

**CENTRAL ASIA:  
BORDER DISPUTES AND  
CONFLICT POTENTIAL**

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## CENTRAL ASIA:

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#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For the past decade Russia, China, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan have all been involved in high stakes negotiations to define their respective borders. Strong-arm politics, economic pressures, shadowy backroom deals, nationalist sentiments, public dissatisfaction and an environment of mutual mistrust have marked this process. The resolution of border issues peacefully and transparently would have a positive impact on regional security, economic cooperation, ethnic relations and efforts to combat drug trafficking and religious extremism. But progress has been slow, and no immediate breakthrough can be seen in an all too often antagonistic process that is defining the new map of Central Asia.

Independence for the Central Asian states reopened a Pandora's box of border disputes. Many of the current difficulties can be traced directly back to a difficult Soviet legacy. Moscow established administrative borders of its Central Asian republics in the mid-1920s, which followed neither natural geographic boundaries nor strict ethnic lines. Soviet planners often avoided drawing more homogeneous or compact republics for fear they would fuel separatism. Further, given the highly centralised nature of Soviet planning, economic and transportation links were designed to cross republic borders freely. Goods flowed largely unimpeded across these internal borders, and people would notice little more than a plaque or a small police outpost as they moved between republics.

Compounding the current difficulties, the borders were redrawn on numerous occasions, and

republics were permitted to secure long-term leases of territory from other republics. In a number of cases, enclaves – isolated islands of territory within another republic – were created.

All these factors combined to create a complex stew of territorial claims and counterclaims once the Central Asian republics became independent states. Borders that were suddenly international quickly took on major significance. Long-standing industrial and transportation links were disrupted. Control of territory meant control of resources and improved strategic positions. Ethnic populations that had long enjoyed access to friends and family just across borders were now isolated and often faced visa requirements and other access difficulties. Much of the population views these new restrictions with hostility and has felt the disruption in traditional patterns of commerce and society acutely.

Resolving these lingering and often quite substantial border disputes has become critical. Regional relations have often been uneasy for a variety of reasons, and tensions over borders have only made cooperation in other areas, such as trade, more daunting. At the same time, border disputes have also become important domestic political issues. Concessions made in border negotiations can be rich fodder for political oppositions (in those Central Asian countries where opposition groups are allowed to operate), and this has served to further constrain the latitude of governments to compromise.

The resolution of territorial disputes is obviously emotional and goes directly to each country's

definition of national interests. No nation wants to make territorial concessions. Nonetheless, the failure to resolve border issues prevents neighbours from normalising relations and dealing with pressing social and economic issues. Thus it is important that any territorial differences be resolved on a mutually acceptable basis in accordance with the standards of international law and practice.

The most complicated border negotiations involve the Ferghana Valley where a myriad of enclaves exist, and all three countries which share it — Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan — have both historical claims to each other's territory and economic interests in the transport routes, rivers, reservoirs, and industries. Negotiations over border demarcation in the valley have been charged with tension and have stalled over scores of disputed points. While talks continue with a broad understanding that border issues must be settled, there is little likelihood of a final breakthrough any time soon.

Even where demarcation has been agreed, border crossings are difficult throughout the region, slowing regional trade and causing tension. Demands for visas, often only available in capitals and at a high price for local people, have made freedom of movement increasingly difficult. Customs officers and border forces are often poorly trained and frequently depend on corruption for their income. Harassment and extortion of travellers and traders has become part of everyday reality in border regions. As cross-border travel becomes more difficult, interaction between populations that once shared many aspects of a common culture and way of life is becoming much less frequent. As new lines are drawn on the map, so new borders and new stereotypes are being created in people's minds.

Limiting cross-border movement has often been done in the name of security, yet few border services are sufficiently proficient to prevent determined narcotics traffickers or terrorists from crossing frontiers. And the means used to secure borders have had a directly negative impact on the lives of local people. There are regular reports of deaths in unmarked minefields, shootings of villagers who have strayed into foreign territory, and huge social and economic costs from the destruction of bridges and other cross-border transport infrastructure.

All the countries in the region are in economic crisis and have a wide array of social problems. Political opposition has become radicalised in some areas. In these circumstances, tension over borders is only one further destabilising issue in a difficult political and security environment. Resolving these issues will require great persistence, difficult compromises, intensive international engagement and genuine creativity.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### TO CENTRAL ASIAN GOVERNMENTS:

1. Cease unilateral border demarcations should cease; all demarcation should take place transparently through official joint commissions, in consultation with the local population.
2. Cease the practice of mining unmarked frontiers and take steps to remove all mines from borders.
3. Simplify visa requirements and border crossing procedures, open consulates in appropriate border cities, or otherwise issue visas at border crossing points.
4. Improve training for border guards in border and visa procedures, and take stronger measures against corruption among them and customs authorities and against harassment of travellers;
5. Uzbekistan should open map archives in Tashkent as a shared resource of the successor states of the Soviet Union, and the countries in the region should encourage Russia to provide access to similar resources in Moscow.
6. Grant regional governors more latitude to deal with the social concerns of local populations in disputed border areas and encourage local authorities to allow NGOs and community groups to engage in dispute mediation and border monitoring;
7. Cease the singling out of ethnic minorities in disputed border areas for disadvantageous treatment.

8. Ratify border agreements in accordance with the legal procedures established under each country's law; giving legislatures and the public access to relevant information so border agreements can be subjected to normal political discussion, including by opponents.

**TO OUTSIDE GOVERNMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS:**

9. The OSCE should offer its services as an impartial mediator for regional border disputes, and work to educate the states on general principles of border resolution; offer training to border guards and customs officials; and coordinate other international assistance in the field.
10. In cases where border disputes represent a serious threat of conflict, the OSCE should

consider establishing border monitoring missions.

11. International donors and governments should offer access to expertise and training on international law and border disputes impartially to officials of all countries in the region.
12. International projects on cross-border transport should include conditions regarding border crossing arrangements, and work should continue on introducing common tariffs and border procedures;
13. International donors should seek further development and peacebuilding projects that span borders, not only in the Ferghana Valley, but also in other complex border regions, and support NGOs that attempt alternative border resolution programs.

**Osh/Brussels 4 April 2002**



## CENTRAL ASIA:

### BORDER DISPUTES AND CONFLICT POTENTIAL

#### I. INTRODUCTION

Central Asia faces pressing, and sprawling problems in the demarcation of its borders. With the demise of the Soviet Union, Russia, China, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan all accepted the old administrative Soviet borders as their state boundaries rather than opening historical territorial claims. This was an important step against a possible host of irredentist claims. Nonetheless, as those administrative boundaries had never been demarcated and were sometimes only general outlines, several kilometres deep, on maps, the Central Asian states have all been forced into a complex, and often interlocking, series of bilateral negotiations to resolve the limits of their territory.

Despite the general agreement on the old administrative boundaries, negotiations over where to actually draw borders directly reflect how these states define their national interests and have often been highly contentious. With thousands of square kilometres in dispute, border issues have appreciably increased tensions and often served as a fundamental stumbling block to wider regional cooperation in economics, security and ethnic relations. Even where borders have been defined, movement of goods and people has been limited by bureaucratic procedures, political mistrust, and corruption among border and customs officials. If these border issues are not resolved, they will continue to complicate the fundamental security picture in Central Asia and provide fuel for state-to-state and local conflict.

Many of the current difficulties stem directly from the unique circumstances surrounding the creation of internal borders within the USSR. However, it is

also worth reflecting that even before the Soviet attempt to create defined republics on its Central Asian territories, there was no history of precise border limitations in the region. Competition between regional and ethnic clans had traditionally been fierce, and the geographic boundaries of respective khanates during the 1800s had frequently shifted. In many areas, nomadic traditions persisted, and the population paid little attention to concepts of state or regional boundaries.

In drawing the Soviet republic borders, planners in Moscow did not (and probably could not) construct administrative units along strictly ethnic lines given the complex mosaic of ethnicity in Central Asia. Neither did Moscow design the republics to follow the contours of natural geographic divisions. Soviet planners took great care not to construct republics whose ethnic composition would allow for separatist or anti-Moscow sentiment to coalesce easily. There was also a high degree of arbitrariness in how these republics were initially demarcated. Central Asia covers a vast amount of territory, and only minimal effort was made to explore the ramifications of administrative divisions on the ground. While such an approach served Moscow's tactical and strategic needs well at the time, it has created thorny border disputes today.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For more detail on the history of Soviet border demarcation, see Aleksandr Gromov, 'Granitisi Tsentralno-Aziatskogo Regiona: Istoricheskiy Kontekst' [Borders of the Central Asian Region: Historical Context], *Profi*, (Moscow), No. 11, 1999, p.10; Arslan Koichev, *Natsionalno-territorialnoe razmezhivanie v Ferganskoj doline (1924-27 gg.)* [National-territorial delimitation in the Ferghana Valley (1924-1927)] (Bishkek, 2001).

Other aspects of the Soviet regime further complicated border arrangements. Inter-republican borders may have had much less meaning in reality than they do today, but there were frequent disputes between the leaderships of different republics over their official frontiers. As a result, the borders between the republics were drawn and then redrawn on several occasions, and there continue to be disputes as to whether subsequent border changes were officially “ratified” by Soviet authorities, with implications for the legality of the claims by today’s independent states.

Some examples of these territorial exchanges make clear how complex the issue is. In September 1929, the Khujand District of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Uzbekistan was handed over to Tajikistan and its name changed to Leninabad Province. A decade later, Uzbekistan was given a portion of that area back when a large canal was constructed in the Ferghana Valley. Tajikistan was not the only republic to exchange territory with Uzbekistan. The remote territory of Karakalpakistan began life in 1924 as part of Kazakhstan but by 1938 had been absorbed into the Uzbek Republic.<sup>2</sup>

The full catalogue of land exchanges between the Soviet Central Asian republics is extensive, but territorial claims were further muddied by the frequent leasing of facilities or areas with natural resources from one republic to another. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan leased land from each other in 1946, and these leases were still in force when the USSR collapsed. Uzbekistan refused to give back its leased land when the lease expired in 1992, leaving the inhabitants of this area in a legal limbo between two states. In frustration, one village in the region, Bagys, declared independence from both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in the beginning of 2002.<sup>3</sup> Other countries had similar leasing arrangements. Uzbekistan leased gas fields in southern Kyrgyzstan, and Kyrgyzstan in exchange leased pasture lands suitable for cattle raising. Again, the status of these territories has been a source of discord. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan alone managed to agree an amicable resolution of

their leases. In 1993 the prime ministers of the two countries signed an agreement on returning all leased lands to their sovereign states by 1996.<sup>4</sup>

In many ways, it was not a problem for the Soviet system to draw borders that, with the benefit of hindsight, now seem arbitrary or capricious. In a highly centralised economic and political system, inter-republic borders were of little significance. Heavy industry, agriculture, the flow of goods and people – all were designed to serve the Soviet centre. Visas were not required for internal travel, and often only a plaque or small police post would mark an inter-republican border. Ethnic groups living in different republics had easy access to family and friends just across the administrative boundary. Economic inputs, such as energy, were highly subsidised, and flowed freely from one republic to another in keeping with the doctrines of central planning.

However, with independence, the high stakes involved in clarifying territorial rights quickly became evident. The flows of subsidised energy supplies stopped. Transportation links were often severed. Control of territory meant direct control over resources that could produce hard currency or improve a country’s strategic position. Issues like land leasing and water rights had to be settled on a bilateral basis instead of being adjudicated by Moscow. With the introduction of new currencies, tariffs and customs duties, economic cooperation became less frequent, not more.<sup>5</sup>

Not surprisingly, with the long-term leasing of land and facilities between republics, the frequent redrawing of borders, clashing historical claims, and lingering ethnic tensions, demarcating borders was a controversial process for newly independent states saddled with the difficulties of designing domestic and foreign policies from virtually a blank slate. Although the need to establish clear

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<sup>2</sup> Gromov, op. cit., pp. 12-13; ICG interview with Chairman of the Town of Isfara (Tajikistan), Mirzasharif Islamidinov, April 2001; John Glenn, *The Soviet Legacy in Central Asia* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), pp. 75-78.

<sup>3</sup> ICG visit to Bagys, January 2002.

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<sup>4</sup> In total, the accord obliged Kazakhstan to return 139,000 hectares to Kyrgyzstan, while Kyrgyzstan was to hand more than 690,000 hectares to Kazakhstan. Ironically, most of the lands Kyrgyzstan returned had actually been a part of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Kyrgyzstan in the early 1920s. Gromov, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Goble, ‘Former USSR: Analysis from Washington — economics, politics and the future of the CIS,’ *RFE/RL Features*, 27 January 1997; Floriana Fossato, ‘Russia: Commonwealth of Independent States await reform,’ *RFE/RL Features*, 9 December 1998, both available at: <http://www.rferl.org>.

borders was quickly recognised, the Central Asian states did not rush to demarcate their frontiers. In the first years of independence, there were expectations that the national borders within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) would remain open, and trade would continue to flow freely.

Two developments at the end of the decade brought the issue of border demarcation sharply into focus. The first was the activity of armed guerrillas crossing from Tajikistan through Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and 2000 with the aim of overthrowing the regime in Uzbekistan. That drove Uzbekistan to take measures to protect the country by mining its borders and restricting free movement across its frontiers. Since Uzbekistan's actions occurred in the absence of an agreement on borders, neighbours viewed them negatively amid growing concern that Uzbekistan was unilaterally determining its boundaries.<sup>6</sup>

The second development that underlined the need to demarcate Central Asia's borders was the establishment of visa regimes by some states, most particularly Russia's 30 August 2000 announcement that it would withdraw from the 1992 "Bishkek Accord" that allowed visa free travel between almost all member countries of the CIS. Moscow's decision to establish a visa regime was tied to security concerns, especially the smuggling of narcotics and contraband, illegal immigration, and belief that terrorists and organised criminal gangs were operating freely within the CIS because of the visa-free regime. With the introduction of visas, it quickly became necessary to institute border checkpoints at agreed boundaries, spurring the Central Asian states to push forward with border talks.<sup>7</sup>

Uzbekistan had begun enforcing a rigorous visa regime in 1999 that complicated the normal flow of traffic in the region and raised concerns among Central Asians about the consequences of

demarcating borders.<sup>8</sup> While clarifying borders and strict visa regimes do not necessarily go hand-in-hand, in an area where there had previously been no borders, except on maps, this has not been fully understood. Partially as a consequence of the border restrictions, trade between Central Asian states has tapered off in recent years.<sup>9</sup> For residents of complex border zones, such as Andijan province in Uzbekistan, or Batken province in Kyrgyzstan, the new restrictions blocked traditional trade routes and seriously impeded economic development.

As negotiations over borders have begun in earnest over the last several years, tensions have mounted. Obviously any territorial concessions, and even reasonable compromise, can be politically difficult. In addition, the economic ties between republics from the Soviet era have made it difficult to adjust borders in a fashion that equitably parcels out industries, resources and transport links. Ethnic groups are also increasingly feeling the impact of having their traditional patterns of travel, commerce and social interaction disrupted. Acrimonious exchanges between neighbouring states over border issues have become commonplace – as have complaints about strong-arm tactics designed to influence the outcome of negotiations.

Given that borders were frequently revised during the Soviet era, competing maps have become central to border negotiations and debates. The respective capitals have shamelessly (but understandably) insisted that whatever map is most favourable to their own claims is the most true and accurate. Access to official documentation (Soviet records and maps) has been problematic. Uzbekistan's neighbours have complained that they are handicapped because the central archives are located in Uzbekistan's capital, Tashkent. This has allowed Uzbekistan an upper hand in the "map

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<sup>6</sup> ICG interview with Nikolai Bailo, Kyrgyz parliamentary deputy and member of the Parliamentary Committee for CIS Affairs, June 2001; See also ICG Asia Report No. 14, *Central Asia: Islamist Mobilization and Regional Security*, 1 March 2001 (Osh/Brussels).

<sup>7</sup> Papers presented at conference in Orenburg, Russia, 'Border Cooperation and Security in Central Asia: Initiatives and Strategy,' 5-6 June 2001.

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<sup>8</sup> Nick Megoran, 'The borders of eternal friendship: Kyrgyz-Uzbek relations in 1999,' *Eurasia Insight* (New York: OSI), 19 December 1999, available at: <http://www.eurasianet.org>.

<sup>9</sup> Uzbekistan's trade with Kazakhstan fell from U.S.\$393 million in 1997 to U.S.\$233 million in 1999, and trade between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyz saw a similar downward turn from U.S.\$103 million in 1996 to U.S.\$43 million in 1999; See Gregory Gleason, 'Uzbekistan's monetary isolation and Central Asian border normalization,' *EurasiaNet Business & Economics* (New York: OSI), 17 August 2000, available at: <http://www.eurasianet.org>.



wars".<sup>10</sup> Such documentation was clearly a shared asset of the Soviet Union, and Uzbekistan should be encouraged to open access to the vital archival material. The Central Asian states might also work jointly with Moscow to ensure that full access to records in Moscow is made available.

Three countries play a particularly important strategic role in the region's border disputes: Uzbekistan, China and Russia. All are militarily far stronger than the other nations embroiled in these territorial negotiations.<sup>11</sup> Although China and Russia remain the "great powers" landscape, Uzbekistan has not shied from using its relative strengths to its advantage.

Indeed, Uzbekistan is a key player in regional border disputes. Central Asia's most populous and militarily powerful state, it directly borders Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan – making it a party to roughly half the bilateral disputes covered in this report. Owing to the size of its population and its relative influence in the region, Uzbekistan was also favoured in many ways during the Soviet period, with much infrastructure directed through its territory. In addition, Uzbekistan was allowed to lease industrial facilities and oil and gas fields in neighbouring republics. Following the break-up of the Soviet Union, it was decided that republics could claim enterprises and industrial assets built on their territory before 1 December 1990.<sup>12</sup> This gave Uzbekistan a large chunk of assets that had been used on a regional basis.

Its neighbours perceive Uzbekistan as the most aggressive state in the region in advancing its territorial interests.<sup>13</sup> Given the largely authoritarian nature of its current government, there are few legislative or judicial checks on its military or negotiating strategies. Uzbekistan has periodically cut off energy supplies to Kyrgyzstan

and Tajikistan apparently both as a complaint about unpaid debts and to exert pressure in negotiations.

After incursions by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) during 1999 and 2000, Uzbekistan took a particularly hard line on border issues with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. It claimed (with considerable justification) that both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan were incapable of safeguarding their territories from the IMU, and that it had to take unilateral measures to safeguard its security.<sup>14</sup> But its response to understandable security concerns has been inappropriate and probably ineffective or even counterproductive. Uzbekistan has unilaterally laid mines along borders that have yet to be demarcated (often expanding its territory in the process), and also made occasional bombing raids against alleged IMU targets in both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. While Tajikistan is too weak and too often divided to stand up to Uzbekistan, resentment over these heavy-handed policies in regard to border issues and treatment of the Tajik minority in Uzbekistan is readily apparent.<sup>15</sup> Kyrgyzstan has made concessions to Tashkent in the past over borders but with increased public attention to the issue, there is little chance that President Askar Akaev can continue to accommodate his larger neighbour without paying a heavy political price.

One of the most controversial border issues concerns a series of enclaves where Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan all have small pockets of territory either within their own country or in a neighbouring state which is nominally a part of their country but is geographically isolated as an "island". The enclave issue is most pronounced in the Ferghana Valley that spans all three nations, both because the valley is home to the majority of the enclaves, but also because of Ferghana's significance to the states straddling it in terms of population, arable land, transport routes, and historical claims.

Kyrgyzstan hosts seven enclaves: two belong to Tajikistan — Varukh, with a population of some 30,000, and a very small one north of Isfana — the

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<sup>10</sup> Conference on problems with border control and migration, held at the Institute for Regional Studies in Bishkek, 28 April 2001.

<sup>11</sup> See ICG Asia Report No. 20, *Faultlines in the Changing Security Map in Central Asia*, 4 July 2001 (Osh/Brussels).

<sup>12</sup> Gromov, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

<sup>13</sup> ICG interview with Lt. Col. Iosif Abasovich Tairov in Charküh, Tajikistan, April 2001; ICG interview with Mazhit Aldakilov, head of Isfara District, Tajikistan, April 2001; ICG interview with Sergey Ryspekov, former Council Secretary to President Askar Akaev, May 2001.

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<sup>14</sup> ICG interview with Tashma Orozov, editor-in-chief of *Batken tany*, April 2001; ICG interview with Batken Provincial Kenesh Speaker Samat Borubaev, April 2001.

<sup>15</sup> ICG informal conversations with Tajiks in Qayraqqum, June 2001.

remainder to Uzbekistan, including the relatively large enclave of Sokh with a population of nearly 50,000, and Shahimardan. The other enclaves are small, with populations that usually do not amount to more than a few hundred people. Nonetheless, as they are considered a country's sovereign territory, issues related to them are highly divisive, and providing access for people and resources has been problematic.<sup>16</sup>

Many of the most difficult issues have centred on local matters such as access to water supplies and the passage of vehicles, but because of the stakes, negotiations have largely gravitated toward the national level. Allowing regional governors more latitude to address some of these social concerns (matters that also have the greatest potential to spark local violence or tensions) could go some way to preventing disputes in the enclaves from escalating.

As discussed below, Kazakhstan has also had a trying experience in dealing with Uzbekistan over border issues, although some progress was made in November 2001, when the two states signed an agreement delimiting 96 percent of their borders. They have promised to resolve remaining differences by May 2002, yet the 4 per cent that was not agreed upon will not be easily resolved since these are populated areas with assets and mixed populations. The declaration of independence by the village of Bagys and its population of 2,000 at the end of 2001 underlines how negotiations have stalled in some areas, and highlights the difficulties these states have in coming to agreements over competing claims.<sup>17</sup>

Disputes between Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, as well as Turkmenistan's generally insular approach to the world, have also led to their border being increasingly sealed. While other border tensions in the region are at least the subject of ongoing negotiations in one form or other, talks on border issues between Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have apparently almost ceased. Tensions have been rising in border regions in 2001-2002, with demonstrations reported in towns

and clashes between the population and border guards increasingly regular.

Border disputes involving China have been in many ways simpler than those involving the former Soviet Union's inter-republic boundaries. China's borders with Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were already demarcated for long stretches. The territories are generally sparsely populated, and border lines fall more often along natural geographic boundaries. Nonetheless, there was still a great deal of territory where areas were in dispute, and negotiations began soon after independence.

Central Asian states have long expressed anxieties regarding perceived Chinese expansionist tendencies. Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have traditionally viewed security ties to Russia as their best insurance against any form of predatory behaviour by China. However, since independence, China has developed important trade and transportation links with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In addition, the "Shanghai Five" was created in 1996 – including China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – to serve as a forum to facilitate border negotiations and work at demilitarising the frontier. In June 2001, the group expanded its areas of collaboration to include counter-terrorism and economic cooperation. Uzbekistan was admitted as a member, and the name was changed to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).<sup>18</sup>

Despite these steps towards regional cooperation, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan continue to feel a great deal of pressure from Beijing to resolve border disputes favourably for China. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, China has also appeared willing to "barter" military assistance, transportation links and new trade ties for land concessions and water rights.

Russia's role in the border issue is complex. While its only direct negotiations in the region are with Kazakhstan and China, it has considerable strategic influence and close ties to the military and security services throughout the region, with more than 10,000 troops currently stationed in Tajikistan. Russia has a vested interest in seeing regional border disputes resolved peacefully but many also

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<sup>16</sup> ICG interview with Governor of Batken Province Mamat Aibalaev, April 2001.

<sup>17</sup> 'Kazakh, Uzbek border to be delimited by May', Interfax-Kazakhstan news agency (Almaty), 28 Feb 2002, BBC Monitoring, 1 March 2002.

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<sup>18</sup> Interfax News Agency, 15 June 2001.

argue that Moscow has at times been keen to take advantage of a “manageable” level of turmoil in Central Asia as a means to pull the CIS states back more closely into its sphere of influence. Improving the flow of goods and services across the region would clearly seem to be in Moscow’s economic interests, but for the time being, Russia continues to judge Central Asia predominantly through the optic of security issues and Islamist extremism.

To date, there has been remarkably little involvement by international organisations in mediating or facilitating these border disputes. Certainly, Russia, China and Uzbekistan would likely voice deep unease with any single Western nation being given a mediating role in the region, and both Russia and China are viewed with sufficient suspicion that they would likely be unable to play such a role effectively. Neither the CIS nor the SCO have demonstrated the ability to tackle such complex administrative challenges, and multilateral cooperation based in the region has been more figurative than substantive.

The most likely candidates for an operational mediation role would be either the United Nations or the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In the case of the United Nations, the Secretary General could appoint a special envoy if there was willingness by two parties to a bilateral dispute to bring in outside expertise. The OSCE may well be better positioned for such a role, however. It has used mediation and monitors, with varying degrees of success, to help ease similar tensions across a broad range of the states in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. However, OSCE officials in Central Asia indicate that no countries have requested such services. OSCE expertise, and efforts to familiarise regional officials with international legal standards and conduct of such negotiations, could make the process move forward more smoothly and transparently.

The capacity of young states to implement effective border regimes and customs institutions should not be overestimated. Given the huge international experience in combining security with ease of border crossing, access to such expertise could be provided more widely. The EU has given some assistance on cross-border tariffs and customs, but too much of this is in technical

consultations with little real implementation on the ground.<sup>19</sup>

It does not appear that the issue of demarcating borders will be settled anytime soon in Central Asia, and particularly in the Ferghana Valley. However, there have been some successes. The common commitment of Central Asian states to preserve existing Soviet-era borders and reject nationalist or irredentist claims should be recognised as an important contribution to stability in the region. In addition, Kazakhstan’s border negotiations with Kyrgyzstan went relatively smoothly, and by 1996 the two had largely completed delimiting the border. Demarcation was finalised in December 2001, despite opposition from some government opponents.<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, in the majority of cases, the political will to reach fair and difficult compromise between states in the region has been lacking. Mutually acceptable resolutions have remained elusive, and there is the clear danger that if relations between states involved in border disputes deteriorate the potential for conflict will sharply rise.

There are several scenarios for such conflict:

- ❑ The refusal of one state to shift from a disputed territory could eventually erupt into a full-blown political crisis, even involving local use of military force.
- ❑ In extreme cases states could be driven to take military action to protect or partition ethnic minorities on what they consider their historic “homelands” – whether within an enclave or simply disputed territory.
- ❑ Confusion over borders could push two nations into conflict as they attempt to pursue or otherwise combat militant groups such as the IMU.
- ❑ Local conflicts over water rights or land could escalate into national disputes.
- ❑ The increasing obstacles to cross-border cooperation and trade are hardening national

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<sup>19</sup> A good example is the provision of computers to border officials in an attempt to speed up registration procedures. Lack of education among border guards mean that the process has actually been slowed down in most cases. ICG Interview with EU (TACIS) officials, November 2001.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Akaev strongarms another border treaty past parliament’, *RFE/RL Central Asia Report*, 20 December 2001, Volume 1, Number 22. Available at [www.rfe/rl.org/centralasia](http://www.rfe/rl.org/centralasia).

identities in opposition to peoples on the other side of the once fluid border. For the long term, these new conceptions and stereotypes represent a real threat to future cooperation and peace in the region.

## II. POINTS OF CONTENTION

The issue of borders is complex in Central Asia. The countries share tens of thousands of kilometres of frontier. Beigali Turabekov, the head of Kazakhstan's border commission, offered useful insight into the scope of the problem when he announced in 2000 that he does not expect his country to resolve disputes along its 14,000 kilometres of border before 2007.<sup>21</sup> To begin to understand the magnitude of the challenge, one need only consider that Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan alone have more than 140 disputed border points – and this shared border constitutes only a small fraction of the regional total. The Soviet Union's collapse created significant bilateral border issues for the following combinations of countries: Russia-China; Russia-Kazakhstan; Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan; Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan; Uzbekistan-Tajikistan; Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan; Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan; Kyrgyzstan-China; Kyrgyzstan-Kazakhstan; Tajikistan-China; Tajikistan-Afghanistan; Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan; Turkmenistan-Afghanistan; and Kazakhstan-China.

Obviously, these border disputes are of legal complexity, historical nuance and cultural sensitivity sufficient to justify much more detailed, specialist treatment. This report does not claim to deal comprehensively, however, with all the bilateral border issues and the status of current talks. Instead, attention has been focussed on those disputes that are most contentious and where the clear potential exists for tensions to escalate to the point where they could help trigger conflict.

### A. UZBEKISTAN-KAZAKHSTAN

In early 2000, Uzbekistan's border guards were discovered undertaking a unilateral demarcation of the border with Kazakhstan, allegedly deep inside Kazakhstan territory in an effort that included building outposts. Kazakhstan reacted with alarm. The government issued diplomatic protests on 27 January,<sup>22</sup> established a Southern Military District and quickly deployed troops in the area to forestall

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<sup>21</sup> BBC World Service, 'Kazakhstan border negotiations "could take years"', 6 September 2000.

<sup>22</sup> 'Kazakhstan i Uzbekistan podpisali soglashenie...' *Panorama*, 14 July 2000.

any further encroachment on its territory.<sup>23</sup> A joint Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan commission was established and held an emergency meeting, concluding its first round of talks on 17 February 2000. This commission then conducted a further series of discussions. By September 2000, there had been three rounds of talks on ongoing border issues. President Karimov issued a statement that Uzbekistan had no territorial claims on any neighbouring states in an effort to reassure the region.<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, the border negotiations were slow in demarcating territory, and by the middle of 2000 the border commission had agreed on delimiting a mere 194 of some 2,150 kilometres of border.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, Uzbekistan was reportedly continuing to behave provocatively. It was alleged that Uzbek border guards were still unilaterally demarcating territory. In September 2000, the chief of staff of Kazakhstan's border guards, Major-General Husain Berkaliyev, admitted that due to a lack of funds, Kazakhstan had difficulty properly patrolling the border.<sup>26</sup>

However, on 16 November 2001 it appeared that the ongoing border disputes were close to resolution when Karimov and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed an agreement settling 96 percent of their borders.<sup>27</sup> But although hailed as a breakthrough, it did not resolve the thornier issues.

The border issue is of particular concern for Kazakhstan, since the southern provinces are among the most densely populated areas of the country, and disagreements about water, arable land and pastures in the area come at a time when social tensions are already palpable because of

economic recession, declining living standards and high unemployment. Reports of the growth of radical Islamist movements, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, in southern regions, only add to the anxieties.

The village of Bagys, some seven kilometres north of Tashkent, has been of particular concern. The area is part of lands given to Uzbekistan in a lease arrangement from Kazakhstan, which have remained in legal limbo following independence.<sup>28</sup> Most inhabitants are ethnic Kazakhs and prefer being part of Kazakhstan, yet their salaries are often paid and taxed by Uzbekistan. Uzbek police patrol the area.<sup>29</sup>

Under an agreement signed in 1991, part of the rented land did go back to Kazakhstan, but not Bagys. The village is next door to Turkestanets, which had been a military state farm for the Central Asian Military District during the Soviet period and remains this for Uzbekistan's armed forces. Following independence the residents of both settlements hoped they would become part of Kazakhstan. Almost all the residents of Bagys are ethnic Kazakhs, as are 80 per cent Turkestanets. Nonetheless, Tashkent has been reluctant to cede the lands, and Astana did not press because it did not want to strain relations. The result has been an uncertain status for the residents. About half hold Kazakh passports and citizenship, while the other half have Uzbek passports but not citizenship. Those who work on the state farm are paid in Uzbek soms, while in the school and other structures are paid in Kazakh tenge.

In a gesture indicating their deep frustration, residents staged a rally on 30 December 2001 during which they proclaimed the Independent Kazakh Republic of Bagys and elected a president and a legislature. Subsequently, Uzbek police swept down on the village and arrested 30 individuals. Further arrests of independence activists took place on 20 January 2002, and seven leading agitators were forced into hiding.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Farzad Samdely, 'Glass borders of Central Asia,' *Tehran resalat*, 31 January 2000, FBIS-NES-2000-0307; Interfax, 27 & 28 January 2000.

<sup>24</sup> 'Granitsa na grani,' *Express-K*, 7 September 2000.

<sup>25</sup> M. Gubaydulina, 'Geopoliticheskie kontury Tsentralnoi Azii: factory i riski,' [Geopolitical contours of Central Asia: factors and risks] *Kazakhstan-spektr*, No. 1 (11), 2000, pp. 101-116; Oleg Sidorov, 'Uzbekistan i Kazakhstan: problemy mezghosudarstvennykh otnoshenii,' [Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan: problems of inter-state relations] *Tsentralnaia Aziia: politika i ekonomika*, no. 3-4 (5), March-April 2001.

<sup>26</sup> 'Granitsa mira i druzhby [Borders of peace and friendship], *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 1 March 2001.

<sup>27</sup> Kabar news agency, 16 November 2001.

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<sup>28</sup> See Gromov op. cit., pp. 13-14.

<sup>29</sup> Daur Dosybiev, 'Village defies Uzbek government,' *Reporting Central Asia* (London: IWPR), No. 51, 11 May 2001, available at: <http://www.iwpr.net>.

<sup>30</sup> ICG interviews in Bagys, January 2002; BBC monitoring, 13-14 January 2001. There are some contradictions in what was reported by BBC and what residents told ICG. Residents were distancing themselves

The residents of Bagys are actually interested in union with Kazakhstan rather than an unrealistic independence, but they have been disillusioned with the lack of support from Kazakhstan. The government is nervous about backing any such political moves, not only because of the potential reaction from Tashkent, but also because it wants to avoid setting any precedent for Slavic separatist movements in the north of Kazakhstan.

Since the declaration of independence, border commissions have visited the area and the governments have declared that the issues will be decided jointly by May 2002.<sup>31</sup> Neither side has any interest in a continuation of such a situation, and a compromise may be found. One option that has been voiced is resettlement of ethnic Kazakhs from Bagys to other areas of Kazakhstan but this would set an unattractive precedent for other border disputes in the region.

In fact, such a move would only formalise an exchange of populations that has been increasing over the past five years. Both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have significant ethnic minorities on each other's territory, and 80-85 per cent of the 400,000 Uzbeks in Kazakhstan live in these disputed southern territories.<sup>32</sup>

The main stimulus for this exodus has been the strict border regime, even though the two states allow their citizens to travel between them without visas. In one instance in the town of Krasnyi Vodopad — divided by a river that forms the frontier — the Uzbek authorities blew up the connecting bridge to prevent illegal border crossings. That left the village school on one side of the river, with the health clinic on the other. Families were split apart, and people with jobs on the other side found had to commute several kilometres to a patrolled border post instead of simply crossing the bridge.<sup>33</sup>

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from their earlier proclamation of independence and said it was instead a protest rally over their undecided status.

<sup>31</sup> 'Kazakh, Uzbek border to be delimited by May' Interfax-Kazakhstan news agency, 28 Feb 2002, BBC Monitoring 1 March 2002. The other major area of dispute remaining is the Arnasay depression, to the north-west of Tashkent, where there are important issues of water resources at stake.

<sup>32</sup> Oleg Sidorov, 'Uzbekistan i Kazakhstan...'

<sup>33</sup> Arslan Kasymov, 'Feuding neighbours', *Reporting Central Asia*, No. 50, 4 May 2001, available at [www.iwpr.net](http://www.iwpr.net).

Given the tightening border controls, it is little surprise that ethnic Uzbek and Kazakh minorities continue to migrate out of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan at rapid rates. Even if demarcation is finalised, both countries still face the huge problem of how to ensure freedom of movement across the border. Tashkent and southern Kazakhstan were once closely tied economically, but new border controls are putting any cooperation at risk. Since these are the two major economies in the region, it is vital that they find ways to stimulate trade and freedom of movement rather than hinder it.

## B. UZBEKISTAN-TURKMENISTAN

If Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have at least tried to solve border issues at political summits and through on-the-ground demarcation, the situation between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan has stimulated little in the way of positive bilateral resolutions. Relations have become increasingly tense, with occasional shootings and frequent local disputes over border issues and resource claims. Poor relations between the two presidents have stymied efforts to discuss the border issues at high level.

Turkmenistan has historical claims to the Uzbek regions of Khiva and Khorezm. Nationalists argue that the majority of the inhabitants there are of Turkmen descent, and Khiva was home to one of the most influential regional khanates during the 1800s. At the same time, Uzbek nationalists assert that the Tashauz (Dashoguz) and Turkmenabad (formerly Cherjev) areas in Turkmenistan have majority Uzbek populations and that Uzbekistan has a rightful claim to this territory.<sup>34</sup> Such claims would have led to a redrawing of borders, however, and were not entertained by the authorities in Tashkent or Ashgabat. The governments recognised that raising those issues would open virtually all Central Asian borders for negotiation and preferred to adhere to the Soviet administrative borders. The real issues for negotiation concerned where exactly to draw the border line, the type of border regime, and the status of leased lands on each other's territory.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

Post-independence relations between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan quickly soured over disputes centred on territorial leases for oil and gas facilities. Turkmenistan voiced its unhappiness over Uzbekistan's long-term leases on facilities within Turkmenistan, claiming they deprived the country of substantial revenues. In turn, Uzbekistan demanded that it be granted ownership of these facilities. Relations became so strained over the issue that trade between the two countries virtually halted in the mid-1990s, and rail, air and bus links were suspended.<sup>35</sup>

In 1996, an accommodation of sorts was reached after a joint presidential meeting. Uzbekistan agreed to recognise Turkmenistan's right to neutrality – a move that Tashkent had long resisted because of its hopes for forming a regional collective security arrangement. In exchange, Turkmenistan acceded to allowing Uzbekistan to own property within Turkmenistan. Uzbekistan increased payments for existing lease arrangements and agreed to pay Turkmenistan a portion of the revenues generated from the oil it extracted on Turkmenistan's soil.<sup>36</sup>

In 1998, Turkmenistan imposed visa requirements on Uzbekistan, quickly leading to retaliation. The most direct victims of this exchange were border residents and migrant workers. Ashgabat and Tashkent did make allowances for the former by letting those within 150 kilometres of the border travel visa free for ten days and up to 150 kilometres into the other state. That initially lessened the effects of the visa regime on shuttle traders and border residents.<sup>37</sup>

A joint Turkmen-Uzbek commission completed work on delimitation of the frontier in August 2000. On 21 September the two presidents signed an agreement codifying the work of the commission and ordered it to begin demarcation of the frontier.<sup>38</sup> In 2000 both sides also began setting up border posts and fencing off their territories. In March 2001 Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov decreed that a 1,700-kilometre fence

should be installed on the border with Uzbekistan by the end of 2001.<sup>39</sup>

Although the delimitation agreement seemed to offer some progress, the implementation of increased control on the border has actually provoked greater tension. In June 2001 several clashes between Uzbek citizens and Turkmen border guards resulted in four deaths. Until late 2001 the border remained relatively easy to cross, with only a limited number of control posts. By the end of that year, however, at least seven new posts had been constructed by Turkmenistan along the Uzbek border, and on 1 January 2002 the Uzbek authorities introduced a U.S.\$6 charge for any Turkmen citizens crossing the border. The Turkmen authorities had introduced a similar fee a year earlier.<sup>40</sup>

An illustration of the potential local conflicts that can arise from such border regimes occurred in December 2001, when several hundred Uzbeks from the border district of Amudarya in Khorezm region gathered for a traditional visit to the cemetery on the other side of the border in Turkmenistan. About 200 people broke through armed border guards, refusing to pay the cross-border fee. Only the arrival of reinforcements, and the threat to use force, persuaded them to return to Uzbek territory.<sup>41</sup>

Tensions have risen further in 2002, with several reports of shooting incidents or protests by residents of border zones. One of the few ways of making a living in this extremely poor region is border trade, some of it involving small-scale contraband. An open border is thus vitally important for villagers. Some border posts were reportedly closed completely in early 2002, provoking significant protests in at least one village. Later in January, Turkmen border guards shot dead a villager in a confrontation over illegal border-crossings. In response, villagers – mostly ethnic Uzbeks – tore down all the Turkmen flags in their village of Dapmachi. Reports after the incident suggested that the U.S.\$6 cross-border

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> ICG interview with Geldimurod Saidmalikov, editor of *Termiz okshomi*, in Termez, January 2002.

<sup>38</sup> 'Turkmen-Uzbek border delimitation treaty', *Neutralnyi Turkmenistan* (Ashgabat), 22 September 2000, BBC Monitoring, 18 October 2000.

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<sup>39</sup> *RFE/RL Newslines*, 2 April 2001.

<sup>40</sup> Vitalii Ponomarev, 'Uzhestochenie rezhima na Turkmeno-uzbekskoi granitsy vyzyvaet volneniya naseleniya v prigranichnykh rayonakh Turkmenistana', Memorial Human Rights Centre (Moscow).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

charge would be dropped, but this remained unconfirmed.<sup>42</sup>

Such localised clashes demonstrate how difficult socio-economic conditions and tough border regimes can combine to provoke unrest. In the absence of close relations at higher political levels, it is all too easy for localised conflict to slip out of control. The risk from border tensions between Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan will remain a consistent danger as long as largely unaccountable leaders rule both states and neither side is willing to broker a compromise that offers freedom of movement in border regions.

Given Turkmenistan's negative attitude to any regional or other international organisation, the outside world has little leverage to improve the situation. With relations between the two countries further complicated by water and other resource issues, the risk of future conflicts remains very real.<sup>43</sup>

### C. UZBEKISTAN-TAJIKISTAN

Most travellers in Central Asia would agree that the crossing between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan is one of the worst frontier experiences in the region. Historically difficult relations were aggravated by the activities of IMU guerrillas in 1999 and 2000 and the unsettled situation in Tajikistan after that country's own civil war. Uzbekistan has made it very difficult for any Tajik citizen to cross the frontier, parts of which are mined. A recent warming of relations between the two presidents has yet to be felt at border posts.

Their mutual suspicion stems from historical claims to each other's territory. The cities of Samarkand and Bukhara – two of the most important and historic in Central Asia – have populations that are largely ethnic Tajik. The inclusion of these territories in Uzbekistan when Soviet republic borders were drawn in 1924 deeply angered many ethnic Tajiks and inspired considerable irredentist sentiment. These territorial

claims were given renewed vigour in the early 1990s when, with independence, the countries embarked on rewriting their histories to establish themselves as historic nations. Redrawing borders to fit historical claims seemed a possible course of action.<sup>44</sup>

However, Tajikistan's civil war, from 1992 to 1997, chilled pan-Tajik enthusiasm in the region. Few saw it as viable or desirable to expand that state when it was barely able to function within its current boundaries. In addition, it became increasingly clear with independence that opening the issue of historical territorial claims was highly inflammatory and would do nothing to enhance the stability of the fledgling republics. Nonetheless, as relations were often strained in the 1990s, Uzbekistan worried that irredentism could reappear.

Officially, some 1.25 million ethnic Tajiks continue to reside in Samarkand, Bukhara and the surrounding areas in Uzbekistan, although some claim that there are as many as seven million, and that authorities had registered many Tajiks as Uzbeks during the Soviet era.<sup>45</sup> Uzbekistan fears that this substantial minority could some day be galvanised by an ethnic separatist movement. In an effort to discourage Tajik ethnic identity, the Uzbek government has banned Tajik language books in parts of the country as ideologically incorrect.<sup>46</sup>

Uzbekistan is also wary that the Tajik minority might be susceptible to radical Islamist groups. The civil war that erupted in Tajikistan after independence and the ensuing power sharing agreement of 1997 – which allowed Islamist groups to hold 30 per cent of government positions – were both viewed with unease in Uzbekistan.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Bruce Pannier, 'Central Asia: border dispute between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan risks triggering conflict', *RFE/RL Magazine*, 8 March 1999, available at: <http://www.rferl.org/>.

<sup>45</sup> Bruce Pannier, op. cit.; ICG interview with Iskander Asadullayev, Director of Centre for Strategic Studies under the President's Administration, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 12 July 2001.

<sup>46</sup> Bakhtior Ergashev, 'Tashkent targets Tajik minority,' *Reporting Central Asia* (London: IWPR), No. 49, 27 April 2001, available at <http://www.iwpr.net>.

<sup>47</sup> ICG interview with Iskander Asadullayev, Director of Centre for Strategic Studies under the President's Administration, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 12 July 2001.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid. Kudrat Babadjanov, 'Turkmenistan: Border Tensions Rise', *Reporting Central Asia*, No. 103, 8 February 2002. Available at [www.iwpr.net](http://www.iwpr.net).

<sup>43</sup> For example, Karina Insarova, 'Tashkent 'Threatened' by Turkmen Reservoir', *Reporting Central Asia*, No. 105, 22 February 2002, available at [www.iwpr.net](http://www.iwpr.net).



Ethnic Tajik citizens of Uzbekistan residing along the border have come in for particularly harsh treatment, largely because the government has accused them of collaboration with the IMU. Following the IMU incursions in 2000, the Uzbek government “evacuated” at least 2,000 households in Surkhan-Darya Province in the south because of concerns that they could support the guerrillas. Most of those expelled were reportedly Tajik.<sup>48</sup> Such heavy-handed tactics have increased resentment in the ethnic Tajik community and led some to point out that this territory was historically part of Tajikistan. Thus far, however, Dushanbe has not officially laid claim to these areas.

Not only was Uzbekistan nervous about the potential regional ambitions of Islamist fighters in Tajikistan, but it also came to fear that ethnic Uzbek refugees from Tajikistan might sow the seeds of an uprising. At the time of independence, around 1.2 million ethnic Uzbeks lived in Tajikistan, mostly in the north.<sup>49</sup> During the Tajik civil war many fled to Uzbekistan. They were viewed with wariness by Tashkent as having been influenced by Islamist parties in Tajikistan and were not offered any state support. As a result, as many as 70 percent reportedly made their way back to Tajikistan.<sup>50</sup>

These concerns and mutual suspicions informed the subsequent difficult relations over the Uzbek-Tajik border. In 1999, Uzbekistan launched air attacks into Tajikistan against the IMU without securing permission. Uzbekistan also refused to provide compensation for collateral damage inflicted by these strikes. The incident highlighted the gulf between the neighbours: Uzbekistan views Tajikistan as helping to sponsor terrorism aimed directly at Tashkent; while Tajikistan sees Uzbekistan as a belligerent neighbour using direct military force to advance strategic aims.

Uzbekistan also planted mines along the border that reportedly had killed more than 50 people by early 2002.<sup>51</sup>

Another issue that aggravated relations was the flow of narcotics into Central Asia from Afghanistan via Tajikistan. Uzbek officials charged Tajik citizens with active participation in the trade and were especially tough on Tajiks crossing the borders.<sup>52</sup> In an attempt to stem the flow of drugs and Islamist militants, Uzbekistan instituted a visa regime with Tajikistan and blew up its half of the border bridge on the Syr-Darya river.<sup>53</sup>

In July 2000, Presidents Karimov of Uzbekistan and Rakhmonov of Tajikistan signed an agreement to initiate talks to demarcate the border. These were expected to take, by optimistic estimates, at least eighteen months. In fact, progress has been limited, and relations remain tense with Uzbekistan periodically complaining that Tajikistan has failed to take effective steps to counter and contain narcotics trafficking and Islamist militant activity.

With the apparent destruction of much of the IMU during the US-led campaign in Afghanistan, signs of some relaxation in relations have emerged.<sup>54</sup> In December 2001 the presidents met in Tashkent. Although there was no concrete border agreement, Karimov claimed restrictions would begin to be relaxed. In particular, it was announced that the crossing between Tajikistan’s Penjakent district and Uzbekistan’s Samarkand district would reopen.<sup>55</sup> A meeting between the prime ministers, on 12 February 2002 in Tashkent, agreed on border crossing points and procedures.<sup>56</sup>

According to local residents, the key crossing near the Tajik town of Tursunzade is supposed to open

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<sup>48</sup> ICG interview with Safarov, leader of the National Party of Tajikistan, July 2001. According to Safarov the number of people evacuated from Surkhan-Dariya was much higher than officially reported and amounted to 36,000 Tajiks, whose homes were razed in the operation; see also Bakhtior Ergashev, ‘Uprooted Uzbek villagers “abandoned”’, *Reporting Central Asia* (London: IWPR), No. 38, 30 January 2001, available at: [www.iwpr.net](http://www.iwpr.net).

<sup>49</sup> ‘Uzbekistan consolidates dominant hold in Central Asia’, *Global Intelligence Update* 23 February 2001, available at: [www.stratfor.com](http://www.stratfor.com).

<sup>50</sup> ICG interview with Safarov, leader of the National Party of Tajikistan, July 2001.

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<sup>51</sup> ICG interview with OSCE officials, Dushanbe, February 2002.

<sup>52</sup> See ICG Asia Report No. 25, *Central Asia: Drugs and Conflict*, 26 November 2001 (Osh/Brussels).

<sup>53</sup> ICG research visit along the Syr-Darya, December 2001.

<sup>54</sup> See ICG Central Asia Briefing, *The IMU and the Hizb ut-Tahrir: Implications of the Afghanistan Campaign*, 30 January 2002.

<sup>55</sup> ‘Border crossing resumed between Uzbek and Tajik regions’, *Uzbekworld.com*, 2 January 2002.

<sup>56</sup> ‘Tadzhiksko-Uzbekskie peregovory’, *Narodnaya gazeta* (Dushanbe), 21 Feb 2002.

in May 2002<sup>57</sup> but it is important to note the frequent gulf between official statements and the situation on the ground. Even where border posts are ostensibly open, the reality of border guard and customs harassment ensures that little traffic is actually permitted.<sup>58</sup> In this context, the kind of border monitoring that at least one NGO conducts in Kyrgyzstan (see below) would also be useful on the Uzbek-Tajik border. More public information on the grim reality that Tajik citizens face on attempting to move across Central Asian borders would be a welcome antidote to the often hollow declarations of friendship and cooperation that emerge from presidential summits.

Although Uzbekistan's heavy-handed response to border security cannot be justified, the Tajikistani authorities must take a share of the responsibility for failing to assist in establishing secure crossing facilities. Until 2001 at least, the authorities permitted IMU detachments to operate in eastern Tajikistan, while the flow of narcotics remains a major threat to stability throughout the region. Uzbekistan's response is probably not very effective against either threat but their existence provides a level of justification for its actions. Continued attempts by Tajikistani authorities to implement internal law and order and clamp down on narcotics trafficking are vital to lay the basis for relaxation of border restrictions.

Uzbekistan must also understand that harassment of travellers and obstructions to the movement of people and goods will have a long-term adverse effect on regional security. The international community needs to stress repeatedly that effective security and open borders can go together.

#### **D. UZBEKISTAN-KYRGYZSTAN**

With an ethnically diverse population, important water resources and a rich variety of historic territorial claims, the Ferghana Valley has been at the centre of border disputes between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. As with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, IMU activities in the region have made already difficult border issues even tougher to resolve.

For much of its pre-Soviet history, the Ferghana Valley was controlled by the Khanate of Kokand, with its capital in the Uzbekistan city of Kokand. Many Uzbeks continue to view the Soviet demarcation of borders, which placed the city of Osh and other parts of the valley in Kyrgyzstan, as artificial and unfair, depriving Uzbekistan of territory.<sup>59</sup> This attitude is not given any official support, and it is probably unfair to accuse Uzbekistan of irredentist sentiment in this regard. If anything, Uzbekistan has viewed its compatriots in Kyrgyzstan with some suspicion.<sup>60</sup>

Nevertheless, resentment against Kyrgyzstan is apparent in Osh, and many ethnic Uzbeks feel that its government is attempting to 'Kyrgyzcise' the country while denying them fair representation. In turn, Kyrgyzstan is clearly made nervous by its neighbour, and some Kyrgyz believe the Uzbeks could make up a fifth column that could be mobilised against their nation.<sup>61</sup>

In 1998, Uzbekistan imposed a visa regime that applied to the citizens of Kyrgyzstan. While residents of southern Kyrgyzstan are allowed to travel up to 100 kilometres into Uzbekistan, or to transit this territory, more extensive travel (such as to Tashkent) requires a visa. These restrictions have disrupted traditional patterns of trade and social interaction in the valley. Kyrgyzstan responded by instituting a similar visa regime. Neither country has a consulate in any of the border cities, leading to the ridiculous arrangement where residents of Osh, five kilometres from the Uzbek border, need to travel to the capital Bishkek, in the north, to receive a visa to travel within

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<sup>57</sup> ICG Interviews with local officials, Tursunzade, February 2002.

<sup>58</sup> ICG informal interviews, Dushanbe, Tursunzade, February 2002.

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<sup>59</sup> ICG informal conversations with Uzbeks in Osh, May 2001.

<sup>60</sup> As of January 2001 there were 376,249 Uzbeks living in the Kyrgyz province of Osh or 31 percent of the population. This was less than in the Soviet era since there was significant out-migration after violence between ethnic Kyrgyz and ethnic Uzbeks in 1990. Information provided to ICG from the Osh Regional Department of State Statistics for 1 January 2001.

<sup>61</sup> ICG interview with representatives from the political party Moia Strana in Talas, April 2001. There is no particular evidence of widespread separatist sentiment among ethnic Uzbeks in the South. If anything, they generally have negative attitudes to the Uzbek political and economic system. Paradoxically, a more liberal political system in Uzbekistan could change these attitudes and pose a greater threat of separatist sentiment.

Uzbekistan. A major step in border cooperation would be to open local consulates or visa-issuing facilities at the border.

Following bomb blasts in Tashkent in February 1999, Uzbekistan sealed the borders in the Ferghana Valley as a security measure. Although Tashkent eventually eased its restrictions, attacks by the IMU during the summers of 1999 and 2000 pushed Uzbekistan to take strong steps again. In August 1999, it launched air strikes against alleged IMU positions in southern Kyrgyzstan without the government's consent. In one of these incidents, a dozen Kyrgyz civilians were killed. Similarly, seizures of suspected Islamist extremists by Uzbekistan's security services inside Kyrgyzstan – again without consent – contributed to poor relations along the border. Again, with reduction in the IMU threat, at least in the short term, such frictions should fade away, but only long-term border cooperation can ensure against their recurrence.

Four enclaves within Kyrgyzstan – all Uzbekistan territory – have caused considerable difficulty. Two in particular, Sokh and Shahimardan, have received the most attention. Sokh has been in dispute since the 1920s, and none of the enclave borders have ever been fully demarcated.<sup>62</sup>

These borders took on added significance because Uzbekistan has consistently lobbied to be granted a corridor to the enclaves, and because the demarcation has also involved complex issues of water rights and industry. Further, IMU activity made Uzbekistan more eager to assert itself in the demarcation process and to crack down on any groups in southern Kyrgyzstan it viewed as a security threat.

Sokh was considered a potentially dangerous area after the IMU incursions since the population is almost exclusively Tajik and effectively isolated from Uzbek society. As a result, Uzbekistan continues to fear that Sokh will serve as a haven for any remaining IMU guerrillas. Uzbek forces mined the perimeter of the enclave and set up border posts to check all vehicles and persons passing through, despite the fact that the border is

highly disputed.<sup>63</sup> Kyrgyz officials viewed these steps as a unilateral demarcation attempt that posed direct physical threats to its citizens. Uzbekistan claimed the minefields were on Uzbek soil and marked by signs. Residents, however, noted that the signs were so small they could only be read at a short distance, and the warnings did little good for livestock.<sup>64</sup>

By January 2001 these measures were causing so much disruption to local traffic – vehicles delayed for more than twelve hours – that the Governor of Batken Province in Kyrgyzstan, Mamat Aibalaev, printed an open letter in the provincial newspaper *Batken tany*. It charged Uzbekistan with violating agreements on neighbourly relations by illegally placing mines on Kyrgyz territory, which were producing substantial economic losses by killing livestock, damaging land and property, and causing deaths and injuries to local residents. He demanded compensation as well as rent for gas and electric facilities that Uzbekistan used on Kyrgyz territory.<sup>65</sup> After the publication of the letter, the Uzbeks eased up on their border regime.<sup>66</sup>

Through summer 2001 Tashkent was still anxious over the possibility of renewed IMU attacks and did not remove the mines. That August Governor Aibalaev announced at a local conference that he had unilaterally begun de-mining the borders without permission from either Bishkek or Tashkent.<sup>67</sup> At that time the IMU was reportedly in Afghanistan although there remained concerns that fighters might have infiltrated the enclaves. Since the coalition war against the Taliban regime in 2001-02, the IMU threat has considerably receded and there are reports that Tashkent may begin removing the mines. As of February 2002, however, 148 kilometres of Batken region were still mined.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Open letter from Governor of Batken Province Mamat Aibalaev, *Batken tany* (Batken), 10 January 2001.

<sup>64</sup> ICG conversations with UNDP Regional Coordinator for Batken, Bruno de Cordier, April 2001.

<sup>65</sup> *Batken tany*, 10 January 2001.

<sup>66</sup> ICG interview with Governor of Batken Province, Mamat Aibalaev, April 2001.

<sup>67</sup> Conference held by Governor Mamat Aibalaev in Batken, August 2001.

<sup>68</sup> Boris Golovanov, 'Pogranichnoe sostoyanie', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 21 February 2002, p. 2.

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<sup>62</sup> Nick Megoran, op. cit.

For Uzbekistan, the issue of security continues to be paramount, and a land corridor connecting the Sokh enclave to the rest of its territory is viewed as a means of ensuring control. A land corridor would allow residents easier access to Uzbekistan proper. Trade has dried up because of the constant harassment and humiliation local people face when transiting numerous customs posts (Uzbek and Kyrgyz) to get to Uzbekistan proper.

In a February 2001 meeting between Uzbek Prime Minister, Utkir Sultanov, and his Kyrgyz counterpart, Kurmanbek Bakiev, a memorandum was signed which would have given Uzbekistan a land corridor running the 40 kilometres along the Sokh River to the enclave. This would have risked effectively making Kyrgyzstan's Batken Province an enclave in Uzbekistan since there is almost no transport infrastructure south of Sokh. Given that Uzbekistan has instituted a visa regime with Kyrgyzstan and continues to implement tight inspections for those wishing to transit through the Sokh enclave, granting it further chokepoints would isolate the area and give Tashkent even more military influence.

In exchange for the corridor to Sokh, Kyrgyzstan was to receive a smaller corridor to its enclave in Uzbekistan, Barak.<sup>69</sup> Residents there have struggled with their status, particularly after Uzbekistan instituted more stringent border controls. The 627 households of the enclave have had problems sending children out to high school since the enclave is too small to have its own, as well as problems visiting clinics and hospitals.<sup>70</sup> Although the corridor would have united the enclave with Kyrgyzstan and alleviated those difficulties, after visiting the lands proposed for the swap, Kyrgyz Prime Minister Bakiev stated they were unsatisfactory compensation.<sup>71</sup>

Complicating matters, the document signed by the two prime ministers was leaked to the press in April 2001 and greeted with outrage in Kyrgyzstan's parliament and by many citizens. Bakiev defended signing the memorandum, which,

he insisted, was merely a starting point for further talks.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, the president's administration maintained that the memorandum was not an agreement since it would have had to be ratified by the parliament and signed by the president before it could come into force.<sup>73</sup> Publication of the memorandum, combined with the repeated incidents where Uzbekistan appeared to disregard Kyrgyzstan's border, soured relations.

Public anger over the clandestine border talks also constrained President Akaev's ability to make future territorial concessions. Opposition politicians were quick to portray him as incapable of defending the country's interests,<sup>74</sup> and it has now become virtually impossible for him to compromise over borders without further strengthening his political enemies. Consequently, negotiations over Sokh and Barak have stalled while enclave residents continue to make do with a very difficult situation.

Some local groups have attempted to take things into their own hands and have led a kind of people's diplomacy in border resolution. Mostly they have focused on improving border-crossing facilities through monitoring programs, and resolving local disputes over resources. One group in particular, Foundation for Tolerance International, has run a program that has tracked abuses by border guards of both countries in the Sokh area. Its efforts have led to some improvement in customs provisions for local traders, and it has also acted as a neutral broker between local Kyrgyz and Uzbek authorities unwilling to talk directly to each other.<sup>75</sup>

Unclear demarcations have led to a number of tragic incidents, including frequent mistaken shootings of villagers by border guards or other clashes. Although there is often confusion over the exact position of the frontier, Uzbekistani border guards must bear much of the responsibility for

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<sup>69</sup> The memorandum was published in *Obshchestvennyy reiting*, 26 April-2 May 2001.

<sup>70</sup> ICG visit to Barak, November 2000; 'Tension over enclaves', *The Times of Central Asia* (Bishkek), 28 June 2001, available at: <http://www.times.kg>.

<sup>71</sup> *RFE/RL Newslines* (Prague: Radio Free Liberty/Radio Europe), 24 April 2001, available at: <http://www.rferl.org>.

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<sup>72</sup> *RFE/RL Newslines*, 27 April 2001.

<sup>73</sup> Nurgul Kerimbekova, Head of Strategic Research Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan, speaking at a conference at the Institute for Regional Studies in Bishkek, 28 April 2001.

<sup>74</sup> ICG interview with Absamat Masaliev, Kyrgyz parliamentary deputy and member of the Parliamentary Committee for State Affairs, June 2001.

<sup>75</sup> ICG Interview, Raya Kadyrova, Director, Foundation for Toleration International, Osh, February 2002.

these continuing incidents. They are often very poorly trained in handling confrontations with local residents, badly educated and frequently corrupt. It is in Uzbekistan's interests to ensure that border guards receive adequate training to deal peacefully with conflict situations. Rooting out corruption is key to improving not just relations in border regions but also security. The willingness of border guards to accept bribes does little to improve the inviolability of borders.

In early 2002, Kyrgyz deputy Prime Minister Bazarbay Mambetov claimed the Uzbek enclave of Shahimardan legally belonged to Kyrgyzstan after an incident in which Uzbek border troops shot a Kyrgyz citizen. Kyrgyz officials were tasked with finding documentation to uphold that claim, although it is unlikely Uzbekistan would cede the area. Still, even if the exercise should prove futile, that such a claim should be made by a high ranking official emphasises that Bishkek is running out of patience with Tashkent's border security policies.<sup>76</sup>

Disputes over resources also cloud the border talks. Kyrgyzstan claims sovereignty over the gas and oil fields on its territory but in the early post-Soviet period the country could not run these facilities on its own, so it allowed Uzbekistan to continue managing some of them.<sup>77</sup> In February 2001, during a session of the border talks, Kyrgyz officials demanded that Uzbekistan return to its jurisdiction all leased natural gas and oil fields on its territory and pay U.S.\$180 million in rent arrears. Uzbekistan has been unwilling to discuss the issue.<sup>78</sup> Kyrgyzstan also has some territories that it leased for cattle raising during the Soviet period and which it has not given up.

As the region's main water suppliers, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan also have reservoirs that are central to regional economic development. One sizeable facility in Kyrgyzstan, the Andijan Reservoir, is leased by Tashkent and supplies Uzbekistan exclusively. Despite resentment over this lease (for

which the Kyrgyz claim they receive no compensation), Uzbekistan refuses negotiations.<sup>79</sup>

Joint work to demarcate the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border began in February 2000 but has proceeded very slowly. By February 2002 only 209 out of 1,400 kilometres had been jointly demarcated, although 994 kilometres had been studied. As usual the most controversial points remain: in Osh and Batken regions 406 kilometres are waiting to be studied by the joint commission.<sup>80</sup> This is where the main disagreements lie, and no speedy resolution, for example concerning the enclaves of Barak and Sokh, are expected in the near future.<sup>81</sup>

At least some progress is being made at government level, but tensions on the ground mean that the threat of local conflict is ever present. There is real need to accelerate the process, while taking the views of residents into account. This will require compromise on both sides, and willingness by Uzbekistan in particular to accept that some infrastructure is really of bilateral importance and must be shared.

In the long term, the increased division of peoples of the Ferghana Valley is reinforcing negative stereotypes and hardening national identities. These new borders in the minds of people in the valley threaten the cooperation and trade that is vital to all three countries of the region. They also feed into existing inter-ethnic strains in the region between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. There is little cross-border cooperation or interaction between local governments, and many attempts by international organisations to establish such programs have been blocked by inter-state rivalry. In particular, Uzbekistan's antipathy to valley-wide programs has made such activities difficult.

Most success can be expected from projects with neutral political agendas, and here the role of sport, education and culture is much underestimated. A small project by Mercy Corps for a Ferghana

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<sup>76</sup> Kabar television, 21 January 2002.

<sup>77</sup> Sultan Jumagulov, 'Uzbek gas for land bid fails', *Reporting Central Asia* (London: IWPR), No. 42, 28 February 2001, available at: <http://www.iwpr.net/>

<sup>78</sup> *RFE/RL Newslines*, 16 February 2001, available at [www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org).

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<sup>79</sup> ICG informal conversations with residents around the Andijan Reservoir, May 2001; Gleason, Gregory, 'Upstream-downstream: the difficulties of Central Asia's water and energy swaps', *EurasiaNet Business & Economics* (New York: OSI), 6 February 2001, available at: <http://www.eurasianet.org>.

<sup>80</sup> Boris Golovanov, 'Pogranichnoe sostoyanie', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 21 February 2001, p. 2.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

Valley basketball league may not seem likely to have an impact on issues of high politics. But for those young people involved it breaks down one more psychological border built up over the last decade.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, for young people from Uzbekistan, studying at Osh's Kyrgyz-Uzbek university is an opportunity to break down stereotypes an older generation of political leaders is propagating.

## E. KYRGYZSTAN-CHINA

Like all border disputes in the region, ethnicity, resources and history play roles in border talks between China and Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan have voiced some displeasure over the fact that the border with China – determined by agreements both between the Russian Empire and China in the late 1800s and between China and the newly established Soviet Union – divided ethnic Kyrgyz and Kazakh minority populations. Others fled the Soviet Union during the 1920s and 1930s. As a result, there are now estimated to be some 169,000 ethnic Kyrgyz in China's Xinjiang region and over 900,000 Kazakhs. The border with China was sealed until 1991 but since independence has become an increasingly important trade and transport route for both Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

China is concerned about ethnic separatist movements on its territory among its Muslim population and fears that the new freedom of movement for Uighurs and other ethnic minorities will provide them access to wider regional support from Muslim peoples in Central Asia. It has taken a particularly strong line against ethnic Uighurs, whom, it claims, are often supportive of separatist movements. China is mainly interested, therefore, in a strong border regime with easily identifiable borders, which it can use to control any links between its own ethnic minorities and the states of Central Asia.

In 1996, Kyrgyzstan and China reached an initial agreement on demarcating a portion of their 1,100-kilometre border. As part of this agreement, Kyrgyzstan agreed to cede roughly 35,000 hectares of remote mountain territory. The agreement was ratified by the Kyrgyz parliament, although some

legislators subsequently complained that the vote was conducted without the executive branch having presented a map of the proposed concessions.<sup>83</sup>

However, a subsequent secret border agreement that included further concessions of territory to Beijing provoked widespread protest among the political elite in Kyrgyzstan during 2001. Part of the reason was timing. News of the arrangement became public not long after the "Sokh memorandum" detailing the potential agreement with Uzbekistan described above was leaked.

In 1999, Kyrgyzstan apparently signed an agreement that gave China an additional almost 90,000 hectares in the provinces of Naryn and Issyk-Kul, including a river in the Bedel area.<sup>84</sup> While the territory itself is sparsely populated and mountainous, it provided access to a glacial watershed – an important bonus for often water-starved western China.<sup>85</sup> However, the government did not initially make maps of the proposed demarcation available, so considerable confusion has surrounded the exact territory in question. While the negotiating process had been relatively smooth, the talks were held behind closed doors, and there was little parliamentary debate.

The agreement was controversial not only because it gave away territory, but also because of the way it was presented to the parliament for ratification. Deputies were not given a copy to examine beforehand, but were only briefly allowed to look at it before voting. Administration officials had earlier offered assurances that any subsequent deals with China would not involve territorial concessions. The disputed territory was noted even then, and deputies did not vote to ratify that particular article. Nonetheless, Akaev signed the

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<sup>82</sup> ICG Interview, John Strickland, MercyCorps International, Osh, February 2002.

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<sup>83</sup> Alisher Khamidov, 'Dispute over China-Kyrgyz border demarcation pits president vs. parliament', *Eurasia Insight*, 2 August 2000.

<sup>84</sup> ICG interview with Kyrgyzstan parliamentary deputy, Alevtina Pronenko, May 2001; ICG interview with Azimbek Beknazarov, Kyrgyzstan parliamentary deputy and member of the Parliamentary Committee for Legal Issues, June 2001.

<sup>85</sup> ICG interview with Nikolai Bailo, Kyrgyzstan parliamentary deputy and member of the Parliamentary Committee on CIS Cooperation, June 2001; ICG interview with Deputy Governor of Issyk-Kul Province, B.U. Bozgorpoev, May 2001.

document,<sup>86</sup> despite constitutional provisions that the legislature must codify territorial revisions.<sup>87</sup> If both agreements go through, Beijing would receive a total of 125,000 hectares.

The Kyrgyz parliament vigorously denounced the agreement and even threatened to initiate impeachment proceedings against the president. It did not go through with the threat but the outcry stalled implementation of the agreements, while the parliament insisted on being allowed to examine them. The unravelling of the border agreements would clearly diminish President Akaev's credibility and damage Kyrgyz-Chinese relations.

In defending the agreements some Kyrgyz policy makers point out that it is in the country's interests to resolve all border issues so trade relations with the Chinese can continue to improve. It was also noted that soon after the signing of the 1999 agreement, China gave Kyrgyzstan an air corridor for flights to Beijing and provided U.S.\$600,000 of military assistance. Kyrgyzstan is also planning further transport links from the southern city of Osh to China, settling outstanding border disputes would facilitate this project as well.<sup>88</sup>

In June 2001, the Kyrgyz parliament conducted a series of hearings on the border agreements. Foreign Minister Imanaliev strongly defended the arrangement and insisted that Kyrgyzstan gained 70 per cent of the disputed territory: "The emotional debates on border issues, which lack a sober attitude and understanding of the national interests of Kyrgyzstan, may have very grave political and economic consequences for the republic", he said.<sup>89</sup>

In December 2001 further hearings took place in the parliament. Again they were marked by controversy, and parliamentarians continued to

oppose the accord, despite considerable pressure from the government. As a result, the ratification debate was postponed until spring 2002. Ratification will probably be achieved eventually, but the vocal opposition of a small number of deputies clearly unnerved the ruling elite. The arrest of one such deputy, Azimbek Beknazarov, in January 2002 was widely seen as revenge for his constant criticism of the president over the border agreements.<sup>90</sup> That arrest sparked a hunger strike in Bishkek in early 2002, and protests in Jalalabad province, which developed into violent riots in March. Thus although there is little chance of border disputes pushing the two states to any kind of conflict, the case demonstrates the potential for controversial border demarcations conducted without due transparency to destabilise domestic politics.

## F. KYRGYZSTAN-TAJIKISTAN

Disputes between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan were dominated in 1999 and 2000 by cross-border IMU incursions into Kyrgyzstan's southern regions. But wider issues of border delimitation, illegal migration, and resources continue to complicate border questions between the two countries. Two Tajikistan enclaves inside Kyrgyzstan's Ferghana valley territory (Varukh, and western Qalacha, a very small enclave north of Isfana) have added additional problems to negotiations.

The IMU incursions came directly from Tajikistan. In reaction, Kyrgyzstan deployed some 3,000 troops in the Leilak District of Batken Province and a backup of 4,000 in Osh Province in 2001.<sup>91</sup> Kyrgyzstan also announced in July 2001 that it would construct nine new posts along the border with Tajikistan to protect against possible IMU incursions. Residents in the Isfara District in the eastern part of Sughd Province of Tajikistan complained that their government did not stand up

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<sup>86</sup> ICG interview with Alisher Abdimomunov, Kyrgyz parliamentary deputy and member of the Parliamentary Committee for International Affairs, June 2001.

<sup>87</sup> ICG interview with Absamat Masaliev, Kyrgyzstan parliamentary deputy and member of the Parliamentary Committee for State Affairs, June 2001.

<sup>88</sup> ICG interview with Sergey Ryspekov, former Council Secretary to President Akaev, May 2001; ICG interview with Governor of Osh Province, Naken Kasiev, May 2001.

<sup>89</sup> Alisher Khamidov, 'Dispute over China-Kyrgyz border demarcation pits president vs. parliament', *Eurasia Insight*, 2 August 2000.

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<sup>90</sup> Beknazarov was arrested on charges of abuse of power dating back to when he was an official in the Deputy Prosecutor's office in 1995. The authorities alleged he did not pursue manslaughter charges because the accused was a close friend. However, the timing of his arrest suggests that political motivations were of more importance than a retrospective search for justice. Beknazarov also criticized the Kyrgyz-Kazakh agreement.

<sup>91</sup> ICG interview with Governor of Batken Province, Mamat Aibalaev, April 2001.

to Kyrgyz and Uzbek moves to establish stronger military presences on the frontier.<sup>92</sup>

While Kyrgyzstan did not resort to as severe tactics as Uzbekistan has in dealing with security in the Sokh enclave, Tajiks complained about the situation in Varukh. Relations between Kyrgyzstan and residents of the enclave have been marred by a series of disputes over water and land. Those disputes date back to the late 1980s and early 1990s when relations became so tense there was real potential for armed conflict. With a river that directly intersects the enclave, residents have threatened to cut off water supplies to each other's communities. As the borders around those areas have not been demarcated, there are also continual arguments over pastures and grazing rights.<sup>93</sup> So far the Kyrgyz and Tajiks around Varukh have attempted to resolve problems locally, but it is apparent that many problems will only be solved by an overall agreement on demarcation.

Tajikistan has not formally requested a land corridor to Varukh but this has been raised informally.<sup>94</sup> The Tajiks in Varukh remain largely cut off from Tajikistan and travel in the region continues to become more problematic as further checkpoints and border posts are erected. There is also less trade at the markets as fewer Kyrgyz come to Varukh to sell their goods, and the number of Tajiks selling produce in the surrounding areas of Kyrgyzstan has declined.

Despite its location within Kyrgyzstan, the enclave follows Tajik time, (one hour behind), and residents speak Tajik. Kyrgyz living in the surrounding areas complain that the Tajik border guards frequently speak nothing but their own language. More often than not, encounters end up with both sides expressing frustration. As Russian is spoken less and less, the area risks becoming increasingly isolated.<sup>95</sup>

Interaction among the enclaves in the valley is also decreasing. Buses stopped running regularly between enclaves after 1995. In 2000 Tajiks in Isfara tried to organise a meeting of enclaves to discuss common problems. Very few representatives attended, and the initiative was considered a failure.<sup>96</sup> Both Tajik and Uzbek enclaves are becoming more isolated, from the Kyrgyz territory that surrounds them, and from their mother countries. This isolation is fostering a strong feeling of alienation that seems to have fed into at least some support for radical Islamist groups. Assessing these allegations is always difficult. Authorities in both Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have claimed that there is support in Varukh and Sokh for Islamist groups, but local officials strongly dispute this.<sup>97</sup>

Apart from the enclaves, the rest of the Kyrgyz-Tajik border is characterised by low-level disputes over access to water and other resources, notably land. Kyrgyz authorities complain that Tajiks have gradually moved de facto boundaries north, as farmers have searched for land. Much of this is settled on a local level but there are serious problems with attempting to reach a final settlement on demarcation. The process of delimiting the frontier was halted in 1998, and neither side has been able to renew work. Kyrgyz officials claim that Tajikistan is delaying, perhaps hoping that gradual migration of its citizens will produce gains in its favour.<sup>98</sup>

Talks at a relatively local level produced an agreement in June 2001 between the Tajik province of Sughd and the Kyrgyz province of Batken on the division and use of land and water. That agreement has helped normalise relations, and Tajiks say they do not have serious problems with Kyrgyz officials along the border in that area.<sup>99</sup> But in the long term, both countries need to establish a demarcated border that is acceptable to local residents and allows freedom of movement for traders and travellers, while enhancing security

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<sup>92</sup> ICG informal conversations with Tajiks in Qayraqqum, June 2001.

<sup>93</sup> ICG interview with local officials, Charküh, April 2001. ICG will consider inter-ethnic relations in the region in more detail in a subsequent report.

<sup>94</sup> ICG interview with Alisher Abdimomunov, Kyrgyzstan parliamentary deputy and member of the Parliamentary Committee for International Affairs, June 2001.

<sup>95</sup> ICG interview with Chairman of town of Isfara, Tajikistan, Mirzasharif Islamiddinov, April 2001.

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<sup>96</sup> ICG interview with Lt Col. Tairov Abasovich, Charküh, April 2001.

<sup>97</sup> ICG interview with Governor of Batken Province, Mamat Aibalaev, April 2001; ICG interview with local officials in Varukh, April 2001.

<sup>98</sup> Boris Golovanov, 'Pogranichnoe sostoyanie', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 21 February 2001, p. 2.

<sup>99</sup> ICG interview with Mirozpshev in Tajikistan, July 2001.



against narcotics-trafficking and other transnational criminal groups. Since neither can allot significant resources to border regime management, external assistance and advice could provide an important boost to the process of establishing safe and established borders between them.

## G. BORDERS WITH AFGHANISTAN

The conflict in Afghanistan has created serious problems for Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in controlling their frontiers with that country. Given official acceptance of the Soviet-Afghanistan boundary, much of which runs along the Amu-Darya river, the issue has been less one of demarcation than dealing with the side effects of the Afghan conflict: drugs, refugees and insurgency. With the initial success of the U.S.-led campaign against the Taliban, all three countries are seeking to make the most of opportunities for reopening southern trade routes while guarding against potential future security threats and continued narcotics smuggling.

Tajikistan has been most affected by the war in Afghanistan. The two countries share a 1,280-kilometre border that Tajikistan was not able to effectively patrol upon independence. As a result, after the conclusion of Tajikistan's civil war, Russian forces stationed in the country were not withdrawn, but instead reassigned to protect the Afghan border. Because that border was not easy to penetrate during the Soviet era, Tajikistan had not confronted a refugee problem on the scale of Pakistan (two million) or Iran (1.2 million). Nonetheless, Tajikistan still plays host to some 6,000 refugees from Afghanistan, according to official figures. The real number is probably closer to 15,000.<sup>100</sup> During the Tajik civil war many Tajiks fighting for the opposition took refuge in Afghanistan where a 1.3 million strong Tajik minority resides.<sup>101</sup>

Tajikistan, given its own internal challenges, has resisted accepting further refugees. In March 2001, when almost 12,000 refugees appeared on the border around Panj as a result of fighting,

Tajikistan refused a UN request to allow more into the country, claiming there were no resources to care for them and that some were actually fighters who posed a potential internal threat.<sup>102</sup> Tajiks living along that frontier are also subject to attacks by marauders from Afghanistan, including hostage taking and theft of livestock.<sup>103</sup>

Drug trafficking, the other serious by-product of the chaos in Afghanistan, has driven all the Central Asian republics to reinforce their borders. Again, the most affected was Tajikistan. The amount of drugs confiscated in Tajikistan rose sharply from the late 1990s. Despite a short pause in October 2001, the volume of narco-trafficking has not abated in 2001-2, and it would be naive to imagine that the new interim government in Afghanistan will be able to have a serious impact on production and trade, at least in the short term. Indeed, reports suggest that opium poppy cultivation has restarted in a number of regions. Given that the country has a long way to go in rebuilding its infrastructure and economy after almost a quarter century of war, it will be difficult to convince Afghan farmers to switch to other crops without assistance in crop substitution and subsidies.

Stopping the narcotics trade is critical for Tajikistan. It is having a detrimental effect on health, as more and more local people have begun using the drug, and the whole political and law enforcement establishment is seriously undermined by involvement in the trade. The economy is also becoming highly dependent on drugs trafficking, making attempts at economic reform increasingly difficult. The Russian border guards play a key role in the interdiction process and are open to international assistance and cooperation. Initial projects have begun with the UN Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (ODCCP).<sup>104</sup> There are, of course, serious concerns about possible over-concentration on interdiction in international drugs policy, and a more holistic approach is required. But a strong border regime with

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<sup>100</sup> ICG interview with OSCE Ambassador to Tajikistan, Marc Gilbert, July 2001.

<sup>101</sup> ICG interview with Vladimir Andrianov, second secretary to the Russian embassy in Tajikistan, July 2001.

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<sup>102</sup> *Kommersant Daily*, 7 February 2001.

<sup>103</sup> 'Border villagers victims of Afghan raiders', *Integrated Regional Information Networks* (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), 15 June 2001, available at: <http://www.reliefweb.int/IRIN/asia/countrystories/tajikistan/20010615.phtml>.

<sup>104</sup> ICG Interview, Russian Federal Border Guards officers, Dushanbe, February 2002.

Afghanistan will remain a necessity for the foreseeable future.

That should not, however, be allowed to undermine the potential for new trading routes to the south that could boost Tajikistan's legal economy. Here there is scope for international assistance to invest in infrastructure on both sides of the border, including river bridges and roads, which would promote cross-border trade. Again, combining openness with security should be the central elements of a new border regime for Tajikistan and Afghanistan.

Turkmenistan has apparently been able during the last decade to retain almost complete control over the 744-kilometre border it shares with Afghanistan. It has been even less forthcoming in accepting Afghan refugees than Tajikistan though there is a sizeable Turkmen minority in that country. Although President Saparmurat Niyazov said he would welcome ethnic Turkmen when Turkmenistan first became independent, in practice he has been reluctant. There are nearly as many Turkmens in surrounding states as in Turkmenistan itself (four million). Some suggest, therefore, that President Niyazov fears a large influx of refugees could challenge his authoritarian regime.<sup>105</sup>

Turkmenistan also faces serious problems with drugs, but the trade is not the result of ineffective border control. Instead, government and law enforcement officials essentially control the trade, which is reportedly growing in importance as increased attention focuses on other routes.

Uzbekistan, which also borders Afghanistan for a relatively short stretch around Surkhan-Darya, has likewise been largely unwilling to accept refugees, even from the 1.5 million ethnic Uzbeks in Afghanistan. It clearly viewed any refugees as a potential security concern and worried that the IMU could try to penetrate from Afghanistan. The Uzbek-Afghan border has always been well fortified along the natural boundary of the Amu-Darya River. There is only one transit point into Afghanistan – the 'Friendship Bridge' about 15 kilometres from Termez, which had been closed for several years and is heavily guarded. Following

the Northern Alliance victories over the Taliban, the international community pressed Tashkent to open the bridge so that humanitarian aid could reach Afghanistan. Uzbekistan's reluctance was indicative of its often excessive fear of external security threats.

Despite the eventual opening of the bridge, and the increased flow of international aid through Termez's port, few people in that city expect to see a more open frontier with Afghanistan any time soon.<sup>106</sup> Tashkent has little interest in opening the border further given the potential problem of drugs trafficking and the threat still existing from Islamist militants. Yet, there is also a chance for Uzbekistan to gain economically from new trade routes to the south. There is considerable scope to link reconstruction in Afghanistan with increased trade opportunities, recreating traditional trade routes, and offering Tashkent access to seaports in Pakistan. The danger as ever is that security concerns will triumph over the possibilities of trade and cooperation in the minds of the Uzbek government.

## H. OTHER REGIONAL BORDER ISSUES

The only Central Asian state to share a border with Russia is Kazakhstan, and negotiations between the two will likely continue for some time given the length of the frontier – 6,467 kilometres. Like others in the region, the Kazakh-Russian border talks have to deal with competing historical claims, poorly defined frontiers and disputes over water, transport routes and industrial enterprises. Kazakhstan's former capitol, Orenburg, is now in Russia, and much of the north of the country is populated by ethnic Russians, who make up about one-third of the total population. Russian nationalist groups have called for the secession of these, making a final demarcation of the border a vital issue for the Kazakh government.

Russia was initially ambivalent about its border with Kazakhstan, preferring to treat the Tajik-Afghan border as its 'southern frontier' in terms of guarding itself against narcotics trafficking and Islamist militancy. Since the late 1990s, however, Moscow has approached border talks with an increasing sense of urgency given the flow of

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<sup>105</sup> Charles Recknagel, 'Turkmenistan: President shows no sign of welcoming refugee kinsmen', *RFE/RL Magazine* (Prague), 26 April 2001, available at: <http://www.rferl.org>.

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<sup>106</sup> ICG interviews, Termez, January 2002.

drugs, contraband, and illegal immigrants through Kazakhstan. Nevertheless, by 2001, only 700 kilometres of the border had been defined.<sup>107</sup>

Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan largely resolved issues along their 980-kilometre frontier by an agreement signed on 16 December 2001, although the deal did provoke criticism from some Kyrgyz opposition deputies.<sup>108</sup> Earlier in the year President Akaev had applauded the demarcation process, which began in 1996, as a model of border dispute resolution. However, as with the China border treaty, the agreement with Kazakhstan was reached with little political consultation and was forced through parliament with limited scrutiny.<sup>109</sup>

Kazakhstan's 400-kilometre border with Turkmenistan has proved more difficult to finalise. Relations have also been complicated by the continuing disputes over demarcation of the Caspian Sea, with its potentially vast energy reserves, and the belief that onshore zones also contain reserves. In July 2001, however, Presidents Niyazov and Nazarbaev signed a treaty on delimitation and demarcation of the border.<sup>110</sup> Kazakhstan had already started positioning the first border posts in April of that year on the Mangushlak peninsula, which the head of the state border service, Husain Berigaliev, called one of the most difficult sectors on the entire Kazakhstan border.<sup>111</sup>

Efforts to demarcate the border between China and Kazakhstan have not been particularly contentious

since some 1,400 kilometres had been done in the Soviet era. Nonetheless, disputes over water, particularly exploitation of the Ili and Irtysh Rivers, continue to be debated.<sup>112</sup>

Tajikistan was the last country to sign a border treaty with China, in 2002, but that was due less to any serious territorial disputes as to its preoccupation with the civil war and internal political problems. The border runs along the eastern edge of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region. It is sparsely inhabited, impoverished and underdeveloped. With the signing of the agreement it is hoped a road will be built to China to facilitate trade and development.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> *Prigranichnoe sotrudnichestvo: opyt i perspektiva: materialy mezhdunarodnoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii po problemam prigranichnogo sotrudnichestva* [Border cooperation: experience and perspectives: Materials of a scientific-practical international conference on problems of border cooperation.] (Orenburg: Orenburg Book Publishers, 2001).

<sup>108</sup> 'Akaev strongarms another border treaty past parliament', *RFE/RL Central Asia Report*, 20 December 2001, Volume 1, Number 22. Available at [www.rfe/rl.org/centralasia](http://www.rfe/rl.org/centralasia).

<sup>109</sup> 'Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan sign agreement on economic cooperation', *Kazakhstan Daily Digest*, 26 July 2001. Available at [www.eurasia.org](http://www.eurasia.org).

<sup>110</sup> 'Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan agree on borders, oil export tariffs', *Turkmenistan Daily Digest*, 9 July 2001, Available at [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org).

<sup>111</sup> 'Kazakhstan begins reinforcing border with Turkmenistan', *Turkmenistan Daily Digest*, 12 April 2001, Available at [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org).

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<sup>112</sup> Altinai Mukhamberdiarova, 'China's dangerous thirst,' *Reporting Central Asia* (London: IWPR), No. 48, 19 April 2001, available at: <http://www.iwpr.net>.

<sup>113</sup> ICG interview with OSCE officials in Dushanbe, January 2002.

### III. CONCLUSION

Despite some limited progress and the avoidance of any serious military conflict relating to border disputes, sorting out the remaining demarcation issues in Central Asia promises to be a long and sometimes painful process. While a direct military conflict over disputed territory seems unlikely, in large part because of the vastly varying military capabilities across the region, border tensions have the potential to fuel conflict in a number of ways and will continue to feed into the wider fragmentation of the region.

One of the most striking features of Central Asia as it marks ten years since the demise of the Soviet Union is that independence has not brought new openness, cooperation and strong regional links as many had hoped. Instead, many of the countries have become more insular, with stricter border controls, new visa regimes, growing suspicion of ethnic minorities and often-antagonistic efforts to demarcate territory. Most of these steps have been taken in the name of national security, and there are real, pressing reasons for setting up border controls and demarcating the frontiers. The rapid increase in narcotics trafficking and the threat from insurgent groups such as the IMU have made increased border control a necessity in some areas. However, the manner in which these controls have been put in place is also helping to create dangerous social tensions.

Ethnic minorities, already disgruntled at being cut off from friends and families across newly drawn national borders, have often been viewed by authoritarian governments as potential provocateurs, separatists or extremists. Restrictions on transport and trade links have made economic growth and reform all the more difficult for governments already struggling to stem the public's dissatisfaction with declining living standards. Populations in border areas have seen their access to water, grazing rights and trade curtailed or cut off as a bargaining chip in negotiations. All these factors create a potentially explosive environment. Widespread social discontent, fraying relations among ethnic groups and poverty combine to raise the potential that minor disputes could quickly mushroom into wider violence.

All this suggests that the international community should approach the issue of resolving Central Asia's complicated tangle of border issues with far more urgency than it has to date. While border demarcation is a bilateral issue between the respective states in the region, there is no reason the international community cannot lend its good offices to the effort. For example, the OSCE has a wealth of experience in the field, but there has been little active effort by it to reach out and offer assistance with mediation efforts. While such help can obviously only be proffered if both sides of a dispute are willing to accept intervention, the international community need not take an entirely passive approach.

One area in which the OSCE has been active is in training border guards. This is potentially a fruitful enterprise, although it must involve some kind of practical follow-up and also take into account the realities faced by border guards on the ground, particularly the endemic corruption in the border and customs services. In 2000 the OSCE arranged human rights training for border guards and migration officials in Kyrgyzstan in cooperation with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Although appreciated by participants, a much wider effort is required to have any real impact on the day-to-day problems of cross-border traffic. NATO has also considered assistance in this field, as have some western states. It would be advantageous to ensure some real coordination among parties, to avoid overlapping and ultimately fruitless efforts, involving merely one-off training seminars with little impact on the ground.

Increased OSCE involvement might also envisage an element of border monitoring. The OSCE has experience in this in Georgia/Russia and Kosovo/Albania that could be used to provide at least expertise to states in the region. The gulf between rhetoric on cooperation in Central Asia and reality is enormous. There is little objective information available on the problems faced by, for example, Tajiks crossing borders into Uzbekistan, or by Uzbeks entering Turkmenistan. A full-scale border-monitoring mission may be unrealistic but some level of monitoring by expanding existing offices could be possible. Such an operation is impossible with present limited OSCE resources but this is an important issue that the international community has a vital interest in resolving.

Occasionally, NGOs have attempted to monitor border regimes, notably the Fund for Tolerance International in southern Kyrgyzstan. There is very little similar activity on other borders, and a monitoring role for the Uzbek-Tajik and Uzbek-Turkmen borders would be extremely useful, both as an early warning mechanism and as a way of pressing governments to take more immediate action. Donors should assess whether support for such monitoring and advocacy groups is possible.

Local NGOs and cross-border development programs can also offer useful resolution mechanisms for border and resource disputes. The Fund for Tolerance International supports groups of local mediators in border conflicts and attempts to provide objective information on conflicts to government-level officials.<sup>114</sup> The Swiss-supported Ambassadors of Goodwill program offers a potentially useful institution for alternative discussion forums on such issues. Intelligent diplomacy is required, however, to ensure the inclusion of Uzbekistan's representatives in such programs, taking into account that state's traditional scepticism towards unofficial resolution methods.

One problem faced by all states in the region is a lack of expertise in negotiating and establishing borders. Here the international community could provide funding for neutral access to information and expertise and training for negotiators and conflict resolution experts. Some such expertise could come through the OSCE and also from institutes in the West with strong reputations. Durham University's Boundary Research Unit in the UK, for example, could be used as a neutral resource by states in the region.<sup>115</sup>

Some measure of international engagement would be particularly welcome since Uzbekistan, in particular, has taken provocative approaches to border issues. Unilaterally marking and mining territory, conducting unauthorised cross-border air strikes against suspected IMU positions, expelling citizens from border areas and cutting off energy supplies to gain favourable negotiating positions

are all measures that undermine regional security and present a direct threat to the goals of an organisation such as the OSCE.

Obviously, any unilateral demarcation activities should cease, particularly the laying of poorly mapped mine fields. But here some appreciation of security concerns by all states in the region is also necessary. In the past, rather naive calls for open borders in Central Asia have ignored the security threats that states face in the region. Assisting with genuine security that does not impinge on human rights and allows trade to flourish requires a holistic view of border management that is singularly lacking among governments in the region.

Unless these territorial issues are dealt with effectively, they risk directly fuelling nationalist and irredentist sentiments. Indeed, the sharp political divisions within Kyrgyzstan about territorial concessions offer stark testament to the potentially destabilising impact of border issues if they are not dealt with transparently and strictly according to law. Ignoring political opposition and overruling legitimate protests by local residents risks undermining any border agreements that are reached. 'Illegitimate' agreements only store up trouble for the future.

An important intermediate step to relieve tensions will be to help address some of the social concerns of citizens in disputed border areas such as the enclaves in the Ferghana Valley. Attempting simply to fence in these citizens out of concerns for security will only lead to more discontentment and make violence more likely. Regional governors and officials should be given more latitude by national governments to address specific grievances in disputed border areas. A local approach to resolving issues like grazing rights, water use and checkpoint protocols is more likely to produce solutions that both sides feel are reasonable and effective. Local governments should be encouraged to include NGOs and community organisations in negotiations.

A key issue here is the balance between secure borders and effective movement of people, traffic and goods. So far, the balance has been skewed in favour of security concerns, with little thought given to improving cross-border movement. International experience can offer ways to provide security while allowing easy cross-border

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<sup>114</sup> Indira Raimberdieva, 'Rol mestnykh soobshchestv v uregulirovaniy prigranichnykh konfliktov' ['The role of local communities in border conflict resolution'], *Salam, Aziia* (Bishkek, June 2001), pp. 18-19.

<sup>115</sup> The IBRU offers both consultancy and useful training opportunities. See [www-ibru.dur.ac.uk](http://www-ibru.dur.ac.uk).

movement. Improved visa regimes, making visas available at borders, for example, or at least in local consulates, would ease life for many people in frontier regions.

High levels of corruption raise questions over the real effectiveness of border security in much of the region. Tackling corruption among border services is absolutely vital for improvements both in security and in cross-border trade. This is primarily the responsibility of governments in the region but international projects must ensure that they do not actually feed this systemic corruption through ill-advised programs focusing solely on equipment, for example, without commensurate conditions for improved policy.

Common tariffs on goods and eventual moves towards tariff-free trade could boost regional economies. Here the international community should link any investment in cross-border infrastructure to improved bureaucratic procedures. Any projects under the EU Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia (TRACECA) program, for example, should have explicit provisions for ensuring free movement of transport and built-in mechanisms for third-party monitoring of implementation. International financial institutions could be involved to a greater extent, particularly as countries in the region seek membership in the World Trade Organisation. The Asian Development Bank hosted a conference in Manila in February 2002, which created a Committee for the Coordination of Customs Issues of the countries of Central Asia and China. Nevertheless, there is a need to overcome the gulf between well-meaning international agreements and the reality of border crossings on the ground.

What is needed is a holistic approach to border issues, providing training, monitoring and expertise in linked packages. In this context,

offering real assistance in border security is one method of including states otherwise reluctant to participate in international assistance projects. Such projects should not be seen merely as ways to include otherwise reluctant states: none of the countries of the region have real experience in assuring border security while allowing effective movement of people and goods across frontiers.

Ultimately, resolving border disputes in Central Asia will come down to political will. In many cases, that political will to strike effective compromise has been lacking, although there have been tentative steps forward, and border commissions have been established to hold demarcation talks. It is incumbent upon the regional states to understand the high cost that continued provocation and delay in resolving demarcation efforts will bring. Rising social tensions and public dissatisfaction with the pace of economic and political reform are more likely to topple governments than hostile invaders. Local disputes around border issues can early grow into something much more dangerous.

Similarly, the international community needs to use a far more effective array of both incentives and pressures to encourage progress. It is important not just to the individual states that Central Asian borders become peaceful and mutually advantageous. Border disputes pose a potential threat to peace in the whole region and undermine the international community's efforts to promote stability around Afghanistan. Promoting peaceful borders that encourage regional trade and the traditional movement of people but block drugs trafficking and terrorists, will be an important part of any real strategy to build long-term stability in Central Asia.

**Osh/Brussels, 4 April 2002**









## APPENDIX D

### GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

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<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank	<b>ODCCP</b>	UN Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention
<b>CIS</b>	Commonwealth of Independent States	<b>OSCE</b>	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
<b>EBRD</b>	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development	<b>RFE/RL</b>	Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
<b>EU</b>	European Union	<b>TACIS</b>	Technical Assistance to CIS
<b>FBIS</b>	Foreign Broadcast Information Service	<b>TRACECA</b>	Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia
<b>GBAO</b>	Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast	<b>USSR</b>	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
<b>IOM</b>	International Organisation for Migration	<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>IMU</b>	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan	<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Program
<b>IWPR</b>	Institute of War and Peace Reporting	<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation	<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organisation

## APPENDIX E

### ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

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The International Crisis Group (ICG) is a private, multinational organisation committed to strengthening the capacity of the international community to anticipate, understand and act to prevent and contain conflict.

ICG's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts, based on the ground in countries at risk of conflict, gather information from a wide range of sources, assess local conditions and produce regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers.

ICG's reports are distributed widely to officials in foreign ministries and international organisations and made generally available at the same time via the organisation's Internet site, [www.crisisweb.org](http://www.crisisweb.org). ICG works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analysis and to generate support for its policy prescriptions. The ICG Board - which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media - is directly involved in helping to bring ICG reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policy-makers around the world. ICG is chaired by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari; former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans has been President and Chief Executive since January 2000.

ICG's international headquarters are at Brussels, with advocacy offices in Washington DC, New York and Paris. The organisation currently operates field projects in more than a score of crisis-affected countries and regions across four continents, including Algeria, Burundi, Rwanda,

the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Zimbabwe in Africa; Myanmar, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan in Asia; Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia in Europe; and Colombia in Latin America.

ICG also undertakes and publishes original research on general issues related to conflict prevention and management. After the attacks against the United States on 11 September 2001, ICG launched a major new project on global terrorism, designed both to bring together ICG's work in existing program areas and establish a new geographical focus on the Middle East (with a regional field office in Amman) and Pakistan/Afghanistan (with a field office in Islamabad). The new offices became operational in December 2001.

ICG raises funds from governments, charitable foundations, companies and individual donors. The following governments currently provide funding: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, the Republic of China (Taiwan), Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Foundation and private sector donors include the Ansary Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Open Society Institute, the Ploughshares Fund and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation.

April 2002

## APPENDIX F

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*Colombia's Elusive Quest for Peace*, Latin America Report N° 1, 26 March 2002

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*The European Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO): Crisis Response in the Grey Lane*, Issues Briefing Paper, 26 June 2001

*EU Crisis Response Capability: Institutions and Processes for Conflict Prevention and Management*, Issues Report N°2, 26 June 2001

## APPENDIX G

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