



UNISCI Discussion Papers

BOLSTERING SECURITY AND BOOSTING DEMOCRACY IN SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA

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This paper examines the present U.S. engagement in South and Central Asia and raises questions about the future of democracy strengthening measures of the US administration in that region. It takes note of the fact that with a change in the international situation the discourse and terms of international engagement have altered significantly in terms of perceptions, geographical framework as well as policies. The paper looks at the promise and the pitfalls of this partnership, the trade off between the preferences of patronage and illustrates the mood swings, attention adjustments. It also raises questions about the possible implications assessing how helpful the US intervention is in the wider context of its perceptions, policies and practical position towards these societies.

Over a period of several consecutive years, there has been a visible rise in the U.S. interests (in what was once considered as distant states) in South and Central Asia. Even after the dismantling of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the American presence in there as well as in the neighbouring countries has not just continued but expanded in terms of volume of funding, number of projects as well as the profile of inter-governmental exchanges. However, a change in the level of interest also necessitates a review of the pre-requisites for revising and adjusting the terms of engagement to achieve the aims and objectives set forth in wake of this new phase of involvement. This may also require questioning the assumptions on which the policy is grounded.

In view of the difficult prospects and ever more tough challenges for a breakthrough or to even acquire the necessary threshold suggest an over-riding need to remain consistent and committed over a period for carrying the process to a meaningful stage.

A glance at recent trends however suggests a dichotomy in approach offsetting the priorities in the wake of conflicting aims and contradictory priorities. This results in mixed, confusing signals in which friendships are established with some states while influence is

¹ *Las opiniones expresadas en estos artículos son propias de sus autores. Estos artículos no reflejan necesariamente la opinión de UNISCI.* The views expressed in these articles are those of the authors. These articles do not necessarily reflect the views of UNISCI.

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exerted on others and the extent to which funding and technical assistance is extended to others.

A review of recent assistance projects for promoting civil society initiatives in Central Asia refer to the need for a critical reflection and analysis that should be undertaken persistently.

With the need to secure its economic and defense interest and fight terrorism Western efforts continue to stabilize situation in and around Afghanistan and bring peace to the region, once disapproved and disengaged from as an arc of crisis. In recent years, however, Afghanistan and the countries sharing borders or located close attract attention.

No doubt, Washington requires a better understanding of the realities of this complex and troubled region. The strategic interests in the post September 11 context have abruptly brought the United States and Central Asia together much “more closely and permanently. One of the world's richest countries, a state so powerful that its military and economic reach seems limitless, suddenly began to voice greater concern over developments in one of the world's most remote and powerless regions.”³

It is hence considered desirable to focus efforts to address and alleviate the difficult social, economic, and political problems of the South and Central Asian states—in a range of countries including Pakistan to the South, Turkmenistan to the South-east, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to the North of Afghanistan. The Bush administration required the help of key regional states in South and Central Asia with promises of support.

Indeed, given America's new fears and interests, U.S. involvement in Central Asia is likely to last longer than official statements suggest. Although the Bush administration promises a timely end to the military presence there, many believe the United States will remain engaged through an enhanced political and military presence for years to come. The September 11 terrorist attacks and their aftermath have spurred a renewed U.S. interest in Central Asia. Despite official rhetoric, America is likely to remain militarily engaged there for some time. To manage this relationship effectively, Washington needs a better grasp on the realities of this complex and troubled region.

The rise in interest has been welcomed with much caution. For example the Washington Post remarked that the

foreign aid is being deployed in the war against terrorism in itself does not bring any console or guarantees. Aid has at best an extremely mixed track record and is hardly the sort of tool that can be relied on to produce definite results in any short period of time. Though a good thing in a long-term sense, new commitment to foreign aid is probably just one more illusion along a path already littered with discarded prior enthusiasms though the idea of targeting aid to reformers will put behind us many of the problems and dilemmas that have traditionally dogged foreign aid.⁴

Observers have been cautioning about a sense of balance in approach so as not to compromise one ideal in pursuit of another. This caution is voiced both the way a war is fought against terror and process of democratization is promoted in selected partner countries by the United States.

³ Maynes, Charles William: “America Discovers Central Asia”, *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2003).

⁴ *Washington Post*, 16 April 2002.



An article in Los Angeles Times asks how successful will be the US efforts to nip prospects of future terrorism in the bud. While questioning how successful will be the US policy in removing the incentives for anyone to pursue terrorism, Newberg underlines that we need to find ways to make the efforts worth the price. "If the expedient bargains of war simply validate unfair rule, the effectiveness of the alliances will diminish, and so will the international effort to secure Afghanistan and extirpate terrorism."⁵ Questioning the outcome of US engagement in the long term, warns Newberg, "beware. The best politics that money can buy in Afghanistan and among its neighbors may not be good enough to sustain peace. She further cautions that serious "differences of strategy, policy and politics may risk long-term regional security for the appearance of short-term gain, leaving Afghans and their neighbors enfeebled and at the mercy of local strongmen and outside powers."⁶

While friends and allies were univocal in condemning the terrorist acts committed on US soil in September 2001, the wave of sympathy was soon over taken by a tide of concern in the manner a sense of justice was at risk compromise in the wake of rabble for revenge for people influential on policy both inside and outside the US administration. Instead of vowing to uphold the requirements of justice, fair trial and protection of liberties and civil rights of people both within and outside the United States, many leading policy makers called to wage an all out war.

This is total war. We are fighting a variety of enemies. There are lots of them out there. All this talk about first we are going to do Afghanistan, then we will do Iraq... this is entirely the wrong way to go about it. If we just let our vision of the world go forth, and we embrace it entirely and we don't try to piece together clever diplomacy, but just wage a total war... our children will sing great songs about us years from now⁷.

The authors of the above lines are David Frum and Richard Perle, both are Resident Fellows at the American Enterprise Institute. They give warning of a faltering of the "will to win" in Washington. In the battle for the president's ear, their new publication, "An End to Evil: How to Win the War on Terror" is a manifesto representing an attempt by hawks to break out of the post-Iraq doldrums. It catalogues America's vulnerabilities to justify why the toughest line is the safest line.

By its own account, this book is a "manual for victory" in the War on Terror. The strategy it does set out is more hopeful than George Kennan's "containment" policy must have seemed at the beginning of the Cold War. Richard Perle suggests the US is doing a dismal job at this. On the propaganda front there should be an all-media infrastructure by now that broadcasts in Arabic and Farsi, like that which served Eastern Europe during the Cold War. All in all, the US should not be shy about creating a greater Middle East that looks like America.

Time and again, 11 September is described as an "opportunity". New Yorker magazine's investigative reporter Nicholas Lemann wrote that Bush's most senior adviser on National Security, Condoleezza Rice, told him she had called together senior members of the National Security Council and asked them "to think about 'how do you capitalize on these opportunities'", which she compared with those of "1945 to 1947": the start of the cold war.⁸

⁵ Newberg, Paula R.: "Our New Asian Allies", *Los Angeles Times*, 7 December 2001.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Pilger, John: *The Guardian*, 12 December 2002, in <http://pilger.carlton.com/print/124759>

⁸ Lemann, Nicholas: *The Next World Order*. http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/020401fa_FACT1



In terms of its strategic impact, proponents of America's "new war" call to revive the idea of the Cold War practice of containment, which shaped US policy and world politics for 45 years. On a global scale, the new war is substantially affecting flows of foreign aid and investment, the transfer of military goods and services, the character and focus of counter-proliferation efforts, the implementation of sanction regimes, and the status of efforts to support human rights and advance democratic governance.

But the crucial differences between the circumstances and approach to the two historical episodes should be brought to attention. The Cold War doctrine of containment was the product of four years of intense policy debate before it gained hegemony and calcified in reaction to the Korean War. By contrast, the idea of comprehensively rewriting US policy in terms of a "war on terrorism" jetted to prominence like a plume from the wreckage of 11 September. While the "war on terrorism" is transforming US policy and reshaping the global strategic environment, US public and expert debate regarding the campaign -- its goals and methods -- has been feeble. Likewise, the evaluation of progress in the war and examination of the new programs and spending meant to support it has been mostly circumspect and superficial. This evidences the fact *that US policy discourse itself suffered a serious blow on 11 September.*"⁹

Shifting the cold war to hot sands in pursuit of new enemies and to open new frontiers does not appear convincing for many. As we refer to attempts to curb terror and promote democracy, the geographical region that we talk about is "more than just the Middle East, where conventional reason would place it geographically, but a region that runs from the Philippines through Indonesia, to the Straits of Gibraltar up to the sub-continent and central Asia onto the Arabian peninsula, East Africa, North Africa and the Middle East- in other words, the greater Islamic World."¹⁰

We should also not get trapped by the simplistic allusion that the Greater Middle East is the contemporary equivalent of the Soviet Union and any of their leaders the equivalent of Josef Stalin. Moreover, it would be completely misleading, if not polemic and wrong to assume that the relationship between the Greater Middle East and the West is equivalent to the Cold War relationship between the West and the Soviet Empire. There simply is neither the Arab equivalent of the Soviet Empire nor is there necessarily an Arab Moscow, even if Riyadh might be a potential candidate. Most important however: there is no Cold War between the Greater Middle East as a whole and the West as such. Some analysts might see it emerging, some might even wish it. But the parameters of the relationship between the West and the Greater Middle East are more complex and much more differentiated than the relationship which defined the Cold War.¹¹

Urging for a cool headed approach can save from looking at the parties involved in tainted colors. "More difficult than the geographical delimitation is the question of the scope of the definition of the problem. Do we basically deal with the war against terrorism or is this but a dimension of deeper structural crises in the region and a broader set of challenges for the West?"¹²

⁹ Conetta, Carl: *Terrorism, World Order, and Cooperative Security: A research and policy development agenda*, Project on Defense Alternatives Briefing Memo No. 24. Cambridge MA: Commonwealth Institute, 9 September 2002, in <http://www.comw.org/pda/0209coopsec.html>

¹⁰ General Anthony Zinni, *On Peace and Security in the Middle East and the Greater Islamic World*, talk given at Centre for Defence Initiatives, 15 May 2003. See <http://www.cdi.org/program/index.cfm?programid=39>

¹¹ Kühnhardt, Ludger: *System-opening cooperative transformation of the Greater Middle East*, Centre for European Integration Studies (ZEI), 25 September 2003.

¹² Kühnhardt, see http://www.worldsecuritynetwork.com/showArticle3.cfm?article_id=8663.



Analysts are writing to draw attention to the root causes before more apparent matters are tackled at the surface level. The root causes of the multiple and interlinked crises faced in the Near Eastern countries and societies have best been summarized by the UN-sponsored *Human Development Report* written by 22 eminent Arab scholars and published in 2002. It indicates the root-causes of the modernization crisis in the Arab world as following: lack of political freedom, corruption, economic stagnation, lack of rule of law and reliable legal systems, inappropriate market economies, insufficient education systems, gender inequality.

Among a host of difficulties there are

demographic problems in this area, too. Generally across this area the vast majority of the population is under 16 and growing, and the age dropping in the majority of the population, and they can't cope with it, economically, politically, and it ties in to the war on terrorism. It's cannon fodder for the extremists, and demographics are going to become a major issue. We're also going to see a problem with them trying to diversify their economies.¹³

Though the world of Islam has usually been far from men with hawkish approach such as Karl Rove from Texas who enjoys access and influence with President Bush, however, on 11 September, 2001, it became a new piece of political raw material needing urgent attention. "Suddenly there was a new arena in which to work for political results: and, as Rove entered it, he met and was greeted by a group of people who had for years been as busy as he in crafting their political model; this time, the export of unchallenged American power across the world. Figures who believe war will mean America is respected in the Islamic world."¹⁴

It is not just foreign analysts of international affairs but even leading defense experts who advise taking a calculated approach. In the opinion of a senior defense expert General Zinni what the US administration miss in designing a strategy for the broader Middle East region "is the lack of understanding that there's a complex set of issues and problems that are all inter-related." And I want to stress the linkages, because if you don't understand the linkages you can make bad decisions on how to attack these problems, and you can make bad decisions about priorities". Commenting on the way the war against terrorism is pursued Zinni notes, "You're not going to defeat this problem by these tactical measures; you're treating the symptoms. What makes young men plot at even greater numbers now than before September 11th to be willing to sacrifice their lives for a cause that doesn't make sense to us, and seems counterproductive and destructive?... We're not thinking strategically, we're not thinking root causes, we're putting band-aids on the problem and not dealing with the central issues."¹⁵

In terms of literary form, *An End to Evil* falls under the category of "memorandum that thus defines the problem:

For us, terrorism remains the great evil of our time, and the war against this evil, our generation's great cause. We do not believe that Americans are fighting this evil to minimize it or to manage it. We believe they are fighting to win – to end this evil before it kills again and on a genocidal scale. There is no middle way for Americans: It is victory or holocaust.

A briefing paper from the Project on Defense Alternatives instead emphasizes listening to a voice of reason rather than any emotional pitch for a war to the end.

¹³ Zinni, *op cit*.

¹⁴ Vulliamy, Ed: "Two men driving Bush into war", *The Observer*, 23 February 2003.

¹⁵ General Anthony Zinni, see more at <http://www.cdi.org/program/index.cfm?programid=39>



Although the United States has mobilized significant international support for its campaign, the campaign itself has remained Washington-centric. The effort has proceeded principally on a unilateral and bilateral basis, not a multilateral one, with Washington assuming the role of the campaign's chief architect and engineer. Aspects of the campaign and American leadership have become matters of polarizing dispute between the United States and some of its partners, especially in the Arab and Muslim world. The deleterious impact of this is hard to exaggerate: Effectively limiting the influence and power of *al-Qaeda* (and the broader Jihadist movements) depends, more than anything else, on not only avoiding an "Islam versus the West" overlay, but actually winning the intensive cooperation of Arab and Muslim states. In more general terms: to the extent that the "war against terrorism" seems to serve exclusive national interests or detracts from other legitimate security concerns, global cooperation will be undermined. The long-term success of the campaign against terrorism -- its net effect -- requires a more determined effort to explore and develop cooperative, multilateral approaches.¹⁶

It matters a lot on how the efforts to minimize security threats are conceived and portrayed and from what perspective they are projected to the internal and external audience. Therefore portrayal of the encounters in terms such as a clash of civilizations, a duel of the cowboys, or bringing an end to the evil are all relative in terms and each of these perspectives will ensue its own implications in conditioning the attitudes of the audiences affected.

Several dynamics can work against achieving the type of cooperation necessary for defeating the new terrorism. Obviously, should the campaign against terror be perceived as the privileged instrument of a few states, others will resist it. The campaign must be detached from the advance of any one nation's (or alliance's) exclusive interests or power position. Less obviously: different states, facing different constellations of security problems, will prioritize the problem of terrorism differently. The fact of scarce resources and varied circumstances will pull even allied nations in different directions. Likewise, the net impact of any course of action will vary from state to state; each will experience its own unique mix of risks, costs, and benefits.¹⁷

Security analysts and peace proponents both call for casting a deeper look on factors at work for a better understanding to deal with it. In their initial proposition for transformation in the Greater Middle East as the new transatlantic project, Ron Asmus and Kenneth Pollack have rightly consented that the West "needs a strategy that is more than a military campaign". They have argued in favor to not only fight terrorists and failed states, but „to change the dynamics that created such monstrous groups and regimes in the first place“. They defined "transformation" as the need for "a new form of democracy in the Greater Middle East", "a new economic system that could provide work, dignity, and livelihoods for the people of the regions" and "helping Middle Eastern societies come to grips with modernity and create new civil societies that allow them to compete and integrate in the modern world without losing their sense of cultural uniqueness." They remained rather unsystematic in their definition of the implications of this "tall order" as they rightly described it. The development of Iraq since the fall of Saddam Hussein in May 2003 indicate the potential for problems and the danger of skepticism or even cynicism in the West as post-conflict situations or post-dictatorial transformation can never develop according to a academic blueprint.¹⁸

Referring to the US administration's pursuit of the war on terrorism at home, the Foreign Policy journal terms it "ironically, and also sadly," as, "the greatest source of negative ripple

¹⁶ Conetta, *op cit.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Asmus, Ronald D. and Pollack, Kenneth M.: "The New Transatlantic Project", *Policy Review*, (October 2002).



effects.” “To the extent that the Western states, inside their own borders, begin to emphasize repression at the expense of participation, they might implicitly encourage, or at least do nothing to disturb, the various forms of non-consultative government on display throughout the post-communist world.”¹⁹

The heightened terrorist threat has inevitably put pressure on U.S. civil liberties. But the administration failed to strike the right balance early on, unnecessarily abridging or abusing rights through the large-scale detention of immigrants, closed deportation hearings, and the declaration of some U.S. citizens as "enemy combatants" with no right to counsel or even to contest the designation. The Justice Department's inflexible if not harsh approach sent a powerful negative signal around the world, emboldening many governments to curtail domestic liberties, supposedly in aid of their own struggles against terrorism. Theoretically speaking, in the United States, at least potentially, “an independent judiciary and powerful Congress ensure that the appropriate balance between security and rights is gradually being achieved. In many countries, however, the rule of law is weak and copycat restrictions on rights resound much more harmfully.”²⁰ This view is echoed both within and outside United States. A British organ of the law community urges to decide whether the level of threat justifies exceptional measures, such as restrictions of liberty along the lines of tagging or even detention without trial as Indefinite detention cannot become infinite detention. There must be parameters. Noting that the Muslims begin to express a sense of being targeted for mass criminalization, the *Law Gazette* called for the need to show sensitivity to the need not to antagonize a community in particular whose support, after all, will be crucial in suppressing the threat in the longer term. Legal experts like Stephen Grosz, a partner at leading London civil liberties firm, observe that legal measures in practice about detainees of the war against terror on both sides of the Atlantic “seem barely in tune with the normal principles of justice” as “each anti-terrorism measure erodes our rights a bit more, and the internment of international terrorists without trial is the biggest leap so far.” Another human rights specialist, Daniel Machover, says: 'Huge resources are spent detaining those against whom there is not enough evidence to go to trial. If there is not enough evidence, it would be better to put them under surveillance. But it's not correct for the state to deny them their liberty based on intelligence. It devalues the liberty of the individual.'

As Louise Christian, a human rights specialist, says: 'Measures that are originally proposed as just for terrorism have a habit of creeping into other areas that are nothing to do with terrorism at all.' Anti-terror measures are the most obvious threat to civil liberties, but other legislation raises issues as well. Addressing a joint meeting of the Law Society and Human Rights Lawyers Association, the Lord Chancellor, Lord Falconer, emphasized the need for a human rights culture, helped along by the use of litigation where necessary but a much wider concept than just that. “There are no options we should refuse to consider, but it must be within the framework of the rule of law and our international human rights obligations. “What is required, is access to an independent authority with powers to provide effective redress.”²¹ Leading prison law expert Simon Creighton, at a London firm, is already seeing special terrorism measures seeping into other areas. 'The mandatory sentencing rules are worrying, because judicial discretion is taken away. When tariffs are raised, there is a knock-on effect as all other sentences get dragged upwards. It upsets the balancing role of the criminal law between the protection of the public and the rights of the accused’ the *Law*

¹⁹ Holmes, Stephen: “From Post-communism to Post-September 11”, *EECR*, Vol. 10, No. 4.

²⁰ Carothers, Thomas: “Promoting Democracy and Fighting Terror”, *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2003). See links to more articles at <http://www.ceip.org/files/about/Staff.asp?r=9>

²¹ *The Law Gazette*, 4 March 2004



Gazette quoted Creighton as saying and added: “The current raft of legislation could leave the impression that civil liberties are less valued than they have ever been before.” The war on terror and immigration fears both have led to a climate where draconian measures can seem justified.

In the desire to engage these diverse partners, experts in the United States wonder whether, where, and how should promote democracy and this has become a central questions in U.S. policy debates with regard to a host of countries including Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Uzbekistan, and many others. But the rise in profile of democracy as a policy matter, has hardly led to clarify a befitting approach to the issue. In other words the war on terror has injected an importance for Central Asia by creating a need for US to have a capacity to work with the Central Asian leadership to help contain present and future threats. Along with a new interest there is an increased aid to partner countries. What remains to be seen is that what would it bring to promote democracy? However, not many observers are sure if it will empower people rather than strengthening the regimes. Aid has at best an extremely mixed track record and is hardly the sort of tool that can be relied on to produce definite results in any short period of time.

This new approach though sounds good may not necessary allow for curbing threats and promoting liberties claims Thomas Carothers as he gives the reasons: “To start with, the United States has- for decades- heaped aid on favored partners for security reasons, independent of developmental motives. In the war on terrorism, the need to reward allies -- whether they are reformers or not -- will be all the greater.” If there is any distinctive trend in the direction of U.S. aid, it is large new sums for countries that help the United States on security grounds, no matter what their approach to reform at home.

The United States thus faces two contradictory imperatives: on the one hand, the fight against terror tempts Washington to put aside its democratic scruples and seek closer ties with autocracies throughout the Middle East and Asia. On the other hand, U.S. officials and policy experts have increasingly come to believe that it is precisely the lack of democracy in many of these countries that helps breed Islamic extremism. Writing in *Los Angeles Times*, Paula R. Newberg underlines that the fight to make the world more secure and democratic is dependent on several measures. “If America's new alliances in Central Asia stimulate openness in regional politics, then democracy, fairness and justice stand a chance.”

Questioning the outcome of US engagement in the long term, warns Newberg, “beware. The best politics that money can buy in Afghanistan and among its neighbors may not be good enough to sustain peace. Indeed, some of the relationships emerging between the United States and its anti-terrorism allies in South and Central Asia may extinguish democratic hopes” adding that serious “differences of strategy, policy and politics may risk long-term regional security for the appearance of short-term gain, leaving Afghans and their neighbors enfeebled and at the mercy of local strongmen and outside powers.”

The war against terrorism has turned the former U.S. foes into useful U.S. friends in Central and South Asia. These leaders and their colleagues in Central Asia all profess to want peace and stability. Referring to Central Asia’s “five cash-poor, weak states - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan”, Newberg notes that the war on terrorism has given a renewed lease on political life to its leader with authoritarian inclinations.” But they also maintain closed borders and barely disguised antipathies that work against regional harmony, which is a mainstay of a global campaign against terrorism.



Many observers agree that rather than widening cooperation that will imply compromises on individual countries' influence the leaders of Central Asia tend to promote an introvert agenda to keep things under greater control. Observers also raise the question if partners in surrounding countries will welcome turning Afghanistan into a laboratory for promoting democratic values into practice. America's goal of a broadly based but non-Taliban government in Afghanistan doesn't easily mesh with these authoritarians' interests in carving out spheres of influence.

As to what extent the partners are prepared to move along, it may be noted that the Central Asia's leaders don't seem seriously interested in sharing power with their citizens. For Central Asia's citizens, the price of the anti-terrorism war is therefore high. If America's new alliances in Central Asia stimulate openness in regional politics, then democracy, fairness and justice stand a chance. But if the expedient bargains of war simply validate unfair rule, the effectiveness of the alliances will diminish, and so will the international effort to secure Afghanistan and extirpate terrorism.

America's alliances in Central Asia parallel its long, strained relationship with Pakistan, an anti-terrorism partner already straining at the alliance bit. The price for Pakistan's support in the war against terrorism is steep, financially and morally. Newberg asks what is the cost Pakistanis are going to pay as the military rulers extend their lease further? Well, that's another story. "Politicians, economists and most Pakistanis long for a society that is orderly and stable enough to sustain political debate free from threats by thugs." Until recently, this was not the military's agenda, and it's still not clear that it is now, either. Pakistan's capacity to transform itself into a vital, profitable, democratic political economy is limited indeed. Both in Pakistan as in Central Asian countries, the rule of law is personal and political participation is subjected to the ruler's interpretation of security and symbolic version of electoral democracy. Relying on our old diplomatic habits isn't likely to help us exploit the enormous opportunity that misery has provided us - to remove any incentives for anyone to pursue terrorism. Surely, we can find ways to make the effort worth the price.

The ideals calling for liberal politics and economics are facing the challenge to allocate considerations for more security a higher priority. This is leading many to raise a number of pertinent questions: "How will the West's new emphasis on security at the expense of liberty indirectly shape developments inside the former Soviet block? What affect it will have on American relations with Russia and the Central Asian republic?" How will the war on trans-national terror refashion relations between the West and countries that lived under the Iron curtain for decades? A look at the Russian-US relations suggests that it is undergoing "a shift of national priorities from liberty to security" something, congenial-for different reasons-to leaders in both countries. "As it is, the greatest weaknesses of post-communist state-building during the past decade has been the failure to create strong channels for negotiations and consultation between state and society among others out of fear not to derail the economic reforms."²²

The questions that come to mind is not if the US policies will work but also how far the newly forged allies are willing to go and whether there is a similarity in perceptions and above all in practical measures in not just security but other spheres as well. Many observers feel apprehensive if the approach and perceived outcomes are in line with the complicated state of affairs on ground that may pose very pertinent risks if not jeopardize all efforts.

²² Holmes, Stephen: "From Post-communism to Post September 11", *East European Constitutional Review*, Volume 10, No. 4 (Fall 2001).



Moreover, even if the United States decides it is serious about rewarding good performers, determining who is a reformer is not so easy. Consider the case of issues of partial fulfilling of responsibilities in this new partnership. One country may launch judicial reforms, one of the key areas of reform that development specialists now focus on. Yet, at the same time, the leader manipulates the law to prosecute the independent media. The hard choices pose difficult questions: Should a partner be rewarded as a rule-of-law reformer or shunned as a law abuser? Ultimately the choice is political, not technical. Most of the important cases around the world are of similar complexity and ambiguity.

Furthermore, even if a government clearly is moving ahead on economic reforms -- the reforms that development advocates usually care most about -- it may well be moving backward on political reforms. There is a risk that democracy will get lost in the reformist wash.

The Bush administration required the help of key states in South and Central Asia with promises of support. But, warns Pauline Luong, that if Washington under this short-term marriage of convenience" give a free hand for authoritarian to regional leaders it fosters Islamic extremism, which in turn may exacerbate tensions among Central Asia's unstable governments. Observers underline that only "a multilateral approach can handle the region's many problems."²³

The dynamics of the relationship under which the Central and South Asian states will play their role in the U.S.-led coalition against terrorism can determine if the region is going to calm down or breed further problems. U.S. officials and policy experts have increasingly come to believe that it is precisely the lack of democracy in many of these countries that helps breed Islamic extremism. "Central Asian governments have tried a variety of tactics to deal with the radicals in their fight against Islamic extremists which is not new. For coping with the Islamic elements Central Asian governments have three option described as the C's: contest, control or collaborate by analyst and author Kamol Abdullaev who suggests that Tajikistan's effort to incorporate Islamic political parties into the system is the most promising of the options. It may be recalled that Tajikistan's 1999 elections brought into office members of the Islamic Renaissance Party, the only openly Islamic party to participate in a Central Asian government coalition. Faced by the post September 11 security threat these governments must encourage pluralism through a reinterpretation of Islam, focusing on moderate voices, instead of imposing models or repressing groups through violence. Efforts to suppress Islamic activity and treating groups as dangerous militias might have the unintended consequences of radicalizing more moderate organizations."²⁴

A prime distinction that presents great potential Tajikistan is the only country in Central Asia where an Islamic political party is legally operating and occupies seats in the parliament. Shamsiddin Karimov of the Academy for Educational Development believes that, 'he who would use the religion to develop and build Civil Society would win'. The moral dogmas of Islamic religion correspond to traditional civic culture. Islamic structures are in direct contact with the people at the grassroots and 93% of the population is Muslim. They are citizens and need to be involved, but "there appears to be a cultural clash: with Madrassahs practicing traditional Islamic patterns of patience, understanding and tolerance, while NGOs seem

²³ Jones Luong, Pauline and Weinthal, Erika: "New Friends, New Fears in Central Asia", *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2002).

²⁴ Forum on *Central Asia: Politics, Economics, Religion. Should the U.S. Care?* held at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington on January 10, 2002. See details at http://wwics.si.edu/index.cfm?fuseaction=events.event_summary&event_id=21041



impatient and pushy". In fact NGOs often represent the urban, educated, secular elements in society.

An observer cautions that the Western government should remain wary of the ramifications of their struggle against terror and "take into account the negative ramification of the war on drugs... Some corrupt authorities use the campaign for their own purposes, including targeting certain religious and ethnic groups, limiting civil liberties, tightening political control and harassing opposition groups." Thus, for example, the rationale for Washington's marriage of convenience to Tashkent is clear and understandable. But inertia and the logic of events may tempt the Bush administration to let a temporary expedient grow into an enduring policy shift. "This would be a mistake. Propping up authoritarian leaders not only would fail to address but would actually exacerbate a key source of Central Asian instability: the domestic political repression that fosters the radicalization of Islamist movements and galvanizes popular support behind them. Moreover, viewing the Islamist threat as primarily a military problem requiring a local strongman will not mitigate the various transnational concerns...that plague the region."²⁵

It is observed that the regimes in the region use instability as a dreadful price the people will be required to pay should they opt for political choice and freedom. According to area specialists, the threat of chaos in the region enabled a reassertion of the most conservative features of Central Asian society. Many people have accepted authoritarian control because they are told it is necessary to protect against the perceived dangers of social and regional fragmentation. There are many who can clearly see what serves their interests, but remain fearful that rather than supporting the changes if they act differently then that may charge the atmosphere and lead to violence. Thus for peace's sake, they will tolerate the status quo. They do not wish to lose their jobs and incline to compromise with the circumstances. The situation could get worse, as people hardly see something to pin their hopes to. But there is little to be optimistic about as people do not see any plans being put to work for greater jobs or better earning opportunities. The more people will find out about the changes, the more they will tend to take sides on one issue or the other. All these conditions could fuel the atmosphere, filling the ranks of those who take a professed position and stand on policies such as the Tajikistan's Islamic Renaissance Party or the Hezbut Tahrir group to name a few. However, the specter of Islamists coming to power is played up with much skill to create a bogey of the unknown implying that the people are better off continuing to live with the secularists or else they risk losing their liberties if they opt for a change or discontinuity in the political discourse.

Experts also list of risks to the measures pertaining to bolstering security and boosting civil liberties in Near Eastern societies.²⁶ It is not yet clear how sharply US authorities will shift their policy toward promoting democracy with their allies in South and Central Asia. The dilemma is clear if we examine the American re-discovery and re-engagement with certain partners in these countries broadly incorporating the Near East.

What could be the best way to ensure that the war on terrorism complements rather than contradicts worldwide democracy and that the strengthening of democracy abroad is a fundamental element of U.S. foreign policy in the years ahead. It is on and around the front lines of the campaign against al Qaeda that the tensions between America's pressing new

²⁵ Luong and Weinthal, *op. cit*

²⁶ For details of arguments referred to here see contributions made by some scholars at the Carnegie Endowment of peace at <http://www.ceip.org/files/about/Staff.asp?r=9>



security concerns and its democracy interests are most strongly felt raising doubts that if the administration is not only willing but also capable enough to maintain a sense of balance and sense of justice in its pursuits. But two dangers are also manifest. One is the instrumentalization of pro-democracy policies -- wrapping security goals in the language of democracy promotion and then confusing democracy promotion with the search for particular political outcomes that enhance those security goals. How people are put on pedestal of democracy will determine how such measures are taken, popularly or otherwise.

This same tension between democracy as an end versus a means has surfaced in the administration's press for democracy by selection rather than by election. Bush has urged Palestinians to reform, especially through elections, yet at the same time administration officials have made clear that certain outcomes, such as the re-election of Yasir Arafat, are unacceptable to the United States. A post-invasion process of installing a new "democratic" regime in Iraq would likely exhibit similar contradictions between stated principle and political reality. Whether it is the process or the outcome that is pursued will increasingly come under question. Thus if U.S. and its allies reduce democracy promotion to an instrumental strategy for producing political outcomes favorable to their interests, the value and legitimacy of the concept will be lost. How eager learners are the allies? Indications suggest that as long as it remains an either or option, many Asian leaders will remain less inclined to oblige. When it comes to holding elections it is usually an exercise in engineering legitimization for the incumbent regime rather than as a tool for wider representation and thus broader participation.

The *Foreign Affairs* journal suggests that there should be a balanced approach in pursuit of its objectives as the complexities of the situation must also be acknowledged. As Pakistan's cooperation in the campaign against al Qaeda is vital, therefore, a return to democracy in Pakistan is not simply a matter of getting a military leader to step aside. Calling for a comprehensive engagement, opinion makers suggest: "Democratization will require a profound, multifaceted process of change" suggesting that eventually Pakistan's military will have to pull out of politics altogether and give the leadership role to the politicians.

Those closely observing US administrations democratization efforts have acknowledged that the American authorities approach for bolstering security and boosting democracy in regions of their new-found and renewed interest are very challenging, as it needs to steer clear of risks that can potentially contribute to confusion in perception, contradictions in approach and conflict of priorities. The United States authorities should explore harder to find appropriate options and viable approaches to check extremists in religious garbs without making the common believers face the brunt. Moreover, supporting partners who are eager to tighten their borders may be equally tempted to turn harder on politicians domestically. Such an eventuality will raise the question whether such alliances will stimulate an element of openness in regional politics. In other words, whether bolstering security in the short-term is going to contribute to strengthening the hands of democratic forces and will they be able to gain any meaningful ground in the long run.