

Security Policy and Developments in Central Asia *Security documents compared with security challenges*

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This article examines the security policy of the Central Asian (CA) states, by comparing theory (security documents) with practice (the actual security challenges). The lack of CA regional (security) cooperation and authoritarian rule puts political and economic stability at stake. The internal and external threats are partly caused by the CA regimes themselves: political opposition groups are often described as terrorists, and/or blamed to be connected to Islamic State (IS). There is hardly any effort towards improving social-economic circumstances, which would take away grounds for (Islamic) radicalization. Moreover, the CA governments are themselves responsible for regional border, water and energy disputes. Political unrest and radicalization, IS, as well as terrorism and drugs from Afghanistan could become serious threats to the survival of CA governments.

Introduction

This research is aimed at determining if the statements the CA governments make in their documents on security policy are in line with the current security situation in the region. Do the CA security documents provide sufficient direction for national security, or are additional measures required? First, I will describe the structure of security documents in each of the CA states and their typical national views on security. Subsequently, I will compare each type of security document (Constitutions, National Security Strategies/Concepts, Military Doctrines and Foreign Policy Concepts) for all CA states, through the contents of their main topics, i.e. national interests, threats and measures to ensure national security. Then, I will analyse the total of all security documents of all CA states according to the aforementioned main topics. Finally, I will provide an assessment of the contents of the CA security documents versus actual security developments in the region.

Each CA state has a set of security documents available for conducting its security policy. Per CA country there is some variety in the type of documents. Some states have a National Security Strategy (NSS) as political or grand strategy, whereas in others a Law on National Security acts as the highest security paper. Furthermore, some CA governments publish all their security documents, whereas others have apparently reasons to keep one or more papers classified. Pertaining to transparency of security documents, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are the most open states; they publish all their security documents. Next is Kazakhstan, which only keeps its NSS classified. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan appear as the most closed countries, they hold more than one of their security documents secret. Moreover, some CA states keep their security documents more up-to-date than others. Kazakhstan, for instance, has versions of its security documents that are quite recent. In contrast, some of the security documents of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are outdated, being drafted in the mid-1990s. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan take a middle position, with some of the documents of recent date and some of around a decade ago.

Kazakhstan

According to Kazakhstan's Foreign Policy Concept (FPC), its security policy is based on five documents: the Constitution (1995/2007), the Military Doctrine (2011), the Law on National Security (2012), the Kazakhstan-2050 Strategy (2012) and the Foreign Policy Concept (2014) itself.¹ With the exception of the 2050-Strategy, most countries publish the aforementioned types of security documents. The 2050-Strategy of Kazakhstan is the exception to the rule, presenting a comprehensive state program for all segments of society, for the decades ahead. Usually, a state has an overall NSS. The Kazakh Law on National Security mentions such a NSS, however, a foreign publication testifies that this document is classified.² This was also confirmed to the author by high-ranking Kazakh military officers. The reason for the classification of the NSS is probably because this document contains specific measures in response to violations of the national security of Kazakhstan, which the authorities do not want to disclose to leave any adversary (internal or external) in doubt as to what to expect. However, Kazakhstan's Law on National Security covers all aspects of a NSS: security types; national interests; policy objectives; threats; and responsibilities for ensuring national security.

With regard to national views in its security documents, different from the common CA assessments, Astana repeatedly focusses attention on the (delimitation of the) Caspian Sea. The energy resources in this basin are crucial for Kazakhstan's economy. Therefore, the borders of the Caspian littoral states need to be agreed to avoid disputes which could disrupt the exploitation of the energy resources. For this reason – energy resources being a vital asset of its economic power – Kazakhstan also reiterates the protection of its energy sector.

Kyrgyzstan

On 12 June 2012, Kyrgyzstan's President Almazbek Atambayev signed into law the country's new National Security Concept (NSC).³ Subsequently, a National Sustainable Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for the period 2013-2017 was approved by Presidential Decree of 21 January 2013. This strategy entails social-economic measures for the following five years. Besides these two strategies, Kyrgyzstan has at its disposal a Military Doctrine of 2013 and a FPC of 2007. All documents are public.⁴

Concerning national Kyrgyz viewpoints, prominently comes to the fore Bishkek's (security, energy, economic and political) cooperation with Moscow. This cooperation with Russia is of

¹ *Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan* (30 August 1995) <http://www.parlam.kz/en/constitution> (accessed 7 November 2015); *Voennaya doktrina Respubliki Kazakhstan* (11 October 2011) http://mod.gov.kz/rus/dokumenty/voennaya_doktrina/ (accessed 7 November 2015); *Zakon o natsional'noy bezopasnosti Respubliki Kazakhstan* (6 January 2012) http://mod.gov.kz/rus/dokumenty/zakony/vse_zakony/?cid=0&rid=281 (accessed 7 November 2015); *Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy* (15 December 2012) http://www.akorda.kz/ru/official_documents/strategies_and_programs (accessed 7 November 2015); *Foreign Policy Concept for 2014 – 2020* (25 April 2014) <http://www.kazembassy.nl/index.php/en/about-kazakhstan/foreign-policy/foreign-policy-concept-for-2014-2020> (accessed 7 November 2015).

² R. McDermott, *Kazakhstan's 2011 Military Doctrine: Reassessing Regional and International Security* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, USA: Foreign Military Studies Office August 2012) p. 7.

³ R. McDermott, 'Kyrgyzstan's National Security Concept Legally Enshrines Strategic Balance', *Eurasia Daily Monitor (EDM)*, 9/149 (6 August 2012).

⁴ *Kontseptsiya natsional'noy bezopasnosti Kyrgyzskoy Respubliki* (12 June 2012) http://www.vesti.kg/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=13270&Itemid=117 (accessed 7 November 2015); *Natsional'naya strategiya ustoychivogo razvitiya Kyrgyzskoy Respubliki na period 2013-2017* (21 January 2013) http://www.president.kg/ru/news/ukazy/1466_tekst_natsionalnoy_strategii_ustoychivogo_razvitiya_kyrgyzskoy_respubliki_na_period_2013-2017_godyi/ (accessed 7 November 2015); *Voennaya doktrina Kyrgyzskoy Respubliki* (22 July 2013) <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1374474180> (accessed 7 November 2015); *Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki KR* (10 January 2007) <http://mfa-osh.kg/pravovayabase/1065-koncepciya-vneshney-politiki-kr.html#.Vgkle4voveQ> (accessed 7 November 2015).

vital importance for the survival of the government, since Kyrgyzstan is a political weak state without energy resources. For the same reason, Bishkek also assigns much value to its cooperation in the Russian-led military alliance, Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), as well as the regional Eurasian political-economic organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Tajikistan

Tajikistan lacks a NSS. Instead, the leading security document is for Dushanbe the Law on National Security of 28 June 2011. In addition to this document, Tajikistan has a Military Doctrine of 2005 and a FPC of 2015. All security documents are disclosed.⁵

With reference to national positions in its security papers, Tajikistan's entries are similar to those of Kyrgyzstan. Dushanbe also has close cooperation with Moscow securing the survival of this political weak state, and Tajikistan too lacks energy resources. Likewise, Tajikistan also highly values cooperation in CSTO and SCO.

Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan does not have a NSS. However, its alternative, the Law on National Security of 4 May 2013 is only partly published. Conversely, the Turkmen Military Doctrine of 2009 was released in full. But the Turkmen FPC of 1995 is again classified.⁶

Ashgabat has one prominent national political feature which affects all its security documents, namely its policy of permanent neutrality. Among other things, this leads Turkmenistan to rejecting membership of SCO and CSTO and also to renouncing foreign troops and/or military bases on its territory.

Uzbekistan

The Concept of National Security of Uzbekistan of 29 August 1997 is not public. But the Military Doctrine of 1995 was released in full. Furthermore, Uzbekistan has only partly published its FPC of 2012.⁷

Tashkent regards itself – by military and demographic might – as the leader of Central Asia, although Astana's economic power is much stronger. However, this national view of regional leadership affects its security documents by stressing its independent, non-allied position. For this reason, Uzbekistan has more than once withdrawn itself from the CSTO, most

⁵ *Zakon Respubliki Tadjikistan o Bezopasnosti* (28 June 2011) http://mmk.tj/ru/library/o_bezopasnosti.doc, (accessed 7 November 2015); *Voennaya doktrina Respubliki Tadjikistan* (3 October 2005) http://base.spininform.ru/show_doc.fwx?rgn=12243 (accessed 7 November 2015); *Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Respubliki Tadjikistan* (27 January 2015) <http://mfa.tj/ru/pravovaya-osnova-vp/kontseptciya-vneshney-politiki-respubliki-tadjikistan.html> (accessed 7 November 2015).

⁶ *Zakon o Bezopasnosti Turkmenistana* (4 May 2013) http://base.spininform.ru/show_doc.fwx?rgn=65978 (accessed 7 November 2015); *Voennaya doktrina nezavisimogo postoyanno neytral'nogo Turkmenistana* (21 January 2009) <http://www.turkmenbusiness.org/node/126> (accessed 7 November 2015); *Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Turkmenistana* (March 2012). The *Law on National Security* (2013) is only partly public. The data provided here are based upon S. Aleksandrov, 'Poleznaya strategiya', *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye* (27 May 2005).

⁷ *Voennaya doktrina Respubliki Uzbekistan* (30 August 1995) http://www.lex.uz/pages/GetAct.aspx?lact_id=134026 (accessed 7 November 2015); *Ob osnovnykh printsipakh vneshnepoliticheskoy deyatelnosti Respubliki Uzbekistan* (26 December 1996) http://base.spininform.ru/show_doc.fwx?rgn=801 (accessed 7 November 2015). The *Concept of National Security of Uzbekistan* (1997) is not public. The data provided here are based upon: P. Sidorenko, *Vooruzhennyye sili Respubliki Uzbekistan* (5 June 2009), http://vsemirnaya-istoriya.ru/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=95:armiya-uzbekistana&catid=8:istoriya-nezavisemosti&Itemid=29 (accessed 23 October 2015); and from *Strategiya natsional'noy bezopasnosti Respubliki Uzbekistan v Tsentral'noy Azii*, http://vsemirnaya-istoriya.ru/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=89:nacionalnayabezopasnostuzbekistana&catid=8:istoriya-nezavisemosti&Itemid=29 (accessed 23 October 2015).

recently in 2012. Tashkent is fearful that CSTO armed forces might be used against Uzbek sovereignty. Therefore, Tashkent is anxious of CSTO or other military deployment on its territory, and therefore rejects the presence of foreign troops on its soil.

Comparison of Central-Asian security documents by type

There are a number of policy documents that a state has available for conducting its security policy. Documents that incorporate security aspects are Constitutions, National Security Strategies/Concepts (NSS) / Laws on National Security, Military Doctrines and Foreign Policy Concepts (FPC). In this paragraph I compare each type of security document for all CA states, by the contents of their main topics, i.e. national interests; threats; and measures to ensure national security. When in some cases the specific security document was classified, I have tried to extract the equivalent data from other sources (see country foot notes).

Constitutions

With regard to national interests, all the CA constitutions adhere to the principles of international law, e.g. by pursuing a policy of cooperation and good-neighbourly relations; non-interference in internal affairs; and non-use of force. Turkmenistan differs from the other CA states with dominating attention for its policy of permanent positive neutrality. Pertaining to threats, the CA constitutions only mention internal ones, not external threats. This is logical, because a constitution is first of all a national document. Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have similar entries, which state that armed paramilitary groupings are forbidden and that political parties and other civil organizations are not allowed to threaten the constitutional order. Apparently, these states are fearful of a coup d'état. Concerning the execution of security policy, in ensuring security, the CA constitutions focus especially on the role of President and Parliament. The CA President is usually in charge of introducing martial law and a state of emergency. The CA Parliaments have in general the right to declare war and peace and to decide upon the deployment of the Armed Forces abroad. Considering the authoritarian nature of the CA regimes, it is likely that the President is fully in charge of executing the security policy, with the Parliament following suit.

National Security Strategies/Concepts or Laws on National Security

The NSS documents share strategic-security interests in: the inviolability of the constitutional order, sovereignty and territorial integrity; social cohesion and political and economic stability; as well as domestic and regional security, stability and cooperation. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan mention the guaranteed functioning of the energy sector. For these countries the energy sector is a vital asset of their economies, which also applies to Uzbekistan. Turkmenistan expectedly stresses aspects of its neutrality policy. Comparing internal threats, the CA states agree that separatism, extremism, terrorism; crime, corruption, arms and drugs trafficking; as well as environmental problems and social-political instability are the main drivers. With the exception of Turkmenistan, all other CA states are members of the SCO, which considers separatism, extremism and terrorism as the most crucial threats for the region. Turkmenistan considers the possibility of a "colour" revolution, such as those in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, as a threat. Again, as in its constitution, Turkmenistan apparently fears an overthrow. This distress might also be the consequence of its policy of neutrality, which isolates Turkmenistan from the rest of CA. As external threats the CA states consider in particular breaches of sovereignty and territorial integrity; regional armed conflicts, above all related to Afghanistan; terrorism; damage to the economic security, as well as the incomplete delineation of state borders and those of the Caspian Sea. Especially the threat of terror and of drugs from Afghanistan, border issues, with still a number of CA borders in dispute, as well as the Caspian Sea, because of the presence of energy sources

(for the littoral states Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan); are hot spots for conflicts and are rightfully regarded as threats.

Military Doctrines

The CA states have joint doctrinal interests in international cooperation; non-interference; peaceful settlement of disputes; no-first use of armed force; no enemies; no territorial claims; and inviolability of borders. Moreover, the doctrines underline typical military aspects, e.g. peaceful settlement of disputes; no-first use of armed force and no states regarded as enemies. As usual, Turkmenistan emphasizes its policy of permanent neutrality, which doctrinally subsequently leads to the rejection of Turkmenistan in participating in military blocs / alliances. The enumeration of internal threats lists the familiar extremism, terrorism and separatism, but also drugs trafficking and illegal migration. Moreover, typical military threats, such as supply of arms to illegal armed groups and sabotage, are also mentioned. As external threats the CA doctrines declare: CA regional political instability; CA regional border, water, energy, ethnic and religious conflicts; armed provocations; terrorism, separatism and extremism; proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; regional CA consequences of Afghanistan's situation; states striving to influence the CA region; as well as military build-up by states in the region. Most notable external threats are non-military threats related to border, water and energy issues, as well as military-political power play in the region. Since all CA states regard Russia as a strategic partner, would this entry refer to the USA and/or China? Kazakhstan stresses information warfare and the unresolved legal status of the Caspian Sea. The latter makes sense, due to the energy rich contents of this sea and its importance for the Kazakh economy. With regard to ensuring security, the CA countries agree on maintaining a defence capability to counter the aforementioned threats; international cooperation; action against (proliferation of) weapons of mass destruction; and a preference for non-military measures. Militarily, with the exception of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the other CA states are members of the Russian-led military alliance, the CSTO. The diverting policy lines of some CA states, are those with recur in most security documents: Kazakhstan puts emphasis on security of the Caspian region; Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan declare themselves against deployment of their forces abroad; and against foreign military bases/troops on its territory.

Foreign Policy Concepts

The CA FPCs state the usual national interests, as also mentioned in the other security documents: respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference into internal affairs, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-use of force or threat to use force; strengthening the state's international position and its image abroad; strengthening of good-neighbourly relations; and reinforcing the national economy. The only new aspect, but very expected for a FPC, is the image / reputation of the CA state abroad. Diverging views on national interests are that Kazakhstan stresses its Strategy-2050; Kyrgyzstan shares a lot of attention to international organizations (CIS, CSTO and SCO) and the vital importance for Kyrgyzstan of cooperation with Russia; Turkmenistan's interests dominated by its policy of permanent neutrality; and Uzbekistan concerned with peace and stability in Afghanistan. FPCs, focussing on the international arena, obviously only mention external threats, which are the ordinarily anticipated ones: terrorism, extremism, illegal immigration, drugs and arms trafficking, as well as regional CA conflict potential on social-economic problems, border, water and energy issues. Kazakhstan, as usual, stresses the (undefined) legal status of the Caspian Sea and Kyrgyzstan rightly worries about its vulnerability caused by its dependence on external energy. To ensure security, the CA states mention developing intra-regional CA collective security cooperation, to diminish conflict and promoting energy security and energy independence. That is a nice statement but not entirely realistic: Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan refrain from joining the regional collective security structure, CSTO, and Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are the only states with energy security problems, lacking these sources. Not surprisingly, because of their (security and energy) dependence on Moscow, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan once more underline the importance of their security cooperation

with Russia and within CSTO and SCO. Furthermore, Kyrgyzstan stresses the value of Russian (and until recently US) military bases on its soil. Once more Kazakhstan accentuates the legal status of the Caspian Sea; Turkmenistan highlights its neutrality policy; and Uzbekistan reiterates its position against military blocs, and foreign troops on its soil.

Security documents versus actual security developments

In the previous paragraph I have compared each specific type of security document for all the CA states, through the contents of their standard main themes/topics. Now, I will describe the total of all security documents of all CA states according to the customary components: national interests, threats (internal and external), and measures to ensure national security (see Table 1). I will hold these common CA views on security policy against the actual security circumstances in this region. Finally, for each component, I will present an assessment of the comparison of security policies with security reality in CA.

National interests

The CA states perceive the generally recognized principles of international law as their national interests: respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; international cooperation; good-neighbourly relations; non-interference in internal affairs; non-use of force, and political and economic stability.

Adherence to principles of international law

Respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity is violated by CA states in their disputes on borders, even resulting in shootings by border guards. The undisputed delimitation of state borders seems to be a unsolvable problem in CA. Most CA states, with the exception of neutral Turkmenistan, are active members of CSTO, SCO or the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), with Russia (CSTO and EAEU) and China (SCO) as lead-nations. However, when it comes to regional CA cooperation, disunity is the main theme. Consequently, the same applies to good-neighbourly relations. Especially among Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan tensions are substantial, caused by disputes on borders, water and energy. Related to this, the principle of non-interference in internal affairs is not observed either by especially the three aforementioned states, e.g. Uzbekistan cutting gas delivery to Kyrgyzstan. Likewise, non-use of force is violated by border guards shooting at each other or at citizens of the neighbouring state.

Political and economic stability

In September 2015, the former Head of Kyrgyzstan's Security Council stated that the security situation in Tajikistan could threaten the aggravation of the situation in Kyrgyzstan and in the whole CA region. Unresolved border disputes, land - water conflicts, religious extremism, together with upcoming parliamentary elections in October 2015 could destabilize the situation in Kyrgyzstan. He explained that the armed attacks in Tajikistan of 4 September 2015, by a group of gunmen linked to Deputy Minister of Defence Nazarzoda, could potentially threaten Kyrgyzstan's south as a conflict-prone area.⁸ These events demonstrate the political weakness of especially Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, in which the national interests of political and economic stability are more a wish than a reality. To all CA states applies that conditions such as poverty, unemployment, lack of freedom and democracy, authoritarian rule and oppression are a breeding ground for instability.

⁸ 'Eks glava sovbeza Kyrgyzstana: Situatsiya v Tadzhiqistane mozhet ugrozhat obostreniyu situatsii v regione', *Azia Plyus* (7 September 2015) <http://news.tj/ru/news/eks-glava-sovbeza-kyrgyzstana-situatsiya-v-tadzhiqistane-mozhet-ugrozhat-obostreniyu-situatsii-> (accessed 16 November 2015).

Assessment

In their security documents the CA states mention generally recognized principles of international law as their national interests. The reality is the opposite: the absence of regional CA cooperation, as well as their disputes in various areas demonstrate that their alleged observance of the aforementioned principles perhaps is (perhaps) relevant in their global international relations, but certainly not in their relations among each other. The lack of CA unity, in addition to regimes with authoritarian rule, proves that political and economic stability is another national interest which is desirable but under the current conditions is at stake.

Threats

As threats to domestic security the CA countries recognize armed paramilitary groupings; separatism, extremism and terrorism; as well as arms and drugs trafficking. The CA governments consider as threats from abroad, regional armed conflicts, in particular related to Afghanistan; terrorism and extremism; as well as regional border, water, energy, ethnic and religious conflicts.

Armed paramilitary groupings

On 4 September 2015 in Tajikistan, militants, connected to Deputy Defence Minister Nazarzoda, fired at a police station and a weapons depot in and around Dushanbe. The resulting firefights with government forces ended with 22 dead and 14 arrests. The killed Nazarzoda was accused by the government of having links with the now banned Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRPT).⁹ According to the official version of events, Major-General Nazarzoda was acting on the orders of the IRPT, being the country's leading opposition party, and hence a political threat to the current regime. Nazarzoda had stated that the regime plotted to remove him for refusing to agree with the government's banning of the IRPT. When he heard that he was going to be targeted, Nazarzoda assembled supporters and decided to fight his way out. Not plots by outside forces, but disputes within the Tajik political elite itself caused the outbreak of violence in September 2015.¹⁰

Separatism, extremism and terrorism

Extremist Islamist organizations recruit supporters from within the populations of the various CA countries and sometimes even from within the senior ranks of the security services and the military; their success comes from the values they advocate rather than because of their military capabilities. In October 2015, the United Nations Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee issued a report on foreign militants, which stated that the senior commanders of the so-called Islamic State (IS) in Syria and Iraq, include Chechens from Russia and militants from CA. The report stated that three terrorist organizations from the CA region, namely the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the Islamic Jihad Union (IJC) and the Islamic Movement of Eastern Turkestan, have (had) links to Al-Qaeda.¹¹ Uzbekistan carries the largest Islamist radical group, the IMU. In the meantime this terrorist grouping has officially declared its support for IS. IMU has 1,000 fighters, and was seemingly allied to Al Qaeda. IMU operates out of the north of Afghanistan and conducts operations in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. IMU has for a long time focused on the fight against CA authoritarian governments, but now also concentrates on the recruiting of volunteers to fight

⁹ 'Zaderzhany eshche 14 chlenov vooruzhennoy gruppirovki Khodzhi Khalima', *Azia-Plyus* (7 September 2015) <http://news.tj/ru/news/zaderzhany-eshche-14-chlenov-vooruzhennoi-gruppirovki-khodzhi-khalima> (accessed 16 November 2015).

¹⁰ E. Lemon, 'Tajikistan's Government Uses Recent Violence to Neutralize Opposition', *EDM*, 12 / 171 (23 September 2015).

¹¹ 'Boeviki iz Tsentral'noy Azii vkhodyat v chislo starshikh komandirov IGIL i Fronta "An-Nursa"', *UN.org* (8 October 2015) <http://www.un.org/russian/news/ru/print.asp?newsid=24675> (accessed 16 November 2015).

in the Middle East. IMU is particularly active on the border with Afghanistan, where they joined the Taliban in skirmishes.¹² The IS terrorist grouping is not yet mentioned in the CA security documents, since it has only appeared in 2014. Although the CA states have weak spots in their political regimes, due to their authoritarianism, and whilst also encountering ethnic and religious tension, as well as poor economic circumstances, nevertheless so far interest in IS has remained low. However, that could change.

In May 2015 Tajik Colonel Gulmurod Khalimov appeared in an IS propaganda video, which delivered a shock across Central Asia. Khalimov, Head of Tajikistan's Special Assignment Police Unit (OMON), a key element in President Emomali Rahmon's security apparatus, had disappeared shortly before. In the video he promised to return to wage violent jihad. Furthermore, IS and other foreign fighters, such as IMU, are already operating on Tajikistan's southern border with Afghanistan. The Taliban are also active on the immediate Afghan side of the Tajik border. Spread of instability is likely to take place. Uzbekistan — Central Asia's most populated and most authoritarian state — and Kyrgyzstan, which has already experienced two coups, would be deeply troubled by serious unrest in Tajikistan.¹³ A number of Islamist groups have been outlawed, such as the IRPT by Dushanbe, which only sends them underground. By putting aside the relatively moderate IRPT, the Tajik President further alienated the devout and gave plausibility to those who argue that with other options closed, extremism is only the politics of last resort. Sometimes, all opposition factions are treated as 'Islamist,' to avoid criticism from the West for the suppression of civil society. Tajik President Rahmon, for instance, had labelled former Deputy Minister of Defence Nazarzoda an "Islamic State sympathizer," who tried to lead a coup against the government.¹⁴ The result of banning Islamist and other opposition groups is that among the populations of CA countries, Islamists are not viewed as isolated from the opposition, but on the contrary, as those who express the pursuit for justice.¹⁵

Besides as a result of oppressing political opposition, another reason for possible increased interest in IS in CA, is related to the warfare of IS in Syria and Iraq. In January 2015 the NGO International Crisis Group (ICG) estimated between 2,000 and 4,000 the number of CA citizens who had left for areas held by IS militants or otherwise support the extremist group's cause. ICG urged the CA governments to improve security coordination as well as to liberalize religious laws and provide greater economic opportunities for young people.¹⁶ The return of IS fighters to their home countries in CA could threaten domestic stability. According to a report by Egypt's Ministry of Islamic Endowments, IS will start recruiting new members from CA (and from the Caucasus and Indonesia) since Arab states' leaderships have begun an ideological and armed fight against IS. IS now focuses on regions such as CA to recruit new members because they feature a Muslim majority relatively unfamiliar with the group's extremist and violent ideology. At the same time IS needs these regions not as part of its "caliphate" but for recruitment purposes, according to the report.¹⁷ Among thousands of Muslims from former Soviet CA republics some have joined IS, while others fight with al Qaeda. All of them, however, pose a threat to the weak CA countries as they confront stalling economies and a rise in Islamic radicalism. A particularly fertile ground for

¹² . Dyner, A. Legieć and K. Rękawek, *Ready to Go? ISIS and Its Presumed Expansion into Central Asia*, PISM Policy Paper 19 / 121 (June 2015) pp. 1, 9-10.

¹³ D. Tynan, 'Central Asia Is a Sitting Duck for Islamic State', *The Moscow Times* (14 June 2015).

¹⁴ Lemon, 'Tajikistan's Government Uses Recent Violence to Neutralize Opposition'.

¹⁵ P. Goble, 'Threatened From Afghanistan, Central Asia May Win the Battle Only to Lose the War', *EDM*, 12 / 161 (9 September, 2015).

¹⁶ 'Syria Calling: Radicalisation in Central Asia', *ICG* (21 January 2015)

<http://rus.azattyq.org/content/icg-ugrozy-bezopasnosti-ig-centralnaya-azia/26805103.html> (accessed 18 November 2015).

¹⁷ 'Doklad: IG sosredotochitsya na verbovke chlenov na Kavkaze, Sredney Azii', *RIA Novosti* (13 August 2015) <http://ria.ru/world/20150813/1181220263.html> (accessed 18 November 2015).

such recruitment to Syria has been in the populous Fergana Valley.¹⁸ Allegedly, IS had allocated \$70mn for the organization of terrorist acts in the Fergana Valley, which includes southern Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. IS would plan to destabilize the situation in Uzbekistan through southern Kyrgyzstan.¹⁹

A potential increase in the popularity of IS or other radical Islamist factions will most likely instigate the CA authorities to strengthen their special services and raise funds for border protection. Especially Dushanbe exaggerates the threat from IS and Taliban in order to take further measures against domestic political opposition, as well as asking Moscow for military and other support.²⁰ But Uzbekistan also demonstrates growing concern about the terrorist threat from IMU and IS. In spite of his firm independent course and having suspended Uzbekistan's membership of the Russian-led CSTO military alliance, President Karimov has asked support from Russia and might do the same to NATO if the threat from IS becomes imminent. In December 2014 Karimov approached his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, for assistance in combating the threat of extremism in Central Asia. Furthermore, Tashkent is an active member of the SCO, with a Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), which discusses topics covering combating extremism and developing joint operations against IS threats. While many Western governments believe that Uzbekistan in the past used the threat of terrorism to crack down on domestic dissent, the transnational nature of IS represents a qualitatively different threat, demanding adequate measures.²¹ Likewise, Karimov's Kyrgyz colleague is also worried about IS and also seeks cooperation and support from abroad. Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev said Kyrgyzstan would like EU military assistance to help combat IS, posing a threat to Kyrgyzstan and other CA states. He claimed that IS announced one of the provinces of the Islamic caliphate will be created in CA. Atambayev added that so far only Russia has provided assistance to Kyrgyzstan in the form of supplies of weapons and ammunition.²² Considering the overspill of terrorism and radicalism from CA to its own territory, but also to maintain or even increase its political clout on these CA countries, Russia supports its CA neighbours in the fight against terrorist organizations by helping them to strengthen border control, support for local special services and by use of the CSTO Rapid Reaction Forces.²³

Drugs trafficking

The Kremlin considers illicit drugs from Afghanistan as a rapidly swelling threat for Russia's national security. Moscow has criticised the Western forces in Afghanistan for failing to eradicate narcotics production in this country, which has increased almost tenfold since the Western invasion against Taliban-Afghanistan in 2001. Tajikistan is the primary transit country for Afghan narcotics going to entering Russia and Eastern Europe. After the withdrawal of Russian border troops in 2005, Tajikistan has received support from Russia, the USA, the OSCE and the UN to improve its border forces. However, Dushanbe's border security capacity has not been strengthened very much, due to a political unwillingness but especially because of widespread corruption with Tajik government officials involved in the

¹⁸ Ya. Trofimov, 'Syrian War Draws Central Asians', *Wall Street Journal* (29 October, 2015).

¹⁹ 'IGIL gotovit terakty v Ferganskoy doline', *KirTAG* (20 January 2015) <http://kyrtag.kg/news-of-the-day/igil-gotovit-terakty-v-ferganskoy-doline/> (accessed 18 November 2015).

²⁰ E. Lemon, 'Tajik Government Hypes the Islamic State Threat, Uses it to Control Population', *EDM*, 12 / 82 (1 May 2015); E. Lemon, 'The Taliban and Islamic State Haunt Tajikistan', *EDM*, 12 / 99 (28 May 2015).

²¹ J.C.K. Daly 'Uzbekistan Could Seek Foreign Assistance Against Islamic State', *EDM*, 12 / 74 (21 April 2015); J. Paraszczuk 'Uzbekistan Would 'Cooperate With Russia' To Combat Domestic Security Threat By IS', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL)* (13 April 2015).

²² 'Prezident A. Atambayev: "My budem rady voyennoy pomoshchi stran Evrosoyuzha"', *AKIpress* (23 March 2015) <http://kg.akipress.org/news:612568?imp> (accessed 18 November 2015).

²³ *Ready to Go? ISIS and Its Presumed Expansion into Central Asia*, pp. 1, 9-10; J. Paraszczuk 'In Implicit Criticism Of West, Russia's FM Calls For 'More Serious' Fight Against IS', *RFE/RL* (13 January 2015).

drugs trade. In December 2014 the USA supported Kyrgyzstan in its counter-drugs fight by delivering two border posts, enabling a greater presence of the Kyrgyz State Border Service in the remote regions and improving their capacity to interdict illicit trafficking. The USA announced in spring 2015 to also support Uzbekistan by delivering equipment (patrol boats and vehicles) for counter drugs operations.²⁴

Regional armed conflict: Afghanistan

The national interests of stabilizing Central Asia, in connection with that of further regional integration, are especially related to the future of Afghanistan. This element of the security documents clearly demonstrates the interdependent relationship between national interests, threats and ensuring national security, which all make reference to a stable Central Asia, and hence to a possible forceful obstacle to that, Afghanistan. With the USA and NATO having withdrawn most of their forces from Afghanistan in 2014, the Central Asian states have become increasingly nervous, since they are the ones that have to cope with terrorism (Taliban, Al Qaida and IS) and narcotics from Afghanistan. In March 2015 a UN envoy reported that IS had moved into Afghanistan.²⁵ In August 2015 the Katibat Imam Bukhari – an Uzbek-dominated militant battalion fighting alongside IS in Syria – pledged allegiance to newly appointed Afghan Taliban leader, Mulla Akhtar Mansoor, who succeeded Mullah Omar. The group is a former IMU militant division which joined IS in 2014.²⁶ Hence, there is a connection between a CA terrorist group, fighting in Syria for IS, which also supports the Taliban in Afghanistan. This unfolds ties between Islamist terrorist groupings in CA, the Middle East and Afghanistan. Activities from IS in Afghanistan and in the CA states could become an imminent threat to Central Asia.

To counter the threats from Afghanistan a twofold policy seems to have emerged. On the one hand CA states are reinforcing their borders. On the other hand some of the CA countries, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in particular, are increasingly cooperating with, and getting more and more dependent on Russia for their security against an overspill of terrorism and violence from Afghanistan. The latter I will describe under 'Regional CA security cooperation'. In October 2014 Tajikistan made public that it had built a second line of defence along its border with Afghanistan due to deterioration of the military and political situation in Afghanistan's Kunduz Province, which borders Tajikistan. The Tajik MoD together with other security service structures had completed work along the border and additional forces were deployed there. In October 2015 Russia stated that it could re-establish security operations to guard the Tajik-Afghan border but that would depend on Tajik decision-making. Until then, The Tajik authorities only requested technical assistance, in the framework of the CSTO. Until 2005 Russian border guards secured the Tajik-Afghan border, but were withdrawn that year at the request of Dushanbe.²⁷ In 2014 Turkmen border

²⁴ R. Weitz, 'The SCO and Afghanistan: Challenges and opportunities', *Afghanistan Regional Forum*, No. 3, Elliott School of International Affairs, The George Washington University (December 2012); A. Sodiqov, 'Porous border and corruption keeps drugs flowing through Tajikistan', *EDM*, 9 / 123 (28 June 2012); 'Two new border posts in Batken opened with U.S. Central Command support', *kabar.kg* (12 December 2014); 'Uzbekistan poluchit amerikanskuyu texniku na 6-mln', *vx.uz* (30 April 2015) <http://vx.uz/uzb/uzbekistan-poluchit-amerikanskuyu-texniku-na-6-mln.html> (accessed 17 December 2015).

²⁵ 'OON: Gruppirovka "Islamskoe gosudarstvo" obonovalas' v Afganistane', *Fergana News / TASS*, 17 March 2015.

²⁶ 'Uzbek-led ISIL splinter group pledges allegiance to new Taliban leader' (3 August 2015) http://www.bbc.com/uzbek/uzbekistan/2015/08/150803_cy_uzbek_jihadist_group_taleban (accessed 18 November 2015).

²⁷ 'Minoborony Tadjikistana vystavilo vtoruyu liniyu bezopasnosti na granitse s Afganistanom', *kant.kg* (28 October 2014) <http://faraj.com.tj/tajikistan/763-minoborony-tadjikistana-vystavilo-vtoruyu-liniyu-bezopasnosti-na-granice-s-afganistanom.html> ((accessed 16 December 2015); 'Russkie progranichni mogut vernut'sya na tadjiksko-afganskuyu granitsu', *Gumilev center* (15

guards repeatedly battled the Taliban, including two clashes that apparently left six troops dead. In response, troops added wire fencing and dug ditches on vulnerable stretches of the border with Afghanistan. As of February 2015 border troops from Russia and Uzbekistan started helping Turkmenistan to guard its border against militant incursions from Afghanistan. Turkmenistan has taken various steps to address the rise of Taliban and IS units in northern Afghanistan, including mobilizing reserve troops and carrying out incursions into Afghan territory.²⁸ Uzbekistan announced in January 2015 it was taking additional measures to strengthen its border with Afghanistan, due to reports of an increasing number of unknown militant groups and drug smugglers gathered in northern Afghanistan. According to Uzbekistan's Committee on State Border Protection, the 137-km border was heavily protected and guarded to prevent military incursions of any kind.²⁹

Regional border, ethnic, water and energy disputes

Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan demonstrate recurring clashes on borders, water and energy. The relations are often tense. In October 2014 Kyrgyz President Atambayev declared that his country would be cutting off its ties not only with Uzbekistan, but also with Tajikistan, because these two neighbours were allegedly attempting to thwart Kyrgyzstan's efforts to reach self-sufficiency in energy and transportation infrastructure in the near future. The president also said that Uzbekistan's main purpose for turning off the natural gas supply to Kyrgyzstan was to destabilize the situation in the country.³⁰ In April 2014, Tashkent unilaterally had cut off natural gas supplies to Kyrgyzstan, allegedly because the existing supply contract left no room for the change of ownership, considering that KyrgyzGas had come into the hands of Russia's Gazprom.³¹

Regarding border conflicts, the very principle of territorial and administrative division along national lines is alien to the history of Central Asia. These states were not formed on an ethnic or national principle as the very concept of "nationality" was understood only in relative terms. Therefore, not a single border between the CA countries or between them and Afghanistan resembles borders like those in Europe. Instead, they are frontiers, with members of the same ethnic and religious groups on both sides. Borders were drawn arbitrarily, without taking ethnic and political realities into account. As a result, Central Asia features many disputed areas. Another complicating factor of the border disputes is the fact that there are numerous small ethnic enclaves inside the neighbouring states, which can always be subject to pressure by cutting off roads, water or power.³² Border conflicts – especially involving Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan – are a revolving problem in CA. Border area disputes in the Fergana Valley – between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan – have not only seen clashes between local communities of the respective countries, but are also noteworthy for involving armed skirmishes between border troops. The disputes have led to prolonged closures of borders and tense security conditions that have weakened Central Asia's already poor inter-state collaboration as well as hindered the

October 2015) <http://www.gumilev-center.tj/russkie-pogranichniki-mogut-vernutsya-na-tadzhiksko-afganskuyu-granitsu/> (accessed 16 December 2015).

²⁸ 'Prezident Turkmenistana prinyal uchastie', turkmenistan.gov.tm (14 December 2014); 'Inostrannyye voennyye pomogayut ohranyat granitsu turkmenistana', *Khronika Turkmenistana* (23 March 2015).

²⁹ 'Uzbekistan usilit granitsu s Afganistanom iz-za uvelicheniya kontsentratsii boevikov', *fergananews.com* (6 January 2015).

³⁰ U. Hashimova, 'Growing Uncertainty in Relations between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan', *EDM*, 11 / 174 (2 October 2014).

³¹ G. Voloshin, 'Russia and China Set to Clash Over Kyrgyzstan's Energy', *EDM*, 11 / 159 (11 September 2014).

³² I. Rotar, 'Conflicts Between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan Potentially Undermine CSTO and Custom Union in Central Asia', *EDM*, 11 / 27 (11 February 2014); P. Goble, 'Threatened From Afghanistan, Central Asia May Win the Battle Only to Lose the War', *EDM*, 12 / 161 (9 September 2015).

growth of intra- and inter-regional trade.³³ Regularly, tensions are high and rising along Kyrgyzstan's borders with Uzbekistan as well as Tajikistan. The borders have not been fully demarcated by the countries involved since independence. Border skirmishes have repeatedly escalated to the point of people throwing rocks, border guards firing at people, blocking highways, cutting off water supplies, and building walls on territory others claim is not theirs. Border disputes routinely threaten to destabilize the situation in CA and overload the regimes with yet another problem. The CA governments are under pressure to try to reach agreements before these disputes get out of control.³⁴

Another form of regional disputes are those on water and energy. In April 2015, the CASA-1000 project (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan) got on the move. The construction of this large-scale electricity transmission project plans to facilitate the export of electricity produced via hydro-power in CA to consumers in South Asia. However, the downstream CA republics, which are not a part of CASA-1000 (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan), are highly concerned by this project. These downstream countries share upstream Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan's river resources. Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan fear that the CASA-1000 infrastructure results in further construction of additional hydro-electric plants and hydro-dam capacities by Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, depriving them of water. Moreover, the dissatisfaction of the downstream countries is also caused by Tajikistan's and Kyrgyzstan's failure to sign the two main United Nations conventions that regulate cross-boundary water resources.³⁵

Concerning energy, a prominent example is that Uzbekistan complains about Tajikistan's Rogun hydro power plant project. According to Tashkent, the Rogun power plant "does not meet commonly adopted international standards and poses a threat to CA's fragile ecological balance". The Rogun power plant is for Tajikistan a solution to the energy independence and a tool for economic growth, making Tajikistan a major exporter of electricity. However, the economy of Uzbekistan is heavily dependent on agriculture. More than 90 percent of its fresh water is currently used for irrigation purposes. The Uzbeks expect that Rogun will cause problems for Uzbekistan's agricultural sector, because a giant reservoir behind the Rogun Dam would affect the flow of water to its cotton fields. It would have a serious negative impact on agricultural production as crop growing in Uzbekistan is water intensive. Although Dushanbe insists that this energy project must be carried out, it is also faced with the fact that Uzbekistan is currently Tajikistan's only supplier of natural gas. As a punishment for continuing the Rogun plant, Uzbekistan repeatedly stopped the natural gas exports to Tajikistan, refused to allow the transit of Kyrgyz and Turkmen electricity through its power grid and blocked the transit of all rail freight into Tajikistan. If Tajikistan and Uzbekistan would agree on energy cooperation, electricity might become cheaper, while irrigation could be better managed. However, such a scenario appears unlikely due to the political-loaded positions on both sides.³⁶

³³ R. Muzalevsky, 'Border Disputes in the Fergana Valley Threaten to Undermine Regional Trade and Stability', *EDM*, 11 / 141 (1 August 2014).

³⁴ P. Goble, 'Central Asia's Border Problems Materialize Again', *EDM*, 12 / 151 (11 August 2015); 'Tadzhikistan obvinyaet mestnoe rukovodstvo Kyrgyzstana v konflikte na granitse', *Azia Plus* (4 August 2015) <http://news.tj/ru/news/tadzhikistan-obvinyaet-mestnoe-rukovodstvo-kyrgyzstana-v-konflikte-na-granitse> (accessed 18 November 2015); 'Grazhdanin Tadzhikistana skonchalcyia posle raneniya na granitse 6 iyulya', *Vechernyy Bishkek* (7 July 2015) http://www.vb.kg/doc/319253_grajdanin_tadjikistana_skonchalsia_posle_raneniia_na_granice_6_iulia.html (accessed 16 December 2015).

³⁵ U. Hashimova, 'Uzbekistan and Tajikistan Try to Mitigate Water Disputes', *EDM*, 12 / 105 (5 June 2015).

³⁶ 'MID napomnil o pozitsii Uzbekistana po Rogunskoy GES', *gazeta.uz* (1 August 2015) <http://www.gazeta.uz/2015/08/01/ges/> (accessed 19 November 2015); A. Jafarova 'Rogun hydro-power plant-a disputed issue in Central Asia', *Azernews* (3 April 2013) <http://en.trend.az/casia/tajikistan/2134921.html> (accessed 19 November 2015).

Assessment

The enumeration of threats, mentioned in CA security documents – armed paramilitary groupings; separatism, extremism and terrorism; arms and drugs trafficking; regional armed conflict (Afghanistan); regional border, ethnic, water and energy conflicts – gives evidence of a realistic approach of the CA governments towards the current security issues in the region. However, when it comes to countering these threats, the weaknesses and inconsistencies of the formal CA security policy become evident. To a certain extent, the aforementioned threats are caused by the CA regimes themselves. For instance, political opposition groups are often described as terrorists, and/or blamed to be connected to IS, as was the case with the armed uprising in Tajikistan in September 2015. Furthermore, there is hardly any effort towards improving social-economic circumstances, which would take away grounds for (Islamic) radicalization. Moreover, the CA governments are themselves responsible for regional border, water and energy disputes. Although aware of the threats caused by their own actions, the CA rulers do not seem to have much incentives for solving them constructively and long-lasting. As long as the CA authorities do not wish to admit that they are – at least partly – themselves to blame for a number of the threats they face, it is unlikely that these threats will be countered effectively.

Ensuring national security

In order to warrant national security, the CA states state in their security documents that using their law enforcement and armed forces is a method, but that also non-force measures – in the political, societal and economic domains – are taken. Furthermore, they recognize that regional CA security cooperation is another vital aspect for ensuring national security.

Law enforcement and armed forces

The crackdown by the Tajik government of the violence around Dushanbe of September 2015 is an example that the CA law enforcement agencies and armed forces are capable of repelling attacks from Islamist and other opposing groups from Afghanistan or domestically. But they are unlikely to prevent the ideological influence and internal subversion that their own governments have created by their repressive approaches to Islamic groups and political opposition. The Islamist threat is an ideological rather than a security threat, but the CA governments only reply by using force and oppression.

Non-force measures

The more immediate threats for CA are not of a military but of a social-economic nature, e.g. social unrest, as a result of a waning economy, a worsening of the environmental situation, a deterioration of health of the population, and of education, as well as the presence of extremist religious groups, wishing to overthrow the current government. All these threats are connected to the stability of the current political regimes and of the social-economic development of the countries. If poverty and unemployment increase, this could result in a diminishing trust in the political leadership. Furthermore, poverty is a well-known ground for extremism and subsequent terrorism. According to researchers at the Exeter Central Asian Studies Network, CA citizens joining IS are more motivated by political reasons than religious factors. Lack of opportunities to protest, anti-secular political ideas, exposure to violence, and feelings of alienation and exclusion – compounded by a context of poor education and authoritarian regimes – as the key drivers pushing individuals, especially youth, towards IS. Hence, apparently, non-religious reasons for Central Asians to join IS are more important than religious factors.³⁷ To counter these threats, the CA states recognize that political and social-economic actions have to be taken. However, the intentions have not been met with many results. Corruption remains high in the CA states, as well as poverty

³⁷ J. Heathershaw and D. W. Montgomery, 'Why do Central Asians join ISIS?', *exeter.ac.uk* (17 July 2015) <http://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/excas/2015/07/17/isis/> (accessed 17 December 2015).

and unemployment. Furthermore, the authoritarian nature of the CA regimes, with no serious political opposition allowed, is not helpful either in creating a sound and stable situation.

Regional CA security cooperation

Security cooperation in the CA region is organized through the CSTO, with Russia in the lead, and to a lesser extent through the SCO, with firstly China and secondly Russia as principle actors. A common CA security policy and or corresponding organization does not exist. I recognize two reasons for this. First, because the CA states feel comfortable in the current security settings of CSTO and SCO, which saves them from organizing their own collective security entity. Secondly, and probably even more likely, because of the lack of unity among the CA states. The aforementioned account of CA regional disputes on water, energy and borders clearly demonstrates that there is no such thing as a united CA approach; not on these issues, nor on security. Moreover, in August 2015 Uzbek President Islam Karimov once again stated that Uzbekistan will never agree to let foreign states deploy military bases on its territory. Karimov said that Uzbekistan will never join any military-political blocs and let its soldiers serve abroad.³⁸ In 2012 Uzbekistan – once again – withdrew from the CSTO. Furthermore, Turkmenistan, with its policy of permanent neutrality, consequently also refrains from multilateral security cooperation. Moscow fills this collective CA security gap by providing bilateral military support. Within the CSTO Kazakhstan comes second in delivering troops for exercises, after Russia. Also, Astana and Moscow maintain intensive bilateral military ties. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are also close allies of Russia in CA, but more importantly, are highly dependent on the Kremlin.

Due to pressure from Moscow, Kyrgyzstan did not prolong its agreement with the United States and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) on the continued use of the Manas Transit Center airbase. In June 2014 they left the base. In turn, Russia agreed to provide military and technical support to Kyrgyzstan in the form of direct assistance. Furthermore, Russia continued to keep its own airbase at Kant, near Bishkek, intact and, is allegedly mulling over the establishment of a second similar base in Osh by 2017, close to the border between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. In February 2015, Russia announced rearmament of the airbase Kant with modernized aircraft. Kant, completely Russian, is a component of the CSTO's Collective Rapid Deployment Force. It is also involved in ensuring the security of the CSTO member countries, especially considering NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan. In June 2015 the defence ministers of Russia and Kyrgyzstan discussed bilateral military/defence cooperation and the current situation in Afghanistan. Russia's minister, Shoigu, stated that Russian and CA armed forces should be prepared for a negative development of the situation in Afghanistan. He noted that Russia helps Kyrgyzstan in strengthening its army.³⁹ Kyrgyz President Atambayev is all in favour of closer political, economic and military ties with Russia. But consequently, the Kremlin's influence on Kyrgyzstan's domestic politics will also gain further weight.

Concerning Russian-Tajik military cooperation, in October 2013 Tajikistan ratified a deal to extend the presence of Russia's military base, the former 201st division, in Tajikistan until 2042. The military base, which stations 7,000 troops, is Russia's biggest military garrison abroad. In April 2015 Russia announced plans to increase the number of troops stationed in Tajikistan to 9,000 over the next five years and to provide more military equipment. The

³⁸ "Nashemu narodu nuzhny mir i spokoystvie" – Islam Karimov", gazeta.uz (31 August 2015) <http://www.gazeta.uz/2015/08/31/speech/> (accessed 17 December 2015).

³⁹ V. Litovkin, 'Kirgiziya nadeyetsya na russkoye oruzhiye', *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye* (20 December 2013); I. Rotar, 'Conflicts Between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan Potentially Undermine CSTO and Custom Union in Central Asia', *EDM*, 11 / 27 (11 February 2014); 'U.S. Vacates Manas Airbase in Kyrgyzstan', *The Moscow Times* (3 June 2014); G. Voloshin, 'Kyrgyzstan's Relations With the US Suffer Amid Moscow-Bishkek Rapprochement', *EDM*, 12 / 149 (7 August 2015); 'Rossiyskiy voennyi kontingent na aviabaze "Kant" budet uvelichen', *CA-News* (17 Februari 2015).

Russian army base in Tajikistan is also a component of the CSTO's Collective Rapid Deployment Force, and will in time of crisis give immediate support to the Tajik Armed Forces. In June 2015 Tajik President Rahmon received Russia's Minister of Defence, Shoygu. They discussed defence/military and technical bilateral cooperation, strengthening Tajikistan's common border with Afghanistan, rearmament of the Tajik Armed Forces, the current situation in the CA region and in Afghanistan, as well as coordination of actions between the Tajik security forces and Russia's military base in Tajikistan. In October 2015 Russia said to deploy attack and military-transport helicopters to beef up its military presence in Tajikistan amid rising insecurity in northern Afghanistan. The aircraft would be used to provide air cover for military columns, deliver airborne forces and cargo, carry out reconnaissance missions, and medical evacuation.⁴⁰

Assessment

According to the CA security documents, ensuring national security is accomplished by a mixture of using law enforcement and armed forces, non-force measures, e.g. in the political, societal and economic areas, as well as by regional CA security cooperation. However, the execution of the policy lines of non-force measures and regional CA security cooperation are underdeveloped to say the least. By far, the use of law enforcement and of the armed forces, to crackdown opposition and terrorist movements, seems to be the key instrument of CA governments to ensure national security, and hence also their survival. At the moment this approach, of violence and oppression, works. However, should domestic opposition increase, for instance because of a further deterioration of social-economic conditions, then using force might not be sufficient anymore. Furthermore, as to security cooperation, dependence on Russia is a weak approach, because one can never know if a partner will remain reliable. Hence, for external and internal security – the two are more and more connected – the CA regimes should show a genuine desire to establish regional CA cooperation.

Outlook

I conclude with a look ahead on how some elements of CA security might develop.

Islamic extremism a threat for CA?

For many years already, Moscow has used the threat of a possible jihadist insurgency spilling over the border from Afghanistan into Central Asia to scare the post-Soviet secular authoritarian leaders of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan into submission; i.e. to accept Russia's political clout in exchange for security guarantees. At present, the activities of IS and its interests seem far off from Central Asia. In fact this extremist group is encouraging jihadist activists to the battlefields in Syria and Iraq, where many of them are killed in action. In doing so, IS is possibly reducing the present terrorist threat inside Central Asia, Russia and Europe. Nevertheless, the remainder of the IS fighters might return from the Middle East to Russia's North Caucasus and to Central Asia. For instance, Uzbekistan, a frontline state bordering Afghanistan, faces the potential terrorist and insurgency threat of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which has associated itself with IS. Therefore, in spite of the current lack of threat from jihadist insurgency, it cannot be ruled out that these elements could develop into a serious security threat for Russia and CA.

⁴⁰ I. Rotar, 'Moscow and Dushanbe Strengthen Their Military Alliance', *EDM*, 10 / 184 (16 October 2013); 'Shoygu obsudil v Tadzhikestane ukreplenie VS respubliki', *RIA Novosti* (4 June 2015); 'Rossiya uvelichit chislennyi sostav svoey voennoy bazy v Tadzhikestane', *CA-News* (3 April 2015); 'Russia Announces Helicopter Reinforcements For Tajik Base Amid Afghan Unrest', *RFE/RL* (7 October 2015).

Cooperation on Afghanistan

In 2013, Kazakhstan called for cooperation of NATO with the SCO.⁴¹ However, this Western military alliance has always rejected working with SCO and CSTO. Due to imminent threats of security, arising from Afghanistan, the time of reluctance towards cooperation for East (Russia, China, Central Asia, CSTO, SCO) and West (USA, NATO, EU), no longer exists. Regarding Afghanistan, East and West face the same threats: terrorism by Taliban, Al Qaida and IS, as well as drugs production and trafficking. The USA and other actors in the West do not want the Taliban to return to power in Kabul, possibly creating a repetition of '9/11'. Russia and CA are in the vicinity or even bordering troubled Afghanistan. Hence, East and West will continue to be engaged in the security of Afghanistan and the Central Asian region, and cooperation between them is therefore inevitable and essential. Cooperation of NATO/EU, Central Asia, Russia and SCO/CSTO could lead to strengthening stability and security in Afghanistan and throughout the Central Asian region. Unfortunately, so far the described East-West cooperation on Afghanistan has not yet gotten under way.

Social-economic measures to counter instability and terrorism

Unemployment, poverty, bad education and medical care can develop into not only political instability in CA, but also into support for radical Islam groupings, such as IS, conducting terrorist attacks. More powers for security services and other law enforcement organs and a further crack-down on democracy and human rights are not the solution. To ensure a stable political environment, political and social-economic reforms have to be implemented. In the cases of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, a succession plan of the long-time serving presidents Nazarbayev and Karimov should be prepared. Moreover, political reforms, enhancing participation by opposition groups and granting more power to Parliament and Government, should be drafted, also in the other CA countries. This, in order to soften the current overflow of (single, authoritarian) Presidential rule. In terms of economic reforms, the CA states should take measures in the field of education, health care, employment and improved social guarantees for disadvantaged members of society. It is likely that the current established political regimes in CA are not willing to reduce or even less to give-up their powers. However, without the aforementioned political and social-economic reforms the stability and national security of the CA states will be at risk.

⁴¹ 'Kazakhs urge NATO dialogue with SCO', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (2 February 2013) www.rferl.org/content/kazakhstan-nato-sco-munich/24891375.html (accessed 10 November, 2015).

Table 1: Common Central Asian views on Security Policy⁴²

<i>Constitutions</i>	<i>National Security Strategies / Laws</i>	<i>Military Doctrines</i>	<i>Foreign Policy Concepts</i>	<i>Common views in all security documents</i>
NATIONAL INTERESTS				
Adhere to the principles of international law, e.g. by pursuing a policy of cooperation and good-neighbourly relations; non-interference in internal affairs; and non-use of force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The inviolability of the constitutional order, sovereignty and territorial integrity • Social cohesion and political and economic stability • Domestic and regional security, stability and cooperation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International cooperation; • Non-interference; peaceful settlement of disputes; • No-first use of armed force; no enemies; • No territorial claims; inviolability of borders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference into internal affairs, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-use of force or threat to use force • Strengthening the state's international position and its image abroad • Strengthening good-neighbourly relations • Reinforcing the national economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Respect for sovereignty, and territorial integrity</i> • <i>International cooperation</i> • <i>Good-neighbourly relations</i> • <i>Non-interference in internal affairs</i> • <i>Non-use of force</i> • <i>Political and economic stability</i>
THREATS TO SECURITY				
Internal threats				
Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have similar entries that armed paramilitary groupings are forbidden and that political parties and other civil organizations are not	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separatism, extremism, terrorism • Crime, corruption, arms and drugs trafficking • Environmental problems, social-political 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extremism, terrorism, separatism • Supply of arms to illegal armed groups • Sabotage • Drugs trafficking 	Not applicable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Armed paramilitary groupings</i> • <i>Separatism, extremism, terrorism</i> • <i>Arms and drugs trafficking</i>

⁴² The citations are mostly not literally derived from the different security documents, but are adapted by the author, as is the use of bold text. The grouping of related entries as used here is for the purpose of clarity and does not necessarily correspond with the original documents.

Constitutions	National Security Strategies / Laws	Military Doctrines	Foreign Policy Concepts	Common views in all security documents
allowed to threaten the constitutional order.	instability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Illegal migration 		
External threats				
Not applicable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breaches of sovereignty and territorial integrity Regional armed conflicts, in particular related to Afghanistan Terrorism Damage to the economic security The incomplete delineation of state borders and those of the Caspian Sea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CA regional political instability CA regional border, water, energy, ethnic and religious conflicts Armed provocations Terrorism, separatism and extremism Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction Regional CA consequences of Afghanistan's situation States striving to influence the CA region Military build-up by states in the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terrorism Extremism Illegal immigration Drugs and arms trafficking Information security Regional CA conflict potential on social-economic problems, border, water and energy issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Regional armed conflicts, in particular related to Afghanistan</i> <i>Terrorism, extremism</i> <i>CA regional border, water, energy, ethnic and religious conflicts</i>
ENSURING SECURITY				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CA President is usually in charge of introducing martial law and a state of emergence The CA Parliaments have in general the right to declare war and peace and the deployment of their 	Activities of law enforcement and armed forces , but also measures in scientific, technical, economic, political, ethical and other non-power areas .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining a defence capability to counter the aforementioned threats International cooperation; bilateral and within organizations Action against (proliferation of) weapons of mass 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing intra-regional CA collective security cooperation to diminish conflict Promoting energy security and energy independence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Activities of law enforcement and armed forces, but also non-force action</i> <i>regional CA security cooperation</i>

<i>Constitutions</i>	<i>National Security Strategies / Laws</i>	<i>Military Doctrines</i>	<i>Foreign Policy Concepts</i>	<i>Common views in all security documents</i>
Armed Forces abroad		destruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preference for non-military measures 		