



# EURASIAN SECURITY The Search for Common Ground

Policy Perspectives  
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**PONARS Eurasia**

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PONARS Eurasia is a global network of social scientists that seeks to promote scholarly work and policy engagement on transnational and comparative topics within the Eurasian space. PONARS Eurasia is based at the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies (IERES) at The George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs.

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*Cover images:*

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad delivers a speech during the Caspian Sea leaders summit in Tehran, Iran (2007). (AP Photo/Vahid Salemi)

U.S. Vice President Joe Biden gestures during his speech at Moscow State University (2011). He told the audience that Washington supports Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization. (AP Photo/Alexander Zemlianichenko)

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon listen to a facility officer while touring the Soviet-built Okno (Window) complex in Nurek, 30 miles southeast of the Tajik capital, Dushanbe (2009). (AP Photo/ RIA Novosti, Vladimir Rodionov, Presidential Press Service)

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# Foreword

Cory Welt

*The George Washington University*

This collection of essays is based on the proceedings of a March 2011 workshop of the Program on New Approaches to Research and Security in Eurasia (PONARS Eurasia), held in collaboration with the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO), Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow. PONARS Eurasia is a program that promotes scholarly work and policy engagement on transnational and comparative topics within the Eurasian space, based on the expertise of a global network of social scientists.

The workshop – on Security Challenges in Russia and Eurasia – brought together scholars and experts from the Russian Federation, the United States, and Europe (including Ukraine and Azerbaijan) to propose initiatives for deepening international security cooperation in Eurasia; to consider the implications of changing relationships between Russia, the EU, and countries of post-Soviet Eastern Europe and the Caucasus; and to assess the domestic foundations of Russian security and democratic stability. We are publishing twenty-three essays from the workshop in three collected volumes, of which this is the first.

This volume, *Eurasian Security: The Search for Common Ground*, examines the prospects for deepening international security cooperation in Eurasia. The three essays in Part I propose a variety of cooperation initiatives in Eurasia, primarily focusing on energy and counter-narcotics. *Kimberly Marten* proposes greater openness to Russian participation in the Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline project; exchange of best practices in counternarcotics and border control; and a sustained defense industrial relationship between NATO member states and Russia. Looking specifically at the Caspian Sea, *Dmitry Gorenburg* also endorses greater cooperation in pipeline development, as well as deeper involvement of the United States and Russia in multilateral initiatives in counter-narcotics and, gradually, counter-terrorism and counter-proliferation. Turning to Central Asia, *George Gavrilis* calls for greater donor coordination of security assistance across country-specific (and Central Asia and Afghanistan) portfolios on, in particular, counter-narcotics and the tailoring of security cooperation with different governments in ways that are most likely to gain traction.

Part II of the collection takes stock of three “security sub-regions” in Eurasia: the Black Sea, Caspian Sea, and Central Asia. *Volodymyr Dubovyk* argues that at a time of reduced European interest in the Black Sea, there is reason for even greater European

engagement, on issues ranging from conflict resolution and energy transit to trafficking (in humans, weapons, and narcotics), democratic development, and environmental security. *Andrey Makarychev* observes that the nearby Caspian Sea is at best hesitantly evolving into a coherent region, thanks to the persistence of divergent economic, political, and security interests among littoral states and their differing relations with Western actors, themselves possessing predominantly economic rather than security stakes in the region. Finally, *Alexander Cooley* assesses the ineffectiveness of regional security organizations in Central Asia, chalking it up to enduring suspicions of sovereignty-threatening external actors and a reluctance to intervene in countries' internal affairs, as well as by geopolitical competition that encourages local actors to seek bilateral, rather than multilateral, security solutions.

Finally, Part III forecasts the fate of nuclear nonproliferation efforts in the region and beyond. *Pavel Baev* argues that Russia's support for sanctions against Iran has reached its limits: Russia may derive some economic benefit from Iran's pariah status, but Moscow sees sanctions as ultimately ineffectual and believes Iran's nuclear development to be all but inevitable. On the other hand, *Yoshiko Herrera* and *Jacques Hymans* attribute the staying power of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) to what they call a "conditional" norm, one its adherents accept as applicable in different ways to different countries, namely by allowing those member-states who possessed nuclear weapons prior to the NPT's entry into force to keep them. They argue that the greatest threat to the NPT comes not from such "double standards" but by the perception that nuclear-weapons states, the United States in particular, are willing to selectively reward states that break the norm (i.e., India) while preventing others from developing civil nuclear technology (i.e., Iran).

We are sure you'll find these policy perspectives informative and thought-provoking. Many individuals were instrumental in the production of this volume, as well as the organization of the workshop that generated it. I would like to especially thank our colleague and co-organizer, IMEMO Leading Research Fellow Irina Kobrinskaya; Managing Editor Alexander Schmemmann; Program Assistant Olga Novikova; Graduate Research Assistants Wilder Bullard and Julija Filinovic; IERES Executive Associate Caitlin Katsiaficas; and IERES Director Henry Hale.

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# Institutionalizing Security Cooperation between Russia and the West

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 135

Kimberly Marten  
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Are there any mechanisms that would allow the security relationship between Russia and NATO member states – whether European or North American – to become deeply and permanently cooperative?

On paper, cooperation was institutionalized long ago. The Founding Act on Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation was signed in 1997. The NATO-Russia Council (NRC) has provided a forum for ministerial level consultation since 2002. By 2006, according to political scientist Vincent Pouliot (in his book *International Security in Practice: The Politics of NATO-Russia Diplomacy*), the NRC was a well-established talk-shop with 25 working groups. Practical initiatives tended to go forward there despite the ups and downs of high-level diplomacy.

Yet anyone who follows the issue closely knows that this cooperation has been episodic and often rather shallow. Russia and NATO seem to go through repeated cycles of a “two-steps-forward, one-step-back” dance. Nothing sums up the sometimes schizophrenic character of the relationship better than the official 2010 Russian military doctrine, which cites NATO expansion and NATO’s tendency to take on global intervention roles as an “external military danger” even as it simultaneously calls for more cooperation with NATO to “strengthen collective security.” Later statements by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev emphasized cooperation with NATO while downplaying any remaining threat, but it remains too early to tell whether permanent optimism about the security relationship remains warranted this time around.

The administration of U.S. President Barack Obama has emphasized that outreach to Russia on security issues is one of its prime foreign policy goals. Its own National Security Memorandum of 2010 is replete with calls for cooperation and outreach toward Russia as an emerging power center. The problem, however, is that unless such cooperation is truly institutionalized – inside the

minds and behavior patterns of key senior bureaucratic and political actors in Moscow, Washington, and European capitals – the forward and backward dance will resume as soon as U.S. attention wanes or the next crisis erupts (whether a militarized crisis like the 2008 Georgia war or a diplomatic one like the 2011 question about what action to take toward Libya).

This memo argues that traditional military-to-military programs are unlikely to be a source for meaningful institutionalization of the security relationship anytime soon. Yet three emerging areas – Russian cooperation with U.S. and NATO efforts in Afghanistan, U.S./Russian joint interests in improving border controls and counternarcotics interdiction, and Russian weapons and defense service purchases from European NATO member states – may allow an institutionalization of the relationship to truly emerge. As an increasing number of domestic actors on all sides have an interest in maintaining a cooperative relationship, joint efforts are more and more likely to become an entrenched standard operating procedure.

### **Why Military-to-Military Programs Won't Work Soon**

Russian and Western military officers have engaged in significant cooperation since the end of the Cold War era. The 1989 Dangerous Military Activities (DMA) Agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States, designed to prevent the unintentional or miscalculated use of force in peacetime, was particularly notable in this regard. It marked the first time ever that negotiations were led and an agreement was drafted and signed primarily by military officers on both sides. Both the Soviet General Staff and the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff had to fight significant bureaucratic battles with civilians at home to make the agreement possible. Such common interests among senior military officers – both in avoiding unintentional militarized conflict and in doing end-runs around civilians – might have laid the groundwork for growing trust between the two military organizations.

During the Gorbachev era, there were a series of ad hoc military-to-military visits and educational exchanges. After Russian independence, these were codified into a 1993 Memorandum of Understanding on Defense and Military Relations. Yet the message that Western military organizations received from these programs was discouraging: the young Russian officers who participated in exchanges were afterwards sent into backwater assignments at home, instead of being promoted. A common refrain was that those officers were never heard from again. It seemed that Russian senior officers feared that a trick (or a contagion effect) would emerge from too much contact with Western military forces.

Starting in 1996, Russian army troops served side by side with NATO forces in the IFOR and follow-on SFOR peace enforcement operations in Bosnia; in 1999, Russian soldiers again joined NATO (after an initially tense confrontation at the Pristina airport) in the KFOR peace enforcement mission in Kosovo. This occurred even though the question of Kosovo has remained a thorn in the Russian/NATO relationship. In 2006 and 2007, cooperation extended into the realm of counterterrorism, as Russian naval ships for short periods of time joined Operation Active Endeavor, the NATO-



commanded effort to patrol and interdict potential threats crossing the Mediterranean Sea from the Middle East and North Africa. A wide variety of smaller scale exercises and exchanges, especially related to evacuation, search-and-rescue, and counterterrorism operations, are now routine.

Yet jointness never really gelled as an enduring characteristic of the relationship, and these instances of cooperation remain hard to arrange and implement. The Western side often blames the recalcitrance of the Russian military bureaucracy. Any realist can easily explain the motive for such recalcitrance. Despite all the talk of American decline and impotence in today's globalized world (and despite the United States' continuing economic malaise), the U.S. base defense budget (i.e., expenses outside of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq) proposed to Congress in February 2011 was at a record high of \$553 billion. While a large chunk of that money is slated for veterans and health care benefits and personnel costs, the budget also reflects the continuing U.S. effort to deploy high-tech weapons that give it unquestioned battlefield (and, increasingly, internet) superiority against any state adversary.

In contrast, the 2009 Russian defense budget is estimated to have been \$50 billion, while NATO military staffers reportedly have denigrated Russian military equipment, transportation, and manpower, including in their analysis of the 2008 Georgia war. While the recent spike in oil prices has led to promises of a \$650 billion spending spree by Moscow over the next decade on weapons and equipment, Russia cannot hope to match U.S. capabilities anytime soon. Leaving aside questions of pride (which Pouliot emphasizes in his book), these facts mean that it is completely rational for Russian military officers to be suspicious of U.S. intentions.

There is likely nothing the United States can do to reassure those officers that its ultimate intent is not to enfold Russia into a smothering military alliance. Some Russian officers may publicly pretend that they still fear a conventional war with NATO, but more likely what they most fear is having their own autonomy and freedom of action taken away by the U.S. military behemoth—as it arguably was in Kosovo. They do not fear war, but paralysis and irrelevance. Those officers, and the politicians who support them, will always resist deep institutionalization of military-to-military ties with the West because of the long-term implication of alliance building with a 500-pound gorilla. If the issue is pushed too hard, Washington will only harden their suspicions. Instead, the West needs to wait for Russia to decide if and when to prioritize those connections.

### **Afghanistan: The Potential for Institutionalization**

Russia is currently providing crucial assistance to U.S. and NATO efforts in Afghanistan: through the Northern Distribution Network that crosses Russian territory, allowing the transit of non-lethal supplies (including fuel and food) from Baltic ports via Central Asia as an alternative to the dangerous roads of Pakistan; through a jointly

planned counternarcotics raid in October 2010 that destroyed a huge cache of heroine in Afghanistan; through a counternarcotics training program for hundreds of Afghan military officers; and through weapons assistance to the Afghan police. Such small-scale cooperation will likely continue to increase with time, since Russia benefits from U.S. and NATO military efforts that help control the spread of both illegal narcotics and radical Islamism into Central Asia. A future U.S. and NATO failure in Afghanistan might provoke feelings of *schadenfreude* among some Russians, but instability in Afghanistan harms core Russian security interests.

At the same time, both the history of Soviet involvement in Afghanistan and the variety of competing geopolitical interests in the region make large-scale cooperation difficult to envision. Many Russians have bad memories of Soviet involvement in Afghanistan, and many Afghans have even worse ones. It is unlikely that the Russian military would participate in any action there, except perhaps in very small numbers as well-camouflaged special forces. Despite recent Russian government pronouncements about supporting reconstruction of large-scale civilian infrastructure projects in Afghanistan, it is also unclear that Russian civilians in large numbers would feel comfortable relocating to Afghanistan for commercial or humanitarian purposes, or that Afghans would welcome their presence. Most likely, the reconstruction support will instead center on funding and off-site advising.

Geopolitical competition also limits how much assistance Russia provides to U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan. The U.S. military presence provides a continuing excuse for the U.S. base at Manas, in Russia's backyard of Kyrgyzstan, and the Northern Distribution Network helps cement a larger U.S. commercial presence throughout Central Asia. It makes sense that Russia would want the U.S. and NATO to leave Afghanistan as soon as practicable, even if it benefits from U.S. and NATO efforts to restore stability.

Yet if the U.S. is truly interested in permanent outreach to Russia in Afghanistan, there is one mechanism for making institutionalized cooperation more likely: encouraging Gazprom's investment in the planned Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline (TAP or TAPI) natural gas pipeline connecting Turkmenistan to India through Afghanistan and Pakistan. Gazprom has expressed interest in this recently. Russian participation in TAPI is sometimes portrayed as a negative outcome by Western analysts, who fear that Gazprom would use its participation to cut off Turkmen gas supplies into the planned Nabucco pipeline (the Turkish-European gas supply alternative bypassing Russia). Yet many analysts, including in the U.S. government, doubt that Turkmenistan would be a significant Nabucco participant anyway. Giving Gazprom – an enterprise whose taxes contribute significantly to the Russian state budget – a stake in the security of a pipeline that crosses dangerous Afghan territory is a mechanism for tying Russian interests much more deeply to U.S. and NATO success in Afghanistan. TAPI can make military success in Afghanistan a win-win solution, and cooperation there a long-term possibility, by getting Gazprom on board.

## **Border Security**

Over the past several years, narcotics gangs located in neighboring Mexico have increasingly threatened U.S. border security. Mexico itself is sometimes thought to be approaching “failed state” status. Over 34,000 people have been killed by drug gangs, often in horrific ways, since Mexican President Felipe Calderon’s December 2006 decision to wage a military conflict against the cartels. Direct threats to the United States from Mexico remain rare, but several U.S. federal officials have been assassinated while on duty in Mexico in the past year. Further, the tourist trade of Americans visiting Mexico has declined, as Acapulco and Cancun have become targets. Mexican drug gangs have massacred groups of illegal immigrants en route to the United States, creating a human security problem that resonates with the growing U.S. Latino population. Gangs that are connected through Mexico from Colombia are winning new converts to their cartels in U.S. prisons.

This gives the United States an important security problem that Russia shares, as the latter is concerned about defending its own borders from the narcotics trade and gang influence. In December 2010, for instance, Russian authorities expressed an interest in resuming Russian border troop cooperation with authorities in Tajikistan. Earlier in the decade, Russian border troops had defended Tajikistan’s border with Afghanistan, but they withdrew from the country in 2005 by mutual agreement (although a major Russian military base remains). Tajik border troops now shoulder guard duty alone.

Often Russia’s neighborhood border security situation is portrayed by analysts in terms of a “Great Game” competition. Indeed, the United States is currently building training facilities for the Tajik army as part of its effort in Afghanistan, and some analysts believe that a permanent U.S. military base might be located there eventually. Rather than seeing the Russian interest in returning to Tajikistan and the U.S. interest in retaining a security presence in Tajikistan only in terms of competition, however, this situation might actually provide a key opportunity for additional bureaucratic cooperation on security issues. There is already reported cooperation between U.S. and Russian military officials in various Central Asian locations. U.S. Homeland Security officials might also reach out to their counterparts in the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) to search for common gains in border security collaboration. One can imagine, for example, the sharing of border security best practices, the exchange of trainees, and even joint conferences on security issues held in Tajikistan among all of the involved parties. Drug gangs in Mexico and Colombia probably share some fundamental operational characteristics with those that transit Tajikistan, since theorists tell us that the political economy of violent organized crime and the motives for individuals to join such networks are similar around the world. Given the overstretched U.S. defense and diplomacy budgets, and the desire of the Tajik government for better relations with Russia, cooperation on counternarcotics and border control on the Tajik/ Afghan border could be fruitful for the core interests of all three states.

## **Military Purchases from the West**

Finally, this analysis suggests using a different framework for viewing recent Russian military purchases from Western Europe. Georgian leaders have insisted that Russia's purchase of two Mistral-class amphibious helicopter- and troop-carriers from France (to be followed by a joint project to build two more on Russian territory) is intended to threaten Tbilisi's sovereignty. Some also see the Mistrals as a potential threat to NATO's Baltic member states. Russia itself emphasizes that it intends to deploy the first two ships in its Pacific Fleet off the Kurile Islands. While some see this as a threat to Japan, especially given the latest posturing between the two countries over the islands, it is more likely that long-term Russian fears are centered on the possibility of spillover from a future war in Korea, or on the prospect of an increasingly sophisticated Chinese coastal naval presence.

U.S. Senator John McCain criticized the Mistral sale publicly, and Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates did so quietly in Paris. An agreement with Germany to build a combined-arms troop training center in Russia has similarly been portrayed by some as a Russian effort to undermine NATO defense planning and coordination, as have smaller military equipment purchases by Russia from France and Italy.

Yet Western defense analysts might accept the arguments of Paris about the Mistral and think of these sales in a similar way to how the United States thinks about its own military sales to foreign allies: as building relationships, rather than as one-off deals. For example, U.S. officials say that they are somewhat less worried about the future of Iraq because Iraq is dependent on the United States to provide it with advanced military aircraft, a sale that will be accompanied by long-term follow-on contracts for the provision of spare parts and training. Indeed, reports indicate that Russian state funds for building the two Mistrals on Russian territory will not be available until 2020, leaving Moscow dependent on French Mistral technology for at least a decade. This defense industrial relationship between Russia and France, like those it has begun to establish with Germany and Italy, can become a mechanism for trust-building in yet another set of security institutions.

## **Conclusion**

The more that a larger variety of Western and Russian domestic security institutions see common interests in working together, the more likely it is that the halting dance of post-Cold War cooperation will grow into enduring teamwork. This can happen even under conditions when official NATO-level cooperation and military-to-military programs stall. Rather than fearing each other's influence in a competitive "Great Game," Moscow, Washington, and the European capitals should welcome opportunities for common problem solving on security issues. While traditional military-to-military relationships may not lead to vibrant jointness, collaboration on energy, border security, and defense industrial issues may be promising avenues for change.

# US-Russian Cooperation in the Caspian

## AN OPPORTUNITY WORTH PURSUING

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 136

Dmitry Gorenburg  
*Harvard University*

For the United States, the strategic importance of the Caspian region has increased dramatically in recent years. The Caspian littoral states have come to provide an important set of opportunities for the United States in a strategically significant region. Now, however, they face a range of security threats in the region, which have resulted from a combination of changes in the region's geopolitical environment resulting from the break-up of the Soviet Union and conflicts over the division of marine and seabed resources in the Caspian Sea. Specific threats include smuggling of narcotics and other contraband, proliferation of WMD or related materials, and the limited reach of government authority in remote land and maritime areas. Further, a number of regional actors pose threats to Caspian energy security. There is also the potential for armed conflict that can spill into the wider region; in particular, Azerbaijan and Armenia may come to blows over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region. Finally, terrorism presents a threat – both directly to several of the littoral states, and indirectly to the entire region, which serves as a transit corridor for terrorist group members traveling between the northern Caucasus and Afghanistan. An important consideration is that the effects of these threats can and do proliferate beyond the region. It is in the interests of the U.S. government to help its Caspian regional partners achieve or enhance the ability to deter, detect, and respond to these threats themselves before problems spread.

At the same time, strengthening bilateral security relationships in the region would provide a strategic opportunity for the United States. The region is strategically important for its energy reserves, which help to mitigate European and Asian dependence on Russian energy sources. It also serves as an important link in the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) for resupplying U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan. Its role in this network may need to increase, given the unstable situation surrounding existing U.S. facilities in Kyrgyzstan and elsewhere in Central Asia.

## **Energy Corridors**

Over the last 15 years, security relations in the Caspian region have been driven by competition for access to the region's energy resources, usually in ways that decreased overall security by promoting zero-sum thinking among the major players. This competition primarily took the form of efforts to build pipelines that excluded one or another of the major regional powers.

Initially, the major contenders were Russia, on one side, and the European Union and the United States, on the other. Other countries, such as China, Iran, and India, were not significant players in this competition until quite recently. Russia's main goal in the competition was to ensure that it retained its effective monopoly over the transit of oil and natural gas from the Caspian region and Central Asia to Europe. As long as it had a monopoly over transit routes, it could purchase energy supplies from the region at relatively low rates and make a significant profit in reselling them to Europe.\*

Transit monopolies also allowed Russia to wield a significant amount of political influence in both supplying and receiving countries. For these reasons, it sought to prevent the construction of pipelines to Europe that completely bypassed Russian territory.

Western states had goals diametrically opposed to those of Russia. European states sought to ensure that they had continued access to energy supplies. They thus preferred multiple pipelines from a variety of suppliers, which would reduce dependence on any single supplier or route. The United States sought to ensure the sovereignty of states in the Caucasus and Central Asia that had only recently gained their independence. For these reasons, Western states sought to build new energy pipelines from the region that bypassed Russia.

## **The Second Great Game Is Over**

Russia has now failed decisively in its effort to prevent the diversification of export routes from the region. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) and South Caucasus pipelines allowed Azerbaijani oil and natural gas exports to Europe to bypass Russia, with a recently refurbished gas pipeline to Iran providing another alternative export route for Azerbaijan. The construction of natural gas pipelines from Turkmenistan to China (via Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan) and Iran provides those countries with alternatives to Russian routes as well. Kazakh oil is now being exported to China, by pipeline, and to Europe, by tanker across the Caspian and then through the BTC pipeline.

The only aspect of the Russian monopoly that remains is on the supply of natural gas from the region to Europe. For the moment, a number of Central European countries continue to depend entirely on Russia for their natural gas supplies. The significance of this monopoly has declined in recent years, thanks to a decrease in overall European demand due to the global recession and an increase in supplies of liquefied natural gas. The prospect that shale gas reserves, recently found in Poland and elsewhere in Europe, will become commercially viable in the next decade also reduces

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\* This applied primarily to natural gas, which was more difficult to transport and did not have a world market price. Petroleum was usually sold at market prices.

the political and economic significance of the Russian monopoly on natural gas supplies to Europe.\*

As a result of these developments, analysts believe that in the foreseeable future economic factors will trump geopolitical considerations in determining which pipeline routes get built in coming years. This presents both sides with an opportunity to shift away from zero-sum geopolitical considerations in planning future pipeline construction. Western countries could take the lead by allowing Russia and China to participate in pipeline consortia. The U.S. government has already made some steps in this direction by declaring its willingness to have Gazprom take a stake in the Nabucco project. Just recently, Ambassador Richard Morningstar went further by noting that Nabucco is just one option for the delivery of Caspian gas to Europe, with the Turkey-Greece-Italy Interconnector (ITGI) and the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) potentially being more viable economically.

While some analysts have interpreted these statements as a U.S. admission of defeat in the face of Russia's South Stream project, the reality is that the United States is simply shifting from emphasizing the political advantages of Nabucco to a focus on the economic realities. Azerbaijani gas cannot fill the planned capacity of the Nabucco pipeline – 31 billion cubic meters (bcm) per year – as Azerbaijan has only 10 bcm of natural gas available. Other potential suppliers are unavailable for various reasons. Smaller pipeline consortia such as the Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline are willing to work with existing parameters, rather than take a risky bet that a trans-Caspian pipeline to Turkmenistan will be built in the next few years or that instability in Iraq will abate to a level that will allow for the construction of a connecting pipeline to Nabucco.

Much of the uncertainty surrounding the future of natural gas pipeline routes from the region to Europe may be resolved by the end of 2011, when the Shah Deniz consortium plans to select a buyer of the 10 bcm of Azeri gas that will be available for this route. Whichever route is chosen, it will provide an alternative to Europe for Azerbaijani gas and will therefore likely provide an epitaph for the great game between Russia and the West over Caspian and Central Asian energy supplies.

### **Russian Political Goals in the Caspian**

Russia is the most important political presence in the Caspian and has the most powerful military force in the region. Any U.S. policy in the Caspian must take Russian goals and interests into account if it is to have any hope of success.

Russia seeks to maintain a dominant role in the Caspian region. It is relatively suspicious of outside powers, especially the United States. Russian leaders believe that influence in the region is a zero-sum game, in part because of

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\* Initial estimates by Wood Mackenzie show 1.35 tcm of recoverable natural gas reserves in Poland, which is equal to approximately half of the European Union's current proven natural gas reserves. Drilling is expected to start in 2011. Robin Pagnamenta, "[Dash for Poland's gas could end Russian stranglehold.](#)" *The Sunday Times*, 5 April 2010.

the Soviet legacy in Russian foreign policy but also because of their interpretation of U.S. interests. They believe that the United States has been playing a zero-sum game through its efforts to build energy corridors that bypass Russia and its promotion of color revolutions that have replaced pro-Russian leaders with ones that lean toward the West.

Russian policies in the Caspian region are shaped by three divergent perspectives. The geopolitical/military perspective focuses on great power competition; the perspective of the Russian energy industry focuses on securing exclusive rights for gas transit to Europe; and the security perspective focuses on transnational threats to Russia caused by radical Islamism, terrorism, and drug smuggling.

The internal tension among these perspectives is the main source of inconsistency in Russian policies in the Caspian region. Depending on which perspective is in ascendance, Russian officials alternate between focusing on soft security threats and efforts to retain a monopoly on energy transit and to come out on top in its rivalry with the United States in the region. Focusing on soft security threats is best done through the establishment of cooperative mechanisms with states both in and outside the region, while the other goals are best achieved by limiting the influence of outsiders in the region.

This internal tension presents the United States with an opportunity to focus the relationship on positive interactions in the realm of dealing with soft security threats. To the extent that the relationship and Russian regional policy is focused on this set of issues, it will be that much harder for proponents of the other two perspectives to gain traction in pushing their preferred regional policies.

### **Involving Russia**

In order to maximize the effectiveness of U.S. strategy in the Caspian, policymakers must establish a cooperative relationship with Russia in the region. Recent progress in the overall U.S.-Russia relationship provides an opportunity for them to do so. Such a relationship is necessary if the United States is to achieve its goals of increasing regional stability while reducing the dangers to the region emanating from non-state actors. Despite outward appearances, the Russian leadership is not monolithic and U.S. policymakers should work with Russian leaders to steer the relationship in a constructive direction that will help the United States achieve its goals.

Russia is the dominant power in the region and will remain so for the foreseeable future. The other former Soviet states in the region are loath to take any actions that would antagonize Russia. This is especially the case as they are unsure about the longevity of the U.S. commitment to the region: they do know that Russia will still be their neighbor long after the United States has moved on to other foreign policy priorities. This uncertainty about U.S. intentions has led to a great deal of reluctance in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan to partner with the United States. This is especially true in the realm of military cooperation, which is perceived by the other Caspian states to be the most threatening to Russian interests. It would be easier for Russia's post-Soviet neighbors in the region to engage in bilateral and multilateral



cooperative activities if the United States and Russia acted as partners, not adversaries, in dealing with regional security issues. This is a real possibility on topics such as energy, counter-narcotics, counter-terrorism, and other soft security threats.

### **A Roadmap for U.S.-Russian Engagement in the Caspian**

Russian officials have repeatedly emphasized their concern about the toll drug addiction is taking on their society. Some of them have criticized U.S. drug policy in Afghanistan for being unable or uninterested in stopping the flow of drugs into Central Asia and on to Russia. The United States should treat such statements as an opportunity to press Russia to work together on counter-narcotics issues in order to make these programs as effective as possible. Such an effort would both potentially increase the programs' effectiveness and make it much more difficult for Russian politicians opposed to cooperation to criticize U.S. policy.

The U.S.-Russian Bilateral Presidential Commission Counter-Narcotics Working Group has identified supply reduction as one of its priorities for joint counter-narcotics efforts. Maritime drug interdiction in the Caspian would provide an excellent venue for such cooperation. The two countries could begin with information sharing through an existing organization, such as CARICC, the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre, a United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) project. Ideally, this would only be a first stage, to be followed by joint training exercises in the region to which other littoral states could be invited. As cooperation develops, it will be possible to conduct joint operations, along the lines of recent joint counter-narcotics operations in Afghanistan and St. Petersburg.

If this model of cooperation proves effective in the area of counter-narcotics, it could gradually be expanded to other issues where Russia and the United States share interests. Counter-terrorism and counter-proliferation are both issues on which the two countries already share intelligence and conduct some joint programs, which have led to the establishment of a certain level of trust among the policy and expert communities working these issues. To date, these programs have not focused on the Caspian region, as it is seen as either a backwater for the bilateral relationship or a zone of potential conflict thanks to the history of zero-sum thinking about influence in the region. If the two countries can establish a productive working relationship in the Caspian by focusing on counter-narcotics, this could be combined with the productive national-level working relationships on counter-terrorism and counter-proliferation. However, policymakers must not rush into this too quickly, as the current environment is not conducive to such cooperation without some prior confidence-building measures.

The example of U.S.-Russian cooperation in the region could have a significant political impact on overall regional cooperation. Fear of Russian reaction is one of the factors limiting existing Caspian partner states' willingness to work with the United States on military issues. An environment in which

Russia and the United States were cooperating on Caspian regional security issues of common concern would increase the appetite for security cooperation with the United States certainly in Kazakhstan, and probably in Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan as well.

At the same time, U.S. policymakers need to proceed cautiously in developing cooperative initiatives with Russia. A number of Russian officials continue to view the world through a Cold War prism and remain deeply skeptical of any cooperation with the United States, especially in a part of the world that they consider to belong to the Russian sphere of influence.\* They will undoubtedly seek to derail closer bilateral cooperation in the Caspian by making statements condemning U.S. efforts as inadequate or incompetent, much as Vitaly Churkin, Russia's Ambassador to the United Nations, did in September 2010. To maintain advances in cooperation, it will be important to recognize that the Russian political elite is not monolithic and therefore to avoid over-reacting to such statements.

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\* Such suspicions exist on the U.S. side as well.

# The International Community's Elusive Search for Common Ground in Central Asia

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 137

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## **Introduction**

At a closed-door, high-level gathering in Paris in 2008, the United Nations' special representative to Afghanistan urged ministers from Eurasia, the Middle East, and South Asia to jointly tackle common security challenges and identify achievable projects to assist Afghanistan and improve the security of the broader region. Officials from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan enthusiastically proposed a series of win-win projects and resolved to work together to fight the drug trade, share intelligence to combat terrorism, and build roads, rails, pipelines, and bridges to Afghanistan.

After the conference, Central Asian officials did a unilateral about-face. The Uzbek ambassador publically complained about Afghanistan's "narco-aggression." Tajik officials expressed continued willingness to help Afghanistan so long as that meant that the international community would fund bridges, electric grids, dams, and roads in Tajikistan. Since the Paris gathering, Afghanistan has further deteriorated and the Central Asian states are arguably no more and no less cooperative when it comes to so-called "win-win" regional projects.

A good look at such regional initiatives demonstrates modest returns on donor investment. Indeed, these returns are overshadowed by Central Asian governments' resilient resistance to cooperating with one another even in the face of mutual security threats. The particular interests of Central Asian regimes largely drive how security assistance is absorbed, channeled, and used. Officials in Central Asian capitals have managed to secure funding and participate in hot-button regional security initiatives while maintaining mistrust and severe cooperation deficits with one another.

It is time for international stakeholders to rethink their approach to security assistance to Central Asia. This policy memo briefly discusses the status and stakes behind internationally-sponsored initiatives in Central Asia on

counter-terrorism, trafficking, and Afghanistan's recovery and proposes ways to retool policy for more effective results. It suggests ways to better coordinate and implement international security assistance. More importantly, it argues that security-sector aid should be diverted to the Central Asian governments most likely to put it to good use.

### **Counter-Terrorism**

On paper, Central Asian states appear to be vigilant and well-coordinated in the fight against global terrorism. The UN Counter-Terrorism Committee notes that Central Asian republics have near-perfect ratification records for international counter-terrorism conventions. In the case of UN conventions, states are obligated to enhance cooperation in matters of extradition, mutual legal assistance, and prosecution of suspected offenders. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent also creates the appearance of a coordinated, region-wide attempt to prevent extremism. In exchange for participating in global and regional anti-terror compacts, the Central Asian republics receive a wide range of lucrative assistance, including funds for judicial training, law enforcement, and border control.

In practice, the republics have performed poorly in implementing international counter-terrorism programs. Few states that are parties to counter-terrorism instruments cite them as the basis for extradition requests. The states as a rule do not share lists of terror suspects even at crucial border crossings. Instead, Central Asian officials have resorted to ad hoc arrangements for political expediency (e.g., extraditing suspects to China upon Beijing's request or, in more extreme cases, using agents to kidnap wanted persons ensconced in neighboring countries). Officials are little inclined to document how they expand counter-terrorism assistance funds, and key donors and international counter-terror officials privately express frustration at the lack of transparency. As one anonymous, high-level UN official neatly summed up the situation to the author, "we spend and spend on these programs year after year and have nothing to show for it at the end of the day."

### **Counter-Narcotics**

Central Asian diplomats regularly complain that the international community is indifferent to Central Asia's drug-trafficking woes, and they insist that more funding is necessary for region-wide programs to combat Afghan opium. In reality, there is no shortage of initiatives and many of them are well funded. The United States, European Union, and UN have extended counter-narcotics assistance to Central Asian republics that cumulatively totals in the hundreds of millions of dollars so that recipient states can overhaul drug enforcement agencies, train border agents and police, and equip authorities with interdiction equipment. Additionally, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) has sponsored a series of initiatives designed to encourage the Central Asian states to cooperate with one another to suppress the drug trade, most recently by inaugurating the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center (CARICC).

While Central Asian diplomats unfailingly describe anti-drug efforts as a win-win endeavor for the region, not all Central Asian states are inclined to actively combat the drug trade. Tajikistan's impoverished economy relies on a much-needed injection of illicit revenue, especially related to the drug trade. But being a drug-smuggling conduit pays in more ways than one, as Tajikistan simultaneously benefits from the anti-drug money that the international community disburses. By contrast, Uzbekistan is much more vigilant in counter-narcotics measures. Autarchic and highly authoritarian, the Uzbek government is less interested in receiving aid for counter-narcotics measures and more in using the problem of the drug trade to justify its closed-borders policies. Central Asian states care about counter-narcotics initiatives but for very different reasons.

### **Afghanistan**

Most recently, international stakeholders have called on the Central Asian republics to do more to engage with security, development, and infrastructure projects in Afghanistan. These calls took place at high-level conferences in Islamabad, Astana, London, and Istanbul. However, Afghanistan is a false common issue, unlikely to jump-start regional cooperation.

Central Asian states have fundamentally different ways of coping with their proximity to Afghanistan. Tajikistan maintains a largely porous border and is open to trade and cross-border infrastructure. By contrast, Uzbekistan has sealed off its border with Afghanistan and – with the exception of granting passage to the Northern Distribution Network and providing electricity to Kabul and north Afghanistan – allows little cross-border movement of people and trade. Central Asian regimes do not treat their proximity to Afghanistan as a mutual threat; instead, they see it as an opportunity to justify unilateral policies that ultimately prevent regional cooperation.

It is hard to see how this will change even if Afghanistan further deteriorates. While rhetoric of Taliban-driven extremism infecting Central Asia has been plentiful, the threat of spillover remains remote. Afghan-based extremists, after all, are a threat to Afghanistan's political incumbents, not to Central Asian regimes. A more realistic and less pressing concern is that Uzbek or Tajik militants will seek refuge in Afghanistan as they did in the 1990s during Afghanistan's last bout of civil war.

### **Retooling Policy**

Despite being spun as win-win opportunities, international initiatives and programs on counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, and Afghan rebuilding have failed to spur cooperation across Central Asian governments. But is this the fault of international donors or recipients?

Assistance could certainly be improved on the donor-side in a number of ways. Many programs do not sufficiently coordinate on a regional level the

activities of their individual country programs (the UN-implemented/EU-funded [Border Management Program in Central Asia](#) is a notable exception which emphasizes coordination across the region). More crucially, the institutional divide between Central Asia-based programs and Afghanistan-based programs is particularly deep. Despite repeated calls to engage the Central Asian region more with Afghanistan, there has been relatively little joint initiative across UN programs in Central Asia and the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

To improve the donor side of assistance, international stakeholders should create mechanisms that disburse aid in a more comprehensive, coordinated manner. One option may be to create region-wide coordinating bodies for policy issue areas that span Central Asia and Afghanistan. Counter-narcotics is one particularly salient issue area where such a coordinating body would have perceptible effects and spark a more regional response. Recent UNODC initiatives are a good start (such as the Rainbow Strategy), but they are insufficient in the face of the region's massive trafficking woes.

The idea of creating a region-wide coordinating mechanism is neither impossible nor prohibitive. In West Africa, for example, a group of international and regional organizations adopted a fully coordinated approach to counternarcotics. The West Africa Coast Initiative was launched in 2009 to combat drug trafficking and organized crime in four West African countries and hinges on a partnership across a number of international and regional organizations that have expertise in law enforcement, judicial reform, policing, and border management. The initiative creates a smart division of labor: one agency serves as a focal point that mobilizes political support in regional capitals, another organization facilitates follow-up activities, another monitors implementation, and other organizations train police and legal officials. The initiative is unique and seems to be having early impact—a number of West African states that were not part of the pilot program lobbied heavily to be included in the next phase. A regional anti-trafficking initiative modeled on similar lines is suitable for Central Asia, where the volume and value of Afghan opiates far surpasses the value of cocaine trafficked from Latin America across West Africa to Europe.

However, the problem lies beyond coordination fixes that donors and international stakeholders can make. Central Asia's regional cooperation deficit on hot-button security issues may not be because of lackluster donor coordination or host ineptitude; rather, Central Asian governments have failed to cooperate on even well-funded security initiatives because of their diverging interests. Since international programs cannot necessarily alter a government's interest, donors must learn to work with the governments whose interests and orientations are most compatible with the policy goals they are trying to meet.

For example, Tajikistan's laissez-faire approach to the narcotics trade means that international funds to fight trafficking may see lackluster results. By contrast, Uzbekistan's zero-tolerance approach to the drug trade makes it more likely that aid will be channeled to drug-fighting efforts. On the other hand, Uzbekistan's highly authoritarian regime structure and no-tolerance approach toward domestic opposition create the very real prospect that counter-terrorism assistance will be used for further

repression. Less authoritarian and still recovering from a devastating civil war, Tajik rulers may be more willing to show transparency in counter-terror efforts.

The challenge for sponsors of international initiatives is to tailor aid to the reality that Central Asian officials have pursued – and will continue to pursue – different policies on issues of common concern. For international stakeholders who have money to spend but also wish to see results, this requires making tough policy choices. Donors will do well to repurpose and concentrate assistance to states that are most likely to put it to good use and to shut down security assistance to states whose governments are unlikely to implement it as it was intended.

# Should Europe Care about Black Sea Security?

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 138

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The Black Sea region has only recently appeared on Europe's radar as something that is part of the continent and, therefore, in need of some attention and perhaps even action. With the Bosphorus and Dardanelles the traditional easternmost points of European concern, the Black Sea remained in the shadow of the great cataclysms of twentieth century European history. The cold war brought a touch of conflict to the area, but it was not a battleground of ideologies or of warfare. It is the end of the Cold War that has brought the Black Sea region to Europe and vice versa.

Granted, NATO has been in the region for some time via Turkey and, more recently, Romania and Bulgaria. To a large extent, however, NATO's presence in the region is more about transatlantic ties and commitments, as well as the projection of U.S. influence, than about European involvement as such. Moreover, no clear vision of NATO's regional role and mandate exists. And ongoing debates regarding NATO's future in general are far from over, even with the emergence of NATO's new strategic concept. The outcome of these debates and of NATO's transformation will also determine its potential role in the Black Sea region.

Another factor which may deter NATO from formulating at least some sort of regional vision is the West's "reset" of relations with Russia. The Euro-Atlantic alliance is wary of jeopardizing its latest attempt to put the relationship with Moscow on a new footing and, tactically speaking, Russian assistance on Afghanistan. Moscow has made it clear on many occasions that it strongly opposes greater NATO involvement in the Black Sea region. In the meantime, Russia is not shy about taking part in NATO-led events; the Russian Black Sea Navy plans to participate in NATO drills in 2011.

There was a time not long ago when the United States was noticeably more active in the wider Black Sea region. This manifested itself in regional politics, economics, and security. However, this tendency is now nowhere to be seen. The events of September 11, the change of guard at the White House, the reset of relations with Moscow, and above all continued (and increasing) preoccupation with the broader Middle East, have all led to a decrease in the amount of attention paid to the Black Sea.



Whether this reflects a strategic decision or a more temporary trend remains to be seen. In the meantime, whatever U.S. presence is found in the region is highly situational, tactical, and directly connected with Washington's priorities in the Middle East. With the recent wave of unrest in the Arab world, this tendency will probably become even more pronounced.

Another factor to consider is the influence of EU leaders on Washington. While this should not be exaggerated, it is clear that the current U.S. administration listens to its European allies more attentively than the previous one did. And if the EU does not see the Black Sea as a priority, even as part of its extended neighborhood, why should Washington view the region otherwise?

The EU, however, is no longer in a position to ignore this multifaceted region, now that it has EU members in it (with other regional states all candidates, partners, or neighbors). That said, the incorporation of Bulgaria and Romania into the EU should not be seen as the exclusive motivating force for the EU's regional engagement. Security issues in the Black Sea region anyhow have a direct impact on the well-being of wider Europe.

First, there are the unsettled conflicts of the region. Called for years as "frozen conflicts," they are clearly anything but, as events in the recent past have demonstrated. These conflicts, like many others, have a tendency to have spillover effects, especially as they are in areas with high levels of historical animosity, lack of trust, low economic development, poor governance, colossal corruption, and an absence of transparency. EU leaders have recognized that these conflicts are a threat to the security of the entire continent (indeed, geographically, they are not far from the Balkans and themselves located "within" Europe). This recognition has come in the shape of various EU missions, including the EU Border Assistance Mission to Ukraine and Moldova (EUBAM), based in Odessa.

The South Caucasus is a sub-region where the EU has tried to contribute directly to stability, particularly after the August 2008 hostilities in Georgia. The EU opted to act and was in fact the most fitting third party to do so. European actions were quick, bold, and contributed to a ceasefire. Though it stumbled at times, the EU fulfilled its minimum objective: to stop the violence. However, when it comes to a more long-term, sustainable peace in this sub-region, not to mention a lasting political settlement, the EU has had little to offer.

If anything, the August 2008 war led the EU (and some major actors within it) to further distance itself from the complicated security agenda of the South Caucasus. The EU is willing to fully side neither with Russia nor its regional antagonists. Instead, a certain distancing from the region has taken place. This seems sensible to many, especially at a time when the EU's plate is full with its own existential issues. This outlook was reinforced by the 2010 Kharkiv "gas-for-fleet" agreement, when EU leaders were puzzled by the secretive dealings between Kyiv and Moscow but full of praise for the "stability" of Ukraine and Russia and of their relationship.

Many – mostly in Moscow and Ankara – claim that there is enough security in the region. Regional actors are fully capable of providing security for themselves, their

argument goes, so there is no need for intervention by outside actors. To others, the Russian-Georgian confrontation proved this claim false. While some might still find the argument compelling, it nonetheless calls for a very particular understanding of security, by which is meant security for the few (strongest) regional players, which then impose their interests on everyone else. In this regard, the current Russian-Turkish rapprochement may be seen as a force imposing more such “security” on the region, while effectively dividing it into spheres of influence.

Regional conflicts and small wars (of the August 2008 type) are not the only dangers in the region. Large-scale conflicts are also possible. Ukraine and Russia continue to have relationship issues. These include an acute border dispute surrounding the island of Tuzla in 2003. More important is the issue of Crimea. Some Russians, and even some among the Crimean population, continue to object to the very notion that Crimea is part of Ukraine. Also to be considered is the growing presence of Crimean Tatars, the only real native population of the peninsula whose economic and political rights have been endangered. However, the major development in 2010 was the Kharkiv agreement, which allows the Russian navy to stay in Sevastopol until 2042. Despite the agreement, the role of the Russian navy in Crimea and the broader region continues to prompt debate, and a major confrontation between them cannot be ruled out. Naturally, this worst-case scenario is a potential nightmare for Europe.

Energy security is also a serious reason for Europe to be invested in the Black Sea region, a key crossroads for multiple existing and planned pipelines, the long-term functioning of which requires security and stability. However, the EU has not done enough to articulate a clear and coherent position on regional energy-related issues. Despite numerous seemingly committal statements, it remains unclear where the EU stands with regard to the many planned transportation routes via the Black Sea region to Europe. This ambiguity creates fertile ground for all kinds of speculation. At the very least, various EU member states have differing interests regarding particular pipelines, thereby undermining the EU’s attempt to reach a consensus on pipelines. It may be fair to expect further disagreements ahead.

Other important regional issues include the illegal trafficking of people, drugs, and weapons. The Black Sea is a transit point for many illegal “exports” that end up in Europe. The EU’s recent attempts to secure its eastern borders were steps in the right direction, but they were not sufficient. Working with the states in the region to diminish the threat from trafficking (e.g., by improving quality of life, strengthening local law enforcement capacity, and helping to establish a more sound local justice system) will be a forward-looking approach, even as it calls for greater long-term efforts.

Overall, there should be little doubt that Europe will feel more secure when surrounded by democratic neighbors. Having on its perimeter populations who share European values and principles (and not just rhetorically) will be of enormous help to the cause of European security. The alternative poses a considerable menace. The different systems of governance in the region range from soft authoritarianism to democracy. Enhancing the reach of the latter and providing for greater protection of

human rights, free and fair elections, and independent media, among other spheres, is not just a political affair for Europe but a security one.

Environmental issues, which are a priority for everyone in Europe, are an even greater concern in the Black Sea region. Very little has been done, unfortunately, to face environmental challenges through appropriate collective action. Europe could help more with information, protective actions, and encouraging regional actors to embark on crucial endeavors.

Many of the above-mentioned issues happened to be listed as priorities in the EU-Black Sea Synergy Initiative, which was launched in February 2008. Hailed at the time as a breakthrough for the EU – perhaps the ultimate moment of the EU coming face-to-face with the Black Sea region – it has not produced enough results to be considered a success. First, as has become apparent, the emergence of the Initiative did not imply the start of a new era in EU policy toward the region. It was, instead, a substitute for a more serious and engaging presence. Second, there were perhaps too many stated priorities, which left some wondering what the EU was seeking to achieve in the first place. Finally, there is no doubt that regional states failed to capitalize on the opportunities provided by the Initiative. In sum, there needs to be another run at the Initiative – a refocusing, at least, if not an entirely new document.

There is much that Europe could do to help solve the many problems of the Black Sea region, which could negatively affect European security if left unaddressed. Looking at Europe's track record, however, it is far from certain that it will do what it takes. First off, many in Europe might disagree with the above points. Second, the EU will likely continue to struggle to find a common voice, particularly in the realms of security, defense, and foreign policy. Third, budgetary concerns are also a consideration – Black Sea regional activities will cost many euros, an aspect that is compounded by Europe's protracted recession. One day, however, the EU will have to come to terms with the significant risks and rewards of its Black Sea security policy dimension.

# The Caspian Region

## LOCAL DYNAMICS, GLOBAL REVERBERATIONS

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 139

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### **Introduction**

The Caspian Sea region is one of the most dynamic focal points in Eurasia, and not only because of its strategic oil and gas resources. There are two major issues that contribute to its dynamism: the local engagement of regional and extra-regional actors alike and the interlacing of economic and political motivations driving regional policies. Both these aspects must be considered if one seeks to determine whether the Caspian Sea area will evolve into a cohesive region or fray under the influence of a broader array of external forces.

Several features make the Caspian Sea distinctive from other marine-centered regional projects effectuated in Europe or at its margins (like the Nordic Region, Black Sea, Baltic Sea, or Barents-Euro-Arctic projects). First, the potential for Caspian Sea region-making remains dependent on finalizing the thorny process of Caspian Sea delimitation among the five littoral states, an issue that looms over any possible regional agenda. A second (and related) point is that discussion of Caspian Sea region-building is focused around the issue of exploiting and transporting lucrative energy resources; it is the region's oil and gas deposits that have given the region its global importance. This leads to the region's third specific characteristic: the strong roles of external actors – both states and major energy companies – in setting the regional agenda. It is the combination of internal political dynamics (mostly in the form of several conflicts between Caspian Sea states and their immediate neighbors) and the inevitable external overlay that makes the regional situation so potentially volatile and turbulent.

### **A Region in Search of Its Name**

It is common enough to hear the argument that there are no “natural” regions and that being a region is always a matter of interpretation and institutional support. A common regional identity appears to be more of an exception rather than a norm. In the many

potential regions where a common identity is unattainable, the region-building process is propelled by a set of common rules and institutions. The question is: are these rules produced through the consensus of local actors or are they imposed by a regional or external leader – an institutional “sponsor,” as it were, of a region-building project?

This question is as applicable to the Caspian Sea region as any other. If one assumes a local perspective, then the Caspian Sea represents a very low level of regional integration, sometimes dubbed a *regional international system*. The Caspian Sea has not yet reached the status of a *regional international society*, where integration is based not only on a compatibility of interests but also on common institutions. Of course, some local actors, Russia included, claim to prefer to “find regional solutions to regional problems.” It is far from clear, however, if it is possible to find a grassroots solution to the Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict, for example, or to the issue of sanctions against Iran. All such issues stretch far beyond the terrestrial setting.

A similar way of approaching the Caspian Sea as a region is via the concept of a *regional security complex*. Such a complex is grounded in the understanding that most of the security problems regional actors face are internal and that no outside power is capable of solving them. Regarding the Caspian, Russia and Iran are the main actors that adhere to and promote such a vision; other governments are more sympathetic to external overlays, making the regional security complex idea in the Caspian Sea region immature and institutionally deficient.

On the other hand, the Caspian Sea does match the characteristics of a *semi-peripheral* region, in which most actors take marginal positions with regard to dominating outside powers. *Marginality* in this context means a policy of balancing in-between two or more powerholders (such as the United States, the European Union, and China). This alleged marginality might be an indication of the weakness of the Caspian Sea states, but it can simultaneously be a source of their growing self-assertiveness vis-à-vis major centers of power. The attractiveness of the idea of “multivector diplomacy” is illustrative of the state of mind of political elites in Astana, Ashgabat, and Baku.

Finally, the Caspian Sea may be viewed – drawing upon a concept developed by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever – as a *great power region*, in which Russia plays the role of a dominating power. In a more radical reading, it is a potential model of an *imperial region*.

### **Local Actors**

The key agenda-setting issue in the Caspian Sea is the delineation of the seabed border between its five surrounding states. Most of these states perceive the problem of the Caspian Sea’s legal status as a matter of security, which hypothetically creates preconditions for moving eventually toward a *regional security complex* through the gradual formation of a common space of security relations based on joint institutional arrangements. However, local actors, particularly Russia, Iran, and Azerbaijan, perceive the nature of regional security in different ways.

Arguably, Caspian Sea regionalism is a rather attractive prospect for **Russia**, which previously kept a low profile in several region-building projects in Europe's neighborhood because they were developed under EU auspices. It thus may be in Russia's interest to promote a relatively stable framework of cooperation with its southern neighbors. Russia seeks to resolve regional issues on the regional level, as expressed by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in the aftermath of the August 2008 Georgia war. This was manifested in Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's call for establishing joint forces in the Caspian region to combat terrorism, drug trafficking, and organized crime. To a large extent, Russia's interest in the regionalization of security is politically motivated, grounded in the Kremlin's strategy of countering U.S. influence worldwide. Yet the political effects of this strategy may be detrimental for Moscow, since others perceive the philosophy of "regional solutions for regional problems" as a hidden attempt at establishing hegemony in the vast area Russia considers its "near abroad." As a result, counterbalancing Russia, which itself looks to counterbalance the United States (and the West in general), becomes a strategy for other Caspian Sea states.

Another political factor drives the Kremlin's policies: Moscow appears to understand that its mostly rhetorical claims of playing a pivotal role in its near abroad will be unsustainable if Russia fails to formulate – and reify – its strategy in specific regions, including, but not limited to, the Caspian region. The steady and inevitable fragmentation of the post-Soviet space represents a challenge to Russia's hegemonic ambitions in neighboring areas. What makes Russia's southern policies incoherent and thus vulnerable is, firstly, its vacillation between the pursuit of economic and political goals, and, secondly, the multiplicity of economic roles that Russia plays in this region as an energy producing, transporting, and consuming country.

A tension also exists between the two political roles that Russia wishes to adopt simultaneously. One of these roles envisions Russia as an integral part of the Euro-Atlantic security space, imprinted in President Dmitry Medvedev's appeal to the West for a "new security architecture" to be constructed with NATO and the EU. In the spirit of this proposal, it would be quite logical to expect Russia to display a cooperative attitude with regard to pan-European energy security, and to perhaps use the Caspian Sea region as a test case for vindicating Russia's Euro-Atlantic commitments. The idea of jointly caring for the common EU-Russian neighborhood deserves attention from both Moscow and Brussels.

The second of Russia's roles, however, is that of "the" regional leader in its near abroad. This depends upon the delinking of the Caspian Sea region from the West. Russia's otherwise predominantly economic approach to its foreign policy is thus complicated in this specific region by a political logic of balancing and dislodging the United States, on the one hand, and forging amicable yet politically fragile and vulnerable relations with countries like Iran and Armenia, on the other.

The only country in the region that appears to share Russia's inward-oriented and thus regionalized policy is **Iran**. Both Moscow and Tehran believe that the problems of the Caspian Sea are of a purely regional nature and accept no claims to the contrary by others. For Iran, the involvement of Western companies and U.S. political

pressure stood behind the idea of dividing the seabed, which Tehran unsuccessfully tried to rebuff. Iran's government may use the ongoing uncertainty concerning the legal status of the Caspian Sea as an argument for challenging oil and gas exploration and transportation projects that fail to correspond to Iranian interests.

For Iran, the Caspian Sea region offers one of only a few political opportunities to overcome its international marginalization and effect the lifting of economic sanctions. Arguably, however, Iran's standpoint in negotiations on delimiting the Caspian Sea is not conducive to obtaining this ultimate political goal; moreover, on the regional level, Iran is sometimes perceived as a spoilsport that hinders the finding of a common legal solution by the five littoral states.

Despite compatible political positions, the economic strategies of Russia and Iran appear to diverge, as exemplified by their different attitudes to the Nabucco pipeline project. Russia is overtly disinterested in its materializing, while Iran sends signals of readiness to participate, expecting that its gas resources might become critical for Nabucco's implementation. This explains some of the contradictions in Russia's policy towards Iran: on the one hand, Moscow is interested in lifting international sanctions against Tehran in order to expand business opportunities. On the other hand, Moscow understands that one possible way to prevent Iran from plugging into Nabucco is to maintain economic sanctions against it. This controversy has led Russia to another dilemma: by purchasing huge volumes of gas from Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, Moscow is in fact assisting Iran in strengthening its bargaining position through promises to supply Nabucco itself.

Unlike Russia and Iran, **Azerbaijan** seems to be interested in an enhanced role for external actors in the Caspian Sea region. A number of political explanations for this exist. First, closer security cooperation with the United States and NATO may be instrumental for containing Russian (and Iranian) regional influence. Baku believes that Russian pressure is aimed at getting Russian companies to land lucrative energy projects.

Second, Azerbaijan has traditionally tried to maintain a "special relationship" with Turkey, facilitating its participation in trans-Caspian energy projects. For Azerbaijan, greater Turkish involvement in the Caspian Sea region makes political sense and is instrumental in balancing Iran and strengthening Baku's position in the Karabakh conflict. Yet the role Turkey is going to play depends on an array of political factors, with the prospects of EU membership being most significant. A Turkey that keeps integrating with the EU will – under pressure from Brussels – seek pathways for normalizing relations with neighboring Armenia, which will inevitably provoke resentment on the part of Azerbaijan. The opposite scenario, under which Turkey's negotiations with the EU come to a halt, would make Ankara a more self-assertive player in the regional political scene, most likely to Azerbaijan's advantage.

Third, an important political factor is Azerbaijan's overt strategy of using its growing energy potential for the eventual reincorporation of Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijani media openly discusses the prospects of military operation against this breakaway region. In the meantime, Baku unofficially tries to strike a political deal with

the West, stipulating its eventual participation in the Nabucco project and adopting a more supportive stance in EU and U.S. negotiations on Nagorno-Karabakh. Yet Azerbaijan is still uncertain about the level of gas resources it can contribute to the Nabucco project (though it signed a supply pledge in early 2011), leaving the door open to further political bargaining.

Finally, Azerbaijan is interested in keeping Georgia as an important regional partner. A recent practical example of the Baku-Tbilisi nexus is the publicly discussed prospect of SOCAR, Azerbaijan's state oil company, purchasing the Georgian portion of the pipeline connecting Russia and Armenia, which makes sense only as an explicitly political move against Yerevan (and Moscow as well).

### **External Actors**

Most of the external actors engaged in the Caspian region view it as part of a wider Black Sea region, which includes a Euro-Asian energy corridor linking Euro-Atlantic countries with Central Asian energy supplies. The EU's main interest in the region is to secure the transportation of Turkmen gas via Azerbaijan to Turkey and on to European consumers. As noted by Roland Kobia, the EU's head delegate to Azerbaijan, legal questions related to the delimitation of the Caspian Sea will not impede the realization of trans-Caspian initiatives, a statement that sends an explicit message to both Russia and Iran that their policies for obstructing EU-sponsored energy projects are futile.

Yet the EU is perfectly aware that Nabucco's prospects are dependent upon the decisions of local players, including Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. In the meantime, the EU is a relative newcomer to the Caspian Sea and lacks regional expertise and coherent policy tools. Back in the 1990s, it was believed that there were good opportunities to transfer the positive experiences of the Baltic Sea regional integration initiatives to Europe's southeastern margins, including to countries like Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. A number of more institutionalized policy tools followed, including the European Neighborhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership program, which includes Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia. Yet the perception of the EU as a "normative power" eager to project democratic practices past its borders does not seem to apply as soon as energy security issues come to the fore.

Indeed, having faced competition from countries like Russia and China, the EU is ready to relinquish its normative strategy for the sake of pragmatism, as recent visits by European Commission President José Manuel Barroso to Baku and Ashgabat demonstrated. Yet, even Azerbaijan is reluctant to unequivocally team up with the EU: in January 2011, only a week after pledging to supply Azerbaijani gas to the Southern Corridor, Baku signed a contract with Gazprom stipulating Moscow's purchase of sizeable portions of Azerbaijani gas. These developments were indicative of the fact that most local actors are eager to play more than one game at a time and that the issue of trust between partners has become increasingly important.

As far as the **United States** is concerned, balancing Russia and preventing it from allying with Iran are evidently its strongest set of policy incentives toward the Caspian Sea. The United States has traditionally relied upon Turkey to contain Iranian and



Russian influences. It has also experimented – with modest success – with institutional playgrounds such as GU(U)AM, a grouping made up of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova, and, for a time, Uzbekistan. Yet the utility for local actors of relying on U.S. assistance and protection in security matters was significantly undermined by Washington’s abstention from direct aid to Georgia in its military conflict with Russia in August 2008 and the Obama administration’s subsequent policy of “resetting” the U.S.-Russia relationship.

Still, the United States remains the most decisive actor for at least one of the Caspian states, namely Iran. It is Washington that will decide how long Iran will be subject to international sanctions. More generally, one can assume that U.S. policy will not be aimed at achieving greater regional cohesion among Caspian Sea states. To a significant degree, this can be explained by the increasing attention NATO is paying to the concept of energy security, which will be more obtainable in a fragmented regional setting.

### **Conclusion**

The paradox of the situation in the Caspian Sea region is that Russia appears to have workable bilateral relations with all four of the other littoral states, yet these bilateral relations are not necessarily conducive to a greater cohesion of the regional environment. They also do not lead to stronger solidarity among the potential members of a Caspian regional society. On the one hand, Russia’s regional partners still fear Russian domination and are eager to open up more space for external overlays. On the other hand, Russia’s resources for integration are quite limited, and they are insufficient to fulfill its leadership ambitions. Eventually, Russia has to admit that it will not be able to assert a monopoly in any of the regions in its near abroad, including the Caspian Sea. While other major powers – the EU, the United States, China, Turkey – have no long-term strategy of engagement with the Caspian Sea region, they all will compete increasingly in the region for both material gains and political influence.

All of this raises the meaningful question of whether a “world society” model – with the cosmopolitan idea of global governance at its core – has any prospects in the Caspian Sea region, which seems to be an “island” for traditional Westphalian rules of the game in an otherwise increasingly post-sovereign world.

# The Kyrgyz Crisis and the Political Logic of Central Asia's Weak Regional Security Organizations

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 140

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For the second time in five years, political events in Kyrgyzstan shook the Central Asia region and caught the international community off-guard. In early April 2010, a few sporadic protests against increases in electricity tariffs quickly mushroomed into a series of anti-government demonstrations that toppled the regime of Kyrgyzstan's President Kurmanbek Bakiyev. Just two months later, during the rule of a weak interim government, ethnic violence among Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities erupted in southern Kyrgyzstan on a scale not seen since the late Soviet period.

The horrific consequences of the Kyrgyz pogroms, in combination with the rapid destabilization of the political situation across the country, also drew attention to the seeming inaction and incapacity of the international community. Despite the fact that Kyrgyzstan was a member of three high-profile regional security organizations – the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) – these organizations proved either incapable or unwilling to intervene in this Central Asian state, thereby further eroding their credibility as effective regional security bodies.

## **Organizations to Guarantee Regional Security or Regime Survival Vehicles?**

The puzzle of why regional security organizations proved ineffective in the Kyrgyz crisis is directly related to the question of why Central Asian states such as Kyrgyzstan decided to join multiple and, at times, overlapping regional security institutions in the first place. Consistent with the work of political scientists Roy Allison and Kathleen Collins, I argue that membership in regional security institutions, since independence, has been driven more by the desire for Central Asian governments to promote regime survival, sovereign recognition and conflate their own regime stability with broader regional security, rather than to counter external foreign military or transnational threats.

The exact nature of what the Central Asian states have sought from regional security organizations has varied according to their level of development and institutional composition. For the smaller states, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, membership in regional security organizations has offered the opportunity for elite rent-seeking, access to modern equipment for impoverished security agencies, and the means to play external powers off one another. For Kazakhstan, membership in multiple security organizations has been a key component of its multivector foreign policy and external image crafting, which culminated in Astana's recent chairmanship of the OSCE. Uzbekistan, too, has used regional security membership as a tool of regime survival, joining organizations and projects when helpful from a domestic political standpoint and rejecting them when they have directly criticized or threatened Tashkent's domestic authority. The rest of this memo will overview the big three Central Asian security organizations and account for their poor performance in the wake of the Kyrgyz crisis.

### **CSTO: Moscow's Reluctance, Member Concerns**

The CSTO, now comprising seven member states (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan), is the most developed of Central Asia's security organizations. Headed by Russia, the organization was formalized in 2002 (with Uzbekistan joining later) as a counter, some argue, to both regional transnational threats and to NATO's encroaching eastward march and heightened Partnership for Peace (PfP) activities in Central Asia. Originally conceived of as an intergovernmental alliance, the CSTO has developed a number of cooperative mechanisms and a rapid-reaction force (KSOR) that could quickly respond to regional crises, humanitarian emergencies, and low-intensity threats. The organization also operates military bases, under Russian supervision and in conjunction with Moscow's bilateral agreements with hosts in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Armenia.

The collapse of the Bakiyev government sent shockwaves around CSTO member states and caught the organization flat-footed. Although Moscow was favorably disposed to the new interim government following the troubles it had endured with the Bakiyev regime, other member states were far more critical of the change of government in Kyrgyzstan. At an informal summit meeting in May, leaders declared that the change in power in Bishkek had been "unconstitutional." Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, who embraced deposed President Kurmanbek Bakiyev and offered him residence, was particularly outspoken, commenting "What sort of organization is this, if there is bloodshed in one of our member states and an anti-constitutional coup d'état takes place, and this body keeps silent?" Lukashenko's criticism clearly revealed the expectations of at least a few CSTO members regarding what constitutes a regional security threat. By not taking a clear stand in opposing the toppling of a member state's government, the organization had undermined its own unofficial *raison d'être* of promoting common regime survival.

The ethnic conflicts in June once again thrust the spotlight on the CSTO and its regional role. On June 11, Kyrgyz Interim President Roza Otunbayeva appealed to

Moscow to deploy an emergency peacekeeping force under CSTO auspices to help stabilize the situation in the south. Moscow initially refused, however, citing the need to consult with its allies. The stalling crystallized into a clear reluctance to become actively involved in the region, even though the situation in Kyrgyzstan appeared to be a textbook case of instability and violence that would justify such a deployment. On June 15, 2010, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, in a somewhat contorted explanation for Russian and CSTO non-action, explained that the organization would intervene only against “foreign intrusion” or an “external attempt to seize power,” while CSTO secretary-general Nikolai Bordyuzha similarly categorized the ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan as a “purely domestic matter.”

In the end, several factors likely contributed to the Russian decision not to send troops in June: a genuine fear of committing to an open-ended mission without a clear purpose and timeframe; strong opposition expressed behind the scenes by the government of Uzbekistan, which feared the long-term presence of a third party in what it considers a vital area of national interest; and pushback from authorities in southern Kyrgyzstan itself, who have steadily resisted any external intervention in their local affairs. Though the organization did subsequently follow up on a pledge to provide some humanitarian assistance, its credibility was damaged and openly questioned as a result of events in Kyrgyzstan.

### **SCO: China’s Passivity and the Problem of Deliberative Norms**

The SCO appeared even more powerless than the CSTO during the Kyrgyz crisis. The organization (comprising China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan) was established in 2001 as a successor to the Shanghai Five group that successfully negotiated and demilitarized the Central Asian portions of the old Sino-Soviet border. Over a decade, the SCO had increased security cooperation, particularly among internal security services, and conducted biannual “Peace Missions” dominated by Russian and Chinese troops. Interestingly, these exercises usually simulated some sort of a regime collapse or terrorist attack scenario.

Of course, the SCO has also been the subject of much hysteria and confusion in the West. Following Uzbekistan’s eviction of U.S. forces in the summer of 2005, a few days after SCO leaders issued a joint statement that U.S. bases in Central Asia had served their purpose and should be placed on a timetable for withdrawal, officials and analysts in Washington were quick to blame the organization for pressuring Tashkent to oust U.S. forces. In fact, we now know that the U.S. eviction from K2 was grounded in bilateral U.S.-Uzbek tensions over human rights issues and the fallout of events in Andijon.

At the time, the SCO’s backing of Uzbekistan reflected an elevated concern about regime stability triggered by the color revolutions and opposition to Washington’s perceived aggressive policy of promoting regime change under the guise of democratization. In 2005, Moscow’s and Beijing’s security agendas were aligned, but for slightly different regions. Moscow feared that new Eurasian governments would adopt a pro-West, pro-NATO orientation, as had happened in Georgia and Ukraine, while

Beijing feared that such uprisings could critically destabilize its Western province of Xinjiang.

The aftermath of the August 2008 war revealed the schisms in these regional Russian-Sino security agendas. The Central Asian states' refusal at the 2008 SCO summit in Dushanbe, under significant Chinese pressure, to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, suggests that Beijing is far more concerned with countering acts of separatism that could be used as models to challenge its own territorial integrity than in backing Moscow's support of the breakaway territories. By contrast, the speed and vigor with which the SCO supported China's crackdown on Urumqi demonstrators in July 2009 and its recent declaration criticizing the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Lu Xiaobo suggest that Beijing's security agenda remains the primary driver of the SCO's security agenda.

During the Kyrgyz crisis, Chinese officials proved reluctant to take any position on the legitimacy of the interim government. Stories in the Chinese press emphasized the chaos and instability of events in April, as well as the plight of some Chinese migrants who were targeted. However, there was no appeal to any actual SCO mechanism or authority to intervene in events. Moreover, many Chinese officials viewed the destabilization in Kyrgyzstan as a direct result of U.S.-Russian geopolitical maneuverings and thought it best to lay low until the composition of the new Kyrgyz government became clearer. The SCO's inaction did not sit well with certain neighbors. For example, President Imomali Rahmon of Tajikistan openly questioned the value of the organization given its inability to intervene and prevent the toppling of a neighboring government. Certainly, as the Tajik president implied, it is hard to imagine a more appropriate test case in the region that merited intervention according to the organization's own security mandate.

Moreover, the Kyrgyz crisis also underscored additional organizational weaknesses that limit the SCO's capability as an effective security body. Chief among them is that the group openly operates according to the norm of consensus, which seriously constrains its ability to try to solve disputes and resolve conflicts among members. Problem issues, such as regional water disputes, cannot even be placed on the SCO agenda and so are left outside the basket of the SCO's negotiations at the principals level. Similarly, its ability to effectively respond to crisis situations appears to directly clash with an organizational culture of slow deliberation and consensus. Although the SCO has served China's regional security interests and provided a useful forum to Central Asian governments to balance their dealings with Moscow and Beijing, its limitations as a regional security mechanism were exposed by the Kyrgyz crisis.

### **OSCE: From Helsinki to Osh (and Back Again)**

The third regional security organization under consideration, the OSCE, was also severely challenged by the Kyrgyz crisis. The 56-member OSCE remains the world's largest intergovernmental security organization. Many of its activities and programs

have targeted Central Asia, including high-profile projects in the areas of border management, anti-terrorism cooperation, police training, and conflict prevention.

Over the last decade, however, Central Asian governments have increasingly challenged the organization's so-called "third dimension" or human security branch. Chief among these have been the election monitoring and human rights work undertaken by the Warsaw-based Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). It was ODIHR's criticism of election day procedures in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan that helped provide opposition demonstrators a platform to mobilize. Since 2007, ODIHR has been at the center of an East-West confrontation regarding how intrusive its activities should be, as all the Central Asian states have backed a Russian proposal to limit the size and mandate of the organization's monitoring missions.

The challenge to the ODIHR also reveals that the Central Asian states, more broadly, have successfully managed to roll back the human dimension or "values agenda" of the OSCE and transform it into an organization that primarily manages projects that assist with regime survival and sovereign promotion. The endurance and expansion of the OSCE's "police training" projects is a good case in point. Police training missions have been widely implemented throughout the region, but with unclear project goals and post-project metrics of evaluation. As a result, critics accuse the OSCE of inadvertently having strengthened the coercive apparatus of Central Asia's authoritarian rulers. For example, in 2008 when the Kyrgyz parliament, then dominated by Bakiyev, adopted a highly controversial law restricting freedom of assembly, one that was heavily criticized by the ODIHR, the OSCE's police reform project in Kyrgyzstan remained untouched. And whether OSCE-trained officers actually were among those who fired on anti-Bakiyev protestors in Bishkek remains an open question.

Initially, the OSCE played a constructive political role in the Kyrgyz crisis. In the wake of Bakiyev's fleeing from Bishkek, the local field office organized meetings of the Kyrgyz opposition and aided in the quick establishment of the interim government. As a body tasked to coordinate political meetings and liaise with major interested countries, the OSCE found itself as a key political interlocutor between the interim government and many countries and international organizations, especially at a time when many foreign governments were reluctant to officially recognize the legitimacy of the interim Kyrgyz government. Moscow and Washington's backing of the interim government also offered some hope that, absent the usual East-West tensions, the organization could provide an effective vehicle to actively stabilize the security situation in the south.

However, like the other organizations under consideration in this memo, the OSCE's weak response to the ethnic violence underscores more enduring problems that confront the organization. Chief among them is how domestic political agendas and regime survival in Kyrgyzstan trumped what was a clear need for an on-the-ground OSCE presence. Even though both Washington and Moscow favored sending a robust OSCE peacekeeping or policing mission, and the Permanent Council in Vienna approved a more modest 50-person deployment on July 22, 2010, local authorities in the south effectively vetoed the proposal. Self-styled Kyrgyz nationalist Osh Mayor Melis

Myrzakmatov used the proposed OSCE mission to publicly oppose Bishkek's intrusion into its local affairs, thereby consolidating his power base, and attacked the legitimacy and nationalist credentials of the interim government in Bishkek.

Faced with an already ungovernable situation in the south, the interim government in Bishkek dragged its feet and eventually caved to domestic pressure. President Otunbayeva continued to stall throughout the autumn on the pretext of disagreeing about the deployment's exact mandate (active patrolling versus training) even while international concerns grew about the role of Kyrgyz security services in inciting the violence in the south. As of February 2011, the OSCE police force, now modified to just 30 people, has still not been deployed, while the whole proposal has become in Kyrgyzstan a political symbol for preserving Kyrgyz sovereignty against external interference.

### **Conclusion: Regional Security Organizations and Central Asia's Weak States**

This brief examination of the CSTO, SCO, and OSCE and their shortcomings during the Kyrgyz crisis underscores a current disjuncture between the roots of emerging security challenges in Central Asia and the inadequate institutional design of current regional security organizations. Central Asian governments participate in these organizations more to further their regime survival, extract rents, and garner international legitimacy than to robustly cooperate on important emerging security threats.

At present, all these regional security organizations are designed as intergovernmental bodies meant to coordinate activities against outside or foreign threats. Yet as we saw in the case of Kyrgyzstan's ethnic clashes, the most likely cause of destabilization and insecurity in the region is the weakness of Central Asian state institutions themselves. Twenty years after independence, major cracks in political stability in the region are clearly surfacing. Kyrgyzstan's experiment in parliamentary democracy may give some in the West hope, but the country has increasingly become severed and any institutions in Bishkek will lack the capacity and legitimacy to govern the south. Of perhaps even greater concern is the situation in Tajikistan, where the last year has seen an escalation in insurgent attacks that included a suicide car bombing, a well-planned and coordinated ambush of a Tajik military column, and various bombings of both government and civilian targets. The carefully crafted patron-client deals between Dushanbe and regional figures appear to be in danger of unraveling, as Tajikistan slides further into chaos at a time when Northern Afghanistan also shows increasing signs of instability.

The most pressing security challenges in Central Asia stem from the region's own state weakness, predatory governmental institutions, critically decaying infrastructure, porous borders, and ungoverned areas, not classical intergovernmental security threats or even the transnational militant movements that the CSTO and SCO are more focused on. Yet, it is in the interests of the weak Central Asian states to avoid addressing the core root of this institutional decay and, instead, to bolster external support for their regimes through assorted external projects and cooperative initiatives that involve these various regional security actors. In the interests of promoting

“regional stability,” as proposed by the Central Asian governments and uncritically accepted by external actors, these projects often unintentionally encourage the very institutional malformation that lies at the heart of many of the region’s current security challenges.

Moreover, the external security dimension, especially lingering competition among Russia, the United States, and China for influence in the region, may also prevent the emergence of more effective regional security mechanisms and further encourage patterns of rent-seeking and forum-shopping by Central Asian governments and their security services. Some positive steps have been taken by Presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev, who have jointly emphasized the importance of stabilizing Kyrgyzstan and maintaining operations at Manas for the duration of the Afghan conflict. However, one level below the presidential level, the militaries of both countries continue to pressure and promote themselves as security partners to their Central Asian counterparts, while Russia, the United States and China all now provide security training and assistance in the region under the justification of capacity-building. Based on the regional record, it is doubtful that such bilateral external interventions will have any more of a stabilizing influence over the long-term than the regional security organizations that have tried to actively engage the Central Asian governments in the name of promoting stability.



# Has Moscow Come to Terms with Iran?

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 141

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In strictly geographic terms, Iran is not Russia's immediate neighbor: Azerbaijan on the western side of the Caspian Sea, and Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan on the eastern side form wide buffer zones. In geopolitics, however, politics always matters more than geography. Indeed, Russian policymaking toward Iran is shaped by historical traditions and economic contacts in such a way that the two countries do seem to remain neighbors. The real and perceived exposure of Russia from this state of affairs does not translate into any alarming risk assessments – Russia does not identify any direct threats to its vital interests emanating from Iran and generally recognizes the latter as a legitimate and untroublesome player in the Caucasus and Central Asia. It also finds few reasons to question the rationality of Tehran's foreign policy course.

What makes Iran a really interesting neighbor for Russia is its high profile, protracted, and emotionally-charged confrontation with the United States, which creates opportunities for a diplomatic game with high stakes and tangible rewards. Moscow has accumulated valuable experience in this game, but it is still prone to making mistakes, especially as the rules change in light of Iran's progressing nuclear program and, secondarily, the chain of uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East. These have added new dimensions to Russia's balancing act, as Iran deals with increasingly complex situations in its extended neighborhood that create pressures for Tehran but also gives it room to maneuver. This memo acknowledges these evolving complexities and focuses on the ways in which the stream of new developments could cause changes in Russia's policy toward Iran.

## **Sanctions, *Schmanctions***

More than any other member, Russia values its privileges as one of the five legitimate nuclear-armed states. It thus places a strong emphasis on upholding the non-proliferation regime and dissuading the few potential proliferators from developing nuclear weapons. At the same time, the realist nature of Russia's prevalent multipolar thinking convinces its resolutely non-idealist political elites that a state facing an

irrevocable threat to its vital interests will build the “absolute weapon,” no matter what counter-arguments or reassurances the international community puts forward. Iran constitutes a perfect case for such conceptualizing, which leads to the tacit conclusion that Tehran will develop and test usable nuclear capabilities in the near future.

Taking this undesirable – but by no means unacceptable – outcome to be certain, Moscow engages in quasi-cooperation with the United States in order to score tactical points and boost its international prestige. Russia sees sanctions as symbolic expressions of disapproval of proliferation and as a means to gain more time until the critical first test, but not as a serious instrument that could dissuade Iran from its objective. At the same time, Moscow makes decisions on sanctions in a rather haphazard way because neither the FSB (Federal Security Service) nor Rosatom, the state nuclear agency, is able to provide solid information about Iranian nuclear or missile programs. Meanwhile, the assessments that the United States share, including its recent National Intelligence Estimate, are regarded as serving political purposes and completely unreliable.

Russia has no problem in supporting peaceful aspects of Iran’s nuclear ambitions and was disappointed in the failure of its initiative to build an international center for uranium enrichment and research. In May 2010, it was ready to back the Turkish-Brazilian proposal for safekeeping Iranian low-enriched uranium (LEU) and supplying fuel rods for reactors; Moscow saw the United States’ non-negotiable dismissal of that idea as counter-productive. It was particularly upset by the introduction of unilateral sanctions by the United States and European Union in summer 2010, unexpectedly neglecting Moscow’s opinion. A tightening of UN sanctions, despite the breakdown of international talks with Iran, is thus out of the question. However, Russia may be open to partaking in non-Western initiatives, like supplying Iran with nuclear fuel in exchange for evacuating a corresponding amount of LEU to Turkey (providing somebody else covers the costs).

Russia also insists on further international talks with Iran and warns vehemently against any option that could pave the way for the use of force. Moscow is not intentionally sheltering Iran’s nuclearization, but it is far more worried about a military confrontation that could create a vast zone of overlapping civil wars from Kirkuk to Kandahar. It is also pursuing the greater goal of denying any international organization the capacity to enforce its decision upon a sovereign state. Following the same course, Russia raised objections against the UN resolution on the violently contested election in Cote d’Ivoire in December 2010 and delayed the deployment of additional troops to the embattled peacekeeping operation (UNOCI) there. Such an incapacitation of global governance (which also happens to respond to China’s vision) involves the risk of encouraging proactive unilateralism by the United States and its allies. However, Moscow assumes that the combined Afghanistan-Iraq syndrome will be a lasting handicap.

## **Tea Parties in the Caspian Wonderland**

Any connotations this subtitle might have with U.S. domestic political vicissitudes are entirely unintentional; the point is that every meeting of “enlightened” despots who rule the states of the Caspian region involves such an amount of silly nonsense that each of them can justifiably call it the stupidest tea party he has ever attended. Promises are given with no intention to deliver, and friendships are sworn between deeply mistrustful neighbors. Both Russia and Iran find it opportune to preserve this pattern of “cooperation.” Moscow has successfully blocked Tehran’s ambition to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), but it is also playing on Azerbaijan’s fears of a “brotherly” takeover. Meanwhile, Iran is expanding its ties with Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, where Russian influence is on the wane.

It is remarkable, and even counter-intuitive, that economic interests have little (and diminishing) import in Russian-Iranian relations. Their bilateral trade is not very significant, and Russia has seen fit to restrict its arms exports. Projects like the North-South rail corridor remain in the proverbial pipeline and Gazprom-Neft is still negotiating investments in a couple of minor oilfields. Indeed, Russia is more interested in keeping Iran’s colossal energy potential underdeveloped. This pushes world oil prices towards an “optimal” price (in the producers’ view) of \$100-120 per barrel. More importantly, even with its second largest reserves, Iran remains a net importer of natural gas. This is a market of pivotal importance to Russia – one that is undergoing a deep transformation caused by the exponential growth of shale gas production in the United States. The arrival of Iran as a major exporter, which remains a possibility, would have a severe impact on Russian revenues. Russian-Iranian cooperation in the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF, also known as the “Gas OPEC”) thus remains a public relations exercise. The only energy issue on which Russia and Iran see eye-to-eye is the imperative to torpedo plans for a Transcaspian gas pipeline connecting Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan. The dispute about maritime borders in the southern part of the Caspian Sea will thus remain deadlocked, as a November 2010 summit of the five littoral states demonstrated yet again.

### **The Caspian Region**

The challenge that has acquired great urgency in Russia’s relations with Iran (as with Turkey) is that of preserving stability in the wider Caspian region, which is by no means sheltered from the spectacular chain reaction of revolutions that has spread across the Arab world. For many years, Iran has refrained from any involvement in the ever-evolving crisis in the North Caucasus and provided no support to the growth of clandestine Islamic networks. For its part, Russia expressed no reservations against the suppression of opposition to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Moscow and Tehran cooperated closely to terminate the civil war in Tajikistan in the mid-1990s, but they were unable to check the violent unrest in Kyrgyzstan in 2010. The place where they would have to intervene jointly in case of an escalation of violence is Turkmenistan, which unexpectedly survived the political crisis caused by the sudden death of its despotic leader in December 2006 with ease, but it still remains prone to implosion.

There are few reasons to expect a revolution in Azerbaijan, which experienced much turmoil in the early 1990s, unless a fall in oil revenues precipitates a rise of discontent against the Aliyev dynasty; such a development, however, could enervate Russia and Iran as well.

### **Worm-Eaten Cyber-Security**

One new twist in the long tale of Russia's back-and-forth with Iran involves the computer worm *Stuxnet*'s sensational summer 2010 breach of security of Iran's nuclear program, as well as of the Bushehr nuclear power station. The scale of damage from this extraordinary cyberattack remains unknown, as does its origin, though the prime suspect has been described as a joint U.S.-Israeli project ([NYTimes](#)). What is clear is that the state-of-the-art worm, identified by a security company based in Belarus ([VirusBlockAda](#)), was targeting the centrifuge cascades at the Natanz fuel enrichment plant. However, it was not necessarily tailor-made for this task, since there are no centrifuges at Bushehr and none among Siemens' industrial customers, which also use the software the worm attacks.

While the uranium enrichment industry in Iran has so far suffered only a minor setback, Russia has found itself in a rather difficult position. One problem involves the Bushehr reactor, which has experienced many technical and political delays in construction but was loaded with fuel in August 2010 under IAEA supervision. The fuel was unloaded in February 2011, but re-loaded in April, causing only a minor delay in the schedule for making the plant fully operational in summer 2011. The *Stuxnet* attack caught Bushehr's Russian specialists unprepared, as they had no experience in dealing with this kind of problem and typically rely on not sophisticated firewalls but total isolation of a reactor's control systems from the internet. There are many good cyber-defense companies in Russia, including Kaspersky Labs, but engaging them for exterminating the worm would mean enhancing the cybersecurity of the Iranian nuclear program as well. *Stuxnet* was allegedly designed not only for sabotage but also for gathering intelligence (used to target several Iranian physicists). Russia would much prefer not to engage in this virtual war on the wrong side. Bushehr, therefore, is not properly secured and runs the risk of turning into a new Chernobyl.

A potentially greater problem concerns Russia's own vast nuclear complex, which now looks vulnerable to untraditional challenges. Russian authorities assumed that the low level of computerization of key structures of government made them invulnerable to cyberattacks like the one that discombobulated Estonia in spring 2007. The issue now is not that the gradual development of "e-government" involves the risk of disruption, but that crucial sub-systems that are invulnerable to hacker "swarming" due to total isolation can nonetheless be infected by viruses and worms carefully planted into their often outdated control systems.

### **Conclusion**

Maintaining the status quo in the development of protracted international crises around Iran is the best possible solution from Moscow's perspective. Iranian oil and gas

production remains severely hampered, which helps keep prices high. Russia's voice remains important in international debates surrounding Iran, which boosts its prestige. Russia can also benefit from Iran's interest in cultivating their partnership, one of the few openings available to Tehran during this period of international isolation. Safeguarding the status quo against an "irresponsible" application of force, and particularly a military strike, has been Russia's main guideline for the last decade.

Sustaining Iran's ostracism, however, is becoming highly problematic. Tehran has greeted the revolutions shaking the Arab world as delayed aftershocks of its 1979 Islamic revolution. Changes in the Middle East are expected to facilitate new Iranian ties with, for instance, Bahrain or post-occupation Iraq (or its fragments). It is possible that Ahmadinejad will be replaced by a moderate figure in the run-up to or after the spring 2012 parliamentary elections. In Russia's view, however, any Iranian government will consider the continued development its nuclear program a vital security interest. The first Iranian nuclear test is set to happen within the coming decade. Moscow interprets Turkey's recent moves to upgrade ties with Iran as a readiness to accept the latter's de facto nuclear status. India and China can be expected to do the same.

Russia cannot afford to go against this trend. That means that the limits to its cooperation with the West, the United States in particular, on punishing Iran for building more uranium enrichment capabilities have likely already been reached. In debates with NATO and the United States on missile defense systems, Moscow could be expected to argue that the emphasis on building such "shields" in itself testifies to an unannounced shift to a strategy of containment of a nuclear-armed Iran. Russia may also quietly advance the idea of a BRICs/SCO initiative (taking Turkey on board as well) to reject and defy unilateral U.S.-EU sanctions against Iran. Unless some new tangible rewards are offered, which is unlikely, Moscow will attempt to revive its former "good-neighborly" ties with Iran, which have been damaged by a no-longer rewarding conformity to the Western course.

# The Non-Proliferation Treaty as a Conditional Norm

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 142

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## **The Non-Proliferation Treaty as a Puzzling Success Story**

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is an explicitly discriminatory treaty. It enshrines the right of a handful of “Nuclear Weapons States” (NWS) – the five that had tested a nuclear explosive device prior to January 1, 1967 – to possess nuclear weapons, while categorically ruling out the right to their possession by all others, the “Non-Nuclear Weapons States” (NNWS), even if they do not join the treaty. This basic inequity is only slightly moderated by the treaty’s other provisions (e.g., articles VI and X, respectively, on atomic energy and withdrawal). Not least due to the NPT’s discriminatory character, scholars and expert observers began forecasting its imminent demise not long after its inception. However, despite the NPT’s highly publicized difficulties with recalcitrant member-states such as Iran, the basic fact is that nearly all the states in the world are members in good standing of this treaty. In addition to its near-universal state membership, it has been progressively strengthened over the years and has also overcome numerous serious shocks. Indeed, by most measures – the number of states that are party to it, the number of states that have left or violated its terms, or the indefinite extension of the treaty in 1995 – the NPT is one of the most successful treaties of all time.\* But why? Our memo suggests an explanation for the NPT’s continuing strength that focuses on treatment of the NPT as a conditional norm.

Traditional explanations in international relations theory are inadequate to explain the NPT’s resilience. Neoliberal institutionalists might view the NPT as a “bargain,” according to which the NWS provide civilian nuclear technology in exchange for the NNWS’s promise not to misuse it. The NWS also made a moral commitment in the NPT to work toward nuclear and general disarmament. However, the NWS have consistently failed to live up to their end of the bargain ever since the treaty was opened for signature. Indeed, as one of the U.S. delegates to the treaty

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\* We do not include the fact of the very slow historical proliferation of nuclear weapons as proof of the NPT’s success, because that has causes that go far beyond the NPT. However the NPT probably has helped somewhat.

negotiations put it, the NPT was “one of the greatest con games of modern times.”\* It is often suggested that if the NWS do not start taking their treaty obligations more seriously, the NPT will collapse. Be that as it may, the fact is that this “con game” has survived, and indeed flourished, for over four decades.

Realists suggest a different answer to the puzzle of NPT resilience, simply that the superpowers imposed the NPT on other states, through a mix of offers of nuclear guarantees and threats to remove those guarantees. Realists also routinely argue that because the NPT is based on coercion, the treaty regime is inherently weak and, sooner or later, is likely to become irrelevant. However, there is little evidence for the contention that the superpowers coerced states *en masse* into joining the treaty when it was originally negotiated. A quarter-century later, in 1995, the NPT States Parties easily agreed to the treaty’s indefinite extension.

Constructivists generally argue that acceptance of a new international institution would come from a change in state identities or socialization into existing norms, both of which usually involve long-term processes. While such an approach may be useful in explaining the power of the NPT once it was established as an international norm, it is ill-equipped to explain the development of the NPT as a norm *per se*. Moreover, the NPT norm is quite unlike the norms constructivists usually study. Most international norms reinforce the bedrock constitutive norm of the international society of states: sovereign state equality. The non-proliferation norm violates this more fundamental norm of sovereign equality. It creates two classes of states: the nuclear “haves” and the nuclear “have-nots.” Why, then, have states accepted the NPT in such large numbers?

### **The Concept of Conditional Norms**

We suggest that the answer to this question lies in altering the typical constructivist understanding of norms. We agree with the constructivist focus on state identities and norms to explain outcomes. States are motivated to act in ways that are consistent with their identities, and norms provide appropriate guides to action. Moreover, identity groups such as transnational communities can be sites of learning, whereby domestic actors get new information and reformulate interests due to their interaction with international or transnational actors.

However, constructivists often do not appreciate how underneath the broad canopy of norm acceptance, individual states routinely attempt to bend or change rules and norms to suit their particular interests and situations. Often the choice states make in the face of growing international norms is not to completely accept or reject those norms, but rather to reformulate them as *conditional norms* that limit the appropriateness of a given behavioral prescription to certain types of actors. Norms are held by identity groups, but the actors to whom the norm is believed to apply can differ from the holders of the norm. While the holders of norms are always limited (because identity groups are limited), the subjects of norms can be limited or unlimited. When norms are supposed to apply to all types of actors, they are *unconditional*. When the subjects are

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\* Quoted in William Epstein, “The Last Chance: Nuclear Proliferation and Arms Control,” (New York: The Free Press, 1976), p. 118.

limited, we can call such norms *conditional norms*. Conditions are critical because they delimit the type of actors for whom a behavioral prescription legitimately applies.

De facto conditional norms are very common in international society. There are very different international expectations for the behavior of Liechtenstein and Japan. De jure conditional norms are rather less common. They do exist, however, for instance in the veto power of the United Nations Security Council P-5 or the Kyoto Protocol's acceptance that poor countries need not restrain their carbon emissions. Still other conditional norms are highly institutionalized, but not as laws or treaties per se: for example, macroeconomic statistics used to be organized around two systems, the System of National Accounts (SNA), used by most Western countries, and the Material Product System (MPS), which was once the standard for the USSR and other Comecon (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) member-states. A conditional norm delineated the appropriateness of each system based on the type of economy: capitalist economies used the SNA and the command economies used the MPS.

Sometimes these de jure conditional norms are imposed by the powerful to justify some type of advantage, and sometimes they are "weapons of the weak" that enable the latter to wriggle free from some general rule. What is most interesting from a theoretical perspective, however, is that states might actually sometimes accept such formal differences as legitimate, in contrast to the conventional constructivist assumption of the inviolability of the fundamental international legal norm of sovereign equality. We argue that states can sometimes accept conditional norms, not simply because they recognize the reality of power differentials between states but rather as part of an implicit international legal principle of "separate but equal." In other words, in some cases, *all* states can come to believe that it is proper to apply different rules to different states – indeed, that it is more proper than applying the same rules to all states. This matters for the measurement of international stability, because what standard constructivism would perceive as a tension or contradiction in international society, we contend can actually be a case of legitimacy in diversity.

### **NPT as a Conditional Norm**

We argue that the NPT is a conditional norm and that understanding it as such clarifies the bases for its success. For the NPT, the condition is very clear: states with nuclear weapons as of 1967 are allowed to have them, while other states are not. This condition is usually considered the basis for the treaty's inherent instability, but when conditions are understood as legitimating clauses that make different behaviors not only acceptable but also appropriate, the condition may be what gives the norm its power.

By the 1960s, the United States, USSR, and other NWS had for practical purposes rejected the idea of nuclear abolition, although they continued to give it lip service. However, they saw a mutual self-interest in promoting the concept of nuclear non-proliferation as a conditional norm, because they wanted to stop other states from acquiring these weapons while keeping their own arsenals. The NWS interest in promoting the NPT as a formalization of the non-proliferation conditional norm is relatively clear, although it should be noted that two NWS, France and China, rejected



the treaty as discriminatory and only joined it in 1992. However, the key to the NPT's success was its acceptance by the NNWS. How could this have happened? It was not just the result of great power sticks and carrots.

While different NNWS had different reasons for signing on, one case, West Germany, merits special attention. If West Germany had not signed the NPT, the treaty would have been judged a failure. And when West Germany did sign the NPT, many other states followed suit. So why did West Germany join? Many top politicians in West Germany, including longtime Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, were fervently opposed to the treaty, seeing it as blatantly discriminatory. It was thanks to Willy Brandt and the SPD that West Germany embraced the conditional norm that the superpowers had laid out in the NPT. Why? Because, as Brandt explained at the September 1968 Conference of the Non-Nuclear Weapons States in Geneva, he saw joining the NPT as a means to the achievement of honor in international society.\* Brandt argued that having nuclear weapons may give a state power, but it should not be seen as giving it honor. On the contrary, abstaining from having nuclear weapons was the courageous choice and therefore deserved the world's acclaim. In other words, Brandt reframed nuclear weapons possession/abstention as a measure of moral courage instead of material power, and in this way he could view the NPT's conditional norm as actually favoring West Germany. Since Brandt's 1968 speech, many diplomats have ascended to the rostrum of NPT review conferences to call attention to their states' honorable abstention from nuclear weapons, and to encourage the nuclear weapons states to join their side by casting off their dishonorable arsenals.

### **The Future of the NPT**

The concept of the NPT as a conditional norm suggests that the problem of instability identified by the NPT's critics may be much less severe than they think. The NPT does not necessarily violate the basic principle of sovereign state equality. States can come to understand that different rules are appropriate for different states in different contexts. Indeed, Willy Brandt taught the NNWS to conform proudly rather than begrudgingly to the norms the treaty sets for them.

Moreover, the non-proliferation conditional norm is much stronger now than it was in 1968. Although conditional norms may start out as creative and controversial instrumental strategies, over time they can come to be seen as simply normal, part of the natural order of international society. The success of the NPT today is not primarily based on states calculating whether or not to be in it, even if they probably did make such a calculation when they initially joined. Today, even states that may privately disagree with the non-proliferation norm do not find it easy to publicly reject it, for if they do so they risk social sanction not only by NWS but also by fellow NNWS.

However, the lack of full understanding of the sources of the NPT's success, which is most marked among the NWS, may lead to actions that undermine the norm's stability in the future. For instance, the recent "exception" the Nuclear Suppliers Group

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\* From Willy Brandt, "Konstruktiver Beitrag zur friedlichen Nutzung der Kernenergie," *Bulletin* (Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung), No. 109, September 4, 1968, pp. 932-4.

(NSG), pushed by the United States, carved out for nuclear-armed India to import nuclear technology and other strategic technologies is quite problematic from a conditional norms perspective. Although India is a special case because it never joined the NPT, if states are free to choose which set of rules applies to them, the conditional norm will quickly lose its force. We can already see that the exception the NSG made for India has led China to support making an exception for Pakistan.

Meanwhile, Iran has certainly challenged the NPT by violating various International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, perhaps on the way to building a nuclear weapon. However, in our view, the birth of an Iranian bomb would not necessarily undermine the conditional *norm* of non-proliferation. The norm against murder does not collapse just because a murder occurs. Indeed an Iranian nuclear breakout might actually strengthen the non-proliferation norm, by causing NNWS to line up and once again reaffirm their belief that non-proliferation is honorable and proliferation should be condemned – as happened after North Korea tested its bombs, for instance.

We do see a different, more subtle, challenge to the non-proliferation norm in the U.S. *reaction* to Iran's activities. The United States has essentially argued that Iran must cease enriching uranium due to its history of violating IAEA safeguards and its belligerent rhetoric. It has a point. However, Iran also has a point that the NPT permits all states to engage in nuclear development and even uranium enrichment for peaceful purposes. Willy Brandt himself fought tooth and nail to ensure that the acceptance of NNWS status would not imply any restrictions in terms of civil nuclear energy applications. We are not suggesting that Iran's IAEA safeguards violations should go unpunished, but rather that care must be taken to ensure that the punishments are not perceived by *other* NNWS as reshaping the NPT's commitment to civil nuclear energy, which might lead to the perception of the NPT as a codification of great power domination. In contrast to the United States, Russia has played a positive role in this regard by supporting the development of the Iranian nuclear reactor at Bushehr, which has a theoretically possible but unrealistic relationship to a possible eventual Iranian nuclear bomb.\* Along these lines, including other NNWS such as Brazil and Turkey in the P5+1 group that negotiates with Iran (thereby making it a P5+3) would also be helpful.

Finally, although our conditional norms argument suggests that the non-proliferation norm can survive more or less indefinitely even if the NWS retain their arsenals, an attempt by one or more NWS to join the NNWS club would nonetheless greatly reinforce the norm. The recent actions of the United States and Russia on New START and their renewed discursive commitment to eventually abolishing nuclear weapons are therefore quite positive. These actions and statements directly support the NNWS belief in not only the legitimacy but also the good sense of their choice of nuclear abstention, which is the ultimate foundation of the NPT's strength.

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\* All indications are that if Iran tried to build the bomb, it would be with highly enriched uranium.



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