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China's Strategy in Xinjiang and Central Asia: Toward Chinese Hegemony in the "Geographical Pivot of History"?

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Since September 11, 2001, and the subsequent U.S. politico-military penetration of Central Asia, there has been much speculation regarding China's perceived strategic "defeat" in that region, which is said to have compromised China's long-term plans regarding the integration of Xinjiang. This paper, however, will argue that the strategic implications of the U.S. penetration of Central Asia have in fact resulted in the re-invigoration and reinforcement of China's goal and instruments of integration in Xinjiang. This dynamic has been expressed within Xinjiang, in the form of the strengthening of the major instruments of internal control and development, and externally in the form of China's foreign policy calculus in the context of its relations with the states of Central Asia.

KEYWORDS: **Xinjiang; geopolitics; hegemony; integration; separatism.**

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The influential British geographer Halford John Mackinder asserted that the regions currently defined as Central Asia and Xinjiang (新疆) formed a central part of the "geographical pivot of history."[1] This Eurasian "pivot area," or "heartland" as he described it in 1943,[2] was surrounded by concentric "crescents": "Outside the pivot area, in a great inner crescent, are Germany, Austria, Turkey, India, and China, and in an outer crescent, Britain, South Africa, Australia, the United States, Canada, and Japan."[3] For Mackinder, the flow of world history could be viewed from this perspective as the product of a circuitous process of confrontation and contact between the pastoral-nomadic civilizations of the "pivot area" and the sedentary-agricultural civilizations of the surrounding "crescents." At the time of his writing on this subject, in 1905 and 1943, the modern states that he suggested were poised to control this "pivot of history" were Russia and Germany in 1905, and then the Soviet Union in 1943. At the end of his 1905 paper, however, he made a statement that takes on greater significance in the context of the early twenty-first century:

> In conclusion, it may be well expressly to point out that the substitution of some new control of the inland area for that of Russia would not tend to reduce the geographical significance of the pivot position. Were the Chinese, for instance, organized by the Japanese, to overthrow the Russian Empire and conquer its territory, they might constitute the yellow peril to the world's freedom just because they would add an oceanic frontage to the resources of the great continent, an advantage as yet denied to the Russian tenant of the pivot region.[4]

Mackinder's notion of a geographical "pivot of history" was, however, revisited by Owen Lattimore in his seminal *Pivot of Asia* in 1950.

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[1]Halford John Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History" (The Royal Geographical Society, 1905), reprinted in Halford John Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction* (London: Constable, 1950), 264.

[2]Halford John Mackinder, "The Round World and the Winning of the Peace," *Foreign Affairs* 21, no. 4 (July 1943): 595-605, reprinted in Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, 265-78.

[3]Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," 262.

[4]Ibid., 264.

Lattimore utilized Mackinder's "pivot of history" formulation to describe the instrumental role of Xinjiang in determining the geopolitics of Asia and the implications of China's reclamation (under the People's Republic of China) of the Qing (清朝) legacy in the region.[5] The geopolitical position of Xinjiang—at the crossroads of five distinct geographical and cultural regions (Russia, Central Asia, the subcontinent, Tibet, and China)—made it over the centuries both the "back door" to China and China's corridor to Central Asia. Lattimore perceived that the Chinese state's reclamation of Xinjiang in 1949 thus had the potential to make Mackinder's 1905 prediction of Chinese hegemony in the "geographical pivot of history" a reality. Although the existence of the Soviet Union and the PRC's gradually deteriorating relations with Moscow after 1949 militated against the rapid fulfillment of such potential, China's control of Xinjiang was firmly consolidated over the subsequent 1949-91 period. Chinese rule of Xinjiang throughout this period was characterized by the twin imperatives of internally consolidating and accelerating the region's integration and isolating the region from Soviet influence.[6]

The creation of five independent states in Central Asia with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, simultaneously removed the long-feared Soviet threat to Xinjiang, while creating new and diversified sources of potential threats to the Chinese position. Perhaps of equal significance was that the new states of Central Asia were to be assailed by a multiplicity of external forces over the course of the next decade. The removal of Soviet/Russian dominance returned Central Asia in a geopolitical sense to a situation comparable to that experienced by the region up to the Russian

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[5]Owen Lattimore, *Pivot of Asia: Sinkiang and the Inner Asian Frontiers of China and Russia* (Boston: Little Brown, 1950).

[6]For the general contours of Chinese policy in the Mao period, see Donald H. McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949-1977* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1979); and James A. Millward and Nabijan Tursun, "Political History and Strategies of Control, 1884-1978," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), 63-98. For the post-Mao period, see Dru C. Gladney, "The Chinese Program of Development and Control, 1978-2001," in Starr, *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, 101-19; and Nicolas Becquelin, "Xinjiang in the Nineties," *The China Journal*, no. 44 (July 2000): 65-90.

conquests of the late nineteenth century. Central Asia under the Soviet Union had been isolated and "sealed off" from the contiguous regions of South Asia (such as Iran and the subcontinent) and East Asia (Mongolia and Xinjiang) to which it had had geographical, historical, and cultural linkages. Such a process of isolation had also been undertaken in Xinjiang since the founding of the PRC in 1949. Following the Soviet collapse, however, the various geographical, historical, and cultural linkages were revived and, in concert with the West's "discovery" of the region's largely untapped hydrocarbon resources, these generated a multifarious geopolitical scramble for influence in Central Asia.

Thus Chinese rule of Xinjiang at the beginning of the 1990s was confronted with a rapidly changing external environment. The collapse of the Soviet Union re-opened Central Asia to the geopolitical influences of neighboring regions, such as Iran, China, Afghanistan, and Turkey that had been systematically excluded during the Soviet era. The reassertion of historical linkages between such regions and the newly independent states of Central Asia was also given further impetus by the strategic imperatives for external powers (such as China, Russia, and the United States) flowing from the relatively underdeveloped hydrocarbon resources of Central Asia. The combination of historical, political, economic, ethnic, and cultural linkages with the strategic imperative of gaining access to and control over Central Asian oil and gas led the emergent geopolitical competition to be dubbed the "New Great Game" for Central Asia. This allusion to the nineteenth century "Great Game" for Central Asia between Tsarist Russia and the British Empire, although conveying the grand scale of developments in the region, does not serve particularly well as a conceptual guide to the complex issues involved. The "New Great Game" has involved the interaction of the divergent political, economic, and strategic imperatives of neighboring external states such as Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey, and the world's sole superpower, the United States. The dominant external powers in the "New Great Game" have been the United States, Russia, and increasingly China, with other powers such as Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan having more limited interests to pursue in Central Asia.

China's strategic imperatives in Central Asia, as I have argued elsewhere,[7] derive primarily from its rule of the restive "Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region" (新疆維吾爾族自治區). As alluded to by its official title, the region is populated by predominantly Turkic-Muslim ethnic groups, such as Uighurs, Kazaks, and Kyrgyz, which comprise 52.78 percent of Xinjiang's population of 18.1 million.[8] Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the region has shared borders with the independent states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan whose titular ethnic groups are represented in Xinjiang's non-Han (漢族) population. The independence of the Central Asian states has proven to be both a threat and opportunity for China's position in Xinjiang. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, China has attempted to harness this strategic position to strengthen its hold on Xinjiang through the implementation of an encompassing "double opening" strategy aimed at the simultaneous integration of Xinjiang with Central Asia and China proper. This fourteen-year effort is central to understanding China's foreign policy in Central Asia and thus its role in the "New Great Game."

This paper will argue that China's strategy in Xinjiang and Central Asia places within its grasp an unprecedented opportunity to extend its power and influence into the "geographical pivot of history." Moreover, I will demonstrate that even after the events of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent expansion of U.S. power and influence into Central Asia, China's strategy not only remains on course but has been strengthened. The rationale of the Chinese approach to the changed geopolitical environment of Central Asia following September 11, flows directly from the encompassing strategy for Xinjiang constructed over the course of the 1991-2001 period. Thus in order to fully appreciate the importance of the linkages between China's strategy in Xinjiang and Central Asia at the turn of the twenty-first century, it is necessary first to survey briefly the course of

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[7]See Michael Clarke, "Xinjiang and China's Foreign Relations with Central Asia, 1991-2001: Across the 'Domestic-Foreign Frontier'?" *Asian Ethnicity* 4, no. 2 (June 2003): 207-24.

[8]Colin Mackerras, "Ethnicity in China: The Case of Xinjiang," *Harvard Asia Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 8. Population data quoted come from the PRC's 2000 census.

Chinese power in the region since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The post-September 11, 2001 to 2004 period will then be addressed both to highlight the continuity between China's strategies in the region and demonstrate the reinforcing impact of the expansion of U.S. power into Central Asia. As such, I will argue that the penetration of U.S. political, military, and economic power into Central Asia since 2001 has generated four major strategic implications for China's position in Xinjiang and Central Asia: (1) the growth of limited regional cooperation on the part of the United States, Russia, China, and the Central Asian republics; (2) an initial weakening of the influence and role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Central Asia and the fostering of regional competition and rivalry; (3) through the rationale of the "war on terrorism," the justification of China's "zero tolerance" approach to ethnic minority opposition in Xinjiang; and (4) the reinforcement of China's goal and instruments of integration in Xinjiang. Points one and two directly relate to China's foreign policy framework in Central Asia, while points three and four address the impact of the changed regional environment for China's position in Xinjiang.

The "State of Play" in Xinjiang and Central Asia: From the Collapse of the Soviet Union to September 11, 2001

The core of China's strategy regarding Xinjiang since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 has rested on the goal of simultaneously integrating Xinjiang with Central Asia and China proper. This agenda had been expressed within Xinjiang through increased central government investment, particularly regarding construction and infrastructure projects (especially energy-related), and increased government control and management of ethnic minority religious and cultural practices. Meanwhile, China's foreign policy in Central Asia reflected the preeminence of this goal of integration for Xinjiang, with an emphasis placed on the establishment of political, economic, and infrastructural links with the Central Asian states, particularly Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. An important overarching theme

within the context of this process has been the state's attempts to reconcile the perceived need for strengthened integration and security of the region with the recognition of the economic and political opportunities presented by the relative retreat of Russian power from Central Asia over the 1991-2001 period.[9]

The collapse of the Soviet Union presented China with an opportunity to exploit fully Xinjiang's geopolitical position in order to increase China's political and economic influence in the region. The fall of the Soviet Union, however, also stimulated a resurgence of ethnic minority opposition to Chinese rule in Xinjiang. The causes of this resurgence were not solely the result of external developments.[10] Rather, the Soviet Union's collapse coincided with China's ongoing economic reform program, which had a major impact on the state's overall strategy for Xinjiang. The basis of this strategy was the implementation of political and economic measures that simultaneously attempted to integrate Xinjiang with the domestic economy and with Central Asia.[11] A major element of this strategy concerned the exploitation of the region's oil and gas resources. This particular aspect of Xinjiang's economic development has had significant implications for not only China's internal economic development but also its foreign policy and foreign relations. China's increasing energy consumption, which saw the country become a net importer of crude oil in 1996, has made China dependent on the Middle East for oil imports.[12] The consequent strategic

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[9]The author has previously addressed the 1991-2001 period in Xinjiang in detail. See note 7 above.

[10]Other scholars have argued that the causes of unrest over the 1991-2001 period were more the result of external developments. See, for example, Colin Mackerras, "Xinjiang at the Turn of the Century: The Causes of Separatism," *Central Asian Survey* 20, no. 3 (2001): 289-303.

[11]See, for example, Gaye Christofferson, "Xinjiang and the Great Islamic Circle: The Impact of Transnational Forces on Chinese Regional Economic Planning," *The China Quarterly*, no. 133 (March 1993): 130-51; Clifton Pannell and Laurence J. C. Ma, "Urban Transition and Interstate Relations in a Dynamic Post-Soviet Borderland: The Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China," *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics* 38, no. 4 (1997): 206-29; and Yueyao Zhao, "Pivot or Periphery? Xinjiang's Regional Development," *Asian Ethnicity* 2, no. 2 (September 2001): 197-224.

[12]Gaye Christoffersen, "China's Intentions for Russian and Central Asian Oil and Gas," National Bureau of Asian Research, 1998, 9-10.

vulnerability that flowed from this development compelled China both to restructure its domestic petrochemical industry and diversify its foreign sources.[13] Internally, this resulted in increased efforts to maximize domestic sources of oil and gas, most notably in Xinjiang's Tarim Basin (塔里木盆地), and externally, a reorientation of China's energy security strategy toward the states of Central Asia.[14]

This "double opening" strategy, as of 2001, had only been partially successful due to the fact that such opening is in fact a two-way street. China's attempt to integrate Xinjiang with Central Asia had increased the linkages between the two regions, thus increasing the opportunities for the spread of radical Central Asian and Afghan movements or ideologies such as the "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan" (IMU) or the Taliban into Xinjiang.[15] This process was in turn exacerbated by interstate competition among external states for strategic advantage and the hydrocarbon resources of Central Asia, and ongoing political, economic, and social instability within the Central Asian republics.[16] The economic policies encompassed in the state's strategy—such as the promotion of cotton cultivation and infrastructure development—also played an instrumental role in generating ethnic minority opposition in Xinjiang.[17] Particularly important in this regard were the waves of Han in-migration facilitated and required by these policies. Although this influx of Han into Xinjiang during the

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[13]Phillip Andrews-Speed, Xuanli Liao, and Roland Dannruther, *The Strategic Implications of China's Energy Needs* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2002), 45-50; and Sergei Troush, "China's Changing Oil Strategy and its Foreign Policy Implications," *CNAPS Working Paper*, Fall 1999, 1-10. http://www.brook.edu/fp/cnaps/papers/1999_troush.htm (accessed August 25, 2000).

[14]See Felix K. Chang, "Chinese Energy and Asian Security," *Orbis* 45, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 220-24; and Nicolas Becquelin, "Staged Development in Xinjiang," *The China Quarterly*, no. 178 (June 2004): 364-65.

[15]See, for example, Sean R. Roberts, "A 'Land of Borderlands': Implications of Xinjiang's Trans-border Interactions," in Starr, *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, 216-37.

[16]See Charles Fairbank, S. Frederick Starr, C. Richard Nelson, and Kenneth Weisbrode, *Strategic Assessment of Central Eurasia* (The Atlantic Council of the United States and Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, SAIS, January 2001), 1-133. http://www.acus.org (accessed March 5, 2001).

[17]For the impact of the so-called "cotton strategy," see Ildiko Beller-Hann, "The Peasant Condition in Xinjiang," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 25, no. 1 (1997): 87-112.

1990s was seen by a number of observers as "voluntary,"[18] in contrast to the forcible in-migration of the Maoist era, it has emerged that population transfer has been re-invigorated as a key facet of the state's integrationist project in Xinjiang.[19] The state's strategy in Xinjiang was also underpinned by continued control of the parameters of ethnic minority cultural and religious practices. From 1991 onward these internal and external pressures converged, with varying intensity at specific periods, to strengthen the state's perception of a causal link between manifestations of internal ethnic minority unrest and transnational political, ideological, and cultural flows from Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Across the 1990-2001 period, there were numerous incidents of violent ethnic minority opposition to continued Chinese rule, such as widespread demonstrations and riots in the Ili (伊犁) region in April 1995, and demonstrations and riots in Kulja (庫車) in February 1997.[20] In January 2002 the Chinese government released a detailed document, "East Turkistan Terrorists Exposed," which claimed that over the 1990-2001 period there had been over two hundred "terrorist" incidents in Xinjiang resulting in 162 people dead and 444 injured.[21] Moreover, throughout this period the Chinese authorities blamed such outbreaks of ethnic minority opposition and acts of violence on "hostile external elements," including movements in Central Asia or Af-

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[18]See, for example, Pannell and Ma, "Urban Transition and Interstate Relations"; and Mackerras, "Xinjiang at the Turn of the Century," 291-94, 298-300.

[19]Becquelin, "Staged Development in Xinjiang," 368-70.

[20]These and other incidents are dealt with in: Michael Dillon, "Central Asia: The View from Beijing, Urumqi and Kashgar," in *Security Politics in the Commonwealth of Independent States: The Southern Belt*, ed. Mehdi Mozzafari (London: Macmillan, 1997), 133-48; Mackerras, "Xinjiang at the Turn of the Century," 289-303; and Graham E. Fuller and S. Frederick Starr, *The Xinjiang Problem* (Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, SAIS, 2004), 20-21, http://www.cacianalyst.org/ (accessed March 15, 2004). For Uighur émigré accounts, see "Yining (Kulja) Massacre, an Eyewitness Record," Eastern Turkestan Information Network, March 9, 1997, http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/1730/usl.html (accessed June 25, 2000). The 1997 incident in Kulja is also addressed in Amnesty International 1999 Country Report: "The People's Republic of China: Gross Violations of Human Rights in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region," http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/engAS-A170181999 (accessed April 20, 2004).

[21]"East Turkistan Terrorists Exposed," *China Daily*, January 21, 2002, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn (accessed January 25, 2002).

ghanistan such as the IMU, Hizb ut-Tahrir (Islamic Party of Liberation), and the Taliban.[22]

The management of the relationship between external developments in Central Asia and developments within Xinjiang was thus a major dilemma confronted by the Chinese government over the 1990-2001 period. China's response to this complex dilemma was, however, complicated by the rationale that underpinned its complex of integrationist techniques and tactics of rule in Xinjiang. The establishment of political, economic, and cultural linkages with Central Asia was seen as vital to the success of the state's goal of integration for Xinjiang, yet was simultaneously viewed with suspicion as a potential source of threat to this very process. The contradictory nature of this position compelled China to seek a broader regional approach to issues of regional economic cooperation, ethnic separatism, drugs and weapons trafficking, radical Islam, and border security that culminated in the creation of the "Shanghai Five" in 1996 and its eventual transformation into the SCO in June 2001.[23] China's foreign policy toward the states of Central Asia throughout the 1991-2001 period was thus focused on achieving two broad and interconnected goals—the establishment of cooperative security and economic relations with Central Asia and the strengthening of state control over Xinjiang.[24]

Simultaneously, however, the establishment of such forums as the SCO that were ostensibly aimed at developing regional cooperation oc-

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[22]See, for example, ibid.; "Xinjiang Conference on Separatism, Religious Activities," *Xinjiang ribao* (Urumqi), May 7, 1996, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *China (FBIS-CHI)*-96-100 (May 22, 1996): 72-74; and Dewardric L. McNeal, *China's Relations with Central Asian States and Problems with Terrorism* (U.S. Department of State, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, December 17, 2001), 1-16, http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/7945.pdf (accessed January 10, 2002).

[23]For the issues involved in the development of the "Shanghai Five" into the SCO in 2001, see Clarke, "Xinjiang and China's Foreign Relations," 221-23; Sally N. Cummings, "Happier Bedfellows: Russia and Central Asia under Putin," *Asian Affairs* 32, no. 2 (June 2001): 142-52; and Ahmed Rashid, "China Forced to Expand Its Role in Central Asia," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, July 19, 2000, http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=151 (accessed June 20, 2002).

[24]David Bachman, "Making Xinjiang Safe for the Han? Contradictions and Ironies of Chinese Governance in China's Northwest," in *Governing China's Multiethnic Frontiers*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 158-59.

curred in parallel with the continuation, and even intensification, of regional rivalries. This process, as alluded to above, was the result of the combined pressures of the dynamics created by the "New Great Game" for Central Asia and the internal dilemmas of the Central Asian states, China, and Russia. Of particular import, for example, in deterring the establishment of effective regional cooperation regarding the supposedly mutual threat of radical Islamic movements was the fact that each state's perceptions as to the nature of the threat and the most efficacious response was necessarily filtered through a prism of domestic peculiarities. Russia and China viewed the growth and expansion of the Taliban and the IMU, for example, by reference to their own "internal" problems with restive ethnic groups in Chechnya and Xinjiang. Although the Central Asian states most affected by radical Islam—Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan—portrayed the threat posed by groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir and the IMU (and the associated phenomena of weapons and drugs trafficking) as emanating from external causes, it was in fact symptomatic of an interlinked regional dynamic. The development, growth, and activities of such groups demonstrate that they were more products of intraregional conflicts and crises, such as the Tajik civil war and the authoritarian regime of Uzbekistan's Islam Karimov, than simply phenomena "exported" from outside.[25] The alleged connections and linkages between the IMU and Hizb ut-Tahrir on the one hand, and Afghanistan, the Taliban, and Al-Qaida (The Base) on the other appear to have been formed during and after conflicts and crises within specific Central Asian states.[26] In effect, Afghanistan, from 1991 onward, became a haven for Central Asian Islamists who had already fallen foul of the existing governments of the region. This process was intensified

[25]See Kenneth Weisbrode, "Central Eurasia, Prize of Quicksand? Contending Views of Instability in Karabakh, Ferghana and Afghanistan," *Aldelphi Papers*, no. 338 (2001): 1-85; and Svante A. Cornell and Regine A. Spector, "Central Asia: More Than Islamic Extremists," *The Washington Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 193-206.

[26]For detailed accounts of the history, development, and linkages between the IMU and Hizb ut-Tahrir with groups in Afghanistan, see Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 137-56; and Daniel Kimmage, "The Growth of Radical Islam in Central Asia," *Asia Times*, March 31, 2004, http://www.atimes.com (accessed April 5, 2004).

with the rise of the Taliban after 1994 and the cessation of the Tajik civil war in 1997. Moreover, the pan-regional problems of the IMU and drugs and weapons trafficking were as often the cause of regional suspicion, bickering, and rivalry as they were of cooperation. This was highlighted by the reaction of Uzbekistan following the Batken Incident of September-October 1999, in which one thousand IMU fighters captured a number of villages in the Batken and Chon-Alai regions of southwest Kyrgystan, bordering on the Uzbek portion of the Ferghana valley. The Uzbek government responded to this crisis by unilaterally bombing Kyrgyz and Tajik territory in pursuit of the IMU insurgents, while President Islam Karimov accused Tajikistan of tolerating the presence of the IMU.[27]

The Strategic Implications of U.S. Penetration of Central Asia Post-September 11, 2001, and China's Response

Since September 11, 2001, and the subsequent U.S. politico-military penetration of Central Asia and Afghanistan, there has been much speculation regarding China's perceived strategic "defeat" in Central Asia. Moreover, this "defeat" is said to have compromised China's long-term plans regarding the integration of Xinjiang. The strategic implications of U.S. penetration of Central Asia, however, have in fact resulted in the re-invigoration and reinforcement of both the Chinese state's goal and instruments of integration in Xinjiang. This dynamic has been expressed within Xinjiang, in the form of the strengthening of the major instruments of internal control and development, and externally in the form of China's foreign policy calculus in the context of its relations with the states of Central Asia. China's foreign policy in Central Asia since 1991 can be seen as a

[27]For accounts of the "Batken Incident" and its impact on regional relations, see Weisbrode, "Central Eurasia, Prize or Quicksand?" 49-51; Ahmed Rashid, "Mountain Launchpad," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, April 19, 2001, http://www.feer.com (accessed September 5, 2001); and Anthony Davis, "A Marriage of Convenience: Why China is Cozying up to Central Asia," *Asiaweek* 25, no. 36 (September 10, 1999), http://www.asiaweek.com (accessed February 25, 2000).

key manifestation of its "grand strategy" of "peaceful rise" (和平崛起, *heping jueqi*).[28] This attempt to engage with, and safely enter, the existing international order has seen China develop a preference for "cooperation," "multilateralism," and "integration" in its diplomatic endeavors, particularly with neighboring states.[29] These watchwords were central to the conduct of China's foreign policy in Central Asia over the 1991-2001 period, both in terms of its bilateral and multilateral relations. The major strategic consideration that compelled China to develop constructive relations and linkages with the states of Central Asia over the 1991-2001 period was undoubtedly its ongoing project of integration in Xinjiang. This "domestic" overspill into China's foreign relations, however, developed in parallel with the broader dynamics of China's strategic design—to develop multiple regional and global relationships in order to mitigate against the perceived threat of monopolar U.S. power in the international system.[30] The expansion of Chinese influence and interests in Central Asia, prior to September 11, 2001, also held the promise that China would avoid strategic entanglements with the United States, in contrast to the sources of tension in Sino-U.S. relations in the Pacific.[31] Thus a "continental" focus in China's strategic outlook became (and continues to be) enticing:

> In policy terms, China would prefer a quiet eastern front and intense interaction with the West. A certain "benign neglect" of the Pacific region, or at least a non-confrontational posture, may become necessary for China to avoid dangerous strategic entanglements... Beijing is not seeking a place in the sun, but rather a protected place in the shade. The Eurasian continent could cast a comfortable shadow for years to come.[32]

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[28]Lanxin Xiang, "China's Eurasian Experiment," *Survival* 46, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 109.

[29]See, for example, ibid.; and James C. Hsiung, "China's Omni-Directional Diplomacy: Realignment to Cope with Monopolar U.S. Power," *Asian Survey* 35, no. 6 (June 1995): 573-86.

[30]Hsiung, "China's Omni-Directional Diplomacy," 573-86; and Mark Burles, *Chinese Policy Toward Russia and the Central Asian Republics* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 1999), no. MR-1045-AF, http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR1045 (accessed June 18, 2002).

[31]Potentially troublesome issues in the Pacific involving Sino-U.S. relations include the crisis on the Korean Peninsula, a re-arming and re-assertive Japan, and Taiwan.

[32]Xiang, "China's Eurasian Experiment," 118.

Thus the major question is how the events of September 11, 2001, and the expansion of U.S. power into Central Asia have impacted on this "grand strategy" of Eurasian orientation.

Although the immediate post-September 11 period did in fact see a convergence in the interests of the major regional powers—Russia and China—with those of the United States, it was in fact a temporary "marriage of convenience." In this period China, and particularly Russia, acquiesced to U.S. imperatives in Central Asia, which concerned the establishment of military bases in the Central Asian republics contiguous or in close proximity to Afghanistan—Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, both Russia and China for their own specific reasons (which I shall address shortly) shared intelligence with the United States and pledged support, moral and material, for the Bush administration's "war on terrorism" in Afghanistan. However, the inherent tensions between the strategic imperatives of the United States, Russia, and China re-emerged rapidly after this initial period of consensus. China's response to the "war on terrorism" in Afghanistan, and its consequences for the international politics of the region can only be understood with reference to Beijing's strategy in Xinjiang. As stated earlier, this paper argues that the U.S. politico-military penetration of Central Asia after September 11, 2001, has had four major implications for China's position in Xinjiang and Central Asia. I will now address these implications in more depth in order to demonstrate the determining factor of China's integrationist goal for Xinjiang in its foreign policy calculus in Central Asia.

Limited Regional Cooperation Post-September 11, 2001

Immediately after September 11, Russian President Vladimir Putin moved quickly to provide both moral and practical support for the U.S. "war on terrorism" in Afghanistan. Putin authorized intelligence sharing with the United States, granted U.S. access to Russian airspace, and stepped up military aid to the Northern Alliance. Moreover, Putin also publicly endorsed the legitimacy of the U.S. campaign in Afghanistan and actively encouraged the Central Asian republics to accede to U.S. requests for access to military bases and the opening of airspace in the

region.[33] China, in contrast to Russia's rapid acquiescence to immediate U.S. military imperatives in Central Asia and Afghanistan following the terrorist attacks, was far more cautious in extending its moral and practical support. Importantly, this support was also granted with significant caveats that illustrated China's Xinjiang-centric perspective on the emergent "war on terrorism" in Afghanistan. On September 18, 2001, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman made an interesting statement that clearly linked the U.S. agenda against "international terrorism" to China's domestic separatist dilemmas: "The United States has asked China to provide assistance in the fight against terrorism. China, by the same token, has reasons to ask the United States to give support and understanding in the fight against terrorism and separatists. We should not have double standards."[34]

This was clearly a reference to what China perceived as its ongoing fight against terrorists and separatists in Xinjiang. The United States did not, however, provide any such statement of "understanding," but China like Russia extended its support for the U.S. effort in Afghanistan by promising to supply the United States with any relevant intelligence and avoided any direct criticism of U.S. "interventionism." This in itself was a significant development, given China's vociferous protests against NATO's intervention in Kosovo in 1999. The U.S. intervention in Kosovo was deemed from Beijing's perspective to be a further example of Washington's determination to enforce its vision of "global order" on the world, even if this entailed the violation of state sovereignty through the use of armed force.[35] The change was undoubtedly due to China's perception that although having U.S. military forces engaged close to its frontiers was not a welcome development, the removal of the Taliban and hence the cessation of their support for Central Asian and Xinjiang terrorists was of value to its agenda in Xinjiang.

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[33]Aaron L. Friedberg, "11 September and the Future of Sino-American Relations," *Survival* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 41.

[34]Cited in ibid., 34.

[35]June Teufel Dreyer, *The PLA and the Kosovo Conflict* (Carlisle, Penn.: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2000), 2-3, http//carlisle.www-army.mil/usassi/welcome.htm (accessed October 6, 2002).

China's efforts to convince the United States, and to a lesser extent its Central Asian neighbors, of the connection between Uighur separatists and such groups as the IMU, Al-Qaida, or the Taliban did bear fruit. China claimed in December 2001 that up to one thousand Uighurs had been trained in Afghanistan in IMU or Al-Qaida camps, and that three hundred Uighurs had been captured by U.S. forces in Afghanistan. In the government report "East Turkestan Terrorists Exposed" released in January 2002, the Chinese, while documenting the hundreds of alleged "terrorist' incidents in Xinjiang since 1990, also charged that the "East Turkestan Islamic Movement" (ETIM), led by Hasan Mashum, was directly financed and supported by Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaida.[36] In August-September 2002, the U.S. State Department placed ETIM on its list of international terrorist organizations and claimed that it had evidence of a planned ETIM attack on the U.S. embassy in Kyrgyzstan.[37] A number of observers suggested that this was in fact a "trade-off" between the United States and China in order to secure China's support for the "war on terrorism" and part of a broader effort to stabilize a bilateral relationship that had been shaky since the advent of the Bush administration.[38] It has also been claimed that U.S. moves in this direction were a strategic maneuver by the Bush administration to appease China during UN Security Council negotiations regarding a resolution on Iraq.[39]

Among the Central Asian states, Uzbekistan was the quickest to extend its support and cooperation to the U.S. military effort in Afghanistan in mid-September 2001. Uzbekistan also signaled that it placed greater weight on bilateral cooperation with the United States than with the multi-

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[36]See note 21 above.

[37]Seva Gunitskiy, "In the Spotlight: East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM)," Center for Defense Information, December 9, 2002, http://www.cdi.org/terrorism/etim-pr.cfm (accessed November 10, 2003); Graham E. Fuller and Jonathan N. Lipman, "Islam in Xinjiang," in Starr, *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, 343; and Erkin Dolat, "Washington Betrays China's Uighurs," *Asia Times*, September 5, 2002, http://www.atimes.com (accessed February 19, 2003).

[38]Dolat, "Washington Betrays China's Uighurs"; and Friedberg, "11 September and the Future of Sino-American Relations," 41-42.

[39]Gunitskiy, "In the Spotlight."

lateral SCO when it failed to attend the SCO's October 11, 2001, emergency meeting.[40] By the same month Uzbekistan was already hosting some one thousand U.S. troops.[41] Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan followed the Uzbek lead in December 2001, agreeing to allow U.S. and other international troops to use military facilities in their territory.[42] These states had a number of motives for signing up to the U.S. military action in Afghanistan that were not altruistic. Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan had, as noted earlier, been the most affected by the IMU insurgency in the late 1990s and they obviously saw this as an opportunity to rid the region of the IMU threat and reinforce their own position regarding internal political opposition. Moreover, cooperation with Washington promised wider political, economic, and security benefits for these states. Since September 2001, the Central Asian states—particularly Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan—have received greater attention from the United States. Late in 2001, Uzbekistan received promises of US$150 million in aid from Washington due to its commitment to the "war on terrorism" and assurances that international lending agencies such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) would now grant loans to Uzbekistan.[43] Furthermore, in November and December 2001 the Kyrgyz and Uzbek governments agreed to the establishment of U.S. airbases near Bishkek and Khanabad-Karsi respectively.[44] On January 9, 2002, Kyrgyzstan followed Uzbekistan's lead and agreed to host three thousand U.S. troops at bases at Manas and Bishkek.[45] Thus within the space of five

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[40]Boris Rumer, "The Powers in Central Asia," *Survival* 44, no. 3 (Autumn 2002): 64.

[41]Bruce Pannier, "Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan Balancing Relations with West, Russia," *EurasiaNet*, December 8, 2001, http://www.eurasianet.org/ (accessed January 23, 2002).

[42]Ibid.

[43]Ibid.; and "Karimov Moves to Bolster Authoritarian Rule in Uzbekistan," *EurasiaNet*, December 7, 2001, http://www.eurasianet.org/ (accessed January 23, 2002).

[44]Martha Brill Olcott, "Taking Stock of Central Asia: Assessing the Central Asian Republics," *Journal of International Affairs* 56, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 3.

[45]Michael Denison, "Central Asia's New Romance with the West: A Match Made in Heaven?" *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, January 16, 2002 http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php? articleid=49 (accessed March 8, 2002); and Sergei Blagov, "Kyrgyzstan Muscles Up But for Whom?" *Asia Times*, August 7, 2002, http://www.atimes.com (accessed September 20, 2002).

months the United States had effectively established a political and military presence in the three "front-line" states of Central Asia.

The Role of the SCO in Central Asia and the Re-emergence of Regional Rivalry

The rapidity with which Russia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan established military/security cooperation with the United States was a blow to China's vision of the SCO as a viable regional security organization. Despite the pre-September 11 SCO rhetoric about forming regional responses to the three evils of "terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism" noted earlier, when the opportunity came to demonstrate the organization's capabilities in this field, four out of the six member states decided to rely on bilateral arrangements with the United States. That the U.S. penetration of the region was indeed perceived to have weakened the SCO was illustrated at the meeting of the organization's foreign ministers in Beijing on January 7, 2002, when the Russian and Chinese foreign ministers put forward proposals to improve the SCO's anti-terrorism and security capabilities. Moreover, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov maintained that the SCO should assume responsibility for regional security, suggesting that China and Russia were already wary of the direction of the U.S. involvement in the region.[46] Such a statement of intent was not, however, evidently immediately followed by practical action, although Russia and China intensified their efforts to counter U.S. inroads in Central Asia through their bilateral relations with the region. The first half of 2002, however, witnessed the consolidation of Washington's new relationships with the Central Asian republics. Uzbekistan emerged as Washington's preferred regional partner, with a "United States-Uzbekistan Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework" signed on March 12, 2002.[47] The emergence of Tashkent as the U.S. favorite in Central Asia

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[46]"Shanghai Cooperation Organization Seeks to Strengthen Anti-Terrorism Component," *EurasiaNet*, January 8, 2002, http://www.eurasianet.org/ (accessed July 13, 2002).

[47]"United States-Uzbekistan Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework," March 12, 2002, http://www.state/gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2002/8736pf.htm (accessed October 6, 2003).

would in turn have significant consequences for regional politics that will be dealt with shortly. The United States also further cemented its position in Tajikistan, with Dushanbe receiving a US$140.5 million humanitarian aid and security package, and an agreement from Washington to train Tajik border guards in 2002.[48] Tajikistan in apparent reciprocation, and much to the detriment of Russia's imperatives, joined NATO's "Partnership for Peace" program.[49] The U.S.-Tajik relationship was apparently further consolidated late in 2003 with the conclusion of a number of agreements. In a meeting with President Emomali Rakhmanov on November 13, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia Elizabeth Jones declared Washington's support for the Tajik bid for membership of the World Trade Organization (WTO), while on October 9 Tajikistan ratified an accord with the United States granting U.S. military personnel immunity from prosecution at the International Criminal Court (ICC), whose jurisdiction the Bush administration does not recognize.[50] Moreover, U.S. influence also penetrated Central Asian states not directly affected by events in Afghanistan, with the United States agreeing to grant military aid to Kazakhstan in August 2002.[51]

Russia and China intensified their efforts to consolidate their bilateral relations with the Central Asian republics over the 2002-2004 period, as well as gradual initiatives to reinvigorate the SCO to facilitate greater regional cooperation and thus counter U.S. influence in the region. These efforts were aided to a degree by the emergence of Uzbekistan as the favored U.S. partner in the region. The significant military and economic aid granted to Islam Karimov's government regenerated regional misgivings toward Uzbekistan, particularly on the part of its weaker neighbors Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. These states feared that Uzbekistan's relations with its newfound superpower benefactor would bolster Uzbek pretensions to

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[48]Antoine Blua, "Central Asia: Militarization Could Come at a Cost of Regional Stability," *RFE/RL*, September 3, 2002, http://www.rferl.org (accessed April 3, 2003).

[49]Zafar Abdullayev, "Washington Pushes Economic and Strategic Cooperation with Tajikistan," *EurasiaNet*, April 12, 2004, http://www.eurasianet.org/ (accessed May 1, 2004).

[50]Ibid.

[51]See note 48 above.

regional leadership and embolden Karimov to further belligerent unilateral actions to resolve regional disputes or problems.[52] Uzbekistan had, as highlighted earlier, a well-established track record of unilateral and often belligerent behavior toward its neighbors, particularly Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, prior to September 11, 2001.[53] In order to balance the influence of the United States, and its regional client Uzbekistan, the other Central Asian states sought to re-engage with the dominant pre-September 11 external powers—Russia and China. Most significantly in the post-September 11 environment, Russian and Chinese efforts focused on measures that would present them as credible and viable security partners for the Central Asian republics both in a bilateral and multilateral sense.

This was attempted through a variety of direct military and economic aid, and the acceleration of measures to establish the SCO's security and military credentials. In March 2002, President Putin held talks with Uzbek, Tajik, and Kyrgyz leaders about the possible rescheduling or waiving of their debt to Russia. This was seen by some as a signal of Russian dissatisfaction with the U.S. displacement of its position as the preeminent regional economic and security partner. In an attempt to demonstrate to Uzbekistan Russia's continued security commitment to Central Asia, the Collective Security Treaty (CST) (involving Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Belarus, and Armenia) that had once also included Uzbekistan was re-invigorated with joint military exercises outside of Moscow in May 2002.[54] Russia also signaled to the United States that Moscow was not

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[52]See note 40 above.

[53]For example, Uzbekistan's unilateral mining of its borders with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in 1999-2000, bombing of Tajik and Kyrgyz territory in 2000, and threats to cut off gas supplies to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in 2000-2001. See Weisbrode, "Central Eurasia, Prize or Quicksand?" 50-51; Marat Mamadshoyev, "The Central Asian Insurgency Raises Questions About Civilian Sympathies and Military Capabilities," *EurasiaNet*, August 25, 2000, http://www.eurasianet.org (accessed March 10, 2001); Ahmed Rashid, "IMU Gradually Developing into a Pan-Central Asian Movement," ibid., April 3, 2001, http://www.eurasianet.org (accessed June 10, 2001); and Umed Babakhanov, "Anti-Terrorism Campaign Brings Dushanbe and Tashkent Together," ibid., January 15, 2002, http://www.eurasianet.org (accessed February 17, 2002).

[54]Sergei Blagov, "Russia Probes to Bolster Its Authority in Central Asia," *EurasiaNet*, March 27, 2002, http://www.eurasianet.org (accessed April 1, 2002).

simply grandstanding in Central Asia by increasing military cooperation with Kyrgyzstan, through the establishment of a Russian air base at Kant in Kyrgyzstan and a Kyrgyz agreement to host CST troops in December 2002.[55] The close U.S. relationship with Tajikistan in 2002-2003, noted above, subsequently provoked Russian counter-moves and damaged Russo-Tajik relations in the same period. An episode that demonstrated Moscow and Dushanbe's tense relations was the Russian threat to deport the large number of Tajik migrant workers in Russia back to Tajikitsan in early 2003.[56] In fact, by early 2004, it appeared that the United States had eclipsed Russia's preeminent position in Tajikistan, particularly in a military sense, with Tajik President Emomali Rakhmanov announcing in April that Russian troops would soon leave the country.[57] Russo-Tajik relations were also further weakened by wrangling over leasing arrangements for proposed new Russian military facilities in Tajikistan.[58] A June 4, 2004, summit between Presidents Putin and Rakhmanov, however, produced an agreement that secured Russia's dominant economic and military position in Tajikistan. Russia agreed to waive US$300 million of Tajikistan's debt in return for the rights to the Nurek space surveillance center, Russian corporate participation and investment in Tajik hydroelectric projects, and extension of the Russian military presence to 2006.[59]

China also re-invigorated its position in Central Asia by forging new bilateral security agreements and cooperation with the region. China's strategy, much like that of Russia, was to present itself as a real and reliable security partner for the states of Central Asia and thus provide them with a viable alternative to closer security and military relations with the United

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[55]Olcott, "Taking Stock of Central Asia," 5; and "Tashkent's New Balancing Act After the SCO Summit," *RFE/RL Analytical Reports* 3, no. 31 (September 12, 2003), http://www.rferl.org (accessed September 20, 2003).

[56]See note 49 above.

[57]Kambiz Arman, "Tajikistan Shuns United States, Tilts Toward Russia," *EurasiaNet*, June 14, 2004, http://www.eurasianet.org/ (accessed June 24, 2004).

[58]Stephen Blank, "Russian Forces in Tajikistan: A Permanent Presence?" *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, June 16, 2004, http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php? articleid=2451 (accessed July 2, 2004).

[59]See note 57 above.

States. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, perhaps not coincidentally due to their common borders with China and significant Uighur populations, were the focus of such Chinese efforts in 2002. In March 2002, the PLA's Deputy Chief of Staff met with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, and on March 18 the Chinese government extended a US$3 million military aid package to the Kazakhstani army.[60] Furthermore, in July 2002 China conducted joint military exercises with Kyrgyzstan, its first with a Central Asian state, thus signaling its commitment to wider security/military cooperation in the region,[61] while on December 23, 2002, a Sino-Kazakh "Mutual Cooperation Agreement" was concluded that pledged the parties to cooperate militarily to combat "terrorism, separatism, and extremism," and to develop trade relations.[62] The following year China moved to extend this strategy toward its relations with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, culminating in Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing's (李肇星) visits to Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan on September 1-6, 2003.[63] These visits resulted in the conclusion of inter-governmental agreements on bilateral cooperation against "terrorism, separatism, and extremism" with each state.[64] Moreover, in October 2003, China supplied Kyrgyzstan with over US$1 million in direct security/military-related assistance.[65] Simultaneously, the government moved to ban four groups branded as terrorist and extremist organizations, three of which—the Organization for the Liberation of Turkestan, the Islamic Party of Turkestan (IPT), and ETIM—

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[60]See note 54 above.

[61]Charles Carlson, "Central Asia: Shanghai Cooperation Organization Makes Military Debut," *RFE/RL*, August 5, 2003; and Charles Carlson, "Central Asians Perform Military Maneuvers, Training Against Terrorists," *RFE/RL Analytical Reports* 3, no. 26 (August 3, 2003).

[62]Antoine Blua, "Kazakhstan: President Nazarbaev Signs Mutual Cooperation Agreement with China," *RFE/RL*, December 27, 2002, http://www.rferl.org (accessed January 10, 2003).

[63]"China's Great Game in Central Asia," *RFE/RL Analytical Reports*, September 12, 2003.

[64]Ibid.; and "Transcaucasia and Central Asia: Chinese Foreign Minister Signs Anti-Terrorism Agreements with Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan," *RFE/RL Newsline* 7, no. 170 (September 8, 2003), http://www.rferl.org/newsline (accessed October 2, 2003).

[65]Bakyt Ibraimov, "Uighurs: Beijing to Blame for Kyrgyz Crackdown," *EurasiaNet*, January 28, 2004, http://www.eurasianet.org/ (accessed March 7, 2004).

were, according to China, involved in incidents in Xinjiang.[66] Moreover, in 2002 and 2003, China, by virtue of bilateral security agreements and police cooperation, had alleged Uighur "separatists and terrorists" extradited from neighboring Central Asian states, particularly Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and from as far afield as Nepal.[67]

Such bilateral agreements, however, also developed in parallel to China and Russia's re-invigoration of the SCO over the period 2001-2004. These efforts made limited headway in 2002 due to the wide array of U.S. agreements and cooperation with the Central Asian states noted above. The SCO-related initiatives in 2002 were very much focused on establishing the organization's operational framework, rather than active, "on the ground" military and security activities. Thus border guard commanders from the SCO states met on April 24, 2002, in Almaty (Kazakhstan) to coordinate responses to border security, illegal migration, and drug trafficking.[68] Furthermore, the SCO's official charter was adopted at its June 7, 2002, meeting in St. Petersburg and agreement was reached regarding the establishment of the SCO Secretariat in Beijing and the "Regional Anti-Terrorism" (RAT) center in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan).[69] The lack of concrete practical action to make good on SCO rhetoric regarding regional military and security cooperation in 2002 led some observers to consider the SCO a "stillborn" organization and a regional talk fest made irrelevant by the penetration of U.S. power into Central Asia.[70] Yet, China and Russia's

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[66]Antoine Blua, "Central Asia: Kyrgyz Rights Activists Call for End to Deportation of Uighurs to China," *RFE/RL*, January 21, 2004, http://www.rferl.org (accessed March 20, 2004).

[67]Ibid.; and Rustam Mukhamedov, "Uyghurs in Kyrgyzstan Under Careful Government Supervision," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, January 28, 2004, http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php? articleid=2108 (accessed March 20, 2004). For the Nepal case, see Amnesty International, *China: Country Report 2004*, http://web.amnesty.org/report2004 (accessed January 5, 2004).

[68]Sergei Blagov, "Shanghai Cooperation Organization Prepares for New Role," *EurasiaNet*, April 29, 2002.

[69]Sergei Blagov, "SCO Continues to Search for Operational Framework," ibid., June 11, 2002.

[70]See, for example, Sean Yom, "Russian-Chinese Pact a 'Great Game' Victim," *Asia Times*, July 30, 2002, http://www.atimes.com (accessed June 7, 2002); and Stephen Blank, "The

intent to make the SCO an important regional player was further underlined at a November 30, 2002, summit between Presidents Vladimir Putin and Jiang Zemin (江澤民) in Beijing that focused on promoting the role of the SCO and declared the continuation of the Sino-Russian "strategic partnership."[71] This Sino-Russian commitment was borne out in the following year. On August 6-11, 2003, all the SCO states except Uzbekistan conducted joint military exercises on Kazakh and Chinese soil.[72] The absence of Uzbekistan illustrated Tashkent's half-hearted commitment to the SCO and served to strengthen Russian and Chinese perceptions that Karimov's government was yet to be convinced of the benefits that the SCO could contribute to Uzbek security. The September 8, 2003, SCO meeting in Tashkent (Uzbekistan) thus assumed great significance for the strategic imperatives of China and Russia in Central Asia. At this summit it was announced that the SCO Secretariat would begin its functions on January 1, 2004, in Beijing and the executive committee of the RAT center would open on November 1, 2003, in Tashkent and not Bishkek as previously announced.[73] The transfer of the RAT to Uzbekistan from Kyrgyzstan was symptomatic of Russia's and China's desire to see Uzbekistan drawn away from the U.S. orbit. This pandering to Karimov's regional leadership pretensions appeared to be accepted by the other SCO states, particularly Kyrgyzstan, as a necessary concession actively to encourage Tashkent into wider involvement in the organization.[74] Therefore, by the beginning of 2004, Russia and China through their bilateral relations with the Central Asian republics and the SCO had achieved a measure of success in re-establishing their pre-September 11 positions in the region. For China

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Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Its Future," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, May 22, 2002, http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php? articleid=1150 (accessed June 15, 2003).

[71] Sergei Blagov, "Russia Seeking to Strengthen Regional Organizations to Counterbalance Western Influence," *EurasiaNet*, December 4, 2002.

[72] See note 61 above. The joint military exercises were code-named "Cooperation—2003."

[73] "Tashkent's New Balancing Act After the SCO Summit," *RFE/RL Analytical Reports* 3, no. 31 (September 12, 2003).

[74] Ibid.

this was particularly accurate with respect to its relations with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

The "War on Terrorism" and China's "Zero Tolerance" Approach to Ethnic Minority Opposition in Xinjiang

The events of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent U.S. political, economic, and military penetration into Afghanistan and Central Asia also had important implications for China's position and strategy in Xinjiang. The most immediate impact of these developments was to reinforce the state's long-held perception of a causal linkage between ethnic minority opposition to continued Chinese rule and external, Central Asian, and "international terrorist forces." One month after the September 11 attacks, China implemented another "Strike Hard" campaign in Xinjiang aimed at "ethnic separatist and terrorist forces." According to Amnesty International, this involved further restrictions on the religious and cultural rights of Xinjiang's Muslims between October 2001 and March 2002, similar to those enforced during the "Strike Hard" campaigns of the late 1990s that were detailed earlier.[75] This report estimated that over the said period, up to three thousand people had been arrested or detained in Xinjiang in connection with "illegal religious activities" or "ethnic separatism and terrorism."[76] As in the past, these measures not only targeted those deemed to be actively opposing the state but were also applied to religious and cultural practices that, in the state's perception, reinforced ethnic minority separateness from the Chinese state. Thus, Muslim clerics and students were arrested or detained for participation in "illegal religious activities," "illegal religious centers" were closed, and imams compelled to attend "political education" sessions.[77] Religious worship, education, or instruction was also restricted to those aged eighteen and above, and a general

[75]Amnesty International, *People's Republic of China: China's Anti-Terrorism Legislation and Repression in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region*, March 22, 2002, http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/ENGASA170102002 (accessed August 12, 2002).

[76]Ibid., 6. This figure is based on Uighur émigré sources.

[77]Ibid., 5.

discrimination against religious observance implemented. A pertinent example of the latter, and one that had been prevalent prior to September 11, 2001, were restrictions on the practice of fasting during the holy month of Ramadan—particularly for employees of state institutions such as schools, hospitals, and government offices.

The authorities also identified increased censorship of cultural and media circles as a key area of "struggle" in the fight against "separatist" tendencies.[78] The extent of the state's connection of "separatism" with any overt sign of ethnic minority identity was further reinforced with the regional government's decision in May 2002 that for the majority of courses at Xinjiang University, instruction was to be conducted in Chinese, rather than Uighur and Chinese as previously.[79] Moreover, the following month also saw the authorities begin to confiscate Uighur-language books dealing with political or cultural history from schools and colleges throughout Xinjiang.[80] The Chinese government's all-encompassing campaign to negate ethnic minority opposition under the guise of the "war on terrorism" was carried into 2003, with Amnesty International's Country Report on China for the period January-December 2003 asserting that China's "zero tolerance" approach in Xinjiang continued unabated.[81] Thus the report argued that:

> The authorities continued to use the international "war on terrorism" to justify harsh repression in Xinjiang, which continued to result in serious human rights violations against the ethnic Uighur community. The authorities continued to make little distinction between acts of violence and acts of passive resistance. Repression was often manifested through assaults on Uighur culture, such as the closure of several mosques, restrictions on the use of the Uighur language, and the banning of certain Uighur books and journals.[82]

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[78]Ibid., 5-6.

[79]Michael Dillon, "Uyghur Language and Culture Under Threat in Xinjiang," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, August 14, 2002, http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php? articleid=23 (accessed March 28, 2003).

[80]Ibid.

[81]Amnesty International, *Country Report: People's Republic of China, 2004*, http://web.amnesty.org/report2004/chn-summary-eng (accessed April 11, 2004).

[82]Ibid.

The Chinese government's linkage of Xinjiang separatists to the Taliban, Al-Qaida, and the IMU, however, gained a measure of legitimacy over the same period. In March 2002 the U.S. Department of Defense acknowledged for the first time that they had captured an undisclosed number of Uighurs in U.S. military operations in Afghanistan and that the Northern Alliance held up to twenty others.[83] The true number of Uighurs that fought (or perhaps are still fighting) with the Taliban, Al-Qaida, or the IMU remains something of a mystery. China for its part claimed in May 2002 that over a thousand Uighurs had been trained in camps in Afghanistan and many had returned to Xinjiang to carry out *jihad*.[84] The existence and scope of Uighur "separatist" groups operating within Xinjiang is also a matter of debate. The Chinese government on November 14, 2001, for example, presented to its SCO partners a list of ten separatist or "terrorist" organizations that Beijing claimed were based in Afghanistan, Central Asia, and Xinjiang.[85] According to a U.S. government report of December 2001, there were six major identifiable Uighur separatist organizations in Xinjiang and Central Asia:

1. The United Revolutionary Front of Eastern Turkestan (URFET): based in Kazakhstan; it was originally the United National Revolutionary Front (UNRF) but changed its name in 1997 and switched to a policy of armed resistance to Chinese "oppression."
2. The Organization for the Liberation of Uighurstan (OLU): this organization is reported to be internally divided but committed to armed struggle.
3. The Wolves of Lop Nor: the Wolves have claimed responsibility for bombings and assassinations in Xinjiang over the 1991-2004 period.

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[83] Matthew Forney, "One Nation Divided: Since September 11, Beijing Has Been Cracking down in Xinjiang," *Time*, March 25, 2002, 38-39.

[84] Fuller and Lipman, "Islam in Xinjiang," 342.

[85] Ibid.

4. The Xinjiang Liberation Organization and Uighur Liberation Organization (ULO): this organization is reported to be active in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan and thought to be responsible for the assassination of Uighurs viewed as "collaborators."

5. The Home of East Turkestan Youth: this radical group has been compared to Hamas and is reported to have over two thousand members, some of whom were trained in Afghanistan.

6. The Free Turkistan Movement: the organization held responsible for the Baren incident of April 1990.[86]

It is significant that this report does not mention ETIM, the group listed by the Bush administration as an "international terrorist organization" the following year. The report also suggests that some of these organizations may have links, not necessarily strong ones, to Central Asian and South Asian Islamic movements. The most incidental links appear to be with the Pakistani organizations Tableeghi Jamaat and Jamaat-i-Islami. The former is largely a missionary organization that the Chinese government has blamed for the dissemination of "religious materials" in Xinjiang.[87] The latter, however, is Pakistan's largest Islamic political party and is regarded as having been intimately involved in recruiting for the Afghan mujahideen and then the Taliban.[88] The strongest links Uighur separatists have with external organizations appear to be with Central Asia-based groups. Most notable in this regard are the IMU, or the IPT (Islamic Party of Turkestan) as they have reportedly become since June 2001, and Hizb ut-Tahrir, the history of which had been addressed earlier. The Kyrgyz government on October 8, 2002, also claimed that there were linkages among

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[86]Adapted from McNeal, *China's Relations with Central Asian States*.

[87]Ibid., 10-11.

[88]See, for example, Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2000); and M. Eshan Ahrari, *Jihadi Groups, Nuclear Pakistan, and the New Great Game* (Carlisle, Penn.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, August 2001), http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usassi/welcome.htm (accessed May 12, 2003).

the IMU/IPT, Hizb ut-Tahrir, and Uighur separatists. The head of the Kyrgyz National Security Service, Kalyk Imankulov, announced that he had obtained information indicating that these groups and other Central Asian "Islamists" were uniting to form an "Islamic Movement of Central Asia."[89] Moreover, he claimed that this new amalgam of "Islamists" was aiming to establish an Islamic caliphate across Central Asia, including Xinjiang.[90] Perhaps more importantly for China than its SCO partners acknowledging the "terrorist" threat in Xinjiang was the position of the Bush administration. As noted earlier, the U.S. State Department listed ETIM in September 2002 as an "international terrorist organization" and froze the group's finances.[91] Many observers questioned the accuracy of the Bush administration's listing of ETIM on a number of grounds, including the fact that neither Uighur émigré organizations nor Xinjiang and Central Asian scholars had any knowledge of the group's existence prior to the Chinese government's claims in January 2001.[92]

The Reinforcement of China's Goal and Instruments of Integration in Xinjiang

As noted previously, China has pursued a strategy in Xinjiang and Central Asia since 1991 that has reflected its strategic concepts and goals for the closer integration of Xinjiang into the PRC. The event of September 11, 2001, and its aftermath in Afghanistan and Central Asia have done little to weaken China's commitment to these goals. As I demonstrated earlier regarding the generation of regional competition/rivalry following September 11, China has continued to express the external modalities of its Xinjiang strategy—to achieve greater regional security cooperation, greater regional economic cooperation, and the development of infrastructural

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[89]Zamira Eshanova, "Central Asia: Are Radical Groups Joining Forces?" *RFE/RL*, October 8, 2002, http://www.rferl.org (accessed February 17, 2003).

[90]Ibid.

[91]Fuller and Lipman, "Islam in Xinjiang," 342-43.

[92]See, for example, Dolat, "Washington Betrays China's Uighurs"; Gunitskiy, "In the Spotlight"; and note 21 above.

links with Central Asia. Moreover, I have just outlined the reinforced policies of control within Xinjiang and the acceptance, on the part of key powers in Central Asia (i.e., Russia and the United States), of the "terrorist" threat to China in the region. The internal expression of this process has followed a similar pattern, with China intensifying its integrationist policies in Xinjiang. The "Great Western Development/Open Up the West" (西部大開發) campaign (2000-2010), into which the government has arguably invested much political and economic capital, aims to make China's western provinces into an industrial and agricultural base and a trade and energy corridor for the national economy. For two related reasons, Xinjiang is central to this long-term strategy: its geo-strategic position at the crossroads of Central Asia and the logic of Beijing's political strategy for Xinjiang. What I mean by this second aspect is that the Chinese government has viewed economic development and prosperity for Xinjiang's ethnic minority populations as a cure-all for "ethnic separatist" tendencies. Therefore, the economic development of Xinjiang is perceived to be central to the state's ability to secure the region and ensure its integration. This strategy has in fact been intensified since September 11, 2001 and as of January 2005 appears to have consolidated China's control over Xinjiang and contributed to the re-invigoration of its position in Central Asia.

The re-invigoration of the state's development strategy in Xinjiang over the 2001-2004 period has, as during the 1991-2001 period, focused on the development of economic and infrastructural linkages between Central Asia and Xinjiang. Significantly, the expansion of U.S. power into Central Asia appears to have reinforced China's perception of the necessity for it to diversify its energy strategy in order to safeguard its energy security. This has been reflected in a number of developments since 2001. In May 2002, construction began on the long-discussed Kazakhstan-China pipeline, a joint venture of the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and the Kazak state oil corporation KazMunayGaz. The 1,300-km Atasu-Alatauw Pass section (on the Kazakh-Xinjiang border) of this pipeline was begun in June 2004, while CNPC reportedly began construction of a 400-km section from Alatauw to its Dushanzi (獨山子) refinery in Xinjiang

in May 2004.[93] These pipelines are to be linked by 2006 to the estimated US$18 billion, 2,600-km Xinjiang-Shanghai pipeline, the first section of which—between Shanghai and Changqing (長慶), an oilfield in Shaanxi Province (陝西省)—began construction in 2000.[94] The central government reported in 2003 that it had invested approximately US$8.36 billion in this kind of infrastructure development in Xinjiang.[95] In an important development that signaled China's commitment to the diversification of its energy supplies, the Chinese and Kazakh presidents, Hu Jintao (胡錦濤) and Nursultan Nazarbayev, signed an agreement on May 20, 2004, for the joint exploration and development of oil and gas resources in the Caspian Sea.[96]

Other non-energy-related infrastructure projects and developments between Xinjiang and Central Asia also expanded after 2001, such as the opening of international bus routes in May 2000 between Osh (in Kyrgyzstan) and Kashgar (喀什, in Xinjiang).[97] In May 2003, China pledged US$15 million for the construction of a highway linking Xinjiang and Lake Issyk-Kul in Kyrgyzstan, and in September that year agreed to establish a highway link between Xinjiang and Tajikistan.[98] Furthermore, in December 2003 Kyrgyzstan announced a deal to sell hydroelectric power to Xinjiang, while Chinese officials subsequently announced a US$2.5 million feasibility study to construct a Kyrgyz-Xinjiang rail link.[99] In parallel with these measures to expand the infrastructure links between Xinjiang and Central Asia, the Chinese government has also intensified the major elements of its economic development strategy within Xinjiang. The gov-

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[93]Antoine Blua, "China: Beijing Keen to Pursue Oil Projects with Neighbours," *RFE/RL*, May 26, 2004, http://www.rferl.org (accessed June 15, 2004).

[94]Chang, "Chinese Energy and Asian Security," 222-23; and Ariel Cohen, "China's Quest for Eurasia's Natural Resources," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, February 26, 2003, http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php? articleid=1103 (accessed March 6, 2003).

[95]Becquelin, "Staged Development in Xinjaing," 370.

[96]See note 93 above.

[97]Michael Dillon, "Bus Attack Highlights Problems in China-Kyrgyzstan Relations," April 23, 2003, http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php? articleid=1347 (accessed May 12, 2003).

[98]See note 63 above.

[99]See note 65 above.

ernment's White Paper on Xinjiang of May 2003, for example, called for the continuation and intensification of the "Great Western Development" launched in 2000. This has involved the expansion of two "pillar" industries in Xinjiang—cotton cultivation and energy exploitation—that have been noted earlier. The scope of the cotton strategy, regardless of the political, economic, social, and environmental implications, appears to have been intensified, with 40 percent of Xinjiang's arable land under cotton cultivation by 2003.[100] The focus on the exploitation of the region's energy sources also proceeds apace with CNPC investing 2.1 billion *yuan* or US$250 million in energy projects throughout Xinjiang in 2002-2003.[101] These policies, however, have the potential to generate problems for China not only within Xinjiang but also in its relations with the neighboring Central Asian states, particularly Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The cultivation of cotton of course requires vast quantities of water that in Central Asia and Xinjiang is a precious and limited commodity. China's need for water in Xinjiang has led to the development of plans to divert water from the Ili (伊犁河) and Irtysh (額爾齊斯河) rivers, which subsequently flow into Kazakhstan and Russia, respectively. The completion of these water diversion projects would have possibly disastrous environmental consequences, such as salinization and desertification, similar to that which has occurred in the Aral Sea, as well as having negative implications for regional security.[102]

Conclusion

The events of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent penetration of U.S. power into Central Asia have thus not so much transformed the

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[100]Eric Hagt, "China's Water Policies: Implications for Xinjiang and Kazakhstan," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, July 30, 2003, http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=1615 (accessed August 16, 2003).

[101]Ibid.

[102]Olcott, "Taking Stock of Central Asia," 9; and Becquelin, "Staged Development in Xinjiang," 371.

geopolitical environment in the region as introduced another variable into an already complex equation. The Central Asian states before September 11, 2001, were eventually compelled into greater cooperation both in a bilateral and multilateral sense (i.e., the Shanghai Cooperation Organization) with the dominant external powers—Russia and China. Post-September 11, however, the Central Asian states rapidly aligned themselves with the United States due to the political, economic, and military benefits (that were detailed earlier) on offer during the prosecution of the Afghan invasion. Largely due to the internal considerations of Xinjiang and Chechnya, and their overall relations with the United States, both China and Russia acquiesced in the subsequent expansion of U.S. influence in Central Asia. This convergence of interest proved to be simply a "marriage of convenience" both in relation to the U.S.-Russia-China configuration and the U.S.-Central Asian relationships. For China, U.S. penetration of Central Asia was a contradictory development. The removal of the Taliban and the rationale of the "war on terrorism" were viewed as contributing to China's strategic interests by removing an alleged sanctuary for Islamic militants from across Central Asia, including Xinjiang, and providing a further justification for its approach to ethnic minority opposition in Xinjiang. This was, however, the extent of the benefits accruing to China as a result of the U.S. presence in Afghanistan and Central Asia.

The U.S. emphasis on military and security relations with the Central Asian states weakened a key element of China's strategy in the region—the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. By March 2002, however, both Russia and China moved to re-invigorate the organization and make it a viable option as a regional security mechanism. These efforts, as we have seen, were aided to a degree by Uzbekistan's emergence as the Bush administration's favored regional partner, with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan particularly wary of the possible spur to Karimov's regional leadership pretensions that this could generate. The close alignment of the United States with Uzbekistan thus prompted the other Central Asian republics to seek greater alignment with Russia and China—both as a counter-measure against Uzbekistan and as compensation for a relative "missing out" regarding U.S. military and economic largesse. In a sense, the expansion of U.S.

power into Central Asia facilitated the development of "multi-vectored" foreign policies on the part of the Central Asian republics as they sought to diversify their foreign relations and generate greater strategic benefits from the competing external powers—Russia, China, and the United States. That is to say, the dynamics of the "New Great Game" have not been negated but sustained by the entry of U.S. power on the Central Asian stage. The Central Asian states to varying degrees have all sought to use the "war on terrorism" to clamp down on existing political opposition within their own states and bolster their regional standing. The most obvious example of this has been Uzbekistan, but all the republics have indulged in similar tactics against domestic political opponents. In effect, the U.S. presence has emboldened some of the regional regimes that prior to September 11 led a fragile existence and, according to a respected Central Asian scholar:

> Rather than being frightened of the United States, the Central Asian leaders generally see their role in the war on terrorism as making themselves less rather than more vulnerable to U.S. criticism. Each leader seems to have convinced himself that his role is vital, whether the contribution is in the form of airbases (in Kyrgzstan and in Uzbekistan), or of overflight and limited landing rights (in Tajikistan and Kazakhstan), or of facilitating the transfer of humanitarian assistance (in Turkmenistan). This message has been reinforced by the treatment that many of them have received during official visits to the United States in the past year.[103]

This state of affairs, not coincidently, is reminiscent of the course of U.S. foreign policy in the developing world during the Cold War, where the propping up of authoritarian or dictatorial regimes—so long as they opposed the omnipresent "communist" threat—was par for the course. The course of the "war on terrorism," at least in Central Asia, appears to be following the same path, with authoritarian regimes pledging loyalty to the fight against the supposedly encompassing (and conveniently ambiguous) threat of "terrorism." The key problem for the present U.S. administration and its "allies" in Central Asia (such as Uzbekistan), and Russia and China for that matter, is that the "enemies" are not other states but loosely organized Islamic or ethnic separatist revolutionaries. In essence, the

[103]Olcott, "Taking Stock of Central Asia," 12.

U.S.-led "international coalition" against terrorism is nothing more than an alignment of states for the protection of states, and as such the coalition is inherently fragile as it is "first and foremost a policeman's association."[104] Moreover, as I have demonstrated, China and Russia's strategic goals in the region, beyond the limited goal of destroying the Taliban, diverged significantly from those of the United States. Lieven's categorization of the "international coalition" as a "policeman's association" is apt and has proven to be accurate. The various measures instituted by the United States in its relations with the Central Asian states and similar measures undertaken by China and Russia in the region have all reflected the "policeman's" imperative to suppress overt manifestations of threat rather than construct coherent responses to the cause of that threat. Thus, throughout Central Asia, the existing regimes have been able to clamp down with greater force on domestic political opposition than was possible before September 11, 2001. As of March 2004, Uzbekistan's jails, for example, held somewhere in the order of five thousand political prisoners, the majority of whom were suspected of membership of the banned Hizb ut-Tahrir organization, while similar campaigns against state-defined "Islamists" have also occurred in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan since 2001.[105] China, as we have seen, has also utilized the events of September 11 to further reinforce its "zero-tolerance" approach to ethnic minority opposition in Xinjiang.

Although, officially, China has simply questioned the long-term intent of the United States in Central Asia, it would appear that U.S. political and military headway in the region has alarmed Beijing. In May 2002, an article in the weekly publication *Liaowang* (Outlook) entitled "The Real Purpose of the American March into Central Asia" asserted that U.S. activities in the region were a central component of a larger "grand strategy for global domination."[106] As such, the article argues that the U.S. strategy

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[104]These issues are dealt with, for example, in a perceptive article by Anatol Lieven. See Anatol Lieven, "The Secret Policeman's Ball: The United States, Russia and the International Order After 11 September," *International Affairs* 78, no. 2 (2002): 249.

[105]Kimmage, "The Growth of Radical Islam in Central Asia."

[106]Gao Fuqiu, "The Real Purpose of the American March into Central Asia," *Liaowang*, May 10, 2002. English translation, http://www.uscc.gov/reapur.pdf (accessed April 10, 2005).

in Central Asia had four goals: to "squeeze and press" Russia, to "encircle" Iran and Iraq, to control South Asia and "march all the way down to the Indian Ocean," and to contain the rise of China.[107] The expansion of U.S. power into Central Asia is also perceived as directly aimed at undermining China's relations with the Central Asian states and thus threatening China's sensitive "backdoor":

> Various countries in Central Asia have been good neighbors of China.... China has signed mutual trust treaties with regard to border regions with these countries. China has constantly strengthened its political, security, economic, and trade relations with Central Asian countries. To this American officials seem mute, but are perfectly aware of these developments. The American press explains it this way: China is the "potential enemy" of the United States; and Central Asia is *China's great rear of extreme importance*. The penetration of the United States into Central Asia not only prevents China from expanding its influence, but also sandwiches China from East to West, thus "effectively containing a rising China."[108]

For China, therefore, the issue of U.S. penetration of Central Asia is not only linked to a "grand strategy for global domination" but also to the security and development of its "great rear of extreme importance"—Xinjiang. Interestingly, the analysis of the U.S. "grand strategy" in the article, particularly in relation to its supposed goals, is highly suggestive of Mackinder's strategy for countering the geopolitical advantages accruing to the state that occupies the "geographical pivot of history."[109] This, and the sentiments expressed in the quotation above, suggests that China perceives U.S. activities in Central Asia as an expression of a "new Cold War" containment strategy directed at China. However, such an alarmist interpretation of developments in Central Asia post-September 11 hinges on the assumption of U.S. determination and political will to remain politically and militarily engaged in Central Asia. Although at this juncture U.S. "staying power" appears to be robust, there remain a number of issues that could potentially weaken U.S. resolve such as continued problems in Iraq

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[107]Ibid.

[108]Ibid. Emphasis added.

[109]See note 2 above.

and unexpected regime change in Central Asia (for example, recent events in Kyrgyzstan). Moreover, U.S. "staying power" in the region may also be determined by whether Washington has fully reoriented its interest in the region from the purely tactical (securing military bases, air corridors, etc.) to the strategic.[110] Although this paper has demonstrated China's resolve since September 11, 2001, to maintain and strengthen its position in Xinjiang and Central Asia, unresolved questions as to U.S. ambitions in the region will remain an important factor influencing the outcome of China's long-term strategy. China's efforts since 2001 can thus be seen as having restored the vitality of its strategy in Xinjiang and Central Asia after the initial setbacks encountered in the first twelve months of U.S. penetration into the region.

It is now clear that U.S. involvement in Central Asia has played a significant role in intensifying elements of the "New Great Game," with the Central Asian states pursuing a multi-vectored foreign policy triangulating between the preeminent external powers of the United States, China, and Russia. An important aspect of this process has been the fate of the SCO since September 11, 2001. The close cooperation of Russia and the Central Asian states with the United States in late 2001 and early 2002 weakened the viability of the SCO, challenging a key element of China's strategy in the region. The subsequent U.S. courtship of Central Asia, particularly Uzbekistan, compelled the remaining Central Asian republics to seek further engagement with China and Russia. China and Russia for their part, although clearly responding differently to the immediate U.S. expansion into the region, gradually moved closer together as their wariness of long-term U.S. imperatives in the region grew. This process was reflected in Chinese and Russian initiatives to re-establish the SCO as a regional security mechanism throughout 2002-2004, as well as renewed bilateral initiatives with the Central Asian states. The relative success of these efforts could be seen in the SCO joint military exercises in 2003 and the establishment of the SCO RAT center in Tashkent in November 2003.

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[110] Issues addressed in Svante A. Cornell, "The United States and Central Asia: In the Steppes to Stay?" *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 17, no. 2 (July 2004): 239-54.

Thus China's position in Xinjiang and Central Asia as of early 2005 is perhaps stronger than it was in 2001. Moreover, I have demonstrated over the course of this paper that assertions of China's "strategic defeat" in Central Asia are not only premature, but fail to recognize that China's strategy in the region is intimately linked to the progress of its integrationist goal in Xinjiang. After the initial erosion of the "strategic partnerships" and regional institutions (i.e., the SCO) constructed by China with key regional states (most importantly Russia) following the U.S. action in Afghanistan, there has been a re-establishment of closer cooperation between China, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, and a re-invigoration of the SCO. Moreover, China's "Eurasian experiment" appears to have been strengthened by the challenges posed by the expansion of U.S. power into Central Asia since 2001.

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