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## Afghanistan and Central Asia after September 11 – the Security-Political Development



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# **Afghanistan and Central Asia after September 11**

## **The Security-Political Development**



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<b>Sammanfattning (högst 200 ord)</b> <p>Den säkerhetspolitiska situationen har förändrats betydligt i såväl Afghanistan som i de fem post-sovjetiska centralasiatiska staterna i samband med "Operation Enduring Freedom" och Talibanregimens fall i Afghanistan. Den internationella anti-terroristkoalitionens närvaro har ökat intresset för regionen också från andra stater – säkerhetspolitiskt, utrikespolitiskt och ekonomiskt. Den yttre säkerhetspolitiska situationen har förbättrats i regionen under 2002, men relationerna mellan flera av länderna är fortsatt spända och det finns en ständig risk för lokala konflikter över gränserna med risk för spridning. Den åter ökande narkotikahandeln från Afghanistan till Centralasien under 2002 skärper de spända gränsförhållandena ytterligare.</p> <p>De främsta hoten mot stabiliteten i de centralasiatiska länderna och Afghanistan är dock interna och utvecklingen inom detta område har försämrats under år 2002. Trots det ökade internationella biståndet är de ekonomiska förutsättningarna fortsatt svåra för majoriteten av människorna i regionen, vilket ökar missnöjet och antagonismen mot regimerna i regionen. Regionen är således fortsatt instabil och det finns många hot mot en fredlig utveckling trots de förbättrade yttre säkerhetspolitiska villkoren under år 2002.</p>		
<b>Nyckelord</b> Afghanistan, Centralasien, säkerhet, militär utveckling, gräns, inrikespolitik, ekonomisk utveckling, drogsmuggling, utrikespolitik.		
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## Executive Summary

The security-political situation has changed considerably in both Afghanistan and the post-Soviet Central Asian states in connection with the Operation Enduring Freedom and the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. The international anti-terrorist coalitions' presence has increased the interest for the region also from other states – security-politically, foreign politically and economically. This report describes how the development during the year 2002 has affected the prospects for stability or instability in the six countries as well as in the entire region. The factors affecting these prospects are to a certain extent connected to the September 11 events and the ensuing Operation Enduring Freedom. However, there are also many internal factors that are not directly connected to the September 11 event that affects the prospects for stability or instability in the different countries and that consequently differ from country to country.

The external security-political situation has improved in the region during the year 2002, not least because of the increased international military presence in the area, even if the countries' own military capabilities are still very weak. However, the relations between several of the countries in the region remain tense and there is a constant risk for local conflicts across the borders that might escalate. The renewed strength of the narcotics trafficking from Afghanistan to Central Asia during 2002 further heightens the border tensions. The risk for an open conflict between the external powers with conflicting interests in region have appeared less likely during 2002 due to the high stakes involved. Nevertheless, these countries – primarily represented by the United States, Russia, China, Iran and Pakistan – are to different extent interfering in the internal affairs of the countries in the region and have continuously manoeuvred to further their own interest in the region. Since these interests are often contradictory, the risk for a more hostile foreign political environment and even future conflicts over the influence in the region cannot be excluded.

However, the primary threats against the stability in the Central Asian states and Afghanistan are internal and this development has grown worse during the year 2002. Despite the increase in international economic aid to the region in 2002, the economic prospects remain generally poor for the majority of the people in the region, which exacerbates the discontent and antagonism against the regimes in the region. The Central Asian countries are governed by authoritarian regimes and the pressure on the opposition and the tight control exercised by these regimes over the society has either increased during 2002 or remained at an original high level. The civil war in Afghanistan has ended, but the divisions between various parts and factions in the country are strong and the tensions remain high with several local clashes that could easily escalate. Consequently, the countries in the region remain internally unstable – even though the degree varies between the different countries – and there are many threats against a peaceful development despite the improved short-term external security-political conditions during 2002.



# 1 Introduction

During the year 2002, Afghanistan has undergone tremendous and previously unforeseen changes compared to the situation a year earlier. The Taliban regime has fallen and the civil war has come to an end. The country has managed to peacefully elect a new head of state at an assembly made up of almost all significant Afghan leaders from different parts of the country. The new transitional administration has started working on transforming the economy, forming a new national army and disarming the different armed factions in the country, preparing the ground for national elections and writing a new constitution. Pledges of significant international economic contributions have been made.<sup>1</sup> Without specifying exactly how long the U.S. forces will remain in the Afghanistan, the USA has nevertheless made clear that they will stay for a long time in order to uphold the continued security in the country.<sup>2</sup>

Even though the above-mentioned changes must be regarded as very positive, the challenges and tasks awaiting Afghanistan are formidable. The country needs to be rebuilt as one nation after having been torn by war for three decades. There is hardly any national economy to speak of and very few other national ties to bind the different regions together. Trust between different religious, ethnic and political groups is very low and fighting has been recurring in almost every part of the country throughout 2002. Whether or not Afghanistan will manage to rebuild itself as a nation without any major violent conflicts erupting again still remains to be seen.<sup>3</sup>

For Central Asia<sup>4</sup>, the security-political changes have also been considerable since the international anti-terrorist operation started in Afghanistan during the autumn 2001. These countries have become the focus of an unexpected amount of international attention. The presence of the U.S. and other anti-terrorist coalition forces in the region has already brought the Central Asian states some economic benefits, which has been especially visible in the military sphere. The imminent threat posed by the war in Afghanistan and the threat of armed incursions into Central Asia by Taliban- and al-Qaeda-sponsored radical forces has been eliminated by the anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan, greatly reducing the risk of external threats against the countries in the area.<sup>5</sup>

However, the biggest latent threats against the Central Asian states have for a long time been internal, and in this respect the year 2002 has brought few positive changes. The countries are still ruled by the same authoritarian regimes and their populations suffer from the same serious socio-economic conditions as they did earlier. In fact, according to several indicators, the conditions have actually continued to deteriorate during 2002.<sup>6</sup>

Even if the most imminent threats to the Central Asian states are internal, the countries still have to keep a wary eye on some strategic issues in their relations with external states. The threat emanating from Afghanistan is not totally eliminated. Apart from the risk that war might erupt again, the cross-border drug-trade continues to be a pressing physical threat towards all countries in the region. The

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<sup>1</sup> Compare for example with ICG (2002) *The Afghan Transitional Administration: Prospects and Perils*, Afghanistan Briefing, Kabul/Brussels, 30 July, downloaded from the Internet 10 October 2002 on [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/afghanistan\\_southasia/reports/A400719\\_30072002.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/afghanistan_southasia/reports/A400719_30072002.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Compare with Kaiser, Robert G. (2002) "U.S. Plants Footprints in Shaky Central Asia", *Washingtonpost.com*, 27 August, downloaded from the Internet 27 August on <http://www.washingtonpost.com>.

<sup>3</sup> Compare for example with Khan, Azmat Hayat (2002) "Instability and Fragmentation in Afghanistan: Can It Be Reversed?", 25 September, Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, downloaded from the Internet 2 October 2002 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925\\_AFGHANISTAN\\_STABILITY.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925_AFGHANISTAN_STABILITY.htm).

<sup>4</sup> Central Asia is defined according to the now usual political definition, i.e., comprising the five post-Soviet states Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

<sup>5</sup> Compare for example with Kaiser, Robert G. (2002) "U.S. Plants Footprints in Shaky Central Asia", *Washingtonpost.com*, 27 August, downloaded from the Internet 27 August on <http://www.washingtonpost.com>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

drug flow out of Afghanistan has increased in 2002 and there is a general trend that the drug trafficking has increasingly shifted from the southern routes to Pakistan and Iran to the northern routes through Central Asia and Russia. Consequently, the problems caused by the drug trade for the Central Asian countries will probably be further exacerbated.<sup>7</sup> The sensitive issue of sharing the scarce water resources in the region will probably get more heated as Afghanistan is rebuilt and starts consuming more water from the Amudarya river, making the access of water from the already overused source for Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan even more limited.<sup>8</sup>

The countries also need to monitor the reactions from their big and powerful neighbours towards the increased U.S. presence in Central Asia. Russia has lost some influence in Central Asia because of the U.S. presence and the new level of international attention the region has received also from other countries, making some of the countries in the region less exclusively dependent on Russia. However, Russia still remains a central actor in Central Asia and in combination with the rapprochement between Russia and the USA after the 11 September 2001 this has eliminated any strong Russian objections against the Western deployment in the area. The Chinese leaders, however, are very much concerned about this military presence, which has significantly reduced their influence in the entire former Soviet Union (FSU) and could pose a direct threat against Chinese territory.<sup>9</sup> Iran has also voiced its concern over the increased cooperation between the U.S. and the Central Asian countries, particularly concerning the Caspian Sea region.<sup>10</sup>

## **1.1 Purpose and Outline**

This report describes the recent security-political development that has taken place in Afghanistan and Central Asia after the anti-terrorist operation started in Afghanistan, but mainly focusing on the developments during the year 2002. The report can partly be seen as a follow-up of a report on the socio-economic impact on the religious and ethnic situation in the post-Soviet Central Asian countries published in February 2002, but mainly written during the autumn 2001.<sup>11</sup> This is one reason for the emphasis on the year 2002. Another reason is that the report does not intend to describe the main battle against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, which has been extensively covered by, for example, journalists and other observers, but will focus on the development after the Taliban had fallen. Similarly, regarding the Central Asian countries, the report will describe the development that has taken place after the international anti-terrorist coalition forces had been deployed in the region, but will only very briefly mention the negotiations leading up to the actual deployment (or right to use the countries' territories in another fashion).

The earlier report did not include a separate chapter on Afghanistan, which was only described in connection with its relations to the Central Asian countries and the impact the development and civil war in Afghanistan had on the Central Asian region. Since Afghanistan was not included in its own right in the previous report and since there has not been any other reports written lately at the Division for Defence Analysis at the Swedish Defence Research Agency focusing on the internal security-political situation in Afghanistan, this report will focus especially on the situation in

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<sup>7</sup> Davis, Anthony (2002) "Afghanistan's Opium Production Rises Post-Taliban", *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Vol.14, No.12, p.28.

<sup>8</sup> Kaiser, Robert G. (2002) "U.S. Plants Footprints in Shaky Central Asia", *Washingtonpost.com*, 27 August, downloaded from the Internet 27 August on <http://www.washingtonpost.com>.

<sup>9</sup> Kellner, Thierry (2002) "China: the Uighur Situation from Independence for the Central Asian Republics to the Post 11 September Era", *UNHCR Emergency & Security Service*, Writenet Paper No. 1/2002, May.

<sup>10</sup> See for example "Iranian leader warns Kazakhstan of danger of cooperation with West - TV", Kazakh Commercial Television, 28 June 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newsline – Central Asia Political*, 28 June 2002, from BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk.

<sup>11</sup> Sandström, Emma (2002) "Central Asia – a New Afghanistan? The Consequences of the Socio-Economic Environment for Religious and Ethnic Strife" in Kiesow, Ingolf (ed.) *From Taiwan to Taliban; Two Danger Zones in Central Asia*, Scientific Report FOI-R--0393--SE, Swedish Defence Research Agency, Stockholm, pp.296-407.

Afghanistan. Furthermore, another reason for this focus is the fact that of the countries included in the report, Afghanistan is the country that has gone through the most profound changes during the period examined. Consequently, the report will include separate chapters on each of the countries in the region, but with a special emphasis on Afghanistan. Furthermore, Afghanistan will be the first country examined, since much of the changes that have taken place in the post-Soviet Central Asian states in 2002 – but not all – are a result of the development in Afghanistan.

This report outlines both the internal and external political and military relations and gives a brief account of the recent economic development as a background to the current political situation and in order to more accurately describe the prospects for future stability. The above-mentioned earlier written report on the post-Soviet Central Asian countries dealt extensively with the religious and ethnic groups in these countries. Consequently, this report will not describe the religious and ethnic factions in the Central Asian countries in any detail, but only to the extent that something regarding these issues has changed in 2002 compared to the period prior to the international anti-terrorist coalitions attack on Afghanistan and the fall of the Taliban regime. References on the religious and ethnic issues described in the earlier report will be made when appropriate.

The report ends with a concluding chapter summing up the developments in the region during the period examined and an assessment of the prospects for future stability – or conflict – in the region and how this picture has changed compared to the period prior to 11 September 2001. A development characterised as positive in this report is defined as a development leading towards increased stability, with increased stability defined as a situation with a lowered risk for major violent conflicts compared to before the period examined. Similarly, a negative development is characterised as a development leading to an increasingly unstable situation with the prospects for a major violent conflict deemed as higher than previously. Generally, the assessments in the report is made in a rather short-term future perspective, but some trends based upon the current development will also be identified for a longer or medium term development, in particular in the concluding chapter.

As a consequence of these definitions, the assessments of a positive or negative development or increased or lowered instability do not in themselves take into consideration for which persons or groups the development has become positive or negative. Rather, in an international security-political perspective it is in this case assumed that a situation with no major violent conflict is better than the opposite, *ceteris paribus*. This is closely linked to the perspective in time. For example, if the incumbent regime has strengthened its hold over the country, even by using authoritarian measures, this might strengthen the stability for the country in question in the short run, but perhaps worsen the prospects for stability in the long run. Similarly, a country with intensified public protests against the regime might create an unstable situation in the country in the short run, but might still have better prospects for a future stable development than a country where all public protests are suppressed. Who has benefited from an increasingly stable situation in a country must consequently be established from case to case.

## **1.2 Material**

Since the events described in this report had taken place within a relatively short period of time from the time the report was written, the sources included in this report are mainly in the form of shorter articles and Internet reports. The information coming from the region is often uncertain and quite often contradictory, which means that a large number of sources have to be used and compared with each other. In the cases when it has been possible, oral and other sources from people with good insight in the region have been used to confirm the information in the report (even though they are not always included among the references).

However, since there are many actors involved in the region with different interests and agendas, there is often no absolute truth to be found about the development and facts cannot always be verified with absolute certainty. Consequently, even though efforts have been made to keep the information in the report as neutral as possible, the different perspectives of the various sources used in the report will undoubtedly have coloured the content to some extent.

### **1.3 Acknowledgements**

The author would like to thank all the colleagues and regional experts who have given valuable information and comments during the process of writing this report. In particular, the author wants to thank Mr. Oscar Schlyter who scrutinised the report at a seminar.

### **1.4 List of Abbreviations**

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ATA	Afghan Transitional Administration
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organisation
DCK	Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan
FSU	Former Soviet Union
GBAO	Gorno-Badakhshon Autonomous Oblast
IHROU	Independent Human Rights Organisation of Uzbekistan
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMU	The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
IRP	Islamic Renaissance Party
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
KNB	Committee for National Security
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
NDMT	National Democratic Movement of Turkmenistan
NGO	Nongovernmental Organisation
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Organisations and Human Rights
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PRT	Provisional Reconstruction Team
RDF	Rapid Deployment Force
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan
UNODC	United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime
UOMT	United Opposition Movement of Turkmenistan
WTO	World Trade Organisation

## 2 Afghanistan



Population: 25,755,755 (July 2002 estimate)<sup>12</sup>

Major ethnic groups: Pashtuns 44%, Tajiks 25%, Hazaras 10%, Uzbeks 8%<sup>13</sup>

Border countries: Pakistan 2,430 km, Tajikistan 1,206 km, Turkmenistan 744 km, Iran 936 km, Uzbekistan 137 km, China 76 km<sup>14</sup>

President: Hamid Karzai

GDP per capita: purchasing power parity - \$800 (2000 estimate)<sup>15</sup>

National army: 1,725 (7 January 2003 estimate) of proposed 70,000<sup>16</sup>

### 2.1 Introduction

According to several sources of information, Afghanistan has become increasingly unstable during the latter part of 2002 and has been practically divided into rather loosely connected territorial zones, with the central power in Kabul exercising only a very limited amount of influence over areas outside the capital. Fighting between supporters of different factions has already occurred in various parts of the country. This implies an evident risk that the civil war might erupt again if the

<sup>12</sup> CIA (2002) *The World Factbook 2002. Afghanistan*. (online), downloaded from the Internet 18 October 2002 from <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/af.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Bodeen, Christopher (2003) "Afghan Army's Numbers Approach 2,000", Las Vegas Sun, 7 January, via Afgha.com, downloaded from the Internet 9 January 2002 on <http://www.afgha.com/?af=printnews&sid=28859>.

U.S. and other international forces were to leave the country without adequate security structures available to replace them.<sup>17</sup>

Measures to stabilise the country are thus urgently needed. According to American officials and Western diplomats, the development is also headed in this direction with U.S. operations in the country increasingly shifting towards stability operations instead of air and ground assaults.<sup>18</sup> Commenting on the continuing U.S. operation in Afghanistan in late November, General Tommy Franks, who oversees all U.S. troops in the Middle East and Central Asia, emphasised that the U.S. would continue to carry out both combat operations and reconstruction projects in Afghanistan for “as long as it takes”.<sup>19</sup> (The double roles the USA has played and continues to play in Afghanistan will be further discussed in section 2.3.1.)

However, the tasks needed in order to ensure a stable development in Afghanistan and prevent an eruption of a major violent conflict are multiple and will require both a huge effort and a substantial amount of money, which will have to come from foreign sources. Measures must be taken to strengthen the central government’s authority over territory as well as the financial sector and a national army must be formed, which needs to be combined with disarmament of the so called warlords (from now on referred to as, for example, regional leaders or local commanders) and of the ethnic militias. These are all extremely complicated tasks and will need the sustained commitment by the international community – politically, militarily and financially – for having the slightest chance of being successful.<sup>20</sup> A major diversion of international interest, especially American and Western, from Afghanistan to Iraq could consequently have catastrophic consequences for Afghanistan and the neighbouring area, Central Asia in particular.

This chapter on Afghanistan will begin with a description of the regional divisions that have become visible in the country in 2002 in section 2.2. It will give a brief description of the power struggles that have taken place in the regions, the different ethnic and religious groups living in these regions and something on the regions’ relations to each other, and, in particular, to the incumbent regime in Kabul. The description of the regions will also include some comments on the relations to foreign powers in the cases where these relations have been particularly strong.

The emphasis on these different aspects will vary from region to region depending on what is thought to be most relevant for the short term or long term prospects for stability. The particular territorial division into the regions described in section 2.2 is made because it gives a quite clear structure over the country without becoming neither too simplified nor too detailed and complex. However, it is worth emphasising that this regional division is one of several possible ways to divide Afghanistan into territorial regions.

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<sup>17</sup> See for example “Fighting Resumes in North and West of Afghanistan” (2002) *Reuters.com*, 3 October, downloaded from the Internet 4 October 2002 on <http://www.reuters.com/printerfriendly.jhtml?type=search&storyID=1530530> and Khan, Azmat Hayat (2002) “Instability and Fragmentation in Afghanistan: Can It Be Reversed?”, 25 September, Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, downloaded from the Internet 2 October 2002 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925\\_AFGHANISTAN\\_STABILITY.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925_AFGHANISTAN_STABILITY.htm).

<sup>18</sup> Washington Post (2002) “Afghan About-Face: U.S. Military Takes a Softer Tack”, *Washingtonpost.com*, 1 October, downloaded from the Internet 3 October 2002 on <http://washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A24870-2002Sep.30.html>. See also Rashid, Ahmed (2002) “US Placing Greater Emphasis on Economic Stabilization in Afghanistan”, *Eurasianet.org*, 6 September, downloaded from the Internet 4 October 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav060902.shtml>.

<sup>19</sup> Eckel, Mike (2002) “U.S. Stay ‘As Long As It Takes’ in Afghanistan, General Says”, 30 November, *Afgha.com*, downloaded from the Internet 2 December 2002 on <http://www.afgha.com/print.php3?sid=17855>.

<sup>20</sup> Compare for example with Khan, Azmat Hayat (2002) “Instability and Fragmentation in Afghanistan: Can It Be Reversed?”, 25 September, Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, downloaded from the Internet 2 October 2002 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925\\_AFGHANISTAN\\_STABILITY.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925_AFGHANISTAN_STABILITY.htm).

This section will be followed by a description on the development of the security sector in 2.3, containing a separate part on the international involvement in the security sector, in 2.3.1. The first part of the section describes the general steps taken to develop the new national army and the connected problem of disarming and incorporating former combatants in regional militias into either the new security structures or the civilian society. The second part of the section focuses more deeply on the international participation in the process to build up the security sector in Afghanistan. It mentions the influences the neighbouring countries have had on the process to build up the security sector, but focuses mainly on the involvement of the Western states and the UN in this process.

The following section, 2.4, describes the foreign political relations to the three key neighbouring states Iran, India and Pakistan. A special emphasis is given to the relations with Pakistan that will probably have the most decisive impact on the future development in Afghanistan of all the neighbouring countries. Afghanistan's foreign relations to the northern, Central Asian, neighbours, will be described in the chapters on the latter countries further down.

The last section of this chapter apart from the conclusions, section 2.5, will give a brief description of the economic prospects for the country in order to give a better picture of the prospects for stability or instability in Afghanistan. A separate part of this section (2.5.1) will describe the development of the drugs production and trade in Afghanistan. The drug production and trade hamper not only the development of an economy that is independent of the drugs trade in the short run, but also the international relations of Afghanistan, especially with the neighbouring countries. If the drugs production and trade cannot be substantially lowered, they can consequently affect Afghanistan's possibilities for trade and international economic cooperation even in a longer perspective.

## **2.2 Regional Divisions**

According to Dr. Azmat Hayat Khan, director of the Area Study Center for Central Asia at the University at Peshawar, one year after the terrorist attacks against the World Trade Centre, Afghanistan can be described as literally divided into eight territorial zones, under the more or less firm control by leaders of different ethnic groups and other factions in the country. Khan writes that all the ethnic-based and other factional groupings are hoarding weapons in preparation for an anticipated violent conflict when the U.S. troops leave the country. Khan stresses that the differences are not only between Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns, even though this is the main ethnic dividing line with the greatest risk for turning violent, but also between Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras.<sup>21</sup>

The ethnic Pashtuns, from which most members of the Taliban movement were drawn, account for nearly half of the population in Afghanistan and dominate the southern part of the country. The United Front<sup>22</sup> was mainly comprised of the three biggest ethnic minority groups, of which the Tajiks is the most sizeable with around 25 percent of the total population in the country, followed

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<sup>21</sup> Khan, Azmat Hayat (2002) "Instability and Fragmentation in Afghanistan: Can It Be Reversed?", 25 September, Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, downloaded from the Internet 2 October 2002 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925\\_AFGHANISTAN\\_STABILITY.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925_AFGHANISTAN_STABILITY.htm).

<sup>22</sup> The United Front is often referred to by their former name, the Northern Alliance, which consisted of allied ethnic Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara forces. When this coalition in the late 1990s joined forces with other groups that outside their ethnic constituencies, including a Pashtun group, they changed the name to the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan, usually referred to simply as the United Front. See for example Human Rights Watch (2001) *Backgrounder on Afghanistan: History of War*, October, downloaded from the Internet 14 October 2002 on <http://www.hrw.org/backgrounder/asia/afghan-bck1023.htm>.

by the Hazaras, comprising about 10 percent of the population and the Uzbeks, numbering approximately 8 per cent of the total Afghan population.<sup>23</sup>

The first zone identified by Azmat Hayat Khan is *Kabul*, nominally under the control by President Hamid Karzai, who heads the Afghan Transitional Administration (ATA), and seat of the international anti-terrorist coalition, which maintains the military stability in the area. However, according to Khan, the U.S. forces only have control around the Bagram airfield and over the airspace.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, security incidents do occur also in Kabul, despite the presence of the UN mandated International Security Force for Afghanistan (ISAF) in the capital. For example, in late November 2002 there was a failed assassination attempt on Defence Minister Muhammed Qasim Fahim in Kabul. There have been recurring rocket attacks directed against both Afghan official targets and against American military targets, not only in Kabul but all over the country. The attacks have generally been small, but still contribute to a growing sense of instability in the area. The stridently anti-American Islamist party leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who is thought to be hiding in southeast Afghanistan, has been a prime suspect of many of these attacks.<sup>25</sup>

The daily government functions in Kabul are mainly in the hands of the United Front, or more precisely, the Shura-i-Nazar (Supervisory Council).<sup>26</sup> This council was formed by members within the primarily ethnically Tajik party *Jamiat-i-Islami* and is presently controlled by the powerful troika of Defence Minister Muhammed Qasim Fahim, Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah and former Interior Minister Younos Qanooni.<sup>27</sup> According to Azmat Hayat Khan, the Shura-i-Nazar is financed and armed by India, Iran, Russia and some Central Asian countries and all these countries are exerting a considerable influence on Afghan affairs (the foreign influence will be developed in greater detail further down).<sup>28</sup>

The hopes of many ethnic Pashtuns that the heavy influence of the United Front and Shura-i-Nazar would become more balanced in connection with the Loya Jirga were not realised. Even if the ethnic Pashtuns are represented with important posts in the administration – most notably the presidency, but also the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Interior – there is nevertheless a widespread feeling among Pashtuns that the president has sold himself out to the United Front and that the Pashtuns are being neglected, which could fuel increasing future tensions.<sup>29</sup> However, despite the described problems, the general security and human rights situation in Kabul has nevertheless improved during 2002 in comparison with at least some of the other regions in the country, primarily thanks to the strong international presence in the capital area.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> CIA (2002) *The World Factbook 2002. Afghanistan*. (online), downloaded from the Internet 18 October 2002 from <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/af.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Compare for example with Khan, Azmat Hayat (2002) “Instability and Fragmentation in Afghanistan: Can It Be Reversed?”, 25 September, Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, downloaded from the Internet 2 October 2002 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925\\_AFGHANISTAN\\_STABILITY.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925_AFGHANISTAN_STABILITY.htm).

<sup>25</sup> Prusher, Ilene R. (2002) “Recurring Attacks in Kabul Are Small but Symbolic”, *Christian Science Monitor*, 29 November, downloaded from [Afgha.com](http://www.afgha.com/print.php3?sid=17841) 29 November on <http://www.afgha.com/print.php3?sid=17841>.

<sup>26</sup> Khan, Azmat Hayat (2002) “Instability and Fragmentation in Afghanistan: Can It Be Reversed?”, 25 September, Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, downloaded from the Internet 2 October 2002 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925\\_AFGHANISTAN\\_STABILITY.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925_AFGHANISTAN_STABILITY.htm).

<sup>27</sup> ICG (2002) *The Afghan Transitional Administration: Prospects and Perils*, Afghanistan Briefing, Kabul/Brussels, 30 July, downloaded from the Internet 10 October 2002 on [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/afghanistan\\_southasia/reports/A400719\\_30072002.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/afghanistan_southasia/reports/A400719_30072002.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> Khan, Azmat Hayat (2002) “Instability and Fragmentation in Afghanistan: Can It Be Reversed?”, 25 September, Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, downloaded from the Internet 2 October 2002 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925\\_AFGHANISTAN\\_STABILITY.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925_AFGHANISTAN_STABILITY.htm).

<sup>29</sup> Blomgren, Jan: “Karzai vädjar om militär hjälp”, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 3 December 2002, downloaded from the Internet on [http://www.svd.se/dynamiskt/Utrikes/did\\_3682041.asp](http://www.svd.se/dynamiskt/Utrikes/did_3682041.asp).

<sup>30</sup> Human Rights Watch (2002) *Afghanistan's Bonn Agreement One Year Later. A Catalogue of Missed Opportunities*, 5 December, downloaded from the Internet 5 December 2002 on <http://www.hrw.org/backgrounder/asia/Afghanistan/bonn1yr-bck.pdf>.



The second zone identified by Khan is comprised by *Nangarhar, Kunar and Laghman* in south-eastern Afghanistan. This area, surrounding the important city Jalalabad, is controlled by the family of the late Vice President Haji Qadir, who was assassinated in Kabul on 6 July 2002. However, the family only controls certain pockets in the area.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, clashes have occurred between local commanders in Nangarhar who are trying to consolidate power within the power vacuum created after Qadir's death. One important reason for these fights is the desire to gain control over the trade routes through Nangarhar Province, that have been described by international drug control officials as a major conduit for heroin smuggled from Afghanistan to Pakistan.<sup>32</sup> Nangarhar has long been one of the most drug-producing areas in Afghanistan and has continued to rank second in importance after the southern province Helmand in the year 2002.<sup>33</sup> However, Nangarhar is also one of the provinces in which the poppy eradication programme, launched by the interim government in January 2002, has allegedly been most successful, even though the figure for the percentage of destroyed poppy cultivation varies.<sup>34</sup>

The third zone is "*Greater Paktia*" encompassing the four Pashtun-dominated provinces Paktia, Paktika, Logar and Khost south of the above mentioned area and neighbouring Pakistan, which has always been a stronghold of the royal family. This area has been controlled by Bacha Khan Zadran and other pro-king elements that are opposed to the current government.<sup>35</sup> However, his public support has been very weak and Karzai, who had appointed Zadran governor of Paktia in the first days of the interim administration, decided to dismiss him from his post already in February 2002 after he ordered an assault on his Pashtun political rivals in Gardez, the capital in Paktia.<sup>36</sup> Zadran has subsequently managed to alienate the Kabul government, but also his own proclaimed patron, ex-king Zahir Shah, and reportedly also the Americans.<sup>37</sup> Bacha Khan Zadran and his forces have earlier this year engaged in recurrent battles with Zadran's Pashtun rivals in both Paktia and Khost, which has complicated the efforts of the antiterror coalition to track down remnants of the Taliban and al-Qaeda.<sup>38</sup> Many al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters are thought to have fled to this mountainous area after the fall of the Taliban regime.

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<sup>31</sup> Khan, Azmat Hayat (2002) "Instability and Fragmentation in Afghanistan: Can It Be Reversed?", 25 September, Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, downloaded from the Internet 2 October 2002 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925\\_AFGHANISTAN\\_STABILITY.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925_AFGHANISTAN_STABILITY.htm).

<sup>32</sup> Synovitz, Ron (2002) "Afghanistan: Warlordism Proliferates, Threatening Security and Reconstruction", *Eurasianet.org*, 28 July, downloaded on the Internet 16 October 2002 from <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav072802.shtml>.

<sup>33</sup> See for example Davis, Anthony (2002) "Afghanistan's Opium Production Rises Post-Taliban", *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Vol.14, No.12, p.28.

<sup>34</sup> Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud (2002) "Afghanistan's Opium Production Rises Post-Taliban", *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Vol.14, No.12, p.29.

<sup>35</sup> Khan, Azmat Hayat (2002) "Instability and Fragmentation in Afghanistan: Can It Be Reversed?", 25 September, Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, downloaded from the Internet 2 October 2002 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925\\_AFGHANISTAN\\_STABILITY.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925_AFGHANISTAN_STABILITY.htm) and Sahid, Zultan Aziz (2002) "Khost in Turmoil", *Institute for War and Peace*, Afghan Recovery Report No.21, 2 August, downloaded from the Internet 9 October 2002 on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net).

<sup>36</sup> "Afghan Warlord Defiant Amid Threats" (2002) *CBSNews.com*, 5 August, downloaded from the Internet 17 October 2002 on <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/07/23/attack/printable515941.shtml> and Synovitz, Ron (2002) "Afghanistan: Zadran Threatens Karzai's Government, Complicates Antiterrorism Campaign", *RFE/RL Weekday Magazine - Afghanistan*, 10 September, downloaded from the Internet 16 October 2002 on <http://www.rferl.org/ncal/features/2002/09/10092002163404.asp>.

<sup>37</sup> Sahid, Zultan Aziz (2002) "Khost in Turmoil", *Institute for War and Peace*, Afghan Recovery Report No.21, 2 August, downloaded from the Internet 9 October 2002 on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net).

<sup>38</sup> Synovitz, Ron (2002) "Afghanistan: Warlordism Proliferates, Threatening Security and Reconstruction", *Eurasianet.org*, 28 July, downloaded on the Internet 16 October 2002 from <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav072802.shtml>.

In mid-September 2002, government forces finally managed to gain control over Khost Province, where Zadran and his well-equipped fighters had taken refuge, but Zadran has pledged to continue fighting to regain control of the whole area of greater Paktia. The Americans distanced itself from Zadran following an assault by Zadran against his political rivals in Gardez in May 2002, but continued to rely on his cooperation for access to the area controlled by his forces in Paktia, Paktika and Khost. According to U.S. military spokesman Colonel Roger King, the U.S. forces will not take part in or assist the central government in any factional dispute unless directly challenged.<sup>39</sup> The area is important from an economic point of view, since it generates customs revenues from goods imported by road from Pakistan.<sup>40</sup> At the beginning of 2003, Zadran and Hamid Karzai started to negotiate an end to the standoff via a mediator, probably prompted by American complaints to Zadran that his activity was inhibiting U.S. operations.<sup>41</sup>

*Kandahar* and the other south-western areas comprise a large fourth zone controlled by supporters to the former king, Zahir Shah.<sup>42</sup> Gul Agha Sherzai had been governor in Kandahar until the Taliban took over the city and turned the region into its stronghold. In December 2001, he was reappointed as governor of Kandahar.<sup>43</sup> Sherzai has been in close contact with Washington and the U.S. military since the 11 September 2001. The USA has supplied Sherzai with weapons, cash and communications gear both before and after forces allied with Sherzai took the city of Kandahar. The fact that the second largest U.S. base in Afghanistan is located just north of Kandahar reinforces these contacts. But Sherzai is also an ethnic Pashtun and has to be sensitive to the increasing resentment of the U.S. operations from the people living in the Pashtun-dominated southern area of Afghanistan.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, the local armed forces are not directly under Sherzai's control, but under a local commander, which considerably limits his power. Consequently, Sherzai's position has been maintained primarily thanks to the U.S. support.<sup>45</sup>

*The Herat region* in the west of the country constitutes the fifth zone, adjacent to the border with Iran. The governor of Herat is the ethnic Tajik General Ismail Khan, who re-captured the control over the area from the Taliban in November 2001. Khan has a firm grip of the Persian-speaking population in the area, especially in the city of Herat, but lacks influence over the Pashtun-dominated countryside. Khan is pro-Iranian and anti-Pashtun and a close supporter of former President Burhanuddin Rabbani.<sup>46</sup> Ismail Khan's forces have clashed several times this year with the forces of the rivalling local commander Amanullah Khan in southern Herat. Amanullah Khan, who is an ethnic Pashtun, and Ismail Khan have been strong rivals for several years, but the clashes can be linked as much to the profitable trade routes in the area as to the ethnic divide between the

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<sup>39</sup> Synovitz, Ron (2002) "Afghanistan: Zadran Threatens Karzai's Government, Complicates Antiterrorism Campaign", *RFE/RL Weekday Magazine - Afghanistan*, 10 September, downloaded from the Internet 16 October 2002 on <http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2002/09/10092002163404.asp>.

<sup>40</sup> "Afghan Warlord Defiant Amid Threats" (2002) *CBSNews.com*, 5 August, downloaded from the Internet 17 October 2002 on <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/07/23/attack/printable515941.shtml>.

<sup>41</sup> Gall, Carlotta (2003) "Warlord Is Said to End Standoff with Kabul", *The New York Times*, 19 January, downloaded from the Internet 20 January 2002 on <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/19/international/asia/19AFGH.html>.

<sup>42</sup> Khan, Azmat Hayat (2002) "Instability and Fragmentation in Afghanistan: Can It Be Reversed?", 25 September, Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia - Caucasus Analyst*, downloaded from the Internet 2 October 2002 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925\\_AFGHANISTAN\\_STABILITY.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925_AFGHANISTAN_STABILITY.htm).

<sup>43</sup> "Kandahar Rivals Broker Deal" (2001) *BBC News*, 9 December, downloaded from the Internet 21 October 2002 on [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/1700082.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/1700082.stm).

<sup>44</sup> "Afghan Demand Demonstrates Opposition to U.S. Presence" (2002) *Stratfore.com*, 16 July, downloaded from the Internet 21 July 2002 on [http://www.stratfore.com/standard/analysis\\_view.php?ID=205304](http://www.stratfore.com/standard/analysis_view.php?ID=205304).

<sup>45</sup> Council of the European Union (2002) Report No. 87/2002 from the EU Special Representative to Afghanistan, 21 October.

<sup>46</sup> Khan, Azmat Hayat (2002) "Instability and Fragmentation in Afghanistan: Can It Be Reversed?", 25 September, Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia - Caucasus Analyst*, downloaded from the Internet 2 October 2002 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925\\_AFGHANISTAN\\_STABILITY.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925_AFGHANISTAN_STABILITY.htm).

two men.<sup>47</sup> The Americans have earlier offered to mediate in the conflict between Ismail Khan and the Pashtuns, but Ismail Khan has declined the offer. Ismail Khan's army is thought to number up to 25,000 to 30,000 troops<sup>48</sup>, but the actual figure is difficult to estimate and might be lower.

The fighting is not only taking place along a significant transport corridor connecting Pakistan to Turkmenistan and the rest of Central Asia via Kandahar and Herat, but it is also at the centre of the proposed route for a gas pipeline that is supposed to deliver gas from Turkmenistan to western Pakistan, in which a U.S.-led consortium has been engaged.<sup>49</sup> However, it is the customs revenues that constitute the most attractive feature of being in control of the area for the time being and Ismail Khan reportedly earns millions of dollars a month from duties on goods from Turkmenistan and Iran.<sup>50</sup> Officials in Afghanistan have estimated that less than ten per cent of these revenues eventually become part of the central budget – the remaining amount stays with Ismail Khan in Herat and is a main reason that he can continue to pay for such a large private militia.<sup>51</sup>

*Mazar-i-Sharif* and the surrounding provinces in the north of the country have long been under the control of the powerful Uzbek commander Abdul Rashid Dostum, who has a relatively well organised band of followers. Even so, his hold does not comprise the whole area, but is confined to certain pockets.<sup>52</sup> This has been one of the most volatile regions in the country lately, with fighting regularly breaking out between the rivalling forces of, on the one hand, Dostum, and on the other, the Tajik military commander Ustad Atta Mohammad. Though nominally allies in the United Front, the rivalry between their two factions and struggle for influence and power in the country's northern area goes back years.<sup>53</sup> Mohammad belongs to the Jamiat-i-Islami party that forms the backbone of the Shura-i-Nazar and a core in the United Front. In April 2002, he was promoted to full general by Hamid Karzai (who at the time was chairman of the Afghan Interim Administration).<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, Dostum, who is leader of the predominantly Uzbek political organisation Junbesh-e-Melli, also has strong backing of the transitional government. He has been deputy defence minister and has been appointed President Karzai's special representative in the north.<sup>55</sup>

Despite their formal alliance, Dostum and Mohammad and their respective factions have been unable to trust each other. The two sides, as well as representatives of the Hazara community, have

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<sup>47</sup> "Fighting Resumes in North and West of Afghanistan" (2002) *Reuters.com*, 3 October, downloaded from the Internet 4 October 2002 on <http://www.reuters.com/printerfriendly.jhtml?type=search&storyID=1530530>.

<sup>48</sup> Synovitz, Ron (2002) "Afghanistan: Warlordism Proliferates, Threatening Security and Reconstruction", *Eurasianet.org*, 28 July, downloaded on the Internet 16 October 2002 from <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav072802.shtml>. Compare also with Collett-White, Mike (2002) "Warlords Are Afghanistan's New Worry Number One", *Reuters.com*, 11 December, via *Afgaha.com*, downloaded from the Internet 12 December 2002 on <http://www.afgha.com/print.php3?sid=17958>.

<sup>49</sup> Synovitz, Ron (2002) "Afghanistan: Warlordism Proliferates, Threatening Security and Reconstruction", *Eurasianet.org*, 28 July, downloaded on the Internet 16 October 2002 from <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav072802.shtml>.

<sup>50</sup> Reuters (2002) "13 Reported Dead in Fighting in West Afghanistan", 1 December, via Yahoo!News, downloaded from the Internet 2 December 2002 on <http://story.news.yahoo.com>.

<sup>51</sup> Collett-White, Mike (2002) "Warlords Are Afghanistan's New Worry Number One", *Reuters.com*, 11 December, via *Afgaha.com*, downloaded from the Internet 12 December 2002 on <http://www.afgha.com/print.php3?sid=17958>.

<sup>52</sup> Khan, Azmat Hayat (2002) "Instability and Fragmentation in Afghanistan: Can It Be Reversed?", 25 September, Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, downloaded from the Internet 2 October 2002 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925\\_AFGHANISTAN\\_STABILITY.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925_AFGHANISTAN_STABILITY.htm).

<sup>53</sup> Khan, Samander (2002) "Mazar Stand-Off", *Institute for War and Peace*, Afghan Recovery Report No.21, 2 August, downloaded from the Internet 9 October 2002 on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net) and "Fighting Resumes in North and West of Afghanistan" (2002) *Reuters.com*, 3 October, downloaded from the Internet 4 October 2002 on <http://www.reuters.com/printerfriendly.jhtml?type=search&storyID=1530530>.

<sup>54</sup> *Afgaha.com* - Press Agency - Afghanistan (2002) *Who is Who*, downloaded from the Internet 15 October 2002 on <http://www.afgha.com/glossaire-rech.php>.

<sup>55</sup> Khan, Samander (2002) "Mazar Stand-Off", *Institute for War and Peace*, Afghan Recovery Report No.21, 2 August, downloaded from the Internet 9 October 2002 on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net).

begun UN-brokered talks about disarming their men, but the UN representative in the region said in August that he believed only about ten per cent of the arms in the region had been gathered at the time. In fact, unlike the factional fighting in other parts of Afghanistan, the struggle in the Mazar region has involved the manoeuvring of heavy weapons, which has caused the Americans to intervene in order to get a peace agreement between the two sides. The Pashtuns living in the area have also been targeted by fighting, causing many thousands to flee to southern parts of the country. Geographically, Atta Mohammad's control extends over large parts of the provinces to the west of the Balkh province, in which Mazar-i-Sharif is situated, but he is manoeuvring to gain better control over the areas around the city.<sup>56</sup>

*The Hazarajat area* around Bamyan in the centre of the country is ethnically Hazara and comprises a seventh zone under the control of Vice President Karim Khalili's faction.<sup>57</sup> Khalili is the leader of both the ethnic Hazaras and the Hizb-e-Wahadat party, which has been classified as pro-Iranian and opposed to the administration under President Karzai by the opponents to the group. Recently, however, Khalili has been trying to move his party away from the Iranian influence and turn it into a Hazara nationalist movement. The Hazaras, who represent both an ethnic and a religious minority as Shiites in Afghanistan – and are spread all over the country although their numbers are largest in Hazarajat – have long argued for increased regional autonomy as a safe-guard for their rights. However, Khalili has lately tempered this demand by promoting a more egalitarian Afghan nationalism.<sup>58</sup>

The population of Bamyan, which is one of the economically most deprived regions in the country, now hope that Khalili's post in the transitional administration will bring economic benefits to the region. Military officials have also expressed hope that Khalili's presence in the government will help end the sporadic factional fighting that has been taking place between Hizb-e-Wahadat militias and fighters from the Jamiat-i-Islami party.<sup>59</sup>

Finally, *Parwan, Panjsher and Kunduz* are mainly under the influence of the Shura-i-Nazar, but there are also important pockets of Pashtuns living in the Kunduz province, who have managed to keep themselves outside of Tajik control.<sup>60</sup> Vice President Mohammad Fahim has particular influence in the north-eastern area.<sup>61</sup> He inherited the militia forces from Ahmad Shah Masood after the latter's death in September 2002. These are mainly comprised of ethnic Tajiks from the Panjsher valley, that is, with the same background as Fahim himself, and they have kept growing in size.<sup>62</sup> Fahim has combined this militia with the small remnants of the national army and appointed his

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Khan, Azmat Hayat (2002) "Instability and Fragmentation in Afghanistan: Can It Be Reversed?", 25 September, Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, downloaded from the Internet 2 October 2002 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925\\_AFGHANISTAN\\_STABILITY.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925_AFGHANISTAN_STABILITY.htm).

<sup>58</sup> ICG (2002) *The Afghan Transitional Administration: Prospects and Perils*, Afghanistan Briefing, Kabul/Brussels, 30 July, downloaded from the Internet 10 October 2002 on [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/afghanistan\\_southasia/reports/A400719\\_30072002.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/afghanistan_southasia/reports/A400719_30072002.pdf). Hazaras, as mentioned above, make up 10 per cent of the population in Afghanistan. Afghanistan have about 84 per cent Sunni Muslims and 15 per cent Shiite Muslims totally. See for example CIA (2002) *The World Factbook 2002. Afghanistan*. (online), downloaded from the Internet 18 October 2002 from <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/af.html>.

<sup>59</sup> Wali, Abdul & Maruf, Said (2002) "Local Hopes Riding on Khalili", *Institute for War and Peace*, Afghan Recovery Report No.22, 9 August, downloaded from the Internet 9 October 2002 on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net).

<sup>60</sup> Khan, Azmat Hayat (2002) "Instability and Fragmentation in Afghanistan: Can It Be Reversed?", 25 September, Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, downloaded from the Internet 2 October 2002 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925\\_AFGHANISTAN\\_STABILITY.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925_AFGHANISTAN_STABILITY.htm).

<sup>61</sup> ICG (2002) *The Afghan Transitional Administration: Prospects and Perils*, Afghanistan Briefing, Kabul/Brussels, 30 July, downloaded from the Internet 10 October 2002 on [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/afghanistan\\_southasia/reports/A400719\\_30072002.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/afghanistan_southasia/reports/A400719_30072002.pdf).

<sup>62</sup> McCarthy, Rory (2002) "Dawn Raids Stoke Fire of Resentment", *The Guardian*, 8 October, downloaded from the Internet 18 October 2002 on <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Print/0,3858,4517116,00.html>.

own generals, most of which are Panjshiri Tajiks, and consequently controls the largest and most effective fighting force in Afghanistan.<sup>63</sup>

In April 2002, Fahim had himself promoted from General to Marshal in order to be able to assert command of all Afghan forces, but he has kept defending the continued dominance of Panjshiri Tajiks in the military and security services.<sup>64</sup> However, in connection with Karzai's effort to disarm the regional commanders, further described below, the United States has funded a project aimed at reforming the Defence Ministry. According to this project, Fahim is requested to replace at least 33 senior officers with representatives from other ethnic groups, which is probably necessary if the demobilisation is to succeed. Furthermore, in order to get the other local commanders and religious and ethnic leaders to cooperate, observers have noted that Fahim will probably have to hand in the cache of weapons reports tell he has stockpiled in the Panjsher valley.<sup>65</sup> In mid-January, Mohammad Fahim reported that he had replaced 16 ethnic Tajik generals with officers from the Pashtun, Uzbek and Hazara ethnic groups. However, the most senior post to change was that of the ethnic Uzbek deputy Defence Minister Rashid Dostum, who was replaced with an ethnic Pashtun.<sup>66</sup>

### **2.3 The Emerging Security Structures**

The process to build up the new national security structures in Afghanistan has started and the American military commanders who have the main responsibility for training the new force has been generally pleased with the progress so far. However, it is a very sensitive and complicated process to create a national army in a country that has been plagued by civil war for such a long period of time as Afghanistan. Consequently, it will take several years before the security sector can work efficiently throughout the country. On 2 December 2002, President Karzai signed a decree on the creation of the new national army. The decree limits the army to 70,000 soldiers, but this is still a substantial figure compared to the newly trained national army that was reported to have reached 1,725 men after a new battalion was added in early January 2003.<sup>67</sup>

According to the U.S. Afghan coordinator, David Johnson, it would cost 350 million US-dollars a year for two years to train, equip and uphold such an army, and this money still needs to be raised. In addition to the economic and technical difficulties involved in building and maintaining the new national army, the earlier described private militias operating under various local commands need to be disarmed or incorporated into the new army. This will probably prove to be a task as complicated

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<sup>63</sup> ICG (2002) *The Afghan Transitional Administration: Prospects and Perils*, Afghanistan Briefing, Kabul/Brussels, 30 July, downloaded from the Internet 10 October 2002 on [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/afghanistan\\_southasia/reports/A400719\\_30072002.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/afghanistan_southasia/reports/A400719_30072002.pdf).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Rashid, Ahmed (2003) "Karzai Mounts Anti-Warlord Campaign in Afghanistan", *Eurasianet.org*, 3 January, downloaded from the Internet 8 January 2003 on [http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav010303\\_pr.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav010303_pr.shtml).

<sup>66</sup> Shah, Amir (2003) "Afghan Defence Minister Replaces 16 Generals to Bring in New Ethnic Groups", AP World – General News, 20 February, via Yahoo!News, downloaded from the Internet 21 February 2003 on <http://story.news.yahoo.com>.

<sup>67</sup> Tanner, Adam (2002) "Afghans Battle as Summit Abroad Hails Progress", *Reuters.com*, 2 December, downloaded from the Internet 3 December 2002 on <http://www.reuters.com/printerFriendlyPopup.jhtml?type=worldNews&storyID=1835> and Bodeen, Christopher (2003) "Afghan Army's Numbers Approach 2,000", Las Vegas Sun, 7 January, via *Afgaha.com*, downloaded from the Internet 9 January 2002 on <http://www.afgha.com/?af=printnews&sid=28859>. The desertion rate from the new army was earlier quite high because of the low payment, but is now reported to have improved.

as it is sensitive.<sup>68</sup> The United States and France together with the United Kingdom and Turkey have taken the main responsibility for providing training to the new national Afghan army.<sup>69</sup>

The Defence Ministry has earlier signed contracts with India to train army and police officers, without the knowledge of President Karzai.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, in February 2002, Defence Minister Fahim stated in connection with a visit to Moscow that the new Afghan army would be based on the Russian model and that Russian weaponry would be the economically most acceptable choice for this army.<sup>71</sup> There have also surfaced reports that weapons to the new army will be donated from several former Soviet block countries and that the United States has already provided the same army with uniforms and other basic supplies.<sup>72</sup> Even if all the promised help does reach the new Afghan army, it will probably take a number of years until it can become a matching force to the present size of the private militias in Afghanistan (which, as was described in section 2.2, in some cases number several thousand). Additional time will be needed in order to reach the goal of 70,000 servicemen, at least at the present rate of training the new soldiers.

Many observers describe the local commanders and their independent militias as the primary threat to future peace and stability in Afghanistan and they have made it practically impossible for the ATA to establish control over the country outside Kabul.<sup>73</sup> The disarmament of these forces or their incorporation into the new national army would thus be a major step on the way towards transforming Afghanistan into a civilian society under the centralised rule of a legitimate authority. On December 16, 2002, President Karzai issued a decree forbidding persons holding civilian posts from also engaging in military activity. Furthermore, he ordered the government to complete the process of disarming the country in six months time, which representatives from the Defence Ministry said they would be able to accomplish.<sup>74</sup>

This was seen as the first major attempt on behalf of the authorities to challenge the power of the Afghan regional leaders and commanders and to improve the prospects for rebuilding a national army. A representative for one of the most powerful regional leader, Abdul Rashid Dostum in the north, immediately responded that they would adhere to the ruling of the decree. However, all the regional leaders, including Herat governor Ismail Khan, have not been that quick in their responses to the decree.<sup>75</sup> The United Nations had at the time of the decree reported some success in the disarmament process going on in north-eastern Afghanistan, but in other areas, such as around Mazar-i-Sharif, the process had been much slower and it has overall been ethnically unbalanced.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Compare for example with Tanner, Adam (2002) "Afghans Battle as Summit Abroad Hails Progress", *Reuters.com*, 2 December, downloaded from the Internet 3 December 2002 on <http://www.reuters.com/printerFriendlyPopup.jhtml?type=worldNews&storyID=1835>.

<sup>69</sup> Human Rights Watch (2002) *Afghanistan's Bonn Agreement One Year Later. A Catalogue of Missed Opportunities*, 5 December, downloaded from the Internet 5 December 2002 on <http://www.hrw.org/backgrounder/asia/Afghanistan/bonn1yr-bck.pdf>.

<sup>70</sup> Khan, Azmat Hayat (2002) "Instability and Fragmentation in Afghanistan: Can It Be Reversed?", 25 September, Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, downloaded from the Internet 2 October 2002 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925\\_AFGHANISTAN\\_STABILITY.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-09-25/20020925_AFGHANISTAN_STABILITY.htm).

<sup>71</sup> "Afghan Forces to Use Russian Arms" (2002) *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, Newsbites, 13 February, downloaded from the Internet 18 October on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-02-13/2002-02-13\\_NewsBites.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-02-13/2002-02-13_NewsBites.htm).

<sup>72</sup> Bodeen, Christopher (2003) "Afghan Army's Numbers Approach 2,000", Las Vegas Sun, 7 January, via *Afgaha.com*, downloaded from the Internet 9 January 2002 on <http://www.afgha.com/?af=printnews&sid=28859>.

<sup>73</sup> See for example Collett-White, Mike (2002) "Warlords Are Afghanistan's New Worry Number One", *Reuters.com*, 11 December, via *Afgaha.com*, downloaded from the Internet 12 December 2002 on <http://www.afgha.com/print.php3?sid=17958>.

<sup>74</sup> "Afghan Ruler Aims to Disarm Country in Six Months" (2002) *The State*, 17 December, via *Afgaha.com*, downloaded from the Internet 18 December 2002 on <http://www.afgha.com/print.php3?sid=18061>.

<sup>75</sup> "Afghan Warlords Accept Karzai Decree" (2002) *BBC News*, 17 December, via *Afgaha.com*, downloaded from the Internet 18 December 2002 on <http://www.afgha.com/print.php3?sid=18060>.

<sup>76</sup> "Afghan Ruler Aims to Disarm Country in Six Months" (2002) *The State*, 17 December, via *Afgaha.com*, downloaded from the Internet 18 December 2002 on <http://www.afgha.com/print.php3?sid=18061>.

In February 2003, Hamid Karzai got pledges for additional international aid worth 51 million US-dollars. The sum will be used to fund a substantial part of the new and comprehensive disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programme drawn up with help from the UN that will help former militia combatants train for civilian occupations or to join the national army.<sup>77</sup>

Some other regional and religious leaders still retain both influence and several supporters in certain areas of the countries, despite having broken with the government and challenged its authority. Apart from the earlier described Bacha Khan Zadran, who said in late December 2002 that the tribes loyal to him in the Paktia region would not hand over any weapons to the government<sup>78</sup>, the most notorious of these is Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. In early January 2003, Hekmatyar declared his intention to keep up jihad – holy war – against the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan, which he sees as an occupational power. There have been reports that Hekmatyar's party, Hezb-e Eslami, has been split into two parts, of which one remains loyal to Hekmatyar and the other to the deputy leader of the party, who wants a closer cooperation with the incumbent regime.<sup>79</sup>

Abdurrah Rasul Sayyaf is another Islamic party leader who, like Hekmatyar, has been suspected of being behind attacks against the coalition forces and the Afghan government and who could cause future problems for Karzai and his regime. Sayyaf keeps his headquarters north of Kabul. Unlike Hekmatyar, Sayyaf took part in the Loya Jirga in June, but he is a strong critic of the Karzai regime as well as of the foreign (Western) presence in Afghanistan. Sayyaf wants Afghanistan to be ruled by a strict Islamic regime, although probably not as harsh as the Taliban regime, and according to Western officials, he might be supported by hundreds of thousands of Afghans. Even though he might be aiming for the power for himself, and was greeted as a future leader of Afghanistan at a visit to the Saudi Arabian embassy, his present primary interest seems to be the removal of the American and other international military presence from Afghanistan.<sup>80</sup>

### 2.3.1 The International Involvement in the Security Sector

The influence of foreign forces in Afghanistan is very prominent in the security field and has served to uphold the power of different regional commanders at the same time as efforts have been made to rebuild a national army. During 2002, The United States, Russia, Iran, Pakistan and some other countries continued to supply different Afghan regions and their leaders with weapons and other supplies.<sup>81</sup> At the same time, these countries officially support the Karzai regime, but there are different parts acting within these countries that have had different agendas inside Afghanistan. For example, considering the United States, the Pentagon has had a military campaign to conduct in Afghanistan, which has forced them to cooperate with different local commanders who know the terrain. Simultaneously, the U.S. Department of State has given support to the central government under President Karzai as well as to the processes of building up a national army and disarming the private militias that will strengthen the long-term stability in Afghanistan. These multiple roles and

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<sup>77</sup> Compare for example with "Karzai Says Donors Still Committed to Afghanistan" (2003) ABC News, 22 February, via Afgha.com, downloaded from the Internet on <http://www.afgha.com/?af=printnews&sid=30519>.

<sup>78</sup> "Renegade Commander in Afghan Southeast Refuses to Disarm", Afghan Islamic Press news agency, 23 December 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 23 December 2002, from BBC Monitoring [topic@mon.bbc.co.uk](mailto:topic@mon.bbc.co.uk).

<sup>79</sup> Compare with "Afghan Islamic Party Official Takes Middle Road in Party Split", Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran External Service, 9 January 2003, in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 9 January 2003, from BBC Monitoring [topic@mon.bbc.co.uk](mailto:topic@mon.bbc.co.uk) and "Rebel Leader Vows Jihad against Foreign Forces in Afghanistan, Iran Radio", Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran External Service, 25 December 2002, in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 25 December 2002, from BBC Monitoring [topic@mon.bbc.co.uk](mailto:topic@mon.bbc.co.uk).

<sup>80</sup> Squitier, Tom (2002) "Karzai Foe Chides U.S. Role", *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 28 September, downloaded from the Internet 28 November 2002 on [http://www.sltrib.com/2002/Sep/09282002/nation\\_w/2241.htm](http://www.sltrib.com/2002/Sep/09282002/nation_w/2241.htm).

<sup>81</sup> Human Rights Watch (2002) *Afghanistan's Bonn Agreement One Year Later. A Catalogue of Missed Opportunities*, 5 December, downloaded from the Internet 5 December 2002 on <http://www.hrw.org/background/asia/Afghanistan/bonn1yr-bck.pdf>.

agendas exist also within Russia, Iran and Pakistan and can explain the sometimes contradictory behaviour of these states regarding their relations to Afghanistan.

Nevertheless, the international support of different factional leaders has served to strengthen the division of Afghanistan into more or less independent regions at the expense of the central authorities. To uphold the power of certain regional commanders or ethnic and religious leaders has been seen as the only way to gain some level of stability throughout the country due to the continued instability and the reluctance on behalf of the international community to provide additional international forces to the different regions in Afghanistan. For the local commanders, it has been equally natural to turn to their traditional providers of weapons as well as other supplies in such a situation and without a properly functioning central government. The dilemma is that the practice has made the local commanders increasingly entrenched in their power positions, which will make it even more difficult to unite the country in the future and has increased the risk for intensified fighting between different regional factions.

During the autumn 2002, Germany has taken the responsibility for financing the reopening of the Kabul police academy and training the new police force (although other countries have also helped training the new force). The programme has made some progress in Kabul, but it will take several years before the process of training the planned professional force of 9,000 officers in Kabul and 75,000 nationwide is completed. In late November 2002, there were 1,500 full-time students at the academy as well as an additional number of working police officers taking short-term courses.<sup>82</sup>

As a result of the lack of security and the time span needed before the central Afghan authorities will have a chance of providing adequate protection for the total population in Afghanistan, Afghan diplomats have been pressing for an expansion of ISAF to include other cities beyond Kabul and hopefully also the countryside.<sup>83</sup> According to Human Rights Watch, Afghans of all backgrounds have voiced strong support for such an expansion and even some regional and local commanders have supported the idea.<sup>84</sup> In late autumn 2002, ISAF had slightly less than 5,000 troops from 19 different countries, including Sweden.<sup>85</sup>

During the autumn 2002, ISAF was under Turkish command, which was handed over to Germany and the Netherlands in February 2003 under a mandate that will last half a year. ISAF has been promised some logistical and other support by NATO under the new command.<sup>86</sup> During the autumn 2002, there were indications that an expansion might happen since the USA were now considering an expansion of ISAF, which it previously opposed, but the coalition partners have seemed increasingly less willing to deploy additional peacekeepers in Afghanistan. As a consequence, the international community has continued to disappoint the Afghan officials in this

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<sup>82</sup> Safi, Shoib (2002) "Laying Down the Law", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, Afghan Recovery Report No.38, 29 November, downloaded from the Internet 3 December 2002 on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net). See also Human Rights Watch (2002) *Afghanistan's Bonn Agreement One Year Later. A Catalogue of Missed Opportunities*, 5 December, downloaded from the Internet 5 December 2002 on <http://www.hrw.org/background/asia/Afghanistan/bonn1yr-bck.pdf>.

<sup>83</sup> Entekhabi-Fard, Camelia (2002) "Afghan Diplomats Press for Broader American Security Commitment", *Eurasianet.org*, 23 September, downloaded from the Internet 4 October 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav092302.shtml>.

<sup>84</sup> Human Rights Watch (2002) *Afghanistan's Bonn Agreement One Year Later. A Catalogue of Missed Opportunities*, 5 December, downloaded from the Internet 5 December 2002 on <http://www.hrw.org/background/asia/Afghanistan/bonn1yr-bck.pdf>.

<sup>85</sup> Sweden had during the autumn 2002 33 persons serving in ISAF. Swedish Armed Forces (2002) Information on the overseas forces in Afghanistan (in Swedish), Swedint, updated 13 December, downloaded from the Internet 19 December 2002 on <http://www.swedint.mil.se/article.php?id=983>.

<sup>86</sup> "NATO to Support German-Dutch Force in Afghanistan" (2002) Yahoo!News, 21 November, via Afgha.com, downloaded from the Internet 5 December 2002 on <http://www.afgha.com/print.php?sid=17886>.



regard.<sup>87</sup> There are hopes that the new British-American attempt to deploy civil-military reconstruction teams to a number of places throughout Afghanistan might have a similar effect as an expansion of ISAF. At the same time, this initiative makes the prospects for an expansion of a multinational force that would help to create secure conditions for necessary reconstruction efforts seem even more distant.

The United Nations have attempted to apply a “light footprint” approach in Afghanistan, with a limited number of international staff and have instead engaged Afghans to participate in the reconstruction efforts as a part of their long-term strategy for rebuilding a functioning Afghan society. The United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) has had to focus on maintaining the short-term stability in Afghanistan by, for example, mediating between commanders in order to prevent local conflicts from turning violent. Because of the remaining volatile situation in the country and the need to try to prevent the outbreak of new violent conflicts, the monitoring of human rights violations will have to be kept a lower scale until the country has obtained at least a basic level of security.<sup>88</sup>

Despite statements at the beginning of the campaign in Afghanistan that the USA would not become deeply involved in the reconstruction of Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban regime, the U.S. has thus become increasingly more deeply involved in the nation-building process.<sup>89</sup> There are several reasons behind this development. The USA needs to win a broader support in order to ease both its own continuing military operations in Afghanistan and to uphold the fragile position of Hamid Karzai’s regime. Consequently, they need to show the Afghan population that its continued presence in Afghanistan (and the continued position of Hamid Karzai in Kabul) can give the some economic and other improvements to the people on the local level. The slow build-up of the new Afghan army in combination with the European reluctance to expand their countries’ peacekeeping roles in Afghanistan has made the new long-term and deepened U.S. approach even more necessary, despite the original U.S. intentions.

In December 2002, the first of eight permanent civil-military Provisional Reconstruction Teams (PRT) was scheduled to open up in Gardez, capital of the volatile Paktia province. U.S. military officials described this move as a major shift in focus for the U.S. military mission in Afghanistan, even though most of the U.S. troops stationed in Afghanistan will continue to operate against Islamic terrorism. The earlier civil-military operations in Afghanistan have been modest, but under the new PRT programme, the budget will double and large, professional teams of American civilian experts will be stationed at the new centres which, apart from Gardez, will be based in the cities of Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif, Kunduz, Jalalabad, Kandahar and Bamyán. A number of private aid agencies have criticised this expansion, warning about the danger of mixing military and aid efforts too closely, but the initiative has been generally well received among Afghans.<sup>90</sup> British troops will cooperate with American troops to protect the regional teams. The initiative is still on an experimental basis and the outcome remains unclear, but both Afghan and UN officials have given

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<sup>87</sup> Rashid, Ahmed (2002) “US Placing Greater Emphasis on Economic Stabilization in Afghanistan”, *Eurasianet.org*, 6 September, downloaded from the Internet 4 October 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav060902.shtml>.

<sup>88</sup> Human Rights Watch (2002) *Afghanistan’s Bonn Agreement One Year Later. A Catalogue of Missed Opportunities*, 5 December, downloaded from the Internet 5 December 2002 on <http://www.hrw.org/background/asia/Afghanistan/bonn1yr-bck.pdf>. During the autumn 2002, Sweden had one senior military advisor working for UNAMA. Swedish Armed Forces (2002) Information on the overseas forces in Afghanistan (in Swedish), Swedint, updated 13 December, downloaded from the Internet 19 December 2002 on <http://www.swedint.mil.se/article.php?id=983>.

<sup>89</sup> Donovan, Jeffrey & Recknagel, Charles (2002) “U.S.: 11 September – Did Attacks Smash Foundation of World Order or Merely Shake Them?”, RFE/RL Newslines, 6 September, downloaded from the Internet 24 October 2002 on <http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2002/09/06092002183912.asp>.

<sup>90</sup> Constable, Pamela (2002) “Courting Afghanistan Brick by Brick”, *Washingtonpost.com*, 8 December, downloaded from the Internet 9 December on <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A24768-2000Dec7?language=printer>.

a qualified support for the project, not because they consider it likely to be the most efficient reconstruction effort, but because of a lack of alternatives.<sup>91</sup>

In addition to the non-governmental organisations that have criticised the new U.S. strategy, some European diplomats have joined this criticism on the grounds that U.S. support for an expanded ISAF would be more productive.<sup>92</sup> Generally, however, the European countries as well as the EU have officially been hesitant to criticise the new plan, since the total European support for an expanded ISAF has been at least as weak as that of the U.S. Because Europe has so far been largely reluctant to take any significant responsibility for the Afghan reconstruction, it has been difficult for the European authorities to criticise the new American strategy aimed at this goal, even if some people believe it will have a meagre result. The new U.S. strategy is going to need the continued back-up of the U.S. military forces, further underlining the fact that the USA will have to remain in Afghanistan in both a military and a civilian capacity for several years to come.

Militarily, the U.S. has also adopted a new strategy during the autumn 2002, concentrating on using more ground troops to hunt for remnants of the al-Qaeda and the Taliban.<sup>93</sup> According to a UN report in December 2002, the al-Qaeda, although weakened, was training guerrillas and had established new military camps in eastern Afghanistan close to the Pakistani border. Michael Chandler, head of the UN group that had monitored the terrorist activity in Afghanistan, also claimed that al-Qaeda was cooperating with a number of national and religious extremist groups.<sup>94</sup> Several other experts question the existence of permanent al-Qaeda camps inside Afghanistan that could become easy targets for the American and other coalition forces operating in the area. They believe it is more likely that al-Qaeda, Taliban and the other anti-Western forces would prefer to remain mobile in order to avoid attacks.<sup>95</sup>

## **2.4 Foreign Political Relations**

Speaking about the foreign relations of Afghanistan, Foreign Minister Abdollah Abdollah said in an interview in January 2003 that Afghanistan has good contacts with Iran, and that the close ties with the USA had not had any negative effects on the relationship with Iran.<sup>96</sup> The development of good relations with Iran without risking the close relationship with the USA is of great importance to the central government in Afghanistan, not the least from an economic perspective. Iran has promised a quite substantial amount of aid to Afghanistan and could become an important trading partner. The tripartite trade agreement closed between Afghanistan, Iran and India in early January 2003, was not only important for boosting trade between these three countries, but it also allowed the landlocked Afghanistan to use Iranian and Indian railroads and ports for transportation of goods.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Compare for example with Human Rights Watch (2002) *Afghanistan's Bonn Agreement One Year Later. A Catalogue of Missed Opportunities*, 5 December, downloaded from the Internet 5 December 2002 on <http://www.hrw.org/background/asia/Afghanistan/bonn1yr-bck.pdf>.

<sup>92</sup> Rashid, Ahmed (2002) "US Embarks on New Afghan Strategy", *The Telegraph*, 23 December, via [Afgha.com](http://www.afgha.com), downloaded from the Internet 8 January 2003 on <http://www.afgha.com/?af=printnews&sid=28382>.

<sup>93</sup> Rohde, David (2002) "G.I.'s Walk Perilous line Between Finding Enemy and Alienating Afghans", *The New York Times*, 8 December, via [Afgha.com](http://www.afgha.com), downloaded from the Internet 9 December 2002 on <http://www.afgha.com/print.php3?sid=17937>.

<sup>94</sup> Compare for example with Chirkin, Dmitry (2003) "Bin Ladin has More Mysterious Allies in Afghanistan", *Pravda*, 14 January, via [Afgha.com](http://www.afgha.com), downloaded from the Internet 15 January 2003 on <http://www.afgha.com/?af=printnews&sid=29107>.

<sup>95</sup> Compare with Yusufzai, Rahimullah (2002) "UN al-Qaeda Report Confounds Experts", *BBC News*, 19 December, via [Afgha.com](http://www.afgha.com), downloaded from the Internet 20 December 2002 on <http://www.afgha.com/print.php3?sid=18103>.

<sup>96</sup> "Foreign Minister Says Security, Slow Rehabilitation Problem for Afghanistan", *Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran External Service*, 7 January 2003 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 9 January 2003, from [BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk).

<sup>97</sup> "Afghan Minister Hails Tripartite Trade Agreement with Iran, India" (2003) *IRNA*, 8 January 2003, via [Afgha.com](http://www.afgha.com), downloaded from the Internet 9 January 2003 on <http://www.afgha.com/?af=printnews&sid=28870>.

Furthermore, Iran is interested in limiting the smuggling of drugs across its border and to encourage the return of the many Afghan refugees that have settled in Iran.<sup>98</sup>

India could also potentially become an important trading partner for Afghanistan and has already contributed with aid and investments to the new regime in Kabul, including civilian airplanes, buses and hospital equipment. As has already been mentioned, India has also promised to contribute to the training and equipment of the new national Afghan army. However, the relationship between India and Afghanistan is complicated due to the tense relations between India and Pakistan. Despite this complication, or perhaps partly because of it, India has since the summer of 2002 developed a significant presence in Afghanistan. For example, India has opened consulates in Mazar-i-Sharif in the north of the country and in Kandahar and Jalalabad, close to the Pakistani border. The Pakistani President, General Pervez Musharraf, has expressed concern over the latter consulates. According to Hamid Karzai, Afghanistan has received assurance that the consulates will only be used for trade and consular activities. President Karzai emphasised that Afghanistan will not allow either India or Pakistan to use Afghanistan to work against each other.<sup>99</sup>

Afghanistan's relations with Pakistan are even more complex than those with India. The Pakistani regime was previously one of the few foreign powers that had friendly relations with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Despite the former relations, Pakistan has become an important ally for the both the USA and the new regime in Afghanistan in the fight against terrorism since the international operation began in Afghanistan during the autumn 2002. However, Taliban as well as al-Qaeda members, including Osama bin Laden and renegade commander Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, have been reported to be hiding in the Pakistani border area close to Afghanistan in large numbers. Pakistan has been accused by both Afghanistan and the United States for not doing enough to stop these people from moving across the border. According to its own information, Pakistan has stationed 60,000 to 70,000 troops in the border area and captured around 400 suspected al-Qaeda members during 2002, but the terrain is rugged and difficult to patrol. Nevertheless, both Afghanistan and the USA think Pakistan could do more to assist in the anti-terrorist operation.<sup>100</sup>

When a coalition of Islamist parties won control over one province and shared power over another in north-western Pakistan in early December 2002, Kabul grew worried that the local authorities in these areas would lessen the pressure on the al-Qaeda and Taliban members thought to be hiding there. The Pakistani government have official control of the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas, where most of the Afghan refugees are believed to be hiding, although the practical control remains very loose.<sup>101</sup> However, there have been several reports of both al-Qaeda and Taliban members (as well as money for the refugees) being smuggled across the border in a network of smugglers and traders sympathetic to the former regime in Afghanistan even prior to the above-mentioned date.<sup>102</sup> There have also been reports debating whether parts of the Pakistani authorities or, in particular, the Pakistani intelligence service might be involved in the interference in Afghanistan, for example by

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<sup>98</sup> Compare for example with Denyer, Simon (2003) "Afghan Minister Goes to Iran, to Discuss Aid", Reuters, 9 January, via Afgha.com, downloaded from the Internet 10 January 2003 on <http://www.afgha.com/?af=printnews&sid=28930>.

<sup>99</sup> Rashid, Ahmed (2003) "Jockeying for Influence, Neighbours Undermine Afghan Pact", *Eurasianet.org*, 15 January, downloaded from the Internet 16 January 2003 on [http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav011503\\_pr.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav011503_pr.shtml).

<sup>100</sup> Denyer, Simon (2003) "Afghanistan Asks Pakistan to Do more in Terror War", Reuters, 8 January, via Afgha.com, downloaded on the Internet 9 January 2003 on <http://www.afgha.com/?af=printnews&sid=28880>.

<sup>101</sup> "Afghans Concerned at Pakistan Islamists' Rise" (2002) Reuters AlertNet, 1 December, via Afgha.com, downloaded on the Internet 2 December 2002 on <http://www.afgha.com/print.php?sid=17862>.

<sup>102</sup> See for example Gannon, Kathy (2002) "Smugglers, Politicians and Spies Move al-Qaeda, Taliban Fugitives in and out of Afghanistan", AP Asia, 27 November, via Yahoo!News, downloaded from the Internet 29 November 2002 on <http://story.news.yahoo.com>.

supporting the Taliban, and perhaps also the al-Qaeda and Hekmatyar allies hiding in Afghanistan or Pakistan.<sup>103</sup>

The interference of Pakistani-based groups in Afghan affairs and allegations of official Pakistani involvement in this interference has created a very difficult situation for Islamabad. The Pakistani regime wants to maintain the good relationship it has gained with the USA in connection with the cooperation against terrorism. At the same time, the central regime has to be careful not to make the already sensitive domestic opinion turn against the cooperation with the Western powers. Consequently, they cannot appear too subservient to the USA. For Afghanistan, the high level of Pakistani involvement in the internal Afghan development makes the relationship with Pakistan both the most important and most difficult of the relations Afghanistan has to all its neighbouring countries. How this relationship develops is very important for the Afghan development as a nation in the short run, but might also have a decisive impact on the long-term development of Afghanistan.

## **2.5 Economic Prospects**

Most of the international attention in relation to Afghanistan has focused on the military operation concentrated on rooting out the threat of terrorism and the efforts to end the recurring battles in the country, that is, to ensure immediate peace and security. However, in order to lay the foundations for a long-term stable and secure development in Afghanistan and create prospects for the eventual international withdrawal from Afghanistan, economic reconstruction and improvements of living conditions are the only real solutions. This will probably prove to be the greatest challenge ahead for Afghanistan and for the international community's involvement in Afghanistan as well.

The illegal economy – primarily represented by the production and trafficking of drugs (further described in section 2.5.1) – is closely connected to organised crime and creates a serious obstacle to the development of a long-term functioning legal economy. The weak national economy serves to reinforce the illegal drugs production and trade, which, in its turn, leads to increased corruption and strengthening of organised crime syndicates, which further weakens the national economy. Another negative effect caused by the drug trade is that it hampers the development of legal trading relations with the neighbouring states that are the primary recipients of the Afghan drugs. In addition, the drug trade and the connected level of corruption and organised crime, scares away investors also from other countries.

At the international donor conference in Tokyo in December 2001, a five-year reconstruction plan was made that promised an aggregated sum of 4.7 billion U.S.-dollars to Afghanistan from the participating countries. Out of these, almost 2 billion dollars had been mobilised a year later according to U.N. sources, but very little has happened in the way of reconstruction. Furthermore, there have been many complaints (especially by Afghans) that too much of the pledged money has gone to pay the costly expenses of foreign consultants and aid organisations.<sup>104</sup>

At a meeting with 23 donor nations in Oslo in mid-December 2002, Afghanistan was promised 1.24 billion U.S.-dollars for the year 2003, but it was unclear how much of this sum was new money or part of the earlier pledges from Tokyo. At the talks in Oslo, President Hamid Karzai urged the donor countries to start shifting from short-term humanitarian aid to long-term reconstruction

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<sup>103</sup> Compare with Synovitz, Ron (2003) "Afghanistan: Analysts Say Some Neighbours Interfering in Kabul's Internal Affairs", a *Eurasianet.org* Partner Post from RFE/RL, 9 February, downloaded from the Internet 10 February 2003 on [http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav020903\\_pr.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav020903_pr.shtml).

<sup>104</sup> Goudsouzian, T. (2002) "Special Features: Post-Tokyo International Donors Conference in the Pipeline", *Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty*, Afghanistan Report Vol.1, No.2, 5 December 2002 via ReliefWeb, downloaded from the Internet 20 December 2002 on <http://www.reliefweb.int>.

projects. Due to the urgent needs and poverty in Afghanistan as a consequence of the war, the major part of the funds diverted to Afghanistan during the first year after the fall of the Taliban has gone to humanitarian aid efforts.<sup>105</sup> The group also took the step long asked for by the Afghans to cede the control over the aid money directly to the Afghan government.<sup>106</sup>

The government's "National Development Framework" document identifies six priority areas for reconstruction projects: basic infrastructure, education, health care, rural development, urban development and physical institution rehabilitation. Some projects, such as the new road being built from Kabul to Kandahar and Herat, and the installation of a new telecom network, were initiated during 2002. However, the recent reconstruction efforts have been largely concentrated to the north of the country, leaving much of the poverty-stricken southern and eastern parts neglected. This imbalance in the reconstruction efforts between the north and the south of the country serves to further strengthen the general discontent and distrust of the Kabul regime among the mainly Pashtun groups in the south. In combination with a lack of projects aimed at creating jobs for young men, this could increase instability by drawing more young people to serve in the private militias, engage in criminality and possibly even terrorist activities or get involved in the lucrative drug trade.<sup>107</sup>

### 2.5.1 The Opium Economy

During the year 2002, Afghanistan has regained its position as the world's largest opium producer. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reported in October 2002 that the opium crop is estimated to reach 3,400 tons in 2002, which is a dramatic increase compared to the crop of a mere 185 tons the previous year thanks to the Taliban ban on poppy cultivation. The opium production is primarily concentrated to five of the 32 provinces in Afghanistan. Apart from the above-mentioned southern Helmand and eastern Nangarhar provinces, the production is particularly high in the two southern provinces Uruzgan and Kandahar and in north-eastern Badakhshan on the border to Tajikistan that has advanced to become the third most important opium-producing province. Alongside the increase in poppy cultivation, the number of heroin refineries has grown, especially in the north.<sup>108</sup>

The effect of the government poppy eradication programme remains to be seen, especially in a long-term perspective. The official reports made by the government have claimed that as much as a third of the poppy cultivated area has been successfully targeted, but they are likely to have been exaggerated. Only a small amount of the promised economic compensation has reached the farmers, leaving many of them with few other options than to wait for a new poppy crop. In some areas, such as in the leading poppy producing province Helmand, the launching of the programme has even led to armed confrontations between the impoverished peasants and government officials.<sup>109</sup> International observers have also noted that there are not enough trained Afghan polices to enforce the ban.<sup>110</sup> A UN-report from early February 2003, have criticised the anti-drug strategy of the

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<sup>105</sup> Doyle, Alister (2002) "Donors Promise Afghanistan \$1.24 Billion for 2003", Reuters, 18 December, via Afgha.com, downloaded from the Internet 19 December 2002 on <http://www.afgha.com/print.php3?sid=18077>.

<sup>106</sup> Gibbs, Walter (2002) "Donor Group Gives Karzai Control of Aid", New York Times, 19 December, via Afgha.com, downloaded from the Internet 20 December 2002 on <http://www.afgha.com/print.php3?sid=18097>.

<sup>107</sup> Goudsouzian, T. (2002) "Special Features: Post-Tokyo International Donors Conference in the Pipeline", *Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty*, Afghanistan Report Vol.1, No.2, 5 December 2002 via ReliefWeb, downloaded from the Internet 20 December 2002 on <http://www.reliefweb.int>.

<sup>108</sup> Davis, Anthony (2002) "Afghanistan's Opium Production Rises Post-Taliban", *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Vol.14, No.12, p.28.

<sup>109</sup> Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud (2002) "Afghanistan's Opium Production Rises Post-Taliban", *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Vol.14, No.12, p.28-29.

<sup>110</sup> "DEA: Afghan Gov't Can Enforce Opium Ban" [Spelling as given from Afgha.com.] (2003) The Guardian, 8 January, via Afgha.com, downloaded from the Internet 9 January 2003 on <http://www.afgha.com/?af=printnews&sid=28888>.

Afghan regime that has focused mainly on law-enforcement activities. According to the UN officials, more efforts need to be made to address the root causes behind the poppy cultivation.<sup>111</sup>

That a number of local commanders and officials are bound to be involved in the production of opium and heroin, as well as in the trafficking, makes the task of the central government even more difficult. The corruption serves to strengthen the farmers' dependency on the local commanders and the international crime syndicates involved in the drug production and trade. For now, at least, the central Afghan government lacks both the adequate political control over the drug producing territory and the financial means to bring the production down by its own efforts. Coupled with the widespread poverty among peasants, lack of efficient irrigation for more water-demanding crops and the comparatively high profits made by the farmers on the poppy cultivation, it will probably take some years before the opium production can be substantially lowered. This will have a negative impact on other forms of agricultural development and consequently also on the general development of an economy in Afghanistan that is not dependent on the drug trade.<sup>112</sup>

## **2.6 Conclusions**

There are presently quite few reasons for optimism concerning the prospects for a development towards stability in Afghanistan. During 2002, Afghanistan has become practically split into a number of rather loosely connected territorial areas under the more or less strict control of different regional heads and local fighting have been frequent in almost every one of these areas. The risk for more widespread violent conflict between different factions in the country remains large, both within the different regions and between them. For the people who lived in the areas that were directly affected by the civil war, 2002 has of course brought significant improvements in safety. Furthermore, the life of women has generally become more secure compared to the Taliban era, despite the reports from some regions of lapses into the old repressive patterns towards women.

However, for many people, life under the Taliban regime was more predictable than it is under the current rule and the incomes were safer, at least before the Taliban ban on poppy cultivation. Hamid Karzai's regime will need continued international help to be able to restore some level of economic safety for the Afghan population if it should have a chance to maintain the long-term stability in the country and keep Afghanistan together. Even if the country remains united under the formal leadership of a central government, the country will nevertheless stay practically split into different factions and territorial regions under the foreseeable future. Consequently, the main task for the central government will be to try to get as good cooperation as possible both between itself and the leaders of the various regions and factions and between the latter.

Many Afghans believed that the international presence in the country and Hamid Karzai's good relations with the Western world would result in quickly visible economic improvements for Afghanistan. This was of course a very unrealistic belief. Nevertheless, many people in Afghanistan have become disappointed with both the West and the incumbent regime for the lack of such a positive development. In particular, the growing discontent could easily exacerbate the tensions between the central government in Kabul and the various groups in the rest of the country that feel that the capital has gained from the international cooperation while the rest of the country has not. In general, it will continue to feed the unrest in the country, which could lead to future conflicts. Similarly, the country is going to need help to fight the production and smuggling of drugs that not

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<sup>111</sup> Diamond, Todd (2003) "Rising drug Flow out of Afghanistan Threatens Central Asian Neighbours", *Eurasianet.org*, 6 February, downloaded from the Internet 10 February 2003 on [http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav020603\\_pr.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav020603_pr.shtml).

<sup>112</sup> Diamond, Todd (2003) "Rising drug Flow out of Afghanistan Threatens Central Asian Neighbours", *Eurasianet.org*, 6 February, downloaded from the Internet 10 February 2003 on [http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav020603\\_pr.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav020603_pr.shtml).

only undermines the prospects for a future sustainable economic development in Afghanistan, but that also could cause violent conflicts with neighbouring countries, including local border skirmishes.

Even if most of the problems that threaten the peace in Afghanistan are internal, the efforts of Afghanistan's neighbours to influence the development and get a regime either in Kabul or locally that favours their interests, can serve to undermine the future position of Karzai's regime. This could have consequences also for the stability of the country itself, since there is currently no other apparent candidate to the presidency that would have a better chance of being tolerated by most factions in Afghanistan. In particular, Russia, Iran, India and Pakistan have according to several reports continued to back the Afghan regional leaders they feel would be most likely to promote to their interests during the year 2002. According to observers, some wealthy Saudi Arabians have resumed their financial contributions to radical Islamic groups in Afghanistan and the Central Asian countries that have large ethnic minorities in Afghanistan are giving support to the local leaders of the ethnic groups.<sup>113</sup>

An example of foreign interference that could have serious consequences for Afghanistan is the Russian support of Defence Minister Fahim, including generous military supplies, which could prove highly disruptive, especially in a situation when Fahim feels that his position is threatened. Pakistan's and India's contrasting interests in Afghanistan could potentially be disruptive not only for Afghanistan, but also for the surrounding region and both countries have become very closely involved in the Afghan development. India's as well as Iran's improved relations with Kabul, in particular in the economic field, have caused some concern in Washington, especially since the two countries' trade contacts with Kabul have developed at the expense of the relations to Pakistan. The United States need Pakistan as a close ally in relation to Afghanistan, both in order to continue the fight against international terrorism and for maintaining the peace in Afghanistan.

In short summary, during the year 2002

- the security-political climate has improved slightly in Afghanistan as the civil war has ended, but the situation in the country is still highly unstable and the risk for renewed widespread violence is high
- the internal political situation in Afghanistan has become very fragile; the central power in Kabul has practically no control over the country's territory and the economy run down by the civil war, which leaves few chances of rapid improvements
- there is no concrete threat against Afghanistan from any foreign state, but several countries have interfered in the internal Afghan development and the positions they take will be crucial for the development in Afghanistan

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<sup>113</sup> Compare with Rashid, Ahmed (2003) "Jockeying for Influence, Neighbours Undermine Afghan Pact", *Eurasianet.org*, 15 January, downloaded from the Internet 16 January 2003 on [http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav011503\\_pr.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav011503_pr.shtml).

### 3 Central Asia



As was described in the introductory chapter, the chapters on the post-Soviet Central Asian countries will describe the development that has taken place primarily during the year 2002 with the focus on the factors that have influenced the prospects for stability or instability in each country. The description begins with an assessment of the development in the security sector. It describes the military capabilities of the different states and the cooperation with external states in the cases where there have been relevant changes in this cooperation within the security sector in 2002. Furthermore, the sub-chapters on the security-political development include separate sections on the border issues. These sections include a description of the development during 2002 concerning both the disputes over border delimitation and demarcations and the risk for local or more widespread conflicts over the borders in the cases where this is relevant.

The sections about the internal politics describe the major changes that have taken place on the domestic political arena in each country during 2002, focusing on the developments that affect the prospects for increased or lowered internal stability in the respective countries. The internal political sections are followed by short descriptions of the economic development that have taken place in each country during 2002, which give additional information on the prospects for internal stability or instability. These sections include separate sub-sections on the development concerning the drug trade in each country, which have consequences for both the internal and external security in the countries. Furthermore, the chapters on the Central Asian countries include separate sections on the development relevant for increased or lowered tensions in the foreign relations of each country during 2002. Finally, each country chapter has its separate conclusions about the changed prospects for stability or instability during 2002.



## 4 Kazakhstan

Population: 16,741,519 (July 2002 estimate)<sup>114</sup>

Major ethnic groups: Kazakhs 53.4%, Russians 30%, Ukrainians 3.7%, Uzbeks 2.5%, Germans 2.4%, Uighurs 1.4%<sup>115</sup>

Border countries: Russia 6,846 km, Uzbekistan 2,203 km, China 1,533 km, Kyrgyzstan 1,051 km, Turkmenistan 397 km<sup>116</sup>

President: Nursultan Nazarbayev

GDP per capita: purchasing power parity - \$5,900 (2001 estimate)<sup>117</sup>

Armed forces: 60,000 (estimate)<sup>118</sup>

### 4.1 Introduction

Kazakhstan, has previously received the highest level of foreign attention and investments of the Central Asian countries, primarily because of its large oil reserves. However, during the last year, Kazakhstan has been forced to find itself playing a secondary role compared to, for example, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan that have become closely involved in the Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.<sup>119</sup> Due to the continued corruption scandals and increasing authoritarian tendencies, the opposition against the regime has intensified and a new and more unified opposition party, the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DCK), has emerged.<sup>120</sup>

Furthermore, according to several experts, the economy has backslid – despite Kazakhstan being labelled a market economy by the U.S. after Kazakhstan joined the anti-terrorist alliance – creating even better breeding ground for the internal discontent and political opposition.<sup>121</sup> The benefits from the fall of the Taliban regime have not been as significant for Kazakhstan as they have for the other Central Asian states, especially not since the flow of drugs from Afghanistan into Kazakhstan has increased again. Overall, the stability in Kazakhstan compared to the other Central Asian states is no longer as evident as it was a year ago, even if the country still has better economic prospects than the other states in the region.

### 4.2 Security-Political Development

Kazakhstan, the largest country in the Central Asian region with the best economy, also has the largest regular armed forces in the region with approximately 60,000 active men. As a result of the quite substantial economic growth in 2002, Kazakhstan has announced an increase in the defence budget of 34 per cent. The budget contains a new programme to modernise arms, military hardware and communications systems and earmarked funds to develop the state-run armoured vehicle

<sup>114</sup> CIA (2002) *The World Factbook 2002. Kazakhstan*. (online), downloaded from the Internet 18 October 2002 from <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/kz.html>.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) (2002) *The Military Balance 2002/2003*, London, Oxford University Press, p.131.

<sup>119</sup> Compare with Abazov, Rafis (2002) "Kazakhstan Desires Military Bases Too", *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, 3 July, downloaded from the Internet 21 October 2002 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-07-03/20020703\\_KAZAKHSTAN\\_MILITARY\\_BASE.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-07-03/20020703_KAZAKHSTAN_MILITARY_BASE.htm).

<sup>120</sup> Rashid, Ahmed (2002) "Central Asia: Trouble Ahead", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 9 May, downloaded from the Internet 9 May 2002 on <http://www.feer.com/cgi-bin/prog/printeasy>.

<sup>121</sup> Compare for example with Appelbaum, Alec (2002) "A Year Later, Central Asian Economies Have Not Changed Course", *Eurasianet.org*, 10 September, downloaded from the Internet 4 October 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav091002.shtml> and Bremmer, Ian (2002) "A Time for Eurasia", *Eurasianet.org*, 17 September, downloaded from the Internet 4 October 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav091702.shtml>.

plant.<sup>122</sup> The Kazakh Defence Minister has announced that the armed forces in Kazakhstan are currently conducting their own reform, which will bring them closer to NATO standard, and the country will increase the presence of their armed forces at the Caspian Sea in order to better be able to protect the national oil deposits as well as to ensure regional security.<sup>123</sup> In addition, the Interior Ministry staff has risen to a reported number of 97,577 employees after the September terrorist attacks.<sup>124</sup>

The military cooperation with Kazakhstan's most important security-political partners has intensified further after the September 11 terrorist attacks and the launching of the international coalition's campaign in Afghanistan in the autumn 2001. Russia has been a close military partner of Kazakhstan since the break-up of the Soviet Union and the United States has cooperated militarily with Kazakhstan even before the autumn 2001. Turkey and China are also interested in maintaining a certain degree of military influence in Kazakhstan. For example, in the spring of 2002, China decided to give 3 million U.S.-dollars worth of aid to the Kazakh armed forces and China has announced its intention to increase its cooperation with Kazakhstan in the military field.<sup>125</sup>

Russia remains the most important bilateral military partner for Kazakhstan. Russia has been especially important for providing military training to the Kazakh officers and Kazakhstan also cooperates closely with the Russian special services. Furthermore, Kazakhstan has been one of the most active proponents of and participants in the military cooperation within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). For example, in 2002, Kazakhstan took part in the large-scale military exercises held in the Caspian Sea together with Russia and Azerbaijan. Kazakhstan has also participated in the first exercises held by the CIS Collective Rapid Deployment Forces (RDF) in June 2002 with battalions from Kazakhstan, Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.<sup>126</sup>

A debate on whether the country would lose or gain from offering the U.S. and the anti-terrorist coalition the use of Kazakh airbases was initiated already at the beginning of 2002.<sup>127</sup> An agreement between the USA and Kazakhstan over the access to Kazakh airspace was struck as early as in December 2001, but it was not until 10 July 2002 that a memorandum was signed allowing the U.S. to use the Almaty airport for emergency landings by military planes.<sup>128</sup> The U.S. Ambassador to Kazakhstan, Larry Napper, who signed the document for the USA, said that it indicated that the cooperation between the two states had grown into a strategic partnership.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) (2002) *The Military Balance 2002/2003*, London, Oxford University Press, pp.131 and 289. Kazakhstan's defence budget has grown considerably during the last years – the country doubled its official defence spending in 2000. The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) (2001) *The Military Balance 2001/2002*, London, Oxford University Press, p.157.

<sup>123</sup> "Kazakhstan to Swell Military Forces at Caspian Sea", Kazakhstan Today news agency, 19 November 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newline – Central Asia Political*, 20 November 2002, from BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk.

<sup>124</sup> Plater-Zyberk, H. (2002) *Kazakhstan: Security & Defence Challenges*, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Conflict Studies Research Centre, September, downloaded from the Internet 16 October 2002 on <http://www.csrc.ac.uk/pdfs/K35-hpz.pdf>.

<sup>125</sup> "China to Give No-Strings Military Aid Worth 3m Dollars to Kazakhstan", Interfax-Kazakhstan news agency, 18 March 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newline – Central Asia Political*, 19 March 2002, from BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk.

<sup>126</sup> Compare with The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) (2002) *The Military Balance 2002/2003*, London, Oxford University Press, p.87.

<sup>127</sup> See for example Abazov, Rafis (2002) "Kazakhstan Desires Military Bases Too", *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, 3 July, downloaded from the Internet 21 October 2002 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-07-03/20020703\\_KAZAKHSTAN\\_MILITARY\\_BASE.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-07-03/20020703_KAZAKHSTAN_MILITARY_BASE.htm).

<sup>128</sup> Beketova, Gaukhar and Ibysheva, Cholpan (2002) "Kazakhstan: US Military Deal", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting Central Asia*, No.130, 19 July, downloaded from the Internet 11 October on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net).

<sup>129</sup> "US Military Planes Can Now Use Kazakhstan's Airport" (2002) *Pravda.ru*, 10 July, downloaded from the Internet 21 October 2002 on <http://english.pravda.ru/cis/2002/07/10/3211.html>.

At a visit to the Pentagon by a Kazakh Defence Ministry delegation, a draft plan was discussed for the military cooperation of the two countries in 2003, including an agreement to step up the education of Kazakh military personnel at U.S. elite military educational establishments. It was also confirmed that the strengthening of the material and technical base of the Kazakh armed forces, as well as the development of the army's mobile forces with U.S. assistance, should be a priority.<sup>130</sup> The USA has, for example, assisted the Kazakh military education and training programme and during the autumn 2002, the U.S. has agreed to provide the Kazakh armed forces with some military helicopters as well as a number of armoured high-mobility vehicles equipped with large-calibre machine-guns.<sup>131</sup>

#### 4.2.1 Border Security and Disputes

A November 2001 agreement between President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Uzbek President Islam Karimov on border issues was hailed as a breakthrough, but did not solve the issue of the two disputed villages Bagys and Turkestanets, dominated by ethnic Kazakhs. In December 2001, the villagers of Bagys declared their independence in a move more designed to raise the awareness of the Kazakh authorities of their wish to belong to Kazakhstan than of any serious determination to actually achieve independence. Experts believed that the residents of Bagys would settle for a union with Kazakhstan, rather than total autonomy, but that they had become disappointed by the lack of support from the Kazakh authorities.<sup>132</sup>

About a year later, in November, 2002, the two presidents signed the final agreement on the demarcation of the border between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The agreement gives Bagys to Kazakhstan, but the country had to give up Turkestanets to Uzbekistan, prompting many inhabitants in the latter village to start moving into Kazakhstan.<sup>133</sup> The demarcation process will take some time to be completed and in the meantime, the tensions on the border – that have included shooting incidents<sup>134</sup> – will probably continue, especially considering the stricter border regime introduced by the Uzbek authorities in late 2002.

Apart from the border disputes with Uzbekistan, the Kazakh borders have remained quite calm during 2002. The border negotiations with Russia will probably continue for several years ahead because of the length of the border shared between the two countries. Russia has become more anxious to work out a border agreement in the last years given the increasing flow of drugs and other smuggled goods as well as illegal immigrants across its border to Kazakhstan. Nevertheless, by 2001, only 700 kilometres had been defined of the 6,467 kilometre long border.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> "US, Kazakh delegations agree to step up military cooperation", Interfax-Kazakhstan news agency, 16 July 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newline – Central Asia Political*, 16 July 2002, from BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk.

<sup>131</sup> See for example "USA to give helicopters, armoured vehicles to Kazakh army", Interfax-Kazakhstan news agency, 14 August 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newline – Central Asia Political*, 15 August 2002, from BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk and "US helicopters to be given to Kazakh military for free", Interfax-Kazakhstan news agency, 27 September 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newline – Central Asia Political*, 28 September 2002, from BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk.

<sup>132</sup> ICG (2002) *Central Asia: Border Disputes and Conflict Potential*, Asia Report No.33, Osh/Brussels, 4 April, downloaded from the Internet 8 April 2002 on [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400606\\_04042002.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400606_04042002.pdf), pp.8-9.

<sup>133</sup> "Residents in Uzbek Border Village Start Moving to Kazakhstan", 8 November 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newline – Central Asia Political*, 9 November 2002, from BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk and "Uzbek, Kazakh Presidents Sign Border Treaty" (2002) Central Asia Report Vol.2, No.35, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 13 September, downloaded from the Internet 16 September 2002 on <http://www.rferl.org/centralasia/2002/09/35-130902.asp>.

<sup>134</sup> See for example Dosybieva, Olga (2002) "Kazakh Anger at Border Death", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting Central Asia*, No.161, 15 November, downloaded from the Internet 18 November on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net).

<sup>135</sup> ICG (2002) *Central Asia: Border Disputes and Conflict Potential*, Asia Report No.33, Osh/Brussels, 4 April, downloaded from the Internet 8 April 2002 on [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400606\\_04042002.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400606_04042002.pdf), pp.21-22.

Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have largely settled the issues concerning their common border. More surprising, Kazakhstan has reached an agreement on the delimitation and demarcation of the border with Turkmenistan in mid-2002 that has earlier been called the most difficult part of the Kazakh border. The negotiations with China have in particular focused on the water resources in the border area and have been quite difficult to settle.<sup>136</sup> The increased level of cooperation between Kazakhstan and the United States has also raised China's concerns, adding one more complication to the border negotiations. Despite these difficulties, the two countries were able to sign a protocol on the delimitation on their common border in May 2002.<sup>137</sup>

### 4.3 Internal Politics

Over the last years, Kazakhstan has witnessed a number of corruption scandals, weakening the position of the authorities in general, but also implicating President Nazarbayev and his family. The biggest scandal has been the one involving the two U.S. corporations ExxonMobil and BP Amoco, which have been accused of paying significant bribes to Nazarbayev and his oil minister. An investigation of the charged bribery has been going on for months in the U.S., allegedly making Nazarbayev worried enough to make the Kazakh parliament pass a law that gives him lifetime immunity from any legal liability stemming from his actions as president. According to several sources, the Kazakh leaders have diverted as much as half of the 1 billion U.S.-dollars paid by Mobil (before the merger with Exxon) for a 25 per cent stake of the Tengiz oil field for their personal use.<sup>138</sup>

The corruption charges were reinforced as it surfaced that the government had been concealing a Swiss bank account with more than one billion U.S.-dollars in oil revenues – the so called “Kazakhgate” affair – which the government subsequently claimed were meant to serve as a buffer in the event of a national economic crisis.<sup>139</sup> Several other U.S. companies have also invested heavily into the Kazakh oil fields, giving the country strategic importance for the United States. Since the U.S. gained access to Kazakh airspace in connection with the anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan, fears have been raised that the enhanced importance of Kazakhstan for the USA will further reduce the criticism of the corrupt and increasingly authoritarian regime under Nazarbayev.<sup>140</sup>

However, unlike for example Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan still has a vocal opposition, even though its most prominent representative, the former Prime Minister Akezhan Kazhegeldin, has been forced to live in exile since 1997.<sup>141</sup> The opposition has increased its activities since the beginning of 2002 and in January 2002, the DCK organised a demonstration against the government with several thousand participants, which was the first of its kind in many years. The intensified opposition has frightened the regime, which has responded by both stepping up the persecution of the opposition and restricting the freedom of the independent media.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid, p.22.

<sup>137</sup> “Kazakhstan is the First of China’s Neighbours to Solve Border Issues”, 11 May 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 12 May 2002, from BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk.

<sup>138</sup> Ruppert, Michael C. (2002) “Kazakh Investigation: the Elephant in the Living Room”, a *Eurasianet.org* Partner Post from the Wilderness Publications, 26 March, downloaded from the Internet 29 October 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav032602.shtml>.

<sup>139</sup> Kusainov, Aldar (2003) “Kazakhstan’s Critical Choice”, *Eurasianet.org*, 13 January 2003, downloaded from the Internet 14 January 2003 on [http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav011303\\_pr.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav011303_pr.shtml).

<sup>140</sup> Khamidov, Alisher (2002) “Regional Experts Call on US to Bolster Civil Society”, *Eurasianet.org*, 2 October, downloaded from the Internet 3 October 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/recaps/articles/eav100202.shtml>.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Beketova, Gaukhar (2002) “Kazakhstan: Nazarbaev Turns Screw on Media”, *Institute for War and Peace Reporting Central Asia*, No.102, 1 February, downloaded from the Internet 5 February on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net). See also Blua, Antoine

In July 2002, trials were held charging two of the most prominent leaders of the DCK movement with power abuses, which the opposition as well as many analysts believe were politically motivated. The DCK has quickly become the most successful opposition movement in Kazakhstan, bringing together more than eight formerly un-united opposition parties and with 12,000 members. DCK representatives have said that they think the charges will only help their cause and has pledged to step up their campaign against Nazarbayev.<sup>143</sup>

Individual journalists as well as editors, newspapers and broadcasters have become targets of the growing pressure from the authorities since the beginning of 2002. For example, a number of television channels have had their licenses withdrawn and criminal charges have been brought against managers and employees of independent publications. The Adil soz foundation, an non-governmental organisation (NGO) supporting journalists, had by July 2002 already noted 97 criminal cases against the media in that year (of which 44 were brought about by officials) compared to only twelve criminal cases in all of 2001. This persecution is especially serious since the main media bodies in Kazakhstan – including television, radio and newspapers – are already owned and controlled by President Nazarbayev and his family.<sup>144</sup>

During the autumn 2002, rape charges have been brought against the journalist Sergei Duvanov, which his supporters claim are false allegations made by the government in order to prevent Duvanov from exposing alleged government corruption and misuse of the state's oil fund. Duvanov went on hunger strike after his detention as a protest against what he was sure would be an unfair trial brought against him. The U.S. government has expressed its concern about Duvanov's case, noting that independent journalists have been systematically harassed by the government and that the circumstances surrounding this particular case were highly suspicious. Duvanov was taken into custody only hours before he was supposed to leave for the USA in order to give a series of speeches hosted by think tanks and human rights organisation, among them the New York-based Open Society Institute.<sup>145</sup>

The OSCE's office for democratic institutions and human rights, ODIHR, has been seriously concerned about the new law on political parties that went into force 15 July 2002. The law will make the formation and registration of new political parties much more difficult and makes it almost equally difficult for existing political parties to re-register and participate in elections. One of the new requirements is that a party needs to have at least 50,000 registered members representing all regions and major cities in Kazakhstan in order to participate in an election, whereas the previous law required only 3,000 members nation-wide. According to the law, all

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(2002) "Kazakh Government Clamps Down on Independent Media", *Eurasianet.org*, 9 March, downloaded from the Internet 29 October 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/pp030902.shtml> and Bozai, Sabyr (2002) "Attack against Journalists in Kazakhstan Indicative of Political Crisis", *Eurasianet.org*, 4 September, downloaded from the Internet 29 October 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav090402.shtml>.

<sup>143</sup> Ibragimov, Medet & Gorodetski, Aleksei (2002) "Kazakhstan: Opposition Leaders Behind Bars", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting Central Asia*, No.131, 23 July, downloaded from the Internet 11 October 2002 on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net). See also Burke, Justin (2002) "Kazakhstani Opposition Movement to Renew Battle with Nazarbayev", *Eurasianet.org*, 17 October, downloaded from the Internet 18 October 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav101702.shtml>.

<sup>144</sup> Mukhamedova, Leila (2002) "Kazakhstan: Press Freedom in Dispute", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting Central Asia*, No.130, Part One, 19 July, downloaded from the Internet 11 October 2002 on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net).

<sup>145</sup> "Duvanov Formally Charged, Supporters Worry about Journalist's Deteriorating Condition" (2002) *Eurasianet.org*, 7 November, downloaded from the Internet 8 November 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav110702.shtml> and "Supporters of Detained Journalist Denounce Incident as Government Set-Up" (2002) *Eurasianet.org*, 29 October, downloaded from the Internet 30 October 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav102902.shtml>.

existing political parties had to re-register before 17 January 2003.<sup>146</sup> The requirements led to the formation of a new political block in January 2002. The new opposition block is comprised by several parties that were unable to re-register according to the new law and is led by the DCK.<sup>147</sup>

Overall, the domestic political climate in Kazakhstan has worsened considerably during 2002 and there are no apparent signs of any immediate reversal of this process. This impression is reinforced by the fact that the U.S. and the other Western countries have bigger economic investments and less security-politically related leverage in Kazakhstan than in the other Central Asian states.

#### **4.4 Economic Development**

The Kazakh economy has been relatively successful compared to the other Central Asian economies, primarily thanks to the energy sector, and the level of foreign investments has been comparatively high. Some Western governments have given support to the Kazakh ambition to become a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Moreover, as a result of the Kazakh participation in the U.S.-led anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan, the USA granted Kazakhstan status as most favoured nation during six months at the beginning of the year 2002.<sup>148</sup> However, even if the Kazakh authorities have understood the long-term economic risk of being too dependent upon the income from the hydrocarbons sector and have tried to diversify the economy, they have not had any significant success in attracting investments to other sectors of the economy.

Furthermore, the corruption scandals surrounding Kazakhstan and the attitude of the Kazakh authorities to their foreign economic partners have made international investors increasingly hesitant to invest in the country, even in the energy sector. The Kazakh authorities have earlier acted as if the huge and potentially very lucrative reserves of oil and gas in Kazakhstan would be enough to ensure investments, but there have been several examples that the uncertain legal and business climate in Kazakhstan has hindered the realisation of important business deals.<sup>149</sup>

##### **4.4.1 Impacts of the Drug Trade**

Like in the other Central Asian states, the increase in the Afghan drugs trafficking has been clearly noticeable in Kazakhstan and has also created tense border relations with Russia. In addition, the law enforcement agencies have become increasingly involved in the narcotics business and there have been a number of arrests of law enforcement officers only in 2002. Even if most of the drugs found in Kazakhstan (including the heroin) originate from Afghanistan, there is also a limited domestic production of drugs and, lately, there has been a rapid increase in, for example, LSD and ecstasy brought to Kazakhstan from Europe and Russia. In 2002, the Kazakh authorities have devoted much needed money to strengthen the bodies involved in the fight against the narcotics business, but Kazakhstan lacks both money and professional competence to make any significant improvements in the worsening narcotics situation in the country.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Braden, Mark (2002) "OSCE/ODIHR Review of Kazakhstan's New Law on Political Parties", a *Eurasianet.org* Partner Post from ODIHR, 8 August, downloaded from the Internet 25 October 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav080802.shtml>.

<sup>147</sup> "Kazakh Parties Form New Opposition Block" (2003) AP World Politics, 22 January, via Yahoo!News, downloaded from the Internet 24 January 2003 on <http://story.news.yahoo.com>.

<sup>148</sup> "Kazakhstan to Enjoy Most Favoured Status in Trade for Six Months", Khabar Television, 13 February 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 14 February 2002, from BBC Monitoring [topic@mon.bbc.co.uk](mailto:topic@mon.bbc.co.uk).

<sup>149</sup> Compare for example with Berniker, Mark (2002) "A Troubled Project Holds Warnings for Kazakhstan's Oil Sector", *Eurasianet.org*, 19 November, downloaded from the Internet 20 November 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav111902.shtml> and Vasileva, Vasilina & Satpaev, Dosym: "Bodalas Astana s Investoram", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 25 November 2002, downloaded from the Internet on [http://www.ng.ru/cis/2002-11-25/3\\_astana.html](http://www.ng.ru/cis/2002-11-25/3_astana.html).

<sup>150</sup> Vasileva, Vasilina: "SNG Gotovitsa k Narkolavine", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 1 October 2002, downloaded from the Internet on [http://www.ng.ru/cis/2002-10-01/6\\_drugs.html](http://www.ng.ru/cis/2002-10-01/6_drugs.html).

## 4.5 Foreign Political Relations

Kazakhstan's foreign political relations have not changed as much during 2002 as the relations of the other Central Asian states. Kazakhstan has had quite close relations with the United States and other Western states even prior to the Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. During the first post-Soviet years, Kazakhstan was seen as a relatively progressive country in the Central Asian region – politically as well as economically – prompting more (Western) countries to cooperate with Kazakhstan than with the other Central Asian states, with the possible exception of Kyrgyzstan. These relations have been further enforced during 2002, but due to the limited Kazakh cooperation in the anti-terrorist coalition and their previous relations with the Western countries, it has not been such a dramatic change as for some of the other states in the region. In a way, Kazakhstan may be said to have lost some of its comparative advantage for Western cooperation in relation to its neighbours.

Kazakhstan has been a close Russian ally for a number of years and the relationship improved further after Vladimir Putin became president in Russia. The corruption scandals and strengthened authoritarian trend that has made the Western countries increasingly hesitant to cooperate with Kazakhstan has brought Nursultan Nazarbayev even closer to Moscow, economically as well as in the security-political field. Furthermore, the Russian desire to regain an influential position in the Central Asian region has served to strengthen the relations even further and Russia has declared 2003 as the year of Kazakhstan in Russia. Russia and Kazakhstan have reached a new agreement on the future use of the Baikonur cosmodrome that is of strategic interest to Russia.<sup>151</sup> Furthermore, they have come to a mutual agreement on the division of the Caspian Sea, which gives Kazakhstan both the largest part of the seabed and more of the estimated hydrocarbon reserves than any other Caspian littoral states. According to this agreement, three hydrocarbon fields will be divided between the two countries and the deal implies that Russia and Kazakhstan will exploit these fields on a parity basis.<sup>152</sup>

The relations with China have overall remained calm, even though China has said that it does not favour Kazakhstan's present level of cooperation with the United States and the ethnic Uighur minority living in Kazakhstan remains a sensitive issue in Kazakh-Chinese relations. The relations with Iran are more complicated, however. The Iranian President, Mohammad Khatami, has made an open statement to the Kazakh leadership, warning Kazakhstan of the dangers involved in cooperation with the Western countries. Iran has been particularly concerned about the help offered by the USA to Kazakhstan to improve the security in the Caspian Sea region. Iran has also protested against the Kazakh-Russian agreement on the division of the seabed in March 2002 by putting the Iranian navy in the Caspian Sea on high alert against Kazakhstan two days after the agreement was signed. Iran declared at the time that they consider half of the Caspian Sea to be Iranian territorial waters and that any appearance in these water by Kazakh navy vessels would be viewed as an attack on Iran.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Vasileva, Vasilina, Rubleva, Tatyana & Ivzhenko, Tatyana: "God Nazarbayeva v Rossii", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 20 December 2002, downloaded from the Internet on [http://www.ng.ru/cis/2002-12-20/5\\_nazarbaev.html](http://www.ng.ru/cis/2002-12-20/5_nazarbaev.html).

<sup>152</sup> Blagov, Sergei (2002) "Kazakhstan Pushes for Trilateral Caspian Deal", *Asia Times Online*, 10 October, downloaded from the Internet on [http://www.atimes.com/Central\\_Asia/DJ10Ag01.html](http://www.atimes.com/Central_Asia/DJ10Ag01.html).

<sup>153</sup> Plater-Zyberk, H. (2002) *Kazakhstan: Security & Defence Challenges*, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Conflict Studies Research Centre, September, downloaded from the Internet 16 October 2002 on <http://www.csrc.ac.uk/pdfs/K35-hpz.pdf>.

## 4.6 Conclusions

The major changes in Kazakhstan during 2002 have taken place on the internal political arena, and the development has not been positive. The corruption scandals, together with the intensified opposition activities in the country, have obviously frightened Nazarbayev's regime that has responded by increased authoritarianism. The opposition, as well as the independent media, have been targeted by the government repression and the new law on political parties will make it even harder for the opposition to work openly in Kazakhstan.

The international criticism of the increased authoritarian tendencies and harsh measures against the opposition in Kazakhstan has so far yielded few concessions from the Kazakh regime. Furthermore, since Kazakhstan is the most economically developed country in the region and has not been equally dependent on international aid as some of the other countries, the international community has had fewer opportunities to put pressure on Kazakhstan than it has had in, for example, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. However, the government's response to international criticism might possibly change if more investors would choose to withdraw from the energy sector, which is vitally important for the Kazakh economy.

However, as the international community has distanced itself somewhat from Kazakhstan during 2002, the Kazakh relations to Russia have strengthened considerably, both in the security sector and in the economic field. Kazakhstan's increased attention to Russia is probably as much politically as practically and economically motivated, since Nursultan Nazarbayev hopes to gain future support from Moscow that will strengthen his position against the opposition as well as in relation to the international criticism. Of course, the substantial Russian minority in Kazakhstan also continues to be a motivating force for maintaining good relations to Moscow.<sup>154</sup>

Moreover, Kazakhstan might need Russia's support in relation to the recently worsened relations with Iran that has reacted very negatively to Kazakhstan's decision to sign a bilateral agreement on the division of the Caspian Sea with Russia, as well as to the Kazakh participation in the Caspian Sea military exercises. However, it appears highly unlikely that Iran would risk an open military confrontation with Kazakhstan unless something unprecedented happens in the future. Kazakhstan would have both Russia and the United States (that would want to protect its economic interests) giving Kazakhstan their support in the case of an open Iranian aggression. The major challenges facing President Nazarbayev and his regime are consequently internal and they have become much more difficult during the year 2002.

In short summary, during 2002

- the security-political and military situation in Kazakhstan has remained approximately the same as before the Operation Enduring Freedom began in Afghanistan
- the internal political situation has grown considerably worse and furthermore, the repression of the opposition in combination with the corruption charges have given Kazakhstan a worsened climate for future economic negotiations and investments
- the foreign political climate has remained largely unchanged, but with further strengthened ties to Russia and worsened relations to Iran

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<sup>154</sup> For a broader description on the Russian minority in Kazakhstan, see Sandström, Emma (2002) "Central Asia – a New Afghanistan? The Consequences of the Socio-Economic Environment for Religious and Ethnic Strife" in Kiesow, Ingolf (ed.) *From Taiwan to Taliban; Two Danger Zones in Central Asia*, Scientific Report FOI-R--0393--SE, Swedish Defence Research Agency, Stockholm, pp.385-390.



## 5 Kyrgyzstan

Population: 4,822,166 (July 2002 estimate)<sup>155</sup>

Major ethnic groups: Kyrgyz 52.4%, Russians 18%, Uzbeks 12.9%, Ukrainians 2.5%, Germans 2.4%<sup>156</sup>

Border countries: Uzbekistan 1,099 km, Kazakhstan 1,051 km, Tajikistan 870 km China 858 km<sup>157</sup>

President: Askar Akaev

GDP per capita: purchasing power parity - \$2,800 (2001 estimate)<sup>158</sup>

Armed forces: 10,900 (estimate)<sup>159</sup>

### 5.1 Introduction

Since September 2001, Kyrgyzstan has become one of the most important partners for the international anti-terrorist coalition in Central Asia with a large number of foreign troops from several countries stationed at its Manas airport, not far from the capital Bishkek. This presence is of importance to Kyrgyzstan, both economically and militarily, since the country has weak domestic security structures and has felt itself becoming subject to many threats due to an exposed geographical position. The coalition partners pay for the use of the Kyrgyz facilities, which is welcome for the poor state even though some analysts are warning that this is quickly developing into a dependency, and their presence can also encourage international donors to give aid and credits to Kyrgyzstan.<sup>160</sup>

The relationship with Russia, which has been close ever since the break-up of the Soviet Union, seems not to have deteriorated because of the international and American presence, and the relationship with China has also remained calm so far. However, Kyrgyzstan has been the Central Asian state in which internal protests voiced against (mainly) the American military presence in the country have been heard early and most loudly. There are several reasons for this outspoken opposition. Firstly, in comparison with Tajikistan, the international military build-up in Kyrgyzstan has been much broader and more visible to the population. Secondly, in comparison with Uzbekistan, you may actually hear these protests from Kyrgyzstan, which signals that the Kyrgyz society still remains more open than some of its more totalitarian neighbours.<sup>161</sup>

The other side of the coin is, of course, that there exists strong reasons for protests in Kyrgyzstan and the American presence becomes part of this general disapproval of the regime, especially since there have not been any positive effects either economically or politically for the general population as a result of the international presence. On the contrary, there has rather been a further drawback politically as the Kyrgyz authorities, like several of the other Central Asian leaders, seem to think that their contribution to the anti-terrorist coalition make them less exposed to international criticism of their authoritarian practices. Furthermore, rights activists claim that a large part of the

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<sup>155</sup> CIA (2002) *The World Factbook 2002. Kyrgyzstan*. (online), downloaded from the Internet 18 October 2002 from <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/kg.html>.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) (2002) *The Military Balance 2002/2003*, London, Oxford University Press, p.132.

<sup>160</sup> Compare with "Kyrgyzstan" (2002) in *Terrorism: Questions & Answers*, Council of Foreign Relations in cooperation with the Markle Foundation, downloaded from the Internet 5 November 2002 on [http://www.terrorismanswers.com/coalition/kyrgyzstan\\_print.html](http://www.terrorismanswers.com/coalition/kyrgyzstan_print.html).

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

aid that has been sent to Kyrgyzstan over the last years has ended up in the private pockets of corrupt officials.<sup>162</sup>

The political and economic discontent has caused a virtual explosion of protests and oppositional demonstrations in the country during 2002, especially after some demonstrators were shot by the police in March the same year (further described in section 5.3). As in Kazakhstan, the opposition has become more united than previously, even though there still remain many differences between the oppositional groups, and it has arranged several protest marches against both local and central authorities. Even if the government was forced to resign after the March shootings, the political content has not changed much, and the protests from the opposition have continued. The main threats against the regime under President Askar Akaev – who seem to have taken very little notice of the American pledges that he should restore his reputation as a democrat – are thus presently internal.<sup>163</sup>

## 5.2 Security-Political Development

Kyrgyzstan's international security-political cooperation has expanded to a previously unforeseen level since September 2001. The international anti-terrorist coalition forces have been deployed to the so-called Ganci airbase at the Manas airport, close to the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek, from December 2001. Manas has hosted about 2,000 coalition troops from 11 countries, mainly from the United States, France, the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway, with military equipment from the same countries. At the end of 2002, aircraft from the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway had replaced the American and French aircraft and even though the active part of the operation in Afghanistan had ended at the time, the coalition airbase will probably remain in Kyrgyzstan for quite a long time to come.<sup>164</sup>

The original agreement allowed the coalition forces to use the airbase for one year with possibilities to prolong their stay depending on the situation in Afghanistan. In connection with the one year anniversary for the Ganci airbase in mid-December 2002, the deputy secretary of the Kyrgyz Security Council said that the anti-terrorist coalition would remain in the country until it has accomplished its mission to eliminate the remaining terrorists in Afghanistan. The force was deployed to support the Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. It has been used for re-supply and refuelling operations, humanitarian relief missions but also for occasional combat missions inside Afghanistan. The United States, which is responsible for and leads the coalition force at Manas, has paid fees to Kyrgyzstan for the use of the airbase. Moreover, the United States and the EU have planned to expand their assistance programmes to Kyrgyzstan, including a program to train and equip the Kyrgyz border guards.<sup>165</sup> The U.S. economic aid to Kyrgyzstan, which increased in 2002, was primarily given in the form of military assistance.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Compare for example with ICG (2002) *Kyrgyzstan's Political Crisis: An Exist Strategy*, Asia Report No.37, Osh/Brussels, 19 August, downloaded from the Internet 22 October 2002 on [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400744\\_20082002.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400744_20082002.pdf), pp.i-ii.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> "Antiterrorist Coalition's Airbase in Kyrgyzstan Marks First Anniversary", ITAR-TASS news agency, 15 December 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newsline – Central Asia Political*, 17 December 2002, from BBC Monitoring [topic@mon.bbc.co.uk](mailto:topic@mon.bbc.co.uk).

<sup>165</sup> "Antiterrorist Coalition's Airbase in Kyrgyzstan Marks First Anniversary", ITAR-TASS news agency, 15 December 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newsline – Central Asia Political*, 17 December 2002, from BBC Monitoring [topic@mon.bbc.co.uk](mailto:topic@mon.bbc.co.uk) and "Kyrgyzstan" (2002) in *Terrorism: Questions & Answers*, Council of Foreign Relations in cooperation with the Markle Foundation, downloaded from the Internet 5 November 2002 on [http://www.terrorismsanswers.com/coalition/kyrgyzstan\\_print.html](http://www.terrorismsanswers.com/coalition/kyrgyzstan_print.html).

<sup>166</sup> Oresman, Matthew (2003) "Central Asia in Play: the Russian Deployment at Kant Airbase", 15 January, Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, downloaded from the Internet 16 January 2003 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2003-01-15/20030115\\_CENTRAL\\_ASIA\\_PLAY.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2003-01-15/20030115_CENTRAL_ASIA_PLAY.htm).

Russia has responded to the increased U.S.-Kyrgyz security-political cooperation by stepping up its own military cooperation with Kyrgyzstan. At the beginning of December 2002, Russia began deploying military forces to the Kant airbase, some 20 km from Bishkek, as part of the Central Asian Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) established within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO). The Central Asian RDF will consist of one battalion from each CSTO member state in the region, i.e. Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and is supposed to eventually number 5,000 troops. However, the initial Russian contribution to the force, which will form the core of the RDF, was both limited and temporary. Moreover, the other member countries' forces are poorly equipped as well as trained, especially the Tajik and the Kyrgyz forces.<sup>167</sup> For example, the Kyrgyz aircraft slated to be part of the RDF – including four fighters – were used the last time in the summer 2000 in connection with the incursions of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) into southern Kyrgyzstan. It will take a long time before the RDF grows to a size even approximately equivalent to the international forces currently deployed at Manas.<sup>168</sup>

Most observers believe that the timing of this deployment is due to the Western presence in the region and aimed at reinforcing Russia's influence, making this deployment more political than practical. Another part of the explanation might be that it is a response to the Chinese efforts to renew its influence in the region. China has held military exercises in cooperation with the Kyrgyz border forces simulating a terrorist insurgency. Furthermore, China has allegedly made a request to station troops in Kyrgyzstan within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).<sup>169</sup>

However, the decision to implement the RDF in Central Asia at this time has probably more to do with a Russian desire to show that it is still an important security-political partner for Kyrgyzstan (and the other Central Asian CSTO-members), than with any serious military tension with the other two major powers. The U.S.-Russian relations are closer than they have been for many years and China basically shares the same goals in the anti-terrorist fight as Russia and the U.S., even though both Russia and the Central Asian states are cautious about the future Chinese agenda concerning the region and view the Chinese motives with more suspicion than those of the U.S.<sup>170</sup> Furthermore, unlike for example Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan has been a close security-political ally with Russia since the time the country gained independence and this relationship seems only to have strengthened over the year following the 11 September 2001, for example involving a new level of military-technical cooperation.<sup>171</sup>

According to the latest figures from the International Institute for Strategic Studies, there are 10,900 men in the total armed forces of Kyrgyzstan, with a small part of 2,400 serving in the air force and the remaining number serving in the army. Kyrgyzstan increased its defence budget in 2002 and intended to modernise its aircraft, buy new communications equipment and increase the salaries for

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<sup>167</sup> Cohen, Ariel (2002) "New Russian Deployment Marks Changed Strategy", *Eurasianet.org*, 17 December, downloaded from the Internet 18 December 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav121702.shtml> and Oresman, Matthew (2003) "Central Asia in Play: the Russian Deployment at Kant Airbase", 15 January, Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, downloaded from the Internet 16 January 2003 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2003-01-15/20030115\\_CENTRAL\\_ASIA\\_PLAY.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2003-01-15/20030115_CENTRAL_ASIA_PLAY.htm).

<sup>168</sup> Herman, Burt (2002) "Russia and Kyrgyzstan Sign Agreement to Bolster Security as Russian Jets Strut Their Stuff for Planned Rapid-Reaction Force", AP World Politics, 5 December, via Yahoo!News, downloaded from the Internet 10 December 2002 on <http://story.news.yahoo.com>.

<sup>169</sup> Compare with Oresman, Matthew (2003) "Central Asia in Play: the Russian Deployment at Kant Airbase", 15 January, Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, downloaded from the Internet 16 January 2003 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2003-01-15/20030115\\_CENTRAL\\_ASIA\\_PLAY.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2003-01-15/20030115_CENTRAL_ASIA_PLAY.htm).

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Jumagulov, Sultan (2002) "Kyrgyzstan Plays a Dangerous Game", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting Central Asia*, No.150, 30 September, downloaded from the Internet 2 October 2002 on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net).

the service personnel.<sup>172</sup> Despite these increased efforts to strengthen the external defence, during 2002, Kyrgyzstan has become a particularly obvious example of the fact that the primary threats to the Central Asian states and their incumbent regimes are internal, not external. This is reflected in a large police force serving under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which also has its own armed units and special forces, and the smaller National Security Service that are all responsible for internal security issues.<sup>173</sup>

Again like in the other Central Asian states, corruption in the police force is rampant and the police generally distrusted by the citizens. The severed relations between the police and the population grew worse after the shootings of some demonstrators by the police in March 2002. The subsequent trials against some policemen and other law enforcement officials in September the same year led to a strike among their police colleagues in the southern Jalal-Abad region. This event has consequently not only served to further antagonise the opposition, but could also cause a rift between Akayev's regime and the law enforcement agencies. A Commission established by the president in April 2002 to examine ways of reforming the law enforcement agencies, which is rather urgent, had produced few results by the end of 2002.<sup>174</sup>

### 5.2.1 Border Security and Disputes

China has had real reasons to worry about separatist Uighur groups working illegally in Kyrgyzstan with the goal to establish an independent Uighur Islamic state in China's north-western Xinjiang province. For example, during the summer 2002, a Chinese diplomat was shot by suspected Uighur separatists and there have also been other killings connected to Uighur radical groups.<sup>175</sup> China has consequently been interested in establishing a strong border regime with easily identifiable borders that would ease the Chinese control of any links between its own ethnic minorities and Kyrgyzstan. This is one factor that has contributed to complicate the border negotiations between the two countries. However, a much more significant obstacle has been the Kyrgyz parliament's rejections of the secret border agreements signed between the Kyrgyz authorities and China, which the parliament has refused to ratify.<sup>176</sup>

The Kyrgyz-Tajik border relations have become considerably more relaxed after the IMU's position was weakened in connection with the anti-terrorist coalition's fight against the Taliban and al-Qaeda during the autumn 2001. Kyrgyzstan did not have to fear any threat of military incursions via Tajik territory during the summer 2002, but the border has not been demarcated, easing the operations of drugs trafficking and other transnational criminal groups.<sup>177</sup>

By contrast, the reduced risk of military incursions across the Ferghana-valley borders, has not contributed to any significant improvement in Kyrgyz-Uzbek border relations. There have been

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<sup>172</sup> The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) (2002) *The Military Balance 2002/2003*, London, Oxford University Press, pp.132 and 289.

<sup>173</sup> ICG (2002) *Central Asia: The Politics of Police Reform*, Asia Report No.44, Osh/Brussels, 10 December, p.7.

<sup>174</sup> ICG (2002) *Central Asia: The Politics of Police Reform*, Asia Report No.44, Osh/Brussels, 10 December, pp.8-12. Compare also with Khamidov, Alisher (2002) "Ak-Sui Trial in Kyrgyzstan Causes Rift between President and Law-Enforcement Officials", *Eurasianet.org*, 18 October, downloaded from the Internet 21 October 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav101802.shtml>.

<sup>175</sup> Compare with Turdubayev, Tolkunbek (2002) "Kyrgyzstan: Chinese-Uighurs Suspected of Consul Killing", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting Central Asia*, No.128, 5 July, downloaded from the Internet 11 October 2002 on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net) and "Kyrgyzstan Must Act against Terrorism and Religious Extremism", *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 18 October 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 29 October 2002, from [BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk](mailto:BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk).

<sup>176</sup> ICG (2002) *Central Asia: Border Disputes and Conflict Potential*, Asia Report No.33, Osh/Brussels, 4 April, downloaded from the Internet 8 April 2002 on [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400606\\_04042002.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400606_04042002.pdf), pp.17-18.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid*, pp.18-20.

frequent mistaken shootings of Kyrgyz civilians and other clashes involving untrained Uzbek border guards. After an incident in early 2002, when a Kyrgyz citizen was shot by Uzbek border troops, the Kyrgyz deputy Prime Minister claimed that one of the disputed Uzbek enclaves on Kyrgyz territory legally belonged to Kyrgyzstan, which can be seen as a sign that the Bishkek authorities are losing patience with the Uzbek border security regime. This and similar incidents have created strong local tensions, especially in the Ferghana valley, which threaten future solutions to the border disputes. The present internal Kyrgyz turmoil that is connected to public anger over clandestine border talks held by the authorities concerning the Kyrgyz-Uzbek and the Kyrgyz-Chinese border situations has made it difficult for president Akayev to make future compromises on border issues.<sup>178</sup>

### **5.3 Internal Politics**

The internal political tension in Kyrgyzstan has intensified during 2002, with heavy protests against the ruling elite and its increasing persecutions of political opponents. As has been the case in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan's participation in the anti-terrorist coalition has weakened the criticism against the human rights abuses in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>179</sup> In the spring 2002, thousands of people gathered on the streets in southern Kyrgyzstan to protest against the controversial border pact with China and jailing of opposition member Azimbek Beknazarov charged with violations in connection with a murder case he handled in 1995.<sup>180</sup>

On March 17 security forces clashed with Beknazarov's supporters in the Aksy district of the southern region Jalal-Abad, causing the deaths of five (some reports say six) protesters and 61 injuries, creating a public riot in the district. The government responded by releasing Beknazarov and sending additional troops to the area, but was eventually forced to resign in May 2002. As a result, Beknazarov has become one of the most popular public figures in the country despite having his main base of support in the south and the protests against the Bishkek authorities in general and against President Akayev in particular have continued.<sup>181</sup>

A series of demonstrations and protest marches have been organised by a movement of opposition political parties and members of parliament as well as civil society activists formed in August 2002, called the Movement for the Resignation of President Akayev and Reforms for the People. During the autumn 2001, another influential political alliance had been formed by four major parties, called the People's Congress, including the popular Ar-Namys party with its imprisoned and equally popular leader Feliks Kulov as the nominal head of the alliance.<sup>182</sup>

Apart from these examples, however, the opposition remains generally divided and have widely varying platforms. One such divide is between the north and south of the country, with many heads of civil society, media and human rights organisations coming from the north of the country and an

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<sup>178</sup> ICG (2002) *Central Asia: Border Disputes and Conflict Potential*, Asia Report No.33, Osh/Brussels, 4 April, downloaded from the Internet 8 April 2002 on [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400606\\_04042002.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400606_04042002.pdf), pp.13-17; Jumagulov, Sultan (2002) "Tensions Mount on Kyrgyz-Uzbek Border", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting Central Asia*, No.138, 16 August, downloaded from the Internet 11 October 2002 on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net) and "Uzbek-Kyrgyz Border Delimitation Process Threatened with Breakdown - Paper", *Narodnoye Slovo*, 10 December 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 11 December 2002, from BBC Monitoring [topic@mon.bbc.co.uk](mailto:topic@mon.bbc.co.uk).

<sup>179</sup> Khamidov, Alisher (2002) "Regional Experts Call on US to Bolster Civil Society", *Eurasianet.org*, 2 October, downloaded from the Internet 3 October 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/recaps/articles/eav100202.shtml>.

<sup>180</sup> Khamidov, Alisher (2002) "Kyrgyzstan: Organized Opposition and Civil Unrest", *Eurasianet.org*, 16 December, downloaded from the Internet 17 December 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav121602.shtml>.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

increasing number of prominent political and religious political leaders coming from the south. The southern-based opposition is generally more radical than the northern part of the opposition. Whereas some opposition politicians from the north believe that it is possible to reach their goals with Akayev remaining as president, most southern opposition politicians demand his resignation. Furthermore, local observers have said that the political unrest during 2002 is connected to the southern clan groups' complaints against the incumbent regime, which the northern clans – including President Akayev's clan – have been unwilling or unable to address.<sup>183</sup>

In addition, there are opposition groups representing the ethnic minorities, most significantly the Uzbek and Uighur groups, which have become increasingly marginalised. This marginalisation has made some members of these groups likely to become potential recruits for radical religious groups, further increasing the prejudice about them and thus creating a vicious circle.<sup>184</sup> During the autumn 2002, there have been increasing inter-ethnic skirmishes involving ethnic Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Tajik groups in the south of the country, which the authorities have been accused of ignoring.<sup>185</sup>

Consequently, even though Askar Akayev's position has become very precarious, it is uncertain who could challenge him for the power. The next parliamentary elections are scheduled for 2005 and the lack of cohesion among the opposition makes some experts believe that he will serve out his term and that he will spend the two years before these elections looking for a reliable successor.<sup>186</sup> In February 2003, the proposed changes to the constitution that will transfer some of the president's powers to the parliament and local authorities were accepted in a referendum also asking the population if they think Askar Akayev should remain president to the end of the present constitutional term. Despite the concessions made to the opposition in the final version of the constitution, the changes have been heavily criticised, among other things for including a provision granting immunity to former presidents for actions taken during their time in office.<sup>187</sup>

#### **5.4 Economic Development**

The continuing economic hardships for the majority of the population serve to further increase the discontent and have, for example, been described as one of the reasons behind the inter-ethnic tensions. In addition, the opposition and human rights activists have accused the authorities of putting the aid money received from abroad into their own pockets.<sup>188</sup> The international aid to the country has increased, not only from the countries in the international anti-terrorist coalition, but also from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. However, people in Kyrgyzstan generally believe that the raised international economic assistance has benefited only a

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> For a more detailed account of the ethnic and religious division lines in Kyrgyzstan, see Sandström, Emma (2002) "Central Asia – a New Afghanistan? The Consequences of the Socio-Economic Environment for Religious and Ethnic Strife" in Kiesow, Ingolf (ed.) *From Taiwan to Taliban; Two Danger Zones in Central Asia*, Scientific Report FOI-R--0393--SE, Swedish Defence Research Agency, Stockholm, pp.333-347.

<sup>185</sup> Khamidov, Alisher (2002) "Brewing Ethnic Tension Causing Worry in South Kyrgyzstan", *Eurasianet.org*, 18 November, downloaded from the Internet 19 November 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav111802.shtml>.

<sup>186</sup> Khamidov, Alisher (2002) "Kyrgyzstan: Organized Opposition and Civil Unrest", *Eurasianet.org*, 16 December, downloaded from the Internet 17 December 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav121602.shtml>.

<sup>187</sup> "Akayev Administration Claims Victory in Kyrgyzstan Constitutional Referendum" (2003), *Eurasianet.org*, 3 February, downloaded from the Internet 5 February 2003 on [http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav020303a\\_pr.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav020303a_pr.shtml) and "Kyrgyzstan: Constitutional Referendum Culminates Five Months of Heated Debate" (2003) a *Eurasianet.org* Partner Post from RFE/RL, 18 January, downloaded from the Internet 20 January 2003 on [http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/pp011803\\_pr.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/pp011803_pr.shtml).

<sup>188</sup> Compare with "Kyrgyz Rights Activists Say Aid End up in Pockets of Corrupt Officials", Res Publica web site, 5 November 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 13 November 2002, from [BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk](mailto:BBCMonitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk).

very small number of people whereas the economic conditions for the general population have remained poor.<sup>189</sup>

#### 5.4.1 Impacts of the Drug Trade

The number of people involved in illegal economic activity and especially the drugs trafficking have increased as a result of the lack of employment and other sources of income, which in its turn has led to an increase in the number of drug abusers. In addition to the drugs smuggling from Afghanistan that is connected to an increase in the general crime rate, there are illegal poppy crops cultivated also in remote areas of Kyrgyzstan. The Kyrgyz authorities are concerned about this development, but there have also been reports of representatives of the state bodies being involved in the sale and trafficking of drugs. Kyrgyzstan has received international help in the fight against the drugs trafficking from, for example, the USA and the U.N. Even if this contribution is helpful, especially economically, it will not solve the total problem due to the lack of a coherent drugs policy in Kyrgyzstan and lack of coordination in the fight against the drugs trade in the wider region.<sup>190</sup>

### 5.5 Foreign Political Relations

Both the domestic opposition and international observers have been concerned that the new Russian military deployment to Kyrgyzstan might potentially be used to support the Kyrgyz incumbent regime in the event of a serious uprising by the opposition, even though Western experts say it is unlikely that Russia would provide any direct military support to Akayev. In addition, Kyrgyz opposition members have accused the regime of betraying state interests by allowing the Russian military deployment.<sup>191</sup>

However, all people in Kyrgyzstan are not equally upset about the Russian deployment. Kyrgyzstan and Russia have been very close allies during the last years – also in military matters – and many Kyrgyz view Russia as a natural cooperation partner that will be present in the region even when the U.S. interest has weakened. Russia has not only stepped up its military cooperation with Kyrgyzstan in 2002, but has also extended Kyrgyzstan's debt repayment with 20 years – part of which will go to the necessary build-up of the Kant airbase – and has increased its trading investments in several branches of the Kyrgyz economy.<sup>192</sup>

Even though the Kyrgyz authorities have been very positive to the U.S. military presence in the country, the Kyrgyz' population's reaction has been equally mixed to the Western deployment. In a poll conducted in September 2002, 18 per cent of the participants supported the government's decision to host a U.S. base and 34 per cent opposed it while the majority remained neutral about the base. This can partly be explained by unfulfilled expectations of fast and visible economic improvements resulting from the American presence. The government and some selected companies dealing with the coalition troops have gained large sums from the cooperation with the coalition forces, but most of the population have not seen any visible economic gains. Despite the

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<sup>189</sup> Compare with Khamidov, Alisher (2002) "Regional Experts Call on US to Bolster Civil Society", *Eurasianet.org*, 2 October, downloaded from the Internet 3 October 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/recaps/articles/eav100202.shtml>.

<sup>190</sup> "Kyrgyzstan has no Coherent Drugs Policy", Delovaya Nedelya web site, 25 October 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 2 November 2002, from BBC Monitoring [topic@mon.bbc.co.uk](mailto:topic@mon.bbc.co.uk).

<sup>191</sup> Burke, Justin (2002) "Russian Deployment in Kyrgyzstan Could Prompt Growing Domestic Turmoil", *Eurasianet.org*, 11 December, downloaded from the Internet 12 December 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav121102.shtml>.

<sup>192</sup> Compare with Oresman, Matthew (2003) "Central Asia in Play: the Russian Deployment at Kant Airbase", 15 January, Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, downloaded from the Internet 16 January 2003 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2003-01-15/20030115\\_CENTRAL\\_ASIA\\_PLAY.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2003-01-15/20030115_CENTRAL_ASIA_PLAY.htm).

varied popular opinions, the U.S. and Western presence has undoubtedly raised the international political status of Akayev's regime in addition to the economic benefits, and the USA is rather likely to expand its cooperation with Kyrgyzstan in 2003 than lower it.<sup>193</sup>

China has not voiced any official objections to either the U.S. or the Russian deployments, but has tried to expand its own bilateral cooperation with Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, Kyrgyzstan has been in need of external protectors for countering the pressures put on the country from its more powerful Central Asian neighbours. So far, this policy seems to have paid off rather well for Akayev and his regime and it yet remains to be seen if there are any hidden costs involved in the Great Power protection.<sup>194</sup>

## **5.6 Conclusions**

During 2002, Kyrgyzstan's security-political position in relation to the surrounding world has improved significantly compared to the situation during the autumn 2001. The country has become the site of military bases for both the international coalition forces and the presently rather symbolic CIS rapid deployment forces under Russian lead, that are expected to grow during next year. Kyrgyzstan has also held anti-terrorist exercises with China, and is seemingly trying to balance the influence of the three big regional powers: China, Russia and the United States.

Some observers have viewed this as a struggle for influence mainly between the USA and Russia – with the Russian deployment at Kant being primarily a response to the military presence of the U.S.-led anti-terrorist coalition. Other observers rather believe that both the United States and Russia (and probably Kyrgyzstan as well) are most concerned with making sure that the Chinese influence in Kyrgyzstan, and Central Asia in general, does not grow too strong. Even though some experts have expressed concern that Kyrgyzstan is playing a very dangerous game, the short-term gains in increased military allies and protection, reduced dependency on Russia and more international aid and credits have been very positive for Kyrgyzstan and the incumbent regime.

Moreover, the fall of the Taliban in combination with the international military presence in Kyrgyzstan has at least for the time being eliminated the threat of radical Islamist incursions into Kyrgyzstan which has already contributed to improved foreign relations to Tajikistan and could serve to strengthen the future relations also with Uzbekistan. Internally, however, Kyrgyzstan has seen a virtual explosion in secular opposition activities, and the fall of the Taliban is no guarantee that underground Islamist opposition movements have lost their allure.

The economic situation for the bulk of the population has not improved, contributing to a general discontent as well as creating tensions between different groups in the society, for example between the various tribes and ethnic groups. Furthermore, the drugs trafficking from Afghanistan has regained its former strength and threatens the stability of the country, especially in the more vulnerable southern regions where the public protests have been most intense. Taking into account both the foreign and domestic development during 2002, the prospects for future stability in Kyrgyzstan seems generally to have worsened, rather than improved, despite the radically lowered threat of military attacks against Kyrgyzstan.

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<sup>193</sup> Bartuzi, Wojchieh (2002) "US Appears Set to Expand Cooperation with Kyrgyzstan in 2003", *Eurasianet.org*, 5 December, downloaded from the Internet 9 December 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav120502.shtml> and Jumagulov, Sultan (2002) "Kyrgyzstan: Anger at U.S. Bases Mounts", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting Central Asia*, No.139, 20 August, downloaded from the Internet 11 October 2002 on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net).

<sup>194</sup> Compare with Blank, Stephen (2002) "Kyrgyzstan: Strategic Pivot", 18 December, Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, downloaded from the Internet 8 January 2003 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-12-18/20021218\\_Kyrgyzstan\\_Strategic\\_Pivot.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-12-18/20021218_Kyrgyzstan_Strategic_Pivot.htm).



In short summary, during the year 2002

- the security-political situation in Kyrgyzstan has improved significantly because of the improved international military cooperation and the lowered risk for armed incursions from groups based in Afghanistan or Tajikistan
- the internal political climate has grown much more tense and the division lines within the Kyrgyz society has become deeper than they were a year earlier
- the foreign political relations have generally improved, with strengthened ties to Russia, the USA and China, even though the relations to Uzbekistan still remain tense, primarily because of the drugs trafficking

## 6 Tajikistan

Population: 6,719,567 (July 2002 estimate)<sup>195</sup>

Major ethnic groups: Tajiks 69%, Uzbeks 25%, Russians 3%<sup>196</sup>

Border countries: Afghanistan 1,206 km, Uzbekistan 1,161 km, Kyrgyzstan 870 km, China 414 km<sup>197</sup>

President: Emomali Rakhmonov

GDP per capita: purchasing power parity - \$1,140 (2001 estimate)<sup>198</sup>

Armed forces: 6,000-12,500 (depending on various estimates, see footnote)<sup>199</sup>

### 6.1 Introduction

For Tajikistan, the situation in the country has improved quite significantly during the year 2001 compared to the situation in the early autumn 2001. Most obvious, the civil war in Afghanistan has ended and in November 2002 the first permanent bridge between Tajikistan and Afghanistan was inaugurated.<sup>200</sup> The fall of the Taliban regime has also removed the immediate threat of new attacks from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (even though the IMU might regain its former strength in the future). The IMU did not only pose a direct military threat against Tajikistan, but also created very tense relations with its neighbours and with Uzbekistan in particular that correctly accused Tajikistan for not being able to adequately protect its borders and territory.

Furthermore, Tajikistan's participation in the international anti-terrorist coalition has led to significant economic improvements for this the poorest country in the FSU. Even prior to the September 11 events, Tajikistan was to a large extent dependent on international aid for its survival, but during the last year, Tajikistan has reached a new level of international attention. The aid and credits from international donors, military as well as humanitarian, have increased accordingly.<sup>201</sup>

As in the neighbouring states, the war against terrorism has strengthened the rule of the central authorities and of the President, Emomali Rakhmonov, who is an authoritarian leader, just like his Central Asian colleagues. However, in the case of Tajikistan the increased stability that this strengthening has brought is not merely negative for the country, since the central government in Tajikistan has been very weak ever since the end of the civil war in 1997. Unlike Kazakhstan and

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<sup>195</sup> CIA (2002) *The World Factbook 2002. Tajikistan*. (online), downloaded from the Internet 18 October 2002 from <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/ti.html>.

<sup>196</sup> State Statistical Agency under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan (1999) *Naseleniye Respubliki Tajikistan* (The Population of the Republic of Tajikistan), Dushanbe.

<sup>197</sup> CIA (2002) *The World Factbook 2002. Tajikistan*. (online), downloaded from the Internet 18 October 2002 from <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/ti.html>.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> The estimates on the size of the Tajik armed forces vary quite widely. One reason for this variation is probably whether or not the assessments include the former opposition forces in the army or not. For example, according to The International Institute for Strategic Studies's assessment for 2002, the Tajik armed forces were only 6,000 men strong. The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) (2002) *The Military Balance 2002/2003*, London, Oxford University Press, p.136. However, according to Russian researchers, the national army numbered 11,500 military officers in 2001. Kuzmin, I.A. (2001) "The Causes and Lessons of the Civil War" in Vassiliev, Alexei *Central Asia: Political and Economic Challenges in the Post-Soviet Era*, London, Saqi Books, p.196.

<sup>200</sup> "Senior Tajik, Afghan Officials, prince Aga Khan Open Tajik-Afghan Bridge", Tajik Television first channel, 3 November 2002, in *BBC Monitoring Global Newsline – Central Asia Political*, 4 November 2002, from BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk.

<sup>201</sup> See for example Panfilova, Viktoria: "Amerikanskiy Voyazh Prezidenta Rakhmonova", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 11 December 2002, downloaded from the Internet on [http://www.ng.ru/cis/2002-12-11/5\\_tadjikistan.html](http://www.ng.ru/cis/2002-12-11/5_tadjikistan.html) and Panfilova, Viktoria: "Parizskii Uspekh Emomali Rakhmonova", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 9 December 2002, downloaded from the Internet on [http://www.ng.ru/2002-12-09/3\\_rahmonov.html](http://www.ng.ru/2002-12-09/3_rahmonov.html).

Kyrgyzstan, the increased strengthening of the presidency is thus not only bad for the development of the country, but could actually prove advantageous, at least in the short run.

A threat that is still acute for Tajikistan, or rather increasing again, is the drug smuggling across its borders from Afghanistan and onwards through the Central Asian neighbours to Russia and Europe. After the Taliban ban against the growing of poppy, the flow of narcotics from Afghanistan to Tajikistan was reduced, but as soon as the Taliban regime had fallen, the production increased again due to the lack of alternative sources of income for the Afghan population.<sup>202</sup> The Tajik participation in the drug smuggling will also remain high because of the poor economic conditions and high level of unemployment in Tajikistan, despite the increase in foreign assistance. The unemployment level is estimated at a minimum of 30 per cent and a vast part of the households are dependent on the income from male seasonal workers in Russia.<sup>203</sup> After the Moscow hostage crisis in late October 2002, justified suspicions were raised that the increased anti-Muslim feelings in Russia would further exacerbate the conditions of the labour migrants.<sup>204</sup>

## **6.2 Security-Political Development**

The American and French military presence in Tajikistan, even though it is very small compared to the number of troops in Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan, is a great change for Tajikistan that has previously been practically totally dependent upon Russia for its security. Some Russian officials have complained about this limited foreign deployment in Tajikistan and firmly emphasised that there is not and will not be a permanent American military base in Tajikistan. However, generally, the Russian response to the international military presence in Tajikistan has been rather mild and Moscow – or at least Vladimir Putin – seems to realise that Russia has most to gain and less to lose from this presence.

Furthermore, the Western and Russian influence in Central Asia is no longer an obvious zero-sum game, and Russia definitely remains a very close partner for Tajikistan, economically as well as military. For example, simultaneously with the international deployment in Tajikistan, a decision has been taken to transform the Russian 201<sup>st</sup> motorised military division in Tajikistan into a permanent military base. At the same time, Tajikistan will receive border monitoring equipment from the USA to a value of seven million U.S.-dollars, significantly improving the security situation along the 1,280 km Tajik-Afghan border.<sup>205</sup>

The presence of the international anti-terrorist coalition forces in Tajikistan have been limited and generally shrouded in secrecy. According to various sources there have been around 50 Americans deployed in Dushanbe – the country capital – and about 100-150 French troops deployed at the Kulyab airbase. There have also been some Italian troops in the country. These forces are believed to have been used primarily to support search-and-rescue missions in Afghanistan.<sup>206</sup> The U.S.

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<sup>202</sup> Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud (2002) “Afghanistan’s Opium Production Rises Post-Taliban”, *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, Vol.14, No.12, p.29.

<sup>203</sup> ICG (2001) *Tajikistan: An Uncertain Peace*, Asia Report No.30, Osh/Brussels, 24 December, downloaded from the Internet 7 January 2002 on [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400521\\_24122001.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400521_24122001.pdf), pp.20-22.

<sup>204</sup> See for example with “Russia’s Deportation of Tajiks ‘Unfriendly Act’ – Tajik Foreign Ministry”, Interfax news agency, 29 November 2002, in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 1 December 2002, from BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk.

<sup>205</sup> “Other Central Asian States” (2002) in *Terrorism: Questions & Answers*, Council of Foreign Relations in cooperation with the Markle Foundation, downloaded from the Internet 5 November 2002 on [http://www.terrorismsanswers.com/coalition/centralasia\\_print.html](http://www.terrorismsanswers.com/coalition/centralasia_print.html).

<sup>206</sup> “French Chief of Staff to Visit Military Contingent in Tajikistan”, Asia Plus news agency, 13 November 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 14 November 2002, from BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk; The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) (2002) *The Military Balance 2002/2003*, London, Oxford University Press, pp.124 and 136 and “Other Central Asian States” (2002) in *Terrorism: Questions &*

planners originally considered using Tajikistan for a large base because of the country's close location to Afghanistan, but decided against it due to the poor quality of the runways and the security concerns involved.<sup>207</sup>

However, during Emomali Rakhmonov's visit to the United States in November 2002, the two countries signed an agreement on military cooperation and about U.S. help in reconstructing the runways at Dushanbe airport, which will allow the country to receive heavy cargo- and fighter aircraft from the United States and other NATO-countries.<sup>208</sup> In addition, Tajikistan has joined the NATO Partnership for Peace programme as the last Central Asian state in February 2002, which will further increase the country's international military cooperation with the Western countries.<sup>209</sup>

### 6.2.1 Border Security and Disputes

Despite the fall of the Taliban and the increased military cooperation with foreign states, the Tajik government still views Afghanistan as a source of danger, not only concerning the drugs trafficking, but also regarding new terrorist incursions. This belief has been reinforced by the head of the Russian Federal Border Service who claim that his men had captured several small teams on IMU-fighters in February and March 2002, trying to enter Tajikistan from Afghanistan. President Rakhmonov has blamed the Afghan Transitional Administration for not being able to control its territory, turning a blind eye to the fact that the threat posed by terrorists as well as drugs smugglers would be much less acute for Tajikistan if his own regime had been able to establish control over the eastern part of its own country.<sup>210</sup>

Tajikistan has been trying to calm down both its neighbours and potential foreign investors, claiming that the borders are secure and that they will be further reinforced, but they have remained largely unconvinced. Tajikistan would not have been able to control its borders at all, were it not for the continued presence of the Russian Border Service operating in the country. The Russian Federal Border Service has with around 11,000 personnel – most of which are Tajik citizens – working along the Tajik Afghan border. Over a thousand additional Russian soldiers have been moved to the Tajik-Afghan border since the summer 2001 and new border posts have been put up.<sup>211</sup>

During the last years, Tajikistan has received international training for border guards and is working towards increasingly replacing the Russian Federal Border Service along its borders. In December 2002, one such step was taken as the Russian Border Service handed over the protection of the last part of the Tajik-Chinese border to the Tajik State Border Protection Committee.<sup>212</sup> Tajikistan was

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*Answers*, Council of Foreign Relations in cooperation with the Markle Foundation, downloaded from the Internet 5 November 2002 on [http://www.terrorismanswers.com/coalition/centralasia\\_print.html](http://www.terrorismanswers.com/coalition/centralasia_print.html).

<sup>207</sup> "Kyrgyzstan" (2002) in *Terrorism: Questions & Answers*, Council of Foreign Relations in cooperation with the Markle Foundation, downloaded from the Internet 5 November 2002 on [http://www.terrorismanswers.com/coalition/kyrgyzstan\\_print.html](http://www.terrorismanswers.com/coalition/kyrgyzstan_print.html).

<sup>208</sup> Panfilova, Viktoria: "Amerikanskiy Voyazh Prezidenta Rakhmonova", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 11 December 2002, downloaded from the Internet on [http://www.ng.ru/cis/2002-12-11/5\\_tadjikistan.html](http://www.ng.ru/cis/2002-12-11/5_tadjikistan.html).

<sup>209</sup> "Tajikistan's Partnership for Peace Role to 'Strengthen' NATO - official", Asia Plus, 28 February 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 10 March 2002, from BBC Monitoring [topic@mon.bbc.co.uk](mailto:topic@mon.bbc.co.uk).

<sup>210</sup> Davlatov, Vladimir (2002) "Rakhmonov Warns of Afghan Terror Threat", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting Central Asia*, No.127, 28 June, downloaded from the Internet 11 October 2002 on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net).

<sup>211</sup> Zakirova, Nargis & Isamova, Lidia (2002) "Security on Tajik-Afghan Border Tightened", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting Central Asia*, No.130, Part One, 19 July, downloaded from the Internet 11 October 2002 on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net). See also McDermott, Roger N. (2002) "Tajikistan Hurries to Strengthen Border Protections", *Eurasianet.org*, 7 October, downloaded from the Internet 9 October 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav100702a.shtml>.

<sup>212</sup> "Tajik Border Guards to Take over Protection from Russians on Tajik-Chinese border 16 December", Asia Plus news agency, 13 December 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 16 December 2002, from BBC Monitoring [topic@mon.bbc.co.uk](mailto:topic@mon.bbc.co.uk).

the last of China's three Central Asian neighbouring countries to sign a border treaty with China in 2002, but this had more to do with the preoccupation with the civil war than with any serious territorial dispute. The border relations between Tajikistan and China are facilitated by the fact that, unlike Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan only has an insignificant minority of ethnic Uighurs living on its territory.<sup>213</sup>

Tajikistan has not been able to secure its borders to Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan, creating serious tensions with the neighbouring countries. Several parts of the Tajik-Kyrgyz border remain disputed, complicated foremost by the existence of two Tajik enclaves on Kyrgyz territory, which has given rise to increased local rioting at border checkpoints. For example, in early January 2003, about 300 residents of the Tajik Isfara valley in the Soghd region destroyed a Kyrgyz border checkpoint, injuring two Kyrgyz law enforcement officers. A group of local Kyrgyz citizens later responded with a similar measure and security forces from both countries were eventually forced to intervene to stop further violence. There have also been shooting incidents at the border.<sup>214</sup>

The Tajik-Uzbek border situation has been one of the worst in the region, in particular for Tajik citizens attempting to move across the border into Uzbekistan. However, in October 2002, an agreement was signed between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan which, even though it means that Tajikistan will have to give up some historic claims, might serve to improve the relations between the two countries in the long run. The agreement only covers 86 per cent of the border, but was still seen as a major breakthrough. The remaining areas are particularly sensitive in the Tajik Soghd area, but the Uzbek President Islam Karimov said at the time of the signing of the October agreement that the countries would take into account each other's interests while solving this issue.<sup>215</sup>

### **6.3 Internal Politics**

The strengthened position of the previously very weak Tajik central government resulting from the country's participation in the international war on terrorism could prove partly advantageous for Tajikistan. However, like in the other Central Asian countries, the strengthened central power has emboldened the authorities' actions against the opposition. In a series of speeches held by the president in 2002, he claimed that some members of the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) were trying to indoctrinate people in the spirit of extremism. In addition, the president implied that there was a connection between the IRP and the illegal radical Islamic groupings Hizb-ut-Tahrir and IMU. IRP is the only officially registered Islamic party in Central Asia that has cooperated in governing the country through a power-sharing agreement signed in order to the end of the civil war.<sup>216</sup>

The authorities have introduced tests for evaluating the heads of 250 mosques and 20 religious schools on their knowledge of Tajik secular law that resulted in ten imams being banned from preaching. Furthermore, the leaders of the mosques were required to swear loyalty to the incumbent

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<sup>213</sup> Compare with ICG (2002) *Central Asia: Border Disputes and Conflict Potential*, Asia Report No.33, Osh/Brussels, 4 April, downloaded from the Internet 8 April 2002 on [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400606\\_04042002.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400606_04042002.pdf), p.22.

<sup>214</sup> Khamidov, Alisher (2003) "Kyrgyz-Tajik Border Riots Highlight Building Inter-Ethnic Tension in Central Asia", *Eurasianet.org*, 8 January, downloaded from the Internet 9 January 2003 on [http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav010803\\_pr.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav010803_pr.shtml).

<sup>215</sup> Abdullo, Rashid (2002) "Tajik-Uzbek Border Progress", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting Central Asia*, No.152, 10 October, downloaded from the Internet 28 October 2002 on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net).

<sup>216</sup> Igushev, Alexei (2003) "Tajikistan: Governing Opposition", *Eurasianet.org*, 6 January, downloaded from the Internet 8 January 2003 on [http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav010603\\_pr.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav010603_pr.shtml).

regime and the authorities have closed down several mosques in the IRP stronghold in the north of the country.<sup>217</sup>

The IRP has grown increasingly popular among the population in Tajikistan over the last years, partly because of the weak secular opposition. The next parliamentary elections are scheduled for 2005 and the presidential elections for 2006. Some experts believe that the increased pressure put on the IRP by the president may be part of a broader attempt to weaken the religious opposition in preparation for either extending the presidential term or amending the constitution before the coming elections so that he will be able to remain in office.<sup>218</sup>

Tajikistan's record on human rights is poor, like in the neighbouring countries. However, there have been some improvements, even though they have taken some time to materialise. The prison system has been reformed and a number of law enforcement officers have been targeted for abuse of power. There have also been attempts on behalf of the authorities to improve relations with the media.<sup>219</sup> In general, however, the internal political climate in Tajikistan has grown increasingly authoritarian in 2002. The new level of cooperation with the Western countries has not softened this development, which might be reflected in an increasing number of local media articles with a negative view of the United States and the results of its ongoing operation in Afghanistan.<sup>220</sup>

#### **6.4 Economic Development**

The Tajik contribution to the international anti-terrorist coalition has paid off in the form of generous new pledges of economic aid and credits granted by, primarily, the United States, France and other Western states, as well as from international organisations.<sup>221</sup> While these economic contributions are badly needed and represent a major triumph for Rakhmonov's regime, much more efforts will be needed to put the Tajik economy on its feet again, which is still trying to recover from the consequences caused by the civil war.<sup>222</sup> As late as mid-summer 2002, UN representatives to Tajikistan described the poor economic state of the economy as the biggest threat to the future stability in Tajikistan. More than 80 per cent of the population are still estimated to be living below the poverty line. There has been a small rise in GDP during 2001, but it is still not even half the level of GDP the country had prior to independence, and the unemployment is a huge problem.<sup>223</sup>

The Russian crackdown on the illegal Tajik labour migrants in late 2002 could further exacerbate the poor economic state in the country. Even though there are illegal immigrants from all over Central Asia working in Russia, the Tajik labour migrants have been particularly roughly treated. For example, in November 2002, Russia deported about 200 Tajik citizens back to Dushanbe, and

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Davlatov, Vladimir (2002) "Tajikistan: Pressure on Islamists", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting Central Asia*, No.143, 3 September, downloaded from the Internet 11 October 2002 on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net).

<sup>220</sup> Compare with Khamidov, Alisher (2002) "Regional Experts Call on US to Bolster Civil Society", *Eurasianet.org*, 2 October, downloaded from the Internet 3 October 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/recaps/articles/eav100202.shtml>.

<sup>221</sup> Compare with Panfilova, Viktoria: "Amerikanskiy Voyazh Prezidenta Rakhmonova", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 11 December 2002, downloaded from the Internet on [http://www.ng.ru/cis/2002-12-11/5\\_tadjikistan.html](http://www.ng.ru/cis/2002-12-11/5_tadjikistan.html) and Panfilova, Viktoria: "Parizskii Uspek Emomali Rakhmonova", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 9 December 2002, downloaded from the Internet on [http://www.ng.ru/2002-12-09/3\\_rahmonov.html](http://www.ng.ru/2002-12-09/3_rahmonov.html).

<sup>222</sup> For a more detailed description of the economic crisis following the civil war and the consequences for the socio-economic conditions in Tajikistan, see Sandström, Emma (2002) "Central Asia – a New Afghanistan? The Consequences of the Socio-Economic Environment for Religious and Ethnic Strife" in Kiesow, Ingolf (ed.) *From Taiwan to Taliban; Two Danger Zones in Central Asia*, Scientific Report FOI-R--0393--SE, Swedish Defence Research Agency, Stockholm, pp.308-313.

<sup>223</sup> Abdullo, Rashid (2002) "Poverty Is Biggest Threat to Peace", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting Central Asia*, No.127, 28 June, downloaded from the Internet 11 October 2002 on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net).

the development has been worrying the Tajik authorities.<sup>224</sup> Many people in Tajikistan are dependent on the labour migrants for economic contributions. According to unofficial estimates, there are about 800,000 Tajik labour migrants working illegally in Russia every year, sending as much as 400 million U.S.-dollars back to Tajikistan. By comparison, this is roughly double the amount estimated as the level of Tajik annual state expenditures estimated for the year 2000 in the CIA World Factbook. A serious Russian crackdown on illegal Tajik labour migrants in Russia could consequently have very grave economic consequences for Tajikistan.

#### 6.4.1 Impacts of the Drug Trade

The increase in the opium production in Afghanistan and the simultaneous increase in heroin production in the same area was probably one of the most serious security problems for Tajikistan at the beginning of the year 2003. The Afghan opium production has reportedly tripled during the year 2001 in the former United Front-controlled regions close to the Tajik border. In the north-eastern Afghan province Badakhshan alone, 300 tonnes of opium have been reported harvested in 2002, compared to 150 tonnes produced in the province during the record year 1999.<sup>225</sup> This region borders on Tajikistan and stretches along a large part of the Tajik Gorno-Badakhshon Autonomous Oblast (GBAO), where the border is very difficult to control and over which the central Tajik government has limited control. GBAO is the poorest region in Tajikistan with high unemployment, making the drug trade an attractive means of earning money. Moreover, the population in the region has good contacts with the people living in Afghan Badakhshan, who are predominantly ethnic Tajiks.<sup>226</sup>

According to early figures for the seizure of drugs along the Tajik-Afghan border published on 21 December 2002, Tajik security structures and Russian border guards confiscated more than 6.6 tonnes of drugs including 5.6 tonnes of heroin brought in from Afghanistan during 2002.<sup>227</sup> Later reports said that the Russian border guards serving on the Tajik-Afghan border seized more than 4 tonnes of drugs totally in 2002, of which 2.3 tonnes were heroin.<sup>228</sup> The Tajik authorities claim that they have stopped 10-12 per cent of the drugs being trafficked from Afghanistan to Tajikistan, whereas the UN Drug Control Program put the figure at 3-6 per cent. According to the UN-sponsored Drug Control Agency in Tajikistan the drug trafficking is growing, which means that the Tajik authorities will probably have to rely on assistance from Russian border protection for some years to come.<sup>229</sup> Both Tajik and Russian officials have expressed great concern about the inability to deal with the production of drugs in Afghanistan on behalf of the new Afghan regime as well as the international anti-terrorist coalition forces.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> "Russia, Tajikistan Spar over Illegal Labour Migration" (2003) *Eurasianet.org*, 9 January, downloaded from the Internet 10 January 2003 on [http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav010903\\_pr.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav010903_pr.shtml).

<sup>225</sup> Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud (2002) "Afghanistan's Opium Production Rises Post-Taliban", *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Vol.14, No.12, p.29.

<sup>226</sup> For more information, see Sandström, Emma (2002) "Central Asia – a New Afghanistan? The Consequences of the Socio-Economic Environment for Religious and Ethnic Strife" in Kiesow, Ingolf (ed.) *From Taiwan to Taliban; Two Danger Zones in Central Asia*, Scientific Report FOI-R--0393--SE, Swedish Defence Research Agency, Stockholm, pp.310-313 and 321-322.

<sup>227</sup> "New Afghan Political System Fails to Improve Drug Situation", ITAR-TASS news agency, 21 December 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 22 December 2002, from [BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk](mailto:BBC_Monitoring_topic@mon.bbc.co.uk).

<sup>228</sup> See for example "Russian Border Guards Seize Drugs, Arms on Tajik-Afghan Border", Interfax news agency, 3 January 2003 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 4 January 2003, from [BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk](mailto:BBC_Monitoring_topic@mon.bbc.co.uk).

<sup>229</sup> McDermott, Roger N. (2002) "Tajikistan Hurries to Strengthen Border Protections", *Eurasianet.org*, 7 October, downloaded from the Internet 9 October 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav100702a.shtml>.

<sup>230</sup> See for example "Coalition Forces not Keen on Destroying Afghan Opium Crops, Russian Border Chief", ITAR-TASS news agency, 14 November 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 14 November 2002, from [BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk](mailto:BBC_Monitoring_topic@mon.bbc.co.uk); "New Afghan Political System Fails to Improve Drug Situation",

## 6.5 Foreign Political Relations

Tajikistan's as well as President Rakhmonov's international status have been greatly enhanced in 2002, particularly in the Western countries. The United States and the EU, including several individual countries in the union, have become close partners of Tajikistan. U.S. and EU officials have praised the Tajik cooperation in the international anti-terrorist coalition and the efforts of the Tajik regime to reform the country. This close cooperation with the Western world in general and the United States in particular will also serve to raise the interest in Tajikistan from other countries and the USA has pledged to support Tajikistan in the IMF and the World Bank, as well as in the country's bid to join the WTO.<sup>231</sup>

At the same time, Russia has stepped up its cooperation with Tajikistan, especially in the military sphere. The relations became strained following the Russian deportations of Tajik citizens from Russia during the autumn 2002 after the Moscow hostage crisis. The Tajik Foreign Ministry has accused Russian law enforcement agencies of destroying residence permits of Tajik citizens and detaining others, which they viewed as an unfriendly act towards Tajikistan in violation of several agreements signed between the two countries.<sup>232</sup> However, Tajikistan and Russia have also begun working together on improving the rights of the legal Tajik guest workers in Russia.<sup>233</sup>

The most obvious foreign political change for Tajikistan in relation to its close neighbours lies in the improved relationship with Afghanistan. Prior to the September 11, 2001, fierce battles were taking place close to the Tajik border and Tajikistan was supporting the oppositional forces against the Taliban-held power in Kabul. In 2002, the same oppositional forces had gained the power in Afghanistan, with the ethnic Tajiks in Afghanistan playing a dominant role. The situation in Afghanistan have remained unstable and there are several problems connected with the Tajik-Afghan relationship, in particular concerning drugs. However, at the opening of the first permanent bridge linking Tajikistan's eastern GBAO region with Afghanistan in November 2002, Emomali Rakhmonov expressed his hopes of a boost in economic cooperation, in particular in the fields of industry and agriculture. Tajikistan had at the time already begun to supply Afghanistan with electricity and had given assistance in the restoration of electric power lines.<sup>234</sup>

## 6.6 Conclusions

Tajikistan's foreign and security political situation has improved considerably during 2002 compared to the previous year. As a poor country with few resources (in a resource-rich

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ITAR-TASS news agency, 21 December 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 22 December 2002, from BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk and "Record Drugs Crop in Afghanistan in 2002 – Tajik Drugs Chief", ITAR-TASS news agency, 28 November 2002, in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 28 November 2002, from BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk.

<sup>231</sup> "EU Official Hails Tajikistan for Antiterrorist Commitment", ITAR-TASS news agency, 15 December 2002, in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 16 December 2002, from BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk and "Tajikistan Ready to Be 'Reliable and Stable Partner' of USA - President", Asia Plus news agency, 12 December 2002, in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 13 December 2002, from BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk.

<sup>232</sup> "Russia's Deportation of Tajiks 'Unfriendly Act' – Tajik Foreign Ministry", Interfax news agency, 29 November 2002, in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 1 December 2002, from BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk.

<sup>233</sup> "Tajikistan, Russia Call for Legal Labour Migration", ITAR-TASS news agency, 15 November 2002, in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 16 November 2002, from BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk.

<sup>234</sup> "Senior Tajik, Afghan Officials, prince Aga Khan Open Tajik-Afghan Bridge", Tajik Television first channel, 3 November 2002, in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 4 November 2002, from BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk.



environment) Tajikistan had only very limited cooperation with the Western countries before 11 September 2001. This limited cooperation was further enforced by the strong Tajik dependency on Russia. During 2002, Tajikistan has become a limited, but still relevant, security-political partner for the United States and the other countries in the international anti-terrorist coalition, increasing Tajikistan's status also in other countries.

Tajikistan was even prior to 2002 heavily dependent on international aid. After the country's decision to cooperate with the anti-terrorist coalition, the foreign aid and credits to Tajikistan have grown to an even higher level. At the same time, Tajikistan's one-sided dependency on Russia has decreased somewhat due to the new powerful partners gained by the country. Even so, Tajikistan will continue to be a close partner of Russia – economically as well as militarily – for several years forward.

Emomali Rakhmonov's position has also strengthened, both on the international and the domestic political arena. Nevertheless, the Tajik society still remains very much divided and has been so ever since the civil war. The authoritarian practices of the Rakhmonov regime, which have rather been enforced than dampened during 2002, have continued to uphold this split in society. President Rakhmonov's accusations against the IRP for alleged connections with radical Islamic groups, like Hizb-ut-Tahrir and the IMU, have been particularly serious in this respect and could serve to radicalise the religious opposition in their own right. However, the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the weakened status of the groups that used to operate under Taliban protection, might serve to improve the relations between the different groups in the Tajik society in the long run, creating less room for suspicions and accusations.

Overall, Tajikistan's security-political situation can consequently be described as radically improved compared to the situation the country experienced during the summer of 2001, even if the internal weaknesses inherent in, for example, the country's security structures, the economy and the domestic political environment remain the same.

In short summary, during the year 2002

- the security-political situation in Tajikistan has improved considerably, in particular due to the end of the civil war in Afghanistan, although the drugs trafficking remains a big problem
- the internal political situation has remained largely unchanged, but this is from a highly unstable initial situation and the increased pressure put on the opposition might lead to a worsened the internal climate in the future
- Tajikistan has gained strengthened and important foreign political relations that might contribute to a better economic situation in a longer perspective

## 7 Turkmenistan

Population: 4,688,963 (July 2002 estimate)<sup>235</sup>  
Major ethnic groups: Turkmens 77%, Uzbeks 9.2%, Russians 6.7%, Kazakhs 2% (1995 estimate)<sup>236</sup>  
Border countries: Uzbekistan 1,621 km, Iran 992 km, Afghanistan 744 km, Kazakhstan 379 km<sup>237</sup>  
President: Saparmurat Niyazov  
GDP per capita: purchasing power parity - \$4,700 (2001 estimate)<sup>238</sup>  
Armed forces: 17,500 (estimate)<sup>239</sup>

### 7.1 Introduction

Turkmenistan has probably been the Central Asian country least affected by the September 11 events and the Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. The framework agreement to build a natural gas pipeline for the transportation of Turkmen gas across Afghanistan to Pakistan and the decision of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to finance a feasibility plan for the project is of course a triumph for President Saparmurat Niyazov. This was one of his main goals even during the time of the civil war in Afghanistan and it has now become possible to explore the prospects for the project in practice. However, if and when the building of the pipeline can actually take place, still remains a question of speculation. The project is huge and requires both a continued calm development in Afghanistan, peaceful relations between Pakistan and India and a genuine will to cooperate and make compromises on behalf of Niyazov, who has previously proven to be a difficult business partner.<sup>240</sup>

Internally, Niyazov seems to have at least temporarily strengthened his position in connection with the purges against the opposition following the failed assassination attempt against his life in late November 2002. In particular, the capture and subsequent imprisonment of one of the leading foreign-based opposition leaders, Boris Shikhmuradov, was an important victory for President Niyazov.<sup>241</sup> In addition, many analysts believe that the call for early parliamentary elections to be held on 6 April 2003, instead of as previously scheduled in December 2004, might be yet another attempt to rid the parliament of oppositional ideas and create an assembly even more subservient towards Niyazov.<sup>242</sup>

At the same time, the country's external relations seems to have worsened with almost all neighbours as well as with a number of other countries, like Russia and the United States, with the

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<sup>235</sup> CIA (2002) *The World Factbook 2002. Turkmenistan*. (online), downloaded from the Internet 18 October 2002 from <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/tx.html>.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) (2002) *The Military Balance 2002/2003*, London, Oxford University Press, p.136.

<sup>240</sup> Ahmad, Munir (2002) "Pakistan Hopes to Sign US\$3.2 Billion Pipeline Project...", Yahoo!News, 10 December, via Afgha.com, downloaded from the Internet 11 December 2002 on <http://www.afgha.com/print.php3?sid=17957> and "Turkmen-Afghan-Pakistani Gas Pipeline Accord Published by Turkmen Newspaper", Neytralnyy Turkmenistan, 31 May 2002, in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 31 May 2002, from BBC Monitoring [topic@mon.bbc.co.uk](mailto:topic@mon.bbc.co.uk). For a more detailed description of present and planned Turkmen gas exports, see Kiesow, Ingolf (2003) *Energy in Asia; An Outline of Some Strategic Energy Issues in Asia*, Base Data Report FOI-R--0793--SE, Swedish Defence Research Agency, Stockholm, pp.42-44.

<sup>241</sup> Compare for example with "Turkmenistan's Niyazov Crushes Opposition Movement" (2003) *Eurasianet.org*, 7 January, downloaded from the Internet 8 January 2003 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav010703.shtml>.

<sup>242</sup> Compare with Pannier, Bruce (2003) "Turkmenistan: President Calls Early Parliamentary Elections", a *Eurasianet.org* Partner Post from RFE/RL, 11 January, downloaded from the Internet 13 January 2003 on [http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav011103\\_pr.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav011103_pr.shtml).

possible exception of Iran, Afghanistan and Turkey. International organisations have also grown increasingly hesitant to work in Turkmenistan, especially following the government's crackdown on the opposition and their relatives after the alleged assassination attempt.<sup>243</sup>

There had been some earlier rumours of cracks emerging in the Ashgabat regime circulating in the press, as well as reports of protest leaflets being spread in the streets, which had not been seen in Turkmenistan since 1995. The foreign-based opposition had intensified its struggle against the regime, especially since the defection of former Turkmen Foreign Minister Boris Shikhmuradov in late 2001, who was previously one of the most well-known and respected Turkmen politicians of the incumbent regime abroad.<sup>244</sup>

However, no opposition politicians are allowed to work inside Turkmenistan and the alternative to Niyazov remains unclear. The opposition abroad is convinced that the reformation of the Turkmen society depends on the removal of Niyazov from the power, but they are still largely divided among themselves.<sup>245</sup> Niyazov himself seems to have been convinced that the Western countries' occupation with the development in Afghanistan would make them less inclined to criticise the human rights situation in Turkmenistan. At least at the beginning of the anti-terrorist operation, this seems to have been a correct conclusion.<sup>246</sup>

## **7.2 Security-Political Development**

Niyazov, having declared Turkmenistan a permanently neutral country, has accordingly abstained from cooperation in the Operation Enduring Freedom, but has allowed international aid to be shipped through Turkmenistan and for the coalition to use Turkmen airspace. Consequently, Turkmenistan has not gained as much economically from the anti-terrorist campaign as the other Central Asian countries, but this also means that the Western countries have had fewer possibilities to influence the Turkmen regime.<sup>247</sup>

Despite its neutrality, Turkmenistan has cooperated with other countries in the security sector. Of the U.S. aid delivered to Turkmenistan in 2002, 8 million U.S. dollar – or nearly half the total amount – went to the security sector, primarily to improve border security in order to control the smuggling of weapons and drugs.<sup>248</sup> Turkey's military engagement in Eurasia has increased alongside the U.S. presence in the area, and Turkey is now helping to build and staff military academies in Turkmenistan, as well as in Georgia.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Compare with Ismailzade, Fariz (2003) "Turkmenistan's Policies Bring Near Total Isolation, Weaken Regime", 15 January, Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, downloaded from the Internet 16 January 2003 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2003-01-15/20030115\\_TURKENISTAN\\_ISOLATION.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2003-01-15/20030115_TURKENISTAN_ISOLATION.htm).

<sup>244</sup> Eshanova, Zamira (2002) "Turkmenistan: Opposition See Cracks Emerging in Ashgabat Regime", a *Eurasianet.org* Partner Post from RFE/RL, 3 November, downloaded from the Internet 5 November 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav110302.shtml>.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> See for example Berdyev, Aslan (2002) "Turkmenistan: Niyazov's Silent Prison", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting Central Asia*, No.143, 3 September, downloaded from the Internet 9 October 2002 on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net).

<sup>247</sup> For example, at the beginning of 2002, the planned U.S. assistance to Turkmenistan was 16.4 million U.S.-dollars in 2002 compared to 12.2 million U.S.-dollars the previous year. By comparison, Uzbekistan that took a very active part in the Operation Enduring Freedom had been given 55.9 million U.S.-dollars in U.S. assistance already in 2001, which was almost tripled to 161.8 million U.S.-dollars during the year 2002. Kyrgyzstan was estimated to receive the second lowest level of U.S. assistance with 49 million U.S.-dollars in 2002, which is still nearly three times as much as Turkmenistan received during the same year.

<sup>248</sup> ICG (2003) *Cracks in the Marble: Turkmenistan's Failing Dictatorship*, Asia Report No.44, Osh/Brussels, 17 January, downloaded from the Internet 20 January 2003 on [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400871\\_17012003.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400871_17012003.pdf), p.33.

<sup>249</sup> Kaya, Kemal (2002) "Turkey's Elections: What Impact for Eurasia?", Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, 6 November, downloaded from the Internet 7 November 2002 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-11-06/20021106\\_TURKEYS\\_ELECTIONS.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-11-06/20021106_TURKEYS_ELECTIONS.htm).

Given the lack of public data, the general size of the armed forces and state expenditure on the security sector in Turkmenistan is difficult to measure.<sup>250</sup> The conscript army, forming the bulk of the Turkmen armed forces, was highly privileged during Soviet times but has become increasingly worse equipped and low-paid. In addition, the president has started to use the army as a free labour force for the state, for example as medical assistants. In August 2002, Niyazov announced that serving soldiers would replace the 10,000 member road police. The lowered status both financially and professionally has led to growing discontent within the army, which some of the opposition members claim can prove supportive of its cause.<sup>251</sup> Even though Niyazov believes that many of the threats towards him and his regime come from outside the country, he is even more anxious about keeping the internal threats in check with the help of the security apparatus.

The KNB is believed to number approximately 3,000 employees and was earlier entitled to exercise absolute control over other state institutions and was immune before the justice system until March, 2002. The high and middle-ranking KNB officers form a well-organised force of equally well-trained and educated personnel. The KNB has been in charge of detaining people believed to be threatening to the state and sending them either to prison, usually under very poor conditions, or to labour camps, under even worse conditions. Human Rights Watch estimated in 2001 that around 20,000 people are imprisoned in different camps, including psychiatric hospitals.<sup>252</sup>

However, in March 2002, Niyazov initiated a thorough clean-up campaign against the KNB – officially due to violations made by the KNB, but by most observers believed to be the result of Niyazov's perceived threat from the influential force – subjecting the KNB to their own treatment of other society members. 60 officers are thought to have been imprisoned, some of them executed and many more in other ways affected by the purge. Contrary to Niyazov's wishes, the purges have raised widespread discontent within the KNB and probably turned many more members against the president than there were before this move.<sup>253</sup>

The president now relies primarily on the Presidential Guard that has become much more than a mere bodyguard. The Guard is also made up of about 3,000 people with backgrounds as bodyguards or security agents. It is reported to be in charge of monitoring political and economic conflicts within the society at large, as well as the elite, and regularly reports to the president on the development in this area. It is also obliged to carry out secret operations on the president's personal orders and is spreading its influence over the other power structures.<sup>254</sup>

### 7.2.1 Border Security and Disputes

Border security is, not surprisingly considering the president's fear of outside influences that might pose a threat to his regime, the most prioritised Turkmen security sector, and steps have been taken to further tighten the border control during 2002.<sup>255</sup> Turkmenistan appears to have maintained a

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<sup>250</sup> Sandström, Emma (2002) "Central Asia – a New Afghanistan? The Consequences of the Socio-Economic Environment for Religious and Ethnic Strife" in Kiesow, Ingolf (ed.) *From Taiwan to Taliban; Two Danger Zones in Central Asia*, Scientific Report FOI-R--0393--SE, Swedish Defence Research Agency, Stockholm, p.371.

<sup>251</sup> ICG (2003) *Cracks in the Marble: Turkmenistan's Failing Dictatorship*, Asia Report No.44, Osh/Brussels, 17 January, downloaded from the Internet 20 January 2003 on [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400871\\_17012003.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400871_17012003.pdf), pp.10-11.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.6-9. It should be noted that there are other sources of information that put the number of people kept in regular prisons as low as around 800 people in early 2003.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.9-10.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.8-9.

<sup>255</sup> Compare for example with Mikhailova, Polina (2002) "Turkmenistan: Niyazov Tightens Borders", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting Central Asia*, No.100, 25 January, downloaded from the Internet 28 January 2002 on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net).

rather close control over the country's 744 km long border with Afghanistan<sup>256</sup>, although some reports claim that certain areas along the border are very sparsely patrolled.<sup>257</sup>

The most tense border situation for Turkmenistan has been the border to Uzbekistan. There have been many local disputes over both border issues and resources and even occasional shootings. Following a border delimitation agreement in September 2000, both countries began fencing off their territory, but this has only increased the tensions along the border, which grew worse in 2002. Both sides have introduced fees for crossing the border, which has created an additional burden to the many people from this poor region that depend on the cross-border trade.<sup>258</sup> In the heightened security situation following the assassination attempt on Niyazov, the Turkmen border service strengthened the control over the border to the Uzbek region Khorezm in north-eastern Turkmenistan. The measure was explained as the result of a growing number of smugglers in the area, but the increased military presence on the Uzbek side of the border might have been an additional reason to strengthen the border security.<sup>259</sup>

In May 2002, the President re-took the control of the country's border service, claiming that the security service (the Committee for National Security, or KNB) that was previously in charge of the border control had failed to protect the borders properly.<sup>260</sup> The assassination attempt against the president, for which foreigners became the main suspects and whom the neighbouring countries, in their turn, were suspected of sheltering, led to a strengthening of the country's border controls. Vitalii Ponomarev, who heads the Moscow-based human rights organisation Memorial, stated in December 2002 that reports had indicated that Turkmenistan was moving army troops and armoured vehicles to the country's border, in particular to the border with Kazakhstan, which was previously considered as relatively calm.<sup>261</sup>

### **7.3 Internal Politics**

The year 2002 started badly for Saparmurat Niyazov and his regime. At the beginning of February, the Turkmen ambassador to Turkey, Nurmukhammed Khanamov, announced that he had decided to leave his post and join the opposition in the National Democratic Movement of Turkmenistan (NDMT), created by Boris Shikhmuradov following his defection in November 2001. Khanamov accused Niyazov of dictatorship and of leading a foreign policy that was driving Turkmenistan into isolation. Niyazov responded to these and the other high-profile defections that occurred during the same period by increasing the purges against what he believed to be potential opposition forces in Turkmenistan.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> ICG (2002) *Central Asia: Border Disputes and Conflict Potential*, Asia Report No.33, Osh/Brussels, 4 April, downloaded from the Internet 8 April 2002 on [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400606\\_04042002.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400606_04042002.pdf), p.21.

<sup>257</sup> Compare with Mikhailova, Polina (2002) "Turkmenistan: Niyazov Tightens Borders", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting Central Asia*, No.100, 25 January, downloaded from the Internet 28 January 2002 on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net).

<sup>258</sup> ICG (2002) *Central Asia: Border Disputes and Conflict Potential*, Asia Report No.33, Osh/Brussels, 4 April, downloaded from the Internet 8 April 2002 on [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400606\\_04042002.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400606_04042002.pdf), pp.9-11.

<sup>259</sup> *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 20 December 2002, downloaded from the Internet 20 December 2002 on [http://www.ng.ru/cis/2002-12-20/5\\_news.html](http://www.ng.ru/cis/2002-12-20/5_news.html).

<sup>260</sup> "Turkmen Head Takes Control of Country's Border Service", Turkmen TV first channel, 5 March 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 7 March 2002, from BBC Monitoring [topic@mon.bbc.co.uk](mailto:topic@mon.bbc.co.uk).

<sup>261</sup> Eshanova, Zamira (2002) "Turkmenistan: Niyazov Cracks down on Foreigners after Assassination Attempt", a *Eurasianet.org* Partner Post from RFE/RL, 7 December, downloaded from the Internet 9 December 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav120702.shtml>.

<sup>262</sup> Ataeva, Nazik (2002) "Turkmenistan: Diplomatic Defection Sparks Turmoil", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting Central Asia*, No.105, 15 February, downloaded from the Internet 26 February 2002 on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net).

Most of the opposition had been driven into exile already in the early 1990s, and the majority were, like Shikhmuradov and Khanamov, living in Russia. The most active part of the opposition was split into two major camps, with the first wave of émigrés allied with the Unified Opposition Movement of Turkmenistan (UOMT) formed by Turkmenistan's first foreign minister, Avdi Kuliev, who left the government as early as 1992, and the other supporting Shikhmuradov's group. Both these groups stepped up their opposition activities during the year 2002 and both of the leading figures were trying to strengthen communications with opposition forces inside Turkmenistan and planning for their future return.<sup>263</sup>

During 2002, rumours also began spreading about Saparmurat Niyazov's rapidly deteriorating health, which – although unconfirmed – contributed to give the impression that the regime was losing its stable position.<sup>264</sup> Leaflets have been spread against the government and in August 2002 there was a demonstration by women outside a session of parliament. Analysts noted that the general population and the small opposition groups existing in Turkmenistan were showing signs of becoming more politically active, and so were the important regional elites. Both opposition members and international observers noted that cracks were appearing in the Turkmen regime and predicted that a change in power was at least not more than a couple of years away. However, efforts to unite the exiled opposition failed because Boris Shikhmuradov and his followers did not show any real interest in cooperating with Kuliev.<sup>265</sup>

This rift between the leaders meant that the potential opposition forces inside Turkmenistan were hesitant about what message to adhere to and consequently hindered the development of a unified opposition movement. It is uncertain if or how the imprisonment of Shikhmuradov will affect this problem. Even if Shikhmuradov was the leading figure of the NDMT, there are still other well-known members in the movement, like Nurmukammed Khanamov, who differ from Kuliev not so much in their proclaimed methods, but in their backgrounds and financial resources. Kuliev and the UOMT regard Shikhmuradov's and the NDMT's long association with Niyazov's regime as compromising. At the same time, they realise that both the contacts with people in the security sector and the financial resources of the second wave of exiled opposition can be very useful in the struggle against Niyazov.<sup>266</sup>

The crackdown on the opposition after the alleged assassination attempt that culminated with the imprisonment of Shikhmuradov, has weakened the opposition and re-affirmed the position of the Ashgabat regime, at least in the short run. The hazy circumstances surrounding the assassination attempt and the harsh measures taken to weaken any potential future opposition, have led several members of the opposition to believe that the assassination attempt might have been staged by the president himself in order to be able to use these suppressive measures. Regardless of whether this is true or not, the new and tougher visa regime – both for entering and leaving the country – will create obstacles for the future return of exiled opposition members. Furthermore, the stepped-up

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<sup>263</sup> Safronov, Rustem (2002) "Opposition in Exile: Turkmenistan", *Eurasianet.org*, 9 December, downloaded from the Internet 10 December 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav120902.shtml>.

<sup>264</sup> Eshanova, Zamira (2002) "Turkmenistan: Rumours of Niyazov's Ill Health Symptomatic of a Closed Society", *Eurasianet.org*, 13 October, downloaded from the Internet 14 October 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav101302.shtml>.

<sup>265</sup> Compare with Eshanova, Zamira (2002) "Turkmenistan: Opposition See Cracks Emerging in Ashgabat Regime", a *Eurasianet.org* Partner Post from RFE/RL, 3 November, downloaded from the Internet 5 November 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav110302.shtml> and Safronov, Rustem (2002) "Opposition in Exile: Turkmenistan", *Eurasianet.org*, 9 December, downloaded from the Internet 10 December 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav120902.shtml>.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*

purges against potential opposition forces within the country have made it even more difficult to create an internal opposition movement that can have contacts with the opposition in exile.<sup>267</sup>

Even if the opposition would obtain its goal and the incumbent regime under Niyazov would fall, there are no guarantees for a peaceful succession. There are no institutional structures that can help ease the succession process, since all state structures are currently centred upon Niyazov.<sup>268</sup> The exiled opposition itself remains divided and it is not certain that the population would welcome a take-over of power from any of the foreign-based members of the opposition. The presently disadvantaged regional leaders will try to get a new regime that will favour their interests. Niyazov has placed his fellow tribesmen in some key positions, which has increased the resentment of other tribes against this group.<sup>269</sup>

Similarly, the KNB as well as the army, which appears to have become increasingly less loyal to Niyazov, might also try to vie for power in their own right or support a regime that favours their position and the today highly influential Presidential Guard is also likely to play an important role. Furthermore, the narcotics business will try to undermine any future regime that threatens its interests.<sup>270</sup> The risk for a turbulent or violent development following the sudden fall of Niyazov's regime must consequently be considered as quite high.

#### **7.4 Economic Development**

A factor that in the long run will serve to undermine the position of Saparmurat Niyazov is the declining economy that appears to have small chances of any significant improvement as long as the incumbent regime stays in power. The most important revenues come from the gas sector, which is still largely dependent on Russian pipelines and this situation seems not about to change in the short perspective. Even if the trans-Afghan pipeline project would be realised, it will according to analysts take at least a decade before this pipeline could become beneficial for Turkmenistan or reduce the country's dependency on the northern route via Russia.<sup>271</sup>

Like the gas sector, the oil sector is seen as too risky for attracting any serious investments with the present regime remaining in Ashgabat and the foreign direct investments have dropped sharply for Turkmenistan during the last year, with a 25 per cent decrease during the first six months of 2002. The third most important part of the Turkmen economy, cotton production, fell heavily in 2002. The standards of living have fallen as a result of the declining economy, despite optimistic official estimates. The salaries are low and the unemployment estimated to 19 to 20 per cent by the Economist Intelligence Unit, but the total underemployment is probably higher.<sup>272</sup>

The government has replaced the earlier poverty reduction programme, called "Ten Years of Welfare" with a new programme: "A Golden Century for Turkmenistan", which can be seen as an unofficial acknowledgement that it has failed to improve standards of living. Another indication that the economy is experiencing a difficult period is that, by January 2003, no official economic data

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<sup>267</sup> Compare with Safronov, Rustem (2002) "Opposition in Exile: Turkmenistan", *Eurasianet.org*, 9 December, downloaded from the Internet 10 December 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav120902.shtml>.

<sup>268</sup> Eshanova, Zamira (2002) "Turkmenistan: Opposition See Cracks Emerging in Ashgabat Regime", a *Eurasianet.org* Partner Post from RFE/RL, 3 November, downloaded from the Internet 5 November 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav110302.shtml>.

<sup>269</sup> Compare with ICG (2003) *Cracks in the Marble: Turkmenistan's Failing Dictatorship*, Asia Report No.44, Osh/Brussels, 17 January, downloaded from the Internet 20 January 2003 on [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400871\\_17012003.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400871_17012003.pdf), pp.8-22

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.8-18.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.15-20.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.15-20.

had been released by the government since April the previous year. The state subsidy policy on, for example, petrol, water and flour, might keep down the socio-economic pressure from the population for a while longer, but it is an expensive policy that will be unsustainable in the long run without major improvements in the state economy. If this policy would have to be reformed it could ignite serious social upheavals. In the short perspective, however, the present policy can be sustained with the help of revenues from the gas exports, in particular. The standards of living are likely to continue declining in the meantime.<sup>273</sup>

#### 7.4.1 Impacts of the Drug Trade

Apart from the revenue the Turkmen state gets from the gas export, several reports from both local and international observers have given evidence that the unofficial income from state corruption and the drug trade make up a significant part of the state's cash revenues. For example, international observers claim to have seen trucks being loaded with drugs at the Afghan border under the supervision of Turkmen government officials. The government has not done any thorough investigations of the alleged official involvement in the drug trafficking, but have made some arrests of individuals accused of drug smuggling which seem to serve as examples. The official involvement in the drug trade serves to enforce corruption and criminalisation of the state structures, which will be hard to change even if the political leadership would be replaced and the drug trade will consequently continue to be high during the foreseeable future.<sup>274</sup>

### 7.5 Foreign Political Relations

Turkmenistan's strained international relations have grown even worse after the assassination attempt and the Turkmen accusations against several countries for protecting persons allegedly responsible for the attempt, prompting several observers to compare the country's isolated status with that of North Korea's. Citizens of Russia, Turkey, the United States and Georgia have been arrested. Azerbaijan has been accused of issuing Turkmen visas to some of the alleged culprits. Furthermore, Turkmen security services broke into the Uzbek ambassador's residence in Ashgabat, whom they accused of hiding persons involved in the assassination attempt in a blatant breach of international diplomatic protocol.<sup>275</sup>

The Turkmen authorities have also arrested many relatives of the four primary suspects, including about 30 family members of former deputy agricultural minister Saparmurat Yklymov, who is currently a Swedish citizen, as well as the brother of a former political prisoner now living in Norway.<sup>276</sup> As a response, Yklymov has taken the initiative to form a committee based in Sweden with the main goal to collect documented facts on crimes committed by Saparmurat Niyazov and his regime against the citizens of Turkmenistan in order to subsequently file a case with the International Criminal Court. Most of the exiled opposition have reportedly expressed their readiness to cooperate with the committee.<sup>277</sup> Sweden had already before the year 2002 strained relations with the Turkmen regime in comparison with the other European states because several

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<sup>273</sup> Ibid., pp.18-20.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid., p.18.

<sup>275</sup> Ismailzade, Fariz (2003) "Turkmenistan's Policies Bring Near Total Isolation, Weaken Regime", 15 January, Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, downloaded from the Internet 16 January 2003 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2003-01-15/20030115\\_TURKEMISTAN\\_ISOLATION.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2003-01-15/20030115_TURKEMISTAN_ISOLATION.htm).

<sup>276</sup> Blua, Antoine (2002) "Turkmenistan: Human Rights Officials Investigation into Assassination Plot", a *Eurasianet.org* Partner Post from the RFE/RL, 13 December, downloaded from the Internet 16 December 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav121302.shtml>.

<sup>277</sup> "Opposition Forms Committee to Bring Turkmen Leaders to Justice", Watan.ru web site, 12 December 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newline – Central Asia Political*, 12 December 2002, from [BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk](mailto:BBC_Monitoring_topic@mon.bbc.co.uk).



relatively high-profile Turkmen dissidents have been living in Sweden. The Turkmen regime is now bound to have an even more cautious attitude in its relations to Sweden.

Uzbekistan was already before this event annoyed about Turkmen plans to create an official lake in the Karakum desert, which would lower the water supplies to Uzbek regions, and Turkmen demands that all agreements between the two countries regulating the lease and use of strategic water installations and pipelines must be rewritten. The tense relationship with Uzbekistan is probably the most serious problem for Turkmenistan in relation to its close neighbours, especially considering the fact that Uzbekistan is the strongest military power in the Central Asian region.<sup>278</sup>

Turkey has played an important economic role in Turkmenistan, but due to difficulties in doing business in Turkmenistan, many companies have reportedly begun moving their businesses to Baku, Almaty and other places in the area deemed as more reliable.<sup>279</sup> However, when Recep Tayyip Erdogan, leader of the newly elected governing party in Turkey, visited his eastern neighbours in January 2003, he also paid a visit to Turkmenistan. In his talks with Saparmurat Niyazov, he reportedly managed to secure the release of the six Turkish citizens who were arrested following the attempt on the president's life and he also discussed the prospects for a renewed co-operation in the energy sector.<sup>280</sup> Overall, the Turkish relations to Turkmenistan appear to remain strong, primarily because of the economic interests that Turkey still has in Turkmenistan.

The U.S. State Department has issued public statements of concern regarding Turkmenistan following the crackdown on alleged opposition members after the assassination attempt, including for the fate of a U.S. citizen who was arrested without any immediate notification or consular access given to the United States. The United States had grown increasingly apprehensive about the Turkmen regime during 2002. It has stepped up its criticism of the country's human rights abuses and hosted two meetings with the United Turkmen Opposition. However, the U.S. lacks efficient means to influence Niyazov, especially since the trans-Afghan pipeline project is stalling.<sup>281</sup>

Russia seems also to have grown increasingly irritated over Niyazov's behaviour, but has nevertheless been careful in its responses to the president because Moscow wants to keep favourable trading relations with Turkmenistan in the hydrocarbons sector. The Turkmen government, in its turn, is almost exclusively dependent on the Russian pipelines for its gas exports and the hard currency income earned from the Russian purchases. Consequently, the Turkmen-Russian relationship is primarily governed by economic pragmatism. Russia has allowed most members of the exiled Turkmen opposition to live and work as an active opposition in Russia, but has done little else to put pressure on Ashgabat.<sup>282</sup>

After the assassination attempt, Russia and Turkmenistan decided to sign a bilateral security agreement, giving Russia a legal basis for potentially extraditing Turkmen opposition leaders who

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<sup>278</sup> Ismailzade, Fariz (2003) "Turkmenistan's Policies Bring Near Total Isolation, Weaken Regime", 15 January, Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, downloaded from the Internet 16 January 2003 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2003-01-15/20030115\\_TURKENISTAN\\_ISOLATION.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2003-01-15/20030115_TURKENISTAN_ISOLATION.htm).

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Katik, Mevlut (2003) "Turkish Party Leader Seeks Favour in Central Asia", *Eurasianet.org*, 14 January, downloaded from the Internet 15 January 2003 on [http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav011403\\_pr.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav011403_pr.shtml).

<sup>281</sup> ICG (2003) *Cracks in the Marble: Turkmenistan's Failing Dictatorship*, Asia Report No.44, Osh/Brussels, 17 January, downloaded from the Internet 20 January 2003 on [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400871\\_17012003.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400871_17012003.pdf), p.33. See also Ismailzade, Fariz (2003) "Turkmenistan's Policies Bring Near Total Isolation, Weaken Regime", 15 January, Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, downloaded from the Internet 16 January 2003 on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2003-01-15/20030115\\_TURKENISTAN\\_ISOLATION.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2003-01-15/20030115_TURKENISTAN_ISOLATION.htm).

<sup>282</sup> ICG (2003) *Cracks in the Marble: Turkmenistan's Failing Dictatorship*, Asia Report No.44, Osh/Brussels, 17 January, downloaded from the Internet 20 January 2003 on [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400871\\_17012003.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400871_17012003.pdf), pp.29-30.

hold dual Russian and Turkmen citizenship if they continue to carry out activities aimed against Niyazov. Since many of the opposition leaders are dual Russian-Turkmen citizens, this could seriously weaken the opposition's abilities to work against the Turkmen regime. Despite this deal with Niyazov, which must be seen as a concession to the Turkmen leader, Russia is annoyed about the treatment of the ethnic Russians living in Turkmenistan and the countries remain divided on how to solve the issue of dividing the Caspian Sea.<sup>283</sup> After Niyazov had announced that Turkmenistan intended one-sidedly to suspend its agreement on dual citizenship with Russia in mid-January 2003, the Russian Foreign Ministry eventually responded by carefully asking for an explanation from Turkmenistan.<sup>284</sup>

Turkmenistan has allied itself with Iran in the debate on how to divide the Caspian Sea, and Iran has become one of the closest partners of Turkmenistan, both economically and politically. Following the assassination attempt, Niyazov singled out Iran as a "good neighbour" and Turkmenistan might be interested in further deepening the contacts with Iran as its relations to other countries deteriorates. This would also give Iran a strategic possibility to influence a future struggle for the power in Turkmenistan after Niyazov's regime has fallen.<sup>285</sup>

Despite having had close contacts with the Taliban, Turkmenistan maintains close relations also with the incumbent regime in Kabul. Turkmenistan has played an important role in providing a transit route for humanitarian aid to Afghanistan since the anti-terrorist operation started in Afghanistan in late 2002. This has given Turkmenistan much credit also internationally and in the Western countries. At the same time, however, Turkmenistan has become a major transit route for the drugs trafficking from Afghanistan, which according to the reports has been sanctioned by the state, but this has so far not drawn much international attention. Despite the gains available from both the illegal and the normal cross-border trade with Afghanistan, Turkmenistan's primary interest in Afghanistan is to realise the trans-Afghan pipeline project, which indicates that Turkmenistan will continue to strive for good relations with the Afghan regime as long as this remains on the agenda.<sup>286</sup>

## 7.6 Conclusions

Regardless of whether there was an actual assassination attempt on Saparmurat Niyazov or not, it has highlighted the problems that are inherent in Turkmenistan and that are mainly derived from the president's totalitarian control over the country. Furthermore, it has enhanced the awareness among Turkmens inside and outside the country as well as international observers of the risks of conflicts and violence if Niyazov's regime would suddenly fall. The situation in the country is very unstable. The state structures, including the security sector and the administration, are so tightly tied to the president's erratic demands and wishes that they have become virtually unpredictable.

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<sup>283</sup> ICG (2003) *Cracks in the Marble: Turkmenistan's Failing Dictatorship*, Asia Report No.44, Osh/Brussels, 17 January, downloaded from the Internet 20 January 2003 on [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400871\\_17012003.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400871_17012003.pdf), pp.29-30. Compare also with "Turkmenistan's Niyazov Crushes Opposition Movement" (2003) *Eurasianet.org*, 7 January, downloaded from the Internet 8 January 2003 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav010703.shtml> and Panfilova, Viktoria: "Turkmenbashi Izmenit Rossiskie Zakoni", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 14 January 2003, downloaded from the Internet on [http://www.ng.ru/2003-01-14/6\\_niyazov.html](http://www.ng.ru/2003-01-14/6_niyazov.html).

<sup>284</sup> AP World Politics (2003) "Russia Wants Explanation from Turkmenistan on Move to Cancel Dual-Citizenship Agreement in Wake of Alleged Assassination Attempt", 14 January, via Yahoo!News, downloaded from the Internet 15 January 2003 on <http://story.news.yahoo.com>.

<sup>285</sup> ICG (2003) *Cracks in the Marble: Turkmenistan's Failing Dictatorship*, Asia Report No.44, Osh/Brussels, 17 January, downloaded from the Internet 20 January 2003 on [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400871\\_17012003.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400871_17012003.pdf), pp.31-32.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, p.31.

The economy is precariously dependent on the hydrocarbons sector and, in particular, the gas exports and the socio-economic conditions have grown steadily worse over the last years. The population is generally kept in check by rule of fear, and this has increasingly begun to include people even in previously privileged positions. The subsidy policy still helps to soften popular discontent, but will become unsustainable in the long run if the economy continues to decline. If Niyazov is forced to reform this policy, it could quickly lead to open protests against the regime.

Overall, the situation in Turkmenistan has grown much more unstable in 2002 than it was a year ago, and even if the purges following the assassination attempt are successful in the short run, Niyazov's position appears much less secure than it did a year earlier. This is both due to the general decline of the society and the deep popular resentment of the incumbent regime. The risk for a sudden and turbulent development must consequently be deemed as rather high. However, unlike the other Central Asian states or Afghanistan, a turbulent or even violent succession process in Turkmenistan is less likely to implicate the other states in the region, since Turkmenistan is ethnically quite homogeneous and has been more or less isolated for such a long period of time.

Uzbekistan is the country that is most likely to become involved in a power-struggle after Niyazov's regime has fallen and the Uzbek relations to Turkmenistan has worsened during 2002. Turkmenistan's foreign political relations have also grown worse with the other neighbouring states and to several other countries that are important for the region, including Russia and the USA. Only the relations to Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey appear to remain the same. The worsened relations will serve to further enforce Turkmenistan's isolation, but since Turkmenistan has had very limited contacts with the external countries even prior to 2002, this might not have such a big impact on the country as might be expected.

In short, during 2002

- the security-political situation for Turkmenistan appears largely unchanged and the country continues to maintain good relations with the regime in Afghanistan
- the internal political situation has become more strained, even though the president appears to have regained the control over the country in the short perspective
- Turkmenistan's foreign political relations have deteriorated slightly with most countries, but due to the country's already previously isolated status, this has not changed Turkmenistan's foreign political situation to any considerable extent

## 8 Uzbekistan

Population: 25,563,441 (July 2002 estimate)<sup>287</sup>  
Major ethnic groups: Uzbeks 80%, Russians 5.5%, Tajiks 5%, Kazakhs 3%, Karakalpaks 2.5%, Tatars 1.5% (1996 estimate)<sup>288</sup>  
Border countries: Kazakhstan 2,203 km, Turkmenistan 1,621 km, Tajikistan 1,161 km, Kyrgyzstan 1,099 km, Afghanistan 137 km<sup>289</sup>  
President: Islam Karimov  
GDP per capita: purchasing power parity - \$2,500 (2001 estimate)<sup>290</sup>  
Armed forces: 50-55,000 (estimate)<sup>291</sup>

### 8.1 Introduction

Like Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan has become closely involved in the international anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan and almost immediately invited the coalition troops to launch their campaign from Uzbek territory. The American military base at the Khanabad airfield has been hosting about 1,500 troops and has reportedly been frequently used during the anti-Taliban campaign for both offensive and humanitarian purposes. The fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the cooperation with the international coalition have improved Uzbekistan's external security-political environment significantly.<sup>292</sup>

The IMU, formerly considered as the major oppositional and military threat towards President Islam Karimov and his regime, has been considerably weakened and is for the time being not considered to pose a direct military threat to Uzbekistan. Furthermore, the U.S. military commander in the region has pledged to keep on cooperating with Uzbekistan in future operations against the IMU. In addition, the cooperation with the international coalition has paid off in terms of increased aid from the United States and the Bush administration has lobbied for increased assistance to Uzbekistan also from the World Bank and the IMF.<sup>293</sup>

Apart from these improvements of the security political climate and in foreign economic contributions, very little progress has been made domestically. The economy remains largely unreformed, despite several promises on behalf of the president to the contrary, limiting the prospects for a positive economic development in the long run. Furthermore, the authoritarian internal political environment has not been improved to any significant extent, apart from small concessions made to appease the pressure from the international community. A widely quoted report from Human Rights Watch published in January 2003, estimated that 6,500 to 7,000 people were imprisoned at the time in Uzbekistan for political (or religious) reasons. Other estimates have

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<sup>287</sup> CIA (2002) *The World Factbook 2002. Uzbekistan*. (online), downloaded from the Internet 18 October 2002 from <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/uz.html>.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

<sup>291</sup> The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) (2002) *The Military Balance 2002/2003*, London, Oxford University Press, p.137.

<sup>292</sup> Compare with "Uzbekistan" (2002) in *Terrorism: Questions & Answers*, Council of Foreign Relations in cooperation with the Markle Foundation, downloaded from the Internet 5 November 2002 on [http://www.terrorismanswers.com/coalition/Uzbekistan\\_print.html](http://www.terrorismanswers.com/coalition/Uzbekistan_print.html) and "Uzbek President Says No Threat of Militant IncurSION this Year", Uzbek Television First Channel, 4 April 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newline – Central Asia Political*, 6 April 2002, from BBC Monitoring [topic@mon.bbc.co.uk](mailto:topic@mon.bbc.co.uk).

<sup>293</sup> Ibid. For a more detailed description of the IMU and the role it has played in relation to Uzbekistan, see Sandström, Emma (2002) "Central Asia – a New Afghanistan? The Consequences of the Socio-Economic Environment for Religious and Ethnic Strife" in Kiesow, Ingolf (ed.) *From Taiwan to Taliban; Two Danger Zones in Central Asia*, Scientific Report FOI-R--0393--SE, Swedish Defence Research Agency, Stockholm, pp.301, 353-354 and 365-367.

put the figure even higher. Unfortunately, the international presence in Uzbekistan seems so far to have done very little to improve the domestic climate in the country.<sup>294</sup>

## 8.2 Security-Political Development

The primary changes in Uzbekistan since the Operation Enduring Freedom began in Afghanistan, have taken place in the security-political field. According to a statement by the country's defence minister in the summer 2002, Uzbekistan no longer faced any military threats. This is a major improvement compared to the previous year, when Uzbekistan was mining its borders with its neighbours and preparing to fight off a new incursion from the IMU.<sup>295</sup> The remnants of the IMU guerrilla formations, which helped the Taliban fight the international anti-terrorist forces during the autumn 2001, are reportedly scattered. According to intelligence information, IMU-members have gone into hiding in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and some others are believed to have left the movement. Moreover, the movement has probably lost much of its former economic support and consequently, many experts believe that the IMU no longer poses any significant military threat to the Central Asian region in the short perspective.<sup>296</sup>

The security-political cooperation with the West has intensified and most significantly, the American military base is likely to remain in Uzbekistan for many years to come. During Islam Karimov's visit to Washington D.C. this spring, the two countries signed a "Strategic Partnership" document, according to which the United States is obliged "to regard with grave concern any external threat" to Uzbekistan. A big share of the U.S. economic assistance to Uzbekistan, which tripled during 2002 to about 160 million U.S.-dollars, is being used to help train and equip Uzbek law enforcement and border security forces in order to fight the trafficking of drugs, weapons and other goods across the Uzbek-Afghan border.<sup>297</sup>

The United States has also participated in a UN-led programme for training border guards and customs officers together with experts from the United Kingdom, the OSCE and the EU TRACECA programme.<sup>298</sup> Moreover, British military have trained students in sergeant's schools. These sergeants are going to serve as junior commanders in the armed forces on a contract basis, in accordance with a recent military reform scheduled to be implemented in the spring 2003.<sup>299</sup>

The Uzbek regular armed forces, which have previously been among the largest in Central Asia, are now bound for a sharp reduction when the reformed professional force becomes active. However, during the last years, the law enforcement structures within the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA)

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<sup>294</sup> Stern, David (2003) "British Envoy's Speech Still Reverberates in Uzbekistan", *Eurasianet.org*, 14 January, downloaded from the Internet 15 January 2003 on [http://www.eurasianet.org/rights/articles/eav011403\\_pr.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/rights/articles/eav011403_pr.shtml). Compare also with ICG (2002) *Central Asia: The Politics of Police Reform*, Asia Report No.44, Osh/Brussels, 10 December, p.23.

<sup>295</sup> Kaiser, Robert G. (2002) "U.S. Plants Footprints in Shaky Central Asia", *Washingtonpost.com*, 27 August, downloaded from the Internet 27 August on <http://www.washingtonpost.com>.

<sup>296</sup> Compare for example with Chivers, C. J. (2002) "Uzbek Militants' Decline Prove Clues to U.S.", *The New York Times*, 8 October, downloaded from the Internet 9 October on <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/08/international/asia/08UZBE.html>.

<sup>297</sup> "Uzbekistan" (2002) in *Terrorism: Questions & Answers*, Council of Foreign Relations in cooperation with the Markle Foundation, downloaded from the Internet 5 November 2002 on [http://www.terrorismanswers.com/coalition/Uzbekistan\\_print.html](http://www.terrorismanswers.com/coalition/Uzbekistan_print.html).

<sup>298</sup> "Training of Border Guards Starts in Southern Uzbek Town", UzReport.com web site, 25 October 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 26 October 2002, from [BBCMonitoring.topic@mon.bbc.co.uk](mailto:BBCMonitoring.topic@mon.bbc.co.uk).

<sup>299</sup> "UK Military Officers Train Uzbek Sergeants, Impressed by Performance", Uzbek Television First Channel, 1 December 2002, in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 3 December 2002, from [BBCMonitoring.topic@mon.bbc.co.uk](mailto:BBCMonitoring.topic@mon.bbc.co.uk) and "Uzbek President Announces Military Reforms", Uzbek Radio First Programme, 29 August 2002, in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 31 August 2002, from [BBCMonitoring.topic@mon.bbc.co.uk](mailto:BBCMonitoring.topic@mon.bbc.co.uk).

have grown to become the biggest armed organisation and most powerful state institution in the country. Apart from the different kinds of police, fire service and passport regulating staff, the MIA personnel – by human rights organisations estimated to number as many as 200,000 in the whole country – also include the internal security troops and special forces, designed to meet internal security threats. In addition, the special forces were involved in fighting off the IMU militants that have made incursions into Uzbekistan from Tajikistan. These forces are generally better trained and equipped than the regular army, reflecting the opinion by the regime that the main threats to the country are internal, not external, or at least not emanating from any particular foreign country.<sup>300</sup>

According to International Crisis Group experts, the Uzbek security services have unparalleled political power in Central Asia (compare for example with Turkmenistan, where the president keeps the security sector under as tight control as possible). They have been involved in massive human rights abuses, for example the arrests of ordinary Muslims or peaceful opposition members for alleged criminal charges, and suffer from massive corruption. However, even if there are no signs of any major reforms being undertaken of the law enforcement agencies, there has been some reduction reported in the arrests on religious or political grounds during 2002, in particular during the first half of the year.<sup>301</sup>

Moreover, a couple of trials have been held against police officers and National Security Service Officers (the equivalence to the former KGB) for power abuses, sentencing the culprits to lengthy prison terms for torturing – in one case with a lethal result – their prisoners. This might have been isolated cases, but it is nevertheless a positive change and the government rhetoric has changed in favour of reforms. Unfortunately, the official speeches have not included reforms of the MIA itself, which according to some experts derives from the fact that the MIA has become too powerful to be touched.<sup>302</sup>

### 8.2.1 Border Security and Disputes

The improved security political environment seems not to have made Karimov significantly more inclined to open up the country's borders and resolve the border conflicts with its neighbours. Uzbekistan is the only country in the region that borders all other Central Asian states, as well as Afghanistan. In addition, it has large ethnic diaspora groups in the neighbouring countries and has ambitions to be the leading player in Central Asia, backed up by the largest military force in the region. Consequently, it is not surprising that Uzbekistan is the country in the region involved in the largest number of regional border conflicts. The Uzbek border with Afghanistan has been relatively well guarded, contributing from the fact that it runs along the natural boundary of the Amu-Darya river. Nevertheless, Uzbekistan only reluctantly opened the so-called "friendship bridge" to Afghanistan due to fear of the threats from the drugs trafficking and Islamic militants, and it remains heavily guarded. This transit point, situated not far from Termez, is the only transit point between the two countries and Tashkent will probably not open up any more transits any time soon.<sup>303</sup>

The border demarcation agreement with Kazakhstan was finalised in September 2002, but the border regime is tight and the freedom of movement across the borders has been limited despite a visa-free regime. On 28 December 2002, Uzbekistan decided to close its borders with Kazakhstan because of alleged mass poisoning by food products imported from Kazakhstan. A more probable

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<sup>300</sup> ICG (2002) *Central Asia: The Politics of Police Reform*, Asia Report No.44, Osh/Brussels, 10 December, pp.21-22.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21.

<sup>303</sup> ICG (2002) *Central Asia: Border Disputes and Conflict Potential*, Asia Report No.33, Osh/Brussels, 4 April, downloaded from the Internet 8 April 2002 on [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400606\\_04042002.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400606_04042002.pdf), p.21.

reason is the large cash flow from Uzbekistan to Kazakhstan following the increased import taxes and stricter trading regulations that led to a closure of most food markets in Uzbekistan, forcing people to go shopping across the border.<sup>304</sup> Uzbekistan has taken similar measures in relation to Kyrgyzstan and has closed some border crossings to Tajikistan and Turkmenistan as well.<sup>305</sup>

The Uzbek-Kyrgyz border delimitation process has been dragging on without any progress in sight and the Uzbek-Tajik border remains one of the worst frontier situations in the region. The mines planted along the border by the Uzbek regime had according to reports killed more than 50 people by early 2002. However, after the threat of new IMU-incursions ended, Uzbekistan began to relax some of the restrictions imposed on the border to Tajikistan.<sup>306</sup> In early October 2002, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan signed an agreement solving most of the border disputes between the two countries under favourable terms for Uzbekistan, something that President Karimov described as a milestone in the relationship between the two countries.<sup>307</sup>

The situation along the Uzbek-Turkmen border has deteriorated over the last years and in a response to the Turkmen measures taken after the assassination attempt – in particular the search of the Uzbek ambassador's residence in Ashgabat – Uzbekistan in late December 2002 moved military units in the three regions adjacent to Turkmenistan up to the border.<sup>308</sup> This measure in combination with the generally reinforced Uzbek border regime due to the Uzbek loss of revenue resulting from the shuttle-trade, will probably serve to create even more tense relations with Turkmenistan.

### **8.3 Internal Politics**

There have been some positive developments concerning human rights in Uzbekistan since the anti-terrorist forces arrived in the country. The use of capital punishment has been restricted, a parliament reform is underway, and political parties have reportedly become more active and the official censorship of the mass media has stopped. However, there are still several obstacles hampering the development of the civil society, including cumbersome registration and licensing regulations.<sup>309</sup> Despite the positive signs given by the two trials against members of the security services for use of torture, a UN Special Rapporteur found widespread and systematic use of torture against dissidents after a two-week fact-finding tour to Uzbekistan in late 2002.<sup>310</sup>

The media freedom has in practice not grown much better since the formal censorship was abolished in July 2002, to a great extent dependent on self-censorship out of fear of the security services.<sup>311</sup> As an example, when the British ambassador to Uzbekistan, Craig Murray, in October

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<sup>304</sup> AP World Politics (2003) "Uzbekistan Closes Border with Kazakhstan", 6 January, via Yahoo!News, downloaded from the Internet 14 January 2003 on <http://story.news.yahoo.com>.

<sup>305</sup> "Uzbek Border Row Introduces New Element of Tension in Central Asia" (2002) *Eurasianet.org*, 27 January, downloaded from the Internet 30 January 2002 on [http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav0127023\\_pr.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav0127023_pr.shtml).

<sup>306</sup> ICG (2002) *Central Asia: Border Disputes and Conflict Potential*, Asia Report No.33, Osh/Brussels, 4 April, downloaded from the Internet 8 April 2002 on [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400606\\_04042002.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/centralasia/reports/A400606_04042002.pdf), p.11-13.

<sup>307</sup> Abdullo, Rashid (2002) "Tajik-Uzbek Border Progress", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting Central Asia*, No.152, 10 October, downloaded from the Internet 28 October 2002 on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net).

<sup>308</sup> *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 20 December 2002, downloaded from the Internet 20 December 2002 on [http://www.ng.ru/cis/2002-12-20/5\\_news.html](http://www.ng.ru/cis/2002-12-20/5_news.html).

<sup>309</sup> Khamidov, Alisher (2002) "Regional Experts Call on US to Bolster Civil Society", *Eurasianet.org*, 2 October, downloaded from the Internet 3 October 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/recaps/articles/eav100202.shtml>.

<sup>310</sup> Machleder, Josh (2002) "Despite Limited Access, UN Envoy Finds Widespread Use of Torture throughout Uzbekistan", *Eurasianet.org*, 9 December, downloaded from the Internet 10 December 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav120902a.shtml>.

<sup>311</sup> ICG (2002) *Central Asia: The Politics of Police Reform*, Asia Report No.44, Osh/Brussels, 10 December, p.22.

2002 made a speech unprecedented among the diplomatic community, sharply criticising Uzbekistan's diplomatic, economic and human rights records, the Uzbek media kept silent.<sup>312</sup> The exiled Uzbek opposition politician Mohammad Solih, founder of the first major opposition movement Birlik and chairman of the democratic Erk party, said in an interview in the summer 2002 that the situation for dissidents and the political opposition in Uzbekistan had not changed at all since the country joined the international anti-terrorist coalition in September 2001.<sup>313</sup>

One of the human rights organisations in Uzbekistan, the Independent Human Rights Organisation of Uzbekistan (IHROU), has been formally registered, and has reported on some encouraging improvements. For example, the number of people arrested for membership in the Islamic party Hizb-ut-Tahrir fell significantly over the first six months of 2002 and the nine women prosecuted for links to the party during the same period received only suspended sentences. Despite the concessions made in the areas of human rights and freedom of speech, the Uzbek authorities have not allowed for more political freedom and the government remains very much authoritarian. Before a referendum held in January 2002 on the expansion of the presidential term from five to seven years, the authorities had taken pains to assure the voters that the reform would only come into effect after the 2005 presidential elections and would consequently not apply to Islam Karimov. However, after the reform was passed, the presidential elections were postponed to December 2007, significantly extending Karimov's time in office.<sup>314</sup>

At the same time as the arrests of members of Islamic groups have fallen, international and domestic human rights organisations fear that a trial against a Jehovah's Witness in November 2002 might be the beginning of a campaign against non-Islamic religious organisations. The trial mentioned found the convicted guilty of disseminating pseudo-Christian teachings and ideas inciting religious hatred and undermining the constitution, but he was only sentenced to a suspended jail sentence and probation with account taken to good references and the fact that the convicted was his family's breadwinner. Two other cases of criminal charges were brought against Jehovah's Witnesses at the same time for "proselytising" and "missionary activity". If this indeed becomes a wider campaign it could have widespread consequences given the fact that there are currently over 3,000 Jehovah's Witnesses in Uzbekistan and it is the fastest growing of the many Christian groups currently operating in the country.<sup>315</sup>

#### **8.4 Economic Development**

As previously mentioned, Uzbekistan's cooperation in the Operation Enduring Freedom has led to a significant increase in aid and credits from the United States and several other aid contributors. For example, in December 2001, the World Bank announced their decision to give Uzbekistan a 36 million U.S.-dollar loan to help restructure the agricultural sector.<sup>316</sup> These contributions are

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<sup>312</sup> Cohen, Nick (2002) "Trouble in Tashkent", *The Observer*, 15 December, downloaded from the Internet 25 January 2003 on <http://www.observer.co.uk/comment/story/0,6903,860121,00.html>.

<sup>313</sup> Eshanova, Zamira (2002) "Central Asia: Has New Alliance with West Helped Opposition Movements", a *Eurasianet.org* Partner Post from RFE/RL, 5 July, downloaded from the Internet 30 October 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/pp070502.shtml>.

<sup>314</sup> Bukharbaeva, Galima (2002) "Slow Progress in Uzbekistan", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting Central Asia*, No.143, 3 September, downloaded from the Internet 11 October 2002 on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net).

<sup>315</sup> Borisova, Olga (2002) "Uzbekistan Calls it First Witness", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting Central Asia*, No.167, 6 December, downloaded from the Internet 11 December 2002 on [info@iwpr.net](mailto:info@iwpr.net) and "Uzbek Conviction of Jehovah's Witness May Set Precedent for Crackdown on Christian Proselytizers" (2002) *Eurasianet.org*, 2 December, downloaded from the Internet 3 December 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav120202.shtml>.

<sup>316</sup> "Uzbekistan" (2002) in *Terrorism: Questions & Answers*, Council of Foreign Relations in cooperation with the Markle Foundation, downloaded from the Internet 5 November 2002 on [http://www.terrorismanswers.com/coalition/Uzbekistan\\_print.html](http://www.terrorismanswers.com/coalition/Uzbekistan_print.html).



undoubtedly advantageous for the Uzbek economy – and the incumbent regime – in the short perspective, but the economy itself still remains unreformed despite several pledges to the contrary.

The failure to reform the economy also limits the long-term prospects for aid cooperation with the IMF that has demanded reforms of the currency, in particular, in order to renew its loan programme to Uzbekistan. The president repeated his promise to introduce a single exchange rate that would make the currency, the som, fully convertible as late as in December 2002, but he has made several similar promises earlier on. Experts maintain that the government's inability to reduce the margin between the official exchange rate and the black market rate, in December 2002 trading 40 per cent higher than the official rate, has turned Uzbekistan from what could have been an economic engine in the region, into a fiscal backwater.<sup>317</sup>

A government import-duty decree issued in July 2002, which some experts believe were introduced to soften the blow expected when the currency reform is implemented, caused the prices on imported goods to skyrocket. The social and economic upheaval caused by this measure finally forced the president to abolish the decree in December 2002. At that time, however, many Uzbeks had already established a habit of shopping in neighbouring countries like Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, where the prices could be as much as three times lower than they were in Uzbekistan and it would probably take some time to break this habit, contributing to a huge outflow of cash in the meantime. Moreover, as a consequence to this experience, the Uzbek population has grown increasingly suspicious about the introduction of the future economic reforms even before the actual reforms have been implemented. Some experts think that one major obstacle to the currency reform can be linked to the corruption inherent in the Uzbek bureaucracy since top-official with business interests in up-scale stores and boutiques in the major cities are suspected to be using the discrepancy between the exchange rates to enhance their profits.<sup>318</sup>

#### 8.4.1 Impacts of the Drug Trade

Like the other Central Asian states that borders on Afghanistan, Uzbekistan has seen an increase in drug trafficking across its borders, even though the flow of drugs into Uzbekistan is lower than the amount crossing into for example Tajikistan, given the more easily protected border. The UN Office for Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) in Central Asia has expressed its understanding of the Uzbek fear of a drastically raised influx of drugs from Afghanistan after it honoured the request of the international community to open up the road communication to Afghanistan via the so called friendship bridge. As a response, the UN has pledged to assist Uzbekistan in fighting the drugs trafficking. For example, the UN will provide Uzbekistan with special equipment for detecting drugs, reinforcing the Termez checkpoints at the Afghan border and training checkpoint personnel.<sup>319</sup>

### 8.5 Foreign Political Relations

Karimov's regime has strived to develop stronger ties with the West for several years and has limited its cooperation within, for example, the various cooperation organisations formed between the former Soviet republics. The participation in the international anti-terrorist coalition has

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<sup>317</sup> Stern, David (2002) "Uzbek Government Renews Currency Reform Pledge", *Eurasianet.org*, 18 December, downloaded from the Internet 19 December 2002 on <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav121802.shtml>.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid. Compare also with Bukharbayeva, Bagila (2002) "Uzbek Markets in Turmoil as Government Prepares for Currency Reform", 4 November, via Yahoo!News, downloaded from the Internet 6 November 2002 on <http://story.news.yahoo.com>.

<sup>319</sup> "UN to Aid Uzbekistan to Strengthen Borders against Drug Trafficking", Interfax news agency, 23 December 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newsline – Central Asia Political*, 24 December 2002, from [BBC\\_Monitoring\\_topic@mon.bbc.co.uk](mailto:BBC_Monitoring_topic@mon.bbc.co.uk).

permitted Uzbekistan to concentrate even further on the cooperation with the West and the USA, which Karimov now considers to be a strategic ally.

A sign of this increased focus on the West in Uzbekistan's foreign policy orientation is the country's decision in June 2002 to temporarily leave the cooperation within the GUUAM-framework – a post-Soviet alliance aimed primarily at strengthening the economic cooperation within the CIS independent of Russia. On the other hand, Islam Karimov has said that if the CIS itself would turn into an efficient organisation that respects the wishes of all the member states and has economic cooperation as its main goal, then there would be no need for any other groups on the former Soviet territory.<sup>320</sup> Similarly, Karimov has rejected any initiative for turning the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, which includes all post-Soviet Central Asian states except Turkmenistan in addition to China and Russia, into a political and military bloc. In Karimov's opinion, the SCO should focus on resolving the global problems of international terrorism.<sup>321</sup>

Karimov, who has kept his country out of the security political cooperation within the CIS, has reacted rather cautiously to the Russian military deployment at the Kyrgyz airfield Kant within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty. Karimov has said that he will welcome the creation of the new military base in Kyrgyzstan if its purpose is to maintain the security within the region and prevent future attacks and incursions from other territories and from the southern neighbours, in particular. However, he added that he would not welcome anything that turns out to be merely a competition with the United States for dominance over the region. Despite these remarks, signalling Karimov's suspicions of the Russian motives, there are nevertheless signs that the relationship between Uzbekistan and Russia have improved since Vladimir Putin became president in Russia. Some experts even believe that the Uzbek decision to withdraw from the cooperation within the GUUAM might have been the result of the combination of improved relations with both Russia and the West.<sup>322</sup>

Concerning Uzbekistan's relations to its close neighbours, the Uzbek regime remains understandably cautious about the development in Afghanistan and the prospects for Hamid Karzai's regime to maintain a peaceful development within its borders, which will probably limit the cooperation between the two countries to a very low level in the short perspective.<sup>323</sup> However, Islam Karimov is supportive of Hamid Karzai's regime, which was reflected in his initiative in December 2002 to invite Afghanistan to join the Central Asian Cooperation Organisation (uniting Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) as an observer. The initiative was supported by the other members.<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> "Economy Should Be the Foundation of Future CIS, Uzbek President", Interfax news agency, 19 December 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 21 December 2002, from BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk.

<sup>321</sup> "Uzbek Leader Says Shanghai Organisation Should Not Turn into a Block", Uzbek Television First Channel, 7 June 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 8 June 2002, from BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk.

<sup>322</sup> "Uzbek President Says No to Foreign Military Rivalry in Central Asia", Uzbek Radio First Programme, 12 December 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 13 December 2002, from BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk. Compare also with Ismailova, Gulnara (2002) "Uzbekistan's Withdrawal from GUUAM Causes Shock in Baku", *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, 19 June, downloaded from the Internet 5 November on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-06-19/20020619\\_Uzbekistan\\_GUUAM.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-06-19/20020619_Uzbekistan_GUUAM.htm).

<sup>323</sup> Compare with "Uzbek President Says No to Foreign Military Rivalry in Central Asia", Uzbek Radio First Programme, 12 December 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 13 December 2002, from BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk.

<sup>324</sup> "Central Asian Cooperation Organisation Calls Afghanistan on Board", Interfax-Kazakhstan news agency, 27 December 2002 in *BBC Monitoring Global Newslines – Central Asia Political*, 28 December 2002, from BBC Monitoring topic@mon.bbc.co.uk.

Apart from the significantly worsened relations to Turkmenistan following the handling of the assassination attempt against Turkmen President Niyazov, the Uzbek-Kyrgyz relations also remain tense. Uzbekistan has continued to use the Kyrgyz dependency on Uzbek natural gas to exert pressure on Kyrgyzstan in the border negotiations between the two countries and is likely to continue doing so due to the lack of progress in the negotiations.<sup>325</sup>

## 8.6 Conclusions

During the year 2002, Uzbekistan has improved its foreign and security political cooperation with the West, which is something President Islam Karimov has been working for since the country's independence. Moreover, the fall of the Taliban and even more significantly, the weakened status of the IMU, have greatly improved the security of Uzbekistan, further enhanced by the presence of the U.S. and other Western forces on Uzbek territory. By contrast, the relationship with the Central Asian neighbours has worsened, in particular at the end of the year. The need for a tougher border regime against the Central Asian neighbours has been blamed on the neighbouring countries and their inability to uphold border security and stop the illegal shuttle-trade across the borders. While this is largely true, a large part of the reason behind the closed border crossings at this particular time can be found in Uzbekistan's own domestic failures.

Despite continued pressures from the international community, the Uzbek economy remains largely unreformed, hindering future foreign investments and a positive economic development in general. As the Uzbek regime fears, the needed currency reform might cause some discontent in the short run, but is necessary for improving the economic conditions for the Uzbek population in the long run. However, for the time being, Islam Karimov and the Uzbek political establishment seems most interested in protecting their current positions in power regardless of the long-term consequences for Uzbekistan. The close association between the political and economic power in the country serves to enforce this tendency. As a consequence, the members of the political – and economic – establishment will try to stall unpopular economic reforms for as long as possible at the same time as they work against the development of a real political opposition within the country. There have undoubtedly been some improvements concerning human rights during 2002, but the regime does not allow any significant or loud opponents.

It would take much stronger demands – and probably sanctions – from the international community and in particular the Western countries, with which Karimov is keen on cooperating, in order to achieve more thorough changes in the domestic political environment in Uzbekistan in a short perspective. However, this does not seem likely for primarily two reasons. Firstly, the United States, as the external power having the greatest possibilities to influence Karimov, will be reluctant to radically challenge Karimov's position as long as the U.S. remains dependent on Uzbekistan as a military strategic partner. Secondly, the USA is currently pursuing a policy in Central Asia intended to influence the countries' position on democracy and human rights by its long-term presence in and cooperation with the countries in the region. Consequently, Karimov is not likely to give up on much of his power in the close future.

In short summary, during 2002

- the security-political situation in Uzbekistan has become significantly strengthened with the increased cooperation with Western states and the reduced risk for military incursions from radical Islamic groups

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<sup>325</sup> Mukhmedov, Rustam (2002) "Geopolitical Approaches: Gas Policy of Uzbekistan toward Kyrgyzstan", Biweekly briefing from *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, 24 April, downloaded from the Internet 5 November on [http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-04-24/20020424\\_Uzbekistan\\_Kyrgyzstan\\_Gas.htm](http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-04-24/20020424_Uzbekistan_Kyrgyzstan_Gas.htm).

- internally, the situation in Uzbekistan has remained approximately the same, which means that the underlying causes that have drawn people to the underground opposition represented primarily by radical Islamic groups also remains the same
- apart from the strengthened relations to the Western states and the USA in particular, the foreign political relations remain approximately the same and Uzbekistan has continued its tough border politics against the neighbouring states that might contribute to more serious frictions in the future

## 9 Summary and Conclusions

The internal political climate has changed very little in the Central Asian countries during the year 2002. There have been some small improvements towards a more open society in Uzbekistan, which some observers like to see as the first steps towards a more open political climate in the country. However, according to many observers, these steps are merely symbolic and it is still impossible to predict whether they will lead to real changes in favour of human rights and democracy or not.

In Turkmenistan, status quo has been more or less maintained, with frequent replacements of officials in positions of influence. Nevertheless, there are signs that President Niyazov has become increasingly nervous at the same time as the exiled opposition has become more vocal. Several reports claim that the authorities staged the assassination attempt against the president in November 2002 as an excuse to carry out clampdowns on the opposition. Regardless of whether this is true or not, the authorities' conduct after the alleged attempt indicates that they are indeed very worried that their positions are threatened.

In the former positive examples in the region, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, which have had a more open political and social climate than the other countries, the presidents have seemed to think that their participation in the international anti-terrorist coalition has given them legitimacy to continue asserting their own positions in power. In both countries, the pressure on perceived political rivals as well as the media has increased and the opposition groups have intensified their campaigns accordingly. Tajikistan's participation in the anti-terrorist coalition has also served to enforce the relatively authoritarian rule of President Rakhmonov, but it has also strengthened his position considerably. The increased authoritarian tendency could serve to radicalise the opposition, which might lead to conflicts in the long run. However, the strengthened position of the president could also serve to stabilise the country in the short run since there has been an obvious lack of a strong central power in Tajikistan since the end of the civil war.

In Afghanistan, finally, the situation is more complex. The incumbent regime has strong international support, but the Afghan society remains very much divided and even if Karzai's position in Kabul is accepted by most people, his regime has very little actual influence outside the capital. Compared to the previous year, the domestic political situation in Afghanistan has obviously improved during 2002 after the civil war had ended. However, unless the situation in the country stabilises to at least some basic degree in the close future, there is a high risk for a renewal of widespread violence. The economic conditions, which remain very hard for the majority of the population, will continue to contribute to the discontent and distrust of the government (and the international presence), especially if the south and east parts of the country are continuously neglected during the reconstruction process. Unfortunately, there are no signs of any improvements that could contribute to a stabilisation of the country in the short perspective.

Overall, the internal political situation for the countries in the region has become very fragile during 2002. In the previously most exposed countries, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, the development has improved to different extents, but still remains very unstable, particularly in the former case. In the cases of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, the domestic climate and the conditions for a peaceful development look much less positive at the end of 2002 than they did before the year started. In Uzbekistan, finally, the domestic situation remains generally unchanged, with the same lack of democratic space that there was before the anti-terrorist operation started in Afghanistan and consequently the same discontent growing under the surface. However, the falling numbers of imprisonments of devote but peaceful Muslims could serve to improve the situation if it becomes a lasting trend. The primary threats to the stability in all the states in the region are thus internal and

closely connected to the lack of good governance in combination with a weak economic development.

The external security-political situation has improved in the short perspective for most of the countries in the region during 2002 compared to the previous year, partly as a result of the increased foreign military presence in the area. Consequently, the threat of violent conflicts with external powers is much lower than the threat of internal conflicts. However, the relations between the countries in the region, as well as with surrounding states, are rarely stable and there is a constant risk of local conflicts across the borders that could potentially escalate, enforced both by the lack of properly delimited and demarcated borders and by the often very tough border regimes.

This is unlikely to improve in the close future due to the renewed high level of drug trafficking in the region, even if the reduced risk of incursions from radical Islamists into Central Asia might potentially help solve the continuing border issues between some of the countries in the region. In a longer perspective, the often conflicting interests of the more powerful states operating in the region might also serve to strengthen conflicts both within the region and in the larger surrounding area. Russia's relations to the United States have improved considerably in connection with the war on terrorism. Some parts of the Russian establishment undoubtedly object to the presence of the USA and other NATO states in Central Asia (and possibly even Afghanistan). Nevertheless, in the short run, it does not appear likely that Russia would risk the good relations it has gained with the United States by putting any strong demands on the USA to decrease its presence in the region – at least not under the incumbent regime in Moscow.

China has also been rather cautious in its reactions to the U.S. presence in the region, but the regime clearly objects to any long-term presence by the USA or another NATO country so close to the Chinese borders. Consequently, the relations could become tenser in the future and the pressure on the countries that host Western forces might grow simultaneously, in particular if the USA would choose to continue to wage its war against terrorism without UN support. Similarly, Iran could also become more strongly opposed to the U.S. presence in Afghanistan and Central Asia in such a situation, in particular if it involves waging war in another Islamic state. Iran's position regarding the division of the Caspian Sea could also create a more hostile foreign political environment in the region in the future.

Pakistan's desire to maintain an influential role in Afghanistan might also cause future tensions, especially since this interest is often contradictory to the interests of India. The role Pakistan has played and continues to play in relation to the development in Afghanistan is of such importance that the relations between the two countries deserve to be further investigated in future studies. Even if an open conflict between the countries that have conflicting interests in the region does not look likely in the immediately foreseeable future, the increased international military presence in most of the countries in the region could make such a future conflict highly explosive.

Overall, the security political situation in the Central Asian region, including Afghanistan, and the prospects for a stable development has generally improved somewhat during 2002. However, it is important to remember that this small improvement is relative and that the change has taken place in relation to a very unstable situation in the first place. The region still remains unstable and there are still many threats against a peaceful development both domestically and externally for the countries in the region.

In short, during 2002

- the security-political situation has improved for almost all countries in the region and remains about the same in some of the other countries, which gives a general improvement over whole the region (even if the security-political situation is still unstable)

- the internal situation has become increasingly unstable in two of the Central Asian states that were earlier considered as among the most stable; it has remained about the same in two of the Central Asian countries that were earlier considered as the most unstable and, finally, it has grown better in Afghanistan compared to during the civil war, but the situation still remains highly tense and unstable, which gives an overall decline in internal political stability across the region
- the foreign political relations have improved for almost all countries with some important exceptions, most notably in the relations of Turkmenistan, which gives some level of improvement across the region, but with negative exceptions

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### **10.3 Newspapers and Compilations of News**

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