–Moscow road transport, per truck, USD

Source: World Bank Tajikistan trade diagnostic study (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2005) p. 40

At the 2003 round table on ‘Central Asia at the crossroads’, an international trade expert who had studied formal and informal trade barriers in Central Asia described the situation as follows:

This insecurity and unpredictability linked to the current situation at borders and internal control points, add to the travel time for transit shipments, and creates costs for traders. This means that even the most well-prepared and competitive traders are obliged to include an unpredictable amount of money in their calculations. Such a scenario certainly impacts on production and marketing decisions. However, it also means that in practical terms, drivers must be entrusted with large amounts of cash to manage the unpredictable circumstances caused by the numerous unofficial payments required in order to transit, enter or exit a Central Asian country thus creating added insecurity for traders.³³⁹

³³⁹ L. Annovazzi-Jakab, 'Cross-border trade facilitation issues in the Central Asian region', pp. 33–36.

Intra-state informal trade barriers

In addition to the inter-state informal barriers noted above, a further type of hindrance should be noted: intra-state barriers. It is questionable whether fully-fledged national markets existed within each of the four republics during the whole of the period under consideration.

In the early years after independence, security was a major problem for road transportation between cities. As late as 1997 there were reports of road robberies in Kyrgyzstan. In the southern Kyrgyzstani province of Osh, a special decree by the provincial office of internal affairs (OVD) ordered the establishment of a special law enforcement unit for the protection of commercial road transport.³⁴⁰ In an interview, a successful Tajikistani businessman recalled how, when he had been shipping vegetables through Central Asia to Russia in the period from 1991–1997, large stretches of the route had been practically lawless. Northern Kazakhstan was particularly problematic. Not only were parts of the ‘36 Magistral road’ (known among truck drivers as *Iirgin*) missing, but convoys of trucks driving through this area were regularly stopped by organised criminal groups – or in some cases, groups of law enforcement officials with similar physical threats and demands for money.³⁴¹

The internal market in Tajikistan was particularly challenged. During the civil war and in the post-war years up to 2000, civil war commanders controlled sections of the main roads in Tajikistan, demanding informal fees for passengers and goods transiting

³⁴⁰ ‘Gruzy soprovozhaet militsiia’, *Vechernii Bishkek* 10 May 1997.

³⁴¹ In the mid-1990s transport costs made up 40 per cent of the expenses incurred in exporting goods from Tajikistan to Russia; bribes represented 75 per cent of these transport costs. Interview, businessman, former exporter of goods from Tajikistan to Russia, Dushanbe, 13 April 2005.

their check posts.³⁴² This control also extended to the country's external border. One Tajikistani businessman interviewed for this thesis noted that at any time of the day, one could contact and persuade a war lord, for a fee, to open the state border for a commercial shipment.³⁴³

In the late 1990s lawlessness in the form of attacks by criminal groups along Central Asian roads decreased.³⁴⁴ Nevertheless, there were other challenges to the functioning of nationwide markets. One was the province- or district-specific implementation, or lack thereof, of national regulations. The Pragma Corporation ran a USAID-financed trade facilitation scheme in the four Central Asian states. According to Pragma representatives, a key problem was the lack of or incoherent implementation of multilateral as well as bilateral and national trade policies in all four republics. They argued that the multitude of laws, regulations and international agreements made it difficult for local authorities to remain informed about which trade regulations should be enforced and to enforce them. At times, Pragma noted, the national regulative framework also seemed contradictory. In effect, each piece of legislation improving trade conditions for local enterprises needs to be lobbied for in each individual province – creating a plethora of regulatory practices across the country.³⁴⁵ The difficulties encountered by pharmacists in Shymkent, South Kazakhstan province illustrated these difficulties. The import of medicine from Uzbekistan was difficult due to national licensing regulations that demanded re-registration of imported medicines every six months. Most pharmaceutical goods last longer, and re-

³⁴² Interview, representative of Tavildara Development Committee, Tavildara, 24 August 2004.

³⁴³ Interview, businessman, former exporter of goods from Tajikistan to Russia, Dushanbe, 13 April 2005

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Interview, Pragma Corporation Central Asia Regional Director (International Trade and Customs) and Country Director, Kazakhstan, Almaty, 24 April 2005.

registration twice a year meant considerable added expense for local pharmacists. A CIS provision, however, allowed for the mutual recognition of medicinal certificates – which would make re-registration every six months unnecessary. The pharmacists’ union in Shymkent spent over a year lobbying local authorities in order to get the CIS regulations implemented. Finally, the Shymkent branch succeeded.³⁴⁶ Pragma, however, was unable to get a similar regulatory regime applied in other provinces in Kazakhstan.³⁴⁷

A second challenge to the existence of national markets was the tendency of law enforcement officers patrolling the highways to demand payment of formal and informal fees. This problem was particularly acute with the road police, but units like the ‘environmental protection’ road posts and local police (*uchastkovaya militsya*) could also make similar requests.³⁴⁸ The road police had both fixed posts and some mobile units. The number plate of a car was crucial in the determination of bribes and informal fees. Number plates in Central Asia indicated place of registration, and hence usually the driver’s home area. Moreover, cars in government service, or cars driven privately by government officials, had distinct numbers and were easily recognised.³⁴⁹ Cars and trucks that were not government service vehicles, and that were registered in provinces and districts other than the one where the inspection was taking place, were more vulnerable to arbitrary action by the inspectors and more likely to be forced to pay high bribes.³⁵⁰ These charges may not have posed an

³⁴⁶ Interview, representative South Kazakhstan Branch of the Association for the Support and Development of Pharmacies, Shymkent, 17 May 2005.

³⁴⁷ Interview, businessman, former exporter of goods from Tajikistan to Russia, Dushanbe, 13 April 2005 See note 42 above

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Field trip observations, Dushanbe, 8–22 April 2005.

³⁵⁰ This practice seemed operative in all four countries. In Tajikistan the situation was even more challenging – taxi drivers driving to Dushanbe from opposition areas in some cases parked their cars in the nearest formerly opposition-affiliated city and went by bus the last leg so as to avoid the Dushanbe

unbearable financial burden to traders, but their arbitrary nature left the entrepreneur with little security or ability to plan ahead – and hence figured as a deterrent to expanding businesses to a larger national market.

A World Bank survey found that at each of the 14 Ministry of Interior (police) checkpoints between Khudjand and Dushanbe, Tajikistan's two major cities, truck drivers were on average asked for the equivalent of three dollars in bribes. The World Bank estimated that informal payments at internal checkpoints could amount to USD 15 million per year, or 1 per cent of Tajikistan's GDP.³⁵¹ Kazakhstan faced similar problems in the 1990s. After 2004 it began to dismantle many of its internal checkpoints – reportedly after the Minister of Interior had travelled incognito with a truck driver and observed the difficulties created by the checkpoints.³⁵²

road policemen – many of whom were former members of government-affiliated militias. S. Torjesen, C. Wille and S. N. MacFarlane, *Tajikistan's road to stability: the reduction in small arms proliferation and remaining challenges* (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, 2005). S. Torjesen and S. N. MacFarlane, 'R before D: the case of post conflict reintegration in Tajikistan', *Journal of Conflict, Security and Development*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2007.

³⁵¹ World Bank, *Tajikistan trade diagnostic study* (Washington DC: World Bank, 2005), p. 19.

³⁵² *Ibid.* p. 20.

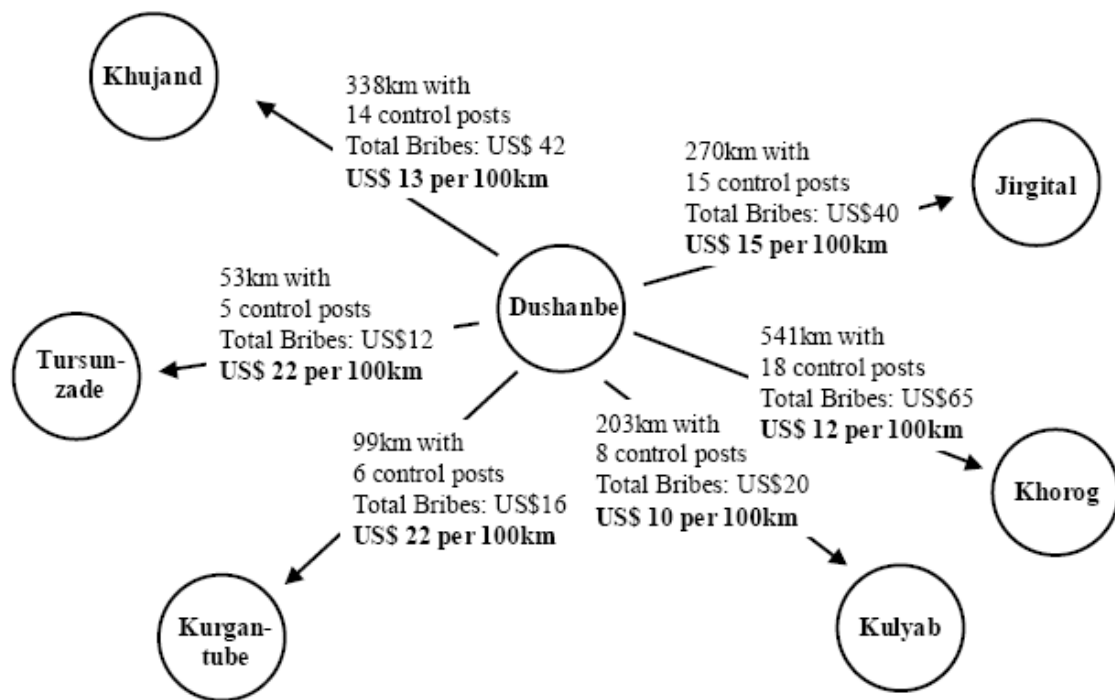


Figure 7: Bribes at internal checkpoints in Tajikistan

Source: World Bank Tajikistan trade diagnostic study (Washington DC: World Bank, 2005) p. 20

Illicit trade flows to and from Uzbekistan

Unpredictability and the high formal and informal costs involved in export and import in regional trade have spurred extensive smuggling of goods across Central Asian borders. In the case of Uzbekistan there were also strong incentives to smuggle to other countries a range of goods that were subsidised by the government or had government-fixed prices. The former included oil and fertilisers; the latter pertained particularly to cotton, obtained by the government of Uzbekistan at prices below regional and world market levels.

The rise in smuggling activity in Central Asia was aided by the long stretches of open, unguarded borders – in particular those in mountainous regions. The borders of

Uzbekistan were, however, an exception. From 1999, these were increasingly fortified with fences and border guards positioned at regular, closely spaced intervals. Some areas along Uzbekistan's border with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan were also heavily mined.³⁵³

As a result, smuggling activities on the Uzbekistan border were logistically more demanding. This difficulty promoted the rise of informal micro-economies in relatively densely populated border areas along stretches of Uzbekistan's border with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Informed observers confirmed the existence of major informal crossing points for goods and people on the Tajikistan–Uzbekistan borders and on the Uzbekistan–Kazakhstan borders.³⁵⁴ The informal activities at the Kyrgyzstan–Uzbekistan border are described in detail below. Additionally, exports from and imports to Uzbekistan increasingly come under the control of high-level officials who protected illegal regional trade flows crossing official border posts.³⁵⁵

There is, obviously, very little formal documentation and assessment of the nature and scale of the border micro-economies that facilitate smuggling. On the basis of my field notes and interviews, I outline the functioning of two such micro-economies

³⁵³ Landmine Monitor 'Uzbekistan', *Landmine Monitor Report 2002* (Ottawa: International Campaign to Ban Landmines, 2002).

³⁵⁴ Interview, independent journalist, Shymkent, 17 May 2005; interview, journalist, major national newspaper, Uzbekistan, Tashkent, 1 April 2005; interview, representative of International Organization for Migration (IOM), Dushanbe, 15 August 2003.

³⁵⁵ A UNDP study interviewed small scale *chelnoki* ('suitcase traders') traders in December 2004, one trader described arrangements on the Almaty–Tashkent route in this way: '...it is more expensive [now]. There are people everywhere, they have families to feed. The border and customs officers and the cops have to earn their money as well. So we settle things with them.' Asked what was the key to business success, the trader answered: 'get yourself a roof. Without it you will earn nothing, with it you will have to pay a lot, but you will also have some money for your own needs.' UNDP *Central Asia Human Development Report 2005*, p. 54. The UNDP study provided the following definition of 'roof': 'a slang word for someone (it might be a public servant or security officer or some other influential person) who can protect a business from administrative control. The cost of a "roof" varies according to the nature of the business; in retail sales it is reported to be at least \$300 per month.' (Ibid, p. 215.)

below.³⁵⁶ A detailed look at how the flow of goods was facilitated gives important insight into how the actions of state agents formed an integral part of the illicit border economies, which in turn may help to explain the failure of official regional co-operation in trade.

Border micro-economy 1: Kara Suu

The Kyrgyzstani border city of Kara Suu is host to a large market, mostly retail-based. It is officially registered, and trading at the market is part of the formal, legal economy in Kyrgyzstan. Kara Suu straddles Uzbekistani and Kyrgyzstani territory, with a river running through the city marking the border. Some 60 per cent of the buyers at the market were estimated to be from Uzbekistan, while 20–30 per cent came from Tajikistan and the remainder from Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Of the 18,000 stall owners, about 10,000 were citizens of Uzbekistan or ethnic Uzbeks with Kyrgyzstani citizenship. There was an increasing number of stall owners from China, perhaps as many as 5000, and there are plans for more to come.³⁵⁷ Most types of goods could be purchased at or near the market, ranging from meat and vegetables to electronics, cars and furniture. Cheap consumer articles and textiles from China and, to a lesser extent, Turkey, predominated.

As the majority of buyers were Uzbekistani, most of the goods made their way to Uzbekistan. Within the bounds of Kara Suu city at least four illegal border crossings were in operation, manned by two or three young men on either side. Some of the crossings consisted of permanently fixed steel wires stretched over the river. A steel

³⁵⁶ Field trip observations, Kara Suu, 6 March 2005; field trip observations, Dostyk, 6 March 2005

³⁵⁷ Interview, RFE/RL local correspondent, Kara Suu, 6 March 2005.

cage attached to the wire carried people or goods over. At another crossing, there was a rubber tractor tyre floating in the river, fixed to a rope. These posts were located in the backstreet riverbank areas of Kara Suu, and were not immediately visible to visitors. The fourth crossing was, however, visibly apparent in the town centre. In 2000, the Uzbekistani government destroyed one fifth of the central road bridge between the Uzbekistani and Kyrgyzstani parts of Kara Suu.³⁵⁸ The bridge still functioned: a two-meter-long metal plank was simply pulled from beneath the bridge structure on the Kyrgyzstani side and connected illegally to the Uzbekistani side when someone wanted to cross. Two young men operated this post on the Kyrgyzstani side and one man on the Uzbekistani side – this person guided people or goods through a hole in the fence and down to the provisional plank and illegal crossing point.

There was constant traffic in goods and people at all of these posts throughout the day, with special peak times when the Kara Suu market opened in the early morning (5–7 am) and closed in the evening (5–10 pm). Major goods shipments took place during the night. The border on the Uzbekistani side was fenced and border guards were posted at regular intervals. They often stood only meters away from the crossings, but did nothing to halt the illegal trespassing of the borders. The cost for one person to cross one of these posts was 200 Uzbekistani *som*, or about 20 US cents. One load of goods cost 500 *som* –the equivalent of half a dollar. The young men manning the posts claimed that they kept 200 *som* of this for themselves, and gave the remaining 300 *sum* to the border guards. The goods from the Kara Suu market were re-sold at other markets in the Uzbekistani parts of the Fergana Valley, like Andijan or Fergana

³⁵⁸ 'Central Asian border tensions: the worsening Kyrgyz-Uzbek relations', *The Central Asia - Caucasus Analyst*, 13 August 2003. Authorities in Uzbekistan argued for the destruction of the bridge due to the alleged presence of over 2000 Hizb ut Tharir sympathisers at Friday prayers in the mosque located in the Kyrgyzstani part of the city. Interview, IWPR local correspondent, Osh, 6 March 2005.

city. By the time these small-scale traders had transported the goods to their final destination, they had paid the equivalent of up to 5 dollars in Uzbekistani *som* to the road police. If a trader lacked a customs declaration, then the road police were in a good position to demand a bribe.³⁵⁹ Five dollars could represent a significant loss for the traders, as competition was stiff and profit margins low.³⁶⁰

Border micro-economy 2: Dostyk

The Dostyk customs and border post is the main official crossing point on the border between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. It is located on the outskirts of Osh, the second-largest city in Kyrgyzstan, less than an hour's drive away from the major Uzbekistani city of Andijan. Between 3000 and 5000 people crossed here legally every day.

People were allowed to bring toll-free goods of up to USD 100 with them when crossing.³⁶¹ Many Uzbekistani citizens crossed the border here every day to go to work in Kyrgyzstan.³⁶²

There was a border village located 500 meters south of the official border post. In the village was a large open field, and here illegal border crossings were made. People chose this border crossing over the official one if they lacked the right documentation (e.g. a passport) or to avoid customs fees. About 3000 people used this illegal crossing every day.³⁶³ Minibuses left regularly from the main road just before the

³⁵⁹ Interview, small-scale importer of goods from Kara Suu market, bazaar trader, Uzbekistan, Fergana City 5 April 2005.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Interview, representative NGO (legal advice on border crossings), Osh, 15 March 2005.

³⁶² Some worked in the markets, others as domestic servants or on farms in Kyrgyzstan. Some shared farms with Kyrgyzstani land-owners, contributing all the labour and subsidised Uzbekistani fertilisers, but shared the profit with the Kyrgyzstani land-owner. Interview, representative NGO, Osh, 2 March 2005.

³⁶³ See note 64 above.

official border post and transported them to the informal crossing point. The drivers of the cars entering the open field were often asked for a small fee by Uzbekistani men. At the field, some 40 to 50 women offered to carry goods on foot over the border, charging 500 Uzbekistani *som* or 50 US cents per load. There were also 10 to 15 young men and boys on horses with rudimentary carriages; here the charge was around three US dollars a load. The women walked over a small plank stretched over a narrow stream. Just before the plank, an Uzbekistani man collected a small fee. The day I made these field observations, the women claimed that Uzbekistani border guards had been there until lunchtime, demanding bribes; after lunch they had been replaced by a civilian.

The horses crossed 10 metres further down from the footbridge. This crossing point was staffed by one man, who demanded a considerable fee. He noted each crossing in a small notebook (containing date and the entries '1+1+1' etc). Some 100 m. from the illegal crossing on Uzbekistani territory, there was a bus station for minibuses going to Tashkent and to most cities in the Uzbekistani parts of the Fergana Valley.

A rudimentary post staffed by one Kyrgyzstani boy and two Kyrgyzstani men in civilian clothing demanded a fee from cars transporting goods. Some observers claimed that this post represented or was linked to the Kyrgyzstani border guards, while others said the men were from the local mafia.

The goings-on at the crossing could be observed by anyone, including journalists. The only restriction was a prohibition against taking photos. Local journalists said that the informal crossing point was very well monitored, and perhaps even controlled by law

enforcement agencies in Uzbekistan. Once a journalist attempted to take a picture, and was immediately stopped by a man in civilian clothes. It was hinted that the taking of any photos might give the journalist trouble with the Uzbekistani Security Service.³⁶⁴

The goods crossing the informal posts from Kyrgyzstan were consumer goods purchased at the Kara Suu market, in some cases potatoes and other vegetables – though these were mainly shipped through the legal crossing. The goods shipped from Uzbekistan were cement, oil and petrol. There were reports of substantial illegal export of cotton from Uzbekistan to Kyrgyzstan, where it could be sold at world market prices rather than the low government-set Uzbekistani prices, but it was unclear which crossing points the cotton passed through. Many villages on the Kyrgyzstani side of the border experienced substantial rises in income due to the illegal border trafficking and the re-sale of cheap Uzbekistani products. House prices rose disproportionately compared to the levels elsewhere in Osh Province.³⁶⁵ Large sacks of cement or other contraband goods could sometimes be observed in the yards of Kyrgyzstani houses situated on the border.

Above, I have shown that not only were diplomatic trade co-operation initiatives in Central Asia largely irrelevant or weak, but there were also deliberate formal and informal barriers to trade in the region. These barriers helped to spur the rise in illegal trade flows, as evident from the two micro-cases above. Before turning to a discussion of how best to account for this distinct pattern of failure in the sphere of trade, I must

³⁶⁴ Several other testimonies indicated heavy involvement in illegal activities on the part of the Uzbekistani border guards and other branches of the Uzbekistani law enforcement. One person recalled how opposition literature had been smuggled into Uzbekistan in cigarette boxes and passed easily through the border as a result of bribing of the law enforcement officer. Interview, anonymous, city: anonymous, 6 March 2005.

³⁶⁵ Interview, representative NGO, Osh, 2 March 2005; field trip observations, Dushanbe, 8–22 April 2005.

assess one final and larger issue associated with trade: Central Asian states' membership in EvrAzES and the WTO.

Frameworks for trade co-operation involving outside states

In addition to indigenous multilateral and bilateral diplomatic attempts at supporting regional trade, Central Asian states dealt with two other important free trade frameworks, both originating from beyond the region: the Eurasian Economic Community (*EvrAziiskoe Ekonomicheskoe Soobshchestvo, EvrAzES*) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). At the outset of this chapter, I indicated that diplomatic agreements on trade within TAS failed to produce tangible effects on trade policies or trade flows. The section below evaluates whether EvrAzES and the WTO were equally unsuccessful in bringing about meaningful regional co-operation on trade, and examines the relationship between these two outside initiatives.

EvrAzES

In 1995, four CIS members (Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia) committed themselves to creating a customs union aimed at deepening economic integration. Tajikistan joined in 1999. The initiative led to the formulation of policy aims and strategies for free trade, as well as pledges to construct common external trade barriers.³⁶⁶ EvrAzES succeeded in one important aspect where TAS had failed: It

³⁶⁶ Rakhmatulina *Dinamika razvitiia integratsionnykh protsessov*, p. 142.

prompted member countries to abolish import tariffs on goods from other member countries.³⁶⁷

However, the customs union framework did not cover all aspects of trade flows. Moreover, many provisions were poorly implemented, and the informal barriers to trade identified above in relation to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan remained. The difficulties that Kyrgyzstani trucks encountered on the border with Kazakhstan were, of course, contrary not only to the spirit of the TAS common market agreement, but also to customs union provisions.

Kazakhstan and Russia, two of the main proponents of EvrAzES, devoted a large part of their bilateral relations to negotiations on a range of minor bilateral trade issues. For example, in 2000 Kazakhstan's embassy in Russia reported that the two countries were working out an agreement 'On the principles of levying indirect taxes on inter-trade'.³⁶⁸ In the same year, the Russian customs committee temporarily halted shipments of Kazakhstani sulphuric acid and cyanic natrium through Russian border regions to an end destination in Kazakhstan (the road network in northern Kazakhstan transits Russia). This decision led the two sides to initiate work on a separate protocol 'On the order of transfer of goods moving from Kazakhstani territory to Kazakhstani territory through Russia, and also transfer of goods from Russian territory to Russian territory through Kazakhstan'.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁷ Interview, High-level representative, Ministry of Industry, Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 12 April 2005.

³⁶⁸ Kazakhstan, Rep. of, *Kazakhstansko-Rossiiskie otnosheniia*, Briefing to Parliament (Moscow: Embassy of Kazakhstan to the Russian Federation, 2000), p. 2.

³⁶⁹ Kazakhstan, Rep. of *Kazakhstansko-Rossiiskie otnosheniia: osnovnye aspekty sotrudnichestva*, Briefing to parliament (Astana: Ministry of Foreign Affairs Kazakhstan, 2000), p. 4.

A similar situation existed with regard to Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstani bilateral relations. Between 1995 and 2004, accords signed by Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan included agreements on such matters as the transit of Kyrgyzstani goods through Kazakhstan (26 March 2004);³⁷⁰ the exchange of information related to breaches in the tax code (March 2001);³⁷¹ the ease of licensing procedures for cement exported from Kyrgyzstan to Kazakhstan (July 1999);³⁷² the determination of Value Added Tax (*NDS*) on imported goods (February 1997);³⁷³ and the regulation of the imposition of licenses on particular goods (alcohol products) (June 1997).³⁷⁴

The two countries also signed a transit agreement in 2004.³⁷⁵ Here, the parties noted in the introductory paragraphs their wish to 'to implement provisions of the Protocol on Customs Control of Goods and Means of Transport Transferred Between the Customs Bodies of the Customs Union Member States as of February 17, 2000'.³⁷⁶ The agreement then listed the specific measures meant to guide the transit regime of Kyrgyzstani goods through Kazakhstani territory. A Ministry of Trade representative from Kyrgyzstan stressed that the country had pressed for such a free transit regime for several years, but that it was only during Kazakhstan's bilateral trade negotiations with Kyrgyzstan on Kazakhstan's WTO entry that Kazakhstan had agreed.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁰ 'Kyrgyz goods get simplified transit regime in Kazakhstan', *Times of Central Asia*, 30 March 2005.

³⁷¹ 'Glavnoe nachistotu', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 22 March 2001.

³⁷² 'Kazakhstan vvedet litsensirovanie importa tsementa is kirgistan', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 14 July 1999.

³⁷³ 'Iz punkta A v punkt B po miroviim standartam', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 20 February 1997.

³⁷⁴ 'Tamozhni sakruchivaiut gaiki', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 9 June 1997.

³⁷⁵ Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on Transit of Goods by Road Transport Through the Territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan (26 March 2004).

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁷ Interview, representative, Ministry of Finance, Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, 25 February 2005; interview, representative, Ministry of External Trade and Industry, Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, 21 February 2005.

In general, the presence of a multitude of agreements and initiatives on a range of highly specific trade issues indicates that the customs union was unable to provide an overall and comprehensive framework for enabling free trade.

Despite the poor implementation record of the customs union, in 2000 the five countries initiated a more ambitious integration project, which was to become the EvrAzES. The Deputy Secretary of EvrAzES noted that ‘the need for real integration, the pressure from globalisation processes, concern for the stabilisation of the post-Soviet economy – all this enabled a new look at the potential for integration and facilitated a search for functioning mechanisms for interaction. This is why in 2000 (...) the decision was taken to convert the customs union into (...) EvrAzES’.³⁷⁸ The Kazakhstani EvrAzES expert Gulnur Rakhmatullina has similarly stressed that the major tasks of the new organisation were to ‘increase the competitiveness of the economies of the EvrAzES states, ensure their security and oppose the dangers of globalisation’.³⁷⁹

The new organisation merged the legal base of the Customs Union, and a more extensive institutional framework, with new mechanisms for decision-making. Most decisions required support from only 2/3 of all votes; and the proportion of votes was distributed as follows: Russia 40 per cent, Belarus and Kazakhstan 20 per cent, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan 10 per cent. Moreover, the new organisation was intended to facilitate multi-speed integration processes: even if not all member countries were able to undertake the required domestic policy changes at the same time, integration would still move forward among those that had completed the necessary procedures.

³⁷⁸ S. Primbetov, ‘EvrAzES i Vsemirnaia torgovaia organizatsia’, *Kazakhstan Spekter*, no. 3, 2004, pp. 3–6.

³⁷⁹ Rakhmatulina, *Dinamika razvitiia integratsionnykh protsessov*, p. 143.

A key part of activities within the EvrAzES framework was the creation of a list of commodities for which the members were to agree on common external tariffs. This plan envisioned that 11,086 commodities would form part of a harmonised system. In September 2003, member states reached agreement on a Basic List covering 6,178 tariff lines, for which Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus set common tariffs. In addition, they created three other lists, including one for commodities for which tariff differences were less than five per cent (4.2 per cent of the total commodities) and one for commodities for which differences in tariff rates among the members were over 5 per cent (25 per cent of total).³⁸⁰

The EvrAzES members also reiterated the ambition that drove the Custom Union project: to create a free trade zone that would entail lifting barriers on intra-EvrAzES trade flows. This process included an ‘Agreement on observance of principles of free transit’.³⁸¹

The most tangible outcome of the new EvrAzES initiative was the progress made by Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan in harmonising external tariffs. Interestingly, these efforts were closely linked with the second major trade framework of importance to the region: the World Trade Organisation.

³⁸⁰ Each member also provided a list of sensitive commodities which should be exempt from common external tariff rates. During the transition period before the customs union is completed, each member is allowed to exempt 15 per cent of its trade in sensitive commodities from the commonly agreed tariffs. Tajikistan is allowed to exempt up to 25 per cent in value terms, but only in aluminium. The shares and values are reassessed each year. IMF, *Country report Tajikistan* (Washington: IMF, 2005).

³⁸¹ Rakhmatulina, *Dinamika razvitia integratsionnykh protsessov*.

The WTO is compatible with regional trade organisations and provided certain criteria are met, it supports the emergence of new regional organisations. In this way a parallel functioning of the WTO and EvrAzES could in principle be possible.

Article XXIV of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) permits regional free trade organisations on the following conditions: external trade barriers after integration into the regional organisation do not rise on average (point 5); all tariffs and other regulations of commerce are removed on intra-regional exchanges (point 8); and the WTO is notified.³⁸² The crucial parameter the WTO in assessing Central Asian trade is the first criterion: trade barriers after integration must not increase. This rule has proven contentious, and in 1994 a further ‘Understanding of the Interpretation of Article XXIV’ was issued. Here the WTO re-affirmed that regional agreements should ‘to the greatest possible extent avoid creating adverse effects on the trade of other [WTO] members’.³⁸³ A transition period for adjustments to ensure correspondence with this rule was set to ten years.

Within the EvrAzES framework, the member countries committed themselves to establishing tariff levels similar to those of Russia – even if Russia generally had higher tariffs than the other members. In 2002, its average import tariffs were 11.3 per cent, while those in Kyrgyzstan they were 5.2, in Tajikistan 8.3, and in Kazakhstan 7.9 percent. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, which joined the WTO in 1998, this was identified as a problem early: should EvrAzES fully implement the agreements on

³⁸² Hoekman and Kostecki, *The political economy of the world trading system*, p. 352.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

common external customs barriers, then Kyrgyzstan would be unable to move to meet those levels if they proved higher than the ones set through its WTO membership.

This dilemma shaped the WTO negotiations of EvrAzES members. Russia initially proposed that all EvrAzES members except Kyrgyzstan should negotiate jointly and enter as a unified bloc.³⁸⁴ This goal proved too difficult. The countries opted to negotiate individually, but to share information with other EvrAzES members on the status of their negotiations. The result was, as Constantine Michalopoulos writes, that ‘members of the Eurasian Economic Community [EvrAzES] agreed to apply to join the WTO individually, which means they recognised that the Eurasian Economic Community is not a Customs Union (which requires common external tariff) but a free trade area where each member has its own tariff structure on imports from the rest of the world’.³⁸⁵

In 2005 the International Monetary Fund reported that Tajikistan had increased its average tariff level from 5 to 7.7 per cent. The national authorities had justified this move, according to the IMF, both with reference to ‘the need to harmonise Tajikistan’s tariff with the [EvrAzES] in accordance with the commitments undertaken under the Agreement on Establishment of the Customs Union of February 17, 2000’ and with reference to ‘the intention to preserve some leverage on tariff reduction in the upcoming negotiations on WTO accession’.³⁸⁶ In fact, these two aims were incompatible. Tajikistan needed to raise its tariff levels further if it wanted to

³⁸⁴ Interview, representative, Department of Foreign Economic Relations, Ministry of Industry, Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 12 April 2005.

³⁸⁵ C. Michalopoulos, ‘The integration of the low-income countries into the world trading system’, in Shiells and Sattar eds, *The low-income countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States* (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2004), p. 271.

³⁸⁶ IMF, *Country report Tajikistan*, p. 44.

harmonise fully with EvrAzES standards and be part of a future customs union. But in the WTO negotiations, it was likely to face pressure to reduce its tariff levels further. The dilemma was one of sequencing: either the EvrAzES members would first have to raise their common external tariffs to EvrAzES levels and then apply for WTO membership, or they should first apply for WTO membership and then deal with the challenge of creating common external tariffs that could comply with their individual obligations towards the WTO. At the EvrAzES summits in 2003 and 2004, members voiced support for the former approach, but in practice both Kazakhstan and Tajikistan followed the latter strategy.³⁸⁷

Table 13: WTO accession status

	Memorandum submitted	Working party meetings	Comments
Kazakhstan	23 September 1996	19–20 March 1997, 9 October 1997, 9 October 1998, 12–13 July 2001, 13 December 2002, 4 March 2004, 3 November 2004	First draft report of working party submitted 20 May 2005
Kyrgyzstan	24 July 1996	10–11 March 1997, 18 July 1997, 5 February 1998, 6 May 1998, 23 June 1998, 17 July 1998	Kyrgyzstan joins WTO 14 October 1998
Tajikistan	21 February 2003	18 March 2003	
Uzbekistan	21 October	17 July 2002, 29 June 2004	

Source: WTO 'Accessions' www.wto.org (accessed: 12 February 2007)

As of 2004, the question remained open: would Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan accept higher import tariffs in sectors where Russia, and not themselves, needed to protect domestic producers, thereby enabling EvrAzES to materialise? Or

³⁸⁷ Kazakhstan and Tajikistan entered into bilateral negotiations under the auspices of the Working Party group. Kazakhstan had completed seven working-party meetings by December 2005. Both countries undertook these negotiations individually and directly with WTO members. The two candidates shared information with Russia, but without involving it in the negotiation process. Interview, representative, Ministry of External Trade and Industry, Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, 21 February 2005; WTO 'Accessions' www.wto.org (accessed 12 February 2007).

would they continue to keep a high proportion of their external tariffs lower (in accordance with WTO commitments) – thereby limiting EvrAzEs to a potential free trade area rather than a fully-fledged customs union with common external tariffs?

An IMF working paper assessed the potential welfare effect on consumers in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan from the WTO and the establishment of EvrAzES common external customs barriers. It argued that an increase in external tariffs due to EvrAzES would mean added costs to consumers in Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. If these countries joined the WTO before EvrAzES launched its common tariffs, WTO membership would probably compel EvrAzES to keep external tariffs low, and would thereby benefit non-Russian EvrAzES consumers.³⁸⁸ The paper also noted that WTO accession was particularly favourable for smaller countries, since once inside the organisation their bargaining position towards larger states pursuing accession would be relatively enhanced.³⁸⁹

The muddled trade policies in relation to EvrAzEs and the WTO revealed two important shortcomings on the part of Russia with regards to its role as a potential hegemon. Russia had attempted to manage the joint WTO entry of several former Soviet states. This proved to be a process beyond its control, and WTO negotiations were left to each individual state. Moreover, by the time Tajikistan and Kazakhstan embarked on serious WTO negotiations, Russia had not managed to secure a full and final commitment from all EvrAzES states to the type of external tariffs it was seeking. This failure placed EvrAzEs in potential jeopardy, making its future contingent on the outcomes of the various individual WTO negotiation rounds.

³⁸⁸ P. Tumbarello, *Regional trade integration and WTO accession: which is the right sequencing? an application to the CIS*, (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2005).

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

A final interesting point was the ‘disciplinary’ benefits expected to flow from the WTO membership of the Central Asian states. According to Khojimuhammad Umarov, a trade expert in Tajikistan, ‘given that all the Central Asian states are going to enter the WTO, all the unjustifiably high customs and transit duties that Tajikistan now pays will be lifted. Those duties have already cost the country more than 15 billion US dollars’.³⁹⁰ A World Bank report similarly hailed WTO ‘disciplines’ (monitoring and enforcement mechanism) as solutions to the difficulties that had beset trade co-operation in the region: ‘there is a need to introduce WTO disciplines in intra-bloc affairs thus establishing consistent rules at least as favourable as the WTO’.³⁹¹ The formal dispute mechanisms of the WTO, in particular, were highlighted as beneficial and superior to those of the EvrAzES framework. Trade experts argued that these formal mechanisms could help to safeguard against the use of temporary exemptions and other *ad hoc* measures.

In other words, trade experts assessing the region pinned higher hopes on the WTO than on regional mechanisms like EvrAzES for facilitating freer trade flows. This preference is in fact the opposite of what standard theories of regional economic integration would predict: those theories predict regional agreements to be better and more easily enforced because of the closer proximity of the parties to the agreement, in contrast to wider multilateral arrangements like the WTO.³⁹² In relation to

³⁹⁰ ‘Free trade concerns in Tajikistan’, *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, 2 June 2006. While Umarov’s claim that duties have cost Tajikistan over 15 billion USD is likely to be an inflated figure, his statement nevertheless testifies to perceived gravity associated with the trade barriers facing Tajikistan.

³⁹¹ World Bank, *Trade performance and regional integration of the CIS countries*, p. 10.

³⁹² Bernard M. Hoekman and Michel M. Kosteci note that ‘[regional agreements] may also allow more credible commitments to be made. One reason is that the limited number, similarity, and proximity of member countries reduces monitoring and implementation costs’ (Hoekman and Kosteci, *The political economy of the world trading system*, p. 351.)

hegemony theories and the notion of 'essential rules', the fact that Russia through EvrAzES seemed less able than the WTO to enforce rules is an indication that Russia failed to fulfil its hegemonic potential in the region.

Understanding regional trade co-operation patterns

The above discussion relates closely to debates about hegemony and the ability to enforce 'essential rules'. I will return to this discussion below. First, let me consider how we may best understand the distinct regional trade co-operation patterns in Central Asia.

In the introduction I emphasised different levels of analysis in international relations and listed approaches resting both at the systemic level and at the domestic level. One approach accounted for co-operation failures by stressing realism and the hegemonic rivalry of Russia and the USA for control in the region. A second realist perspective emphasised the national interests of the local states. A third perspective focused on interdependence, while the fourth approach moved the analysis to the unit level by wanting to understand how regime types – and authoritarian aspects, in particular – might make co-operation between the Central Asian states difficult. The fifth approach continued this focus on the state level, but viewed elements of 'indirect rule' as central to understanding failed regional co-operation.

One of the systemic approaches emphasised economic interdependence. Keohane and Nye, and, in the post-Soviet context, Mark Webber, have argued that interdependence may promote co-operation. On this point, Mearsheimer has disagreed, stressing that

interdependence can equally well lead states to seek enhanced self-sufficiency. The findings presented above do not indicate any clear correlation between interdependence and co-operation in the context of Central Asia. In connection with trade flows, I demonstrated that Uzbekistan had high degrees of interdependence, both with the CIS and Central Asia, and yet it has been the country least engaged in co-operation efforts. The smaller countries of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan had high levels of interdependence and favoured co-operation, even if this co-operation was not actually realised.

In assessing the overall trade patterns of Kazakhstan in terms of export value, the country's trading partners beyond Central Asia and CIS are most important, because of the large export revenue of Kazakhstani oil exports. However, it should be kept in mind that Kazakhstan has had other important economic links with Russia, including tightly integrated industrial production in northern Kazakhstan and dependence on Russian pipelines for energy exports to world markets. This linkage helps to explain Kazakhstan's positive stance towards EvrAzES and close collaboration with Russia.

On the whole, however, the interdependence–co-operation approach fails to provide a comprehensive account of interstate relations, not least due to Uzbekistan's reluctance to support regional trade measures despite its high levels of interdependence.

Are the other systemic theories able to better account for the policy choices of Uzbekistan and the other states? One realist approach stresses the role of local power competition and national interest in accounting for failed co-operation. While competition among the Central Asian states does not feature prominently in trade

relations, attention to national interest does appear to be an important factor. All states (except Kyrgyzstan, in part) have erected various formal barriers to trade, and both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan stressed the need to safeguard domestic markets when establishing these barriers. Kazakhstan's Minister of Trade Industry and Energy Mukhtar Abljasov even emphasised the benefits that high trade barriers would bring for the national budget.

The existence of high transit barriers in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan is a further sign that these two countries sought to maximise the immediate and short-term interests of high transit revenues, rather than to promote regional trade flows. In the case of Uzbekistan, high trade barriers in relation to transit and imports have constituted an integral and important part of the country's economic development strategy. The safety of domestic producers had priority over the interests of domestic consumers or regional trade. Attention to economic security thus trumped any desire to facilitate regional trade. This policy preference clearly shows Uzbekistan's commitment to the immediate national interest. On the other hand, the expected power rivalry between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan does not seem to have manifested in the sphere of trade. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan did not levy barriers that would be particularly damaging. Instead, they indiscriminately levied barriers on trade flows according to their own domestic concerns. These primarily hurt the two smaller states, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – neither of which threatened the power positions of the two larger countries.

The 'local powers' realist starting point enables us to explain a key feature of the failed co-operation pattern: the creation of formal barriers to trade. Moreover, given

Uzbekistan's distinct economic security concerns, 'the national interest' was closely tied to the need for high trade barriers. In turn, Uzbekistan's comparatively poor trade record towards Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is well explained by a realist approach.

Why did Uzbekistan's economic security concerns differ from those of the other Central Asian states? And how was this difference related to the national interest? These two questions bring us to a third approach to understanding failed regional co-operation. The 'regime studies' perspective stresses the relevance of political systems. In Chapter 2, I outlined Uzbekistan's choice of an import substitution strategy for economic development. This choice was rooted both in the country's economy and in its politics. On the one hand, Uzbekistan had a large industrial base to preserve and a sizable domestic market, making import substitution a more viable strategy than in the case of the other Central Asian states. On the other hand, Uzbekistan's leaders considered it essential to retain central control over key economic sectors, including manufacturing and cotton export. They were more concerned than other leaders of the region that the negative societal effects of rapid economic transformation and liberalisation might cause instability, decrease central control or result in regime change. As a result, Uzbekistan's leadership chose an economic model that would necessitate significant barriers to trade as well as continued government involvement in the economy. It was this model, which, in turn, made it Uzbekistan's 'national interest' to resist meaningful co-operation in trade.

Given the political underpinnings of Uzbekistan's strategy, this was as much a choice for the regime's interest as for the 'national interest'. Indeed, the negative

consequences of the strategy for Uzbekistan's consumers and the ensuing low growth rates indicates that it was primarily the regime's interests that were met. Thus, an approach that takes into account the political system is an important complementary account to realism when attempting to understand failed regional co-operation in trade.

The introduction also suggested that mistrust and concerns over losing control may be integral to regime-type explanations. In fact, trade co-operation is not particularly complex: agreeing on a free trade area would not necessarily entail introducing supra-national institutions. This means that the degree to which concerns over control mattered for the leaders of Uzbekistan or the other countries is not highlighted in the case of trade. There is one exception, however. Above I indicated that there had been attempts to establish a Central Asian Development Bank, but these had stalled in part because of the reluctance of the Central Asian states, Uzbekistan in particular, to pool their resources into a regional body. And this conforms to the expectations of a regime-type approach.

The combination of 'local power' realism and regime studies can provide a reasonably complete understanding of the central features of regional co-operation patterns for trade. It seems correct to state that attention to national and regime interest on the part of Uzbekistan is the primary reason *why* regional co-operation failed so dismally. However, some further issues also become evident in when attempting to grasp fully *how* such co-operation failed.

I have identified a distinct pattern of extensive diplomatic initiatives and pledges concerning free trade co-existing with significant formal and informal barriers.

Moreover, the informal barriers were in part constituted by irregular behaviour on the part of state agents. Why was there such a major discrepancy between rhetorical pledges to co-operation and the actual resistance to trade facilitation and liberalisation? Why did Central Asian state leaders profess their commitment to free trade, when their actual intentions seem to have been different? How do we account for the high prevalence of major informal barriers to trade?

To start with the latter question one should recall the systematic and large-scale nature of the informal barriers. In Tajikistan, the intra-state barriers on road transport were estimated to constitute 1 per cent of GDP, while for Kyrgyzstan 17 per cent of trade flows went unrecorded. The major discrepancy between recorded trade flows cleared through customs in China with those cleared through the Central Asian states was a further indication of possible bribe-taking by government officials. The uncertainty associated with bribe-taking at customs acted as an informal barrier to trade. Lastly, the informal barriers for road transit through Uzbekistan were estimated to be considerably higher than formal ones, with each truck paying an average of USD 1,625 in 'non-formal payment'. The figure for non-formal payment in Kazakhstan was USD 210. These figures indicate that the informal barriers in all four countries were *systematic*: the generation of side payments by state agents was routine and deliberate.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to debate just how much information the various state leaders had about the scale of informal barriers and the extent to which they endorsed bribe-taking practices, or even profited themselves from such behaviour. One trade expert argued that the system of bribe-taking in the customs and tax

agencies in Kyrgyzstan was similar to a pyramid scheme: it was controlled by high-level government officials and involved lower-ranking officers who initially had to 'buy' their post. Thereafter, lower-ranking officials would continue to channel money upwards, while also making sure, through bribes, to generate enough funds to cover their initial 'entrance' fee.³⁹³ The practice of buying posts in customs, police and tax agencies was frequently mentioned in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan as well.

Regardless of the level of endorsement or resistance from the central leadership, the system constituted a *de facto* violation of the principle of separation of state officials and civil servants from ownership of the means of governance. State officials used their positions to generate private income that was often considerably higher than their official government salaries. The income generated privately by revenue-related agencies and the police ensured the continued operation of these structures despite the turbulence of the transition from communism and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Bribe-taking in relation to trade flows was not a malign exception to an otherwise smoothly functioning political system. Rather, it seems to have been a central and integral feature of the Central Asian states, and one that helped to generate order and institutional continuity. Key state agents continued to generate sufficient funds to maintain their local power and prestige, in turn enabling them to uphold some degree of formal and informal social control.

This system is, arguably, similar to Max Weber's notion of indirect rule, and clearly deviates from what Weber termed 'modern bureaucratic administration'. The informal barriers to trade were a result of lower-ranking officers' violation of formal rules,

³⁹³ Interview, representative, Pragma Corporation, Bishkek, 23 March 2005.

while the execution of official duties was not based ‘upon written documents’ or transparency. Moreover, the agencies that had been ‘granted authority to order certain matters’ in the sphere of trade persistently deviated from the principle that lower-ranking bodies should not ‘regulate a matter by individual commands for each case’.³⁹⁴

The state machineries available to the leaders of Central Asia states were of a distinct kind. Many employees of the agencies regulating trade flows seem to have benefited greatly from the existing informal barriers. Thus, for state leaders, facilitation and liberalisation of trade would not only have entailed formally ordering changes in procedures and the lifting of tariffs: it would probably also have necessitated fundamental reform of key government agencies and a reconfiguration of the relationship between the leadership and lower-ranking officials. Central Asian state leaders did not have a government apparatus readily available to implement the free trade policies they were pledging. This lack may have represented a further deterrent to free trade initiatives, which, alongside regime and economic security concerns, can help to account for failures in regional trade co-operation.

Now to the second question: why did the state leaders profess a commitment to free trade when such a policy does not seem to have been their actual intention? How to make sense of the parallel existence of both elaborate plans for a Central Asian common market, and increasing barriers to trade? Chapter 1 outlined Bhavna Dave’s argument that the Central Asian states increasingly resorted to symbolic and formal state-making in response to the complex societal challenges they faced. The

³⁹⁴ M. Weber, *Economy and society: an outline of interpretive sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

management of trade flows was one such complex social issue, having become enmeshed with the malfunctioning of ‘modern administrative bureaucracies’. State leaders may have chosen to stress their commitment to trade facilitation and liberalisation, even when they knew that that this would be difficult to achieve, simply because such statements gave a strong *impression* that they were attempting to solve trade problems. Symbolic statecraft may have served as compensation for the inability to forge solutions and reform or restrain regulation.

Great-power engagement and hegemony in trade co-operation

I have argued that a combination of the ‘local power’ realism approach and an approach that stresses regime type can offer a plausible account of failed regional co-operation. Attention to state capacity provides further complementary insights. However, there is one additional realist approach which I have not yet assessed. As noted in the introduction, one of the most common explanations of the international relations of Central Asia stresses the engagement of outside great powers. The geopolitical and Great Game versions of this approach hold that intra-regional relations, including regional co-operation, are hostage to competition between outside states for influence in the region. In a more sophisticated version, drawing on Waever and Buzan, outside powers may help to define the structures of regional relations, and by supporting different states may augment differences and tensions in a region. This influence, in turn, might hamper co-operation.

Has outside competition or diverging support to local powers undermined co-operation in trade in Central Asia? In the economic sphere, there was substantial

outside competition in energy matters, but outside states had little or no direct interest pertaining to regional trading patterns. Russia and the US were affiliated with two different outside frameworks for trade co-operation, EvrAzES and the WTO, and the US actively supported the Central Asian states in preparing for the WTO negotiations rounds. However, neither of these two trade initiatives was directly threatening to intra-regional initiatives such as TAS, and the pledges of free trade made within the TAS framework would probably have been compatible with both the WTO and EvrAzES. During the years of US–Uzbekistan strategic partnership from 2002 to 2004, the US might have helped to consolidate Uzbekistan’s resolve to stay out of EvrAzES, but this was a position that Uzbekistan had held prior to the advent of US support. On the whole, therefore, a focus on great-power competition fails to shed useful light on co-operation patterns in the sphere of trade.

The writings of Buzan and Waever also presented a second option in relation to great-power engagement: ‘overlay’ or hegemony by one power could suppress divisions between states and foster regional co-operation.³⁹⁵ Chapter 1 showed how several theories on hegemony argue that the structural preponderance of one power might enhance co-operation among subordinate states. Did the structurally predominant power Russia provide ‘essential rules’ to Central Asia in the sphere of trade?

EvrAzES represented a major attempt at providing ‘essential rules’. However, Russia was unable to convince Uzbekistan to join this grouping, and in turn EvrAzES could not provide an overall framework for regional trade flows. Moreover, EvrAzES suffered many of the same deficiencies as did TAS: trade among member states was still marked by high formal and informal barriers, which also existed in the sphere of

³⁹⁵ B. Buzan and O. Waever, *Regions and powers: the structure of international security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

transit. Russia did not provide a comprehensive set of rules that amounted to a free trade regime. It is not entirely clear whether this was the case because Russia was unable to do so, or because it was unwilling or uninterested in facilitating trade. In any case, the degree of overlay or hegemony was not sufficient to bring about substantial co-operation. Trade experts concluded that the enforcement mechanisms of the WTO would be better able to solve disputes and facilitate trade than EvrAzES had been.

There was one particular item on the trade co-operation agenda where Russia's commitment was unequivocal. Ever since 1995, the Customs Union had proclaimed its intention of creating common external tariffs. With the formation of EvrAzES, this project gained momentum and Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia managed to agree on a Basic List of over 6,000 tariff lines. However, despite Russian efforts, the countries reached no further agreement on tariff lines before Kazakhstan and Tajikistan embarked upon their extensive rounds of bilateral negotiations with WTO members. This development made it uncertain whether Kazakhstan and Tajikistan would comply with Russia's requirement that these countries raise their external tariff levels to match those of Russia. IMF economists argued that if Kazakhstan and Tajikistan were to raise their external tariffs to protect Russian producers, they would entail net welfare losses to Kazakhstani and Tajikistani consumers.³⁹⁶ In terms of hegemonic theory, this behaviour on the part of Russia was an effort to combine the provision of public goods (the establishment of EvrAzES) with the extraction of contributions from subordinate states (supporting domestic producers to the detriment of

³⁹⁶ Tumbarello, *Regional trade integration and WTO accession*.

Kazakhstan and Tajikistan). Although basically weak, Russia was acting like a malign hegemon of the kind envisaged by Robert Gilpin.³⁹⁷

To conclude, the issue of trade offers a range of interesting insights as to Russia's hegemonic pretensions while at the same time largely refuting the argument that great-power competition constitutes a prime reason for failed regional co-operation.

This chapter has indicated that the attention paid by local powers to their own national interest and economic security remains the central variable in accounting for co-operation patterns, although regime-type and state-capacity approaches offer important additional insights. The chapter has also illustrated the profound gap between pledges towards co-operation and an empirical reality characterised by extensive formal and informal barriers as well as by highly malfunctioning state structures. In this way, the chapter demonstrates the viability of the local power realism approach, but also underscores the need for attention to 'indirect rule' and façade-making.

Having assessed co-operation in the sphere of trade, I now turn to co-operation patterns on water issues.

³⁹⁷ R. Gilpin, *War and change in world politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

Chapter 5: Water co-operation

Water is a topic well suited for an examination of regional co-operation in Central Asia. To an even greater extent than in the sphere of trade, there were serious and extensive efforts to construct a regional co-operation architecture for water sharing in the period under study, 1991-2004. The failure of these mechanisms as viable tools for inter-state co-operation illuminates some of the reasons why co-operation in the region has been so difficult.

Outside powers were not directly involved in water issues in Central Asia, nor did they have national interests at stake in the issue. The key actors in managing water issues were, by geographic default, the Central Asian states themselves – unlike the cases of trade and security, where external powers were more active. This lack of outside involvement means that the case of water cannot provide substantial insights into one of the key approaches to understanding regional co-operation in Central Asia – the approach stressing great power rivalry. However, this chapter provides ample opportunities for exploring the relevance of other approaches, including that of interdependence. In Chapter 2, I noted that levels of interdependence in Central Asia were especially high in relation to infrastructure – in particular, on irrigation and water issues.

Given the intense diplomatic efforts invested in regional water co-operation, the case of water also illustrates well the wide discrepancy between pledges about co-operation, and actual ability or willingness to act on these pledges. This gap is particularly stark in relation to the desiccation of the Aral Sea. While that case is not

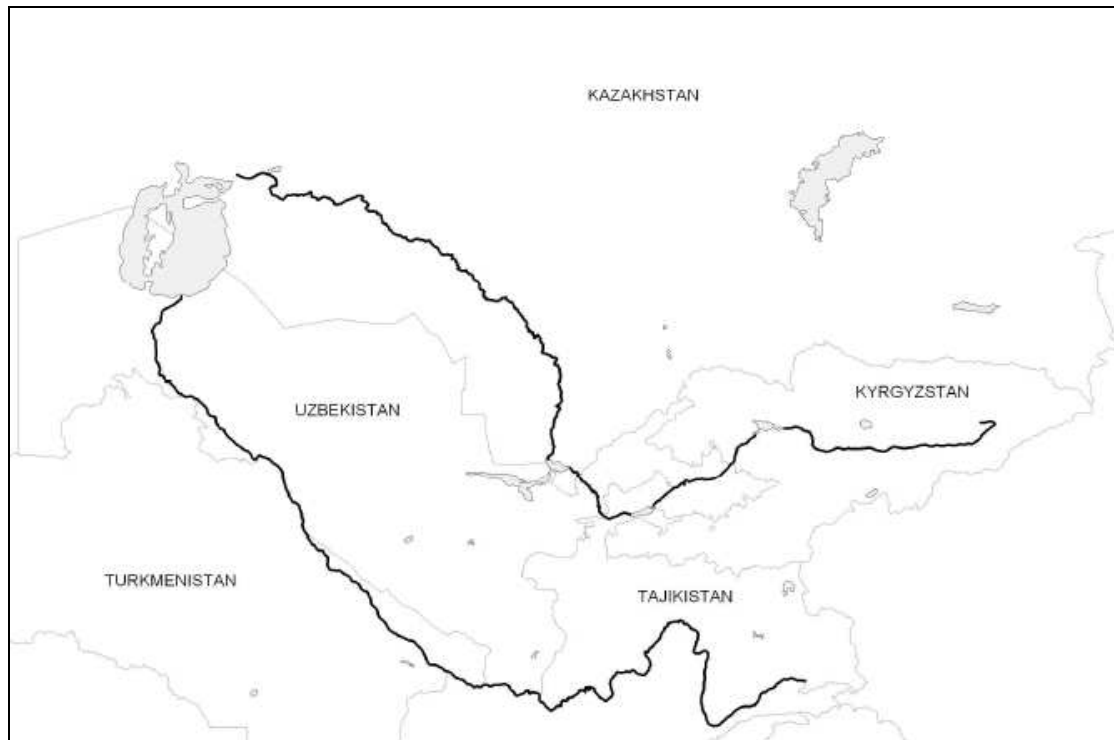
the central focus of this chapter, the material presented here documents a region-wide rhetorical commitment to saving the Aral Sea, combined with state practices that instead further reduced its water levels. At times, the official rhetoric of Central Asian leaders bordered on deception of their populations as to the causes of the Aral Sea desiccation, and the measures undertaken to reverse the ecological catastrophe.

The present chapter also highlights several additional features of regional co-operation in Central Asia. A striking feature is the continued relevance of norms and social practices from the Soviet period. These findings run counter to the previously discussed arguments by other scholars who have seen Central Asia as a 'periphery' likely to be defined by chaotic and unpredictable inter-state relations. Similarly striking is the very conservative approach to water management. Co-operation often codified existing practices and joint regional initiatives bolstered old management methods rather than stimulating reform or new solutions.

The basic argument of this chapter is that an approach emphasising the diverging national interests of the states in the region can best account for why regional co-operation on water failed. Issues of interdependence formed an integral part of this failure, since some of the states felt that a lack of unilateral control was damaging to their national interests. Approaches stressing regime type and state weakness are not as central to promoting an understanding of why co-operation failed, but they can nevertheless help shed light on the issues that made constructive regional water management so difficult to achieve.

In order to fully appreciate the dynamics of interstate water relations in Central Asia, one needs a solid understanding of geographical factors and historical practices. In Appendix 2 I give an outline of the basic parameters in relation to irrigation, electricity and agriculture. In this chapter I start with an overview of the major interstate issues on the regional co-operation agenda for water, and then discuss Soviet water management practices, so as to situate water management challenges and responses in a historical context. The Chapter later provides an outline of regional initiatives and chronology of agreements, followed by a preliminary survey of the national strategies of the Central Asian states. The analysis then addresses two cases: inter-state negotiations over the major Toktogul reservoir, and efforts to establish a supra-national Water and Energy Consortium (WEC). The chapter ends with a discussion of water inefficiency and how it relates to indirect rule and state weakness. I conclude by assessing how regional co-operation patterns on water can best be understood.

Map 3: Amu Darya, Syr Darya and Pyandzh



Source: Map created in MapInfo using Batholomew Digital Data (2002)

Overview

Major inter-state policy issues

Inter-state dialogue on water sharing in Central Asia in the period under study encompassed several dimensions. One was the question of what kind of institutions should govern water management in Central Asia. There were debates about the organisational makeup of the institutions and, more importantly, about degrees of decision-making power and the yielding of sovereignty to supra-national bodies. The question of whether dams and water-release tables should be controlled by a supra-national organ or by national authorities was particularly contentious. Also important was the debate over short-term versus long-term agreements. Should the countries

agree on water quotas each year, or should there be fixed long-term mechanisms for water sharing? Interestingly, there seemed to be normative agreement that water *should* be shared between the states and that the downstream countries *should* get a higher share – a continuation, as will be discussed below, of Soviet-era outlooks. This consensus implied that sharing and quota levels were not in themselves a central focus of the disputes. It was rather the issues of timing and whether water should be used for irrigation versus electricity generation that lay at the heart of the disagreements.

A second central issue was financial compensation. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan had high operation and maintenance (O&M) costs for the reservoirs. Should the countries that reaped economic benefit from irrigation through high agricultural production compensate Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan for the funds needed for maintenance? Could the upstream countries charge payments for water flows? This issue was closely linked to discussions on the system of barter exchanges for the compensation of upstream states. This system had existed in Soviet times, and after 1991 debate erupted as to whether or in what forms it should continue. This debate was also related to the issue of hydropower generation. To what extent could the upstream states use their reservoirs to generate electricity generation in the winter, instead of saving water for summer irrigation in the downstream states?

No viable solutions to most of these issues emerged. It is worth noting at the outset the dire consequences of this failure. The countries were unable to ensure that the largest water reservoir in the region, Toktogul, fulfilled its original task: the accumulation of water for multi-year storage. Due to insecurities and disagreements, more water was released after 1991 than in the Soviet period, bringing Toktogul to

dangerously low levels – a situation that benefited none of the riparian states.

Moreover, on several occasions, failure to reach agreements resulted in the halting of gas shipments to Kyrgyzstan, including to its capital Bishkek, which imposed serious wintertime hardships on the population. Similarly, due to failures to reach viable agreements, floods caused by Kyrgyzstan's releases of water in winter inflicted major damage on the livelihoods of farmers in affected areas of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

Soviet water management practices

Water management in Central Asia after 1991, both within and between states, was embedded in dense historical traditions. Cotton had been grown in Central Asia since before the Tsarist period, but only within series of annually rotating crops, with cotton grown once every fourth year. In the Tsarist period, cotton production expanded from 2.5 million *pud* (1 *pud* equalled 16 kg) in 1870 to 24 million *pud* by 1916.³⁹⁸ After the Bolsheviks came to power in 1917, they aimed at continuing high levels of cotton production and export from the region, while also working to alter fundamentally the organisation of agricultural production – including water management. Indeed, it seems that water became a central element in Bolshevik efforts to solidify control over village communities in Central Asia. Land reform broke up traditional tenure systems and also facilitated land seizure by Russian immigrants. Implementation of the reforms consolidated the role of the *mirab* and the *aksakal* as village-level 'water authorities' – but also made them subject to official approval. Gerard O'Neil argues

³⁹⁸ G. O'Neill, 'Land and water "reform" in the 1920s: agrarian revolution or social engineering?', in Everett-Heath, ed., *Central Asia: aspects of transition* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

that this shift gave the central government a direct hand in village affairs for the first time. The threat of withholding water was a useful tool in forcing compliance.³⁹⁹

Collectivisation marked the second stage in Soviet water and land reform. Land redistribution had created a plethora of small-scale plots. Collectivisation gathered these plots into larger units (either government-run *Sovkhozes* or collective peasant farms under government control, *Kolkhozes*) in an effort to create large-scale industrial and efficient agricultural complexes. The establishment of the *Kolkhoz* and *Sovkhoz* system introduced additional important village authorities, like the *Kolhoz* leader and the lower-level *brigadirs*, who also obtained considerable influence in local water distribution. In his World Bank report, Mike Thurman argues that ‘although major decisions such as water allocations among... [sub-units]... within farms were formally made by a general meeting, in fact the farm director and his cronies, the district [water] department (*rayvodkhoz*) and the district Communist Party executive committee decided how a farm’s resources were used in order to meet production targets’.⁴⁰⁰

The role of the Ministry of Land Reclamation and Water Resources of the USSR

The increasing consolidation of Soviet power in Central Asia brought with it a growing role for the Ministry of Land Reclamation and Water Resources of the USSR (MLRWR). The MLRWR administered and implemented the large-scale expansion of

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ M. Thurman, *Irrigation and poverty in Central Asia: a field assessment* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2001), p. 4.

irrigation and drainage in Central Asia in the 1960s to 1980s.⁴⁰¹ Water management became highly centralised. MLRWR existed at republic, province and district levels, but ultimate decision-making authority over water allocation rested with MLRWR headquarters in Moscow. Republic, province and district departments ensured the execution of orders by developing and implementing standardised schedules for water flows. Branches of the MLRWR were also responsible for the operation and maintenance (O&M) of inter-farm irrigation and drainage systems (I&D). While the expansion in irrigation and irrigated land was impressive, Thurman holds that the MLRWR's near-monopoly position led to poor construction and maintenance of the I&D systems. The roles of customer, planner, contractor and quality controller were concentrated within one ministry. There was little oversight at federal level until the late 1980s. Due to structural incentives in the planned economy, the MLRWR made greater efforts to initiate projects than to complete them and ensure their sustainability. The MLRWR seems to have misreported levels of completion in order to meet planned targets. Farmers were often left with incomplete or hastily constructed infrastructure. Drainage was particularly likely to be left half-finished – with serious effects for the efficient use of water resources in Central Asia.⁴⁰²

Water allocation

Water was allocated among the union republics according to overall provisions of state protocols concluded in Moscow. The last of these for the Syr Darya region was Protocol number 413, of 7 February 1984.⁴⁰³ This document allocated 46 per cent of

⁴⁰¹ Thurman (ibid.) notes that the area of irrigated land in Central Asia rose by a factor of 1.5 in the period 1960 to 1987.

⁴⁰² Ibid. p. 7.

⁴⁰³ World Bank, *Water and energy nexus in Central Asia* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2004), p. 7.

the total river surface flow of 22.7 BCM to the Uzbek SSR, 44 per cent to the Kazakh SSR, 8 per cent to the Tajik SSR and 2 per cent to the Kyrgyz SSR. The protocol stipulated annual releases from Toktogul of 9.43 BCM, with 75 per cent in summer and 25 per cent in winter – a mode of operation that heavily favoured irrigation over electricity generation.⁴⁰⁴ A complex set of exchanges of goods between the republics existed. The Kyrgyz SSR's key tasks in the integrated Soviet economy were provision of water for irrigation and herding of livestock. In return, it received oil, gas, grain and other goods from neighbouring republics.

Thurman notes that water allocation on the local level was reasonably equitable in Central Asia in Soviet times, but he stresses that rent-seeking also formed part of the system:

rent-seeking in water allocation is a tradition in Central Asia that predates the Soviet Union...during the Soviet period it merely became restricted to where it was 'safe', meaning behind the office door of the planning division of the district water department or executive committee...moreover... although water users did not pay for water in the formal sense, it was possible to 'buy' a local mirab, or, if more was required, the district water department (usually with vodka, a sheep or money).⁴⁰⁵

Several interesting developments occurred in the area of water management in Central Asia in the 1980s. One was the growing acknowledgement and awareness of the Aral Sea crisis and the emergence, in the late perestroika period, of vocal and critical environmental NGOs in Central Asia. Policy-makers and their interlocutors debated various solutions to the crisis. One project idea prominent among policy-makers in this period proposed to redirect a major Siberian river to the Aral Sea. Environmental

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid. The World Bank reported that the average winter releases were not expected to exceed 180 cubic meters per second.

⁴⁰⁵ Thurman, *Irrigation and poverty in Central Asia*, p. 7.

concerns and financial costs, however, led to the eventual shelving of that proposal.⁴⁰⁶ Instead, the twelfth five-year plan adopted in 1986 drew attention to the grave inefficiencies in Central Asian water use and called for the initiation of measures to remedy this problem. The government took some steps in the 1980s to enhance the decision-making power of republican-level water ministries in the region. To support these decentralisation moves, two basin-wide agencies – one for the Syr Darya and one for the Amu Darya – were established and tasked with co-ordinating, controlling and monitoring water allocation. These agencies were also intended to manage the cascades of the reservoirs, water withdrawal facilities and pumping stations. The headquarters of both basin agencies (*Basseynoe Vodnoe Ob'edinenie, BVO*) were located in Uzbekistan – the Syr Darya BVO in Tashkent and the Amu Darya in Urgench.⁴⁰⁷ Both were subordinate to the MLRWR.

Regional initiatives and chronology of agreements after 1991

Central Asian countries undertook various inter-state initiatives to facilitate regional water management after independence in 1991. Below is an overview of events and agreements in inter-state water relations in the region. The emphasis here is on agreements related predominantly to water sharing – and not the Aral Sea, although at times these initiatives overlapped. Furthermore, it bears stressing that this is a selection of only what appear to be the most relevant agreements. Eric Sievers, who has assessed legal water frameworks for Central Asia, notes that he found over three

⁴⁰⁶ J. Salay, 'The Soviet Union river diversion project. From plan to cancellation 1976–1986', *Uppsala papers in economic history*, no. 10, 1988.

⁴⁰⁷ E. Weinthal, *State making and environmental cooperation: linking domestic and international politics in Central Asia* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), p. 92.

dozen bilateral, trilateral, quadrilateral, regional and CIS water agreements relevant for the Syr Darya alone.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁸ E. W. Sievers, 'Water, conflict, and regional security in Central Asia', *N.Y.U. Environmental Law Journal*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2002, p. 338.

Year	Initiative/title of agreement	Content
1987		Creation of BVO Amu Darya and BVO Syr Darya under the auspices of MLRWR of USSR.
1991 (12 October)	Intermediate declaration by heads of states in Central Asia	Old practices in water management would continue until new international agreements could be elaborated and enacted.
1992 (18 February)	'Agreement on Co-operation in the Joint Management of, Use and Protection of, Trans-boundary Water Sources'	Confirmed the principle of equal rights to use of the region's water resources (article 1). ⁴⁰⁹ Established, 'on parity conditions', an 'Interstate Co-ordinating Water Management Commission' (ICWMC) to meet on a quarterly basis, consisting of members from the national water management agencies (article 7) to determine water management policy in the region, to elaborate 'trends for the needs of all branches of national economy' as well as water-use limits and operating schedules' (article 8). The ICWMC was to consist of four structures: the ICWMC secretariat, the ICWMC Scientific Information Centre (a renaming of a previous Soviet institution: the Central Asian Irrigation Institute) and the Basin Water Organisations for the Syr Darya and the Amu Darya .
1993 (26 March, Kyzyl-Orda)	'Agreement on Joint Activities to Address Problems of the Aral Sea and its Surrounding Area'	Created additional and parallel structures to the ICWMC to deal with comprehensive water management in light of the Aral Sea crisis: the Interstate Council on the Aral Sea Basin Problems (ICAS), the Executive Committee of ICAS, the International Fund for the Aral Sea (IFAS).
1994 (January, Nukus)	'Programme of Concrete Actions on the Improvement of the Ecological Situation in the Aral Sea Basin'	Included creation of the Aral Sea Basin Programme, a comprehensive regional plan of initiatives – many designed for support from international donors. The ASBP was to be administered by ICAS.
1997 (28 February, Almaty)	'Changes in the Structure and Management of IFAS and in Management of the ASBP'	Reorganised the structures formed in 1993 for the Aral Sea: executive committee of ICAS and executive committee for IFAS merging into a new IFAS. Obligated states to make the following contributions to IFAS in US dollars from 1998 onwards: Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan 0.3 per cent of 'profitable part of the (national) budget', Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan 0.1 per cent.
1997 (29 May, Tashkent)	'On the Status of the IFAS and its Corresponding Institutions'	Made the ICWMC a separate yet integral part of IFAS, and charged the IFAS executive committee with the task of 'assisting the activities' of the ICWMC. However, the ICWMC apparently retained autonomy and continued to receive instructions directly from water ministries and the political leadership of the individual states.
1998 (17 March, Bishkek)	'On the Use of Water and Energy Resources of the Syr Darya Basin'	Established the principle that water used for irrigation in the summer period in the Toktogul reservoir was to be compensated with energy resources (coal, gas etc) (article 4). Reservoir operation modes, energy amounts and transfers were to be approved by annual inter-governmental agreements based on 'decisions made by the water, fuel and energy organisations headed by vice-ministers of the signatory countries' (article 8). The Syr Darya BVO and UDC Energia were appointed as executive bodies responsible for release schedules and energy transfers (Article 8). The agreement envisioned the establishment, at an unspecified later stage, of an International Water and Energy Consortium to serve as an executive body for the agreement.
2000 (21 January)	'On Utilisation of the Water Facilities of Interstate Use on the Chu and Talas Rivers'	Bilateral agreement between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, establishing that 'the party owner [Kyrgyzstan] of the water facility of interstate use is entitled to receive compensation from party user [Kazakhstan] for the costs' (article 3). The agreement concerned the Chu and Talas Rivers and their reservoirs and canals. Intended to facilitate 'prompt and efficient repairs' by calling on parties to acknowledge the necessity of using each others' construction capacities (article 9).

Source: compilation by D.Phil candidate

⁴⁰⁹ Article 1 reads: 'Recognising the community and unity of the region's water resources, the parties have equal rights for their use and responsibility for ensuring their rational use and protection', Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan *Agreement on co-operation in the joint management of, use and protection of, trans-boundary water source* (18 February 1992).

The agreements of 1992 and 1998 adjusted Soviet institutions and norms to fit new inter-regional realities in Central Asia. The nuts and bolts of the former Soviet system – the Syr Darya and the Amu Darya BVOs, the republican branches of the MLRWR, and the Central Asian Irrigation Institute – continued to function in much the same way, although ultimate decision-making power over water quota allocations now rested with the Central Asian states and the ICWMC, and not with decision-makers in Moscow. There was also a considerable degree of continuity from Soviet times in both personnel and institutional make-up. In this regard, the agreements can be seen as inherently conservative in nature.

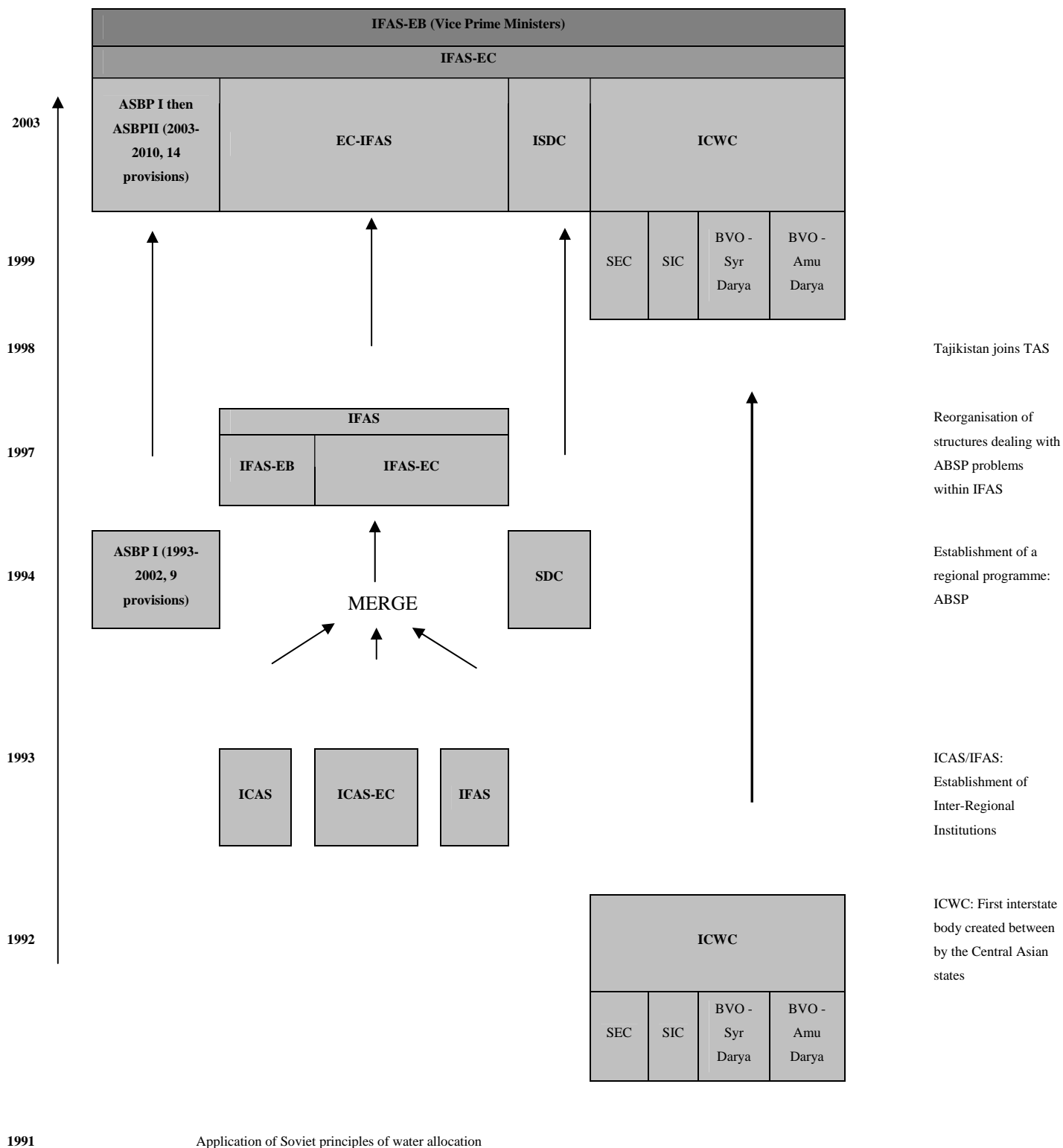


Figure 8: Institutional developments

Source: The figure is based on an unpublished diagram developed by Johan Gely, Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation, and is used here with permission

Norms

The agreements also enshrined important norms that had emerged during Soviet times, among them the notion that the states had equal rights to the region's water resources. Article 1 of the 1992 agreement stressed 'recognizing the community and unity of the region's water resources, the parties have equal rights for their use and responsibility for ensuring their rational use and protection'.⁴¹⁰ The 1992 and 1998 agreements also continued to stress on the pre-eminence of economic aspects – water for the realisation of economic development and irrigation.⁴¹¹ Interestingly, the 1992 agreement did not state that the Aral Sea crisis was a direct result of irrigation and cotton production, saying instead that: '...coordination of action will... allow mitigation of ecological stresses, which originated as a consequence of water resource depletion...'.⁴¹² The use of the word 'depletion' here was arguably a misnomer, and was indicative of the rhetorical steps Central Asian leaders took to obscure the causal links between irrigation and the reduction in the quality and amounts of water flowing into the Aral Sea.

New in the context of norms that came in the wake of independence was the introduction of consensus. Each state was to have equal weight in the new institutions, and decisions had to be unanimous. The new water-sharing mechanisms did not, therefore, force the states to yield sovereignty to supra-national organs, but instead offered a way to entrench their newly-won independence.

⁴¹⁰ Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan *Agreement on co-operation in the joint management of, use and protection of, trans-boundary water source* (18 February 1992).

⁴¹¹ The opening sentence in the 1992 agreement was: 'guided by the necessity of approved and organised solutions of the problems of joint management of water of interstate sources and in further pursuance of agreed policy of economic development and raising of people's standards of living...'

⁴¹² *Ibid.*

Organisational structures

The ICWMC consisted of one representative from each country, and had a secretariat located in Tashkent. It was tasked with deciding on water schedules every six months.⁴¹³ The Scientific Information Centre, also located in Tashkent (as previously) was supposed to supply the necessary data and forecasts for the secretariat and the ICWMC. The BVOs were to implement the decisions of the ICWMC. The Amu Darya BVO was charged with managing the water flows of the Amu Darya and its tributaries. It had offices in Tashkent, Kurgan Tube (Tajikistan), Turkmenabat (Turkmenistan), Urgench (Uzbekistan) and Tahkiatash (Uzbekistan). The Syr Darya BVO was to control the flow of the tributary rivers of Naryn (downstream of, and *not* including, Toktogul and the hydropower cascade), the Karadarya, Chirchik and Syr Darya as far down as Chardara reservoir.⁴¹⁴ The Syr Darya BVO had offices in Tashkent, Charvak, Gulistan, Chirchik and Uckurgan (all in Uzbekistan).

It was intended that the BVOs manage many of the diversion facilities, hydro-systems and inter-state canals. There were nevertheless significant limits to the tasks allocated to the BVOs: national water ministries and committees were granted official control of the major diversion for the larger canals (like the Karakum canal in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). The Syr Darya downstream of the Chardara reservoir was managed by the separate Aral Syr Darya BVO – an agency under Kazakhstan’s State Committee of Water Resources.⁴¹⁵ Other reports question whether, from the 1990s onwards, the BVOs really played a meaningful and relevant role in water diversion

⁴¹³ P. Donalek, O. Mandrugina and R. Rudberg, *Assessment for USAID/CAR on the transboundary water and energy nexus in Central Asia* (Washington, DC: Advanced Engineering Associates International, 2004), p. 20.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

and maintenance, as they lacked status, legitimacy and funds. Kyrgyzstan was reported to be particularly sceptical about the BVOs, seeing them as biased towards Uzbekistan (where BVO headquarters were located).⁴¹⁶ At the local level, it seemed that the province and district departments of the national water ministries were carrying out the actual work of regulating water flows, with the BVOs relegated to information gathering and reporting.⁴¹⁷

Key provisions in the agreements

The 1992 agreement solidified several general principles, but did not establish detailed procedures and quotas. The allocation of water year by year proved difficult. The core problem involved the compensations that Kyrgyzstan had received in Soviet times from neighbouring states in return for keeping the Toktogul reservoir in irrigation mode. These compensations were not mentioned or stipulated in the 1992 agreement. The states nevertheless engaged in yearly *ad hoc* bilateral or trilateral negotiations that attempted to fix compensations for Kyrgyzstan in relation to water quotas.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁶ K. Wegerich, 'Coping with disintegration of a river-basin management system: multi-dimensional issues in Central Asia', *Water Policy*, no. 6, 2004.

⁴¹⁷ Interview, representative of Fergana province administration (section on water management issues) Fergana, 6 April 2005. Interview, representative of Andijan province administration (section on water management issues) Andijan, 4 April 2005.

⁴¹⁸ These annual agreements had several problematic aspects. First was the barter element: inflated and arbitrary prices made it difficult to determine equality in exchanges, in particular since market prices in Central Asia for coal, gas and fuel oil quickly came to align with world market prices, whereas electricity prices were kept low due to greater state control over this sector. A second problem came with the annual agreements, rather than multi-year provisions. These made it difficult to plan and provide for accumulation of surplus in water storage – which had been the original purpose of the Toktogul reservoir. Storage levels gradually fell, in April 1998 reaching as low as 7.2 BCM (5.5 BCM is the dead storage level, while 19.5 MCM is the maximum). The third problem involved getting Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to comply and provide the specified amounts of fossil fuels. Finally, the annual negotiations were problematic because they tended to be lengthy – so as a result, the actual agreements were not initiated before the water releases for the summer were to start. (Donalek et al., *Assessment for USAID/CAR on the transboundary water and energy nexus in Central Asia*; World Bank, *Water and energy nexus in Central Asia*.)

The 1998 agreement was an attempt to regulate and formalise these *ad hoc* annual negotiations and to encourage the introduction of new principles and procedures, such as monetary payments instead of barter.⁴¹⁹ However, water sharing, barter negotiations and associated problems continued in much the same fashion.

Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, on the sidelines of the conflicts and problems concerning co-operation over the Syr Darya basin, also negotiated bilaterally on another river basin. In 2000, they concluded a bilateral agreement on two other rivers – the Chu and Talas – which run from northern Kyrgyzstan into southern Kazakhstan, with no links to the Syr Darya or the Amu Darya. As with the Syr Darya, there had been problems with downstream floods. Moreover, Kyrgyzstan was finding it increasingly difficult to maintain its reservoirs and water facilities. The 2000 agreement was remarkable in several ways. It enshrined the principle that the water user (Kazakhstan) had the responsibility to assist with maintenance and to compensate the owner of the water facilities (Kyrgyzstan).⁴²⁰ Middle-level managers in the national water ministry in Bishkek, however, have mentioned that the agreement has not led to actual monetary transfers from Kazakhstan to Kyrgyzstan. The ‘compensation’ has been the deployment of Kazakhstan’s own water engineers, equipment and resources for repairs on Kyrgyzstan’s territory. The agreement was nevertheless considered

⁴¹⁹ Features encouraged but not firmly put in place included the introduction of monetary exchanges instead of barter, and the use of lines of credit. (World Bank, *Water and energy nexus in Central Asia*, p. 8.)

⁴²⁰ According to Article 3: ‘the party owner of the water facility of interstate use is entitled to receive compensation from the party use of the facility for the costs needed to provide safe and reliable operation.’ Article 9 notes that: ‘for the purpose of prompt and efficient repairs and reconstruction at the water facilities of inter state use, the parties shall acknowledge the necessity to use construction, repair, operation and industrial capacities of each other.’ *Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan Agreement between the Government of the Kazakh Republic and the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on the use of water management facilities of intergovernmental status on the rivers Chu and Talas* (21.01, 2000).

important in facilitating these activities – which Kyrgyzstan’s water managers saw as both necessary and desirable in the face of pressing financial and personnel shortages.

Many of the above regional agreements on water included provisions for the exchange and free passage of water management personnel across borders in the provinces.

However, in the Fergana Valley, according to the local-level water management representatives in Uzbekistan interviewed for this thesis, local-level law enforcement and customs agencies in Kyrgyzstan posed serious obstacles. Local-level state agents in Kyrgyzstan prevented Uzbekistan’s water engineers from inspecting or repairing canals on Kyrgyzstan’s territory on the pretext that they lacked the proper customs declarations or visas.⁴²¹

National water strategies of the Central Asian states

Several general trends in strategies and positions on the part of each of the Central Asian states emerged in the period 1991 to 2004. Below I summarise the main patterns for each state, before turning to two cases that reveal some of the central dynamics of inter-state relations. The initial overview of the states’ positions, interests and strategies is intended to help the reader better engage with the developments to be presented in the two cases.

⁴²¹ Source: see note 417 above.

Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan actively engaged in multilateral co-operation on water management, but was under no circumstances willing to yield control over its reservoirs to supra-national bodies. National control over water resources was perceived as an issue of sovereignty and an inherent value— as well as an important bargaining chip vis-à-vis the other countries in the region. In 1997 the national parliament voted to develop a law that would make water a saleable commodity.⁴²² Kyrgyzstan's engagement in multilateral forums was motivated by the desire to see the principle of compensation established. Kyrgyzstan sought compensation for the water that it could not use for electricity generation in the winter, as well as seeking for the money, personnel and input that went into maintaining the reservoirs that benefited downstream countries. The Chu Talas agreement testified to Kyrgyzstan's willingness to co-operate and engage in diplomatic solutions, as long as these did not threaten sovereignty issues related to control over its reservoirs.

Tajikistan

Tajikistan shared many of Kyrgyzstan's strategies and outlooks during this period. With good hydro-generation capacities, and expansion of that capacity expected in the near future, it resisted any prospects of multilateral control over national water installations. Instead, it sought to secure possibilities for export and transmission of hydro-generated electricity. The latter proved difficult, as Uzbekistan refused to receive surplus energy from Tajikistan. Tajikistan then agreed with Kyrgyzstan and

⁴²² S. L. O'Hara, 'Central Asia's water resources: contemporary and future management issues', *Water Resources Development*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2000.

Kazakhstan to construct a major new transmission grid through these countries so as to circumvent Uzbekistan, and make export to Kazakhstan and Russia possible. Like Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan had a generally weak position towards Uzbekistan, and water was one of the few bargaining chips at its disposal. Tajikistan was less vocal than Kyrgyzstan on the need for compensation for maintenance of water installations – possibly because the Amu Darya was less regulated than the Syr Darya. Tajikistan was not party to the 1998 agreement on the Syr Darya, but claimed later that it saw the agreement as a possible model for the Amu Darya. It welcomed an expression of interest by Kazakhstan in investing in Tajikistan’s hydropower sector.

Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan consistently pursued a strategy of strengthening unilateral control and resisted efforts by other states to introduce principles of compensation for water maintenance, services and delivery. It upgraded its own reservoirs and capacities for water regulation and storage, and opposed energy imports and transfers through its territory. The choice to sign the 1998 agreement, which introduced the principle of monetary or barter payment for summer *electricity* exports from Kyrgyzstan to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, was a first step towards meaningful multilateral co-operation, and a rare exception from Uzbekistan’s usual policy line on water. However, in the water-rich years that followed, Uzbekistan did not enter into negotiations or adhere to the agreement. Uzbekistan had an interest in gaining the greatest possible control over water reservoirs in the upstream countries – but was reluctant to do so as long as it would entail introducing principles of monetary compensation for reservoir services or water deliveries.

Kazakhstan

By contrast, Kazakhstan was an initiator and firm supporter of regional co-operation on water issues, and was keen to increase control over water management, delivery times and quotas. As the user furthest downstream, Kazakhstan was receiving polluted and salinated water, which spurred its interest in finding ways of guaranteeing certain standards of water quality. Initially it favoured an irrigation mode for the Toktogul reservoir, but later seemed split between two factions in the political leadership, one supporting irrigation and another opting for electricity generation. Kazakhstan also saw cheap electricity from Kyrgyzstan as potentially beneficial for economic and industrial regeneration plans for the southern provinces. Kazakhstan's role in forging the Chu-Talas agreement was indicative of a willingness to contribute relatively more to inter-state initiatives, due to its stronger economic position, in return for viable, predictable and workable water-sharing mechanisms in the region.

Case 1: The Toktogul reservoir and barter agreements

There was a remarkably consistent and troubled pattern in inter-state negotiations and barter deals on water in the period 1991 to 2004. These deals solely concerned Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and were directly linked with the functioning of Central Asia's largest water reserve, Toktogul. Two important structural issues underpinned the problem. One was Kyrgyzstan's considerable dependence on gas from Uzbekistan. The other was the importance of the Toktogul

water reserves for agricultural production in Uzbekistan and, to a lesser extent, in Kazakhstan.

As noted above, in 1992 the Central Asian states agreed to continue operating principles for water sharing similar to those of Soviet times. However, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan now charged for gas deliveries that had previously been allocated automatically at little or no cost to the Kyrgyz SSR. Kyrgyzstan had been receiving a high share of energy inputs from Uzbekistan, gas in particular. Deliveries continued after 1991, but Kyrgyzstan quickly accumulated a major debt. In 1994 this debt stood at USD 12 million, an amount augmented by Uzbekistan's decision that year to raise the price per cubic metre by nearly thirty per cent.⁴²³

With the build-up of debt, Uzbekistan periodically threatened and even implemented cuts in its wintertime gas deliveries to Kyrgyzstan in the 1990s, resulting in serious heating and electricity crises.⁴²⁴ The disputes over energy payment followed intense but regular negotiation patterns. Kyrgyz delegations would visit Uzbekistan every autumn and winter to discuss payment for debts occurred in the past year. The members of these delegations would usually be heads of the state energy and gas corporations (Kyrgyzgaz, Kyrgyzenergo and Uztransgaz). In the case of serious disputes, the negotiations would move up to the deputy minister level. In 1995 President Akaev himself intervened and pushed for a solution, telephoning President Karimov and President Nazarbaev directly.⁴²⁵

⁴²³ 'Bol'shie igry s primeneniem gaza', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 16 December 1994.

⁴²⁴ 'V eto nevozmozhno poverit' *Vechernii Bishkek* 13 June 1994. 'Bez gaza plokho. No i s gazom tozhe' *Vechernii Bishkek*, 24 November 1994.

⁴²⁵ 'Pro gaz eshe raz', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 12 January 1995; 'Gorim. bez gaza', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 20 October 1998.

Over half of Kyrgyzstan's payment for Uzbek gas came in barter goods, and much of the negotiations centred on this issue. Kyrgyzstani barter goods usually included meat and flour. In 1998/1999 Kyrgyzstan sent 10 thousand tons of flour set at the price of USD 320 per ton in order to cover USD 3.2 million in debt.⁴²⁶

It is against the backdrop of Kyrgyzstan's severe payment crises towards Uzbekistan that disputes over water sharing need to be understood. Faced with cuts in gas deliveries and payment problems, Kyrgyzstan increased the winter releases of water from Toktogul in order to produce electricity for its own national consumption. According to a World Bank study, in the period from 1991 to 2000 average water releases during the summer fell to 45.6 per cent, while releases during winter rose from 25 to 55.4 per cent.⁴²⁷ This pattern marked a departure from Soviet times, when the Toktogul water resources had been primarily reserved for summer irrigation (75 per cent of water in summer, 25 per cent in winter). It also deviated from the spirit and letter (however vague the formulations) of the 1992 agreement's pledge to continue with old water management practices.

In response to Kyrgyzstan's increased tendency to use Toktogul for energy generation instead of irrigation, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan made annual *ad hoc* agreements to buy electricity from Kyrgyzstan in the summer – this purchase would then guarantee the release of water for irrigation at the exact time that the downstream countries would need it.⁴²⁸ Many of these practices had developed before 1998, but became codified with the agreement that year. As noted somewhat critically and bitterly by Uzbekistan's representative and the director of ICWMC Secretariat V. A. Dukhovny:

⁴²⁶ 'Gaz: problemy prodolzhaiutsia', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 19 May 1999.

⁴²⁷ World Bank, *Water and energy nexus in Central Asia*, p. 4.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 7.

In the beginning of the 1990s Kyrgyzstan unilaterally changed the regime of releases from the Toktogul hydropower station from irrigation to energy, and the agreement from 1998 in reality 'legalised' these activities and set the precedent of hydroelectric egoism, recognised only the interests of energy and used water as a factor of political pressure.⁴²⁹

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan paid for the electricity they received in the summer by delivering gas and fuel oil to Kyrgyzstan in the winter. The deliveries equalled the cost of the *electricity* that had been imported in the summer. The parties never agreed to payment for water as such, or payment for maintenance costs of reservoirs.

Importantly, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan were free to decide every year how much water to draw from Toktogul in the summer (or, more accurately, how much electricity to trigger water release). In years with ample rainfall, they did not need to draw on it in a substantial way – and hence would face no obligations to import and pay for summer electricity. Water-rich years pushed Kyrgyzstan back into payment crisis for Uzbekistani gas and reintroduced the necessity of using the Toktogul water resources to produce electricity for domestic consumption in the winter.

The 1998 agreement was hailed as a landmark achievement – offering hope for a solution to disputes over water sharing. However, the two years following the 1998 agreement were marked by intense hostilities and disputes over water. 1999 was a water-rich year, enabling Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to draw less on the Toktogul resources and more on their own domestic sources. They therefore insisted that they had no obligation to deliver fuel and gas to Kyrgyzstan.⁴³⁰ Kyrgyzstan in turn released water for electricity in the winter, while Uzbekistan retaliated by cutting off gas

⁴²⁹ V. A. Dukhovnyi, *Kommentarii k otchetu Vsemirnogo Banka* (Tashkent: Official letter to the World Bank, 2004).

⁴³⁰ 'Siurpriz ot sosedei', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 19 August 1998; 'Peregovory prodolzhaiutsia', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 26 November 1999.

supplies altogether, on the pretext of shortfalls in debt payments.⁴³¹ These difficulties spurred segments of Kyrgyzstan's elite to demand that water should be treated as a saleable commodity in inter-regional affairs.⁴³²

The year 2000 was marked by little rainfall, which led to severe drought conditions in some areas of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.⁴³³ Moreover, levels in the Toktogul reservoir were low, due to excessive releases of water. The *ad hoc* operation had left Toktogul's managers unable to build up their multi-year storage of large volumes of water.⁴³⁴

The rhetoric on water at the official top level and within the context of TAS stood in sharp contrast to the actual tit-for-tat strategies that Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan employed in 1999 and 2000. A key outcome of the annual meeting of TAS heads of state in Ashgabat on 9 April 1999 was a joint declaration. This stressed that 'before the 21st century [the Central Asian States] consider necessary to give a new pulse to development of mutually advantageous, equal in rights partnership and a deepening of cooperation in a political, economic and welfare life'.⁴³⁵ Article 8 of the same statement noted that:

Presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan recognizing that water always was the major component in relations between neighbours in the region have agreed that development of water resources should have an ecosystematical approach, be carried out by the reasonable way that is not rendering mutual damage, in view of interests of all sides and observance of principles of good

⁴³¹ 'Peregovory prodolzhaiutsia', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 26 November 1999.

⁴³² 'Voda - tsennee zolota', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 13 June 1998.

⁴³³ K. Wegerich, 'Natural drought or human made water scarcity in Uzbekistan?', *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2001; See also Wegerich, 'Coping with disintegration of a river-basin management system: multi-dimensional issues in Central Asia'.

⁴³⁴ World Bank, *Water and energy nexus in Central Asia*.

⁴³⁵ Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan *Joint statement of the heads of states Ashgabat summit* (9 April 1999).

neighbourhood and the mutual benefit, promoting increase of the level of agroindustrial development, corresponding to the tasks of food strategy of the United Nations for the 21st century.⁴³⁶

Despite these pledges, the pattern of water negotiations outlined above continued however after 2000. In 2002, the Toktogul reservoir again reached dangerously low levels – 7.5 BCM by April 2002. Many of the annual agreements were also concluded too late and after the start of the growing season in April (see table below).⁴³⁷ In water-scarce years, the advantage tilted in Kyrgyzstan's favour, increasing the likelihood that Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan would deliver needed supplies to Kyrgyzstan. In water-rich years, however, the dynamics changed, and Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan would reduce their requests for water and the corresponding delivery of barter goods. Uzbekistan even failed to attend some of the annual negotiation rounds – a violation of the 1998 agreement.⁴³⁸ In 2001 new disagreements made it necessary for the prime ministers to attempt to solve the issue over the phone. The Kyrgyz prime minister, Kurmanbek Bakiev, threatened Uzbekistan with winter use of Toktogul. In a comment to the newspaper *Vechernii Bishkek*, Bakiev stated, 'if our neighbour ignores this question, it means that in the summer there will be serious problems with water for irrigation from the Toktogul reservoir'.⁴³⁹

A World Bank study of delivery of barter goods in the period 1999–2002 shows that Kyrgyzstan, as well as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, failed to adhere fully to agreed quotas of water releases or barter goods. Interestingly, Kazakhstan performed slightly better than Uzbekistan in meeting its obligations to Kyrgyzstan.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., Article 8.

⁴³⁷ World Bank, *Water and energy nexus in Central Asia*, pp. 8–9.

⁴³⁸ Interview, representative Ministry of Water Management Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, 11 February 2005;

⁴³⁹ 'Argumenty i fakty', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 21 December 2001.

Table 14: Contributions to inter-state exchanges in water and energy 1999–2002

Indicators		Units	1999		2000		2001		2002	
Date of signature			29 May 1999		3 July 2000		20 May 2001		Trilat. 1Apr. 02 Bilat. Kyr-Uz, 6 May 02 Bilat. Kyr-Kaz, 9 July 02	
Toktogul Reservoir volume	As of 1 Jan	BCM	13.5		14.5		11.9		10.4	
	As of 1 Apr		10.4		11		8.7		7.5	
	As of 1 Oct		16.3		13.7		12.1		17.4	
			Agreed	Actual	Agreed	Actual	Agreed	Actual	Agreed	Actual
Water release during vegetation period from Toktogul Reservoir		BCM	6.5	5.06	6.5	6.5	5.9	5.9	6	3.6
Kyrgyzstan Export										
Power to Kazakhstan	Quantity	GWh	1100	585.3	580	673.6	1100	912.4	1100	422.7
	Price	USD/kWh	2		1		1		1	
Power to Uzbekistan	Quantity	GWh	1100	970	1905	1925.6	1100	1038.1	1100	523.3
	Price	USD/kWh	3.34		3.34		3.34		3.34	
Kyrgyzstan Import										
Natural gas from Uzbekistan	Quantity	MCM	500	331	422	430.6	700	593.9	490	360
	Price	USD/KCM	54.174		54.174		54.174		54.174	
Coal from Kazakhstan	Quantity	000' tons	566.7	572	362.5	331.1	618	466.5	500	165.3
	Price	USD/ton	30		16		16		21	

Source: World Bank, *Water and energy nexus in Central Asia: improving regional cooperation in the Syr Darya basin* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2004) pp. 8-9

At the end of this chapter, I offer an analysis of how best to account for the failures to co-operate on the Toktogul reservoir and other issues. Here let me simply highlight some of the features which stand out in the barter negotiations over Toktogul. One is the extent to which the 1998 agreement seems to have served more as a codification of existing behaviour rather than a development of fundamentally new inter-state practices. The novel elements of the agreement, like the provisions encouraging the states to use monetary instruments rather than barter in the exchanges, were never realised. The 1998 agreement was phrased in general terms and gave few specific directions for action. In fact, the year immediately following the agreement saw some of the worst disputes over water – a testimony to the limited utility of the agreement. The well-developed mechanisms for inter-state negotiations seemed to exist independently of any formal codification of diplomatic exchanges and practices.

Negotiations followed a set course: the state companies undertook an initial round; if disputes occurred, the states formed delegations, headed by the deputy prime minister, to enter into bilateral negotiations; if disputes continued, the disputes were solved at the highest level, that of the heads of state. These negotiations were *ad hoc*, yet the interactions seemed to follow a set of dense informal rules and shared outlooks among the negotiating parties.

Case 2: The Water and Energy Consortium (WEC)

The above case looked at barter arrangements and agreements linked to the Toktogul reservoir. The second case also relates to Toktogul, but centres on efforts to establish a supra-national solution to the water and energy nexus in Central Asia.

In 1998, on the sidelines of negotiations for the 1998 framework agreement, Uzbekistan launched the idea of establishing a Water and Energy Consortium. The central proposals were to link water and energy negotiations, to create long-term solutions and to let one multilateral body govern both water and energy issues. The idea re-surfaced at the TAS heads of state summit in 2002. This time, it formed part of an initiative by Kazakhstan to establish three consortia: one for food production, one for water/energy and one for transport. Kazakhstan sought to generate co-operation under TAS auspices on substantial issues as well as providing a mechanism for international donors to contribute financially and technically to TAS initiatives.

President Nazarbaev, on behalf of the four TAS states, asked the World Bank to take the lead on developing plans for a Water and Energy Consortium. The World Bank

was charged with developing an initial ‘concept’ for the consortium. Initially, it willingly seized on this opportunity, which matched its own policy aims of promoting regional co-operation in Central Asia. It commissioned the comprehensive policy report ‘Water and energy nexus in Central Asia’ and formulated the ‘concept of establishing the international water and energy consortium of member countries of the Central Asian Cooperation organisation’, later provisionally agreed upon by representatives of the states in the region.⁴⁴⁰ According to the concept, the objectives of the proposed consortium were as follows:

ensuring optimum ratio between energy and irrigation operating regimes of water reservoirs’ cascade taking into account the annual and long-term/perennial cycles of flows and balances of water and fuel-and-energy resources; attracting investments for reconstruction of existing and for construction of new water, fuel and energy entities/projects with a view of development and effective utilisation of water-energy capacities; establishment of conditions for industrial and technological cooperation in water and fuel-energy sectors; increasing their export potential and introduction of progressive technologies.⁴⁴¹

The central idea of the new WEC initiative seems to have been to increase the remuneration from cheap electricity generation and to ensure that all four countries would reap direct benefits– Uzbekistan, for example, by receiving cheap electricity and transit revenue from Kyrgyzstan’s export of electricity to countries like Afghanistan. The countries would jointly search for the right balance between irrigation and electricity generation, and new investments would enable the consortium to upgrade the reservoirs so that electricity generation would cause less damage to irrigation schedules.

⁴⁴⁰ P. Donalek et al., *Assessment for USAID/CAR on the transboundary water and energy nexus in Central Asia*, p. 31.

⁴⁴¹ Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan *Concept of establishing the International Water and Energy Consortium of member countries of the ‘Central Asia Cooperation Organization’*(draft).

However, the initial concept was – as an official in Uzbekistan remarked to a USAID consulting team – only ‘philosophy’; further design and implementation of the consortium remained unrealised.⁴⁴² The World Bank report ‘Water and energy nexus in Central Asia’ of February 2004 was the first attempt at proposing concrete strategies and mechanisms for a launch of WEC. This comprehensive report provided a detailed economic analysis of the options and economic rewards with regard to setting the Toktogul reservoir to irrigation or electricity modes. It strongly advocated the introduction of compensation to the upstream countries when they were required to forsake power generation for irrigation, and provided economic models for measuring the benefits from agriculture and hydropower generation.⁴⁴³ It also advocated various institutional improvements, like expanding the remit of ICWMC to include energy and environmental concerns; making BVO Syr Darya the regulator of inter-state water operations and ensuring that payment for water services should be made on the basis of certification by BVO; enabling both BVO Syr Darya and UDC Energia to draw staff from all riparian states and become truly international organisations, and making UDC Energia the operator of the regional pool and corporatising and internationalising it.⁴⁴⁴

The World Bank proposals evoked strong and critical replies from some of the states in the region. Professor V. A. Dukhovny, director of the ICWC and Uzbekistan’s representative, wrote a hard-hitting four-page commentary on the World Bank report, in which he warned of the dangers associated with increased demand for electricity on the part of neighbouring powers (Russia, India, China and Pakistan) and the

⁴⁴² Donalek et al., *Assessment for USAID/CAR on the transboundary water and energy nexus in Central Asia*, p. 31.

⁴⁴³ World Bank, *Water and energy nexus in Central Asia*, pp. 11–19.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 19.

possibility that Kyrgyzstan in the future might default on previous commitments to maintain the status quo in water quota allocations and timing. Dukhovny also argued that water constituted a common resource, and thus warned against any moves toward introducing monetary compensation for it.⁴⁴⁵ In my interviews with other representatives of Uzbekistan in regional water institutions, several respondents commented, with reference to the report, that the World Bank was biased and championed only the interests of Kyrgyzstan.⁴⁴⁶

In a note to its ‘development partners’, the World Bank summarised the responses to the report. Three issues had proven particularly problematic: differing perceptions among the states as to what the consortium should be; differing positions among the states on the Toktogul reservoir and the Syr Darya; and the fact that even with optimum co-operation (‘perfect’ balance between irrigation and electricity) among the Syr Darya riparian states, Kyrgyzstan would still need additional power-generating capacity to meet its winter energy deficit.⁴⁴⁷

According to the World Bank note, Kyrgyzstan perceived the consortium primarily as a vehicle to raise funds for the construction of the Kambarata power stations near Toktogul. Tajikistan saw it as a way to enhance co-operation in the Amu Darya basin, in particular on the Vakhsh River and the planned Rogun and Sangtuda hydropower stations. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan saw it as an opportunity to improve the operation

⁴⁴⁵ V. A. Dukhovnyi *Kommentarii k otchetu Vsemirnogo Banka* (Tashkent: Official letter to the World Bank, 2004).

⁴⁴⁶ Interview, representative of Uzbekistan to the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, Dushanbe, 11 April 2005; interview, Technical director Agency for Implementing GEF projects (IFAS), Tashkent, 30 March 2005.

⁴⁴⁷ World Bank, *A revised approach to World Bank and Development Partners' involvement in the area of Water–Energy Cooperation in Central Asia* (Almaty: World Bank, 2005), p. 2.

of the Toktogul reservoir to ensure winter energy generation for Kyrgyzstan and summer irrigation supplies for themselves.⁴⁴⁸

The differing positions on Toktogul and the Syr Darya included the Kyrgyz view that water should be sold to the downstream states. Uzbekistan by contrast stressed that solutions should be based on the international legal frameworks for trans-boundary rivers, such as the Helsinki Agreement. Moreover, both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan indicated mistrust towards Kyrgyzstan: key state representatives thought that even if Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan were to honour the 1998 agreement completely, Kyrgyzstan would fail to do so because of the persistence of energy shortages during winter.⁴⁴⁹

The World Bank note also stressed that Kyrgyzstan would continue to need to draw on its hydropower during the winter season, in part because the two thermal plants that could alleviate Toktogul were in such poor condition that they generated only 1.1 to 1.2 billion kwh – rather than the 4.1 billion kwh they were designed to produce. This problem further complicated the initiation of a comprehensive agreement on the Syr Darya.

Crucially, the note observed several new trends that the World Bank saw as altering the grounds for initiating the WEC. The downstream countries had in recent years invested in water storage facilities that allowed them to better re-regulate winter flows and invest in the increase of flow capacity of the rivers to handle large flows during the winter. Uzbekistan had completed the construction of control facilities to create a

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

reservoir in the Arnasay Depression. Two additional reservoirs were under construction in Uzbekistan: Razaksay and Kangulsay, with storage capacities of 650–750 MCM and 300 MCM respectively. These were to be filled with water from the tributaries of the Syr Darya and by the winter releases from Toktogul. A third reservoir, Karmanksay, with 690 MCM capacity, was also in the advanced planning stages. The completion of these reservoirs would provide additional storage of 2.5 BCM, according to World Bank estimates. Wintertime release from Kyrgyzstan of 3 BCM was seen as a realistic future scenario, even if some of the worst years had seen releases of 6 BCM.⁴⁵⁰ Similarly, the World Bank reported that Kazakhstan was improving the conveyance capacity of the Syr Darya downstream, so that its winter flows could reach the Aral Sea, rather than causing floods in southern Kazakhstan.

The vocal and critical reactions from the region's states, coupled with these new developments, led the World Bank to shift its approach. It decided to abandon efforts to generate multi-country and multi-year agreements along the lines of a WEC, and instead chose to focus on three areas: Work with individual countries on solving power and water management issues; work with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to improve energy co-operation among the three; and work with all countries to analyse long-term energy potentials, provide international experience in energy co-operation and improve operational plans of the Toktogul reservoir.⁴⁵¹ A year after the World Bank note, the World Bank regional co-operation manager for Central Asia confirmed this new direction, contending in an interview for this thesis

⁴⁵⁰ In fact, the 2004 World Bank note found that two key challenges persisted: (1) the 2.5 BCM storage capacity (some of which would be for tributary rivers and not for the winter releases, thus not avoiding the possibility of floods with 6 BCM, and also in dry years the system would not be sustainable); (2) the increase in energy needs in Kyrgyzstan, predicted to grow at a rate of 1.2% per year from 2005 to 2025, which would trigger winter releases greater than 6 BCM.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

that the only possible solution to the water challenges of the region was to be found within each of the individual states – and that local-level water efficiency and constructions of additional reservoirs were the most viable areas to prioritise.⁴⁵² He also provided some insights on a situation that had arisen after the World Bank had given up on the WEC in May 2004. Kazakhstan was still pushing for the establishment of all three consortia, including the water-energy nexus. The World Bank, however, refused to spend its own resources to engage further with these issues. In turn Kazakhstan asked the World Bank to consult with Kazakhstan (all World Bank human resource input was paid by Kazakhstan) and continue to outline potential structures and modes of operation of a WEC.⁴⁵³

Several interesting issues emerge from this assessment of attempts to establish a WEC. The first was the rhetoric of commitment to a WEC and the willingness to co-operate during the TAS summits. This rhetoric contrasted with the parallel unilateral efforts of Uzbekistan in particular, but also Kazakhstan, to create reservoirs that altered the rationale for joint solutions along the lines of a WEC. Second, the WEC case demonstrated the positions of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan: Uzbekistan seemed totally unwilling to enter co-operation schemes that would entrench principles of compensation for water deliveries. Kyrgyzstan, for its part, would under no circumstances delegate control over its reservoirs to a multilateral body. And thirdly, the negotiations were affected by the prevalence of mistrust among the countries in the region, and the reluctance of Uzbekistan to consider ambitious and large-scale schemes for energy generation for export and industrial development. Had Uzbekistan

⁴⁵² Interview, regional programme co-ordinator, World Bank Central Asia regional office, Almaty, 28 April 2005.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

committed itself to a multilateral solution, it could have gained a stake in, and achieved some degrees of control over, future expansion in hydropower generation.

‘Indirect rule’ and water inefficiency

Above, I outlined attempts at tackling the water challenge on the inter-state level. The water crisis in Central Asia was, however, also closely linked with intra-state and local-level processes. The failure to provide viable governing mechanisms on the village and district levels for agriculture and water management was one important cause of the water shortages in the region. This failure contributed to the shrinking of the Aral Sea and also made inter-state relations on water management more difficult and tense.

Earlier I noted that water inefficiency in Central Asia was exceptionally high. The withdrawals of water per irrigated hectare were excessively large (12, 000–14, 000 m³/ha or more).⁴⁵⁴ Frequently, however, this water did not reach the intended fields. A large-scale assessment in 2001 of 11 districts in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan found serious shortcomings in irrigation and drainage systems, and most farmers claimed there had been no maintenance for the past decade. Nine out of eleven districts had ‘poor’ canal systems. The districts with ‘adequate’ canal systems were in Uzbekistan, where efforts at continuing operations and maintenance (O&M) had been more substantial.⁴⁵⁵ In most of the assessment sites, the researchers found that around half of the water was lost between the source and the farm intake – a

⁴⁵⁴ World Bank *Irrigation in Central Asia* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2003).

⁴⁵⁵ Thurman *Irrigation and poverty in Central Asia: a field assessment 2001*, p. 16.

figure considerably higher than the estimated average conveyance losses in Central Asia of 30 per cent.⁴⁵⁶

Table 15: District-level survey of irrigation and drainage systems

District (name of village or farm)	Condition of canal system	Unreliable water supply?	Upstream capture within area studied?	Conflict?	Condition of drainage system	Salinisation?	Water logging?
<i>Kazakhstan</i>							
Otrar (Shoymanov)	Poor	Yes	No	No	Poor	Yes	Yes
Otrar (Otrar)	Poor	Yes	No	No	Poor	Yes	Yes
Syr Darya (Illyasov)	Poor	Yes	No	No	Poor	Yes	Yes
Syr Darya (Tokmaganbetov)	Poor	Yes	No	No	Poor	Yes	Yes
<i>Kyrgyzstan</i>							
Talas	Poor	Yes	No	Tension	Poor	No	No
Kara Bora	Poor	Yes	Yes	Yes	Ok	No	No
Aravan	Poor	Yes	Yes	Yes	Ok	No	No
Kadamjan	Poor	Yes	Yes	Tension	Ok	No	No
<i>Uzbekistan</i>							
Nishan (Pakhtabad)	Ok	No	No	No	Poor	Yes	Yes
Nishan (Turkmenistan)	Ok	Yes	Yes	Tension	Poor	Yes	Yes
Elkkala	Poor	Yes	Yes	Yes	Poor	Yes	Yes

Source: M. Thurman, *Irrigation and poverty in Central Asia: a field assessment* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2001) p. 16

A primary reason for this inefficiency stemmed from the material aspects of water management: decaying infrastructure for irrigation and drainage due to reductions in expenditure on operation and maintenance. There were serious shortcomings in the quality of the irrigation infrastructure constructed in the Soviet period. This problem was augmented by cuts in spending after 1991.⁴⁵⁷ The lack of financial resources was therefore at the centre of the efficiency problem in water management, but other aspects also contributed significantly to the problem.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

Information deficits

Kai Wegerich notes that in Central Asia, the national water authorities allocated and distributed water quota to province-level authorities; these in turn allocated and distributed water to the districts, which then allocated and distributed to farms.⁴⁵⁸ Allocation decisions were taken in a top-down manner. The introduction of water user associations (WUAs) in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan was expected to change this system, since farmers would order water quotas and pay for these (see below) – but in fact it is uncertain whether the establishment of WUAs actually altered the old allocation practices. Wegerich notes that at each level the administrative units bargained for maximum water, but there were also high costs in information, monitoring and enforcement costs – and these contributed to inefficiency. Findings from my fieldwork lend support to Wegerich’s argument. One NGO representative in Jalalabad (Kyrgyzstan) working on water issues stressed that there was firm reluctance on the part of farmers and low-level officials to pass on any negative information to their superiors in the state bureaucracy. This meant that the regional or central authorities had little or no knowledge of actual water conditions. This respondent mentioned one incident when the head of the local government body (*Oyil Okmotul*) had not been aware of serious water problems in five of the villages under his administration.⁴⁵⁹ Such information deficits made it difficult for central bureaucrats to allocate water quotas in an efficient and timely way, which in turn meant water wastage.

⁴⁵⁸ K. Wegerich, *Water user associations in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan: study on conditions for sustainable development* (London: SOAS, 2000).

⁴⁵⁹ Interview, representative NGO, Jalalabad, 13 March 2005.

The water management bureaucracies of all four states faced problems with information deficits. This failure is likely to have made water institutions at the national level less aware of the situation on the ground. It might be that, beyond establishing the overall quota to be released from the major reservoirs, the central authorities had little control over what happened with the water in the districts. After 1991, Kyrgyzstan shifted from livestock production to more food and cash-crop production, considerably increasing its post-independence agricultural output.⁴⁶⁰ However, the water quota allocated to Kyrgyzstan in inter-state negotiations had remained constant since the late Soviet period. Kyrgyzstan might have been withdrawing more water than was agreed on.⁴⁶¹ This issue, however, was never raised during the official inter-state negotiations or discussions. If the central water authorities faced grave information shortcomings and quota allocations were seriously violated, inter-regional co-operation on water was seriously disconnected from the actual water situation.

Indirect rule

The conduct of low-level officials complicated water management. Farmers that I interviewed in the border villages of Osh province in Kyrgyzstan stressed that one of the most pressing challenges they faced was water theft – other farmers illicitly manipulating the installations that directed water flows, so as to enhance flows to their

⁴⁶⁰ Wegerich, *Water user associations in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan*; Wegerich, 'Coping with disintegration of a river-basin management system: multi-dimensional issues in Central Asia'; Wegerich, 'Natural drought or human made water scarcity in Uzbekistan?'; interview, representative NGO, Jalalabad 13 March 2005.

⁴⁶¹ Wegerich, 'Coping with disintegration of a river-basin management system'; Wegerich, 'Natural drought or human made water scarcity in Uzbekistan?'

own fields.⁴⁶² Reports confirmed that this was a major problem throughout Central Asia⁴⁶³ – involving theft within districts and also between downstream and upstream districts. When interviewed for a World Bank study on poverty and irrigation, one downstream farmer in southern Kyrgyzstan voiced a concern typical of farmers in the region:

We have no irrigation or drinking water. People live very poorly. Compare us with the upper zone. See, they live better than we do, because they have water. There is no order in water allocation. Those in the upper zone always take the water and tell us ‘the water is ours. First we will irrigate, and if any is left, we will give it to you’. We discussed this in the council of elders, but all the same there was no result. Because there is a lack of irrigation water, people can’t cultivate their land.⁴⁶⁴

Illicit manipulation was linked to formal and informal authority and income structures at local levels. In his World Bank study, Thurman noted that in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, ‘owing to gradual erosion of on farm irrigation units of the [former collective farms] and nascent character of WUAs or other institutions intended to replace them, the tendency of water users to illegally capture water and [tendency] of irrigators to accept payments “on the side” have become noticeably stronger than before the break up of the Soviet Union.’⁴⁶⁵

In both Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, Thurman noted strong evidence that centrally placed authority figures and wealthy local farmers used their power to manipulate water access in their favour. He also found evidence of widespread manipulation of the record keeping for the quantity and distribution of water flows.⁴⁶⁶ A field report from the district of Kara Bora (Kyrgyzstan) prepared for Thurman’s study noted:

⁴⁶² Interview, small-scale farmer, Osh province, 14 March 2005. Interview, farmer and local-level water regulator, Osh province 14 March 2005.

⁴⁶³ World Bank, *Irrigation in Central Asia* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2003).

⁴⁶⁴ Thurman, *Irrigation and poverty in Central Asia*, p. 18.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p. 19.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p. 23.

Foreign investors [from Iran and Turkey] that lease land, local bosses, and wealthy leaseholders receive water more than the farmers, without waiting their turn...Moreover, the representatives of the province authorities obtain rainfed cropland on lease, connect this land with canals, and irrigate before anyone else, even though water is not supposed to be allocated to rainfed cropland.⁴⁶⁷

In Uzbekistan, where privatisation was slower and market relations were less prevalent, the situation was no different. One villager in the district of Nishan interviewed for the Thurman report explained:

Rich [private farmers] are those that have land at the beginning of the irrigation system, at the point of withdrawal. These are usually former directors of sovkhozy [state farms], policemen, farm agronomists, brigade leaders, entrepreneurs, and also Tajiks from Surkhandarya [Province in Uzbekistan], who have a lot of money and connections...the wealthy farmers have the possibility of irrigating their land 5 times...There was a decree of the district *hakim* [governor] to the effect that private farmers at the head of the irrigation system were to use the water economically, but none of them listen to anybody.⁴⁶⁸

Thurman's findings indicate that local elites, many of them government officials, were using state resources – irrigation systems – for their own private benefit. This situation that formed part of patterns of indirect rule in Central Asia: a blurring between private and state assets, with local-level officials left free to manipulate state assets so as to strengthen their economic and political positions. These practices contributed to inefficient use of water resources, thereby indirectly and negatively shaping the water challenges facing the region. Such practices, of course, also differed greatly from principles of 'office hierarchy' described by Max Weber. 'Rational states', according to Weber, seek to maintain 'a clearly established system of super- and subordination in which there is a supervision of the lower offices by the higher ones'.⁴⁶⁹ In Central Asian water management, clearly, the case was otherwise.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid. pp. 19–20.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid. pp. 21–22.

⁴⁶⁹ M. Weber *Economy and society: an outline of interpretive sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 957.

Central authorities at the national levels were able to direct water flows from the main reservoirs, but otherwise local-level dynamics determined the flows and usage of water. The central authorities were unable to gain oversight or provide enforcement of centrally determined water schedules.

This situation had two implications for regional co-operation on water management. It meant that the cubic meters of water that flowed between the countries in Central Asia may not have corresponded to the quantities stipulated in inter-state agreements. This probable discrepancy mirrors the findings from comparisons of Kyrgyzstan's water use versus increases in agricultural production. It also implied that any regional inter-state level moves to tackle the water challenges were necessarily restricted to bargaining over water releases from central reservoirs, rather than serving as a forum for encouraging joint broad-based alterations in water management and water flows in the region. Administrative deficits within each of the national machineries for water management led to these complications.

Regime type, cotton production and water inefficiency

The flow and use of water in the region was also profoundly affected by cotton monoculture. Cotton and its production were highly water-intensive, and accounted for the high levels of water use in the region. All the same, the Central Asian states did not opt to reduce cotton production and introduce other, less water-intense crops. This choice was closely tied to the functioning of the regimes in these states, in Uzbekistan in particular.

Erika Weinthal has outlined in detail the elaborate patronage networks that emerged around agricultural production in Soviet times.⁴⁷⁰ She argues that Central Asia was characterised by levels of political and social order much higher than those found in the Slavic parts of the USSR. The rents extracted from the sales of cotton supported a system of patronage in Central Asia that, in turn, underlay a system of social control.⁴⁷¹ Weinthal provides an in-depth study of the three-way relationships that evolved between Moscow, national and province-level elites and the population.⁴⁷² One central dimension – which continued to be a force in the cotton-producing areas of Central Asia also after independence – concerned the relations of the national and province leaders with the rural populations. Both before and after independence, the central task of these leaders was to ensure a political and social order that could provide sufficient labour for the cotton harvest. The harvest yielded little financial rewards for cotton pickers, since the income from cotton export went to the central state coffers. Parts of the rents were also available to national and province leaders, who distributed them through a range of patronage relationships. In addition, these leaders distributed government-subsidised farm inputs like fertilisers and fuel, which could be used on small private plots. The pervasiveness of the many patronage networks, with cotton production and cotton rents at their core, is part of the explanation for why the Central Asian states did not move away from their reliance on cotton after independence – even though this crop generated water scarcity in the region. The extensive efforts of international donors to encourage greater water

⁴⁷⁰ Weinthal, *State making and environmental cooperation*.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.* pp. 96–97.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.* p. 97.

efficiency through the introduction of Water User Associations seem to have failed, for similar reasons.⁴⁷³

The Aral Sea and the rhetoric of regional commitment

In addition to the problems posed by inter-state water sharing, the water challenge in Central Asia was also tied to another issue: the shrinking and potential disappearance of the Aral Sea. This environmental catastrophe generated grave concern both within the region and internationally. The Central Asian state leaders expressed both alarm about the situation and commitment to saving the sea, and often used TAS meetings as a platform for voicing these messages.

Restoring the sea to pre-1960 levels would require substantial increases of the water flows into the Aral Sea, and corresponding reductions in water withdrawals for irrigation and agricultural production. Crucially, ensuring *increased water flows* into the Aral Sea rarely made it on the regional agenda, and indeed (as Spoor and Kortunov's tables indicated at the start of this chapter) the period 1991 to 2000 saw substantial and continued decreases in levels of inflow.⁴⁷⁴ By contrast, the regional agenda did include joint efforts by the Central Asian states, with the help of the international community, to *ameliorate* the effects of the desiccation on the seabed, wildlife and local population in the Aral area.

⁴⁷³ Wegerich, *Water user associations in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan*; Thurman, *Irrigation and poverty in Central Asia*.

⁴⁷⁴ Weinthal, *State making and environmental cooperation*, p. 194. Kortunov and Spoor note that the states agreed on reduction in water quotas in 1993 but never followed through. (Spoor and Krutov', *The 'power of water' in a divided Central Asia*.)

It is worth noting the rhetoric adopted by the Central Asian leaders at regional summits with regard to the Aral Sea crisis. In a joint declaration at Nukus (Uzbekistan) in 1995 the presidents of the five Central Asian state stated:

[we confirm] our mutual obligations on full co-operation at regional level on the basis of mutual respect, good neighbourhood, and determination further to work in the name of overcoming consequences of ecological crisis in a zone of Aral Sea basin....[we declare our] adherence to principles of sustainable development and we count that for this purpose it is necessary to undertake the following: to develop and realize long-term strategy for and programs under the sanction of the Aral sea crisis to principles of sustainable development in the way [of]: recognition of great value of water, ground and biological resources as bases for sustainable development; transition to more balanced and scientifically grounded system [of] rural forestry; increases of efficiency of irrigation by means of development of economic methods of use of water resources, application of the perfect technologies in an irrigation and a preservation of the environment; stimulation of long-term forms of use of grounds and water use. (Translation by the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea)⁴⁷⁵

This broad statement of a strong commitment to saving the Aral Sea is typical of most statements on water made by state leaders at regional summits throughout the period from 1991–2004.⁴⁷⁶ In interviews, however, mid-level officials involved in inter-state water management stressed that saving the Aral Sea was not actually a real policy concern in inter-state water relations.⁴⁷⁷ Erika Weinthal lends support to this finding, and concludes:

...certain solutions to the Aral basin problem were excluded from the policy agenda after independence... under this scenario the Central Asian states and the international community would have had to replace cotton with less water-intensive crops. In the long term this was the most efficient strategy to rectify 70 years of disregard for the environment...[but] the Central Asian leaders perceived that the shift away from cotton monoculture would have politically and socially destabilizing consequences.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁵ Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan *Nukus declaration* (20 September 1995).

⁴⁷⁶ IFAS *10 years IFAS decisions and events* (Dushanbe: International Fund for saving the Aral Sea, 2003).

⁴⁷⁷ Interview, representative Ministry of Water Management Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, 11 February 2005; interview, representative of Uzbekistan to the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, Dushanbe, 11 April 2005; interview, Technical director Agency for Implementing GEF projects (IFAS), Tashkent 30 March 2005.

⁴⁷⁸ Weinthal, *State making and environmental cooperation*, p. 194.

Understanding failures to co-operate on water management

Above, I outlined a complex set of patterns for regional co-operation on water management. These patterns included extensive dialogue and various efforts at agreements and regional multilateral institutions. But their overall result was a failure to find viable and lasting solutions to water-sharing problems. The intra-state difficulties involved in bringing about better water management at local levels as well as greater water efficiency further complicated the issue.

How can one best account for these patterns? In the introduction to this thesis, four ways of accounting for failures in regional co-operation were noted. The first approach stressed realism and rivalry between Russia and the USA for control in the region. A second realist perspective stressed the national interests of local states. A third perspective shifted the focus to the state level and opened up an understanding of how regime types, in particular authoritarian ones, could make co-operation between the Central Asian states difficult. A final approach kept the focus on the state level, but saw elements of 'indirect rule' as central for understand the failure of regional co-operation.

The adversarial interests of the Central Asian states were a central feature of all the case material presented above. Each sought to maximise its own share of water resources; moreover, states had radically differing preferences for the timing of water flows. These are distinctively realist features. A central difficulty that hampered co-operation was Uzbekistan's perceived state interest in rejecting compromises that would set a precedent for paying for water deliveries, in combination with Kyrgyzstan's perceived interest in maintaining at all costs unilateral control over

reservoirs on its territory. Moreover, rather than committing to co-operative solutions, Uzbekistan attempted to increase unilateral control by constructing its own new reservoirs. With both these countries, the rationales for their positions were clear-cut and represented viable strategies for maximising state interests. In this way, the states behaved in accordance with realist expectations.

On the other hand, a realist approach is unable to explain the following puzzle: Both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan were dependent on the upstream states in Central Asia. Kazakhstan proactively sought to ameliorate this situation by advocating comprehensive multilateral solutions to water sharing. Uzbekistan, in contrast, preferred a state of affairs characterised by short-term solutions and unpredictability. Why did Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan adopt such different positions?

In the case of Uzbekistan, it is important to stress that other strategies could have offered different and perhaps better ways of maximising state interests. Uzbekistan had an abundance of gas. It could have made this gas available to Kyrgyzstan as some form of payment in return for partial control over the water reservoirs – or at least long-term, viable and predictable mechanisms for summer irrigation. With the expansion in hydropower facilities and prospects of increased demand from China, Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, it remains a puzzle within a realist paradigm why Uzbekistan did not act more proactively in order to gain stakes and influence over future expansion in hydropower. A supra-national Water and Energy Consortium (WEC) might have offered all four states influence, stakes and benefits over hydropower. Uzbekistan, however, did not play a constructive role in promoting the WEC.

The choice of Uzbekistan is easier to understand with insights from the domestic regime-type perspective. A commitment to unilateralism and self-sufficiency was a central feature of the regime of President Karimov. Changing its perspective on WEC would have entailed altering one of the central ideological parameters of the regime – and it was not willing to do so. In contrast to Uzbekistan’s unilateralism, Kazakhstan had made the search for multilateral solutions to post-Soviet challenges an integral part of its foreign policy, and this approach underpinned its commitment to multilateral solutions to water sharing.

A regime perspective can also direct attention to other features of the pattern of regional co-operation. Negotiations among the four states often suffered due to Uzbekistan’s reluctance to send state representatives endowed with authority to negotiate. Minor issues had to be cleared by the president before forming part of negotiation packages, which indicated an unwillingness to decentralise decision-making processes on the part of the top leadership. This tendency slowed co-operation efforts. Moreover, vested interests within the regime had a stake in maintaining the country’s reliance on cotton monoculture. This interest ensured that water withdrawals remained high, which in turn made water sharing in Central Asia a far more complex and difficult regional problem than necessary.

Issues associated with ‘indirect rule’ had a similar effect of further complicating water challenges in the region. There is considerable evidence that state officials controlling water flows at the local level used this resource to their own personal advantage, to bolster their power or gain more income. At the same time, central ministries were inadequately informed as to whether centrally devised water schedules were

implemented. This shortcoming undermined prospects of rational allocation of water and may have augmented regional water shortages.

A final aspect of the issue of water was interdependence. In the introduction, I noted that some theorists see interdependence as an important structural feature likely to generate co-operation. Other theorists, like Mearsheimer, argue that states are likely to consider interdependence a source of weakness and will therefore seek to obtain greater control and self-sufficiency. In the case of water-sharing in Central Asia, it is clearly the latter perspective that best captures the inter-state dynamics of the region. Interdependence spurred efforts to co-operate, but Uzbekistan and to lesser extent Kazakhstan made parallel unilateral efforts to lessen the degree of interdependence. These moves undermined co-operation initiatives such as the WEC.

The realist perspective can thus account for the most central feature that doomed co-operation in water: namely, conflicting national interests. Interdependence complements realism in this case: concern over the absence of unilateral control was part and parcel of Uzbekistan's perception of national interests and appropriate strategies. In addition, regime type and elements of indirect rule shaped the water issue. Analytical perspectives that stress regime type and state weakness can enable students of regional affairs to give a fuller account of the failure of regional co-operation on water issues.

Aside from these ways of understanding the co-operation failures, I should mention several other features from the case of water co-operation. One is the issue of conservatism. Regional relations on water were conservative in three ways. The inter-

state agreements seemed to codify existing behaviour rather than breaking new ground in practices and principles. Soviet outlooks and practices continued to shape negotiations, and issues that could offer alternatives to the respective regimes never formed part of water negotiations on the state level. Kazakhstan, for example, withdrew relatively little water from the Syr Darya, but was faced with the unfolding Aral Sea disaster. Neither Kazakhstan nor any of the other states used regional forums to offer criticism of the reliance on cotton or governing practices associated with water management and agriculture. The central predicament and starting point for interaction at the regional level seems to have been reaching agreement on the need to safeguard and bolster the chosen policy paths of the four presidents.

Another relevant feature was the dense institutional and normative environment in which the inter-state disagreements played out. This environment shaped the forms in which arguments and grievances were expressed. Central Asia's extensive tradition of dialogue and shared perspective precluded outright hostility or 'water wars' among the states. The dialogue may have been riddled with disagreements and produced few solutions – but at least it avoided the choice of military means over political ones. In this way, regime-like patterns were visible in inter-state relations in Central Asia.

Finally, the discrepancy between the rhetoric and reality of state practices was striking. Large-scale diplomatic efforts and statements on the WEC were at odds with the unilateral constructions of additional reservoirs. Likewise, the supposedly deep concern for the fate of the Aral Sea leaders expressed at TAS summits stood in dramatic contrast to the continued high water withdrawals for unreformed agricultural sectors.

The conclusion of this thesis will return to many of these points. In the next chapter, however, I will focus on regional security co-operation.

Chapter 6: Security co-operation

The case of security co-operation among the nations of Central Asia offers several interesting and surprising findings. As security threats are central to state survival, one would expect states to ensure that issues of state weakness do not feature prominently in this sphere. However, this study finds the opposite outcome. In contrast to the case of water, on security issues, approaches stressing state weakness emerge as highly pertinent in accounting for both *why* and *how* co-operation failed in Central Asia. Moreover, again unlike water, the security sphere was marked by substantial great-power involvement in the period under study. Yet there is no clear evidence that this involvement caused intra-regional security co-operation to fail. The great-power provision of formal alliance options reduced the number of formal intra-regional diplomatic initiatives in the security sphere, but on the practical level, the difficulties that bedevilled intra-regional security co-ordination were not linked to great-power involvement.

The Central Asian states faced a range of serious security threats in the period from 1991–2004. These security threats were mainly of the traditional kind pertaining to state survival, although some were also partially linked to human security.⁴⁷⁹ The security situation sparked considerable efforts to ensure co-operation between their

⁴⁷⁹ Of the three key security threats discussed in this chapter the military incursions by the IMU clearly constituted a traditional (military) security threat to state survival. The drug trafficking through the region also threatened state sovereignty, and, even if not strictly a military threat, it begged a response from military and law enforcement units. The case of migration corresponded primarily to concepts of human security (where human security refers both to the security of the individual as well as to the security of the state). Later in this chapter I illustrate that illegal migrants had to cope with serious insecurities. I also, however, indicate how the Central Asian states wanted to guard their sovereignty by controlling population flows and that migration movement triggered a response from law enforcement and defence structures. For an overview and discussion of human versus state security see S. N. MacFarlane and Y. F. Khong *Human Security and the UN: A Critical History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006) pp. 1-2

law enforcement and military agencies. Three issues dominated the co-operation agenda of the four countries in these years: rebel ‘extremist’ or ‘terrorist’ groups associated with warring factions in Afghanistan, drugs trafficking, and illegal migration.⁴⁸⁰ The civil war in Tajikistan represented an additional major challenge for the neighbouring states during the war years (1992–1997). It did not, however, trigger any co-ordinated response beyond the joint efforts initiated under the auspices of the Collective Security Treaty (CST). I will therefore examine Central Asian responses to the civil war in conjunction with discussions of Russia’s involvement in the security affairs of the region.

This chapter argues that national interests – in particular, concerns over national sovereignty – were central reasons that security co-operation failed. Also important, however, were regime-type issues and aspects of state weakness. The chapter discusses the three threats (‘extremism’, drugs, illegal migration) facing the region as three separate cases. In connection with ‘extremism’, the focus is on the events associated with the military incursions by a radical Islamic group, the Islamic

⁴⁸⁰ Indeed, in TAS statements these three threats often formed part of one ‘cluster’ of named security challenges. A typical example was a joint statement to the United Nations by the heads of the TAS member countries. The statement noted that: ‘...having discussed the questions of developing multilateral regional co-operation within the framework of the Central Asian Co-operation Organisation (CACO), the situation in and around the region, and other urgent international problems, acting in accordance with the established practice of open, constructive dialogue and the degree of mutual understanding and reciprocal trust that has been achieved, guided by the general aspiration to develop multilateral co-operation... confirming the aspiration to bring about the further expansion of regional co-operation across the entire spectrum of inter-state relations in the interest of ensuring peace, stability and security in the region, **attaching particular importance to deepening co-operation in combating international terrorism, political and religious extremism, illicit drug trafficking, illegal migration and transnational organised crime...** [emphasis added].’ Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan *Joint statement by the heads of State of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan* (5 July 2003). This manner of ordering the security threats facing Central Asia is often found in the security literature. In the *Central Asia Human Development Report*, for example, the chapter titled ‘Cooperation for dealing with regional threats: natural disasters, drugs, crime and terrorism’ – developed jointly by researchers from the region and human security specialist Sharbanou Tadjbakhsh – makes a similar list of the key security threats. See UNDP *Central Asia Human Development Report 2005* (New York: United Nations Development Programme, 2005).

Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Law enforcement and military agencies undertook co-operative action on other episodes and threats associated with ‘extremism’, but none were as significant as the IMU, nor did other episodes involve as high levels of mobilisation of both law enforcement structures and military forces.

I start with an overview of the security challenges posed by the three threats of ‘extremism’, drugs trafficking and illegal migration. This section also discusses Russia’s involvement, especially its role in Tajikistan’s civil war. While not of direct concern in this chapter, the civil war in Tajikistan was a key arena for Russian involvement in Central Asia and formed an important backdrop to other security challenges – so an outline will help the reader to better engage with the overall security configurations in the region. I then discuss ‘extremism’, drugs and illegal migration – in each case assessing formal co-operation initiatives, key events and actual co-operation patterns. The chapter ends with a discussion of how best to account for the failures in security co-operation in Central Asia.

Overview

Security challenges

IMU

The IMU emerged out of radical religious and political movements in the Fergana Valley in Uzbekistan in the early 1990s. After President Islam Karimov’s fierce crackdown on these groups, their members fled to Tajikistan, where they formed the

IMU.⁴⁸¹ The IMU later established close ties with the Taliban, and fought with the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) during the civil war in Tajikistan. The group aimed to topple Karimov and install an Islamic theocracy in Uzbekistan and the wider region. The IMU was accused of orchestrating a bomb attack in Tashkent in February 1999. It launched a military incursion in Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and another into Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in 2000.⁴⁸² Both incursions constituted considerable challenges to the armed forces of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. In this way, the IMU was (aside from the civil war in Tajikistan) by far the most tangible and immediate threat to Central Asian stability in the years from 1991 to 2004.

Drugs trafficking

The rise in organised crime associated with the traffic in drugs was another serious concern for the Central Asian states. Drugs trafficking from Afghanistan through Central Asia to Russia and Europe increased dramatically in the 1990s. Vladimir Fenopetov, former Chief of Europe and West/Central Asia Section of UNODC, estimated that 20 per cent of the total production of Afghan opiates, mainly heroin, was trafficked through Central Asia. The total value of these shipments was estimated at USD 2.2 billion – with a likely profit of 1.8 billion going to traffickers spread across Central Asia.⁴⁸³ Drugs from Afghanistan were transited along various routes –

⁴⁸¹ A. Rashid, *Jihad: the rise of militant Islam in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002) pp. 137–57.

⁴⁸² Ibid.

⁴⁸³ V. Fenopetov, "The drug crime threat to countries located on the "silk road", *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2006.

many went through Tajikistan, where the civil war and its aftermath made control especially difficult.⁴⁸⁴

Illegal migration

The economic collapse, poverty and unemployment that hit Central Asia after 1991 created a pool of surplus labour. Growth in GDP and the economic upswing in Kazakhstan and Russia after 1998 created a demand for cheap labour. This demand generated a flow of labour migrants within the region, with people from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan seeking work in Kazakhstan. Kyrgyzstan also received some labour migrants from Uzbekistan. GDP growth also created a far larger flow of migrants from the region to Russia, and these migrants often transited one or more Central Asian state on their way. It was estimated that up to 10 per cent of Kyrgyzstani citizens worked abroad, primarily in Russia and in Kazakhstan. For Uzbekistan, estimates ranged from 3–6 per cent of the population, while up to 18 per cent of the population in Tajikistan were thought to be labour migrants.⁴⁸⁵ Citizens of Central Asian states were nominally entitled to work in other countries in the region and in Russia, but cumbersome registration procedures coupled with efforts by employers or employees to avoid taxes and fees in the legal economy turned many workers into illegal migrants. The flow of migrants and the fact that their economic activities were beyond the reach of the state were major concerns for the Central Asian states, and prompted considerable efforts to bolster police and border agency

⁴⁸⁴ For a detailed overview of drugs routes in Central Asia see J. Townsend, 'The logistics of opiate trafficking in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan', *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2006.

⁴⁸⁵ UNDP, *Central Asia Human Development Report 2005*, p. 141.

control over these flows. The issue also spurred the initiation of several formal agreements on the issue.

Russia, CST and the civil war in Tajikistan

Russia's security involvement in the region was closely tied up with the transformation of the military forces of the former Soviet Union. After 1991, the assets and personnel of the Soviet army were divided among the Soviet successor states. The states made attempts at continued inter-operability and co-operation of these forces through CIS structures. On 15 April 1992, the CST – Collective Security Treaty – was signed in Tashkent by CIS member states Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Georgia, Belarus and Azerbaijan joined in 1993. In the treaty, the states agreed to consult immediately if a threat to one or more signatory/ies should appear (Article two).⁴⁸⁶ Aggression against one member was to be regarded as an act of aggression against all (Article four).⁴⁸⁷ Olcott, Aslund and Garnett note that the CST countries failed to retain joint strategic and general-purpose forces, but that there were substantial common activities in the spheres of border co-operation, air defence and peacekeeping.⁴⁸⁸

Border co-operation and peacekeeping were important pillars in Russia's relations with Central Asia. There were three types of border co-operation, according to Olcott et al.: states with no special border arrangements; states with close border co-operation with Russia, including technical assistance and the deployment of Russian

⁴⁸⁶ M. B. Olcott, A. Aslund and S. W. Garnett, *Getting it wrong: regional cooperation and the Commonwealth of Independent States* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999), p. 82.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

experts; and states that defended their borders together with Russia. Uzbekistan belonged to the first category, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to the second, and Tajikistan to the third.⁴⁸⁹

In the sphere of peacekeeping, co-operation emerged in parallel or as part and parcel of the immediate responses to the civil war in Tajikistan. According to Lena Jonson, an attack on Russian border guards on 13 July 1993 marked ‘a watershed’ in Moscow’s commitment to stability and ending the war in Tajikistan.⁴⁹⁰ Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan decided to send CIS peacekeeping troops to Tajikistan. Russia’s 201st motorised rifle division, which was already stationed in Tajikistan, became the core of the peacekeeping forces, although Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan provided some troops in the early stages of the war. A former warlord who had operated in the area where Kyrgyzstan had troops stationed stated in an interview that these forces had been very weak, and appeared mostly concerned with protecting their own security.⁴⁹¹ Olcott et al. note that while the joint intervention in Tajikistan seemed to have been a ‘genuine effort at multilateral intervention, in practice Russian troops have been its strongest and largest contingent’.⁴⁹²

In the early years of the civil war, the most substantial contribution to joint Central Asian efforts came from Uzbekistan, especially in the areas of diplomacy and intelligence. Uzbekistan’s intelligence personnel played a key role in the formation of a new Tajik government in 1993 and the rise of Emmomali Rakhmonov as leader

⁴⁸⁹ Olcott et al., *Getting it wrong*.

⁴⁹⁰ L. Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia: the shaping of Russian foreign policy* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004).

⁴⁹¹ Interview, former civil war middle-level commander (UTO), Ishkashim, 1 August 2004.

⁴⁹² Olcott et al., p. 93.

during an extraordinary meeting of parliament in Khudjand in 1993.⁴⁹³ Uzbekistan later disapproved of the increasing dominance of Rakhmonov's group in the new government, as well as of the weakening of ethnic Uzbek political factions, and the eventual willingness of both Rakhmonov and Russian policy-makers to negotiate with, and include, the Islamic opposition in new governing arrangements after 1997.⁴⁹⁴ Lena Jonson notes that, while Uzbekistan had previously been Russia's 'right hand' and policy implementer in the region, from the mid-1990s onwards Uzbekistan pursued a policy increasingly independent from Russia's.⁴⁹⁵

The loss of Uzbekistan as an ally became evident when it denounced CIS peacekeeping efforts and then refused to renew its commitment to the Collective Security Treaty in 1999. According to Jonson, Russia was concerned over the implications of Uzbekistan's withdrawal for the balance of power in the region, and made efforts to improve relations.⁴⁹⁶ She writes: 'the Russian approach to Uzbekistan remained ambivalent. On the one hand Russia tried to counter Uzbek influence in the neighbouring countries. On the other hand, it tried to find common ground for co-operation with Uzbekistan'.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹³ Interview, former officer, Tajikistan Ministry of Security, Dushanbe, 19 July 2004.

⁴⁹⁴ S. Torjesen and S. N. MacFarlane, 'R before D: the case of post conflict reintegration in Tajikistan', *Journal of Conflict, Security and Development*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2007.

⁴⁹⁵ Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, pp. 54–56.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 55.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 56.

Co-operation in responding to ‘extremism’

The absence of formal agreements

Co-operation in tackling military threats was different from co-operation on other regional initiatives. As this thesis has documented in the cases of trade and water, the Central Asian states entered into various regional agreements, although they later failed to act on the pledges and public statements that were made. A similar pattern is also visible in relation to security co-operation on drugs and migration issues. But in the case of ‘extremism’ and corresponding military co-operation, Central Asia states made several joint statements and some agreements pertaining to such threats, but did not develop the same degree of intra-regional diplomatic efforts to build a co-operation architecture as they had in the other cases.

Events

In the period from 1999 to 2000, IMU activists led several incursions from Tajikistan into southern Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. The IMU was based in mountain areas of Tajikistan controlled by former UTO commanders, although the movement also trained in Afghanistan and was believed to have received financial support from Al Qaeda. During its incursions, the IMU demanded that the Uzbek government release all religious activists imprisoned in Uzbekistan, re-open mosques it had closed, permit Muslim dress in the country, and introduce sharia law.⁴⁹⁸ Scholars dispute whether the

⁴⁹⁸ ICG *Briefing: recent violence: causes and consequences* (Bishkek/Brussels International Crisis Group, 2000). Estimates of the size of the IMU vary greatly. International observers who lived near IMU bases in Tajikistan claim that the IMU never consisted of more than 50 to 60 fighters. (Interview, representative of International Organization for Migration (IOM), Dushanbe, 15 August 2003.) By

group's aims for the incursions were primarily political, or whether an additional important objective was to secure drug trafficking routes.⁴⁹⁹

The first incursion came on 6 August 1999. The IMU initially took four hostages, who were later released. On 22 August, the group seized another 13 hostages near the village of Kan in Batken province. Fighting broke out between the Kyrgyz army and IMU militants as the rebels approached Uzbekistan's Sokh enclave (Uzbekistani territory inside Kyrgyzstan). Uzbekistani fighter planes bombed areas that the rebels crossed. The rebels released the hostages on 25 October and retreated to Tajikistan.⁵⁰⁰

A new large-scale incursion took place the following year. IMU fighters entered both Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in separate groups on various occasions in August and September 2000, and were reported to have come within 100 km of Tashkent.⁵⁰¹

Eventually, the armies of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan were able to push back the rebels and the group retreated again into Tajikistan. The continued presence of the IMU in Tajikistan caused considerable discord between Tajikistan and its neighbours. The Russian army eventually airlifted members of the group from Tajikistan to Afghanistan by helicopter in February 2001.⁵⁰² The group supported the Taliban during Operation Enduring Freedom in the autumn of 2001. Many of its members, including leader Juma Namangani, were killed in a battle at Kunduz. The surviving members re-grouped and sought refuge on the Afghanistan–Pakistan border.

contrast, newspaper reports, usually citing Russian Federation military sources, estimated up to 5,000 fighters (ICG *Briefing: recent violence*, 2000).

⁴⁹⁹ S. Cornell, 'The narcotics threat in greater Central Asia: from crime–terror nexus to state infiltration?', *CEF Quarterly*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2006.

⁵⁰⁰ ICG *Central Asia: crisis conditions in three states* (Bishkek/Brussels International Crisis Group, 2000).

⁵⁰¹ 'Politics–Central Asia: regional problems may take a back seat', *IPS news service*, 23 August 2000.

⁵⁰² Interview, Representative of Tavildara Development Committee, Tavildara, 24 August 2004

The 1999 attack caught Central Asian states by surprise. As the country whose territory was attacked, Kyrgyzstan, also took the lead in responding to the incursion. Government officials negotiated with the hostage-takers, and the Kyrgyzstani army clashed in battles with the armed rebels. In all, 30 Kyrgyzstani soldiers died in the 1999 attack.⁵⁰³ Kyrgyzstan also requested assistance from its neighbours, and Uzbekistan engaged directly with the IMU via air force attacks in 1999, and later in 2000 in direct combat.

Co-operation patterns

On 28 August 1999, during the first crisis, the foreign ministers and heads of the national security councils of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan met in Osh in southern Kyrgyzstan to 'exchange opinions on the situation', according to President Akaev of Kyrgyzstan.⁵⁰⁴ In April 2000 the Central Asian leaders met in Tashkent, where they signed an agreement on joint action to combat terrorism.⁵⁰⁵ Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbaev stressed that the agreement amounted to 'a defense union aimed at protecting sovereignty and independence of our nations'.⁵⁰⁶ Parallel to these multilateral efforts, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan also signed a military agreement and proclaimed in a joint statement from a meeting between Presidents Askar Akaev and Islam Karimov that Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan 'will view hostile actions against either state as a threat to both and will take all possible measures to oppose them

⁵⁰³ 'Mostly, integration exists on paper', *IPS news service*, 13 October 2000.

⁵⁰⁴ President Akaev also noted in the same statement: 'the aforementioned meeting also made it possible to demonstrate to the international community the resolute mood of the states in the region to undertake joint and coordinated efforts to counteract acts of international terrorism' (Kyrgyz president calls for calm in address to nation', *BBC Worldwide monitoring*, 30 August 1999).

⁵⁰⁵ 'Kyrgyz, Uzbek presidents issue joint statement on talks', *ITAR-TASS*, 27 September 2000.

⁵⁰⁶ 'Central Asians sign pact', *New York Times*, 22 April 2000.

effectively'.⁵⁰⁷ However, as indicated previously, these pledges of co-ordination did not deter the IMU. In late summer 2000 the rebel group launched a more successful attack that severely compromised the security of both Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

Despite meetings, joint pledges and agreements, serious diplomatic difficulties arose. Uzbekistan's air force bombed mountain villages in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in response to the incursions. There were conflicting reports as to whether Uzbekistan had had received prior approval from Kyrgyzstan.⁵⁰⁸ Tajikistan protested vigorously, and stressed the infringement on sovereignty.⁵⁰⁹ Uzbekistan also responded to the attacks by mining sections of its borders with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.⁵¹⁰ The country subsequently refused to share the maps of the areas where the mines had been laid along the border. Over 20 civilians from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were killed in mine accidents as a result.⁵¹¹ In late summer 2001, Kyrgyzstan's parliament refused to ratify the military accord with Uzbekistan signed in September 2000, to protest Uzbekistan's unilateral mining.⁵¹² Uzbekistan accused Kyrgyzstan of not responding forcefully enough to the threat of extremism.⁵¹³

Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan – Uzbekistan in particular – also experienced serious dispute with Tajikistan. The IMU launched its attacks from bases in Tajikistan's

⁵⁰⁷ 'Uzbek, Kyrgyz presidents to sign military accord', *Agence France Press*, 25 September 2000; 'Kyrgyz, Uzbek presidents issue a joint statement on talks', *ITAR-TASS*, 27 September 2000.

⁵⁰⁸ A *Moscow News* article claimed that there were 'considerable disagreements between Islam Karimov and his Kirgiz counterpart. In particular they cannot come to terms on using aviation against the rebels. Only Tashkent has combat planes while Kirgizia does not want foreign aircraft to fly over its territory.' ('CIS southern flank up in flames', *Moscow News*, 23 August 2000.)

⁵⁰⁹ After Uzbekistan's bombing Tajikistan immediately lodged an official complaint. See 'Uzbekistan denies its planes bombed Tajik territory', *RFE/RL*, 17 August 1999.

⁵¹⁰ Landmine Monitor, 'Kyrgyzstan', *Landmine Monitor Report 2006* (Ottawa: International Campaign to Ban Landmines, 2006).

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁵¹² 'Kyrgyz deputies refuse to ratify accord with Uzbekistan', *Agence France Press*, 5 September 2001.

⁵¹³ N. Megoran, *The borders of eternal friendship?* (University of Cambridge, PhD thesis, 2002).

mountains. Former top UTO military commander and Minister for Emergency Situations Mirzo Zioyev controlled the areas where the IMU was based, and provided a safe haven for the rebel group. The failure of President Rakhmonov to crack down on the presence of the rebels on Tajikistan's territory after the first 1999 incursion infuriated Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan's National Security Council Secretary Bolot Zhanuzakov complained: 'the Tajik side has failed to respond to any of our proposals to wipe out terrorist bases near the Kirgiz border.'⁵¹⁴ Tajikistan also officially denied that IMU was using its territory as a base. In August 2000, during the second incursion, reports that President Rakhmonov had been on holiday led Presidents Akaev and Karimov to boycott a joint co-ordination meeting with Russia and Tajikistan.⁵¹⁵

The reason for President Rakhmonov's difficulties laid in the fragile nature of the post-civil war political compromises. The shaky internal balance of power and the inability of groups loyal to Rakhmonov to control the situation in areas dominated by the Minister for Emergency Situations made it impossible for the president to remove the IMU from Tajikistan's territory. Moreover, the first elections after the signing of the peace agreement in 1997 were due in February 2000. In this context, any controversial crackdown on groups loyal to the UTO could have jeopardised the peace in Tajikistan, and the rule of President Rakhmonov.⁵¹⁶

As a result, the ability of the Central Asian states to respond effectively to the IMU was hampered by weak state capacity, as seen in the state leadership's lack of

⁵¹⁴ 'CIS southern flank up in flames', *Moscow News*, 23 August 2000.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁶ ICG, *Tajikistan's politics: confrontation or consolidation?* (Bishkek/Brussels International Crisis Group, 2004).

monopoly of violence and the 'indirect rule' of Mirzo Zioyev in some parts of Tajikistan. Aspects of weakness affected Kyrgyzstan as well. Soldiers who had fought in Kyrgyzstan's army during the first incursion later described the dismal state of their country's armed forces. They said they were 'shocked' at the bad tactics and strategy of the military leadership; soldiers were not paid according to terms promised; and military equipment was lacking or in extremely poor condition.⁵¹⁷ The low level of defence spending was a prime reason for the army's weakness, but reports also indicated a poorly functioning military bureaucracy riddled by corruption and thereby elements of 'indirect rule'.⁵¹⁸ After the incursions in 1999, reports claimed that the rebels had been in possession of detailed (US-produced) satellite maps belonging to Uzbekistan's army. This breach of security may have been an indication that corruption in the armed forces of Uzbekistan undermined its battle against the IMU.⁵¹⁹

Eventually, the response to the challenge posed by the IMU came not from the attempts to bolster of Central Asian defence co-ordination, but from outside intervention: first from Russia and then from the US. Internal Tajik pressure in combination with Russian demands resulted in Juma Namagani's agreement that all IMU fighters would be airlifted from Tajikistan to Afghanistan by Russian army helicopters.⁵²⁰ Fears nevertheless persisted of new incursions in spring and summer 2001. Only during the Enduring Freedom Campaign did US forces bring about a near-liquidation of the IMU, after which the group never recovered its fighting potential.

⁵¹⁷ 'Kyrgyz private relives Batken nightmare', *IWPR*, 1 September 2000.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁹ 'Uzbekistan comes back', *Russian Press Digest*, 3 December 1999.

⁵²⁰ S. Cornell, 'The nexus of narcotics, conflict and radical Islam in Central Asia', *Caspian Brief*, no. 24, 2002.

The April 2000 agreement was the first TAS agreement that addressed joint efforts against military threats. The agreement called for more security co-operation and envisioned joint military action in case of an attack.⁵²¹ In this way, efforts to combat military threats like those posed by the IMU were incorporated in the TAS co-operation agenda. This focus persisted: when the renaming and reorganisation of TAS was agreed upon in Tashkent in December 2001, the members included security as a new key dimension, alongside the traditional themes of co-operation on trade and water. In 2004, the TAS Dushanbe summit of heads of states reaffirmed the commitment to security co-operation in a joint statement calling for a combined response to international terrorism, religious extremism and drug trafficking.⁵²²

These intra-regional diplomatic initiatives at security co-operation were, however, surpassed by Moscow's renewed involvement in the region and its attempts to invigorate security co-operation from the late 1990s onwards. It is important to note that the substance of Russia's efforts differed markedly before and after the terrorist events of 11 September 2001. The incursions in 1999 and 2000 produced agreements on military co-operation, provision of equipment by Russia and an intensification of CST military exercises in the region. It was also in 2000 that it was agreed to establish a CIS an anti-terror centre in Bishkek.⁵²³

The attacks of 11 September 2001 and the deployment of US troops, however, raised the stakes— even though the Enduring Freedom forces quickly reduced the security threats facing the region. Russia nevertheless started preparing to create a Central

⁵²¹ 'Central Asians sign pact', *New York Times*, 22 April 2000.

⁵²² 'CACO summit adopts joint statement on fight against terrorism, drugs', *Russia & FSU News Bulletin*, 18 October 2004.

⁵²³ H. Plater-Zyberk, *Kyrgyzstan – focusing on security* (Camberley: Conflict Studies Research Centre, 2003).

Asian rapid-reaction force and to station Russian military aircraft and personnel at Kant airbase in Kyrgyzstan.

A further important detail concerns developments in bilateral relations between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The two countries had a turbulent relationship, due among other things to Tajikistan's choice to include Islamists in the government as part of the 1997 peace settlement. Relations hit another low point in August 2000, when Rakhmonov, for the second year in a row, proved unable to deter IMU activities on the territory of Tajikistan. On the sidelines of the TAS Tashkent meeting in December 2001, Tajikistan's media reported a substantial warming in relations.⁵²⁴ This thaw occurred just before Uzbekistan was to sign a major strategic partnership agreement with Washington. Substantial US financial and military support bolstered Uzbekistan's position in the region. Tajikistan, by contrast, remained an important ally of Moscow, with Russian border guards and the 201st motorised rifle division stationed in Tajikistan. And yet the fact that Uzbekistan received a massive increase in support from the USA did not serve to drive a wedge between the two Central Asian countries.

Russia's responses to IMU incursions

When faced with the IMU threat in 1999 and 2000, the Central Asian states actively sought Russia's involvement and assistance, using Central Asian regional summits to argue for Russian aid. In responding, Russia drew upon CST frameworks, but also forged further bilateral agreements and promised bilateral support.

⁵²⁴ 'Tajik-Uzbek relations improve', *BBC monitoring international reports*, 4 January 2002.

Prior to the IMU incursions, there had been a distinct pattern of security affiliations in the region. Uzbekistan had refused to be part of the same defence alliance as Russia and had kept its military co-operation at a low level. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, by contrast, were active members of the CST and supplemented this connection with extensive bilateral arrangements. Tajikistan was closely tied to Russia and heavily dependent on the presence of the 201st motorised rifle division for preserving internal stability.

When the first incursions hit the region in August 1999, the Central Asian countries called on Moscow for help. Russia responded primarily by promising material assistance. With regard to bilateral support, Kyrgyzstan received night-vision equipment, weapons and the country also benefited from the dispatch of Russian military advisors.⁵²⁵

After the incursions, there were some tendencies towards rapprochement in Russia–Uzbekistan bilateral relations, as shown by several bilateral agreements signed between December 1999 and June 2000. The two parties agreed on substantial military co-operation.⁵²⁶ Also, as early as November 1999, Russia and Uzbekistan proclaimed they were ready to undertake joint pre-emptive strikes against rebel formations in Tajikistan and Afghanistan.⁵²⁷ Moscow put pressure on Uzbekistan to re-enter the CST, repeatedly stressing that efforts at combating terrorism were

⁵²⁵ President Akayev subsequently thanked the Russian leadership for 'its willingness to provide comprehensive support to wipe out the gangs' 'Kremlin involved in struggle with Islamic rebels in South', *The Scotsman*, 29 September 1999.

⁵²⁶ Karimov noted on several occasions that Russian support for rebuilding the Uzbek helicopter fleet was particularly important See 'Uzbekistan drifting into military dependence on Russia', *Jamestown Monitor*, vol. 6, no. 127, 2000.

⁵²⁷ 'Uzbekistan and Russia consider hitting guerrilla bases', *Times of Central Asia*, 18 November 1999.

hampered by Uzbekistan's reluctance. At the CST Yerevan summit in May 2000, CIS Executive Secretary Yuri Yarov noted that the fight against terrorism would be more successful if Uzbekistan joined the CST.⁵²⁸ Uzbekistan increased its participation in CST activities following the agreements – a concession to Moscow, albeit a significantly smaller one than full CST membership would have been.⁵²⁹ Uzbekistan paid a substantial economic price for asking for Russian military help without actually joining the CST. The agreements signed in May 2000 on Uzbekistan's procurement of military equipment from Russia, for example, set the price at USD 32 million.⁵³⁰ Military-technical agreements between Russia and Uzbekistan were qualitatively different from Russia's agreements with CST countries, to which Russia offered military hardware at discount prices.⁵³¹ Russia initially demanded payment in hard currency, while Uzbekistan pressed for barter payment. In the December 1999 agreement, the two parties decided that payment would be part barter, part hard currency. Later assessments of the December 1999 and May 2000 deals claimed that goods from Uzbekistan included in the barter payment (cotton, vegetables and minerals) were set at significant discount prices.⁵³² Uzbekistan, in effect, lost both vital hard-currency earnings and sold its goods below market prices. There were also difficulties with implementation of the agreement: according to one of President

⁵²⁸ 'CIS official urges Uzbekistan to join collective security', *Times of Central Asia*, 27 May 2000.

⁵²⁹ Participation included joint monitoring of Uzbek air space as well as integration in into the CST air defence system. Uzbekistan participated in the CST Commonwealth Southern Shield exercises in 1999 and 2000 and attended some meetings of CST defence ministers.

⁵³⁰ 'Putin ponyal Karimova', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 24 May 2000.

⁵³¹ Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Ivanov noted in May 2000: 'Aid, in particular the supply of defensive hardware to Collective Security Treaty signatory countries must be different from what we do to other CIS member nations, especially in financial terms...the treaty must offer incentives to its signatories' ('Russia's measures against Taliban does not necessarily imply air strikes', *Times of Central Asia*, 1 June 2000). President Putin similarly noted 'military co-operation with Treaty participating countries will be different from co-operation with other countries in the world' ('Creation of rapid deployment force marks potential watershed in Collective Security Treaty development', *Times of Central Asia*, 31 May 2001.)

⁵³² 'Uzbekistan: gas for Russian arms may be a dangerous precedent', *Times of Central Asia*, 10 May 2001.

Karimov's key foreign policy advisors, Uzbekistan received little of the equipment and support that had been promised in 1999 and 2000.⁵³³

On the multilateral side, apart from encouraging greater CST participation by Uzbekistan and bolstering CST military exercises, Russia expanded the institutional presence of the CST in the region. In October 2000 the countries decided to establish a CIS anti-terrorism centre in Bishkek, to co-ordinate responses to terrorism and help improve intelligence-gathering on rebel groups.⁵³⁴ A final important aspect of Moscow's response was the development of plans to establish a CST rapid-reaction force for Central Asia. However, the realisation of these plans lagged behind, and no specific action took place until 2003 – well after the IMU threat had been eradicated, but following the establishment of a significant US military presence in the region as part of the Enduring Freedom campaign in Afghanistan.⁵³⁵

The US response to IMU incursions

The United States played only a minor role in helping states in the region to deal with the threat posed by the IMU in 1999 and 2000. There is evidence that Uzbekistan turned to Washington for an increase in military support, in particular for air defence and improvement in the helicopter fleet.⁵³⁶ However, the US did not commit substantial funds or signal a serious willingness to deal with the security threat emanating from Afghanistan. Apparently, Uzbekistan renewed its co-operation with Russia in 1999 only after it had become clear that Washington would not increase its

⁵³³ Interview, Advisor to the President of Uzbekistan, Director of the Institute of Strategic and Regional Studies, Tashkent, 12 September 2002; 'Putin visits Uzbekistan', *RFR/RL*, 19 May 2000.

⁵³⁴ Plater-Zyberk, *Kyrgyzstan – focusing on security*.

⁵³⁵ 'Russia drops an anchor in Central Asia', *Asia Times Online*, 25 October 2003.

⁵³⁶ 'General Zinni at Tashkent media roundtable on security threats', *Washington File*, 15 May 2000.

support. Similarly, though the US had sought to establish a Central Asia peacekeeping battalion, Centrasbat, as part of its support to the national armies in the region and in an effort to increase inter-operability between the national armies and US or NATO operational procedures, policy-makers in the region did not mention Centrasbat as a tool that could be used to help stem threats posed by the IMU. This inattention, arguably, testified to the limited strength and relevance of Centrasbat.

After the events of 11 September 2001, however, the US *did* play a crucial role in countering the IMU. The US established military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and the Enduring Freedom forces in Afghanistan and largely destroyed the fighting strength of the IMU in battle there.

Co-operation in responding to drug trafficking

Co-operation pledges

The Central Asian states stressed their commitment to tackling drug trafficking and emphasized the need for joint efforts.⁵³⁷ Most TAS sessions discussed drug-related issues, and joint statements were often issued during summits.⁵³⁸ On 5 April 1996, the member countries (at the time Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan) signed an agreement on co-operation in combating trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.⁵³⁹ They established an Interstate Drug Control Commission (IDCC) as an integral part of the TAS framework, and the commission held its first

⁵³⁷ 'Ob'ediniia usilia', *Pravda Vostoka*, 1 May 2003.

⁵³⁸ K. Osmonaliev, *Developing counter-narcotics policy in Central Asia* (Uppsala: Silk Road Studies Program, 2004), pp. 59–60.

⁵³⁹ Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, *O sotrudnichestve v bor'be s nezakonnym oborotom narkoticheskikh veshchestv i zloupotreblenii imi* (5 April 1996).

session in Bishkek in 1999.⁵⁴⁰ IDCC sessions were intended to take place on an annual basis. The National Information Analysis Centre on Drug Control under the Cabinet of Ministers in Uzbekistan was tasked with issuing an information bulletin on the drug trafficking situation in the region. The three states also decided to establish an institution for communication officers on drug issues. However, the IDCC was abolished in conjunction with the restructuring of TAS and the elimination of the TAS executive committee in 2001.

Article 12 of the 1995 agreement compelled the parties to exchange information on drug-related legislation, while in Article 13 the parties pledged to harmonise their drugs legislation.⁵⁴¹ In Article 18 the parties committed themselves to train experts, and Article 22 envisioned the creation of joint operational groups for detection of transnational criminal groups.⁵⁴²

In addition to TAS co-operation on drugs, the Central Asian states also initiated joint efforts within other multilateral organisations, particularly the United Nations office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The platform for the work of UNODC (at the time UNDCP) in Central Asia was provided in the May 1996 memorandum of mutual understanding with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The same meeting also adopted a Regional Programme of Co-operation in Drug Control. Among its priorities was the development of co-operation among

⁵⁴⁰ Osmonaliev, *Developing counter-narcotics policy in Central Asia*, p. 59.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*

law enforcement agencies in the region. The goal of enhancing law enforcement co-operation became a central dimension of UNODC's work in Central Asia.⁵⁴³

Pledges towards joint efforts were also made under the auspices of the SCO and CSTO. The CSTO summit of presidents in Dushanbe on 28 April 2003 adopted a decision to strengthen drug-control efforts, thereby reiterating a commitment voiced at previous CSTO meetings.⁵⁴⁴ The 1999 Bishkek declaration of the Shanghai Five states (later the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation) stressed the need for effective measures against drugs trafficking.⁵⁴⁵ In 2004, the SCO member states also signed an agreement on co-operation to counter trafficking in drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors.⁵⁴⁶

Co-operation patterns

As noted above, Several mechanisms for curbing drugs trafficking were initiated under the auspices of TAS. The member states agreed to establish the IDCC, and the National Information Analysis Centre on Drug Control under the Cabinet of Ministers in Uzbekistan was to provide regular information bulletins. Specific articles in the 1996 agreement also envisioned close collaboration among the law enforcement agencies of the Central Asian states. The National Information Analysis Centre issued regular reports, but experts noted that overall monitoring of the drugs situation was still weak, and that 'insufficient forecasting' undermined drug-control efforts.

⁵⁴³ Interview, Resident Regional Representative UNODC, Tashkent, 28 March 2005; Osmonaliev, *Developing counter-narcotics policy in Central Asia*, p. 65.

⁵⁴⁴ CIS, *Agreement on cooperation in control of illicit narcotic drugs, psykotropic substances and precursors circulation* (Minsk, 30 November 2000); Osmonaliev, *Developing counter-narcotics policy in Central Asia*, p. 61.

⁵⁴⁵ Osmonaliev, *Developing counter-narcotics policy in Central Asia*, p. 58.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

Moreover, the IDCC proved to have little relevance in the battle against drugs trafficking and was soon abolished.⁵⁴⁷

The 1996 agreement had stipulated close co-operation between law enforcement agencies, but it was not until 2003 that all branches of law enforcement from the four member countries met for the first time. The gathering noted that there was a need for Central Asian states to 'harmonise legislation' and create a 'common legal field'. The parties also stressed that they needed to activate the exchange of 'operative' information.⁵⁴⁸ These issues had been raised frequently at TAS summits – but evidently, little action had been forthcoming.

In 2005, Kairat Osmonaliev, former head of the legal and international co-operation section of Kyrgyzstan's Drug Control Agency, concluded:

Central Asian states have completed the first stage of formulating their counter-narcotics policy. However, there is still little interaction between law enforcement structures in the border and peripheral areas. In many ways co-operation remains merely declarative, information is exchanged only formally, the system of communication officers is dysfunctional and controlled deliveries do not occur frequently. Overall, it is clear that closer co-operation between the countries of Central Asia is needed. Governments need to find mechanisms for implementing agreements in their entirety, with adequate financial support, and to begin harmonise their legal frameworks on countering drug trafficking, money laundering and human trafficking. All proposals that aim to strengthen overall security in Central Asia rest on the ability of the countries there to deepen their co-operation. Given that these threats to security and stability are held in common they should be a force for unity rather than argument.⁵⁴⁹

Osmonaliev's envisioned collaboration on controlled deliveries is particularly interesting. 'Controlled delivery' is a central technique within international drug law enforcement: it is used when a consignment of illicit drugs is detected and allowed to

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁸ At the meeting, Minister of Internal Affairs of Uzbekistan, Zakrizhan Almatov, stressed the importance of regular lines of contact among leaders. See 'Za region bez opasnosti', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 5 August 2003.

⁵⁴⁹ Osmonaliev, *Developing counter-narcotics policy in Central Asia*, p. 8.

proceed under the control and surveillance of law enforcement officers in order to secure evidence against the organisers of cross-border drug trafficking.⁵⁵⁰ Osmonaliev argued that controlled delivery seldom occurred in Central Asia, and when it did, it often demanded the personal involvement of the head of the law enforcement agency involved. He suggested this was the case because ‘during the time it takes to jump bureaucratic hurdles, the situation can change and the operation fails’.⁵⁵¹ These failures were partly due to lack of communications equipment and internet tools – but more importantly, they arose from the profound reluctance of law enforcement bodies to share information with colleagues from other countries due to fears of information leakage. There was a tendency to hoard information – even within one and the same law enforcement body.⁵⁵²

There were also difficulties in relation to pursuit and capture of individuals. Concerns over national sovereignty prevented effective counter-measures against transnational crime. In several cases, states refused to let agents from neighbouring countries enter their territory in pursuit of criminals. This refusal was especially problematic in the complexly delineated borders areas between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in the Fergana Valley.⁵⁵³

A final central problem for regional co-operation was the likelihood that in some countries and agencies ‘drug-related corruption has reached those at a high level, who then have a stake in obstructing co-operation’.⁵⁵⁴ As the former head of the legal and

⁵⁵⁰ P. D. Cutting, ‘The technique of controlled delivery as a weapon in dealing with illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances’, *Bulletin on Narcotics*, vol. 35, no. 4, 1983.

⁵⁵¹ Osmonaliev, *Developing counter-narcotics policy in Central Asia*.

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 83–84.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

international co-operation section of Kyrgyzstan's Drug Control Agency noted: 'these states can actively support co-operation, but only in the form of exchanging non-operational information on drug problems. Even if law enforcement agencies perceive drugs as a threat and have opportunities to attack the problem, co-operation efforts will fall flat if there is corruption in their ranks or in their controlling governments'.⁵⁵⁵

Experts singled out Tajikistan as country where corruption presented the greatest problem, although observers also thought Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan faced similar challenges.⁵⁵⁶ Several incidents underpinned these claims.

In an in-depth and field-based study, Jacob Townsend found 'fluidity of borders and corruption between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan'.⁵⁵⁷ He described an interview with an official in Tajikistan's Drug Control Agency who had described a case where he had 'traced an Uzbek policeman crossing the border repeatedly to facilitate drug shipments. During preparations to arrest him, however, the DCA official was pressured into abandoning the case by members of his own office'.⁵⁵⁸ This account provides a clear example of law enforcement officers in Central Asia not only protecting or ignoring trafficking crimes, but actively engaging in them. Interestingly, it also indicates good cross-border co-operation between law enforcement officers – except this co-ordination facilitated criminal activities, rather than curbing them.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁶ Cornell, 'The narcotics threat in greater Central Asia'. The controversial former ambassador to Uzbekistan, Craig Murray, noted in a speech that 'there is a tremendous taboo surrounding international efforts to counter drug trafficking in Central Asia. No progress is possible until the real problem is acknowledged, so I will break the taboo. The real problem is participation, at very senior levels indeed, of regime members in the trade. It is not just a question of minor corruption by customs officers.' C. Murray, *The trouble with Uzbekistan* (London: Speech: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2004).

⁵⁵⁷ Townsend, 'The logistics of opiate trafficking in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan', p. 75.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

A former representative of the DCA in Kyrgyzstan indicated that due to resource shortages, a symbiosis arose between drug crime and law enforcement. Law enforcement officers received low pay, but were expected to be responsible for maintaining the means of law enforcement. In particular, officers were expected to use their own private cars for work and to contribute fuel themselves. It therefore became imperative for them to generate funds illegally in order to be operationally effective. One common way of doing so was through re-selling confiscated drugs or providing cover ('roof') for drug distributors and drug dens. Most drug dens were protected by individual law enforcement officers, and it was common knowledge whom a given drug den 'belonged to'.⁵⁵⁹

Corruption and facilitation in relation to drug trafficking also went beyond law enforcement. In May 2000, cars belonging to Tajikistan's ambassador to Kazakhstan and Tajikistan's trade representative to Kazakhstan were stopped outside Almaty and found to be carrying 62 kg of heroin. A further 10 kg was found in the embassy's garage, and Kazakhstan's National Security Council accused embassy staff of being involved.⁵⁶⁰ Ironically, the facilitators of these shipments were probably, by virtue of their formal positions, closely engaged in diplomatic initiatives to further Central Asian regional co-operation, including discussions on how to improve collaboration in curbing drugs trafficking.

A final factor that prevented an effective response to Central Asia's drug trafficking problem was the holdover of archaic and rigid management methods in the law enforcement agencies. As with other types of crime, each country organised its

⁵⁵⁹ Interview, former head of the legal and international co-operation section of Kyrgyzstan's Drug Control Agency, Bishkek, 13 February 2005.

⁵⁶⁰ 'Five held in Tajik embassy drugs scandal', IWPR, 25 May 2000.

activities for combating drug crime according to multi-year state programmes. National plans were devised under these programmes. The national plans were lengthy documents with specific instructions, varying from the number of drug raids that should take place to the number of information leaflets to be distributed. The governments then evaluated the performance of the law enforcement agencies according to the reported fulfilment of these planned targets. There were at least two serious problems with this system. One was the lack of state funding to back up the stipulated plans. Many anti-drug plans were essentially wish lists elaborated by high-level bureaucrats, with the implementing units selecting their actual activities according to the funds available. A former representative of Kyrgyzstan's DCA thought that less than one third of the stipulated activities in the national plans had ever been implemented.⁵⁶¹

The other problem was the unfortunate focus on quantitative measures, rather than on qualitative assessments of tangible upgrading of law enforcement's ability to battle drug crimes. The International Crisis Group (ICG) noted that most police efforts were targeted at the arrest of small-scale drug traffickers rather than pursuit of the key organisers of the drug business. One reason for the prioritisation of small-scale traders was a symbolic concern with bolstering government statistics on the numbers of drug seizures made.⁵⁶²

⁵⁶¹ Source: see note 559 above.

⁵⁶² According to the International Crisis Group: 'to maintain high rates of arrests in drug-related crime, the police tend to arrest many minor traffickers, allowing more serious offenders to operate largely unhindered...sometimes [drugs were] deliberately planted to draw attention away from more serious traffickers', ICG, *Central Asia: The politics of police reform* (Bishkek/Brussels International Crisis Group, 2002), p. 17.

Amidst these discouraging trends, there were some successes in Central Asia efforts to combat drug trafficking. Several large-scale anti-drug trafficking exercises initiated primarily by Russia entailed co-ordinated action by law enforcement agencies across the region and large-scale drugs seizures. Operation ‘Kanal-2003’ on 3–9 November 2003 took place simultaneously in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Belarus and Russia. More than five thousand operative groups monitored 899 railway junctions and stations, 2057 highways, 92 airports and 2 seaports. The key branches of law enforcement in all countries took part, including border guards, customs agencies and police. Over 19 tons of various drugs (including 116 kg of heroin) and two tons of precursors were seized, and criminal proceedings were initiated against 955 persons.⁵⁶³ Other similar operations included ‘Vostok’ in August 2002, for which Russia, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and the USA worked together.⁵⁶⁴ A number of drug couriers and drugs were intercepted – although the biggest shipment of heroin seized was only 1.4 kg.⁵⁶⁵

UNODC also spearheaded substantial initiatives related to regional co-operation, capacity-building and institution-building on the drugs issue, and made the facilitation and encouragement of regional collaboration a key priority area. The first major UNODC programme, ‘the Osh Knot’, aimed to enhance efforts to tackle the drugs flow from eastern Tajikistan to southern Kyrgyzstan by improving law enforcement co-operation and communication in the region. However, the project encountered various difficulties and an ICG report revealed that ‘the Kyrgyz State Commission of Drug Control [the predecessor to Kyrgyzstan’s DCA] tried to use it to further its own

⁵⁶³ Osmonaliev, *Developing counter-narcotics policy in Central Asia*.

⁵⁶⁴ ‘Spetsoperatsiia "VOSTOK"’, *Vechernii Bishkek*, 9 August 2002.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.

aims'.⁵⁶⁶ Some of UNODC's later projects were implemented in co-ordination with initiatives under the EU-funded project Border Management Central Asia (BOMCA), which aimed at enhancing border control in Central Asia.⁵⁶⁷

UNODC's most significant involvement in the region was probably its role in establishing Tajikistan's Drug Control Agency and Kyrgyzstan's Drug Control Agency. The two countries had previously maintained state committees for drug control, but these committees lacked law enforcement capacities. The new DCAs were modelled on the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and funded by outside donor countries, with the US as the largest contributor.⁵⁶⁸ The new organisations offered staff high salaries and had tough recruitment procedures, which included the use of lie detectors.⁵⁶⁹ Many of the best qualified and presumably least corrupt police officers were hired. After the formation of the DCA, the quantities of drugs seizures rose considerably, especially in Tajikistan. Co-operation between the DCAs in Kyrgyzstan and in Tajikistan was reportedly better than that between other agencies, including at operational levels. On the other hand, there were negative outcomes from the establishment of the DCAs as well. They pulled the best-qualified officers away from other police structures, thus further weakening the general police force. Moreover, their sustainability was uncertain: Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan were unable to finance the activities of the DCA through their own national budgets, and the two agencies remained heavily reliant on outside donor support.

⁵⁶⁶ ICG, *Central Asia: drugs and conflict* (Bishkek/Brussels International Crisis Group, 2001), p. 19.

⁵⁶⁷ Interview, Resident Regional Representative UNODC, Tashkent, 28 March 2005.

⁵⁶⁸ Interview, Representative of the US Embassy in Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 22 April 2005; Osmonaliev *Developing counter-narcotics policy in Central Asia*.

⁵⁶⁹ Interview, Representative UNODC, Bishkek, 21 February 2005.

Co-operation in responding to illegal labour migration

Co-operation pledges

The founding TAS agreement from 1994 envisioned the establishment of a common market, which according to Article 3 would include free movement of people and capital. The member countries also concluded a Memorandum on Co-operation in the Sphere of Migration in July 1994.⁵⁷⁰ A Programme on Co-operation in the Sphere of Migration of Citizens between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan was also developed by the executive committee of TAS in 1997 and ratified by the member states.⁵⁷¹ In addition, in 1997, the TAS member states signed the Agreement on Regulation of Migration Processes by Citizens, although Uzbekistan never ratified this agreement.⁵⁷²

In parallel to these TAS initiatives, CIS agreements on the movement of people and migration in the post-Soviet space provided an extensive multilateral foundation for labour migration. The CIS made provisions for visa-free travel among the member countries, and the Agreement on Co-operation in the Sphere of Labour Migration and Social Protection from 1994 sought to facilitate migration among member states by stipulating mechanisms for tax payment and the protection of the rights of migrants.⁵⁷³ Furthermore, the 1998 Agreement on Co-operation in the Struggle

⁵⁷⁰ E. Sadovskaia, *Migratsiia v Kazakhstane na rubezhe XXI veka: osnovnye tendentsii i perspektivy* (Almaty: International Organization for Migration, 2001), p. 197.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid.

⁵⁷² Ibid. p. 199.

⁵⁷³ M. Khaidarova, 'Aktual'nye voprosy v Tsentral'noi Azii' *Migratsiia v Tsentral'noi Azii: problemy i perspektivy (materialy mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii)* (Almaty: Institut mirovoi ekonomiki i politiki pri fonde pervogo Prezidenta RK, 2005), p. 70. In addition to the 1994 agreement there was also the CIS

against Illegal Migration envisioned close co-operation among member states in curbing illegal migration.⁵⁷⁴ In 1995 the CIS assembly of parliamentarians also adopted a model law on migration, with a view to stimulating the harmonisation of national legal frameworks.

Shortly after the formation of EvrAzES in 2000, the organisation adopted an agreement on visa-free travel similar to that made by all CIS states in 1992.⁵⁷⁵ In December 2003, an EvrAzES draft agreement regulating temporary work migration by citizens of member countries was also formulated and circulated for consideration. Russian President Vladimir Putin stressed that the facilitation of migration was among the key aims of the organisation: '[EvrAzES] envisages free movement of capital, goods and people. This is the basis of the integration process.'⁵⁷⁶

Co-operation patterns

The TAS's proclaimed intentions on migration co-operation had little, if any, effect. As one migration expert from Kazakhstan commented in 2001: 'Unsurprisingly, practically all signed international agreements of importance in the last years between the three states – Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan – for the establishment of legal and economic conditions for free exchange of work forces and for integration

Agreement on visa free movements of the citizens of the Commonwealth of Independent States on the territories of the member states (9 October 1992).

⁵⁷⁴ Khaidarova, 'Aktual'nye voprosy v Tsentral'noi Azii' *Migratsiia v Tsentral'noi Azii*. Agreements on border control co-operation also intended to regulate migration: *CIS Decree of the Presidents: Cooperation of the frontier troops in the sphere of border control in the checkpoints at the borders of the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent states with states not Included in the Commonwealth* (29 September 1999).

⁵⁷⁵ EU and IOM, *Trudovaia migratsiia v stranakh Tsentral'noi Azii, Rossiiskoi Federatsii, Afghanistan i Pakistan* (Almaty: European Commission, International Organization for Migration, 2005).

⁵⁷⁶ 'Russia TV sums up CIS security and economic blocs' summit results', *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 23 June 2006.

are still far from implementation, while illegal migration... in the neighbouring countries is taking on a larger and larger dimension.⁵⁷⁷

The CIS agreements were prone to similar deficits in implementation, but they did provide some basic measures. The commitment to visa-free travel and the 1994 agreement on migration were first steps towards giving citizens of CIS member countries the right to work legally in other CIS countries. However, most countries added their own separate unilateral provisions, thereby complicating labour movement in the CIS. Some also eventually withdrew from the commitment to visa-free travel.⁵⁷⁸ In turn, provisions adopted within the CIS framework did not as such constitute a comprehensive framework for labour migration in the post-Soviet space. Some countries also attempted to compensate by initiating additional bilateral agreements.

The legal framework for migration in Kazakhstan serves as useful illustration of the plethora of provisions. The country had 20 laws, decrees and government instructions relevant to migration into Kazakhstan (see table below). In addition, Kazakhstan had several bilateral agreements with Kyrgyzstan and Russia – even though all three countries were members of both EvrAzES and the CIS. Kazakhstan's bilateral agreements with Russia covered issues related to acquisition of citizenship, labour migration, social policy and border regions.⁵⁷⁹ The Kazakhstan–Kyrgyzstan agreements included an Agreement on Regulating the Provisions for Mutual Travels of the Citizens from 29 December 2001 and a 2002 agreement on work activities and

⁵⁷⁷ Sadovskaia, *Migratsiia v Kazakhstane na rubezhe XXI veka*, p. 199.

⁵⁷⁸ Eventually, some CIS countries fully or partly overruled the CIS 1992 agreement on visa-free travel in order to curb illegal migration: Turkmenistan in 1999, Uzbekistan in 2000 and Russia in 2001

⁵⁷⁹ EU and IOM, *Trudovaia migratsiia v stranakh Tsentral'noi Azii, Rossiiskoi Federatsii, Afghanistan i Pakistane*, p. 21.

social protection for labour migrants in the agricultural sector and work in the border regions.⁵⁸⁰ There was a similar agreement with Uzbekistan on border regions and the agricultural sector, but Uzbekistan's failure to ratify this agreement prevented it from entering into force.⁵⁸¹ The large number of agreements caused confusion and in some cases serious contradictions. One example was the dissimilarities in specification of the documents necessary to cross the Kyrgyzstan–Kazakhstan border. The EvrAzES agreement of 30 November 2000 provided a list of documents that differed substantially from the list of appropriate documents specified by the Kazakhstan–Kyrgyzstan bilateral agreement from 2001.⁵⁸²

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid. IOM, 'Legal aspects of border control between the two countries' *Preliminary assessment of immigration inspection and border control at the land border of Kazakhstan with the Kyrgyz Republic* (Almaty: International Organisation for Migration, 2005).

⁵⁸¹ E. Sadovskaia, *Migratsiia v Kazakhstane na rubezhe XXI veka: osnovnye tendentsii i perspektivy* (Almaty: IOM, 2001).

⁵⁸² IOM, 'Legal aspects of border control between the two countries' *Preliminary assessment of immigration inspection and border control at the land border of Kazakhstan with the Kyrgyz Republic* (Almaty: IOM, 2005).

Table 16: Key legal acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the sphere of labour migration

Legal acts	Date
The constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan	30 August 1995
Law 'On citizenship'	20 December 1991, 3 October 1995, 17 May 2002
Law 'On migration of the population'	13 December 1997 (including changes from 2001–2001)
Law 'On employment of the population'	23 January 2001, 27 January 2004
Law 'On work in the Republic of Kazakhstan'	10 December 1999
Law 'On labour protection'	22 January 1993, 5 October 1995, 29 November 1999
Presidential Decree 'On the legal status of foreign citizens in the Republic of Kazakhstan'	19 June 1995, 19 July 1997, 1 and 16 March 2001
Presidential Decree 'On arrangements for granting political refuge for foreign citizens or persons without citizenship'	15 July 1996, 19 April 2000
Presidential Decree 'On arrangements for assessing questions connected with citizenship of the Republic of Kazakhstan'	27 September 1996
Presidential Decree 'On licensing'	17 April 1995
Government resolution 'Issues of legal regulation of foreign citizens in the Republic of Kazakhstan'	28 January 2000
Government resolution 'Rules for determining quotas issuing work permits for foreign labour force in the Republic of Kazakhstan'	19 June 2001
The concept for migration policies in the Republic of Kazakhstan 2001–2010	5 May 2000
Administrative codex of the Republic of Kazakhstan	30 January 2001
Government resolution 'On establishing quotas for receiving foreign labour force for undertaking working activities on the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2004'	17 March 2004
Resolution of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Kazakhstan 'On the ratification of Agreement on co-operation in the sphere of labour migration and social protection of labour migrants'	8 September 1994
Decree of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan 'On confirming the instructions for regulating entry and stay of foreign citizens in the Republic of Kazakhstan, and also exit'	28 July 2000, 8 August 2000
Joint decree Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan 'On confirming the instructions for regulating the issuing of visas for the Republic of Kazakhstan'	24 and 27 December 2002

Source: EU and IOM Trudovaia migratsiia v stranakh Tsentral'noi Azii, Rossiiskoi Federatsii, Afghanistan i Pakistane (Almaty: European Commission, IOM, 2005)

With regard to EvrAzES, concrete initiatives in the sphere of migration were slow to develop. An EvrAzES representative explained that the difficulties with developing viable and common measures in the sphere of migration were linked to the divergence

of interests between the receiving countries, namely Russia and Kazakhstan, and the sending countries, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.⁵⁸³

Uzbekistan's policies in relation to migration created special difficulties for regional migration. Despite the significant and steady increase of labour migration from Uzbekistan to Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Russia from the late 1990s onwards, the country did not formally acknowledge that this outward flow existed.⁵⁸⁴ It recognised only migrants sent officially by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security on government-initiated projects, notably specialists working in the South Korea automobile industry.⁵⁸⁵ By law, ordinary citizens of Uzbekistan were required to apply to an inter-ministerial migration commission for permission to leave the country for work abroad. However, this committee was not operational. One representative of an Uzbekistani NGO noted that, on contacting the official who by law was to serve as head of the committee, it became clear that that person was not even aware that such a committee should exist.⁵⁸⁶ The malfunctioning of the formal mechanisms for assessing worker applications for legal and official status as migrants ensured that nearly all of Uzbekistan's labour migrants in the CIS were by default illegal migrants as soon as they left their country.

The failure of Uzbekistan to officially recognise the outward flow of migrants to neighbouring countries also created difficulties in cross-border interactions between

⁵⁸³ I. Rakhimov, 'Mezhdunarodnoye sotrudnichestvo kak neobkhdimoe uslovie tsivilizovannogo resheniia problem migratsii' *Migratsiia v Tsentral'noi Azii: problemy i perspektivy (materialy mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii)* (Almaty: Institut mirovoi ekonomiki i politiki pri fonde pervogo Prezidenta RK, 2005).

⁵⁸⁴ Interview, IOM representative Tashkent, 29 March 2005.

⁵⁸⁵ Uzbekistan workers in South Korean industry came as a spin-off from Uzbekistan's agreement with the South Korean automobile firm Daewoo, which had invested heavily in Uzbekistan. (Source: see note 104 above.)

⁵⁸⁶ Interview, representative NGO, Tashkent, 2 April 2005

regional administrations. After difficulties associated with a large inflow of cotton workers from Uzbekistan's Jizzak district to the Childara district in the province of South Kazakhstan, Childara authorities contacted Jizzak district with the intention of better organising the inflow of workers to its agricultural sector. The Childara administration specifically requested an estimate of inflows for the subsequent season. Some six months later, the Jizzak district administration reportedly replied with an official letter stating that there was very little outward migration from Jizzak province and hence no need to initiate collaboration.⁵⁸⁷

An interesting aspect of Central Asia multilateral initiatives in the sphere of migration was the explicit wish of state authorities to enhance regulation and control over migration flows in efforts to curb illegal labour migration. Ibod Rakhimov, head of department for development in the socio-humanitarian spheres in the integration committee of EvrAzES, stressed: 'The strategic direction of social-economic co-operation of the member countries of EvrAzES is connected with the call for order and tough control in the migration sphere. This is justified by [the fact that] at the territory of the states of [EvrAzES] there exists a visa-free travel regime in correspondence with the agreement... of 30 November 2000'.⁵⁸⁸

Rakhimov's statement is indicative of the considerable ambivalence that the state authorities frequently expressed in relation to migration: on the one hand, they rhetorically endorsed the idea of a common market and free movement of workers. On the other hand, they emphasized the need to monitor, regulate and control this process. Rakhimov signalled that 'one method to lower [levels of] illegal migration is

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁸ Rakhimov, 'Mezhgosudarstvennoe sotrudnichestvo kak neobkhdimoe uslovie tsivilizovannogo resheniia problem migratsii', p. 13.

to strengthen control with migration inflows’ and mentioned new methods of immigration inspection in Moscow as a positive example of ways to ‘control the adherence to regulations’ when foreigners were hired.⁵⁸⁹ Instead of assessing how regulations could be simplified to make adherence easier, the authorities focused on forcing compliance with stricter regulations.

A high-level IOM representative stationed in Central Asia commented that recent efforts by the states to improve the management of inflow and transit of people were in fact making matters more complicated without improving state control over these flows.⁵⁹⁰ According to this representative, the cumbersome regulations served to encourage the rise of middlemen or traffickers in labour migrants, which in turn facilitated the rise in trans-national crime.⁵⁹¹

The relationship between regulations and illegal migration was a complex one. There were two ways in which labour migrants became illegal upon entering another country: either through failing to follow the receiving country’s procedures for registration as foreign citizens after entering the country, or through violating the procedures for formal registration of employment. In Kazakhstan and Russia, the former included failure to register within three days of arrival and failure to obtain necessary temporary residence permits. Violations of the latter type included failure to obtain necessary permits for employment; labour activities contradicting the obtained permits or going beyond the specified time limit; and entrepreneurial or independent labour activity without corresponding permits.⁵⁹² Few comprehensive surveys of

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁰ Interview, senior IOM representative, Almaty, 15 May 2005.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid.

⁵⁹² S. Olimova and I. Bosc, *Labour migration from Tajikistan* (Dushanbe: IOM, 2003), pp. 68–72.

illegal migration in Central Asia exist, but a major study of Tajikistani citizens working in Russia undertaken by Saodat Olimova and Igor Bosc found that 77.5 per cent of those surveyed did not have a permit for legal employment.⁵⁹³

The required permits were difficult to obtain and frequently necessitated bribing state officials: 67.6 per cent of the Tajikistani migrants surveyed by Olimova and Bosc stated that they had to pay a bribe when registering as foreign citizens after arrival in Russia. Both employers and employees also had significant incentives not to register migrants as workers. In Russia the employer had to pay a fee of 3000 Russian roubles to the Federal Migration Service in order to obtain permission to hire foreign workers and 1000 Russian roubles for a work permit.⁵⁹⁴ In Moscow the employer also needed to submit 12 different documents to various departments.⁵⁹⁵ In Kazakhstan, the fee required was lower but still significant, and employers needed to submit at least four documents to different official bodies.⁵⁹⁶ For migrants, there were fewer opportunities for work in the legal economy than in the illegal or shadow economy, and the prospect of having to pay income tax was a further deterrent. Olimova and Bosc summarised the reasons for high rates of illegal employment among Tajikistani labour migrants in Central Asia and Russia as follows: ‘first opportunities for legal

⁵⁹³ Ibid. p. 69. Olimova and Bosc note that illegal workers made up a considerable part of the Russian labour force. According to these authors, the state statistics committee in Russia estimated in 2001 that production in Russia’s shadow economy represented 25 per cent of annual GDP, and unemployment in that sector constituted 15 to 30 per cent of the total number of employed. Moreover, the authors found evidence that at the end of 1998, the real number of employees in small and medium-sized enterprises was 70 per cent higher than official figures indicated.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 70.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁶ Interview, representative, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kyrgyzstan Southern Region Migration Service, Osh, 4 March 2005. Interestingly, after the introduction of new migration legislation in Russia, the number of required documents increased: while before it had been 8 documents, it became 12. As Olimova and Bosc comment: ‘Russia’s new migration law has increased the barriers migrants face. They will have to invest time and effort to overcome these obstacles. Individual success may often depend on having the right contacts and the resources to pay high bribes. It is fair to assume that one effect of the law will be to boost the level of corruption in the official bodies supervising the migration and employment of foreign workers.’ Olimova and Bosc, *Labour migration from Tajikistan*.

employment are limited; second legal employment is less attractive because in effect it means lower earnings; third, there is a conscious desire on the part of many migrants to evade contact with state bodies, which they mistrust.⁵⁹⁷

Law enforcement authorities in Central Asia also represented a significant challenge for labour migrants during travel and transit from home country to work destinations in Kazakhstan or Russia. Migrants experienced serious difficulties with both rail and road transport. In July and August 2002, a group of NGO activists, IOM representatives and journalists took the train from Dushanbe to the Russian city of Astrakhan. This was one of the main routes for migrants to Russia, and passed through Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. Because of the complex border delineations, the rail route entered Uzbekistan four times and Turkmenistan three times. In total, there were 22 official check-points on the Dushanbe–Astrakhan line.⁵⁹⁸

The observer group reported after their journey:

Boarding is a major hassle...inside the station there are lengthy document and luggage checks...Women are forced to undergo gynaecological exam by a nurse without proper equipment somewhere in the station. In an effort to avoid this procedure, women pay her 1 somoni (half a dollar). If they pay another 200 roubles the customs official will let their luggage go through.....Endless border controls and inspections began at the Tajik–Uzbek border...They were accompanied by roughness, endless insults and extortion by border guards, customs officials and police who were entering the carriages at the stations...Most of the customs officials and representatives of other law enforcement bodies (we couldn't establish which ones exactly) in all countries the train from Tajikistan passed through (Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Russia), were carrying out their activity without uniforms and badges of rank. It was impossible to find out the name and positions of border guards, customs officials or police officers. The train takes three days...⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁷ Olimova and Bosc, *Labour migration from Tajikistan*, p. 70.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 79. referring to statements of Amonhudji Hodzhibekov, deputy head of Tajikistan's state railway company

⁵⁹⁹ Excerpts from report filed by three IOM observers, a member of the Kazakhstani NGO 'Legal aid to migrants' and a reporter from the Kazakhstani weekly newspaper *Megapolis*, cited Olimova and Bosc, *Labour migration from Tajikistan*, pp. 78–79.

A labour migrant interviewed for Olimova and Bosc's study noted with regard to the train journey '[Law enforcement agencies] check your documents and extort money every time you cross the Tajik–Uzbek border. Even the city police enter the carriages at Karshi and Bukhara stations to check passengers and extort money from them.'⁶⁰⁰

There were similar problems with road transport. Like border guards and customs officials, the road police intimidated migrants and extorted money from them. One estimate suggested that migrants ended up paying over 100 USD in bribes for journeys through Central Asia to Russia.⁶⁰¹ The behaviour of law enforcement officers on Central Asian roads gave rise to the phenomenon of middlemen or 'guides' for busloads of Tajikistani migrants. These guides were persons who had regular contact with law enforcement officers along travel routes and managed the transfer of bribes and 'gifts', thereby bringing some predictability to the levels and modes of payment.⁶⁰² Middlemen in Tajikistan who facilitated the transport and supply of illicit labour to Russia usually enjoyed the protection of at least one important local (Tajikistani) official.⁶⁰³

The rise in labour migration within the region spurred the involvement of lower-level officials in the exploitation of illicit labour in the shadow economy – especially in Kazakhstan, the primary receiving country. A Tashkent-based NGO undertook extensive research on the conditions of Uzbekistani migrants in Kazakhstan. They found several cases of serious mistreatment of migrants, and significant complicity and involvement of state officials and law enforcement personnel. Migrants usually

⁶⁰⁰ Interview with labour migrant from Isfara Tajikistan, quoted in Olimova and Bosc, *Labour migration from Tajikistan*, p.79.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid. pp. 79–80.

⁶⁰² Ibid. pp. 80–87.

⁶⁰³ Ibid. p. 77.

lived on the factory or construction site where they worked, and their employers frequently denied them payment and often prohibited them from leaving the worksite. In the city of Kyzyl Orda in Kazakhstan, NGO researchers observed illegal Uzbekistani migrants repairing a holiday house (*dacha*) belonging to a representative of the city administration. The NGO representatives, who did not reveal their identity as researchers, were later told by the official that he could arrange for law enforcement officers to collect illegal migrants and supply them to the NGO representatives.⁶⁰⁴

In an interview for this thesis, the same NGO representative stated that law enforcement agencies often protected the interests of the organisers of illegal migration rather than the migrants themselves. In one of the more extreme cases noted by the NGO, Uzbekistani border guards in the border city of Shymkent in Kazakhstan had arrested two young Uzbekistani shuttle traders, who were entering Uzbekistan with profits from market trading in Kazakhstan. The guards handed the traders over to the local police in Shymkent, who in turn had 'sold' the teenagers as 'slaves' to a businessman who supplied labour to the construction industry. NGOs in Kyrgyzstan monitoring the plight of Uzbekistani migrants in southern Kyrgyzstan told similar stories of close links between the police and organisers of illicit work activities.⁶⁰⁵ The fact that illegal migrants faced the risks of becoming 'slaves' was frequently mentioned in interviews for this thesis as well as in the local and international press.⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰⁴ Interview, Representative NGO, Tashkent, 2 April 2005

⁶⁰⁵ Interview, representative NGO, Osh, 2 March 2005.

⁶⁰⁶ Interview, senior IOM representative, Almaty, 15 May 2005; 'Kyrgyzstan struggles to stop slave trade', *Eurasianet.org*, 29 June 2004.

IOM and NGOs in the region agreed that Uzbekistani migrants were especially vulnerable to abuse by law enforcement officers because of the failure of Uzbekistan to recognise the outflow of migration to neighbouring countries.⁶⁰⁷ By contrast, Kyrgyzstan also had considerable outflow of migrants to Kazakhstan and Russia, but it pursued active diplomacy in order to improve the conditions for Kyrgyzstani migrants. Reports of scandals related to Kyrgyzstani ‘slave’ labour at tobacco and cotton plants in Kazakhstan in the period from 2000–2002 were published in the Kyrgyzstani press. A bilateral agreement between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan later improved the situation in this sector. Kyrgyzstani agricultural migrants also had the benefit of being able to turn to a special migration section in the Kyrgyzstani embassy in Almaty to voice their grievances.⁶⁰⁸

Understanding the failure of security co-operation

I have previously suggested five different ways of accounting for failures in regional co-operation. The first approach stresses realism and the hegemonic rivalry of Russia and the USA for control in the region. A second realist perspective focuses on the national interests of the local states. The third perspective stresses interdependence, while the fourth approach shifts the focus to the state level and seeks to understand how regime types – and authoritarian aspects in particular – might make co-operation between the Central Asian states difficult. The fifth approach maintains the focus on the state level, but views elements of ‘indirect rule’ as central to understanding failed regional co-operation.

⁶⁰⁷ Interview, senior IOM representative, Almaty, 15 May 2005; interview, IOM representative, Tashkent, 29 March 2005; interview, representative NGO, Tashkent, 2 April 2005.

⁶⁰⁸ Interview, representative Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kyrgyzstan Southern Region Migration Service, Osh, 4 March 2005.

In all three security-focused cases outlined above, attention to national interest and national sovereignty featured prominently. The fears of infringements of national sovereignty shaped Kyrgyzstan's and Tajikistan's relations with Uzbekistan when they were faced with the IMU threat, creating an environment less conducive to co-operation. In the case of labour migration, co-operation was difficult due to the differing interests of the sending and receiving countries. In relation to narcotics, concerns over national security prevented regional co-operation. Agencies were reluctant to share operative information with neighbouring countries for fear of information leakages.

Concerns about national interests and sovereignty were clearly central features of co-operation patterns. However, can a realist approach suffice for providing an understanding why co-operation on security issues proved to be so difficult? In the case of security, both regime type and state weakness are central in accounting for not only how but also why co-operation failed. Interestingly, issues of security interdependence seem to have played a less prominent role. The perceived threats from 'extremism', drugs and illegal migration were common to all the Central Asian states, and as such, the states bore high degrees of interdependence. Faced with a common threat like the IMU, the Central Asian countries declared their unity and intention to work together – but in practice inter-state co-ordination was riddled with difficulties. How can this best be accounted for?

Co-operation patterns were shaped markedly by both regime type and state weakness. In the case of migration, Uzbekistan's reluctance to acknowledge the massive outward

labour migration to neighbouring countries was remarkable, and this refusal seriously complicated efforts at collaboration. Bilateral agreements and multilateral initiatives were both doomed, since Uzbekistan could not take an official position on the issue. It seems that the key reason for Uzbekistan's position was its concern with masking the failures of its economic policies. Admitting that a large proportion of the work force had sought employment in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan would be a tacit acknowledgement that the more politically and economically liberal neighbouring countries had a development model superior to that of Uzbekistan.

Some regime-related features also surface in the assessment of co-operation in the two other cases, albeit to lesser extents. Uzbekistan's row with Kyrgyzstan over its decision to mine its border with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan was primarily one of national interest: Uzbekistan prioritised national security over good relations. However, an important feature of the controversy was the grave concern expressed by Kyrgyzstan's media over the issue, compared with the government-controlled reporting in Uzbekistan's media outlets. If the press in Uzbekistan had subjected the regime to greater scrutiny over the human costs of its security policies, perhaps state leaders would have calculated differently when deciding to lay the mines. With regard to drugs, the culture of secrecy in law enforcement agencies was a typical legacy of authoritarian governing methods – and it made inter-state co-operation on drugs more difficult.

The issue of state weakness featured prominently in all three cases. The inability of President Rakhmonov of Tajikistan to exert control over the UTO-dominated mountain areas was one of the key reasons for the inability of Central Asian states to

effectively counter the IMU threat. The IMU presence in Tajikistan's mountain areas was possible due to the protection extended to this armed group by Minister of Emergency Mirzo Ziyoiev. This situation was an example of state weakness in its most immediate sense: President Rakhmonov was unable to successfully lay claim to the monopoly of violence across all of Tajikistan's territory. Thus rather than helping to bring about effective co-operation to deter the IMU, Tajikistan actually served as a useful launching pad for IMU attacks on Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Tajikistan's official denials of the IMU's presence further complicated the issue and prevented Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan from entering into a constructive dialogue with Tajikistan on how to best solve the IMU challenge. Instead, arguments and protests riddled inter-state relations and complicated responses.

In the cases of co-operation on anti-drug efforts and illegal migration, difficulties related to state weakness also arose, but they related more to issues of 'indirect rule' rather than to the 'monopoly of violence'. In the sphere of drugs co-operation, joint initiatives were rare, and there was little regularised collaboration among agencies in the region. This absence was largely due to the malfunctioning of state structures. The lack of government resources, combined with low salaries for law enforcement agents, led some among them to capitalise on illicit trafficking, and this in turn seriously undermined efforts at drugs control. There were also strong indications that agents were regularly facilitating the drugs trafficking going through the region.

On co-operation in the sphere of migration, a similar pattern was visible. Tough state regulations and inter-state agreements failed to provide the states with greater oversight and control over labour migration flows. Instead, law enforcement bodies in

the Central Asian states seem to have capitalised on the increased migration flows, and state agents appear to have regularly attempted to generate informal income from the migration movements. The serious malfunctioning of the state organs charged with the task of regulating migration made the Central Asian states unable to achieve their goals of better regulating labour migration.

Symbolic aspects of regional co-operation efforts were also clearly evident in the case of security. State leaders used the TAS summit to project unity and resolve in tackling threats, even stating at one point that the countries were in a *de facto* 'defence union'. The reality was, however, one of failures in various basic tasks, with Uzbekistan's unilateral mining serving as perhaps the clearest indication that the states did not behave as if they were linked in a defence union.

Great-power involvement

Contrary to what Great Game theorists would expect, there was no clash between the great powers in 1999/2000. Indeed, in this period both Russia and the US failed to intervene effectively to help the Central Asian states to repel the danger posed by the IMU. The states called on outside powers for assistance, but both Russia and the US failed to use the opportunity to gain a better foothold in the region. The period was marked more by a security deficit and great-power vacuum than by rivalry between outside states. Moreover, just as the US stepped up its support to Uzbekistan – thereby increasing structural divisions in the region – there was a thaw in relations between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, which remained a close ally of Russia. This development indicates that the predicted increase in 'enmity' between states in the region due to

great-power involvement did not fully materialise.⁶⁰⁹ On the level of diplomatic agreements, Russia's presence and the existence of the CSTO might have reduced intra-regional diplomatic efforts to construct a co-operation architecture for security. Some intra-regional efforts in the sphere of security did emerge, but these typically failed to result in effective collaboration. On the whole, therefore, the great-power approach does not provide a satisfactory understanding of co-operation patterns in Central Asia in the period under study.

As with the issue of trade, the case of security, while largely refuting the great-power approach, offers several interesting insights into the nature of Russia's involvement in the region and its ambition to play the role of a hegemon. In security issues, Russia seems to have mainly pursued a benevolent role. When intervening in Tajikistan's war, Russia stressed the threat of radical Islam to the CIS as a whole, and undertook the political and financial burden of stabilising the country. The neighbouring states contributed briefly to peacekeeping, but these countries were mostly free-riders on Russian efforts to bolster the regime of President Rakhmonov.

Moscow's unsuccessful campaign to regain Uzbekistan's commitment to the CST in the wake of the IMU attacks is a further illustration of the nature of Russian hegemony. Russia clearly was too weak to force Uzbekistan to re-orient itself towards Russia – even in the face of grave security threats. Debates over CST membership also revealed the material benefits associated with being a member, as Russia was willing to subsidise military supplies to its CST allies.

⁶⁰⁹ An alternative and more complex reading of the 'thaw' between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan would be to emphasise the US support to both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and point to the likelihood that US pressure on both countries allowed for improvements in bilateral relations. This still represents a challenge to structural realism and Great Game approaches, since it would imply Russia's tacitly accepting US efforts, or even collusion with them.

As for Moscow's efforts to build multilateral institutions for managing migration flows, Russia undermined its own multilateral efforts by letting domestic law differ from EvrAzES goals. The Russian domestic legal framework did not correspond to the intentions expressed within the EvrAzEs framework. The Russian law on migration made labour migration to Russia even more difficult than it had been previously.⁶¹⁰ Moreover, Russia chose, in selected bilateral cases, to use migration issues as a source of leverage. Bilateral migration arrangements formed an important part of the cluster of issues involved in negotiations over Russian border guards and Russian military bases in Tajikistan in 2004.⁶¹¹ These policies signalled a disregard for multilateralism as a useful vehicle for furthering Russia's potential hegemonic role in the region, and undermined Moscow's own EvrAzES efforts.

I now turn to the conclusion, in which I will further address issues of hegemony as well as those of co-operation.

⁶¹⁰ Olimova and Bosc, *Labour migration from Tajikistan*, p. 70.

⁶¹¹ V. Socor, 'Russia's military presence in Tajikistan is to be legalized and diluted', *Jamestown Foundation Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 1, no. 100, 2004.

Conclusion

Key findings

Why did Central Asian states fail to act together to solve common challenges in the period 1991–2004? That was the main question underlying this thesis. At the outset, I indicated several different approaches from the international relations literature that could help shed light on this issue.

Realist perspectives emphasising the structural predominance of great powers attributed failures in regional co-operation to the competition for influence between outside states. By contrast, a second realist approach stressed the potential conflicting national interests of states within the region as a key factor obstructing regional solutions. A third approach focused at the systemic level was the interdependence perspective. According to this approach, states might have viewed high degrees of interdependence as vulnerability – and thus seek unilateral rather than multilateral solutions to the challenges facing them.

Two further approaches shifted the level of analysis from the systemic to the domestic. One perspective stressed regime characteristics as the key to understanding failures of regional co-operation. Another, which emphasised state weakness defined as ‘indirect rule’, held that the blurring of the line between private and state functions made the states in the region unable to enact multilateral solutions.

Why co-operation failed

I discussed the viability of these approaches in case chapters on trade, water and security co-operation. My assessments demonstrated that conflicting national interest was a key reason why co-operation failed. This conclusion confirms the relevance of realism for an analysis of Central Asian regional politics. Importantly, however, the approach that proved most useful was a realist perspective stressing conflicting interests among the states *within* the region, and not among *outside* states. Moreover, it was not possible to identify any clear indications of state concern about the distribution of potential gains from co-operation. In this context, the case material did not offer any distinct support for neo-realist approaches as opposed to neo-liberal ones. Rather, my basic finding was that while substantial co-operation could have offered important gains for the states in the region, costs and uncertainties associated with co-operation made the states see their national interests best served by avoiding implementation of co-operation pledges. This is a typical ‘rationalist’ pattern that both neo-realists and neo-liberals would predict.

In the case of trade, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan chose to guard their immediate short-term economic interests instead of opting to facilitate regional trade. In regional water management, diverging interests with regards to electricity generation and irrigation made co-operation difficult, and unwillingness to yield control to supra-national regional water institutions further complicated co-operation efforts. In the case of security, concerns over sovereignty hampered effective co-operation. Interdependence, where present, did not generate an impetus for co-operation. On the contrary, it

seems – particularly in the case of Uzbekistan – to have triggered efforts to reduce the degree of interdependence by enhancing unilateral control.

The preceding chapters also detailed how regime type shaped co-operation patterns. Uzbekistan's preference for import substitution was, I argued, closely linked to the political necessities of the regime. Yet that country's import substitution strategy made it nearly impossible to achieve a Central Asian common market. With respect to water issues, authoritarian governance exacerbated water inefficiency, hampered negotiations and made the establishment of supra-national institutions more difficult. In security issues, an absence of trust undermined co-operation – and this lack of trust may have been partly attributable to the authoritarian tendencies of the Central Asian states.

Uzbekistan, by far the most authoritarian of the four states discussed, was a particularly unconstructive partner in co-operation efforts. By contrast, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, which both adopted comparatively liberal political and economic development strategies, managed to achieve some successes, albeit minor ones, in bilateral co-operation initiatives. In water management, the two states were able to agree and implement co-operative arrangements for the Talas-Chu river. On migration issues, active diplomacy from Kyrgyzstan's side combined with Kazakhstan's receptiveness to such diplomacy led to an improvement, even if a marginal one, in the conditions of Kyrgyzstani labour migrants in Kazakhstan.

State weakness also mattered profoundly for co-operation patterns. In fact, based on my findings from the three case chapters, I argue that even if there had been complete

harmony of state interests, it seems the Central Asian countries would not have been able to ensure that co-operation policies were implemented. This is because most co-operation initiatives would run counter to the authority structures associated with 'indirect rule'. The state leaders in the region faced powerful constraints: upsetting authority structures would likely trigger instability. The political leaderships therefore ardently avoided co-operation initiatives that carried liabilities related to this.

In the case of trade, it is conceivable that the many formal barriers to trade would have been lifted if all states had had an equally strong interest in an open trading regime. However, informal barriers would probably have persisted. The considerable level of informal income generation by low-level state officials associated with 'indirect rule' would have continued to make trade difficult. This would have shaped and limited trade flows significantly.

In the case of water, state weakness would have continued to result in limited oversight and inefficiency in water use in the region. If there had been closer harmony between national interests it might have been possible to design a more robust and predictable mechanism for annual water sharing. This outcome would have enabled a better regime for the Toktogul reservoir and probably avoided the flooding of agricultural fields caused by winter releases. Optimal water management would still have been difficult, though, since the state bureaucracies would have continued to lack effective oversight over actual water flows on the province and district levels. If states failed to initiate local reforms to end the local authorities' diversion of water flows and enhance water efficiency, Central Asia would still have been likely to face

the same underlying water challenges: over-use of water for cotton production and the continued shrinking of the Aral Sea.

It is difficult to apply a similar counterfactual logic in relation to security co-operation. In the case of drugs and illegal migration there *is* already a harmony of interest: all states want to regulate better the flow of labour migrants, and all states claim to want to end drug trafficking. Still, as indicated in Chapter 6, malfunctioning state machineries, especially the highly problematic role of law enforcement, makes effective co-operation difficult to achieve.

In the case of co-operation to curb 'extremism', one possible counterfactual scenario could involve a situation in which Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan had fewer concerns over breaches of their sovereignty by Uzbekistan, and Uzbekistan was more willing to share classified information – for example, in relation to the location of mines in border areas. This situation would have enhanced co-operative responses to the IMU. Nonetheless, the weakness of Kyrgyzstan's army and President Rakhmonov's inability to control Tajikistan's eastern mountain regions would still have significantly shaped the regional response to the IMU.

Posing the question 'why did co-operation fail' highlights the fact that the outcome of unsuccessful co-operation between the states in the region was to a considerable extent over-determined. The incompatibility of national interest provides a convincing and parsimonious account of Central Asian co-operation failures, which can easily be substantiated with empirical findings. However, another central and forceful barrier to

regional co-operation was the weakness of the Central Asian states in the form of ‘indirect rule’.

How co-operation failed

Each case presented a strikingly similar pattern of *how* co-operation failed. Regional challenges were met with extensive pledges from Central Asian state leaders, who promised to tackle these challenges through regional co-operation. The states signed a range of agreements, often duplicating or partly contradicting each other, and created institutional mechanisms for regional co-operation. At the same time, however, each state undertook unilateral moves to guard its immediate national interests and thus undermined declared regional co-operation plans. Moreover, at the grassroots level – at the juncture where Central Asian citizens encountered everyday state practices – formal state declarations, whether unilateral, bilateral or multilateral, had little relevance. Actual trading patterns, water sharing and security measures unfolded according to practices very different from those presented, debated and ‘solved’ in the diplomatic arena of Central Asian regional relations.

In the case of security, the same patterns emerged – with one exception. Military co-operation between the states in the region did not involve the same kind of institutional mechanisms as other regional challenges. This absence was the result of the fact that the majority of the states in the region chose to see the institutional framework provided by one outside great power – Russia – as sufficient. I will return to this issue below. Suffice to say here that even if the Central Asian states did not produce the same quantity of formal agreements on military issues, they still ended up

vowing and attempting to initiate joint military co-ordination to curb ‘extremist’ threats. However, in attempts to initiate intra-regional co-operation, the same difficulties that were evident in the other cases quickly manifested in relation to military co-operation as well.

While diverging national interests were one of the key reasons for why regional co-operation failed in Central Asia – thereby confirming the utility of a realist approach – realism is nevertheless unable to offer a comprehensive understanding of the distinct yet complex pattern of co-operation described above. It fails to do so because the character of Central Asian states shaped co-operation patterns, and realism – its structuralist versions in particular – does not acknowledge the relevance of the state make-up in determining inter-state relations.

Implications of post-Soviet statehood

An underlying question associated with the study was whether the character of post-Soviet states mattered for the kind of inter-state politics that unfolded in the post-Soviet space. The material presented in this thesis indicates that key attributes of the states shaped co-operation patterns in important ways. These features were closely linked to Soviet legacies: authoritarian techniques of governance represented a continuation of Soviet modes of rule; and state weakness – or practices of ‘indirect rule’ – followed from and augmented governance trends that had developed during the Soviet period. Regime type and state weakness therefore mattered profoundly for *how* co-operation failed.

An important feature of that failure was the wide discrepancy between extensive diplomatic efforts to tackle challenges through regional co-operation, and the actual absence of meaningful co-operation. This gap made the majority of the diplomatic efforts at regional institution-building more akin to façade-making than genuine efforts to enable tangible co-operation. It is important to stress the remarkable scale of this phenomenon. The vast majority of the agreements signed within TAS were never implemented. The scale of this failure makes the phenomenon more than just a side issue of Central Asian affairs – it constitutes, rather, a key trait of regional co-operation patterns. It follows that any approach that seeks to comprehensively account for failed regional co-operation in Central Asia must also shed light on the discrepancy between formal agreements and actual patterns of state interaction. Approaches that include attention to post-Soviet statehood do precisely that. In Chapter 1, I noted that Bhavna Dave found a reliance on symbolic achievements to be a key feature of the states in Central Asia. Due to weakness in state capacity, state leaders relied on symbolic statecraft rather than ‘real’ implementation. This reliance indicated that the Soviet-era duality between declared policy goals and actual practices, as identified by Anna Zelkina and Olivier Roy in Chapter 1, continued to be a force after 1991.

Central Asian state leaders faced with complex regional challenges resorted to policy skills that they had acquired as Soviet officials: namely, presenting symbolic solutions to situations that were seemingly unsolvable. Interestingly, Bobo Lo also identifies a similar propensity for façade-making in another post-Soviet state, Russia. Lo argues that in the period from 1991 to 2002, much of Russia’s foreign policy was shaped by efforts to ‘create an alternative reality that [was] largely divorced from the true state

of affairs'.⁶¹² The legacies of Soviet statecraft appear to have shaped foreign policy conduct in the post-Soviet space, including the foreign policy conduct of the Central Asian states.

Understanding Russia's hegemonic role in Central Asia

In the two case chapters where great-power involvement played a significant role, theoretical approaches attributing the failure of regional co-operation to great-power competition were unconvincing. In the case of trade, no link was found between great-power involvement and the inability of the Central Asian states to launch an intra-regional common market or improve trade facilitation.

In the case of security, great-power provision of alliances did shape security co-operation, and explains why there were comparatively few intra-regional institutional mechanisms for security co-operation. The great power approach could not, however, account for why co-operation became difficult when the Central Asian states tried to deal with the IMU threat. Moreover, an approach stressing great-power competition would not anticipate that the two major outside powers avoided responding to the Central Asian call for assistance in 1999 and 2000. Finally, the positive developments in Uzbekistan–Tajikistan relations in the period 2001/2002 run counter to expectations of a great-power approach: according to such a perspective, increased US support to Uzbekistan would be likely to worsen relations with Russia's close ally, Tajikistan – when in fact relations between the two improved.

⁶¹² B. Lo, *Russian foreign policy in the post-Soviet era: reality, illusion and mythmaking* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 68

While the approach stressing great-power rivalry is of limited use for understanding Central Asian co-operation patterns, the discussions of Russia's role in the case chapters have shed some interesting light on Russia's engagement in the region.

In the sphere of trade, Russia did not provide 'essential rules' for economic exchanges among Central Asian states. Russia neither enhanced conditions for trade co-operation nor challenged intra-regional efforts like the TAS common market proposal.

Moreover, in the one area where it took the most pro-active and concrete steps – the attempt to ensure common external customs barriers for EvrAzES before WTO membership – Russia was unable to fully realise its goals.

In the sphere of security, Russia provided one set of essential rules. Until 1999, all Central Asian states belonged to the same security alliance, the Collective Security Treaty. Uzbekistan's withdrawal in 1999 undermined region-wide security co-operation, and Russian influence weakened. Russia did maintain essential rules at the very basic level in one, limited, way. Russia's close security links with the remaining three countries still meant that it had a formidable presence in the region. This presence, arguably, still posed a deterrent to military state action. However, Russian engagement did not positively shape intra-regional security co-operation to deal with 'extremism', nor did it add momentum to co-operation efforts in other spheres.

Broader issues: multilateralism and hegemony in Russia's foreign policy towards Central Asia

The above empirical findings contribute to a wider discussion on Russian hegemony. Many of the thesis' findings add to an understanding of both the role of multilateralism in Russian foreign policy and of the nature of Russian hegemony.

On multilateralism, one can identify several important traits. While it seems clear that the Russian leadership did not prioritise efforts to remedy the failing CIS structures, it did espouse a more proactive approach in relation to EvrAzES and CSTO.

Interestingly, the most vigorous efforts by Russia vis-à-vis EvrAzES were directed towards ensuring common external barriers. This goal was directly related to another policy challenge facing Russia: the prospect of WTO membership for Russia and other former Soviet states. When it became clear that WTO membership for the Central Asian countries would impose restrictions on Russia's influence over trade policies in the region, Russia stepped up its effort to build a multilateral trade framework. In this way Russian behaviour was *reactive*: its focus and policy efforts were determined by the rise of a particular challenge, the prospect of WTO membership. Its policies were not the result of a carefully designed plan to ensure the creation of a viable multilateral trade framework. The issue of external barriers received top priority because of its immediate significance in relation to WTO negotiations, while other equally pressing issues for a multilateral trade framework, such as common customs procedures, received scant attention.

The deployment of the CSTO rapid reaction force to Kant in Kyrgyzstan made the CSTO a more substantive and relevant actor in relation to Central Asian security challenges. The timing of this initiative is interesting, though, as it came after the creation of US military bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. This example also fits the pattern of Russia *reacting* to immediate challenges, rather than realising long term strategies.

Both cases are also notable for the way they signify attempts to keep other potential powers out of the region, hinting at what Roy Allison terms ‘competitive regionalism’.⁶¹³ In the case of EvrAzES, Russia tried to ensure that regional trade arrangements rather than global arrangements would set the key terms for trade in region. Similarly, in relation to CSTO, it sought to speed up the withdrawal of US forces by deploying a CSTO contingent.

Finally, there was a related element of *instrumentality* to Russia’s multilateral efforts. The aim of establishing multilateral institutions was tied up with the ultimate goal of making Russia the predominant power in the region. Multilateralism was an instrument that helped Russia achieve this goal – but it was not an end in itself. Russia was not primarily concerned with building institutions so that the states in the region and Russia could solve challenges more effectively – rather, its aim was to pre-empt other institutions or powers that might supply such intra-state governing mechanisms.

The issue of migration was a powerful testimony to the instrumental nature of Russia’s multilateral initiatives. While EvrAzES was supposed to play a role in

⁶¹³ R. Allison 'Regionalism, regional structures and security management in Central Asia' *International Affairs* 2004 vol. 80, no. 3, p 479

managing migration flows between the member states, Russia made no efforts to develop an overarching framework for migration within EvrAzES. Rather, Russian domestic law trumped multilateral frameworks. Russia even used the issue of migration from Tajikistan to Russia as a bargaining chip in its bilateral relations with Tajikistan.

The empirical findings presented in the thesis also provided some indications as to the nature of Russian hegemony in Central Asia. In Chapter 1, I noted that hegemony may be of a benign or a malign type. Keohane stressed that hegemons will often seek to enhance co-operation and ensure provisions of public goods. Gilpin, by contrast, pointed out that hegemons often coerce subservient states into carrying the costs of public goods provision. The case material presented in the preceding chapters is inconclusive on the question of whether Russia was a malign or benign hegemon in Central Asia. In the sphere of trade, it showed signs of malign behaviour. Seen from the viewpoint of Central Asian consumers, Russian efforts to harmonise external customs barriers entailed notable costs. External customs barriers might have strengthened Russian producers – but they introduced a financial burden for Central Asian consumers, who would eventually have to pay for more costly imported goods from beyond the EvrAzES. In this way, Russian efforts at public goods provision (the establishment of common trade regulations) primarily benefited the hegemon, while the consumers of the subservient states had to cover the costs associated with this strategy.

In the sphere of security, however, a rather different picture emerged. Russia covered the costs of providing security assistance and generating stability in Tajikistan, at little

or no expense to Tajikistan or the other Central Asian states. Similarly, the discounts in weapon procurement and military support that Russia offered to CSTO member states were tangible public goods that benefited Central Asia. This type of behaviour on the part of Russia was in harmony with Keohane's concept of the benign hegemon.

These efforts by Russia also highlight the link between hegemony and capacity. Two issues stand out in this regard: the behaviour of a declining hegemon, and the nature of organisational resources. As noted in Chapter 1, both Duncan Snidal and Andrew Hurrell stressed the likely correlation between the declining relative strength of a hegemon and an increase in the hegemon's interest in creating co-operative frameworks, since such frameworks could help the hegemon to share the burden of upholding specific arrangements. In the case of Russia's hegemonic decline, the picture is slightly more complicated. Russia seems initially to have wanted to create co-operative frameworks as a compensation for losing relative strength (for example, by establishing the CIS), but it was unable to ensure that the CIS operated successfully.

Robert Gilpin held that a hegemon supplies security and economic order so that states have an interest in following its lead, but that ultimately, however, smaller states obeyed the hegemon because of its military capacity.⁶¹⁴ Robert Keohane stressed that a hegemon is a state that 'is powerful enough to maintain the essential rules governing interstate relations and is *willing* to do so'.⁶¹⁵ Contrary to both Gilpin and Keohane, the case of Russia reveals that a hegemon must be not only willing to provide essential rules, but also *able* to provide these rules. In the 1990s, Russia remained

⁶¹⁴ Gilpin *War and change in world politics*, p. 34.

⁶¹⁵ R. O. Keohane, *After hegemony: cooperation and discord in the world political economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 46.

predominant in military terms and also *wanted* to mediate its hegemonic decline though establishing the CIS. But Russia lacked, among other things, organisational power.

Rethinking Central Asian relations

In the introduction, I outlined three ways in which this thesis can contribute to a rethinking of Central Asian relations. First, it encourages a move away from Great Game analysis; second, it shows that regional politics can demonstrate regime-like characteristics; and third, it views stability through formal and informal institutions as a prominent feature of Central Asian societies. Both of the two latter points challenge conventional perspectives that warned of looming danger in the region from 1991 to 2004.

Great-power competition was mainly linked to one specific issue area: access to and transportation of Central Asia's energy resources. At certain points in the period from 1991 to 2004 there was also considerable competition between outside powers over influence in security affairs. In other issue areas, the picture was different, constituting either great-power absence or great-power co-operation. 'Patchwork geopolitics' seems, overall, a more appropriate label for nature of the regional system than does the 'Great Game'. Moreover, as noted above, a focus on the role of great powers did not shed sufficient explanatory light over the pattern of regional co-operation.

My dismissal of the role of the great powers lends support to my argument that Central Asian regional affairs are largely driven by dynamics *within* the region, rather than outside forces. This argument bears relevance for broader debates in international relations theory on the study of regions. Cantori and Spiegler's work from 1970, as well as Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver's more recent volume, stress the likelihood that outside engagement falls into existing inter-state policy patterns, rather than substantially reconfiguring these patterns when engaging in a region.⁶¹⁶ Using these theoretical insights as a starting point, it comes as no surprise that Great Game dynamics did not play a fundamental role in structuring intra-regional relations. What perhaps *is* surprising is the continued widespread use of the Great Game approach as an analytical framework, given its predictable limitations. As suggested in Chapter 1, this over-focus on the role of the great powers might be explained by the region's peripheral place in international relations research.

My second rethinking of Central Asian relations pertains to procedures for inter-state interactions in the period from 1991–2004. In Chapter 1, I discussed how McFaul and Goldgeier expected peripheral regions in the world to be confined to realist scenarios of military power-balancing, limits on the degree of shared norms and low degrees of interdependence.⁶¹⁷ Roy Allison seemed to confirm these notions in the context of Central Asia, when he labelled it a 'peripheral zone' where regional security co-operation was made difficult by economic stagnation and political turbulence.⁶¹⁸ In contrast to McFaul and Goldgeier's expectations of tensions and threats, this thesis

⁶¹⁶ L. J. Cantori and S. L. Spiegel, *The international politics of regions: a comparative approach* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970); B. Buzan and O. Waever, *Regions and powers: the structure of international security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁶¹⁷ M. McFaul and J. M. Goldgeier, 'A tale of two worlds: core and periphery in the post-Cold War Era', *International Organization*, vol. 46, no. 2, 1992.

⁶¹⁸ R. Allison 'Regionalism, regional structures and security management in Central Asia'

has highlighted regime-like features of inter-state relations in Central Asia. Attempts at regional co-operation failed, but regional relations were nevertheless to a considerable degree characterised by ‘explicit principles, norms rules and decision-making procedures’ around which the expectations of Central Asian countries converged.⁶¹⁹ The case of water provided the clearest illustrations of this phenomenon. While the states were fundamentally at odds over the question of how water resources in Central Asia should be shared, they nevertheless agreed on important principles (e.g., water should be made available for irrigation of cotton fields), and on important procedures: negotiations over water followed set patterns every year.

The third rethinking pertains to internal dynamics within Central Asian states. This issue may seem to fall outside the remit of an International Relations thesis, but since the empirical material presented in the previous chapters sheds some light on the matter, I offer these brief comments. Several scholars have stressed the instability of Central Asian societies and the high risk of chaos and upheaval in the region.⁶²⁰ While some of these assertions were warranted, it is nevertheless important to point out that Central Asian societies in the period from 1991 to 2004 possessed considerable degrees of formal and informal control mechanisms.

This thesis has documented the pervasive nature of state institutions, showing the extent to which citizens of Central Asia had to deal with these institutions in their

⁶¹⁹ This draws on Hurrell’s definition (A. Hurrell, ‘Explaining the resurgence of regionalism in world politics’ *Review of International Studies*, vol. 21, 1995, p. 42). See also S. D. Krasner, ‘Structural causes and regime consequences: regimes as intervening variables’, in Krasner, ed., *International regimes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 1.

⁶²⁰ N. Lubin, *Calming the Ferghana Valley: development and dialogue in the heart of Central Asia* (New York: Century Foundation Press, 1999); P. van Tongeren, H. van de Veen and J. Verhoeven, *Searching for peace in Europe and Eurasia: an overview of conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002).

daily lives. State institutions were often highly dysfunctional – but they were pervasive nonetheless. Their mere presence imposed considerable degrees of order on Central Asian communities. This situation is evident in the testimony outlined in Chapter 2 – that of a newspaper editor crossing illegally into Uzbekistan. The illegal border crossing was not a random act in an anarchic setting devoid of state regulation. Rather, it was part of a well-established pattern of nominally illegal border crossings, in which local representatives of state structures closely monitored and guarded behaviours. The state agents at the border ‘siphoned off’ income illegally, but this same income enabled them to maintain dominant formal and informal positions in their areas.

Together with other researchers of Central Asian affairs, I have discussed academic misconceptions of danger in Central Asia elsewhere, and I will not expand on the issue in this conclusion.⁶²¹ I will simply note here that just as Central Asian inter-state relations were not primarily anarchic in nature during the period from 1991-2004, nor was the situation within those states anarchic. This contention lends support to Christoph Stefes’ findings from other parts of the former Soviet Union, which show that the decline of formal rules brought about a rise in the importance of informal rules and norms.⁶²² Just as there was little inter-state conflict and military violence in

⁶²¹ See C. Bichsel, 'In search of harmony: repairing infrastructure and social relations in the Ferghana valley', *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2005; J. Heathershaw, 'The paradox of peacebuilding: peril, promise, and small arms in Tajikistan', *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2005; N. Jackson, 'The trafficking of narcotics, arms and humans in post-soviet central Asia:(mis)perceptions, policies and realities', *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2005; N. Megoran, 'Preventing conflict by building civil society: post-development theory and a Central Asian-UK policy success story', *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2005; S. N. MacFarlane and S. Torjesen, 'Awash with weapons?: the case of small arms in Kyrgyzstan', *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2005; M. Reeves, 'Locating danger: konfliktologiiia and the search for fixity in the Ferghana valley borderlands', *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2005; C. D. Thompson and J. Heathershaw, 'Introduction: Discourses of danger in Central Asia', *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2005.

⁶²² C. H. Stefes, *Understanding post-Soviet transitions: corruption, collusion and clientelism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

Central Asia, there was also (except for the civil war in Tajikistan) little intra-state violence in the period under study. This is not to say that there were no serious risks of future instability in Central Asia. But future risk potential is not the same as existing chaos.

State weakness and foreign policy

In Chapter 1, I quoted Thucydides' Melian dialogue and its statement that 'the strong do what they have the power to do' and asked the question: what is it that one expects the weak to do?⁶²³ I then argued that some aspects of foreign policy conduct by weak states seem underspecified in international relations, especially when it comes to the kind of foreign policies weak states conduct vis-à-vis each other. This thesis has shed some light on that question. Three insights are worth emphasising.

First, the thesis has highlighted the importance of distinguishing between types of state weakness. Andrew Hurrell (see Chapter 1, footnote 1) stressed the absence of a monopoly of violence and lack of state cohesion. He argued that: 'the absence of viable states...makes the process of region building difficult, if not impossible. If the state collapses it is all the more likely the warlords and the drug barons will move in'.⁶²⁴ Barry Buzan, by contrast, saw weakness as linked to identity issues and a lack of socio-political coherence. This lack would lead states to emphasise regime security.⁶²⁵ In the case of Central Asia, however, I found it more relevant to consider

⁶²³ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian war* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972) p. 402.

⁶²⁴ A. Hurrell, 'Regionalism in theoretical perspective', in Fawcett and Hurrell, eds, *Regionalism in world politics: regional organization and international order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 67.

⁶²⁵ B. Buzan, *People, states and fear: An agenda for international security in the post-Cold War era* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991).

governing practices associated with Weber's concept of 'indirect rule' rather than the issues of state monopoly of violence or socio-political coherence. The states of Central Asia were weak because there was a blurring of boundaries between private and state interests. It follows that different types of weakness may have different types of consequences for foreign policy formation.

This conclusion brings me to the second issue arising from the discussions of weakness in this thesis. The weakness of Central Asian states – that is, the practices of 'indirect rule' – had important implications for the foreign policies pursued in relation to regional co-operation. 'Indirect rule' further exacerbated resource shortages at the central level, so that the states had little financial ability to enact co-operation initiatives that might have compelled them to provide funds. More importantly, 'indirect rule' and the blurring of private and state interests also meant that lower-level state agents primarily pursued their own immediate interests. Any co-operation initiatives that did not correspond to these interests encountered serious difficulties in implementation. A lifting of restrictions on intra-regional trade was precisely one such initiative that ran counter to the logic behind 'indirect rule'. This system made regional efforts such as those to facilitate and liberalise trade less likely to succeed. On the whole, initiatives that entailed a profound altering of the activities of state agents or the mobilisation of state funds were unlikely to succeed. The wider implication of this finding is that the type of state weakness synonymous with 'indirect rule' seems to result in foreign policy conduct that is devoid of pro-active measures, but instead tends to be shaped by reactive and declarative behaviour.

The third point, which follows from the second, is the link between weakness and façade-making. The thesis has documented the extensive diplomatic efforts that state leaders devoted to constructing a regional co-operation architecture for Central Asia. These efforts may have been extensive and impressive – but were mostly of a ‘virtual’ kind. Above, I noted that this practice was attributable to Soviet legacies of façade-making. Interestingly, however, this phenomenon of ‘virtual’ regional relations is also a trait that Central Asia shares with other regions where state weakness has been a key feature.

Jeffrey Herbst surveyed regional co-operation efforts on the African continent and found that ‘African leaders are extremely enthusiastic about particular types of regional co-operation, especially those that highlight sovereignty, help secure national leaders, and ask little in return’.⁶²⁶ According to Herbst, African leaders used regional organisations to protect and extend their domestic standing, but initiatives that did not cater to these goals, by for example challenging sovereignty or the control of a leader, tended to fail. In consequence, ‘African leaders continue to participate in organizations that have long records of failure, a puzzling trait for those who believe regional organizations exist to solve regional problems but one that is understandable from a domestic perspective.’⁶²⁷

Michael Barnett and Etel Solingen similarly noted the virtual character of co-operation initiatives within the Arab League, which they described as an organisation

⁶²⁶ J. Herbst, 'Crafting regional co-operation in Africa', in Acharya, A. and Johnston, I.A., eds, *Crafting cooperation: the design and effect of regional institutions in comparative perspective*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2007)

⁶²⁷ Ibid.

‘relegated to manufacturing appearance more than substance’.⁶²⁸ Barnett and Solingen held that the reasons for this state of affairs were linked with concerns over regime survival and regime type: many Arab governments launched inward-looking state-building projects that did not correspond well with substantive economic co-operation. The Arab League had a low degree of institutionalisation, with few monitoring or formal sanctioning mechanisms. By the 1980s the Arab League had passed more than 4,000 resolutions – 80 per cent of which were never implemented.⁶²⁹ As Ghassan Salame concluded: ‘there is no need to establish majority rules, since even when unanimity is possible it remains ineffective.’⁶³⁰ The many sub-units or affiliated agencies of the Arab League contributed to the ‘virtualness’ of the organisation. Agencies like the permanent military command or the Social and Economic Council seemed only to add to the bureaucratisation of the organisation, with few effective results.⁶³¹

These findings from the Middle East and Africa bear striking resemblance to the situation in Central Asia: the high number of agreements forged and extensive efforts to build a regional institutional framework have not resulted in substantive co-operation. This evidence highlights a key finding of this thesis: that state weakness is likely to be accompanied by foreign policies that favour symbolic regional co-operation.

⁶²⁸ M. Barnett and E. Solingen, 'Designed to fail or failure of design? The origins and legacy of the Arab League', in Acharya, A. and Johnston, I.A., eds, *Crafting cooperation: the design and effect of regional institutions in comparative perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2007)

⁶²⁹ Ibid..

⁶³⁰ G. Salame, 'Inter-Arab politics: the return to geography', in W.B. Quandt, ed., *The Middle East: ten years after Camp David* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1988), p. 276.

⁶³¹ Barnett and Solingen, 'Designed to fail or failure of design?'

This finding recalls the arguments of Robert Jackson that were presented in Chapter 1. Jackson's work on 'quasi-states' shows how the international system helps to uphold weak states. This result is no small achievement. Charles Tilly argues that the overwhelming majority of states that were established in the world after the 16th century failed.⁶³² By contrast, states that have been formed more recently – like those of Africa, the Middle East and the former Soviet Union – have all survived. This shift testifies to the considerable power vested in international norms pertaining to independent statehood, and the strong incentives that leaders in weak states have for clearly signalling and marking their sovereignty. Regional forums consisting of equally weak states are highly conducive to this type of signalling. Unlike global conventions and agreements, they do not involve the danger that other signatory countries will raise questions over shortcomings in enforcing the provisions of the agreements.

Opportunities for further research

The topic of state weakness and virtual regional relations is one of several issues discussed here that could benefit from further research. Studies of regionalism are already producing a range of insights on the construction of regional identities and their implications for formation of regional groupings.⁶³³ Another avenue for constructivist research involves a closer look at why and how regionalism becomes such a strong marker for modern and sovereign statehood. A comparative study of regions with weak states could add further insights to our understanding of the

⁶³² C. Tilly, *Coercion, capital, and European states, AD 990–1990* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

⁶³³ D. Bechev, *Constructing South East Europe: the politics of Balkan regional cooperation, 1995–2003* (University of Oxford, 2005).

foreign-policy formation of weak states, as well as to our understanding of regionalism as a phenomenon in global affairs.

Yet another avenue for further research is the relationship between hegemony and capacity. Theories of hegemony stress the likelihood that declining hegemony will be more rather than less conducive to co-operation. The case of Russia and Central Asia in the period from 1991–2004, however, has indicated the opposite: the general decline of Russia made it less able to generate co-operation though its hegemonic position. The structural might that Russia enjoyed in Eurasia did not translate readily into a capacity for effective domination in the region. A further assessment of this issue – for example, of what particular features of a materially dominant state enable it to perform hegemonic functions – might shed interesting light both on the analytical concept of hegemony and on Russia’s attempts to exert power in Eurasia since 1991.

The latter is a particularly relevant question, given Russia’s increasing assertiveness in the former Soviet space after 2004. This issue has been central to the development of Central Asian politics after 2004. In view of such important recent developments, I will end this thesis with a brief discussion of post-2004 trends in an epilogue.

Epilogue: 31 December 2004 – 1 May 2007:

Realignments and implications for regional co-operation

This thesis has analysed events in the Central Asian region from 1991 until December 2004. There were, however, several interesting developments in regional politics after 2004. In this epilogue, I highlight some key recent events in the region and briefly indicate their possible implications for co-operation patterns in Central Asia.

Events

On 24 March 2005, President Askar Akaev of Kyrgyzstan was ousted from his position following a popular outcry against irregularities in the February 2005 parliamentary elections. A former prime minister, Kurmanbek Bakiev, headed a coalition of opposition forces and succeeded Akaev as president. Political elites and media outlets in many CIS countries linked the events to similar ‘revolutions’ in Georgia and Ukraine in 2004 and 2005, and many argued that these changes in power structures had been planned and manipulated from the outside – particularly by the US and countries in Western Europe.⁶³⁴

A few months later, on 12–14 May 2005, upheaval struck the Uzbekistani city of Andijan in the Fergana Valley. Demonstrations in support of local businessmen accused of subversive religious and political activities escalated into mass demonstrations and a prison break-out. On Friday 13 May, Uzbekistan’s armed forces fired indiscriminately at demonstrators and the organisers of the protests, killing at

⁶³⁴ ‘Lukashenka takes the oath of office for a third time’, *Reuters*, 9 April 2006.

least 175 people.⁶³⁵ Hundreds of demonstrators fled to neighbouring Kyrgyzstan, where a rudimentary refugee camp was established.

Accounts differed over the nature of the upheaval. The government of Uzbekistan claimed that well-organised and well-armed international terrorists had instigated a revolt,⁶³⁶ while also hinting that the US had somehow been involved in the events. Russia supported this version of the story.⁶³⁷ The US and the EU, by contrast, emphasised the indiscriminate killings of peaceful protestors and urged the government of Uzbekistan to commission an independent enquiry into the events.⁶³⁸

Reconfigurations in regional relations

These two events fed into existing tendencies towards a re-configuration in regional inter-state politics – and, in many ways, substantially augmented these tendencies.

Relations between Uzbekistan and the US had become strained after the US's growing realisation that Uzbekistan was failing to implement the domestic reforms it had pledged under the strategic partnership agreement from 2002.⁶³⁹ Uzbekistan's leadership was also seriously concerned by the political changes in Georgia and

⁶³⁵ S. N. MacFarlane, 'Uzbekistan: willing to act' *The World Today* 2005, Vol. 61, no. 8–9.

⁶³⁶ The upheaval in Andijan sparked both political and academic disagreements over the nature of events: see 'Andijan remembers the dead' *IWPR*, 20 May 2005; Akiner, *Violence in Andijan*; Human Rights Watch, 'Bullets were falling like rain' – the Andijan massacre, May 13, 2005 and Human Rights Watch *Burying the truth – Uzbekistan rewrites the story of the Andijan massacre* (both: New York: Human Rights Watch, 2005).

⁶³⁷ 'Uzbekistan: Karimov, Putin Say Andijan Violence Was Planned Abroad', *RFE/RL*, 29 June 2005.

⁶³⁸ 'U.S. Renews Calls For Inquiry Into Uzbek Events', *RFE/RL*, 25 May 2005.

⁶³⁹ Interview, representative of the US Embassy in Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 22 April 2005; M. Mayer *Security or Human Rights: US Foreign Policy Dilemma in Uzbekistan*, Forsvarsstudier 2 (Oslo: Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies, 2006).

Ukraine, and observed a causal link between significant US assistance to civil society and subsequent ‘revolutions’.

Following the events in Andijan in spring 2005, in July 2005 Uzbekistan demanded that the US withdraw the troops stationed in the country.⁶⁴⁰ Uzbekistan also supported a statement issued jointly by the SCO members in Astana on 6 July that US should set a deadline for removing troops from Central Asia.⁶⁴¹ Uzbekistan then joined EvrAzEs on 25 January and the CSTO on 17 August 2006.⁶⁴² The country also signed several large-scale agreements with Gazprom on 20 January 2006.⁶⁴³

Kyrgyzstan, unlike Georgia and Ukraine, did not alter its foreign policy course after changes in the political leadership, but opted to maintain close relations with Russia and Kazakhstan. It continued its close co-operation with the US as well, allowing the US air force to continue using Manas Airport after some negotiation.⁶⁴⁴ Kazakhstan and Tajikistan maintained their close relationship with Russia, while remaining on good terms with the US.

⁶⁴⁰ A. Cooley, 'Base politics', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 84, no. 6, 2005.

⁶⁴¹ P. Guang 'The Chinese perspective on the recent Astana summit', *Jamestown Foundation China Brief*, 16 August 2005

⁶⁴² 'Uzbekistan becomes full-fledged member of Russia-led security organization', *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 17 August 2006.

⁶⁴³ 'Russia to pay more for Uzbek gas in 2006', *RFE/RL*, 23 January 2006.

⁶⁴⁴ 'Kyrgyzstan expects \$ 17M rent pay from U.S. airbase “Manas”', *24.KG*, 5 April 2007.

Multilateral reconfigurations

The changing configurations in regional inter-state relations resulted in some remarkable alterations in the landscape of multilateral institutions. Russia entered TAS as an observer in 1996 and then as a full-fledged member at the 29 May 2005 TAS Astana meeting.⁶⁴⁵ Uzbekistan joined EvrAzES in January 2006. This change meant that (save for the additional presence of Belarus in EvrAzES) TAS and EvrAzES overlapped in terms of membership. At the TAS summit in St. Petersburg 7 October 2005 the member countries surprisingly declared that TAS would merge with EvrAzES – thereby abolishing the entire TAS framework overnight.⁶⁴⁶

Uzbekistan shifted from being fiercely critical of EvrAzES to posing as a strong supporter of the organisation. It also championed the idea that the CSTO and EvrAzES could merge into one solid structure in which security and economic issues could be tackled together.⁶⁴⁷

In parallel with the EvrAzES developments, the functioning and scope of the SCO increased considerably after 2004. SCO Secretary General Zhang Deguang noted in

⁶⁴⁵ Russia formally entered in May 2005; the actual decision was taken at the TAS meeting in Dushanbe 18 October 2004. See 'Russia joins CACO', *RFE/RL*, 19 October 2004.

⁶⁴⁶ The announcement was made at a joint news conference to which all the four Central Asian leaders arrived in the same car – driven by President Putin. 'Putin hails merger of post-Soviet groupings', *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 7 October 2005.

⁶⁴⁷ As late as January 2005, President Karimov commented: 'The CIS could have influenced various events, but it never has. In general there are too many associations of various types in the post-Soviet zone. I am referring to organizations such as the [EvrAzES], the CSTO Collective Security Treaty Organization, and the SES Single Economic Space, which loudly make their presence known, but I personally feel they serve little purpose'. See 'Uzbek president gives wide-ranging interview to Russian paper', *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 20 January 2005. In August 2006, however, President Karimov stated that the country's rejoining the CSTO was 'a big event in Uzbekistan's life' and stressed that 'this is a needed body, and, maybe the time will come when we unite the CSTO with [EvrAzES]'. See 'Uzbek leader moots merger of CIS security body, Eurasian economic bloc', *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 16 August 2006.

2006 that the past five years had been a 'sowing season' and that the next five years would be a 'harvest season'.⁶⁴⁸ The security dimension of SCO became more substantial. A joint Tajikistan-China anti-terrorism military exercise was conducted in September 2006.⁶⁴⁹ A programme for cooperation between SCO members for the period 2007–2009 was introduced to form the foundations of the SCO Council of Regional Antiterrorism Structure (RATS) work. With respect to RATS, member countries also discussed the creation of protected information and telecommunications systems for relevant agencies in the member countries.⁶⁵⁰

In economic terms, states agreed upon large-scale and state-led investment projects, in particular in the sphere of infrastructure, and formed an 'energy club'. The increasing economic significance of the SCO prompted Russian officials to clarify a key qualitative difference between SCO and EvrAzES. *Moscow News* noted in September 2006: 'it seems that fears of China's extraordinary economic expansion...[have] prompted Russian government officials to stress...[that] The Shanghai Cooperation Organization does not envision the formation of a single economic space, as [EvrAzES] does. SCO's goal is to carry out infrastructure projects'.⁶⁵¹

WTO negotiations continued in this period, but as of spring 2007 no firm entry date for Russia, Kazakhstan or Tajikistan has been set. Russia's entry was made particularly difficult by obstacles put forward by Georgia. On the sequencing of WTO entry by the EvrAzES states and the establishment of a customs union, Russia's

⁶⁴⁸ 'SCO not an eastern version of NATO', *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 7 June 2006.

⁶⁴⁹ 'Chinese agency reports joint anti-terror exercise in Tajikistan', *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 25 September 2006.

⁶⁵⁰ 'Uzbekistan: Shanghai antiterror meeting focuses on greater cooperation', *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 28 March 2007.

⁶⁵¹ 'SCO: pragmatism gains the upper hand', *Moscow News*, 29 September 2006.

Minister of Economic Development and Trade German Gref noted on 5 April 2006 that the customs union of EvrAzES would be created after Russia and Kazakhstan joined the WTO: 'First Russia and Kazakhstan will join WTO and then we will create a customs union'.⁶⁵²

The plan to establish a customs union involving Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan was still in operation in May 2007. Tajikistan was ready also to join but, as Russian media reported, a key 'obstacle preventing it from joining is the lack of a common border between Tajikistan and the first three signatories Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan'.⁶⁵³ So while the EvrAzES increased co-ordination between Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan, these initiatives held little short-run promise of solving Central Asia's intra-regional trade challenges.

Co-operation patterns

What implications, if any, did these reconfigurations have for intra-regional co-operation patterns in Central Asia? I will stress three overarching points.

The first issue that emerges from the above assessment is the remarkably swift end to the TAS framework. After nearly 12 years of existence and hundreds of agreements, the organisation simply – to paraphrase the *Communist Manifesto* – melted into air.

The ease with which TAS was eradicated was a powerful testament to the fundamentally 'virtual' character of the organisation.

⁶⁵² 'Customs union to be set up after Russia, Kazakhstan join WTO – Russian minister', *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 5 April 2006.

⁶⁵³ 'Three Eurasian countries move on with customs union, Putin says', *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 16 August 2006.

Second, a key feature of regional affairs after 2004 was the rise in the level of engagement and activity on the part of the SCO. This increase raised the question of whether China might be more successful than Russia in helping to bring about substantial and tangible co-operation in Central Asia. By May 2007 it was still not clear what the outcome of China's engagement would be.

Third, Uzbekistan's re-alignment with Russia brought about greater uniformity in regional relations. This shift had important formal consequences. Following Uzbekistan's return to Russia, Uzbekistan's bilateral relations with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan improved significantly. Questions remained, however, as to whether this would produce tangible improvements in co-operation patterns. Below I sketch out developments in some selected issue areas.

Trade

On issues related to economics and trade, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan discussed re-opening flights between Dushanbe and Tashkent. With regard to Kazakhstan–Uzbekistan relations, the recently appointed Kazakhstani ambassador to Uzbekistan, Askar Mirzahmetov, described on 23 August 2006 the state of affairs as follows:

Relations between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are characterised by their stability. Along with trade and economic, cultural and humanitarian relations, close neighbourly relations are also increasing to some degree. Nowadays the legal base of the Kazakh-Uzbek relations is formed by hundreds of documents, which cover almost all fields of cooperation. The other issue is how fully and successfully they are being implemented in real life. Therefore during the state visit of the Kazakh president, the sides decided to evaluate the existing documents and to focus on the most important ones, in particular conceptual

documents which serve to expand bilateral relations, and to start a new stage of mutually beneficial relations between our countries.... The interstate coordinating council, set up under the direct patronage of the presidents of the two countries, is going to hold meetings every six months and will help achieve these objectives. The establishment of the council demonstrates to what extent our bilateral relations are significant.⁶⁵⁴

Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan agreed on 12 February 2007 to lift visa requirements for citizens travelling between the two countries. This agreement was seen as potentially highly beneficial for trade flows in the Fergana Valley, since traders could now move more freely between the two countries. However, there were still some concerns as to whether the new agreements would result in tangible improvements. In the case of the Kyrgyzstan–Uzbekistan agreement, shortcomings soon emerged. The visa arrangements were in place for only one month before Uzbekistan temporarily suspended the new arrangement because the country did not accept the ID cards that many Kyrgyzstani citizens carried instead of passports. Moreover, citizens crossing the borders observed no tangible improvements in the period when the new and more liberal arrangements were in place. IWPR reported on 23 March 2007 that the new arrangements did not alter the border regime noticeably, and that some people in the Uzbekistan–Kyrgyzstan border areas dismissed the initiative as a populist gesture. One Uzbekistani citizen from a border community noted: ‘nothing changed during the visa-free month...Corruption is endemic at the border posts and no one obeys the law.’⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁵⁴ 'New Kazakh ambassador to Uzbekistan upbeat on bilateral relations', *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 23 August 2006.

⁶⁵⁵ 'Red tape marks Kyrgyz–Uzbek border', *IWPR*, 23 March 2007.

Water

The diplomatic efforts on water management undertaken within TAS continued under the aegis of EvrAzES. At the informal Sochi summit, the EvrAzES integration commission was charged with preparing a 'draft blueprint for the effective use of water and energy in Central Asia'.⁶⁵⁶ Plans for a Water-Energy consortium were also still in circulation. Interestingly, the EvrAzES leaders also revived discussions of an old Soviet project from the 1980s: the proposal to solve Central Asian water problems and the Aral Sea crisis by diverting Siberian rivers south to Central Asia.⁶⁵⁷ No other specific actions took place on improving regional water co-operation or efficiency in water use.

Security

On security issues, and in relation to dealing with 'extremist threats', there were some significant changes in Kyrgyzstan–Uzbekistan relations. Immediately after the Andijan events, relations between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan took a sharp downturn. Uzbekistan demanded that Kyrgyzstan return the 'terrorists' that had fled Andijan after the demonstrations. Kyrgyzstan refused to do so and, with the exception of 14 suspected organisers and escapees, proceeded to facilitate the refugees' journeys to third countries in Europe. In refusing to hand over the refugees, Kyrgyzstan stressed concerns over human rights and the country's obligations towards international legal conventions and institutions. The US supported Kyrgyzstan's stance.

⁶⁵⁶ 'Russia: the Eurasian bloc heads of state sign documents after Sochi meeting', *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 16 August 2006.

⁶⁵⁷ J. Salay, 'The Soviet Union river diversion project. From plan to cancellation 1976–1986', *Uppsala papers in economic history*, no. 10, 1988.

After Uzbekistan's reorientation towards Russia and its subsequent membership in the CSTO, however, some significant practical changes occurred. There were several alarming incidents related to 'extremism' in 2006, which the Kyrgyz authorities claimed were linked to the IMU. In January 2006, a prison in northern Tajikistan was attacked by two gunmen, who shot the prison director and released one of the inmates – later claimed by the chief prosecutor in Sughd Province (Tajikistan) to be an IMU member. On 12 May, the anniversary of the Andijan events, a border post on the Kyrgyz–Tajik border was attacked by assailants who killed two Kyrgyz and three Tajik border guards. The episode triggered a crackdown and shoot-outs between law enforcement personnel and armed gunmen in the summer. Moreover, Rafiq Qori Kamoluddin, a well-known Muslim cleric who had defended the rights of radical religious groups, was killed in a raid on 6 August 2006.

The violent and fierce crackdown initiated by the authorities in Kyrgyzstan was unusually swift. Moreover, unconfirmed reports suggested that Rafiq Qori Kamoluddin had been killed at a police check-point by security forces from both Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. These events implied that after Uzbekistan joined the CSTO, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan initiated co-operation in dealing with 'extremist' threats in a qualitatively new way: via joint security operations. Previously, Kyrgyzstan had complained that Uzbekistan's security service was undertaking un-sanctioned raids into Kyrgyzstan's territory in order to capture individuals sought by Uzbekistani law enforcement. Now, it seemed, the secret service units were starting to work closely together on an operational level. Kyrgyzstan also changed path on the

refugee issue: while it had previously been reluctant to hand over the 14 remaining individuals, it later accepted Uzbekistan's demands and extradited them.

Efforts towards curbing drugs trafficking in the region continued in much the same way as before 2004. Both outside and local powers had been co-operating formally in previous years, and this formal regime continued. However, the key challenges identified in the Chapter 6 related to the symbiosis of crime and law enforcement remained unsolved.

With regard to migration, President Putin continued to proclaim that the final goal of EvrAzES was the free movement of people, capital and goods. However, EvrAzEs undertook few additional measures in the sphere of migration after 2004. There were also no further bilateral initiatives between the Central Asian states. In contrast, Russia acted unilaterally and bilaterally on migration issues. Russia brought migration regulations into negotiations with Tajikistan over agreement on a Russian military base in the country. Russia also adopted a migration law that entered into force 1 April 2007, imposing new restrictions and more cumbersome procedures for labour migrants in Central Asia –representing a *de facto* diversion from a potential path towards free movement of people in the EvrAzES space.

Concluding remarks

In general, it seems that while there were significant formal reconfigurations in regional relations, co-operation patterns continued in much the same way as I described for the period from 1991 to 2004.

The Uzbekistan–Kazakhstan rapprochement led to the formation of a new ‘interstate coordinating council’, but it took no proactive moves. The case of Kyrgyzstan–Uzbekistan trade relations similarly demonstrated the difficulties that practices associated with ‘indirect rule’ continued to create for trade and cross-border ties.

In water, further diplomatic efforts and reports emerged from EvrAzES, but a breakthrough in regional water co-operation did not seem probable. The states displayed a distinctively Soviet ‘hangover’ on the issue of water, since the one proactive measure discussed was the grand project of redirecting a Russian Siberian river to Central Asia. If initiated, such a project would enable the Central Asian states to avoid reform and avoid dealing with the central challenge with regard to water: exceptionally high water inefficiency due to poor governing techniques in water management.

Security was the one area where a tangible improvement in co-operation was visible. In tackling ‘extremism’ threats, Kyrgyzstani and Uzbekistani national security services appeared to be working together more efficiently. In relation to drugs and illegal migration, however, it seems that the old patterns endured.

Appendix 1: Officially recorded trade flows in Central Asia

Kazakhstan has shifted much of its export away from the CIS market, with 78.8 per cent in 2004 going to countries outside the CIS.⁶⁵⁸ Exports to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan accounted for only USD 370 million of Kazakhstan's overall export of USD 12,927 million in 2003.⁶⁵⁹

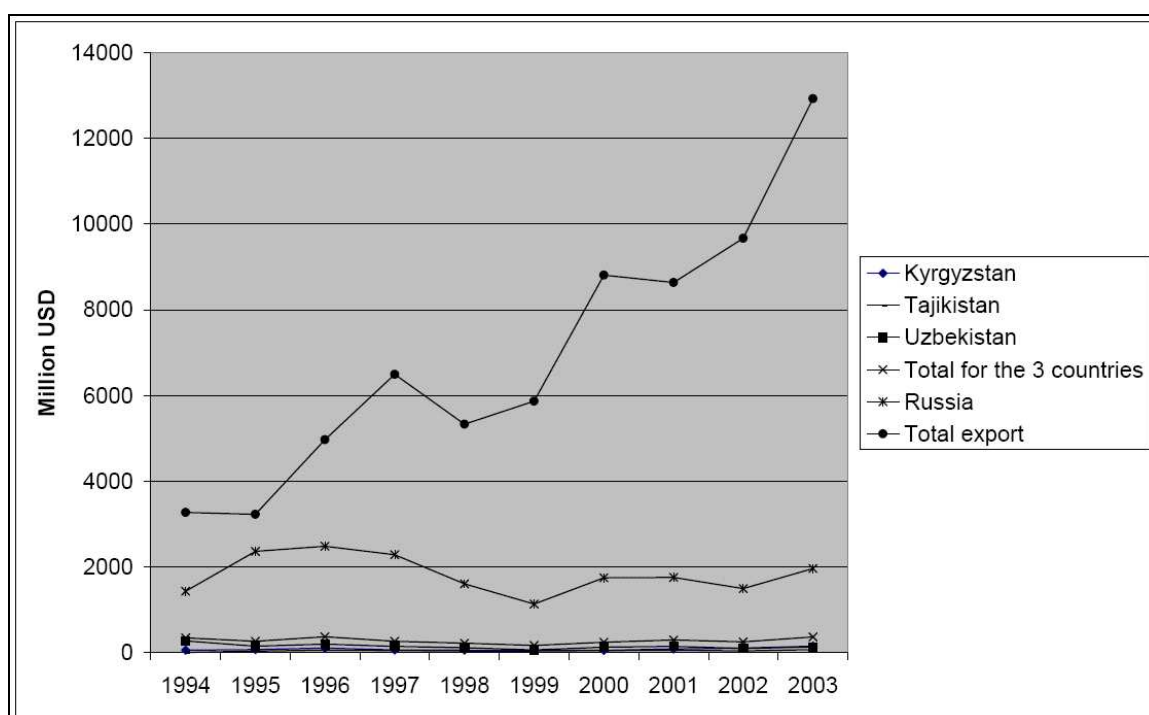


Figure 9: Kazakhstan export trends

Source: IMF Direction of trade statistics yearbook (Washington, DC: IMF, 2004 and 1998)

⁶⁵⁸ IMF, *Country report Kazakhstan* (Washington, DC: IMF, 2005).

⁶⁵⁹ IMF, *Direction of trade statistics yearbook* (Washington, DC: IMF, 2004 and 1998).

Table 17: Kazakhstan exports, million USD

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Kyrgyzstan	60	75	112	66	63	60	58	87	109	156
Tajikistan	10	40	61	55	42	46	53	61	46	76
Uzbekistan	277	153	202	148	119	66	134	150	101	138
Total for the 3 countries	347	268	375	269	224	172	245	298	256	370
Russia	1438	2366	2484	2288	1611	1139	1751	1760	1498	1968
Total export	3277	3231	4974	6497	5334	5872	8812	8639	9670	12927

Source: IMF Direction of trade statistics yearbook (Washington, DC: IMF, 2004 and 1998)

Table 18: Kazakhstan imports, million USD

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Kyrgyzstan	104	31	91	64	53	31	30	33	32	55
Tajikistan	18	12	18	6	4	2	5	2	3	7
Uzbekistan	–	270	89	66	96	87	71	81	87	90
Total for the 3 countries	–	313	198	136	153	120	106	116	122	152
Russia	1293	1900	2325	1969	1712	1351	2439	2892	2549	3282
Total import	3887	3561	3781	4301	4314	3655	5040	6446	6584	8327

Source: IMF Direction of trade statistics yearbook (Washington, DC: IMF, 2004 and 1998)

Russia has retained its position as a key trading partner of Kazakhstan, although the time-series data above indicate a slight decrease in volume. The economic crisis of 1997/98 triggered a slump in trade, though by 2003 the volume of exports to Russia had been restored to levels close to those of 1994. Imports and exports to Uzbekistan have decreased significantly, from USD 277 million in 1994 to USD 138 million by 2003. Exports to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan increased, but these trade flows remain marginal in terms of importance to Kazakhstan's economy – USD 156 million in exports to Kyrgyzstan and USD 76 million in exports to Tajikistan in 2003, out of a total Kazakhstani export of over USD 12 billion.

Uzbekistan, by contrast, has continued to rely more on the CIS as an export market. In 2004, 36.9 per cent of its export went to CIS countries.⁶⁶⁰ As with Kazakhstan, however, very little of the CIS exports have been directed to its immediate Central

⁶⁶⁰ CEEP, *Uzbekistan economy statistical and analytical review January–September 2004* (Tashkent: Center for Effective Economic Policy 2004).

Asian neighbours. Only USD 120 million worth of Uzbekistan's exports went to Tajikistan in 2003, and as little as USD 35 million worth of goods went to Kyrgyzstan. Similarly, only USD 81 million in goods were exported to Kazakhstan. Above I noted that Kazakhstan exported goods valuing USD 138 million to Uzbekistan. Both export figures are remarkably low, given the overall size of the economies of these two countries, coupled with the fact that they are neighbours.

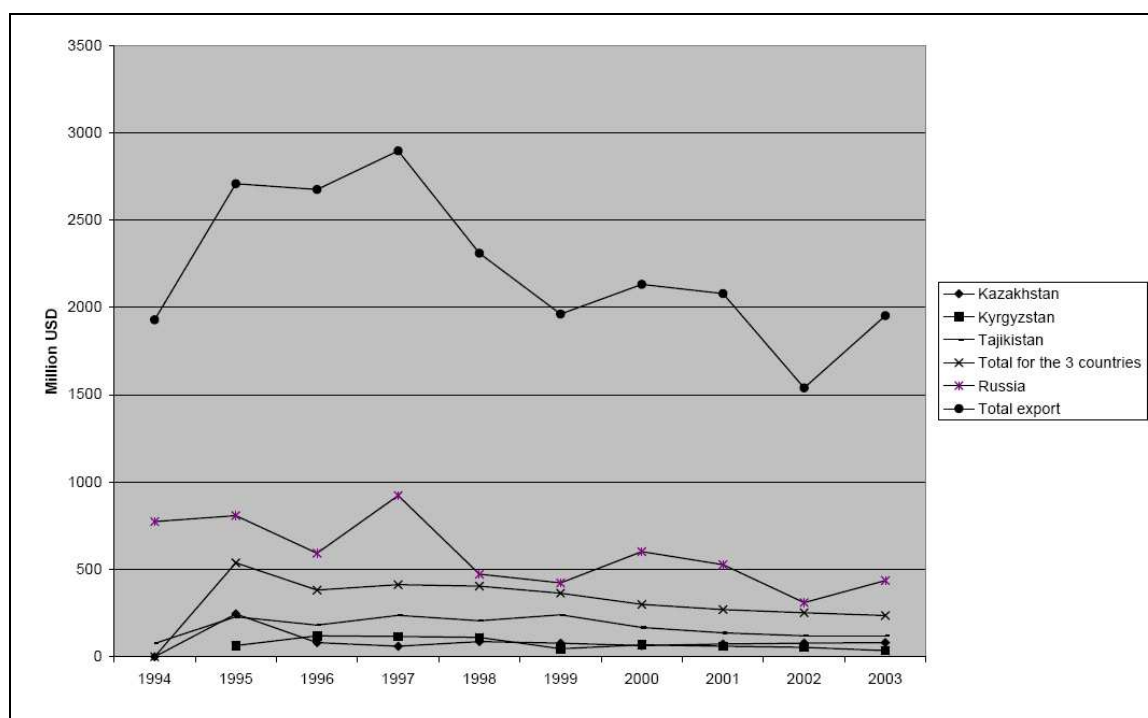


Figure 10: Uzbekistan export trends

Source: IMF Direction of trade statistics yearbook (Washington, DC: IMF, 2004 and 1998)

Table 19: Uzbekistan exports, million USD

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Kazakhstan	–	245	81	60	87	78	64	73	78	81
Kyrgyzstan		64	120	116	111	46	68	60	54	35
Tajikistan	76	229	181	237	206	240	168	137	120	120
Total for the 3 countries	–	538	382	413	404	364	300	270	252	236
Russia	774	808	593	923	473	423	602	527	310	436
Total export	1929	2708	2675	2896	2310	1962	2132	2079	1539	1953

Source: IMF Direction of trade statistics yearbook (Washington, DC: IMF, 2004 and 1998)

Table 20: Uzbekistan imports, million USD

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Kazakhstan	304	168	222	163	131	73	146	165	111	151
Kyrgyzstan	–	98	127	111	42	51	98	52	30	17
Tajikistan	25	145	210	189	138	199	107	95	80	73
Total for the 3 countries	–	411	559	463	311	323	351	312	221	241
Russia	917	907	1191	962	533	264	301	400	498	553
Total import	2321	3030	4901	4537	2930	2481	2071	2292	2079	2481

Source: *as above*

The time-series data show a near halving of exports to Russia between 1994 and 2003, with sharp declines in 1996, 1998 and 2002. On the whole, Uzbekistan's exports to Kyrgyzstan decreased, though there was a period of relatively high export volumes in the years from 1996–1998. Tajikistan also received relatively high volumes of exports between 1995 and 1999, followed by a steady decrease in the period 1999–2003.

Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are smaller economies and have higher trade volumes in relative terms with their close neighbours than do Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

Kyrgyzstan directed 36.5 per cent of its total exports to the CIS in 2003.⁶⁶¹ Until 2002, the share of Kyrgyzstani exports going to Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan was higher than that going to Russia. In 2003, Kyrgyzstan exported goods at a value of 97 million USD, while the three other countries received goods from Kazakhstan totalling 91 million USD that year. Kazakhstan received the bulk of this regional export. In 2003, it imported goods worth 57 million USD.

⁶⁶¹ IMF, *Country report Kyrgyzstan* (Washington, DC: IMF, 2005).

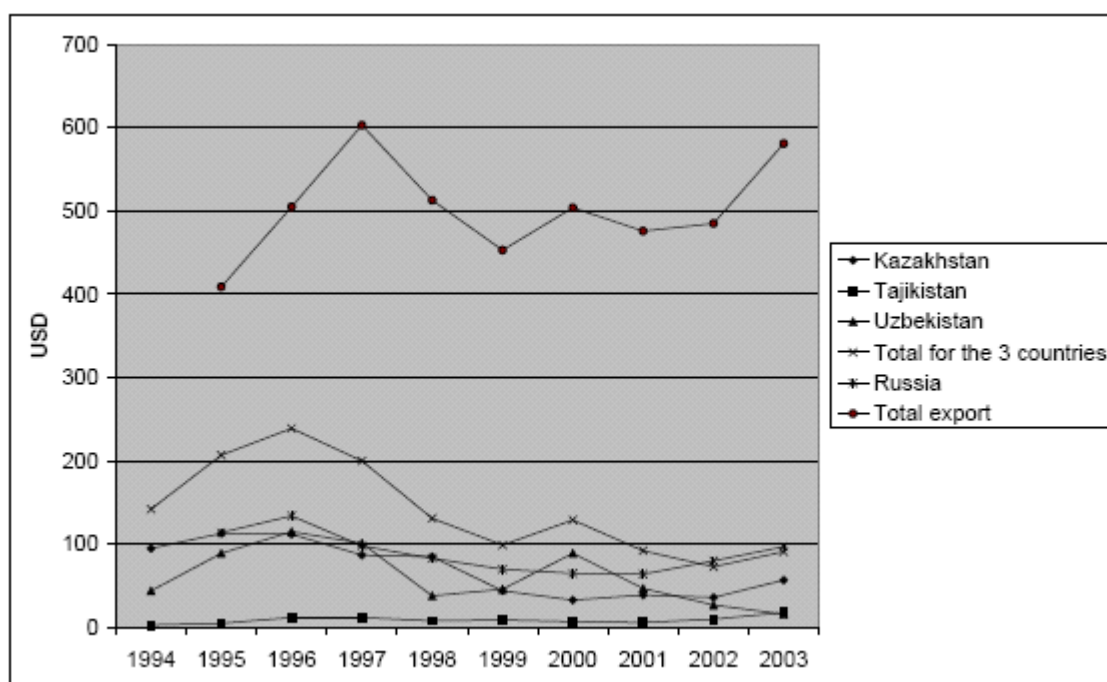


Figure 11: Kyrgyzstan export trends

Source: IMF Direction of trade statistics yearbook (Washington, DC: IMF, 2004 and 1998)

Table 21: Kyrgyzstan exports, million USD

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Kazakhstan	95	113	112	87	85	44	33	39	36	57
Tajikistan	3	5	12	12	8	9	7	6	10	18
Uzbekistan	44	89	115	101	38	46	89	47	27	16
Total for the 3 countries	142	207	239	200	131	99	129	92	73	91
Russia	-	114	134	98	83	70	65	64	80	97
Total export	-	409	505	603	513	453	504	476	485	581

Source: as above

Table 22: Kyrgyzstan imports, million USD

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Kazakhstan	58	67	140	69	75	72	57	81	123	170
Tajikistan	-	8	6	10	6	4	1	1	3	3
Uzbekistan	64	70	132	128	122	50	75	66	60	39
Total for the 3 countries	-	145	278	207	203	126	133	148	186	212
Russia	-	105	175	190	204	109	132	85	116	176
Total import	-	522	838	709	841	599	554	467	586	717

Source: as above

Exports from Kyrgyzstan to both Russia and the three Central Asian countries have dropped markedly since 1996. Export flows to Uzbekistan in particular have fallen,

despite a slight recovery in 2000. These downturns contrast with the increase in Kyrgyzstan's total exports since 1995. The country's interdependence with Kazakhstan has increased markedly since 2000: today it is Kazakhstan, not Uzbekistan, that is Kyrgyzstan's main regional trading partner. In 2003 Kyrgyzstan imported nearly as much from Kazakhstan (USD 170 mill) as from Russia (USD 179 mill).

Tajikistan was estimated to export 13.9 per cent of its goods to the CIS in 2004.⁶⁶² The country differs from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in having a relatively high share of exports going to Uzbekistan. Of total exports (USD 790 mill) in 2003, USD 74 mill went to the three countries – and here Uzbekistan's share was USD 67 million. Nevertheless, Russia has remained important: both Tajikistani exports (USD 52 mill) and imports (USD 178 mill) to and from Russia were nearly as high or, for import higher, than those to/from Uzbekistan in 2003.

⁶⁶² IMF *Republic of Tajikistan: selected issues and statistical appendix* (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2005).

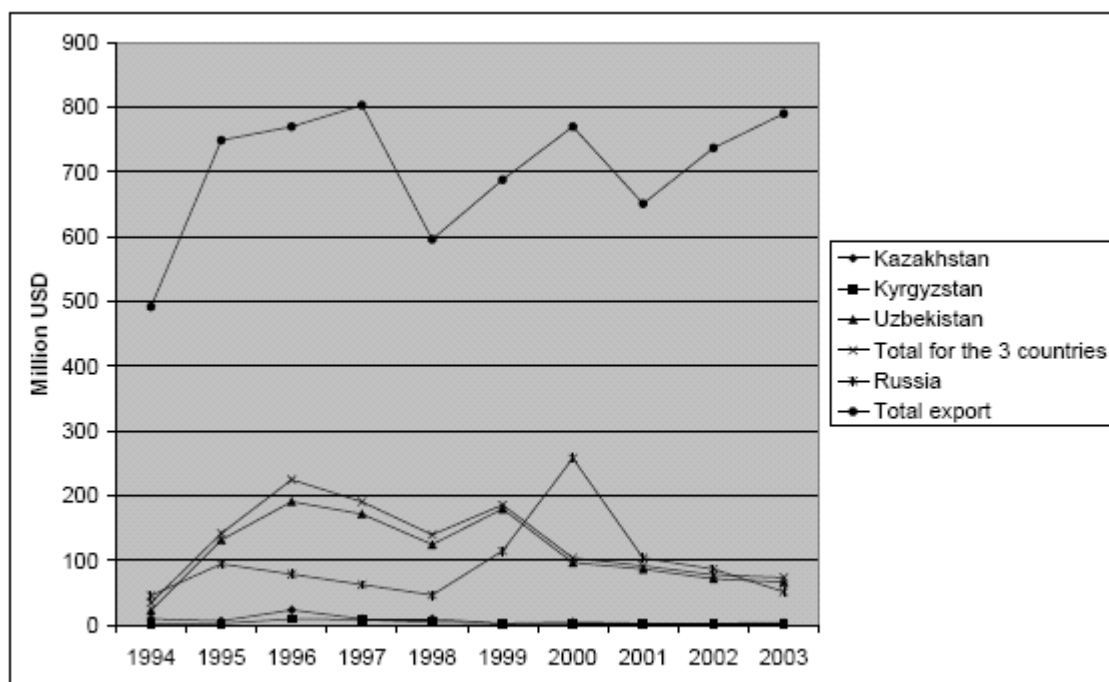


Figure 12: Tajikistan export trends

Source: IMF Direction of trade statistics yearbook (Washington, DC: IMF, 2004 and 1998)

Table 23: Tajikistan exports, million USD

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Kazakhstan	10	7	24	10	10	3	5	3	3	4
Kyrgyzstan	2	3	10	9	5	3	2	2	3	3
Uzbekistan	23	132	191	172	125	180	97	87	72	67
Total for the 3 countries	35	142	225	191	140	186	104	92	78	74
Russia	46	95	79	63	47	115	258	104	87	52
Total export	492	749	770	803	596	688	770	651	737	790

Source: as above

Table 24: Tajikistan imports, million USD

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Kazakhstan	33	27	52	42	51	78	82	89	72	95
Kyrgyzstan	1	3	7	5	5	7	7	5	5	27
Uzbekistan	83	251	199	261	227	264	185	150	132	132
Total for the 3 countries	117	281	258	308	283	349	274	244	209	254
Russia	61	136	74	115	102	92	105	129	163	178
Total import	547	810	668	750	711	663	670	680	710	880

Source: IMF Direction of trade statistics yearbook (Washington, DC: IMF, 2004 and 1998)

The time-series data indicate a steady decrease in the size and significance of

Uzbekistan's exports and imports to Tajikistan in the period 1994 to 2003. There was

a gradual but slight increase in Tajikistan's Russian imports, while its exports to Russia peaked in 2000 but have since declined. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have remained marginal destinations for exports from Tajikistan, although both (Kazakhstan in particular) have increased their significance as exporters to Tajikistan. However, trade volumes are still very low.

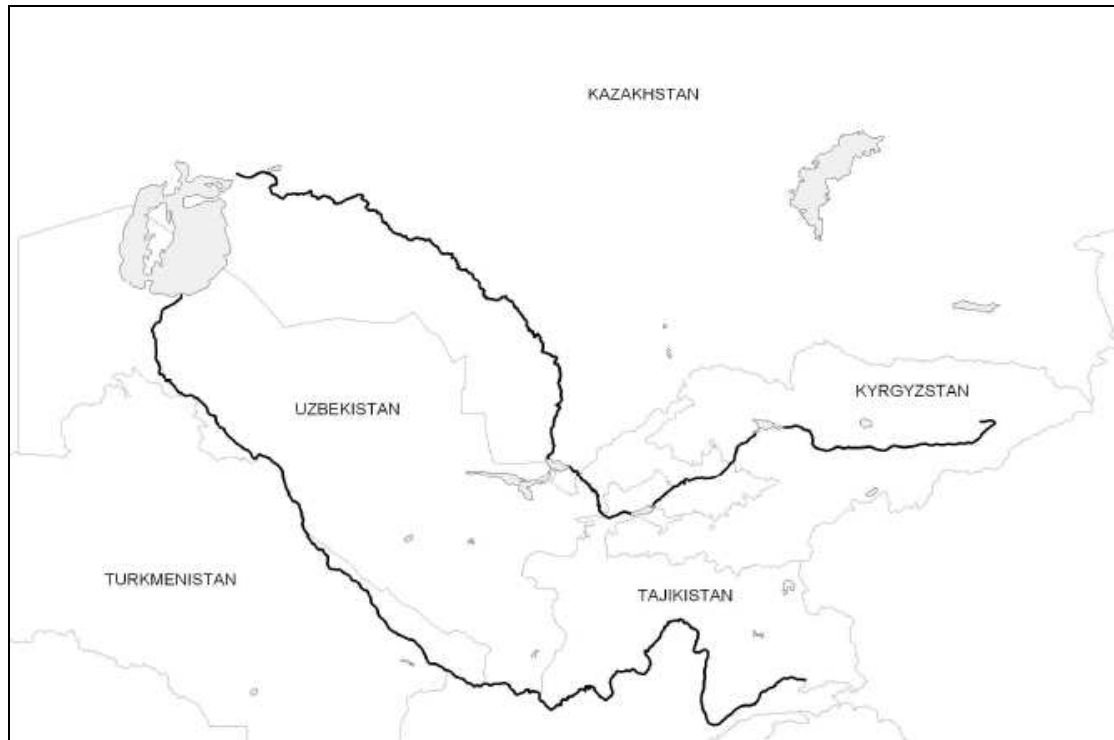
An important caveat about these trade figures bears repeating. Earlier, I mentioned the large discrepancies in registered trade flows between China and some of the Central Asian states. Boris Rumer notes that there was a significant 'shadow sphere' of the Central Asian economy. This involved 'unregistered financial commercial and industrial groups, and it does not appear in the flows of resources and goods reported by the national statistical services. A significant factor ...also belongs to the so called "shuttle-traders" (*chelnoki*) – the hundreds of thousands of people who regularly journey abroad, including to neighbouring states, to engage in such trade.'⁶⁶³ The UNDP estimated that unrecorded imports of petrol, consumer goods and diesel fuel in 2003 were equivalent to 17 per cent of Kyrgyzstan's recorded imports that year.⁶⁶⁴ Thus, there are sizable trade flows that are not registered, and therefore do not appear in the statistics above.

⁶⁶³ B. Z. Rumer and S. V. Zhukov, *Central Asia: the challenges of independence* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), p. 110.

⁶⁶⁴ UNDP *Central Asia Human Development Report 2005* (New York: United Nations Development Programme, 2005), p. 53.

Appendix 2: Basic parameters of water co-operation: irrigation, electricity and agriculture in Central Asia

Map 3: Amu Darya and Syr Darya



Source: Map created in MapInfo using Batholomew Digital Data (2002)

Water

Two trans-border rivers have been central in regional inter-state co-operation in Central Asia: the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya. The Amu Darya originates in Tajikistan. It forms the entire border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan and later between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, then turns north into Turkmenistan and ends in the north-western parts of Uzbekistan. The Syr Darya originates in Kyrgyzstan. It runs through the Fergana Valley in Uzbekistan, crosses into northern Tajikistan, enters the central areas of Uzbekistan and ends by flowing into south-western Kazakhstan and eventually the Aral Sea further north.

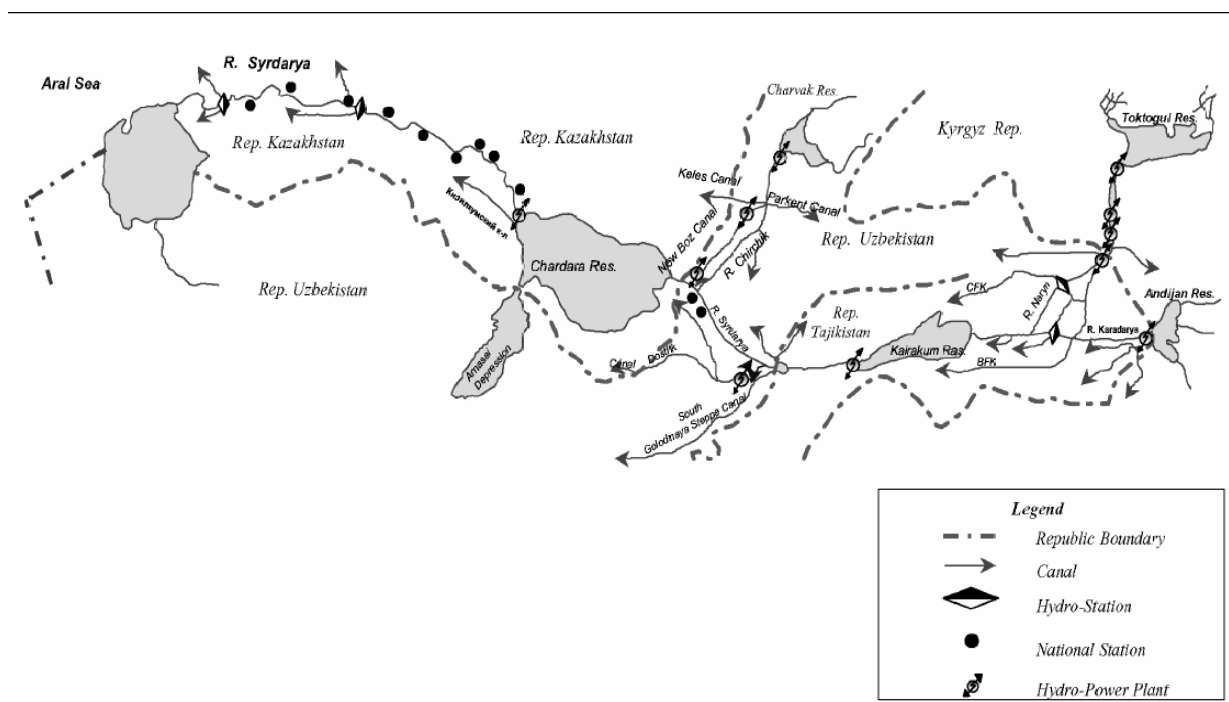


Figure 13: Main Reservoirs and Hydropower Facilities of the Syr Darya Basin

Source: World Bank *Water and energy nexus in Central Asia: improving regional cooperation in the Syr Darya basin* (Washington DC: World Bank, 2004) p. 2

The major consumers of water in Central Asia are the downstream countries.

Uzbekistan receives 22.33 km³ from the Syr Darya and 22 km³ from the Amu Darya.

Tajikistan withdraws approximately 0.7 km³ from the Syr Darya and 10.54 km³ from the Amu Darya, while the respective figures for Kyrgyzstan are 4.92 km³ and 0.42

km.³ Kazakhstan receives 10 km³ from the Syr Darya.⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁶⁵ Aquastat, 'General summary for the countries of the former Soviet Union', FAO, www.fao.org. This situation is quite unique. Elsewhere in the world, with the exception of the Nile river basin, upstream countries tend to predominate in the share of water withdrawals. J. Allouche, 'A source of regional tension: the case of water', in CIMERA ed. *The illusions of transition: which perspectives for Central Asia and the Caucasus?* (Geneva: Graduate Institute of International Studies, 2004), pp. 95–96.

Table 25: Renewable surface water resources of the Aral Sea basin

Country or zone	Area			Renewable surface water resources					
				Amu Darya		Syr Darya		Aral Sea basin	
	km ² (in '000)	% of basin	% of country area	km ³ per year	% of basin	km ³ per year	% of basin	km ³ per year	% of basin
South Kazakhstan	540	28	20	–	0.0	4.50	12.1	4.50	3.9
Turkmenistan	466	24	96	0.98	1.2	–	0.0	0.98	0.8
Uzbekistan	447.4	23	100	4.70	6.0	4.84	13.0	9.54	8.3
North Afghanistan	234	12	36	6.18	7.9	–	0.0	6.18	5.3
Tajikistan	141.67	7	99	62.90	80.2	0.40	1.1	63.30	54.8
Kyrgyzstan	117.5	6	59	1.93	2.5	27.25	73.4	29.18	25.2

Source: Aquastat, 'General summary for the countries of the former Soviet Union', FAO.

Central Asia as a whole is not a particularly water-scarce region. A country is considered water scarce if annual water supplies drop below 1,000 cubic meters per person. Uzbekistan (704 cubic meters) and Turkmenistan (232 cubic meters) fall short of that figure, while Kazakhstan (4,484 cubic meters), Tajikistan (11,171 cubic meters) and Kyrgyzstan (10,394 cubic meters) are comfortably above the 1,000m³ mark. The water problems of Central Asia are therefore more related to distribution and use than to overall quantities.⁶⁶⁶

Water use in Central Asia is strikingly inefficient. Between 80 and 90 per cent of the water used goes to irrigation. The World Bank estimates that the ratio of water use in agriculture in the region is 12,900 cubic meters per hectare, and that only 21 per cent of this amount is employed effectively. The remaining 79 per cent is lost, due to unlined on-farm and inter-farm canals, decaying drainage systems, and lack of canal

⁶⁶⁶ Allouche, 'A source of regional tension: the case of water', p. 95.

cleaning and maintenance. In contrast, the normal rate for inefficiency in water use in developing countries is 60 per cent.⁶⁶⁷

Central Asia's best-known and most urgent water crisis is the shrinking of the Aral Sea. This disaster has a simple cause. The increase in use of water from the Syr Darya and the Amu Darya for irrigation in cotton production after 1960 caused drastic drops in inflows to the sea. In 1960 the Aral Sea stretched across 66,900 km², whereas by 2000 its surface had been reduced to 24,003 km² and it had split into two smaller seas.⁶⁶⁸ Desiccation continued at the same relentless pace after 1991: the independence of the Central Asian states did not foster change and positive action on the Aral Sea crisis. The figure below presents satellite images of the Aral Sea showing the rapid advance of desiccation.

⁶⁶⁷ World Bank, *Irrigation in Central Asia* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2003), p. 9.

⁶⁶⁸ M. Spoor and A. Krutov, 'The "power of water" in a divided Central Asia', *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology*, vol. 2, no. 3–4, 2003, pp. 26–27.

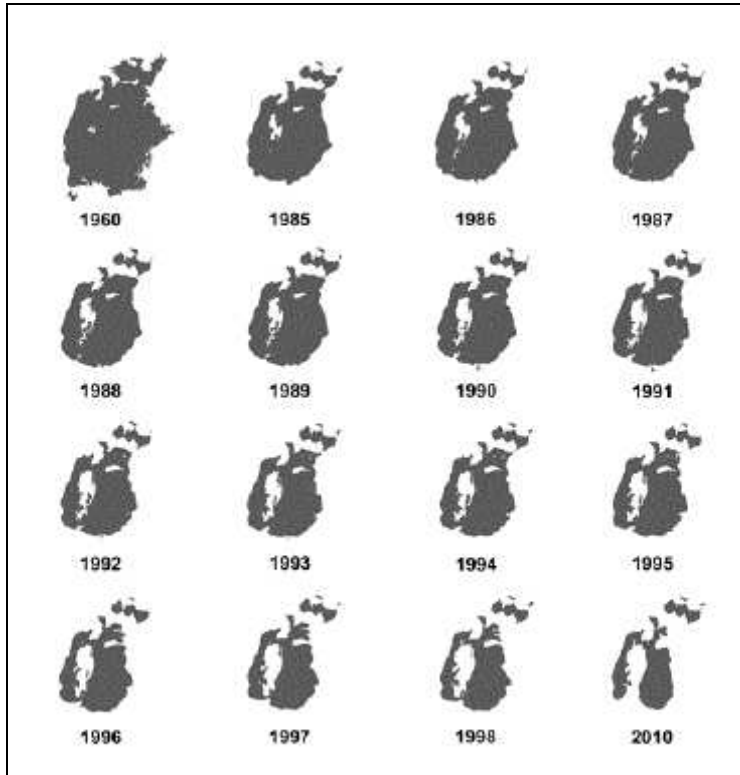


Figure 14: Desiccation of the Aral Sea

Source: Spoor and Krutov *The “power of water” in a divided Central Asia*, p. 26

Table 26: Annual water inflow to the Aral Sea

	inflow, km³
1960	64.1
1965	30.2
1970	37.8
1975	11.2
1980	11.1
1985	3.1
1990	12.5
1995	10.3
2000	5.5

Source: U. Ashirbekov and I. Zonn *Aral: the history of dying sea* (Dushanbe: International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, 2003) p. 56 (publication name listed as appearing in printed version)

The desiccation has led to a complex set of disasters affecting the people and the environment of the region around the Aral Sea. Former seashore villages and towns are now more than 70 km from the sea. The mineral content of the water has increased fourfold, ruling out the survival of most fish and wildlife. Large-scale

fishing ended in 1982. The exposed seabed is salty, and the sand and dust (polluted with pesticides) are carried by the wind to neighbouring regions. Unemployment and emigration have devastated the local communities and health conditions have worsened dramatically.⁶⁶⁹

Reservoirs

The other paramount water-related challenge in the region has been the dispute over the shares and timing of water flows for irrigation and hydropower generation. Here we should note an important structural feature: the location and capacities of water storages and reservoirs. These provide a considerable measure of control on the part of individual states, in particular Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Tajikistan has 19 dams and reservoirs (5 for the Syr Darya and 14 for the Amu Darya) with a total storage capacity of 29 km³ and with a reservoir area of 934 km². Kyrgyzstan has 18 reservoirs, with total capacity estimated at 23.5 km³. Total capacity for storage of Syr Darya water is 22.3 km³ –the large Toktogul dam makes up 19.5 km³ of this amount. This dam is close to the Uzbek border, and relatively few areas in Kyrgyzstan receive water from it.

In 1994, Uzbekistan had 50 reservoirs with a total storage capacity of 19 km³. Of these, 21 were for the Syr Darya and had a total capacity of 5 km³, whereas 29 were for the Amu Darya and had a total capacity of 14 km³.³ Outflow from water reservoirs and installations in Uzbekistan has led to the creation of artificial lakes, the largest of which is Lake Aydarkul in the Arnasay Depression in the middle of the Syr Darya

⁶⁶⁹ Aquastat, 'The Aral Sea basin'.

(storing approximately 30 km³ in 1995). In the mid-1990s Uzbekistan started constructing several additional storage-enhancing reservoir projects.

Kazakhstan has more than 180 reservoirs, but few of them are part of the Syr Darya basin. The one major reservoir for this basin is Chardara on the border with Uzbekistan, with a total capacity of 5.7 km³. The Arnasay Depression and Lake Aydarkul are close to Chardara and also form part of Kazakhstani territory.

Some 90 per cent of the withdrawals from the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya are used for irrigation. Agriculture occupies a vital position in the national economies of Central Asia. In Uzbekistan agriculture accounts for 33 per cent of GDP, 60 per cent of the country's foreign exchange receipts and 45 per cent of all employment. In Kyrgyzstan agriculture contributes to 38 per cent of GDP, and in Tajikistan 19 per cent.⁶⁷⁰ Agriculture is less crucial in Kazakhstan, where it represents only 11 per cent of GDP and only 14 per cent of employment.

Compared to those of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan's foreign exchange receipts stem to a much greater extent from the energy sector rather than from agricultural exports. This distinction is highly relevant, since as will be discussed below, Kazakhstan has been pro-active in pushing for multilateral and long-term mechanisms for water sharing in the region – in contrast to Uzbekistan, whose economy is far more dependent on irrigation.

⁶⁷⁰ World Bank, *Water and energy nexus in Central Asia: improving regional cooperation in the Syr Darya basin* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2004), p. 3.

Agriculture

Cotton dominates among the irrigated crops of Central Asia. In Tajikistan and Uzbekistan it is the leading crop, and the second largest crop in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

Table 27: irrigated crops in 1994

	Crop	Irrigated land (ha)
Uzbekistan	Cotton	1 700 000
	Fodder	950 000
	Wheat	450 000
	<i>Total irrigated cropland</i>	<i>4 308 800</i>
Tajikistan	Cotton	290 000
	Fodder	110 000
	Wheat	60 000
	<i>Total irrigated cropland</i>	<i>719 200</i>
Kyrgyzstan	Cotton	20 000
	Fodder	530 000
	Wheat	210 000
	<i>Total irrigated cropland</i>	<i>1 077 100</i>
Kazakhstan	Cotton	105 000
	Fodder	1 006 000
	Wheat	98 000
	<i>Total irrigated cropland</i>	<i>2 313 100</i>

Source: Aquastat, 'General summary for the countries of the former Soviet Union', FAO, www.fao.org

In Chapter 2, I noted that the countries of Central Asia chose different economic reform paths after independence. Uzbekistan has taken few steps to reform its agricultural sector, and Tajikistan has also done little in that regard. Uzbekistan has continued with government-set production targets, fixed prices and compulsory delivery to the state. By contrast, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan have introduced private property principles and market mechanisms in the agricultural sector.

Electricity

The other aspect of water and irrigation in Central Asia concerns the generation of hydroelectric power. Most reservoirs and dams in Central Asia were constructed primarily in order to regulate water for agricultural production. The reservoirs enabled the Central Asian republics to increase production and ensured more controlled and predictable access to water – which in turn helped them reach the agricultural production targets set by the political leadership in Moscow. Many of the dams and reservoirs were, however, also equipped with installations for generating hydroelectric power.

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have the greatest relative installed capacity for generating hydropower. Of the 3.6 GW and 4.4 GW of total installed capacity for electricity generation, 80 and 90 per cent are hydropower, respectively. Importantly, both countries have planned or have launched ongoing, large-scale projects to enhance hydro-generation capacity. Tajikistan has initiated work on the Sangtuda 1 project, while Sangtuda 2 and Rogun are in the advanced stages of planning.⁶⁷¹ These three projects will draw investment from both Iran and Russia, and possibly Kazakhstan as well.⁶⁷²

Kyrgyzstan negotiated with Russia's Unified Energy System for investments in the Kambarata 1 project, which would enhance hydro-generation at the Toktogul reservoir.⁶⁷³ The realisation of these projects would further enhance Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan's control of the timing and quantity of water releases. Depending on their

⁶⁷¹ Interview, Advisor to the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 12 April 2005.

⁶⁷² Ibid.

⁶⁷³ 'Russia offers Kyrgyzstan a hand', *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, 17 September 2005.

design, the projects might also ensure better technical capacity to generate power, while avoiding distortion of irrigation schedules through the construction of several successive water chambers and reservoirs.⁶⁷⁴ The projects also introduce the prospect of large-scale export of electricity to neighbouring countries like China, Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan.

The Unified Energy System of Central Asia is managed technically from the Central Dispatched Unit, called *Energia*, in Tashkent. *Energia* ensures synchronous operation of the grid by balancing the system in real time and regulating voltage and system frequencies according to plans prepared by each country.⁶⁷⁵ Power exchanges between the countries through this system continue, although the level of inter-state exchanges dropped by 70 per cent in the decade between 1990 and 2000.

⁶⁷⁴ Interview, Representative Ministry of Water Management Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, 11 February 2005.

⁶⁷⁵ World Bank, *Water and energy nexus in Central Asia*.

Interview list (*chronological, by country*)

Kyrgyzstan

Representative, Ministry of Water Management Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, 11 February 2005

Senior representative, Ministry of Water Management Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, 11 February 2005

Former head of the legal and international co-operation section of Kyrgyzstan's Drug Control Agency, Bishkek, 13 February 2005

Representative, UNODC, Bishkek, 21 February 2005

Representative, Ministry of External Trade and Industry Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, 21 February 2005

Truck driver (anonymous), Bishkek, 21 February 2005

Representative, World Bank, Bishkek, 22 February 2005

Representative, Committee for Revenue under the Ministry of Finance, Bishkek, 23 February 2005

Chief technical advisor (governance) UNDP, Bishkek, 23 February 2005

Representative, Pragma Corporation, Bishkek, 23 February 2005

Representative, NGO (migration), Bishkek, 24 February 2005

Representative, Ministry of Finance Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, 25 February 2005

Representative of ACTED, Osh, 2 March 2005

Representative, NGO, Osh, 2 March 2005

Representative, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kyrgyzstan Southern Region Migration Service, Osh, 4 March 2005

Field officer OSCE, Osh, 4 March 2005

RFE/RL local correspondent, Kara Suu, 6 March 2005

IWPR local correspondent, Osh, 6 March 2005

Mayor of Osh City, Osh, 9 March 2005

Businessman (anonymous), Jalalabad City 10 March 2005

Advisor to businessman and Member of Parliament (*Joghorku Kengesh*), Osh, 10 March 2005

Businessman and Member of Parliament (*Joghorku Kengesh*), Osh, 11 March 2005

Small-scale farmer, Osh province, 14 March 2005

Farmer and local-level water regulator, Osh province, 14 March 2005

Representative, NGO (legal advice on border crossings), Osh, 15 March 2005

Uzbekistan

Advisor to the President of Uzbekistan, Director of the Institute of Strategic and Regional Studies under the president of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Tashkent, 12 September 2002

Resident Representative, UNDP, Tashkent, 15 March 2005

Researcher (migration), Tashkent, 18 March 2005

Lecturer, University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Tashkent 22 March 2005

Representative, UNESCO, Tashkent, 23 March 2005

ADB Regional Co-operation Specialist, Tashkent, 23 March 2005

Representative, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Tashkent, 24 March 2005

Researcher, Centre for Economic Research (CER), Tashkent, 24 March 2005

Resident, Regional Representative UNODC, Tashkent, 28 March 2005

Representative, Pragma Corporation (Trade Facilitation and Investment Project), Tashkent, 28 March 2005

Representative, OSCE, Tashkent, 29 March 2005

Representative, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Tashkent, 29 March 2005

Former high-ranking Uzbekistani foreign ministry official, Tashkent, 30 March 2005

Technical director, Agency for Implementing GEF projects (IFAS), Tashkent, 30 March 2005

Journalist, major national newspaper, Uzbekistan, Tashkent, 1 April 2005

Editor and journalist, Andijan, 4 April 2005

Representative, Andijan province administration (section on water management issues), Andijan, 4 April 2005

Representative, NGO (water issues), 4 April 2005

Local TV journalist, Fergana City, 5 April 2005

Small-scale importer of goods from Kara Suu market, bazaar trader Fergana City, 5 April 2005

Representative, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Fergana Province, Fergana City, 5 April 2005

Representative, Fergana province administration (section on water management issues), Fergana, 6 April 2005

Tajikistan

Representative, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Dushanbe, 15 August 2003

Former official, Tajikistan Ministry of Security, Dushanbe, 19 July 2004

Former civil war middle-level commander (UTO), Ishkashim, 1 August 2004

Representative, Tavildara Development Committee, Tavildara, 24 August 2004

Representative of Uzbekistan to the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, Dushanbe, 11 April 2005

Advisor to the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 12 April 2005

High-level representative, Tajikistan Ministry of Industry, Dushanbe, 12 April 2005

Representative, Department of Foreign Economic Relations, Tajikistan Ministry of Industry, Dushanbe, 12 April 2005

Businessman, former exporter of goods from Tajikistan to Russia, Dushanbe, 13 April 2005

Representative, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Dushanbe, 13 April 2005

Deputy Leader, Islamic Revival Party, Dushanbe, 13 April 2005

Researcher, Institute for Strategic Studies under the President, Dushanbe, 14 April 2005

Former high-ranking UTO member, Dushanbe, 15 April 2005

Representative, US Embassy in Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 22 April 2005

Kazakhstan

Pragma Corporation Central Asia Regional Director (International Trade and Customs) and Country Director Kazakhstan, Almaty, 24 April 2005

Regional Programme Co-ordinator, World Bank Central Asia regional office, Almaty, 28 April 2005

Deputy Chief Technical Advisor, ICWC, Almaty, 28 April 2005

Researcher and regional integration expert, Almaty, 29 April 2005

Representative, Kazakhstan's National Water Commission, 30 April 2005

High-level representative of EvrAzES secretariat/former representative of TsAES implementing committee, Almaty, 4 May 2005

Representative, USAID, Almaty 5 May 2005

Project team leader, 'Support to the Eurasian Training Centre for Civil Servants in Kazakhstan', Astana, 11 May 2005

Representative, Pragma Corporation, Astana, 12 May 2005

Representative, NGO, Astana, 13 May 2005

Senior representative, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Almaty, 15 May 2005

Deputy Head, South Kazakhstan Province Administration, Shymkent, 16 May 2005

Independent journalist, Shymkent, 17 May 2005

Representative, South Kazakhstan Branch of the Association for the Support and Development of Pharmacies, Shymkent, 17 May 2005

Confidential

Anonymous, City: Anonymous, 6 March 2005

Representative of a Central Asian Foreign Ministry, City: confidential, 13 May 2005

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