

“The belief that the United States was behind the ‘color revolutions’ has helped both Russia and China strengthen their positions in the region.”

## The Shrinking US Footprint in Central Asia

MARTHA BRILL OLCOTT

American policy makers took advantage of conditions created by the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on New York and Washington to shake up the strategic balance in Central Asia. The United States quickly opened military bases in Uzbekistan (Karshi-Khanabad) and Kyrgyzstan (Manas). It increased foreign assistance to all the states in the region, and talked about new kinds of strategic partnerships and alliances. Six years later, however, a sense of disappointment prevails, and American influence throughout Central Asia is on the decline.

Much of the problem relates directly or indirectly to the United States’ shift in focus from Afghanistan to Iraq. Whereas initially there was considerable talk about the need for a regional strategy for Afghan reconstruction, high-level US attention drifted away from this problem in 2003 as the Bush administration searched for justifications and international support for its desired invasion of Iraq. As a result, assistance for Central Asian states has fallen short of what was envisioned in Washington’s early, ambitious plans, not to mention the more inflated expectations of the states themselves.

The biggest complication, though, has been US advocacy of a “freedom agenda,” which was designed in large part to justify the ongoing human and financial costs of the war in Iraq, since it turned out there were no weapons of mass destruction to be found there. The timing of this shift in public diplomacy coincided with the end of the political life spans of two communist-era leaders in the region. Georgia’s President Eduard Shevardnadze fell in the Rose Revolution in November 2003. A year later, President Leonid Kuchma’s plans to orchestrate his own succession went awry

in Ukraine’s Orange Revolution. Official Washington’s heralding of these events, in which publicly or privately funded US nongovernmental organizations played much-debated roles, left Central Asian leaders concerned that they too might be targeted for “regime change.”

Events in the region escalated in March 2005 with the ouster of Kyrgyzstan’s President Askar Akayev in the Tulip Revolution—blame for which was again laid on the United States, more inappropriately this time—followed in May 2005 by the violent suppression of demonstrators in Andijan, Uzbekistan, by Uzbek security forces. The reaction of the United States and European Union nations to the loss of life in Andijan, including the killing of scores of unarmed people, magnified the difference in value systems between the West and the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)—China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The West focused on the need for an international investigation to hold accountable those responsible for civilian deaths. The members of the SCO concentrated on a “terrorist” action: an armed prison break that triggered the protests in Andijan. Within weeks, the Americans were asked to withdraw their base from Uzbekistan.

In the meantime, the belief that the United States was behind the “color revolutions” has helped both Russia and China strengthen their positions in the region. Russia used the opening of the US bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, along with newly negotiated bilateral security arrangements between the United States and the other three Central Asian states, to successfully press for improved security relations with all five countries in the region. China’s economic influence in Central Asia, particularly in the thriving energy sector, has continued to grow. And all six member-states of the SCO have shown interest in increasing the range of functions of this relatively ill-defined organization in which Americans do not participate.

---

MARTHA BRILL OLCOTT, a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, is the author of *Central Asia’s Second Chance* (Carnegie Endowment, 2005).

## ENERGY COURTSHIP

With the US strategic position in Central Asia at risk, and with the American military having been asked to leave Uzbekistan and periodically in danger of being pushed out of its base in Kyrgyzstan as well, the Bush administration has sought ways to improve the efficacy of US policy in the region—focusing in particular on the energy sector. In this context, at least some of the Central Asian states have been the inadvertent beneficiaries of a hardening of US-Russian relations. Moscow, competing for energy stakes, has made substantial investments in Uzbekistan's oil and gas industry. The Russians have also promised Turkmenistan that they (possibly with Kazakh assistance) will finance construction of a new pipeline along the Caspian coast as an alternative to a plan supported by the United States and the European Union for an undersea pipeline across the Caspian.

With EU-Russian relations also in decline, Central Asia has become more important to Europe as well, as European states have sought ways to access Caspian oil and gas that would bypass Russia. Here, too, Central Asian states benefit because Russia is countering by offering its partners in the region more attractive commercial conditions—albeit in response to the increased activity of Chinese energy companies in the region as much as to that of American and European firms.

The United States continues to regard the Central Asian states as potential facilitators of economic recovery in Afghanistan—in the case of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, because of their hydroelectric power potential. To help promote this potential, and in an effort to further distance these states from Russia, the Bush administration has begun to group the Central Asian states with India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan in various policy-making activities of the US government. It has also set as a regional priority the creation of new transit corridors to link Central Asia to the open seas through Afghanistan and then on through Pakistan. These policies are coming at a time when the internal situation in both Afghanistan and Pakistan has deteriorated.

While all of the Central Asian countries are happy to be courted by the United States, they remember quite clearly how Washington has proved a fickle friend in the past. Importantly, the Central Asian leaders are also generally less needy than they were at independence, or even in 2001. They now can look to China to balance the potential of Russian hegemony. The growing importance of the SCO,

whose current secretary is a Kazakh (Bolat Nurgaliev), gives them an institutional setting in which to do this. And neither Russia nor China has any interest in pressing them to introduce political reforms. The Kazakhs and the Kyrgyz want other foreign actors to mitigate China's increased influence in their economies, but Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan see little that is negative in China's growing interest in the region.

In fact, all of the Central Asian states have a chance to achieve diversity among their foreign economic partners beyond even Russia, China, and the United States. Because of the region's mineral resources and especially its energy reserves, be they fossil fuel or hydroelectric power, Asia's other strong economies (India, Japan, South Korea, and to a lesser extent Singapore and Indonesia), as well as the European Union nations, all remain very interested in Central Asian developments—as do Iran and Turkey, and various countries in the Middle East that have ethno-religious reasons for engagement.

## PIPELINE POLITICS

In many ways the pursuit of the “freedom agenda” in Central Asia has been a diversion for Washington. With the exception of the push for basing rights in the immediate aftermath of 9-11, the priority of US policy in the region has been energy security. Washington has pressed for multiple pipelines as the key to protecting the independence and economic security of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, which border the energy-rich Caspian Sea.

The key is that the pipeline routes bypass Russia, and the only alternative routes that the United States has advocated go through Afghanistan or Turkey. Transport through Iran remains unacceptable to Washington—although both Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan have been eager to ship oil and gas through Iran. And Washington has been uncomfortable with, although not formally opposed to, Beijing's plans to construct or expand oil and gas pipelines from Central Asia to China.

The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline is now open, shipping oil from Azerbaijan and small amounts from Kazakhstan through Georgia and Turkey to the Mediterranean. Kazakhstan has made a commitment to ship substantial amounts of oil across this route, once “big oil” from its Kashagan field is available, which is unlikely to happen before 2010 or possibly later. But this oil will cross the Caspian in freighters, and the potential volume is restricted by the nature of freighter trade in the

inland sea, which is also supporting giant offshore rigs and drilling.

The ultimate profitability of the BTC pipeline depends on large volumes of Kazakh oil coming into it, and this would require the construction of an undersea oil pipeline. And even more important for the international consortium that owns BTC is the construction of an undersea gas pipeline. This is necessary to increase the volume of the companion BTE (Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum) pipeline, which is about to start transporting gas. Gas cannot practically be transported across the Caspian any other way, since converting it into liquefied natural gas for such a short crossing would be prohibitively expensive.

The idea of the trans-Caspian pipelines first came up in the mid-1990s but went nowhere, given Russia's nonnegotiable opposition to them. This opposition remains. And since the Caspian Sea still lacks an agreement on formal demarcation among the five littoral states (Russia, Iran, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan), Russian and Iranian objections

could imperil international financial guarantees for the project. US and EU government guarantees could overcome the financial problem, but they would not ameliorate the impact of Russian lobbying against the project with the Central Asian states. Their economies, unlike that of Azerbaijan, are still closely intertwined with Russia's, in ways that are increasingly beneficial to both sides.

Since the Ukrainian gas crisis of January 2006 (during which Russian gas supplies transported through Ukraine to Europe were briefly cut off), the Europeans have become vigorous advocates of an undersea trans-Caspian gas pipeline. In the absence of large volumes of Iranian gas, this project would be necessary to support the planned Nabucco pipeline, a route across the southern Balkans to Austria that fully bypasses Russia. The Nabucco project enjoys strong support from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Many also hope that the new Turkmen president, Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov (who succeeded the deceased Saparmurad Niyazov), will be more supportive of the project than was his predecessor.

Whether or not such proposals come to fruition, the Central Asian states are pleased to consider them because they provide bargaining leverage. Discussion of reviving the trans-Caspian pipeline

---

*Kazakhstan's progress toward establishing democratic political institutions has been, like the other Central Asian states, at best uneven.*

---

project, for example, has improved the negotiating positions of both Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan vis-à-vis Russia. The Kazakhs will soon get \$160 per 1,000 cubic meters of gas going into the Russian gas pipeline system, and the Turkmen will probably get more than \$125 per 1,000 cubic meters when their new purchase agreement with Russia is negotiated, especially since China is also competing for the Turkmen gas. These prices compare very favorably with the \$100 per 1,000 cubic meters that the Chinese are reportedly offering the Russians for the purchase of east Siberian gas at the Chinese border.

The Central Asian leaders realize that Western partners usually bring more sophisticated technology than anyone else, but their top priority is that they not be underpaid. They do not feel threatened by the changes in Russia's behavior that the Euro-

peans and Americans find so disturbing. On the contrary, the Central Asians regard the increased centralization of political authority under Vladimir Putin as a

very natural state of affairs, bringing the political value systems of their countries more into sync.

## THE "LOSS" OF UZBEKISTAN

Along with their geopolitical and commercial influence, the Americans' security presence in the region has also declined over the past several years, reflecting both changes in US priorities and increased pressure from Russia and China to expand the role of multilateral security organizations in which they share membership with the Central Asians. The end of the first phase of operations in Afghanistan led to a downgrading of the importance of the two US bases in Central Asia, although the Uzbek and Kyrgyz bases were viewed as important to the continued easy supply of US and other NATO forces in Afghanistan. The increased ideological component of the US mission in Iraq, casting it as a war against tyranny instead of against weapons of mass destruction, introduced strains particularly into the US-Uzbek relationship.

President Islam Karimov had tried since 1991, when Uzbekistan gained independence during the breakup of the Soviet Union, to get and then keep Washington's attention. But Karimov, whose political consciousness dates from the cold war years, sought to do this the old-fashioned way—by offer-

ing the United States a strategic partnership that focused on shared foreign policy goals rather than on shared values in the two countries' domestic political agendas. Karimov appears to have thought Uzbekistan could become a friend to the United States somewhat analogous to Pakistan throughout much of the cold war, with the regime in Tashkent sharing regional interests and agendas with Washington but not being obligated to transform itself rapidly into a democratic political system.

Karimov sees democracy, or more properly popular rule, as a dangerous ideology for a young state located in a region rife with security risks, and he has introduced political reforms only when forced to do so. The presence of terrorist groups in neighboring Afghanistan made Karimov even more leery of democratic reforms. Still, the US-led bombing campaign in Afghanistan eliminated Uzbekistan's major security threat and created new opportunities for cooperation with Washington—as well as new opportunities for the United States to press the Uzbeks for economic and political change.

The prospect of US pressure for reform was viewed with enthusiasm by pro-reform elements within Uzbekistan's political establishment. While hoping for changes in the electoral system and parliamentary rule, Uzbek reformers focused most of their efforts on getting the Karimov regime to jump-start economic reform, which had been largely abandoned in the 1990s, along with a structured reform package negotiated with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

The World Bank and IMF did return to Uzbekistan after 9-11 and did offer a new economic reform package, but benchmarks were not achieved, leaving the financial institutions frustrated with the Uzbeks. For their part the Uzbeks were angry at the World Bank and IMF officials, who they believed had never made a sufficiently attractive offer to beat back the criticisms of the "rent-seekers" who dominate the remnants of the old planned economy (especially those tied to the production and sale of cotton) and who would lose from economic reforms. The anti-reformers argued—successfully—that austerity measures would reduce standards of living in the short run, creating a risk of social upheaval led largely by pro-Islamic elements that were becoming more visible in Uzbek society.

---

*The sale of Turkmen gas to Russia  
provides the predictable cash transfers  
that the regime depends on for its survival.*

---

Under these circumstances, it did not take long for the new US-Uzbek "strategic" relationship to begin to sour, and for both sides to walk away unhappy. The United States was frustrated by the Uzbek government's unwillingness to engage in either economic or political reform. Meanwhile, the Uzbeks were bitterly disappointed. They had thought they were getting a strategic friendship with the United States akin to what had been on offer in earlier decades. They thought Washington would support full-blown modernization of the country's security establishment, and also provide massive economic and political aid. The Uzbeks believed they had taken considerable risks for the relationship. They had delivered the promised security cooperation, including verbal support for the launching of the Iraq War—a rarity among post-Soviet states. And they had invited into their country the US military with either minimal or nonexistent consultation with Russia.

Tashkent's failure to meet the terms of reforms promised to the United States in a series of letters and agreements in March

2002 led, in 2004, to the Uzbek government not being certified by the US secretary of state as having made sufficient progress toward an improved human rights environment. As a result, aid (outside of security assistance) was reduced, and restrictions were imposed on the operations of US-funded NGOs.

It was in this environment that the demonstrations occurred in Andijan in May 2005, which security forces quelled with excessive force. The crowds were overwhelmingly unarmed, but an armed group the day before had seized a prison—releasing its prisoners and taking policemen and firemen as hostages—in a building just off the square where the civilians were gathered. Had the US-Uzbek relationship been healthier at the time, Karimov might have decided in favor of salvaging the relationship by allowing an inquiry that met international standards. Instead, he refused. A hard line taken by the EU, including the imposition of sanctions, helped harden the US position as well. In the summer of 2005, Uzbek authorities invoked a clause in the basing agreement allowing cancellation with a six-month warning, and the United States pulled out its military forces and assets slightly before the agreement expired.

Since then, US-Uzbek relations have been relatively strained (more at some times than others), although Washington, as well as Brussels, is looking for ways to reengage with the Uzbeks. The EU, which continues to maintain limited sanctions against the Uzbek government, has begun a human rights dialogue in which Tashkent participates. The sanctions question is certain to be revisited as part of a new EU strategy, adopted in June 2006, for engagement with Central Asian countries. Still, Tashkent's refusal to express public remorse for its actions in Andijan (something that its fellow members in the SCO do not require) continues to block improvement of relations with both the United States and the EU.

### **THE WILTING TULIP**

As already noted, Central Asia's leaders became nervous that they might become the target of US policies favoring regime change after the ouster of Shevardnadze in 2003 and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine a year later. This nervousness turned to outright anger after Akayev was pushed from power in the Tulip Revolution of March 2005. None of the leaders in Central Asia was willing to believe that the United States preferred Akayev finish his term in office and transfer power through the ballot box rather than that he be ousted. In fact, this was what Washington hoped for and believed was possible.

It is true that Washington had pressed for transparent parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan. It is also true that there was US funding (generally rather modest) for some of the NGOs involved in helping make or sustain the protests that followed the elections. But Washington viewed the parliamentary vote as fairer than previous efforts (albeit still quite flawed) and was troubled that local financial groups (many of which were engaged in criminal activities) were involved in getting the demonstrations going (often by paying demonstrators). They certainly had no encouragement from the US government in doing this.

Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev has never claimed, nor does he act as though, his rise to power resulted from US machinations. If anything, in the months before the parliamentary elections that led to Akayev's ouster, the Kyrgyz opposition felt angered by what it viewed as America's relative lack of interest in the upcoming vote. This led Bakiyev and other key opposition leaders to turn to Moscow for assistance. After Akayev's ouster, the interim government was even able to reestablish strong rela-

tions with Moscow faster than with Washington, since the Bush administration was concerned that the situation in Bishkek had yet to stabilize.

The US base at Manas, moreover, has proved to be more of a political risk and liability under the Bakiyev government than it was under Akayev—partly because of popular pressure for revenge for the corruption of the Akayev era. Akayev's family had provided the fuel for Manas, and the Kyrgyz government has (unsuccessfully) sought to be compensated for the money that the Akayev family received. Washington has increased compensation for the base (and once again this seems to have been fashioned in a way that benefits the country's ruling family). But popular opinion in Kyrgyzstan is more anti-American than it previously was. The public leaps on any occasion to press for the base's closure—as in the spring of 2007, when the United States refused to allow a US serviceman involved in the death of a local citizen to be tried in Kyrgyz courts (which would have violated the US military code of justice).

The political situation in Kyrgyzstan in any case has gone beyond the point that outside actors can easily influence it. The political system today is chaotic. The country has introduced two different constitutions since November 2006, after spending a year debating three other variations. Bakiyev seems able to ward off most claims to his power. But if at some point he is not able, he is much less likely to turn to Washington for help than to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, which see their stability as tied to that of neighboring Kyrgyzstan. Both of these states, most likely in concert and consultation with Russia (their partner in the Collective Security Treaty Organization) would seek ways to stabilize the situation in Kyrgyzstan, preferably short of a direct application of force.

### **THE US-KAZAKH RELATIONSHIP**

While Washington never had any realistic expectation that the Central Asian states would be admitted into any of the key European political and economic associations, US policy makers did hope that these states would make steady progress toward becoming democracies with market-driven economies. Over the past 15 years the region has made at best erratic progress in democracy-building. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan made some early progress in the mid-1990s, only to move in the other direction over the next several years.

Kazakhstan is probably the greatest disappointment in this regard, and the place where the US

policy agenda is most complex. Kazakhstan has become the most stable country in the region, accepted by powerful nations like Russia and China as having a right to exist—and even a country with a viewpoint that needs at least to be heard, if not necessarily heeded. The country has no real likelihood of state collapse. It has become a self-confident nation, led by a highly experienced and almost supremely confident political leader. President Nursultan Nazarbayev and much of the senior Kazakh elite now believe that their resource wealth and pace of economic development give them the right to carve out an international position of their own, one of relative prominence.

The government in Astana is an important partner for Washington, and the Kazakhs sense this. For this reason Kazakhstan did eventually decide to send a small group of troops (27) to Iraq, after initially opposing the war in terms that were only slightly more measured than those of Russia. The improved US-Kazakh relationship has not come, however, at the expense of Kazakhstan's relations with either Russia or China.

Moreover, while US-Kazakh security cooperation has increased, there is no possibility of the United States gaining basing rights in Kazakhstan. This is because Astana has no interest in granting Moscow similar privileges, and could not risk antagonizing Russia, a country with which it shares a border over 4,300 miles long. The subtlety of Kazakhstan's foreign policy reflects a growing professionalism in that country's foreign policy-making elite, as well as the president's strong diplomatic skills.

The US-Kazakh relationship has weathered a number of potential crises, including ongoing investigations and prosecutions of corruption in Kazakhstan's oil industry in federal court in New York. Although these have created a shadow over the person of Nazarbayev, both sides have been able to compartmentalize the scandal to prevent it from damaging the bilateral relationship.

Still, Kazakhstan's progress toward establishing democratic political institutions has been, like the other Central Asian states', at best uneven. This is the case despite Nazarbayev's claims that, because of his country's political and economic institution-building, Kazakhstan deserves the chance to become the first post-Soviet state to preside over the Organization for Security and Cooperation in

Europe (OSCE). For a variety of reasons—some accidental, others not—Kazakhstan's leaders have staked a great deal on getting the chairmanship of the OSCE for 2009. While they have been willing to have the OSCE's decision postponed, they have not been willing to delay their chairmanship.

A large number of OSCE states are supporting Kazakhstan's chairmanship, and fellow members of the Commonwealth of Independent States are doing so enthusiastically. EU members are divided on the question, most hoping that the postponement of the decision until late 2007 will encourage Kazakhstan to make further political reforms. The United States and Britain have been critical of Kazakhstan's bid because of the country's very imperfect record of democratic reform.

Developments in Kazakhstan point up the real barriers facing the OSCE, the EU, the United States, and any other outside actors trying to help build democratic societies in Central Asia—if these states are not willing participants

---

*Many Central Asians prefer dealing with Russia and China and with Asian states generally.*

---

in the process. For this reason the decision about Kazakhstan's chairmanship is likely to become a decisive one for the future of the OSCE. If Kazakhstan is turned down because of its failure to live up to the OSCE's goals, that organization is likely to become less important in Central Asia. In that case, the OSCE, the United States, and the EU will also find it more difficult to spread their message of democratization in Central Asia and in the former Soviet republics generally.

## TURKMENS AND TAJIKS

In the past few years, US interest in Turkmenistan has increased substantially. Even before President Niyazov's death the United States was engaged in a vigorous lobbying effort to gain Turkmen support for the trans-Caspian gas pipeline project and for increased US military (and intelligence) access to facilities in Turkmenistan. While Turkmenistan's proclaimed "positive neutrality" precludes Ashgabat from giving Washington full basing rights, US access to Turkmen facilities was increased after Washington fell out with Tashkent. Given Niyazov's longtime rivalry with Karimov, Washington's relative lack of interest in the state of human rights and political reform in Turkmenistan must have been a source of amusement for the late Turkmen leader.

Turkmenistan today is in a period of transition. The United States and the EU are both eager to increase their leverage with the new government. Russia and China likewise are lobbying hard to set up preferential relationships. President Berdymukhammedov has made promises to open his society to outside influences. He has allowed access to the Internet, let some political prisoners out of jail, and pledged to begin the process of legal reform. He is showing signs of willingness to work closely with Western interlocutors as he does so. To date, however, signs of political change in Turkmenistan have been more symbolic than substantial.

US and EU leaders are still happy to give Berdymukhammedov the benefit of the doubt, of course, hoping that he will divert significant amounts of gas to be developed by Western firms and if at all possible shipped to Europe, bypassing Russia. Western investment, however, may prove easier to arrange than major new shipments to Europe. The Turkmen government is inviting Western investors to have a look at undeveloped and underdeveloped gas reserves, but it is very likely to continue sending through Russia the bulk of its gas from fields currently under exploitation. The sale of Turkmen gas to Russia provides the predictable and sustainable cash transfers that the regime depends on for its survival. They help to subsidize the country's unreformed agricultural sector, which in turn provides incomes for the bulk of the population. China, meanwhile, is also competing for Turkmen gas. Turkmenistan recently signed a major gas agreement (largely based on greenfield projects) with Beijing.

The United States is finding itself butting up against a growing Chinese presence in Tajikistan as well. Beijing is offering 1 percent loans for about \$1 billion in new development projects in Tajikistan's hydroelectric sector, which is of great interest to the United States, as well as in other areas of the economy. The Americans had always viewed Russia as their principal rival with the Tajiks, so China's expanding presence has caught them a bit by surprise.

Tajikistan is the US-designated gateway to Afghanistan. The hope was that Tajikistan would allow US firms to develop its hydroelectric power to benefit the Afghan market. This could still happen. However, as the situation in Afghanistan deteriorates, Dushanbe seems to be warming to previously spurned Russian offers. These, together with the increased Chinese engagement, may leave

the United States decidedly in third place in this small, poor, but strategically located country.

## DEMOCRACY AND DOUBLE STANDARDS

Despite official statements to the contrary, the Central Asian states are less important to Washington, in and of themselves, than they are as facilitators of US policies toward other countries, or in the pursuit of American strategic goals. The Central Asian countries seem well aware of this, and this prompts leaders in the region to complain about what they perceive as an American double standard, which they believe many European states adhere to as well.

Central Asians note that the "War on Terror" has introduced new ambiguities into the international arena. Western democracies have granted extraordinary powers to their executive branches, licensed special tribunals, and removed some basic legal protections when national security is said to be threatened. The United States has even expanded the definition of acceptable interrogation techniques to include methods that, to many observers, qualify as torture.

Western insistence that the suspension of some long-accepted civil rights is a response to extraordinary and largely externally based threats, and not evidence of political failures of the sort encountered in Central Asian states, makes a distinction that non-Western leaders find rather self-serving. Those in Central Asia who are the most cynical simply argue that powerful states can maintain a double standard, forcing weaker states to accept standards that they themselves will not accept.

Because of this perceived double standard, many Central Asians prefer dealing with Russia and China and with Asian states generally. They argue that it is their Asian culture, and its allegedly deep-rooted respect for authority, that makes them slow to develop democratic institutions. They refuse to acknowledge that it is elite resistance to reform that has hampered democratic development in Central Asia, not a lack of preparation among the population.

In fact, democratic societies will develop in Central Asia only if there is strong support for their emergence among the countries' grass roots and elites. Democracy will not develop simply through the hectoring of foreign powers. Unfortunately, there is little reason to believe that any of America's possible future presidents will bring in a foreign policy team better able to deal with this fact than the current administration has been. ■