

Outline for RIETI Symposium

Post-9-11 Dynamics of Security in Central Asia

1. Internal Security Threats

- **Militant and Radical Islam**

The US war efforts in Afghanistan have in the Short-term dismantled this threat. But in the long-term this threat could destabilize the region, particularly in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan.

- **Growing Authoritarianism and Transition of Power**

The US anti-terrorism alliance with the Central Asian republics has inadvertently contributed to the authoritarian and repressive tendencies of the regimes. The most alarming aspect of this trend has been the postponement of democratic reforms that would allow the newly emerging political forces to participate in a national discourse on the future direction of post-independence transition. The Central Asian republics may also face insatiability in the next decade since the present leaders have refused to allow a peaceful transition of power take place.

- **Economic Decline, Growing Poverty, High-Level Corruption**

Despite the apparent progress in macro-economic reform the bulk of the Central Asian population has been faced with chronic poverty, unemployment, and deteriorating economic conditions. As such, an overwhelming majority has lost faith in the merits of transition to a market economy. The US promise of greater economic assistance to the region, if carried out prudently, could have a positive impact on restoring trust and reversing the declining popularity of the current regimes. The US and its allies must also address the problem of corruption, which has had a significant impact on reducing the positive impact of economic reform in Central Asia.

- **Rise of Uzbek Domination and Intra-Ethnic Conflict**

The US strategic alliance with Uzbekistan has intensified that countries drive for regional domination. Uzbekistan has been engaged in land grabbing from its neighboring Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan. Uzbekistan has also been accused of conducting a proxy war in Tajikistan, and fan separatist tendencies in southern Kyrgyzstan in the past. The region also has the potential for outbreaks of civil wars of the sort that engulfed Tajikistan (1992-1997). Kyrgyzstan's current political instability is in part attributed to the sharp north-south division in that republic.

2. External Security Dynamics

- **The North**

Russia has benefited greatly from the US operations in Afghanistan as it has effectively, albeit in the short-term, eliminated the Islamic threat to Central Asia and has cut off funding and training opportunities to the Chechen rebels. Russia has also used the US global campaign on terror to silence its international critics of its Chechen war. Russia, however, will continue to exercise economic control over the energy transport routes and will work to enhance stability in the region.

- **The East**

The US presence in Afghanistan has also benefited China by denying the Uighur separatist organizations funding and terrorist training camps. But Chinese expansionist policies—manifested in terms of land acquisitions—in the region have in part contributed to the ongoing political instability in Kyrgyzstan. China's growing energy needs and its desire for economic influence in Central Asia will continue to influence a course of action that would promote stability in the region.

- **The South**

The most serious long-term stability to Central Asia will continue to be the instability in Afghanistan. The threat of terrorism and drug trafficking constitute a clear and present danger to the region. Iran's domestic instability and its desire to shed the image of an Islamic revolutionary country will prevent it from becoming a destabilizing force for the region. The uncertainties regarding the Caspian Sea legal regime, however, may induce Iran to use force or threat of force to protect its interests.