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Research Report

Crisis potentials and crisis prevention in Central Asia. Entry points for German development cooperation

Studies, No. 1

Provided in Cooperation with:

German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS), Bonn

Suggested Citation: Grävingholt, Jörn (2004) : Crisis potentials and crisis prevention in Central Asia. Entry points for German development cooperation, Studies, No. 1, ISBN 3-88985-273-4, Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), Bonn

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Crisis Potentials and Crisis Prevention in Central Asia

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Crisis Potentials and Crisis Prevention in Central Asia



Entry Points for German Development Cooperation

Jörn Grävingholt

Bonn 2004

Studies
Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik

Grävingholt, Jörn: Crisis potentials and crisis prevention in Central Asia : entry points for German development cooperation / Jörn Grävingholt. – Bonn : Dt. Inst. für Entwicklungspolitik, 2004. – (Studie / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik; 1) ISBN 3-88985-273-4

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Abbreviations

AA	German Foreign Office
ACDI/VOCA	Agricultural Cooperative Development International / Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance
ACP	Group of EU partner countries in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific
ACTED	L'Agence d'Aide à la Coopération Technique et au Déve- loppement
ADB	Asian Development Bank
BIP	Gross domestic product
BMI	Federal Ministry of the Interior
BMVg	Federal Ministry of Defence
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Develop- ment
CAIP	Community Action Investment Program (USAID)
CAMP	Central Asia Mountain Partnership
CCD	Convention to Combat Desertification
CIS	Community of Independent States
CP	Communist Party
CSCE	Conference on Security and Development in Europe
DAC	Development Assistance Committee, OECD
DC	Development cooperation
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
EAEC	Eurasian Economic Community
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EU	European Union
FEM	AA budget section "Peacekeeping Measures"
FES	Friedrich Ebert Foundation
FriEnt	Gruppe Friedensentwicklung / Working Group on Develop- ment and Peace
FC	Financial Cooperation
GDI	German Development Institute
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
HIPC	Highly indebted poor countries

IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank Group)
ICG	International Crisis Group
IDA	International Development Agency (World Bank Group)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
INTRAC	International NGO Training and Research Centre
InWEnt	Internationale Weiterbildung und Entwicklung gGmbH / Capacity-Building International
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JOCV	Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers
KAS	Konrad Adenauer Foundation
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
ODA	Official development assistance (as per DAC criteria)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSZE	Organisation for Security and Development in Europe
p.a.	per annum
PCI	Peaceful Communities Initiative (USAID)
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RFE/RL	Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SME	Small and medium-size enterprise
TACIS	Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States (EU support program for CIS countries and Mongolia)
TC	Technical cooperation
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNTOP	United Nations Tajikistan Office of Peace-building
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WIRAM	BMZ priority area “Economic reform and market systems development”

WTO World Trade Organization
ZEF Zentrum für Entwicklungsforschung / Center for Development
Research, Bonn

Executive summary

Following the 9/11/2001 terror attacks in the US, Central Asia moved into the focus of the worldwide efforts aimed at crisis prevention and the fight against terrorism. If the region was no longer perceived merely as the faraway periphery of the crumbled Soviet empire, it now came to be seen as a geographic intersection between East and West, as a boundary line between religious fundamentalism and the secular world, as a poorhouse among the post-socialist countries in transition, and as a potential source of instability. This foregrounded the question as to what development policy and, concretely, development cooperation can contribute to stabilizing Central Asia. The present study addresses this question from the perspective of German development cooperation. In conceptual terms, it draws on the discussion in development policy on crisis prevention and conflict resolution and applies it to the region of Central Asia.

Crisis prevention and conflict resolution in development cooperation

In the past ten years the issue of crisis prevention and conflict resolution has become firmly entrenched as an element of the debate on development. The German government in 2000 elaborated a comprehensive strategy on “Crisis Prevention and Conflict Resolution,” in this way assigning special significance to the field of action as a cross-cutting, interministerial task. Development policy here has the function: “to help prevent and reduce the structural causes of conflicts in affected countries by improving economic, social, ecological, and political conditions, and to promote mechanisms for nonviolent conflict resolution.” The BMZ has acted on this demand by making “peace development and conflict prevention” into one of the sectoral priorities of German bilateral development cooperation and at the same time by establishing the issue complex as a cross-cutting task of development policy as a whole.

The intention of crisis prevention is not to seek to prevent every potential social conflict. Rather, crisis prevention is focused on conflicts that have the potential to escalate into collective violent strife, down to and including war. Preventive policy must start out by addressing, over the long term, the root structural causes of social conflicts and, over the short term, the modes in which such conflicts are acted out (the reason why the field has come to be known by the dual term “crisis prevention and conflict resolution”). The paradigms “structural stability” and “human security” may be regarded as positive target notions of a development policy geared to crisis prevention; taken together, they aim both at protecting the individual and at the social and institutional framework conditions required to reach this end.

Every development strategy for regions with significant crisis potentials should be preceded by a **basic decision on whether and how** development cooperation should seek to immediately **influence a given conflict constellation**. Viewed in ideal-typical terms, the choice involved here is to work “in, on, or around conflict.” Experience indicates, however,

that a conflict-sensitive development cooperation will be able to fall back only on the first of the two options. Conflict-related impact analyses have shown that in acute or potential conflict situations **every form of external help is conflict-relevant**. Any attempt to “work around conflicts” in crisis regions, putting on as it were a mien of neutrality, is as a rule bound to fail. A conscious decision should be made between the remaining alternatives – to take a targeted approach to conflicts (working *on* conflict) or to give due consideration to their existence as a framework condition (working *in* conflict). Either approach may be legitimate. Yet a deliberate choice is the only real way to avoid false expectations and unintended negative impacts. No appropriate decision will be able to be reached without subjecting development cooperation measures in potential crisis regions, in advance, to targeted **conflict impact analyses**.

Moreover, it must be recognized that development cooperation geared to conflict prevention not only offers chances to positively influence the course of events, but that its **impacts are inevitably limited**. The decisive factors here are the **willingness and the will of the actors involved on the ground** to accept peaceful solutions to existing conflicts. External crisis prevention will only have chances of success if it uses its instruments to take up, to strengthen, and, wherever called for, to supplement **locally existing approaches and capacities**, but without substituting for or superimposing itself on them. To be successful, crisis-prevention-oriented development cooperation must be embedded in a coherent overall political strategy on the donor side.

The causative and triggering factors of crisis developments are as a rule complex. There is no such thing as a certain forecast of when a conflict will escalate into a crisis. On the other hand, certain factors have in the past proven to be particularly conducive to conflict. For this reason the present study uses, for its concrete conflict analysis of Central Asia, **crisis indicators from five fields of analysis**: governance, economy, socio-cultural factors, security, and external factors. Analytically, we can distinguish here between three problem levels, which result in different approaches to crisis-prevention policy: (a) structural causes of conflict, which call for long-term, structurally oriented measures; (b) the capacity of a society to engage in constructive conflict resolution, which calls for short- to medium-term measures targeted to the character of political decision-making processes; and (c) conflict-aggravating security risks which require above all short-term action geared to containment.

Against this background the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee, DAC, in its 2001 guidelines “Helping Prevent Violent Conflict,” has identified seven fields of action that can and should be used by development cooperation to make a meaningful contribution to crisis prevention and conflict resolution:

- establishing crisis prevention and conflict resolution as a long-term, cross-cutting task;
- factoring in security as a basis for development;
- promoting regional cooperation;

- supporting peace processes, justice, and reconciliation;
- building partnerships for peace;
- involving the private sector;
- countering negative economic forces.

Political, socioeconomic, and sociocultural framework conditions in the Central Asian countries in transition

The Soviet legacy has left deep traces in the Central Asian republics; and even today this legacy continues to shape their politics, economies, societies, and cultures. At the same time, a retrospective process of return to older traditions can be noted here. All five Central Asian republics are formally democracies, though in fact their political regimes are dominated by more or less authoritarian ruling elites. Repression against opposition and the media have recently been increasing throughout the region. The machinery of government is marked by corruption and clientelism.

In economic terms, the Central Asian republics went through a severe crisis in the first half of the 1990s that was exacerbated by the disintegration of the Soviet economic area. It was only in 1996 that a gradual economic recovery got underway. Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan are today classified by the World Bank as low-income countries.

Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are vying for the leadership role in the region. While Uzbekistan, with its population of some 25 million, is in this respect the larger country, Kazakhstan (15 million), with its major oil and gas reserves, is the richer nation. One central problem in the region is the borders between the republics, which were arbitrarily drawn under Soviet rule. Of minor importance in the Soviet Union, these borders have, since independence, cut apart historically grown cultural and economic spaces. At the same time, many boundary lines have even today not yet been clearly defined. One issue closely associated with the border question is the situation of ethnic minorities, whose status in relation to the titular ethnic group has deteriorated in most of the republics since the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Since 1991 there have been repeated attempts to improve and widen regional cooperation, but most of them have failed for lack of a willingness on the part of the governments concerned to see their scopes of action curtailed. Besides Turkmenistan, which pursues a course of almost complete isolation, Uzbekistan in particular has also sealed itself from its neighbors.

Uzbekistan, the geographic heartland of Central Asia, has an ethnically relatively homogeneous population with a very high percentage of young people. President Karimov rules the country in a largely authoritarian manner. Human rights organizations report systematic torture in Uzbek prisons as well as suppression of civil liberties. Islamic and other religious

practices are tolerated only in the form approved by the state. Religious groupings which do not fall in with this line are regarded as extremist organizations steered from abroad and are ruthlessly persecuted. Bombings and other attacks between 1999 and 2000, which were presumably the work of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), have contributed their part to a stiffening of this policy. The worldwide efforts to fight terrorism after September 11, 2001, have also worked in the same direction. Even though the IMU was weakened considerably by the war in Afghanistan, where it had its areas of retreat, the Uzbek government continues – today more than ever – to feel justified in pursuing its repressive course. Economically, Uzbekistan is dependent on gold and cotton exports, which are used to subsidize a post-Soviet economic system that has made little progress on reforms. Moreover, cotton-farming, with the water scarcity and soil salinization it entails, has led to a dangerous ecological situation. The country's stagnant economic picture is reflected in a deteriorating social situation. Estimates are that the incomes of about 30 % of the population are below the absolute poverty line, and the situation in individual regions of the country (Khorezm, Karakalpakstan) is even considerably worse.

In relative terms, **Kazakhstan** is the richest Central Asian country, and at the same time the one with the most positive economic development. The main reasons for this are sizeable revenues from the export of mineral oil and natural gas as well as the country's wealth in other mineral resources (coal, nonferrous metals). Kazakhstan early pinned its hopes on free-market reforms and further integration in the world economy, a policy designed to attract foreign investment into the country's raw materials sector. Kazakhstan has assumed a burdensome ecological legacy from the Soviet era, for which the progressive drying up of the Aral Sea and the contaminated arms-testing facilities around Semipalatinsk are only the most dramatic symbols. Economy and state are dominated by a relatively small elite, with president Nazarbayev at its peak. In the course of the 1990s the political system grew increasingly authoritarian, and civil-society activities are tolerated only to the extent that they involve no political demands. Unlike the case of Uzbekistan, in Kazakhstan Islam is not a politically significant factor and has more the character of a popular tradition.

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, **Kyrgyzstan** has developed from a glimmer of hope for successful democratic and market-oriented transformation to a problem child of the region. Following independence, the territorially small, very mountainous country was the Central Asian republic that set the most clear-cut example for post-socialist reforms geared to democracy and market economy. The country's socioeconomic situation has, however, become very problematic, since the collapse of industry and the decline in agricultural production experienced in the first half of the 1990s has not been followed by a sustainable upswing with positive impacts for a large share of the country's 5 million inhabitants. At the same time, Kyrgyzstan has the highest foreign debt of the CIS countries (in relation to GDP). According to official information, in 2001 52 % of Kyrgyzstan's population was poor, and the southern part of the country and the rural population in general are disproportionately affected. Development of promising branches of industry is still in its infancy. Viewed in political terms, following independence Kyrgyzstan initially

experienced the development of a landscape of civil-society actors that was pluralist and more comprehensive than in other Central Asian countries. However, since the mid-1990s, and influenced by what he saw as growing social and political tensions, President Akayev, who was seen as a symbolic figure for democratic change in the years of upheaval (1990 to 1992), has arrogated more and more powers to himself and enlarged his control over the state. The Kyrgyz part of the Ferghana Valley was affected by the attacks launched by the IMU in 1999 and in 2000. Subsequently the government stepped up its pressure on the opposition as well as the critical media and the human rights situation has deteriorated. Even so, in regional terms Kyrgyzstan continues to have a more diverse political landscape and a larger measure of freedom of speech than its Central Asian neighbors.

In political, but above all in socioeconomic terms, **Tajikistan** has been hard hit by the aftermath of the 1992-1997 civil war. According to World Bank information, in 2000 Tajikistan was among the world's 11 poorest countries. One part of the immediate tasks still facing the country is reconstruction of essential infrastructure. The country, with its population of approx. 6.5 million, is run by a government under President Rahmonov which has included representatives of the "democratic" and "Islamic" opposition since the 1997 peace agreement. Nevertheless, there is only a limited measure of genuine pluralism and democracy. Establishment of functioning government structures in all parts of the country is likewise a task that still has to be mastered. Traditional factors like regional and local particularisms, handed-down modes of power distribution, and clan membership play an important role in this connection. It is generally agreed that the civil war – aside from a seemingly ideological debate between democratizers, Islamic reformists, and inert post-communist forces over the country's post-Soviet course – also amounted to a struggle between rival regional clans for hegemony in Tajikistan's political-administrative system. The fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan generally contributed to further stabilizing the country's security situation. But the problem of drug trafficking remains virulent, since the country is located on the main transit route between Afghanistan and Europe. Furthermore, tensions between President Rahmonov and the "opposition" members of government over some central issues of power-sharing have recently escalated.

Turkmenistan is the most closed and isolated of the Central Asian countries. Seen in terms of its total population (some 5.5 to 6 million), it is one of the three "little" countries of Central Asia, although the size of its national territory is comparable with that of Uzbekistan. The country has sizable natural gas and mineral oil reserves which constitute the main source of revenue of the state and the overall national economy. Agriculture is dominated by cotton-farming, which, as in the case of Uzbekistan, is associated with massive environmental problems. President Niyazov, who governed the republic even before national independence, has, since 1991, established the most undemocratic and least reformed regime in the entire area that once made up the Soviet Union. In economic terms, the Soviet economic system has largely been conserved. The government has used heavy public subsidies to keep the population's standard of living at a higher nominal level than in most other Central Asian republics. The country's high degree of dependence on raw materials

for government revenue is, however, a reason for major concern as to how long a strategy of this kind can be pursued in view of the fact that urgently required infrastructure maintenance investments have not been made for years and there is no reason to anticipate any growth of export revenues in the foreseeable future. President Niyazov has led Turkmenistan into almost complete isolation. Citizens are largely refused permission to travel abroad. There are as good as no civil-society activities, free expression of opinion, or political representation of interests. The only more or less organized opposition is to be found only in exile, and the country is dominated by a brutal surveillance apparatus. The government appears to have no strategy designed to set a development perspective against feared pent-up political conflicts, social discontent, and ecological crises.

Conflict and crisis potentials

At present, Central Asia appears to be a region of fragile stability. One positive note is that none of the five countries is presently in the throes of acute violent conflict. There is no immediate reason to fear an outbreak of violent internal conflicts in the short term, and there are no signs of any impending international conflicts. In the long run, however, the region is faced with considerable risks stemming from the negative dynamics of the conflict potentials to be observed in most Central Asian countries. Structured with a view to the fields of conflict analysis, we come to the following results:

- All of the countries in Central Asia have massive deficits in the field of **governance**. The governments are beset by substantial legitimacy deficits which are aggravated by a lack of legal security for citizens in their dealings with government authorities. There is little scope for pluralism, especially in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Not only is the interplay between state and society poorly suited to bringing emerging conflicts to a solution accepted by contending actors, it often even contributes toward exacerbating conflicts or escalating the modes in which they are played out. Indeed, owing to particularly low levels of civil conflict-resolution competence, the worst scenarios may even have to be feared precisely for the allegedly most stable countries, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
- **In economic terms**, all of the Central Asian countries are still suffering from the consequences of the collapse of the Soviet Union, a situation which for most people is bound up with a loss of elementary material security. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan still face the greatest structural changes. While income poverty has, within just a few years, become a mass phenomenon in all Central Asian countries, some small population groups have risen substantially in material terms. This situation is exacerbated by enormous regional income disparities within these countries as well as by the unequal endowment of their people with the three central resources fertile land, clean water, and a healthy environment. This situation of competition harbors considerable intrasocietal conflict potential.

- Looking at **socio-cultural factors**, the main concern is the political instrumentalization of cultural, ethnic, and other differences. The picture in Central Asia is mixed in this regard. Active and systematic official public discrimination against ethnic minorities has until now remained the exception, even though members of the main national ethnic groups often enjoy informal advantages and are given cultural support. However, the cleavages between various ethnic, religious, linguistic, and other characteristics are often cross-cutting in nature and are not particularly well suited for purposes of political mobilization. In the recent past, though, there have been some locally limited violent conflicts that have erupted along local-regional identities. The most difficult problem is the way in which the Central Asian governments have dealt with resurgent religiosity among their populations. In the early 1990s stigmatization of Islamic groups and the Islam-oriented opposition as extremists contributed only to radicalizing such groups in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.
- The picture that emerges in the field of **security** is a worrying one. The civil war in Tajikistan, drug- and arms-trafficking, violent crime in the business milieu, and widespread possession of firearms create a problematic background for efforts to raise civil conflict resolution to the level of a standard. The situation is particularly aggravated by the state of the security forces. Thanks to their corruption, their involvement in organized crime, and their particularist political agendas, they represent for many citizens more a source of insecurity than security. In all, the type and structure of problems in the security sector raise doubts as to whether any effective mechanisms would in fact be available to counter a violent escalation of conflicts due to persistent deterioration of the economic and political framework and the heightened conflicts of interest this generally entails.
- With regard to **external factors**, the countries of Central Asia are embedded in a regional and international setting that, while it poses no immediate threats, does involve a number of risk factors. Viewed in regional terms, the national borders, with their economic, social, and security implications, as well as disputes about water, constitute the central conflict potentials between the Central Asian republics. The security situation in Afghanistan also has immediate effects on Central Asia. Central Asia is also linked with Russia, where a large number of migrants, most of them illegal, are working, mostly to support their families at home. Another external factor with risk potential must be seen in commodity prices. Furthermore, attempts to exert external influence, including investments in Caspian oil, the presence of Western and Russian armed forces, and foreign aid, are not free of (possible) negative implications.

From the perspective of the three problem levels “structural conflict causes,” “constructive conflict-resolution capacity,” and “conflict-aggravating security risks,” the following crisis potentials must be noted for Central Asia on the whole:

- **Structural conflict causes:** Central Asia is marked by persistent and substantial social and economic uncertainties; for many people, widespread income poverty is a

new, difficult experience; income disparities have grown considerably; there are great regional disparities within the Central Asian countries; social infrastructure (health-care, education) has deteriorated; a large cohort of young people is faced with unemployment and lack of perspectives; fertile land is growing ever scarcer due to population growth and environmental degradation; poverty and environmental damage are causing more and more diseases; national borders have cut apart historically grown sociocultural and economic spaces; natural resources are distributed very unequally between the Central Asian republics; certain (regional, ethnic, religious, etc.) identity groups feel that they are systematically discriminated against or persecuted.

- **Constructive conflict-resolution capacity:** As conflict mediators, government institutions suffer from legitimacy deficits, corruption, and weaknesses in implementation capacities; the legal system enjoys very little confidence among the population; civil-society activities are in the main weakly developed and are at times massively obstructed; government intolerance toward and use of force against the opposition are provoking counterviolence; government denial of the existence of legitimate conflicts encourages conflict escalation; a Western aid (major investments, military, DC) experienced as overly regime-oriented may serve to undercut the mediator role of donors in conflict situations.
- **Conflict-aggravating security risks:** The intrasocietal threshold for the use of force is becoming lower; the state security forces spread uncertainty, not security; the civil war in Tajikistan has led to widespread circulation of arms there as well as in neighboring regions; organized crime (drug-, arms-trafficking) is undercutting the state monopoly on power and promoting the expansion of an illegal economy; acute crises in one country may spread rapidly to neighboring countries; dependence on exports of raw materials can lead to unforeseeable socioeconomic tensions; the high foreign debt of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is encumbering the population with additional burdens.

Looking at the situation country for country, however, we can make out some clear-cut differences:

Under the present conditions **Uzbekistan** harbors, over the long run, the greatest crisis potential in Central Asia. Here serious structural problems (an economic development stagnating at a low level in an setting urgently in need of reform, a large and extremely young population, a high population density in the habitable parts of the country, a lack of government sources of revenue that are secure over the long term) are exacerbated by a serious lack of cooperative conflict-resolution mechanisms and a repressive government policy that contributes to the escalation of violence. Its central geographical location links the country with almost all potential regional flash points in Central Asia, and in particular with the Ferghana Valley and Tajikistan.

Kazakhstan, with its lower poverty levels, lower population growth, and larger agricultural area, and its more stable economic situation, has the relatively lowest level of potential structural causes of conflict of all the Central Asian countries, even though the massive ecological challenges facing it are a factor to be reckoned with. The capacity of state and society to resolve conflicts constructively is not particularly marked, but the existence of a broader spectrum of civil society does, in principle, amount to a potential for cooperative efforts to find solutions to pressing problems. Kazakhstan is geographically further removed from some of the region's crisis-aggravating security risks than the other Central Asian countries, although an increasing openness to violence in society, the country's problematic security forces, and a high level of dependence on commodity exports must be seen as problem factors.

Kyrgyzstan is faced with major structural conflict potentials. In most parts of the country a slow economic upswing has as yet had hardly any positive effects on the mainly very poor population. No solution has yet been found for the country's high national debt. Tensions between the south and the north have increased, and the events of 1990 have clearly indicated that violent conflicts could break out along ethnic cleavages. The Ferghana Valley closely links Kyrgyzstan with its neighbors Tajikistan and Uzbekistan – and is associated with regional security problems like drug-trafficking. Despite the recent political disturbances, however, Kyrgyzstan does have the relatively best social preconditions for civil conflict resolution and participatory solutions of all the Central Asian countries. This could prove to be a decisive advantage in cases where the concern is to avert escalation of violent conflicts.

Since 1997, following the civil war, **Tajikistan** has developed more positively than many observers dared to hope. Even so, it remains Central Asia's poorest, most underdeveloped, and most traumatized country. Directly bordering on Afghanistan, it is also (still) faced with the greatest challenges to its external security. In no other country of the region is the state's monopoly on power so fragile. At the same time, though, no other Central Asian country has made greater progress on the road from violent conflict to civil conflict resolution. One risk is, however, that this situation might induce President Rahmonov to conclude that he might be able to gradually revise the compromises reached on the issue of power-sharing.

Turkmenistan is faced with structural problems similar to those in Uzbekistan, although, for the time being at least, the country is able to benefit from more or less secure export revenues that can be used to mitigate negative socioeconomic impacts, and Turkmenistan is under less population pressure than its neighbors. However, the president's authoritarian and arbitrary one-man rule constitutes a massive conflict factor *sui generis*. At the same time, there is no room whatever in Turkmenistan for the development of legitimate conflict-resolution capacities.

Looked at in **regional** terms, two crisis potentials can be identified as possibly virulent transboundary problems: on the one hand, widespread **water** scarcity, which, far from

being merely a possible source of cross-border distribution conflicts, is today already generating negative ecological effects on agriculture and the living conditions of people in degraded zones like the Aral Sea region; on the other hand, there is the geographic focus of the **Fergana Valley**. In its combination of structural, process-related, and conflict-aggravating crisis potentials, this area is more exposed than any other in Central Asia. What we find here, in narrow confines, is a dangerous combination consisting of the socio-economic and demographic pressure exerted by Uzbekistan, the status – in Kyrgyzstan's view – of a structurally weak, ethnically highly heterogeneous periphery that eludes central control, Tajikistan's poverty and security problems in a zone of border-crossing ecological degradation – and these problems tend to reinforce each other mutually.

German bilateral DC with the Central Asian republics

The “Central Asia strategy of the BMZ” of December 18, 2001, is the central conceptual basis of official German development cooperation with the countries of Central Asia. Crisis prevention is cited here prominently as the explicit objective and justification of a stepped-up German commitment. With reference to the political conditions given there, Turkmenistan is, at present, not included in this cooperation. The other countries are regarded as partner countries of German DC. Proceeding from an in-depth and critical look at the political and economic situation, the BMZ plans to support the countries of Central Asia “in their social and economic development toward democracy and market economy.” Beside the bilateral approach, a regional approach is being pursued to reach this goal. In all, the BMZ defines three fields of cooperation, each of which consists of several components:

- **Strengthening democratic structures and the rule of law:** legal advice programs; building civil society and strengthening democracy; decentralization; the media.
- **Supporting economic reforms and poverty reduction:** economic-policy advice; reform of the banking system; development of vocational training systems; promotion of business and trade and business startups; employment programs; food-for-work programs; health services.
- **Fostering cross-border cooperation:** anti-desertification activities; drinking-water supply; regional solutions for water problems.

Aside from official DC, there are plans to involve the German political foundations as well as private-sector organizations in the first field named in particular.

The BMZ's Central Asia strategy is additionally bolstered in political terms by the “German Government Central Asia strategy” of March 18, 2002. In essence, this document reaffirms the same strategic goals, referring to creation of democratic and transparent political structures as its basis. The document also cites as an aim “the development and

application of effective strategies and instruments of crisis prevention, peaceful conflict settlement and post-conflict peace-building.”

In the process of concentrating official German DC on selected priority areas, the BMZ reached agreement with the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan to define **economic reform and market systems development (WIRAM)** as the priority area of German DC in these countries. In the case of Tajikistan agreement was reached on including basic education as an additional, second priority. Another instrument is a regional support approach used to conduct cross-border measures, including measures aimed at promoting democracy.

In practice there are as yet only a very limited number of points of contact between the political objective of crisis prevention and peaceful conflict resolution in the Central Asia strategy and the WIRAM priority area. While WIRAM, as a relatively comprehensive priority area, sets the stage for a broad range of activities, a conceptual integration of the cross-cutting task of crisis prevention and conflict resolution into the WIRAM priority area has – independently of Central Asia – yet to be accomplished.

Viewed in terms of the three fields of cooperation identified in the BMZ’s Central Asia strategy, i.e. democracy / rule of law, economic reform / poverty reduction, and cross-border cooperation, the instruments involved may be said to show a marked imbalance. The by far largest share of funds is made available for one component of these three fields (economic reform), while the other components, which would be of particular significance from the point of view of crisis prevention, are considerably more poorly endowed. Thus far attempts have focused on giving more weight to the field of the promotion of democracy by supporting the activities of the German political foundations.

Crisis prevention and conflict resolution in the Central Asia strategies of other donors

The most important multilateral donors in Central Asia include the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the European Union, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The bilateral donors with major DC commitments in the region include in particular the US, Japan, Germany, Switzerland, and the UK. Among the multilateral donors, only the European Union and – in a qualified sense – UNDP have until now made crisis prevention and conflict resolution focal points of their strategies. Furthermore, as an organization specialized in crisis prevention, the OSCE is playing an important role in Central Asia. The development banks are at best only indirectly relevant here. The picture is different when we look at the bilateral donors. The US, Switzerland, and the UK have made crisis prevention and conflict resolution an essential element of their strategies for cooperation with the Central Asian republics. Only Japan has until now lagged behind in this regard.

Conclusions and recommendations

The present analysis of the conflict and crisis potentials in Central Asia has made it clear that the region is faced with substantial risks and is in need of measures with crisis-prevention effects. The strategies of the German Government and the BMZ take this need into account. At the instrumental level, however, German DC has difficulties in translating the highly comprehensive aspirations expressed in its political strategies into concrete measures. The present study assumes that the priorities decided on will not be under consideration over the medium term and therefore proposes focusing on three points to bolster the objective of crisis prevention and conflict resolution:

Use of the instruments of crisis prevention and conflict resolution: The present DC portfolio for the region should be subjected to a conflict impact analysis. As a complementary measure, it would be helpful to conduct an analysis of existing conflicts and crisis potentials involving the most important German DC organizations; this should also be continued on a regular basis. A well-founded decision on the question of “working in, on, or around conflict” could also be made on this basis. The selection of new measures should, finally, also be based on conflict-related impact analyses. This analysis process would have to be accompanied by targeted capacity-building measures on crisis prevention and conflict resolution for the relevant DC staff both on the ground and in Germany.

Design of WIRAM: Within the WIRAM priority area, more efforts could be undertaken to tackle “more political” issues bound up with the framework conditions for economic reform. Projects with a marked component in rural areas and a high level of participation by the local population should be strengthened and enlarged. In regions which are marked by high levels of tension and in which an illegal economy has become established (trafficking in drugs, arms), measures with a high employment effect could contribute to “recivilizing” the economy. The pending formulation of the priority strategy for the Central Asian republics should reflect a focus of this kind within the overall priority area.

Design of the regional approach: In the long-term, funds should be shifted from the bilateral portfolios to the regional approach in order to be able to support new measures in the field of promotion of democracy that have relevance for crisis prevention. More efforts should be undertaken to gain a stronger involvement of private-sector organizations in addition to the German political foundations; the former could, for their part, cooperate with nonstate partners on the ground. Special attention should be accorded to the importance of informal rules and networks in the societies in transition in Central Asia. Measures in this area could contribute considerably to gaining a better understanding of conflict situations and would, in connection with conflict-related impact analyses, have positive repercussions on other projects as well. Efforts to implement regionally conceived measures across countries should not be reduced – despite foreseeable resistance. Efforts should also be made to harness the existing local potentials of the sciences as an important integrative force in the region.

Above and beyond these points of departure, the BMZ should seek more coordination with other donors on approaches in Central Asia. Efforts aimed at joint crisis analysis could represent a first step toward defining priorities and the broad guidelines needed for a division of labor. A more marked presence of the BMZ in partner countries would be important here.

As far as individual countries are concerned, Uzbekistan is, in the long run, the region's most important country. But in view of the fact that the political framework there severely restricts any attempts to influence circumstances on the ground, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan also have an important role to play for development cooperation in Central Asia. A long-term stabilization of the situation in these two countries neighboring on Uzbekistan – and in particular in the Ferghana Valley – would be an important contribution to preventing social or political disturbances from spreading to the overall region.

Introduction

Following the 9/11/2001 terror attacks in the US and the ensuing war to topple the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Central Asia moved into the focus of the worldwide efforts aimed at crisis prevention and the fight against terrorism. The region was no longer perceived merely as the faraway periphery of the crumbled Soviet empire and instead came to be seen as a geographic intersection between East and West, between religious fundamentalism and secular world, and at the same time as a poorhouse among the post-socialist countries in transition and as a potential source of instability. This foregrounded the question as to what development policy and, concretely, development cooperation (DC) can contribute to stabilizing Central Asia.

The present study addresses this question from the perspective of German development cooperation. The study came about in the framework of a research project on terrorism prevention conducted at the German Development Institute (GDI) in 2002/2003 and commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The study centers on the question of the **strategic orientation of German development cooperation in Central Asia under the aspect of crisis prevention and conflict resolution**. In conceptual terms, it thus draws on the discussion in development policy on crisis prevention and conflict resolution and applies it to the region of Central Asia.

Aside from an evaluation of documents and scholarly literature, the study is based on interviews which the author conducted at the relevant German institutions as well as in the course of two exploratory trips to **Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan** in November/December 2002 and **Tajikistan** in March 2003. A workshop conducted in Bonn in early July 2003 with representatives of German governmental and nongovernmental DC institutions set the stage for a broad exchange of views and information on some of the important results of the research project. The author wishes to take this opportunity to extend his thanks to all of his interview partners at home and abroad for their cooperation and for the frankness they showed in speaking with him. The institutions visited in this connection are listed in the Annex.

The political framework given in **Turkmenistan** made it impossible to include the country in the study in the same way as the other countries of the region. Indeed, the BMZ is at present, and for the same reason, not engaged in a bilateral development dialogue with the Turkmen government. Most other bilateral and multilateral donors have likewise either indefinitely suspended projects in Turkmenistan or are operating a conditionalized minimum program.

1 Here, as in what follows, the term Central Asia refers to the five former Soviet republics Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

The set of analytical instruments on which the present study is based was developed and established in recent years in the framework of a comprehensive debate on crisis prevention and conflict resolution in development cooperation. **Chapter 1** sums up only the most important findings of this discussion, specifies some of the **objectives and principles** of crisis-prevention-oriented DC derived from the discussion and presents some of the **analysis categories** used for crisis potentials, and lists a number of **fields of action and points of departure** for crisis prevention in development cooperation.

Chapters 2 and 3 are devoted to the presentation and analysis of crisis potentials in Central Asia. **Chapter 2** discusses some of the important **political, socioeconomic, and socio-cultural framework conditions** in the region and the individual countries concerned. **Chapter 3** takes a systematic look at **individual conflict categories**. The results of this conflict analysis are summed up in an overview at the end of Chapter 3.

Chapters 4 and 5 are concerned with donor strategies in Central Asia. **Chapter 4** presents the **principles, instruments, and priorities of German DC** in the countries of Central Asia and the region as a whole and draws an interim balance concerning crisis prevention and conflict resolution. **Chapter 5** looks into the **strategies of other** – multilateral and bilateral – **donors** with a view to assessing the significance the latter attach to crisis prevention and conflict resolution.

Proceeding from here, **Chapter 6 derives some conclusions and recommendations** for German DC.

1 Crisis prevention and conflict resolution as tasks of development cooperation

1.1 The relevance of crisis prevention and conflict resolution

In the past ten years the issue of crisis prevention and conflict resolution has become firmly entrenched as an element of the debate on development policy. Since the end of the East-West confrontation war and armed conflict² in all parts of the world have stepped out of the shadow of the Cold War. As a rule destructive impacts of violent conflict are an immense burden for the countries affected. In the great majority of cases the **principal victims of armed conflicts are the civilian population**. The humanitarian dimension of violent conflicts is aggravated by the long-term impacts of such conflicts on the develop-

2 The term “armed conflict” refers to violent strife that remains below the threshold of war. See AKUF (2001).

ment of the societies affected. **Such conflicts reverse development successes, thwart development chances**, deepen poverty, and encourage disregard of human rights.

Against this background UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 1999 called on the international community to move “from a culture of reaction to a **culture of prevention**.”³ In doing so, he was picking up on a topic initiated in 1992 by his predecessor Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his “Agenda for Peace.”⁴ For its part, the German government in 2000 elaborated a comprehensive strategy on “Crisis Prevention and Conflict Resolution,” which assigned special significance to this field of action as an interministerial task.⁵ In the “Program of Action 2015” adopted one year later, the German government formulates its contribution toward the goal of halving extreme poverty worldwide, addressing the issue of support for crisis prevention and peaceful conflict resolution as one of 10 “priority areas for action” in the field of poverty reduction.⁶

The September 11 terror attacks in the US have imparted a new urgency to the debate on crisis prevention and civil conflict resolution. This is not to say that the rationale for a policy of prevention has changed. Indeed, the possible points of departure had already been identified prior to these events. But since then the Western industrialized countries have seen themselves confronted with the necessity to redefine the conditions for peace and security. The terror attacks in the US have made plain how closely intertwined the immediate security of the rich industrialized nations is even with violent regional conflicts far removed from them. Terrorist groups speculate that they will be able to attract young people from crisis regions who see themselves cheated of their life perspectives by decade-long conflicts and the destruction of livelihoods they entail. Persistent armed conflicts promote the emergence of war economies, lead to a culture marked by openness to violence, and create potential areas of retreat in so-called failing states, i.e. in countries in which governmental authorities have lost control over substantial parts of their national territory. Each of these factors enlarges the scopes of action of terrorist movements.

Crisis prevention and conflict resolution are for these reasons not only a task of humanitarian and development policy, they also, and at the same time, have a security-related aim. In the competition between ministries for ever scarcer budget resources, this is an important additional argument in favor of strengthening policies geared to crisis prevention. In instrumental terms, it is **development policy that has an important role to play in working toward effective prevention over the long term**. This is one of the implications of the German government’s comprehensive strategy on “Crisis Prevention and Conflict Preven-

3 Annan (1999).

4 Boutros-Ghali (1992).

5 BMZ (2000).

6 BMZ (2001a, 36–39).

tion,”⁷ and it has found practical expression, among other places, in the substantial share of resources from the German “Anti-Terror Package” allocated to the BMZ .

1.2 Definition and elucidation of the concepts: crisis prevention and conflict resolution

In a general sense, crisis prevention refers to the avoidance of major violent conflicts that threaten escalate and destabilize entire societies or significant parts of them. In other words, crisis prevention can and should not seek to avert any and every potential social conflict. Conflicts between social groups that assume the form of differences in interests and opinions, indeed even conflicts of a fundamental nature, will occur in every society. Nor can conflicts of interest between states always be avoided. Especially in times of rapid social change and social development, like those typical of developing countries and nations in transition, conflicts are more than likely to occur. But steered into constructive channels, such conflicts are an important condition needed to impart impulses to the political decision-making process that may be of use in bringing about changes of course that have become necessary.

Crisis prevention is therefore focused on conflicts that have the potential to escalate into collective violent strife, down to and including war. The primary concern is to prevent violence, not to avoid conflicts per se.⁸ It is important to distinguish two approaches here: on the one hand, long-term crisis-prevention measures aimed at the deeper causes of potentially violent conflicts, such as growing economic disparities or political oppression; on the other hand, promotion of forms of civil conflict prevention geared to strengthening the ability of societies to settle existing conflicts constructively, i.e. without recourse to destructive means, and/or to avoid any violent escalation of conflicts in critical situations.⁹ With a view to underlining the fact that preventive policy must start out by addressing, over the long term, the **root structural causes** of social conflicts and, over the short term, the **modes** in which such conflicts are **acted out**, the field of action concerned here has come to be known as “*crisis prevention and conflict resolution*” (also, “crisis prevention and *civil* conflict resolution”).¹⁰

7 BMZ (2000, Section 1.6).

8 While the term commonly used in the English-language literature – including the OECD / DAC Guidelines – is “conflict prevention”, it is as a rule pointed out that what is meant is the prevention of *violent* conflicts. See OECD / DAC (2001, 22 and 86)

9 See Klingebiel (2001, 1); Mutz (2002, 17).

10 Other terminological distinctions are also to be found in the relevant literature, although they, too, are keyed to the same state of affairs: “causative,” “cause-oriented,” or “structure-oriented” crisis prevention on the one hand; “operational,” “actor-oriented,” or “process-oriented” crisis prevention on the other. See Mutz (2002, 31); Fahrenhorst / Musto (2002, 171).

1.3 Crisis prevention and conflict resolution in development cooperation: objectives and principles

The German government's comprehensive strategy on "Crisis Prevention and Conflict Resolution" assigns to development policy the function: "to help prevent and **reduce the structural causes** of conflicts in affected countries by improving economic, social, ecological, and political conditions, and to **promote mechanisms for nonviolent conflict resolution.**"¹¹ The BMZ has acted on this demand by, among other things, making "peace development and conflict prevention" into one of its at present ten priorities of bilateral development cooperation and at the same time by establishing the issue complex as a cross-cutting task of development policy as a whole.¹²

Effective prevention policy is not only in need of a negative paradigm – prevention of war and violent conflict – it also needs a realistic and at the same time generalizable positive notion of peace, one to which options for action and concrete measures can be oriented. The terms "**structural stability**" and "**human security**" were introduced into the development debate to describe an objective of this kind.¹³ While the concept of "human security" focuses on the individual's interest in protection against existential risks such as violence and illness, but also against ecological disasters and economic collapse, the term "structural stability" refers to the social and institutional level. What is meant here is a package of mutually reinforcing goals: social peace, acknowledgement of human rights and the rule of law, social and economic development. A major role in the achievement of these goals is played by dynamic and representative political institutions that are capable of shaping processes of change and settling conflicts by peaceful means.¹⁴

The concept of structural stability may raise some questions to the extent that authoritarian regimes are often inclined to reinterpret the term stability in the light of their own security needs, raising it to their paramount objective of government and misusing it to legitimize human rights violations and political oppression.¹⁵ This is why it is important for a devel-

11 BMZ (2000, Section 1.6). Emphasis, here as below, added by the author.

12 As early as 1997 the BMZ for the first time expressly specified crisis prevention as a goal "to be incorporated in existing strategies and procedures as well as in current and planned development projects" (BMZ 1997, 10).

13 To cite an example: the DAC Guidelines "Helping Prevent Violent Conflict" (OECD / DAC 2001, 17 and 19). See also Leonhardt (2000, 19).

14 OECD / DAC (2001, 17).

15 In its essence, though, the term structural stability is refers to a *systemic* notion of stability. What this means is precisely not immutability and stasis but the permanent "reproductive capacity" of the social system, and this presupposes a permanent adaptability on the part of all the institutions involved. Immutability, on the other hand, is a source of instability. For an in-depth discussion of the strategy, see Mehler (2002), Klingebiel (2002).

opment policy geared to the goal of “structural stability” to avoid any misunderstandings over the democratic and participatory substance of the goal envisioned. Not every system of government and every political regime is worth preserving per se. Indeed, in many countries structural stability is conceivable only as the outcome of a comprehensive reform process that replaces existing structures of power and dominance with other structures oriented to social balance and political participation. The goal of structural stability may therefore also call for promotion of precisely those forces that are working for change – assuming of course that they are doing so by nonviolent, peaceful means.

Crisis prevention and conflict resolution are not only relevant for measures that are implemented specifically for the purpose. Rather, conflict-sensitive development cooperation is based on the principle that any form of external assistance can influence conflict situations and change the course of conflicts. Such impacts are often unintended. This can entail positive, but also negative, consequences. The central concern of the “**Do no harm**” principle is to avoid the latter. Originally a lesson drawn from negative experiences made in the field of humanitarian aid, “Do no harm” is an important principle for any external intervention under crisis conditions. This calls on the one hand for complex impact assessment (**conflict-related impact analysis**), and on the other hand it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the processes involved in promoting development are just as important as the results, and that the perception of these processes by the actors concerned is no less important than the facts themselves.¹⁶

At the same time, it must be recognized that development cooperation geared to crisis prevention not only offers chances to positively influence the course of events but also that the **impacts** of such development cooperation are **inevitably limited**. External influence can help to set conflict-alleviating processes in motion and at the same time be used to mediate in conflict situations. But the decisive factors are the willingness and the resolve of the actors involved on the ground to accept a peaceful solution to existing conflicts and/or to eliminate the root causes of such conflicts. As in all of development cooperation, **local ownership** is essential.¹⁷ Accordingly, the expectations placed in the set of instruments of crisis prevention and conflict resolution have no choice but to remain realistic and modest in outlook.

Every development strategy for regions with significant crisis potentials should be preceded by a basic decision on whether and how development cooperation can and should immediately influence a given conflict constellation. Viewed in ideal-typical terms, the choice involved here is to work “**in, on, or around conflict**” - i.e. to make the prevention or containment of crises the immediate object of the strategy (*on* conflict); or to seek, without losing sight of the connection between aid programs and conflict potentials, to

16 On this and the following paragraphs, see OECD / DAC (2001, 23–28).

17 See Anderson / Spelten (2000, 11): “There is no ’imported peace.’“

minimize the risks inherent in aid measures (*in* conflict); or, finally, merely to attempt to immunize measures against negative effects of conflicts (*around* conflict).¹⁸ Any attempt to “work around conflicts” in crisis regions, putting on as it were a mien of neutrality, is, however, as a rule bound to fail. Proceeding on the principle that in acute or potential conflict situations every form of external aid is conflict-relevant, a conflict-sensitive development cooperation would thus be restricted to the first two options. Either approach may be legitimate. Yet a deliberate choice is the only real way to avoid false expectations and unintended negative impacts. Here, too, it is essential to subject development cooperation measures in potential crisis regions, in advance, to targeted conflict-related impact analyses.

External crisis prevention will only have chances of success if it uses its instruments to take up, to strengthen, and, wherever called for, to supplement **locally existing approaches and capacities**, but without substituting for or superimposing itself on them. The essential point here is to seek, and to develop, dialogue with all of the actors involved. Support for free media and provision of independent dialogue forums are important instruments here. The important role that women may play in violent conflicts as “stakeholders” of peace is a factor that should be borne in mind in this connection; for most combatants in armed conflicts are men, while women are disproportionately affected by the suffering experienced by the civilian population.

To be successful, crisis-prevention-oriented development cooperation must be embedded in a **coherent overall political strategy**. This requires coordination between the ministries of donor countries as well as a coordinated approach involving as many bilateral and multilateral donor institutions as possible in a crisis region. A coordinated approach that brings together the strengths of different donor countries and various instruments to form something on the order of a comprehensive crisis-prevention strategy is most likely to prove able to contribute to preserving peace and bringing about structural stability and security for the people concerned.

1.4 Root causes of conflict, and crisis indicators

Effective crisis prevention presupposes that potential conflict causes are known as such and perceived at an early stage. This condition is anything but trivial, for the root causes and triggers of crisis-like developments are as a rule complex. There is no such thing – and never will be – as a certain forecast of the conditions under which a conflict will escalate into a crisis. Even though every crisis has its genesis, and seldom comes as a surprise for the professional observer, it is simply not possible to formulate a catalogue of unerring indicators that could be used to reliably predict the emergence of a manifest crisis.¹⁹

18 DFID (2002, 22).

19 See Mutz (2002, 20f).

On the other hand, it is entirely possible to formulate *plausible hypotheses* concerning the circumstances that are particularly conducive to the emergence and escalation of violent conflicts. Factors that have proven particularly conducive to conflict include, for instance, growing socioeconomic inequalities, lack of chances for political participation, fragile governmental and insufficient civil-society structures, political violence and repression, or competition for scarce resources. Ethnic, religious, or cultural cleavages can serve to exacerbate conflict situations; once established, “markets of violence” can contribute to perpetuating violent conflicts.²⁰

A recently published World Bank study on the causes and consequences of violent intra-state conflicts points especially to economic causes as important risk factors for societies.²¹ According to the study, countries that are faced with an economic downturn, are dependent on exports of raw materials, and have low but highly unevenly distributed per capita incomes are particularly vulnerable to civil war. On the other hand, one striking fact here is that, for instance, marked ethnic or religious diversity per se does not in any way mean an above-average risk for a given society.

The conflict analysis undertaken in the present study on Central Asia is oriented to a catalogue of crisis indicators proposed by Manuela Leonhardt in an analysis of the EU’s cooperation with the ACP countries and consisting of factors from the four fields of analysis: governance, economy, sociocultural factors, and security.²² The analysis furthermore includes a fifth category, “external factors,” which contains both direct interventions and indirect effects (see Box 1).²³

These indicators, which will be used in what follows to analyze conflict potentials, can at the same time be assigned to three problem levels that are oriented to the points of departure required for crisis-prevention-oriented policy: (a) **structural causes of conflict**, (b) the **capacity** of a society to engage in **constructive conflict resolution**, and (c) conflict-aggravating **security risks**. In other words, the analysis includes both long-term, structurally oriented aspects and short- and medium-term, process-oriented aspects of crisis prevention as well as factors that tend to aggravate crises and prolong conflicts.

20 See Klingebiel (2001).

21 Collier et al. (2003, esp. 3–4)

22 Leonhardt (2000, 19–27).

23 Leonhardt subsumes external factors under the category ‘governance’, which seems rather arbitrary in view of the fact that individual manifestations of this factor (e.g. problematic trade relations or capital exodus) may very well be of an economic nature. It would therefore appear reasonable to me to form a new, separate category. See also the set of instruments used for Tension and Conflict Impact Assessment (TCIA) in Klingebiel et al. (2000).

<p>Box 1: Fields of conflict analysis, and individual crisis indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Governance</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Government legitimacy and good governance ➔ Pluralism and participation ➔ Conflict-resolution mechanisms • <i>Economy</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Problems in coming to terms with transformation and rapid change ➔ Growing socioeconomic disparities ➔ Competition for natural resources • <i>Sociocultural factors</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Political instrumentalization of cultural and other differences • <i>Security</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Legacy of violence ➔ Arms proliferation and irregular armed units ➔ Uncontrolled state security forces • <i>External factors</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Negative effects of external intervention ➔ Negative effects of the regional/international setting
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1.5 Fields of action and points of departure for crisis prevention in development cooperation

Crisis prevention and conflict resolution in DC are keyed above all to intrasocietal causes of conflict. This is not only a result of the division of labor between development policy and “classic” foreign policy, under which the sphere of official diplomacy is reserved for the latter. Concentration on intrasocietal tensions is also bound up with the perception that most wars since 1945 have been intrastate, not international, in nature. In 2001, for instance, this was the case for 28 of 31 wars throughout the world.²⁴ Even so, external influences on intrastate conflicts are a factor that cannot be denied. Many civil wars are closely linked with political tensions or interests in neighboring countries, and effective conflict regulation and durable crisis prevention are in any case not to be had without inclusion of regional actors outside the countries immediately affected. This state of affairs must be accorded consideration in strategies of prevention-oriented development policy.

Based on the root causes of conflicts and the paradigm of “structural stability” and “human security,” we can specify a number of fields of action in which development cooperation

24 AKUF (2002).

can contribute to preventing crises. The DAC Guidelines, which list seven points of departure, provide a useful pattern to start out with. They will be explained briefly in what follows:²⁵

- **Mainstreaming crisis prevention and conflict resolution as a long-term cross-cutting task:** The aim should be to integrate a perspective of crisis prevention and conflict sensitivity into development cooperation as a whole. This implies two central tasks: to gain a **deepened general understanding of conflicts** and the way they are influenced by external aid; and to integrate **conflict analyses, risk assessments, and conflict-related impact analyses** as standard components of the planning and implementation of measures. The development of country strategies in particular should meet this demand. Only a strategy based on a realistic conflict analysis can help to prevent negative impacts of external influence and foster peaceful conflict-resolution mechanisms. Two important points of departure for the practice of development cooperation are therefore adequate **staff qualification** (training and advanced training of internal and external staff as well as counterpart staff, with the aim of conflict sensitization) and functioning mechanisms for a regular and operational **communication** and secure **processing of crisis-relevant information** as contributions to early warning. One important consideration in this context is the presence on the ground of German DC in partner countries, in that a more pronounced presence on the ground can help to abbreviate the paths between information (early warning) and reaction (early response) and facilitate the coordination with other donors essential to gaining a measure of effective influence.
- **Security as a basis for development:** Security of persons, property, and public goods, and protection of human rights are fundamental preconditions for sustainable development and poverty reduction. Development cooperation should aim to help create the conditions needed to enable government institutions to guarantee security in such a way as to foreground, not the self-interests of the security sector or the machinery of state, but people's need for protection from existential threats. To cite an example, targeted **security-sector reforms** and safeguards to ensure civil government **control over security forces** are highly important factors in connection with efforts aimed at "better governance." Encouragement of open discussion processes in a society about existing security needs and efforts aimed at strengthening relevant analysis capacities in governmental and civil-society institutions can contribute to developing a security culture geared to the needs of people. In post-war situations **demobilization** and reintegration of former combatants call for high levels of attention, as do the closely related tasks of landmine clearance and **light-weapons control**. Here development cooperation can as a rule provide no more than a partial contribution alongside those made by other policy fields on the donor side (internal-

25 OECD / DAC (2001, 31–74).

affairs, defense policy). Policy coherence and coordination with other donors are for this reason all the more important in this sensitive field.

- **Supporting regional cooperation:** Even though the great majority of violent conflicts take place within states, in many cases there is also an important regional dimension in play. This applies for the origins, interests, or resources of conflict parties, and this in turn also means that strategies of peacekeeping, crisis resolution, and prevention also have to bear the regional dimension in mind. Regional stability is an important contribution to durable intrasocietal peace. Crisis factors that have inherent transboundary impacts – we need think here only of expulsion, ecological degradation, or the spread of infectious diseases – can in any case only be dealt effectively with on the basis of regional approaches. Development cooperation must therefore **accord proper attention to the regional dimension of conflicts and crises** and **support regional cooperation** in its efforts aimed at crisis prevention. Besides support for official cooperation of the kind engaged in by organizations dedicated to regional economic or security integration, this also includes efforts to strengthen cross-border contacts at the level of civil society, business, and science and culture. External actors must, however, closely observe whether the concrete conditions given permit any helpful regional cooperation in the first place. To cite an example, regional organizations dominated by one state or unable to reach agreement on a joint approach due to a situation of competition between important member countries are unlikely to prove effective as mediators between conflict parties.²⁶
- **Promoting peace processes, justice, and reconciliation:** Active promotion of peace processes is a task central to preventing the emergence of new crises and any relapse into violence. Development cooperation can help create incentives that make it more attractive for all conflict parties to seek nonviolent solutions than to revert to violence. **Support for local capacities and initiatives** dedicated to finding civil settlements of local conflicts is a factor essential to securing peace on a broad social basis. In this sense civil-society organizations committed to reconciliation and nonviolent cooperation are also important target groups for external assistance. Striking the right balance between justice and reconciliation is one of the most difficult, and at the same time most important, tasks of every peace process, one that can, in the end, be taken on only by the conflict parties themselves. Development cooperation can, however, provide important impulses by furnishing tools, offering dialogue forums, and bringing the experiences made by other societies into the peace process. Reconciliation in the face of past injustice will have better chances, the more visibly the present is marked by the experience of justice. This is the reason why **efforts to strengthen democratization and suitable participatory structures** are an element central to the success of any peace process.

26 See Carnegie Commission (1997, 147).

- **Building peace partnerships:** External donors should be prepared to enter into a **long-term engagement in the field of peace development** both with state and non-state actors in crisis regions and among one another. As far as state partners are concerned, resolute and swift assistance is needed precisely in areas where the state is “weak,” no longer able to fulfill its essential protective functions, and a country may therefore be faced with the threat of drifting into violent conflict. In the case of repressive regimes, however, the question of a proper stance is a difficult one to answer. Here, from case to case, it will be necessary to come to balanced decisions between the need to keep open channels of influence and the need to protect and enforce the interests of repressed population segments. Credible partnerships with civil-society organizations are for this reason an important complementary activity. To the extent that such partnerships represent a strong and organized civil society, they may be important contact partners in deciding whether to conditionalize development cooperation even against the will of the government concerned. Experience does, however, also show that complete isolation of a regime can seldom be seen as a constructive contribution to conflict deescalation. This is one more reason why it is highly important to work for a **coordinated strategy involving bilateral and multilateral donor institutions**.
- **Working together with the private business sector:** Most businesses in crisis regions have a vital interest in peace and stability. A development cooperation capable of winning, and activating, the **private business sector as a stakeholder of civil conflict resolution** in a given society is in possession of a good chance to appreciably broaden the effective base of its conflict-prevention work. With the jobs, regularly paid wages and salaries, and the basic social infrastructure they provide, large companies can make important contributions to the social stability and quality of life in crisis regions. External support can serve to tie pro-peace activities of individual private businesses, including investments in social or health-related projects or educational measures, into larger contexts. At the same time, companies should be sensitized for possible conflict-aggravating impacts stemming from their business activities. Development cooperation can support government institutions in their efforts to establish and enforce social and ecological standards. Another important contribution to supporting a culture of civil conflict resolution may be seen in **forums that include domestic and foreign businesses, the state sector, and civil society** and provide all of the parties concerned with an opportunity to reach agreement on principles of mutual engagement.
- **Working to counter negative economic forces:** Crisis prevention must at the same time come to terms with the problem that wars and violent conflicts are often sustained by strong economic interests and increasingly defined by these interests, the longer an armed conflict lasts. Arms-trafficking, exploitation of and illegal trade in resources in the shadow of violent conflicts, “privatized” state institutions, protection provided by private “security firms” in cases in which the state is no longer able to

provide such protection – these are some of the manifestations of a **political economy of violence**. It is therefore essential to elaborate a clear analysis of the economic background of conflicts and the resulting interest situations. This is also important to avoid situations in which the activities of external donors may unintentionally promote actors who are not interested in civil conflict resolution. Furthermore, in helping to establish **anti-corruption** standards development cooperation can also play a role in bringing about more **transparency** in government institutions. Here, too, an important factor is coordination between donors and coherence between various policy-making ministries and agencies as a means, for instance, of inducing multinational corporations to refrain from any involvement in the business of violent conflict.

When, where, and in what way these points of departure can be put to reasonable use depends, among other things, on which phase of the conflict cycle a crisis region is in at a given point of time. In principle, we can distinguish three conflict phases:²⁷

- **The phase of emergence and escalation:** The concern in this phase is to address the root causes, to establish conflict-regulation mechanisms, and to avert violence.
- **The phase in which a violent conflict is played out:** Here the focus is on containment and termination of violence. The scopes of action open to development cooperation are accordingly often restricted in this phase. Increasingly, however, it is coming to be realized that even the humanitarian aid usually provided in this phase must be more closely dovetailed with development-policy goals.
- **The phase of de-escalation and consolidation:** The central tasks here are to cope with the conflict aftermath and to engage in efforts aimed at reconciliation and prevention of any new escalation of violence.

Apart from this highly simplified scheme of phases, which is not meant to conceal the fact that developments on the ground may take a precipitous course, reversals are entirely possible, and different regional situations may often be encountered in one and the same country at the same point of time, a concrete decision on suitable points of departure and approaches will depend on both the given conflict situation and the setting in which development cooperation is positioned.

27 Klingebiel (2001, 2).

2 Political, socioeconomic, and sociocultural framework conditions in the Central Asian countries in transition

2.1 The overall region

The Soviet legacy

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in late 1991 constitutes the key reference point for the recent political, economic, and social development of all five Central Asian republics. Only when, after the attempted coup in Moscow in August 1991, a renewal of the Soviet state had proven unviable did the political elites of the Central Asian Union republics set themselves the goal of “independence” as a new national idea. Once the Soviet ideology had disintegrated, they sought in this way to legitimize themselves as the rulers of the newly emerged states – with their overall population of some 57 million people.

The Soviet legacy has left deep traces in all five Central Asian republics. Even today this legacy continues to shape their politics, economies, societies, and cultures and represents a rallying point even where divisive factors have long begun to make themselves felt and a policy of conscious delineation is the order of the day. This distinguishes the Newly Independent States from their Asian neighbors to the east and south of the territories that once made up the Soviet Union. It must, however, be noted that the processes of “assimilation” between the post-Soviet countries and their neighbors are progressing, albeit at an uneven pace. In Tajikistan in particular the 1992-1997 civil war played a major role in accelerating the dissolution of the structural patterns typical of the Soviet Union²⁸ and in many respects brought the country closer to Afghanistan (weak central authority, particularisms based on regional clan structures, links to militant Islamist groups, area of retreat for Afghan anti-Taliban fighters). The national language, closely related to Persian, also constitutes a barrier vis-à-vis the Turkic languages spoken by Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, and Kazakhs, a barrier, though, that has until now been overcome with the help of Russian, the region’s lingua franca.

Internal situation

Eleven years after independence, all five republics are formally democracies, though in fact **the political regimes are dominated by more or less authoritarian ruling elites** that had already had active leadership positions under the Soviet system and which are adept at shielding themselves from competition and show little interest in accepting political change. In Tajikistan power struggles between rival elites led to a civil war in 1992 that

28 The civil war itself in turn, as well as the geographically small-scale, clan-related structure which it was to take on, is a good illustration of the thesis that of all the Central Asian republics, Tajikistan may have been the one least permeated by the Soviet system.

was ended only in 1997 with the aid of outside mediation. In recent years, intensified by the terror attacks in the US, **repression against opposition and media** has grown throughout the region, often under the pretext of combating Islamist and terrorist activities. In its World Report 2003, Human Rights Watch speaks of a “deepening **human rights crisis** in Central Asia.”²⁹

Economic development

In economic terms, the Central Asian countries, like other former Soviet republics, went through a **severe crisis in the first half of the 1990s** that, depending on the country concerned, led to accumulated GDP contractions on the order of 20 to 60 %. It must be noted here that the starting situation faced by these countries was worse than that in the greater part of the rest of the Soviet Union. In 1990 Kazakhstan had a per capita GDP 8 % below the Soviet average, the figure for the other four republics ranged between 30 and 50 %.³⁰ Together with Azerbaijan, the latter had the lowest per capita incomes recorded in the Soviet Union.³¹ Transfers from the Union budget long served as an important source of income in the region. The classic problems bound up with post-socialist economic transformation in Central Asia were thus exacerbated by the “burdens of imposed independence.”³² The **disintegration of the Soviet economic area** left in its wake a number of economies that were in no way geared to political independence:³³

- Trade and the movement of goods were faced with entirely new boundaries that now served to interrupt the region’s elementary economic relations.
- Suppliers were cut off from producers, as were producers from their markets. Yet since none of the Central Asian republics has open access to the sea, and all important transportation links were traditionally aligned to Russia, the countries of the region have found it more than difficult to develop new trade relations.
- In the Central Asian republics the Soviet “division of labor” led to a forced development of certain specific economic sectors (above all cotton, natural resources industry), which left these countries, now become independent, with economic structures that were in part marked by very low levels of diversification.
- Direct and indirect subsidies for private households, public budgets, and enterprises, an important element of the Soviet system, diminished to a trickle, even though after

29 Human Rights Watch (2003, 282).

30 Havlik / Vertlib (1996, 147).

31 Pomfret (1999, 395). For more in-depth information on the issue of poverty Central Asian, see Müller (2003, Chapter 4).

32 See Mangott (ed.) (1996).

33 Linn (2002).

independence Russia initially made substantial transfers to the region until the ruble area was gradually dissolved in the course of 1993.

- Access to water and energy resources was no longer a matter to be taken for granted. Only some of these countries have mineral oil and natural gas resources, while others have water resources. The old allocation procedures were no longer in effect, new ones had not yet been developed. Ad hoc arrangements replaced fixed agreements and constituted an obstacle to long-term planning.
- Once the Soviet state machinery had broken down, new, functioning administrative structures had to be created.
- A large share of the Russian-descended population left the region, a development which cost it many well-trained workers and experts.

Some much-discussed ideas on creation of a new common Central Asian economic area have until now failed, mainly for lack of mutual trust and because of differences over approaches to economic transformation policies. Numerous agreements on a coordinated reform policy in the framework of the CIS that were concluded between 1992 and 1994 have not been put into practice.³⁴ Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan have in the meantime joined Russia and Belarus in the “Eurasian Economic Community” (EAEC, formerly a customs union), which provides in principle for free trade among member states. In fact, however, this agreement, too, is being undercut, in part by a temporary reintroduction of official customs tariffs (following the Russia crisis), in part by corrupt customs officials, in part by high-handed local authorities.³⁵

It was **only in 1996** that a gradual **economic recovery** got underway in Central Asia. At the beginning of the new decade Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, the slowest reformers, had reached approximately the GDP figures they had recorded in 1989 (2001: 105 % and 96 %, respectively), while Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, Central Asia’s most extensively reformed economies, remained far removed from these figures (84 % and 71 %, respectively), and Tajikistan, the region’s poorest country in absolute terms, is, in addition, still grappling with the consequences of the civil war (56 %).³⁶ The relatively better record posted by Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan is generally attributed to two causes: For one thing, both countries are still faced with the need to implement substantial structural adjustment measures that have already largely been adopted in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. For another, the economic statistics made public by Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan must be read with some caution. For both countries, international financial institutions have expressed reser-

34 Havlik / Vertlib (1996, 149).

35 EBRD (2002b).

36 EBRD (2002a).

vations concerning the reliability of the data that have been made available.³⁷ It is, however, plausible to assume that the 1998 Russia crisis hit Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, which are more closely intertwined with the Russian market, harder than the other countries of the region.

Based on the figures for 2000, the World Bank currently rates **three of the Central Asian republics** – Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan – as low-income countries with annual per capita incomes below US \$ 755. According to this classification, Tajikistan is even one of the world's 11 lowest (per capita) income countries. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, the countries of the region best endowed with natural resources, are categorized as lower-middle income countries.³⁸

Distribution of power between the Central Asian republics

Demographically, Uzbekistan (with a population of some 25 million) **and Kazakhstan** (some 15 million) are **the heavyweights** in Central Asia. Both countries are vying for the leadership role in the region and encounter one another with a certain measure of mistrust. While Uzbekistan has the larger and ethnically more homogeneous population, thanks to its oil and gas reserves Kazakhstan has the more powerful and productive economy. The three smaller republics of Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan – each with a population of 5 to 6.5 million – are doing their best not to be drawn too far into the orbit of their larger neighbors. Both of the latter, but Uzbekistan in particular, are accused of seeking to establish themselves as hegemonic powers in Central Asia, and even of – possibly – harboring ambitions of enlarging their own territory at the expense of their smaller Central Asian neighbors.

Borders

Speculations of this kind are fueled above all by the **course of the borders** of the Central Asian republics, some of which continue to be **in dispute** and must be seen as one of the most problematic aspects of the Soviet legacy.³⁹ In essence, the territories concerned were allocated in the 1920s to the Union republics which, despite its rhetoric to the contrary, Moscow treated as administrative units. Neither practicable and clearly defined and legally claimable borders nor historical ties played any particularly pronounced role in the process. The main consideration was the Moscow leadership's aim of assigning Central Asia's ethnically and culturally heterogeneous population to politically manageable territorial units, without allowing any one of these republics to assume an undisputed leadership position on the basis of its resources, strategic location, or other major influential factors.

37 EBRD (2002c, 15); EBRD (2001a, 12).

38 World Bank (2002a, 19–20).

39 For in-depth information on this question, see ICG (2002a).

These new borders were drawn with a view to creating interdependencies, but at the same time demarcations were put in place that lay the groundwork for incessant claims of one republic against the other. The framework defined by the Soviet system served to mask these conflict potentials in that the borders themselves were of little inherent importance and, to make things even more complicated, the Stalinist terror of the 1930s deprived the various population groups of their identity-forming leadership elites. Furthermore, over the course of time many new “transboundary” structures and linkages emerged without the people affected being aware of their cross-border character. Living and working in different republics, crossing borders to attend school, roads connecting two towns that crossed from one republic to the next and back – all this was part and parcel of everyday life in the Soviet Central Asian republics. When the Soviet Union dissolved, this situation gave rise, over night as it were, to serious problems. Uzbekistan, located geographically in the center of the region, has unsettled border disputes with all four of its former Soviet neighbors. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are also faced with open disputes.

One particularly problematic situation is found in the **Ferghana Valley**, one of the most densely populated areas in the region. Here, in roughly 5 % of the area of Central Asia, 20-25 % of the region’s population is settled. The valley, which extends over some 200 x 100 km in a semi-mountainous landscape on the upper course of the Syr-Darya river, is split up between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan and further fragmented by complicated boundary lines and a number of exclaves. Population growth, unemployment, and a young generation without prospects for the future have made this region, with its large number of identity groups sharing a tiny geographic space, into one of Central Asia’s major potential trouble spots. As early as in 1989 and 1990 violent conflicts erupted between various groups in the Kyrgyz and Uzbek parts of the valley, claiming a toll of several hundred lives. In the further course of the 1990s unrest flared up again and again. In 1996 and 1997 rioting and a violently suppressed prison revolt on the Tajik side claimed several hundred lives.⁴⁰ **The Ferghana Valley has now moved into the center of the crisis-prevention efforts** of external donor organizations and international institutions.

In 1999 and 2000 **tensions between Uzbekistan and its two neighbors** escalated in the **Ferghana Valley**. The government in Tashkent accused Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan of failing to take adequate measures against the activities of the militant Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), whose stated aim is to topple the Uzbek leadership. With attacks on police posts, abductions, and other acts of violence that, according to official sources, in 2000 alone claimed the lives of over 200 members of the regular army and the IMU, the movement, which had its logistic base in Afghanistan and infiltrated the region via Tajikistan, spread profound uncertainty among the governments of all of the three republics involved. Claiming a need and a right to defend itself against further incursions of IMU fighters from neighboring countries, Uzbekistan imposed a **visa requirement** for Tajik

40 Lubin / Rubin (1999, XV–XVII).

citizens, reinforced its **border defenses**, and **mined** part of the **border**. The situation deescalated only when the anti-terror war in Afghanistan markedly weakened the IMU, its leader, Namangani, was killed, and at the same time international pressure was exerted on the governments involved to come to an understanding. In early October 2002 Uzbekistan and Tajikistan announced, on the fringes of a meeting of the Eurasian Economic Community in Dushanbe, that fundamental agreement had been reached on 86 % of the 1,283 km border separating the two countries.⁴¹ Viewed in the context of the overall region, this is no more than a first step.

Regional cooperation

Efforts aimed at improving **security cooperation** in Central Asia had intensified even prior to the terror attacks in the US, not least in response to activities of groups in the region that were overtly extremist or perceived by the governments concerned as extremist. A regional forum that could well grow in importance in the future is the **Shanghai Cooperation Organization** (SCO). The organization, which evolved from a group initiated in 1996 as the “Shanghai Five” (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, China, and Russia), was originally created to settle some open questions regarding the course of the borders separating China and the former Soviet Union. The organization met its original purpose by adopting a number of confidence-building measures. In June 2001 Uzbekistan, which does not share a border with China, was accepted as a new member of the organization, which took the opportunity to give itself a new name and a new orientation. The SCO assumed the function of a security organization dedicated to the transboundary issues of separatism, extremism, and terrorism. It is still too early to say whether and to what degree the organization will prove able to contribute to resolving as yet unsettled border disputes in the region. Skeptics note critically that following the 9/11 terror attacks in the US, Russia and China in particular sought to use the SCO to reassert some of their influence in Central Asia and to constitute a counterweight to the US, which had set up military bases in, among other places, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.⁴² Uzbekistan, a country involved in most of the open border disputes, was in turn reported to be more interested in bilateral agreement in which it could bring its demographic weight to bear in talks with its smaller neighbors and to view the multilateral option merely as a kind of reinsurance against terrorist activities should the US withdraw from the region.⁴³

41 Abdullo (2002).

42 Wacker (2002).

43 Pannier (2002).

Table 1: Membership of Central Asian republics in regional cooperation organizations						
	SCO	EAEC	CSTO	CICA	ECO	CACO
Kazakhstan	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kyrgyzstan	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tajikistan	X	X	X	X	X	X
Turkmenistan					X	
Uzbekistan	X			X	X	X
SCO =	Shanghai Cooperation Organization (with Russia and China)					
EAEC =	Eurasian Economic Community, formerly Customs Union (with Russia and Belarus)					
CSTO =	Collective Security Treaty Organization (with Russia, Belarus, and Armenia), formerly Treaty on Collective Security					
CICA =	Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (with Afghanistan, China, Egypt, Iran, Israel, India, Pakistan, Palestinian National Authority, Russia, Turkey)					
ECO =	Economic Cooperation Organization (with Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Afghanistan)					
CACO =	Central Asian Cooperation Organization, formerly Central Asian Economic Community					
Source:	EU (2002, 55); own researches					

Table 1 presents an overview of the most important regional organizations in which the Central Asian republics are involved. The large number of organizations named should, though, not be misinterpreted: all of the **Central Asian governments are intent** on seeing to it that their **scopes of action** are not unnecessarily **restricted** by multilateral obligations. De facto, the cooperative rhetoric of publicity-minded summit meetings continues to be accompanied on all sides by **extensive measures aimed at sealing off one country from the others**.

2.2 Uzbekistan

Due to its population of roughly 25 million and its geographic location, Uzbekistan is the core country of Central Asia. Unlike the situation in its neighboring countries, Uzbekistan’s population is relatively homogeneous. Ethnic Uzbeks are estimated to account for 75 to 80 % of the country’s citizens, with Russian, Tajik, Kazakh, and Tatar population

groups, the largest minorities, accounting for shares of three to five percent.⁴⁴ Uzbekistan is intertwined ethno-demographically with its neighbors mainly through the fact that some 2.5 million ethnic Uzbeks live in the neighboring CIS republics. A certain percentage of Afghanistan's population is likewise Uzbek.

In the 1980s Uzbekistan experienced the greatest population growth in the entire Soviet Union, an average of 2.6 % p.a. Over the past decade the country's cumulative growth amounted to another roughly 25 %. Accordingly, Uzbekistan today has a relatively young population. Some 60 % of the population are below 25 years of age, 35 % below 15 years. The present annual growth rate is roughly 1.6 % (roughly 400,000 persons).

With its 2.1 million inhabitants, Tashkent, the capital, is Central Asia's largest metropolis and by far the country's biggest city. Other centers with populations between 100,000 and 400,000 include Samarkand and Bukhara – the magnificent symbols of Central Asian history and culture – Nukus south of the Aral Sea, and Namangan, Andijon, Ferghana and Kokand in the Ferghana Valley.

Large expanses of Uzbekistan are covered by sandy deserts and dry steppelands and are accordingly sparsely populated. The Ferghana Valley, on the other hand, the Uzbek part of which is linked to the rest of the country to the west by a narrow land corridor, is an ancient agricultural zone and one of Central Asia's most fertile regions. Monocultural, irrigation-intensive cotton-farming involving a heavy use of pesticides and generating substantial amounts of industrial wastewater have, however, come together to create a dangerous ecological situation along the Syr-Darya, which is one of Central Asia's main rivers, passing through and supplying the valley before flowing on through Kazakhstan and emptying into the Aral Sea. Water scarcity has already been the cause of some isolated local conflicts. Bloody conflicts between Uzbeks and Turk-Meshetes in the Ferghana Valley in 1989 were motivated, among other things, by water disputes. Persistent population growth and a growing pollution of the region's drinking water with toxic substances give every reason to anticipate that problems will be exacerbated over the long run.⁴⁵

44 In all of Central Asia data on populations and their ethnic composition must be viewed with caution. Most official statistics are estimates based on Soviet census data from 1989; due to ethnically differentiated migration, incomplete coverage, illegal immigration, and other factors, these data are little more than rough estimates. And deliberate, politically motivated manipulations also play a certain role. This is the reason why the literature on this question tends to contain quite divergent data. The figures used here were selected from various sources on grounds of plausibility. This is not to say anything about their reliability. Some useful general information can be found in: Götz / Halbach (1996), EBRD (2001a-b), EBRD (2002b-d), CIA (2002).

45 Introductions containing the most important basic historic-geographic and political information on all five Central Asian republics can be found in Götz / Halbach (1996), Mangott (ed.) (1996), Halbach (2002a), Moder (2002).

Politically, Uzbekistan is ruled in largely authoritarian fashion by President Islam Karimov. Under the declared maxim of according “stability” precedence over democratization with a view to avoiding the emergence of chaotic conditions like those experienced in Tajikistan, the Uzbek leadership has largely suppressed any political opposition. Formally, there are five political parties represented in the Uzbek parliament. In fact, though, these parties are all close to the government, if indeed they were not founded on the immediate initiative of the president himself. Neither in parliament nor in the media or other vehicles of public opinion is there any critical discussion of the government’s policies. The country’s media, in any cases largely state-run, are controlled, demonstrations are as a rule not approved. Opposition politicians as well as Islamic clerics who do not subscribe to the state-tolerated variant of Islam are persecuted and jailed as extremists. Human rights organizations report systematic torture in Uzbek prisons, a practice which is claiming more and more lives.

Since 1999 and 2000 at the latest, when there was a bomb attack on the government building in Tashkent and military incursions into Uzbek territory by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan staged from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the Uzbek government has regarded Islam extremists as the major security threat facing the country. The formation of the international anti-terror coalition after the terror attacks in the US and the downfall of the Taliban government in Kabul, which had provided logistic support for the IMU, has, for the time being, eliminated the movement’s threat potential. A movement that many observers see as more influential and significant than the IMU in the long term is the radical Islamist – but as yet non-violent – Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation, or more completely: Hizb ut-Tahrir al Islami, Party of Islamic Liberation), which seeks to recruit its followers not (like the IMU) among the poor rural population but among urban intellectuals and which has made Uzbekistan the pivotal point of the movement in Central Asia.⁴⁶ The Uzbek government has taken the activities of the Islamists as well as the military struggle against terror as an occasion to get even tougher with domestic opposition and other dissidents. Thousands of actual and supposed supporters of Hizb ut-Tahrir and other religious or political organizations are today being detained in Uzbek prisons.⁴⁷

The Uzbek government is today pursuing a policy of gradual economic reform. Its stated intention is to prevent economic breakdown and social hardships of the kind observed in other countries in transition. True, in the wake of the dissolution of the ruble zone initial efforts were undertaken to implement some elements of an IMF-supported macroeconomic stabilization and structural adjustment program, but two years later the government abandoned this course and turned to a strategy of forced import substitutions accompanied by

46 For more information on Hizb ut-Tahrir, see Rashid (2002, 151–175). In Germany Hizb ut-Tahrir was banned by the Federal Minister of the Interior in January 2003.

47 Human Rights Watch reports that the figure ranges, “according to conservative estimates,” between 6500 and 7000; Human Rights Watch (2003, 382).

strict foreign-exchange controls, government regulation of exchange rates, and a dirigistic structural policy. The country's dialogue with the international financial institutions has been disrupted since then.

Official statistics show for post-Soviet Uzbekistan the lowest decline in economic output among all of the CIS countries. The country was, however, able to profit from a set of relatively favorable starting conditions:

- Sales of Uzbekistan's main traditional exports, cotton and gold, proved able to be redirected, with relatively few problems, from the internal Soviet economy to the world market, a move that entailed opportunities to earn foreign exchange.
- Uzbekistan's gas and oil reserves and developed grain industry have freed the country from reliance on any major need to import goods in the energy and food sectors.
- Due to Uzbekistan's relatively low degree of industrialization (and, accordingly, a level of urbanization lower than in most of the other former Soviet republics), the initial "deindustrialization" generally associated with the process of post-Soviet transformation has impacted the country less severely than it has others.
- In infrastructural terms, Uzbekistan is better developed than its Central Asian neighbors.

For a protracted period following independence, the strategy adhered to by the government was to devote substantial public resources to a late-comer industrialization and to use massive transfers and regulatory measures to prevent a breakdown in public-sector investments in the education and social sectors of the kind experienced by most other post-socialist countries in transition. These measures were undertaken mainly at the expense of the rural population. While the Soviet collective farms (kolkhozes, sovkhozes) were largely transformed into forms of private property, the old system was conserved in the form of government-imposed cultivation and delivery targets. Producers were required in particular to sell their cotton crops to the state at fixed, low prices, and the government in turn exported a large share of output at world-market prices. While this had the desired fiscal effect, it at the same time prevented the necessary restructuring and modernization of farms, prolonged ecologically questionable monoculture practices, and constituted an obstacle to a reorientation of agricultural production. Employees were paid extremely low wages, which were often not even disbursed in cash, a practice that drove producers into illegal cross-border trade. In 2002 the government reduced official producer sales requirements to 50 % of the crop and held out the prospect of a complete lifting of quotas. It is by no means certain that this will happen in the near future in view of the massive interests of

government officials in retaining the status quo and the chances of illegal enrichment it holds out.⁴⁸

Viewed in terms of society as a whole, we can speak here of a system of redistribution that entails comprehensive transfers from the rural population to the benefit of the urban (industrialized) centers. The associated, substantial ecological, health-related, and social burdens borne by the rural population (due to extensive irrigation, intensive use of pesticides, and the low skills levels of rural workers)⁴⁹ have prompted many observers to ask what the long-term consequences of this policy will be. Moreover, in recent years poor cotton crops due to persistent drought and declining world-market prices have also pointed clearly to the system's short-term vulnerability to crisis. On the other hand, there are still close limits set to any expansion of private-sector initiative, the main reason being that government regimentation and corruption in the bureaucracy and security forces constitute a substantial disincentive.

The stagnant economic picture is reflected in a deteriorating social situation. The findings of a poverty study recently conducted for the World Bank have not yet been published; but preliminary estimates are that the incomes of roughly 30 % of the population are below the absolute poverty line. Having denied even the existence of a poverty problem for years, the Uzbek government has now committed itself vis-à-vis the World Bank to the goal of poverty reduction and signaled its willingness to formulate a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).⁵⁰ Thanks to its cooperation with the anti-terror coalition, the Uzbekistan government has, since late 2001, been able to entertain hopes for a more sympathetic reception by the international donor community. In 2002, however, efforts aimed at reaching a new agreement with World Bank and IMF failed to reach a breakthrough because the government continues to cling to its present official exchange-rate policy.⁵¹

Even though it may appear that Uzbekistan, due to its population makeup, is faced with less deep-seated ethnic problems than its other Central Asian neighbors, it is possible to identify a number of regional fracture lines that are not without political and social moment. Above all, we can identify three competing regions:⁵²

- the *southern region*, with its Islamic cultural centers of Samarkand and Bukhara;

48 This section is largely based on information obtained in background interviews held in Tashkent in November 2002. See also EBRD (2001a, 12–17); World Bank (2002b, I–II).

49 See also Müller (2003, 42).

50 World Bank (2002b, II and 2).

51 Interview with David Pearce, World Bank, country representative for Uzbekistan, on 21 Nov. 2002 in Tashkent.

52 Mangott (1996, 131).

- the largely agricultural, in tendency Muslim-traditionalist, *Ferghana Valley* to the east of the country;
- the traditional trade metropolis *Tashkent* and its surrounding countryside (in administrative terms: the city and region of Tashkent).

The southern region has played a dominant role among the country's political elite for decades. Like all of his predecessors since 1959, President Islam Karimov, who was the leader of the Uzbek Communist Party prior to independence, comes from the south of the country. However, observers note that today the president's position is "strong" only to the extent that he is able to provide for balance and stability in the rivalry between the country's most important regional leadership groups.

Compared with the three regions named above, especially Khorezm-Uzbek (region: Khorezm, capital: Urganch) and Karakalpak (Autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan, capital: Nukus) in the northwest of the country often feel neglected and forgotten by the center. Their region, however, is particularly hard hit by crisis factors like the scarcity of the water borne by the main southern river, the Amur-Darja, and the ecological disaster stemming from the dried-up Aral Sea.

Over the long run, the fact that a growingly serious social situation overlaps with regional identities and competition between rival elite groups represents, in the view of many observers, the major crisis potential facing Uzbekistan today. The country's geographic location, its population size, its ethnic overlaps with its neighboring countries, and the recruitment efforts of radical Islamist groups could in this case contribute to an alarming deterioration of the crisis situation in the region as a whole.

2.3 Kazakhstan

In economic terms, Kazakhstan is the strongest of the Central Asian republics. At the same time, its population (some 15 million) is the region's most ethnically heterogeneous. The people that gave the country its name, the Kazakhs, assumed majority status only in the course of the past decade, when some 2 million persons, most of them of Russian and German descent, left the country. Russians, who have mainly settled in the north of the country close to the Russian border, have since then, together with a smaller number of Ukrainians, formed the country's second largest population group, accounting for a share of some 30–35 %. The south and east are populated in particular by ethnic minorities from the neighboring Central Asian republics as well as from China (Uigurs); some 375,000 Uzbeks represent the largest group. In Kazakhstan a migration-related population decline in the 1990s, a trend running counter to that experienced in the neighboring Central Asian countries, is expected over the longer term to be followed by population growth.

In territorial terms, Kazakhstan is over twice as large as the four other Central Asian republics together. Located at the center of the Eurasian landmass, is Kazakhstan the world's

largest landlocked country. Its largest population concentrations are found in the north along the Russian border as well as in the south, especially in the business metropolis of Almaty (1.5 million residents), which was the country's capital until the government was relocated in Astana in late 1998. The greater part of the countryside is steppeland, and is very thinly settled.

Kazakhstan shares with Russia the world's longest continuous land border between two countries (6.800 km). Owing to its geographic location, population composition, and economic interdependencies, it is highly important for Kazakhstan to maintain good relations with Russia, and the relations between the country's two major population groups are of central importance in this regard. President Nursultan Nazarbayev, a reform oriented Gorbachev adherent, took over the leadership of the Kazakh CP in 1989 and was elected president of the Republic of Kazakhstan in December 1991, a short time before the dissolution of the Soviet Union. He has promoted a policy of balance between a new national identity reverting back to Kazakh traditions and concerns expressed by a diminishing Russian population minority. True, this was unable to prevent the emigration of many Russians, who were hardly even conscious of the internal Soviet border until Kazakhstan attained independence, and who unexpectedly found themselves in a "foreign" country. But more severe ethnic tensions of the kind that seemed to be emerging in 1986 when the Soviet leadership installed a Russian as CP boss in Almaty, a move that led to vehement protests,⁵³ have been spared the country until now. Even so, many Russians have complained about a "Kazakhization" of political and economic leadership positions as well as in the country's administrative apparatus.⁵⁴

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union Nazarbayev has proved to be one of the most active proponents of a policy of more marked economic and security integration in the framework of the CIS. This position distinguishes Kazakhstan from the two other large Central Asian republics, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, which are mainly interested in a policy of delimitation and economic self-sufficiency. At the same time, the Kazakh government has also made overtures toward the international financial institutions and made further progress with market-oriented reforms than most of its Central Asian neighbors. To stabilize its new currency, Kazakhstan was able, in 1995, to fall back on the support of the IMF in the framework of a consolidation program.

Kazakhstan's economy is based in large measure on coal, oil, and gas production, ferrous and nonferrous metals, electric power, and agriculture (mainly grain and livestock produc-

53 This move amounted to a break with the decades-old practice of filling the most important political position in a Soviet republic with a representative of the country's main ethnic group. The appointment of Nazarbayev, an ethnic Kazakh, only three years after these events was thus seen as a return to the normal state of affairs.

54 See Masanov et al. (2002).

tion). The economy is thus heavily reliant on raw materials, which, while they bring foreign-exchange revenues, have not yet been adequately exploited as sources of employment and value added in the manufacturing sector. The orientation of the country's rail and pipeline networks to Russia made it difficult for the newly independent country to regear its raw materials industry to the world market after it became independent. Accordingly, Kazakhstan has until recently heavily dependent on economic developments in Russia. Since 1998, however, the share of Kazakhstan's exports to Russia and the other CIS countries has markedly declined (from 40 % in 1998 to an estimated 20 % or less in 2001).⁵⁵ Kazakhstan has succeeded in attracting sizable investments of foreign oil companies to further develop the production of its Caspian oil; these investments are also earmarked for a long-term diversification of export routes. The country's overall crude oil reserves are estimated at 30 million barrels, a volume somewhat higher than Mexico's and roughly 45 % as high as Russia's reserves. A certain percentage of the state revenues stemming from the sale of oil are placed in a fund for future development. However, critics note that the uses to which the government puts its export revenues is not subject to sufficient transparency.

Together with Russia, Kazakhstan has inherited the severest ecological legacy left by the Soviet Union. The dried-up Aral Sea in the west and the areas around the former Soviet weapons testing ground in Semipalatinsk in the east, which was devastated by tests with nuclear weapons and biological and chemical agents, are only the most dramatic symbols of a situation that is on the whole more than disquieting. The country's dependence on the production of raw materials, in many cases associated with massive environmental degradation, and a possible intensification of irrigated agriculture give little reason to hope for improvement in the future. A growing number of environmental initiatives and NGOs see themselves faced with narrow scopes of political action.

In Kazakhstan the first years of the process of transformation have led to a dramatic increase in income disparities. In the triangle defined by raw materials rents, privatization, and corruption, the country has earned a dubious reputation as an "Eldorado for windy wheeler-dealers."⁵⁶ And a small number of winners of the transformation processes must be weighed against the largest share of the population, who have had to bear the brunt of negative transformation shocks (inflation, depreciation of savings, uncertain payment of wages and salaries, low incomes, deterioration of social infrastructure, and so on). Following the 1998 Russia crisis, which took Kazakhstan out of a brief phase of economic recovery (beginning in 1996) and threw it back into recession, the Kazakh economy began to grow again, in 2001 by 13.2 % , the highest increase recorded among the CIS countries.⁵⁷ Official figures indicate that in parallel to this development the poverty situation has eased

55 IMF (2002, 5).

56 Götz / Halbach (1996, 201).

57 EBRD (2002a).

somewhat since 1998.⁵⁸ At the same time, the government's scopes for a targeted social policy have broadened somewhat. The 2003 budget gave rise to expectations that the government was undertaking greater efforts to meet its self-defined obligation to contribute to reducing poverty and more equitably distributing public-sector earnings.

Internally, Nazarbayev's regime took on increasingly illiberal traits in the 1990s. While the country does have a number of oppositional political parties and a good number of civil-society organizations, which recently have become increasingly active, this does not mean that the population is involved in political decision-making processes. Rather, many observers have noted tangible growth in government pressure on the opposition and a deteriorating human rights situation. In 1995 Nazarbayev prolonged his term of office per referendum, in early 1999 he called advanced elections at short notice and was reelected to office for seven years, winning a majority of some 82 % of the votes cast. The 1995 referendum in particular, but also the 1999 elections, were far removed from any democratic standards, and opposition candidates cannot be said to have been given a fair chance. The president, using manipulated election procedures, has brought the parliament, which is in a weak constitutional position in any case, largely under his control. It is the president's prerogative to appoint and dismiss regional administrative heads. But on the other hand, a certain amount of progress has been noted in reforms aimed at widening the competences of local administrative structures.

The most important segments of media landscape in Kazakhstan are dominated by members or confidants of the president's family, who are also said to control eleven of the country's largest banks.⁵⁹ The Nazarbayev clan may thus be seen as symbolic of a kind of government machinery that, carrying on with Soviet traditions, uses leadership positions for purposes of personal enrichment and consolidation of power, cashing in on privatization and the post-Soviet raw materials boom to pocket huge rents. The country's future development will, it appears, be marked by a contradiction between the declared aim of market-based liberalization and stepped-up investments in the SME sector on the one hand and – an important obstacle to this policy – a pronounced inclination toward state dirigism abetted by a corrupt public administration on the other. In addition, the scopes of action open to a reform-oriented economic policy are, in the view of political observers, up against substantial limitations posed by powerful veto groups within the new elite, which are in a position to profit from persistent intransparency and structures that deviate from accepted notions of the rule of law.⁶⁰

In material and social terms, Kazakhstan is marked by a striking north-south disparity. Thanks to higher industrial incomes going back to the Soviet era, the population of the

58 See Müller (2003, 31f).

59 Halbach (2002a, 226).

60 Interviews with various resource persons in Almaty, 1–5 Dec. 2002.

north, which has traditionally been largely Russian, has been distinctly more prosperous than the Kazakh population living in the country's more agrarian south. These sharp income disparities have continued until today.⁶¹ The regional north-south division of the country is overlain by the historic-traditional subdivision of ethnic Kazakhs into three so-called hordes which go back to the age of Kazakh nomadism and are, in the view of some observers, even today of some political-social significance:⁶²

- The south of Kazakhstan is settled by the *Great Horde*, which has traditionally provided the leadership elite and even today most clearly embodies a Kazakh national identity.
- Northern and central Kazakhstan is the territory of the *Middle Horde*, which is more Russified in cultural terms and accordingly less nationally conscious.
- The west of the country is home to the *Lesser Horde*, which has traditionally been poor and had little influence on the makeup of the Kazakh elite, though it is now gaining economic ground because of the oil and gas reserves in its region.

Unlike the case of Uzbekistan, in Kazakhstan Islam is not an important political factor. While the end of the Soviet era led to a revival of Islamic traditions in Kazakhstan as well (a phenomenon similar in many ways to the revival of Orthodox traditions observed among the Slavic population), historic-cultural conditions have not provided a fertile breeding ground for a radical Islam accessible to politicization: as nomadic tribes, the Kazakhs were Islamized at a relatively late point of time and suffused the new creed with elements of their ancient natural religions. The country lacked the urban centers needed for regular religious instruction and the formation of dogmatic schools. Today Islam has more the character of a popular tradition and is thus quite unsuited for extremist attempts to redefine its meaning.

However, the Kazakh government is concerned about the growing number of Central Asian migrant workers that are attracted to the country by the relative prosperity differential between Kazakhstan and its neighbors to the south and are seen as more accessible to Islamist agitation. In 2001 and 2002 some Hizb ut-Tahrir followers were arrested for distributing pamphlets in the south of Kazakhstan. Those arrested included Uzbeks, who were immediately deported to Uzbekistan and there sentenced to lengthy prison terms.

2.4 Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan, one of Central Asia's territorially "small" countries, is located in a mountainous area. 90 % of the country's territory is 1500 meters or more above sea level. Roughly

61 Müller (2003, 33f).

62 Mangott (1996, 81f).

half of its territory is suited for agricultural uses, but only 13 % is cropland. Accordingly, the agricultural sector is dominated by livestock-farming. Traditionally, most Kyrgyz lived as mountain nomads. Even today the ruggedness of the land poses obstacles to communication and exchange between the country's different regional population groups. Attempts under Soviet rule to restrict nomadism contributed even further to consolidating regional and tribal identities. The fragmentation caused by local tribal identities is further aggravated by a large-scale regional and sociocultural division of the country into "north" and "south" as well as by the heterogeneous composition of the country's overall population and the territorial fragmentation found in the southwestern Ferghana Valley.

According to official information, in 2000 some 65 % of Kyrgyzstan's population of roughly 5 million were ethnic Kyrgyz. Uzbeks and Russians, which account for 13.8 and 12.5 % of the population, respectively, are the country's largest minorities.⁶³ While the Russian-descended population is found for the most part in the capital Bishkek in the north as well as in some smaller industrial centers, the Uzbek population is largely settled in relatively closed areas in the Ferghana Valley, with its center of Osh. Interethnic rivalries between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz gave the months-long violent conflicts which took place in the region of Osh in the summer of 1990, and at times escalated into regular pogroms, the external semblance of a nationality conflict. The factors responsible for the violence, however, must be sought mainly in the region's deteriorating socioeconomic situation, which was (and – though population growth is declining somewhat – still is) marked by high population growth, youth unemployment, land scarcity, and inadequate housing.

Kyrgyzstan's political history since 1990 is a graphic and typical illustration of the mixing of resource- and power-related conflicts, with the identity projections and mobilization potentials for stereotypes that result from them. The strife in Osh, which developed outwardly along ethnic lines, at the same time provided an outlet for the frustrations of a population group that sees itself as fundamentally disadvantaged within Kyrgyzstan. As far as incomes, social and economic development levels, or the quality of healthcare or education institutions are concerned, the southern regions of the country lag far behind the north. In historical-cultural terms, the north can be seen as a marginal zone of the Islamic culture area in which, not unlike the case of the neighboring country of Kazakhstan, Islam was late to gain a foothold and amalgamated with the pre-Islamic traditions held by the region's nomadic pastoral tribes. In the wake of the Russian-czarist colonization of the country, this region, with its capital of Bishkek, was exposed earlier and more intensively than others to modernization pressure stemming from Russian settlers. The "south," in particular the ethnically mixed Ferghana Valley, was Islamized at an earlier point of time and is more marked by the traditional way of life typical of settled farmers. This region, generally referred to somewhat imprecisely as "the south" but meaning the country's southwestern region, which, – from the perspective of the north – lies beyond the central range of the

63 CDF (2001, 52).

Tian Shan mountains and embraces, like a pair of tongs, the Uzbek and Tajik areas of the Ferghana Valley, has for centuries been something like a melting pot for the cultures of its Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Tajik populations.

The most recent political crisis in Kyrgyzstan, which is linked with the name of the provincial town of Aksy (or Ak-Suu), likewise started out in the country's "south." The arrest of a critical member of parliament, Azimbek Beknazarov, in January 2002 on questionable charges triggered a growing protest movement that had its origin in Beknazarov's constituency of Aksy in the province of Jalal-Abad. Parallel to the court proceedings, in the spring and summer of 2002 demonstrations and other protest actions led to a spiraling escalation which was marked by violence and in the course of which a total of five demonstrators were killed by the police. Outrage over the authorities' ruthless conduct and demands for punishment of those responsible both in the region and at the government level increasingly became linked with further-reaching political aims. While the rhetoric of prominent opposition politicians depicted the so-called "Aksy movement" as emblematic for a conflict between a repressive government and a democratic opposition, the government itself denounced its adversaries as troublemakers and "destabilizing elements." Many observers, by contrast, saw the conflict as an expression of the estrangement between a southern population which regards itself as disadvantaged in socioeconomic terms and deprived of any real political participation and representation and an allegedly corrupt political elite in the north which dominates the government.⁶⁴ In early 2003 the external conflict axis shifted to the dispute surrounding a new constitution, which was subjected to a vote in a controversial referendum on a proposal advanced by President Akayev. Even so, concerns about a widening north-south division of the country, including fears that Kyrgyzstan could break down into two parts, have not been allayed.

The political situation must be viewed in the context of problematic economic development and widespread poverty.⁶⁵ The first years of independence were accompanied by a collapse of industry and a substantial decline in agricultural production. Its small size and pattern of sectoral specialization entailed particularly difficult problems for Kyrgyzstan when the economic relations that typified the Soviet Union collapsed. By 1995 the country's GDP had declined by over 50 %. The economic reforms initiated in 1993, which were quite extensive compared with those undertaken in the other Central Asian republics (and were more instrumental in damping hyperinflation than in any other of the CIS countries) led, beginning in 1995, to uneven economic growth, with annual rates ranging between 2 and 10 %.⁶⁶ Owing to its low initial development level, Kyrgyzstan continues to be one of the CIS's lowest-income countries. With its per capita incomes of US \$ 270 in 2002, Kyr-

64 Interview with Filip Noubel, senior analyst, International Crisis Group, Bishkek, 26 Nov. 2002. For more in-depth information on the conflict, see ICG (2002b).

65 On poverty in Kyrgyzstan, see Müller (2003, 34–37).

66 Figures from EBRD (2002a).

gyzstan ranks 184th among the 207 countries covered by the World Bank's World Development Indicators 2002. Among the CIS countries, only Tajikistan has lower figures for income.⁶⁷

According to official sources, in 2001 52 % of Kyrgyzstan's population was poor (with 18 % living in extreme poverty). The rural population is especially hard hit. If the latter accounts for a 65 % share of the overall population – an exceptionally high figure for post-Soviet conditions – it at the same time accounts for 80 % of the poor population.⁶⁸ In other words, while nearly two thirds of the rural population (64 %) must be seen as poor, the corresponding figure for town-dwellers is less than one third (30 %). This distribution has particularly negative impacts for ethnic Kyrgyz, who account for a disproportionately high percentage of the rural population.⁶⁹

In the twelve years between 1990 and 2002 Kyrgyzstan developed from a glimmer of hope for successful democratic and market-oriented transformation to a problem child of the region. Following independence Kyrgyzstan was the Central Asian republic that set the most clear-cut example for reforms geared to democracy and market economy. President Akayev, who in 1990 was elected president by the country's supreme soviet, was seen as a shining exception among his Central Asian counterparts, a fact that was generally explained with reference to his professional origins, for he was a former president of the republic's academy of sciences and thus a member of the "intelligentsia," and not, as in most other cases, a member of the inner Party power elite. Endowed with a mandate in a 1991 election which gave him – running without opposition – 95 % of the votes cast, Akayev announced a course of far-reaching democratization and markets reforms.

As a pioneer of market-based reforms, Kyrgyzstan received substantial funds from programs of the international financial institutions in the 1990s. The hope was that it would be possible to use external assistance to help this structurally weak, geographically secluded country on its way to a successful process of structural change. In 1998 the country was the first Central Asian republic to be admitted to the WTO. Still, a tangible, sustained upturn for the population has yet to materialize. The major burdens imposed by structural deficits, crime, corruption, and poor governance have taken their toll on the reform process and led to a situation in which the donor community has increasingly been faced with the question of whether the Kyrgyz government is in fact pursuing a clear reform strategy. Today Kyrgyzstan is the CIS country with the highest level of external debt (measured as a proportion of GDP). The country's overall foreign debt amounts to some US \$ 1.5 billion.⁷⁰ This further curtails the government's – in any case low – financial latitude, even though a

67 World Bank (2002a, 19).

68 CDF (2001, 53).

69 In the mid-1990s 85 % of ethnic Kyrgyz were living in rural areas; Götz / Halbach (1996, 209).

70 IMF / World Bank (2001b, 57); Paris Club (2002).

restructuring of the country's debt was successfully negotiated at the Paris Club in March of 2002. Kyrgyzstan's most important creditors are Russia, Japan, Turkey (a nonmember of the Paris Club), and Germany. However, the major shares of the country's public debt abroad (around two thirds) is held by the multilateral donors World Bank (IDA), ADB, IMF, and EBRD.⁷¹

The low growth rates posted by Kyrgyzstan's economy (the EBRD estimated a rate of 2.0 % for 2002⁷²) are not high enough to give the population a sense that their life situations are being tangibly improved. The country's most important foreign-exchange-earning industry is gold exports. The gold deposits in the country's largest mine (Kumtor), which were developed only in the 1990s by a Canadian-Kyrgyz-consortium, are expected to be depleted as early as 2008.⁷³ One hope for the future is development of the country's energy industry on the basis of water power; but if this is to happen, Kyrgyzstan will have to find a durable solution to its water conflict with its neighboring countries. Plans to develop quality tourism in the scenic region of the Issyk-Kul, one of the world's largest mountain lakes, have no prospects of success unless a certain measure of political and social stability is achieved for the region as a whole. Approaches aimed at a new, comprehensive long-term strategy of the kind formulated in the Comprehensive Development Framework adopted in 2001 and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper adopted in late 2002 are referred to by critical voices – even within the government – as little more than illusion, since the inter-ministerial consultation process was inadequate and the country's bureaucracies have no sense of commitment to the goals set out in the documents.

Looked at in political terms, Kyrgyzstan experienced the development of a comprehensive and pluralist landscape of nongovernmental organizations, social interest groups, and political parties at an earlier point of time than in other Central Asian republics. The origins of this development lay in the Soviet era, and under President Akayev the new structures at first offered more freedom of action than in any one of Kyrgyzstan's neighboring countries. This initial situation woke the interest of many Western institutions that had set their sights on promoting civil-society structures in the region. Funds from the European Union, the United States, and some major private foundations (above all the Soros Foundation) were committed to buoying the activities of a large variety of social organizations.

A number of different parties are represented in Kyrgyzstan's parliament, which was elected in unscheduled elections in February 1995, and once again in March 2000. In 1995, when Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan had already established the referendum as a method of prolonging the president's terms of office, i.e. of holding on to power, President Akayev was confirmed in office in a general election. Even so, in this period

71 IMF / World Bank (2001b, 57).

72 EBRD (2002a, 58).

73 Holt / Albrecht / Schönherr (2002, 4).

Kyrgyzstan, too, started to widen the president's powers, a move that was initially justified with the goal of maintaining the country's stability under the pressure of mounting problems. In the years that followed, pressure was increased on prominent opposition figures and the critical media, and the latitudes of political organizations were undermined by spying activities and questionable court proceedings. Structures with a democratic façade have increasingly become instruments of an authoritarian, power-based rule. During the parliamentary and presidential elections held in February and October 2000, the OSCE reported serious irregularities that were carried out at the expense of opposition candidates. The referendum of February 2, 2003, which, according to official figures, brought the government a broad majority for its proposed bills – while the opposition called foul, claiming election fraud – contributed, in the short term, little to stabilizing the country's political institutions.

The Kyrgyz response to the violent attacks launched in 1999 and 2000 by the IMU in the province of Batken along the border to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan led to a further deterioration of the human rights situation in Kyrgyzstan. Arrests of and blanket accusations against followers of Islamic groups for allegedly supporting terrorist activities or engaging directly in terrorist acts did nothing to strengthen confidence in the lawfulness and reasonableness of the country's penal proceedings, even though the measures taken in Kyrgyzstan are not comparable with the repressive policies indulged in by the government of Uzbekistan.

Despite this unsatisfactory situation and the growing concerns of human rights organizations over future developments in Kyrgyzstan, the country continues to be marked by a more diverse political and civil-society landscape and a greater measure of freedom of opinion and pluralism than its Central Asian neighbors. In other words, some important points of departure for an open discussion of social problems as well as for cooperative forms of conflict resolution continue to be given.

At the same time, there is no doubt that there are real security problems in the country's southwest region. Even though the IMU may have been seriously weakened by its involvement in the Afghanistan war on the side of the Taliban, its activities in previous years were instrumental in establishing transboundary trafficking in drugs and arms as an illegal business in the border region between Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. In addition, the country's desperate economic situation in the early 1990s drove many farmers into opium production.⁷⁴

2.5 Tajikistan

In political, but above all in socioeconomic terms, Tajikistan has been hard hit by the aftermath of the 1992-1997 civil war. The World Bank indicates that, measured in terms of

74 Havlik / Vertlib (1996, 202).

per capita GDP data, Tajikistan ranked, in 2000, among the world's 11 poorest countries.⁷⁵ According to government information, 83 % of the population live below the poverty line. The World Bank estimated the country's unemployment rate at over 40 %.⁷⁶

Tajikistan, with its population of roughly 6.5 million, is today ruled by a coalition government led by former-Communist President Emomali Rahmonov and including representatives of the "democratic" and "Islamic" opposition. And yet even this coalition represents only part of the country's political identity and interest groups. Despite the plurality represented in the government, it is far too early to speak of genuine pluralism and democracy here. The country's political institutions are too weak, large segments of the population are too vulnerable at risk, and the wounds inflicted by the civil war are still too fresh. Establishment of functioning governmental structures in all parts of the country is a task which has still to be mastered. For instance, in the autonomous republic of Gorno-Badakhshan in the east of the country, which takes up one third of the country's territory, the central government is for all practical purposes not present.

Viewed at a superficial level, the violent conflict that broke out in the first year of national independence occurred along a rift "between the dominant 'old-Communist' nomenklatura and a broadly diversified opposition movement that subscribed to democratic, national, and even Islamic ideals and was inspired by 'glasnost' and 'perestroika.'"⁷⁷ Behind this level of "modern" political objectives, however, the factors determining the motives and actions of the participants were traditional ones, like regional and local particularisms, challenges to the traditional distribution of power and rival clan associations, as well as interference by political forces from neighboring countries. This complicated constellation of overlapping interests deepened the conflict in the years of the civil war and again and again substantially hampered attempts to implement ceasefire and peace accords reached with the help of international mediation.⁷⁸ For this reason, too, the peace agreement finally reached in 1997 long appeared to be extremely precarious. Presidential and parliamentary elections in November 1999 and February 2000 led, however, to a regular involvement of the "United Tajik Opposition" in the government and thus to a continuation of the course of reconciliation.

In a debate over constitutional amendments, the president recently injected some new points of contention into the political discussion, provoking the anger of at least parts of the opposition. The core point as far as political power is concerned is the president's aim of amending a constitutional provision that would prevent him from running again for office at the end of his present term (1999-2006). Critics see in these efforts a violation of the

75 World Bank (2002a).

76 Freitag-Wirninghaus (2003, 3).

77 Reissner (1997, 9).

78 See Seifert (1999).

basic provisions of the peace accord.⁷⁹ On the other hand, many observers see no viable alternative to the current president. Their main argument is that broad segments of the security apparatus are controlled by the president not primarily *ex officio* but on the basis of personal loyalty. A potential competitor, it is noted, would therefore hardly be in a position to ensure the integration of the security forces needed for a peaceful development.

After the Afghanistan war the country moved to the forefront of efforts to stabilize the overall region of Central Asia. To be realistic, though, reconstruction work since the end of the civil war must likewise be viewed in the context of the various cleavages in Tajik society.⁸⁰ Whether framework conditions sufficiently consolidated and stable to allow for the implementation of long-term DC measures are now in place is a question that has yet to be answered. In any case, donor measures involved in the selection of partners, sectors, and regions will have to be highly conflict-sensitive in nature.

The unstable security situation in parts of the country, above all along the southern border to Afghanistan and in the northern regions extending into the Ferghana Valley, had, up to the summer of 2001, some palpably negative effects on Tajikistan's neighbors Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. IMU fighters were, largely without interference, able to prepare in Tajikistan for the attacks they carried out in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. The presence of international troops in Afghanistan and Uzbekistan has, at least in the near term, served to defuse this situation. However, Tajikistan continues to be a staging area for smuggling weapons and drugs to other Central Asian countries. Uzbekistan sees Tajikistan, like Kyrgyzstan, as a country in which its vital national interests are at stake. In no other country is the absolute number and share of the Uzbek minority population (some 25 %) ⁸¹ as large as it is in Tajikistan, and, conversely, an estimated one million ethnic Tajiks live in Uzbekistan. In the Tajik civil war Uzbekistan took sides with the official government under President Rahmonov, coming out for a clearly anti-Islamic option, and played a direct military role both in the framework of the CIS protection force and in the fighting between the parties to the civil war. Later, Uzbekistan also backed a peace accord as a means of putting an end to the persistent unrest along its southwestern border. Still, Uzbekistan's policy toward Tajikistan is not always transparent, or indeed predictable, and the government in Tashkent views with some mistrust the power-sharing arrangement with Islamic forces in place in Dushanbe.

79 Interview with Muhiddin Kabiri, deputy chairman of the Party of Islamic Rebirth, Dushanbe, 18 March 2003.

80 See Seifert (2002).

81 UNDP (1999, 17).

2.6 Turkmenistan

Seen in terms of its total population (some 5.5 to 6 million), Turkmenistan, together with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, belongs to the group of the three “little” states in Central Asia, although the size of its national territory is comparable with that of Uzbekistan. Like Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan has also experienced enormous population growth in the last decade, the exact extent of which is unclear due to statistical problems, although the country’s population may have increased by 50 % within a period of only ten years.⁸²

90 % of Turkmenistan’s territory is desert, only 4 % is arable land. The country has sizable natural gas and mineral oil reserves (particularly along the Caspian Sea) which represent the main source of revenue of the state and the overall national economy. Agriculture is dominated by cotton-farming, which, as in Uzbekistan, is bound up with massive environmental problems due to irrigation-related water consumption and the salinization of soils brought about by the use of artificial fertilizers and pesticides. Extensive use of the waters of the Amur-Darja links Turkmenistan directly with the silting of the Aral Sea, even though the country does not border directly on it.

After 1991 President Saparmurat Niyazov, who even prior to independence governed the republic as CP secretary, set up the most closed, most undemocratic, and least economically reformed regime in the entire post-Soviet area.⁸³ Not even the nominal beginnings of a political pluralism were able to develop in this repressive climate. The CP, renamed as the “Democratic Party” but not reformed, is the only “party” in the country, and decisions are taken exclusively at the top level of the state. In late 1994 Niyazov, who is the center of an extreme, official personality cult, was the first Central Asian president to extend his term of office by referendum instead of through a regular election. According to official information, Niyazov received 98.3 % and 99.5 %, resp., of the votes cast in polls held in 1990 and 1992 - with a turnout of 99 % - conducted without any rival candidates. In the meantime he has as had himself proclaimed “president for life.”

In economic terms, Turkmenistan has largely preserved the Soviet economic system. Only small and microenterprises have been privatized. Both the raw materials sector and the

82 EBRD (2002c, 40).

83 The rating of the US human rights organization “Freedom House” gives Turkmenistan the lowest marks given to all post-socialist countries in its three rating categories “democratization,” “rule of law,” and “economic liberalization”: 6.94, 6.63, and 6.50, respectively, on a scale extending from 1 (highest value) to 7 (lowest value); Freedom House (2002, 21). Focusing purely on economic factors, the EBRD also gives Turkmenistan the lowest possible value in nearly all categories used to measure progress in transformation and the poorest overall values among all post-socialist countries. Only the GDP share of the private sector, a low 25 %, is thought to be somewhat higher than the figure assumed for Belarus (20 %), although it should be noted that both figures are no more than rough estimates; EBRD (2002a, 20).

manufacturing industry continue to be state-owned. The granting of private land titles to individual farmers has not gone beyond an experimental stage, and, according to EBRD information, the practice not seldom serves to enrich local elites. While privatization of cattle-farming has led to an expansion of livestock holdings, for lack of fodder this practice has become a threat to the country's cotton and wheat crops.⁸⁴ Exchange rates are fixed by the government, imports and exports are state-regulated.

The government has used heavy subsidies for electricity, water, gas, food, and other goods to keep the population's standard of living at nominal levels higher than those in the other Central Asian countries (except Kazakhstan).⁸⁵ Substantial growth figures for the national economy have also been recorded (primarily in the raw materials and agricultural sectors) following a long phase economic recession that came to an end in 1998. The country's heavy dependence on production of raw materials as a source of public revenue does, however, give cause for major concerns over how long a strategy of this kind can be sustained. As in all countries in transition, massive infrastructure maintenance investments would be required in Turkmenistan, and modernization and restructuring is called for in all sectors. For a number of reasons, however, it does not appear to be possible, in the foreseeable future, to achieve an expansion of the volume of the country's exports in any of the relevant sectors that would be needed to earn additional investment capital.⁸⁶

Looking at foreign policy, President Niyazov has led Turkmenistan into a state of self-imposed and nearly complete isolation. While the country is a member of the CIS, it shows very little interest in participating, in this framework, in cooperation or even becoming involved in efforts aimed at regional integration. Only with Russia does Turkmenistan entertain close links in the military sector. Cross-border trade is systematically subverted with a view to maintaining the country's highly subsidized prices.⁸⁷ The country's isolation is further intensified by a restrictive visa policy for both foreigners and citizens of the country (exit visas).

In 2003 President Niyazov deliberately risked a grave diplomatic crisis with Russia when he attempted to force Turkmen citizens of Russian descent to abandon, at short notice, their Russian citizenship (and thus their greater freedom to travel) by threatening to revoke their

84 EBRD (2002c, 19).

85 According to World Bank figures, the average per capita income in 2002, US \$ 750, was just below the boundary between low income and lower middle income. Based on earlier figures, the World Bank nevertheless placed Turkmenistan in the category of lower middle income; World Bank (2002a).

86 The main problem in the crucial gas sector is that the existing trans-Russian pipelines will be unable to provide any additional capacities for Turkmenistan in the coming years; EBRD (2002c, 12).

87 EBRD (2002c, 12).

Turkmen citizenship (including all of the civil rights it entails). Political and economic pressure from Moscow induced the Turkmen side to make certain concessions, but relations are still marred by profound annoyance in Russia.⁸⁸

Despite the repressive methods employed by the regime, the population, mostly due to pressing social or economic hardships, has repeatedly mounted spontaneous demonstrations or other manifestations of its discontent in recent years. Thus far the authorities have invariably responded with further repression. There are for this reason no signs of civil-society activities, broader manifestations of popular opinion, or a representation of political interests. The only more or less organized opposition to President Niyazov can be found abroad, although it, too, appears unable to launch any decisive political activities. At the end of 2002 this opposition was deprived of one of its most important leadership figures when the former foreign minister, Shikmuradov, who had sought asylum in Moscow in 2001 and founded an opposition movement there, was unexpectedly arrested in Turkmenistan and sentenced, in November 2002, to life in prison, in court proceedings reminiscent of Soviet show trials, for alleged involvement in an assassination attempt on Niyazov. The circumstances of the attempted assassination and the arrest provoked, among other things, a diplomatic crisis with Uzbekistan, which was accused by the Turkmen side of supporting the alleged attempted coup in Ashgabat.

Turkmenistan's political "stability" depends solely on the person of the president and his autocratic rule and is thus a risk factor of considerable magnitude. The events of December 2002 demonstrate that the Niyazov regime is able to suppress resistance in the short run and to maintain a semblance of outward stability which has prevented the outbreak of any massive crises. In the long run, however, the government appears not to have any strategy to work out a development perspective that might serve to defuse the anticipated accumulation of political conflicts, social discontent, and ecological crises.

3 Conflict and crisis potentials

3.1 Governance

Government legitimacy and good governance

All of the governments in Central Asia have **substantial legitimacy deficits**, even though these may differ in extent from country to country. One of the key weak points here is a widespread tendency to massively **manipulate elections**, assuming they take place at all. Here Kyrgyzstan was the most positive case for a long time, although the 2000 elections took the country back a number of disquieting steps. Kazakhstan has shown comparable deficits for some time now. In the opinion of the OSCE, the elections held in Tajikistan in

88 RFE/RL Central Asia Report 1 May 2003; 11 July 2003; 22 August 2003; 3 Oct. 2003.

1999 and 2000 were likewise marred by major problems, although the final outcome, the formation of a coalition government, also entailed considerable progress in the country’s peacebuilding efforts. On the other hand, Turkmenistan obviously ranks at the lower end of the deficit scale, in close company with Uzbekistan.

A second weak point of most Central Asian governments is the widespread disdain shown by **government authorities for required procedures** as well as for respect for institutional competences and their limits. Government authorities regularly subordinate formal rules to considerations of expediency, without being checked by sanctions, and this vitally impairs their political legitimacy and undermines citizens’ confidence in government institutions. One noteworthy factor in this regard is Tajikistan’s positive development since the civil war; the formation of a functioning coalition and the need which this implies to seek compromise has earned the government a certain “procedural legitimacy” that is more weakly developed in the other Central Asian countries. Both aspects, election-based legitimacy and procedural legitimacy, are roughly in line with the ‘political process’ criterion used by Freedom House, alongside other criteria, as a gauge of the progress toward democratization made by countries in transition. Freedom House’s assessment comes up with the following picture expressing the distinctions between the five countries:

Table 2: Freedom House – rating of the political process in Central Asia				
Tajikistan	Kyrgyzstan	Kazakhstan	Uzbekistan	Turkmenistan
5.25	5.75	6.25	6.75	7.00
Scale from 1 (high) to 7 (low)				
Source: Freedom House (2002, 21) “Political Process Rating”				

Among all of the post-socialist countries in transition, comparably low values were found only for Belarus (6.75), Azerbaijan (5.75), and Georgia (5.00).

Another indicator for lack of government legitimacy may be seen in whether or not a government is massively, even possibly by violent means, challenged by sizable forces in a society, which is for the most part the case when significant groups of a society see themselves faced with political repression or persistent discrimination. The extreme case was given in the civil war in Tajikistan. In this regard it is impossible to assess today’s situation with any degree of certainty, although the major legitimacy problem appears to have been defused effectively by the formation of the present coalition government. On the other hand, events in Uzbekistan (bomb attacks, attacks by the IMU) and in Turkmenistan (assassination attempt on the country’s president) indicate that the **governments have lost** a good measure of their **legitimacy among segments of their populations**. The suppression of the insurgents by military or police has contributed little to coming up with to a long-

term solution of the underlying problem. On the contrary, the repressive line pursued by the Uzbek government against any expression of Islamic religiosity not sanctioned by the state is creating, in the long term, more problems than it “solves.” The legitimacy of the governments of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan as well is not unreservedly acknowledged by all parts of their populations. Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan and Russians in Kazakhstan often feel highly underrepresented in political terms. In both countries, however, the strategies still prevalent are geared to bringing about change in political power structures *in the framework and with the means of the existing system*. Questioning the legitimacy of the ruling government or its policies is not tantamount to challenging the legitimacy of the state as a whole.

Even as regards the ability of their governments to carry out government tasks effectively, efficiently, and in the interest of the population (good governance), the Central Asian countries turn out to be **poor performers** when compared to the other countries in transition. A lack of effective public and institutional control as well as the use of government resources to serve particularist interests (clans, regional interest groups, and the like) must be seen as particularly grave deficits here. In the case of Tajikistan the **problem of exercising government control over the whole of the country’s territory** is an additional aggravating factor. In Kyrgyzstan the arm of government power does not reach particularly far in some regions (above all in the province of Batken). The paternalist approach to politics pursued by the governments of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan suggests, at first glance, that the matter of good governance might be better attended to in these countries. On the other hand, though, it has also been observed that government organs are unlikely to be particularly responsive without the pressure exerted by organized social actors. One helpful illustration of the differentiation among the Central Asian countries is provided by another assessment conducted by Freedom House, the Governance and Public Administration Rating (Tab. 3).

Table 3: Freedom House – Rating of governance and public administration in Central Asia				
Kyrgyzstan	Kazakhstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan	Turkmenistan
5.50	5.75	6.00	6.00	6.75
Scale from 1 (high) to 7 (low)				
Source: Freedom House (2002, 21) “Governance and Public Administration Rating”				

Here again, the Central Asian countries are the lowest-ranking group among the countries in transition, this time together with Belarus (6.50) and Azerbaijan (6.00) and just ahead of Russia (5.25). Except for the slightly changed ranking due to governability problems in Tajikistan, the most striking difference to the political process rating is the lower dispersion of values. The countries involved are more similar to one another. This may indicate that as

an “input” of the political system the political process is more subject to change based on formal political standard-setting than the “output” variable good governance. In other words, in addition to the political will called for, fewer influenceable factors such as informal action routines and networks run counter to any tangible improvement of governance. This assumption is supported by Freedom House’s corruption rating:

Table 4: Freedom House – Rating of corruption in Central Asia				
Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan	Kazakhstan	Turkmenistan
6.00	6.00	6.00	6.25	6.25
Scale from 1 (high) to 7 (low)				
Source: Freedom House (2002, 21) “Corruption Rating”				

As we see, the values are very close together, closer than on any other criterion of transformation rated by Freedom House. Relatively differentiated values for government legitimacy and – as will be discussed below – pluralism and participation evidently have little influence on the measure of corruption – the indicator par excellence for the **continuing influence of informal action routines and informal networks in government organs**.

Pluralism and participation

The picture appears to be particularly differentiated as far as political liberties and the degree of organization of civil society found in the societies of Central Asia are concerned. Here too, all Central Asian countries rank at the lower end of the scale among the countries in transition, although sizable qualitative differences can be observed. **Turkmenistan neither has sufficient legal foundations for social plurality and participation, nor does the political regime allow any activities with a thrust in this direction. In Uzbekistan the situation is similar**, although the country is far less isolated (travel, Internet), and foreign institutions, like the German political foundations, have a certain leeway to offer forums for discussions and constructive debates on socially relevant issues that are conducted without government control – but with government involvement. This means that these institutions are in a position to serve as catalysts for a slow process of change in areas which – unlike e.g. the question of acceptance of free media – give the government no fundamental reason to fear for its governance capacities. **In Kyrgyzstan in particular the presence of external institutions has fostered the development of a diverse landscape of political and other civil-society organizations**. This diversity – even though, in the eyes of some local observers, it may be overly donor-induced – is one of the most important long-term stabilization factors in a country forced to come to grips with pronounced socio-economic problems and centrifugal tendencies. While the more or less illiberal course pursued by the president in recent years has obstructed possibilities to participate in the

political decision-making process and kept opposition groups out of the struggle for power, it has not yet led to a fundamental questioning of pluralism and rights of participation. The media landscape here, which is more diverse and freer than in the other Central Asian countries, also reflects this state of affairs. **Kazakhstan is likewise marked by a considerable plurality of civil-society actors**, a fact which is due above all to a more open political course pursued during the early phase of the transformation process – as compared with today’s situation. In the meantime, however, the political environment has developed adversely and, with the exception of a few remaining low-circulation weekly or monthly newspapers, the media are almost completely under the control of the president (be it via the government apparatus, be it via family members). Tajikistan, finally, has managed to gain considerable ground since the 1997 peace agreement, including in the areas of pluralism and participation.

Two other Freedom House ratings may serve to illustrate this category – on the one hand, the state of development of civil society and on the other the existence of independent media:

Table 5: Freedom House – Rating of civil society in Central Asia				
Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Kazakhstan	Uzbekistan	Turkmenistan
4.50	5.00	5.50	6.75	7.00
Scale from 1 (high) to 7 (low)				
Source: Freedom House (2002, 21) “Civil Society Rating”				

Table 6: Freedom House – Rating of independent media in Central Asia				
Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Kazakhstan	Uzbekistan	Turkmenistan
5.75	5.75	6.00	6.75	7.00
Scale from 1 (high) to 7 (low)				
Source: Freedom House (2002, 21) “Independent Media Rating”				

These ratings also clearly indicate a “cultural boundary” running between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on the one hand and the three other Central Asian countries on the other. While the point is not at all to level out the differences between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the difference between them and the other Central Asian countries is nevertheless sizable. Another striking fact is the unusually high value for development of civil society in Kyrgyzstan (4.50.), which contrasts sharply with the – in absolute terms – lowest value of 7.00 for Turkmenistan.

Conflict-resolution mechanisms

Impartial police and judicial authorities, independent courts, a government tolerant toward political dissidents, and respect for due process of law are central *institutional* guarantees for the ability of a society to resolve conflicts constructively and nonviolently. Forums in which tolerance can be practiced within society, which, in other words, bring together different ethnic groups, political parties, or estranged neighboring communities to jointly and cooperatively search for solutions to day-to-day problems, are, accordingly, a *social* prerequisite for the success of nonviolent conflict resolution. **In institutional terms, the Central Asian countries here too show a poor overall balance**, again with marked internal differences. Looked at in terms of the legal conditions needed for impartial police and judicial authorities and independent courts, the situation in the more open and markedly reformed countries - above all Kyrgyzstan, but also Kazakhstan – is considerably better than in Uzbekistan or Turkmenistan, though without being really satisfactory. Another Freedom House rating may serve as an illustration here: the Constitutional, Legislative and Judicial Framework Rating (Table 7).

Table 7: Freedom House – Rating of the rule-of-law framework in Central Asia				
Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Kazakhstan	Uzbekistan	Turkmenistan
5.25	5.75	6.00	6.50	7.00
Scale from 1 (high) to 7 (low)				
Source: Freedom House (2002, 21) “Constitutional, Legislative and Judicial Framework Rating”				

The same applies for the even more problematic aspect of the actual implementation of rule-of-law principles like impartiality, due process, and presumption of innocence by the judicial authorities. Here too, all Central Asian countries have serious deficits. The most recent cases of dubious legal proceedings against prominent members of the opposition in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are clear evidence of this, even though they are not comparable with the mass convictions of alleged Islamists in Uzbekistan and the show trials that have been conducted in Turkmenistan. But a governance by the political leadership geared

to political opportuneness is only a part of the problem. A second, not less critical, element is state judicial and police authorities that operate independently of government control, including the law itself. This takes us back to the issue of corruption addressed above. For corruption is not only widespread in the administrative machinery, it is also – and, in the view of many experts, in particular – rife within the police and judicial apparatus (a problem which also plays an important role in connection with the security risks referred to below). **The confidence of citizens in the impartiality of the judicial authorities is negligible**, and only very few people regard the system of justice as a legitimate and effective means of settling individual or collective conflicts.⁸⁹ What this means is that one **fundamental building block of civil conflict resolution is largely missing**.

The institutional weakness of the Central Asian countries must be viewed in the context of highly different national developments in the field of civil society, with the different national capacities this implies to engage in constructive, nonviolent forms of conflict resolution. **In Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan government policy has until now been to dispute the existence of any real legitimate conflicts**, since these would stand in contradiction to the self-image adopted by the paternalistic state. Conflicts are treated not as constitutive elements of developing societies but as a threat to the existence of the political system. Against this background it is simply not possible to openly play out value- or interest-related conflicts in society. If conflicts do erupt, there are no “dams” that might serve to block violent escalation. For this reason Uzbekistan’s supposed “stability” is in the end built on a highly unstable foundation. Occasional events like the killing of policemen and other representatives of state power in 1997 in the Uzbek part of the Ferghana Valley demonstrate this no less clearly than the ruthless use of force by the IMU in its attacks in 1999 and 2000. **Both in Kyrgyzstan and in Kazakhstan the social conditions for cooperative conflict resolution between competing interest groups are fundamentally better**. Incipient efforts to install functioning structures of local self-administration, and in this way to decentralize decision-making competences, are steps in the right direction. Such steps can furthermore fall back on the tradition of self-organized community structures which have been revived in many places within recent years. On the other hand, **authoritarian steps backward** of the kind recently observed in these two countries are a counterproductive approach to dealing with criticism and expressions of dissatisfaction and **threaten to provoke precisely the violence that they purport to be combating**.

In sum, we find that **massive governance deficits persist in all Central Asian countries**. Not only is the interplay between state and society for the most part not suitable to bringing emerging conflicts to a legitimate solution acceptable in principle to the conflict parties, it often even contributes to escalating conflicts or to aggravating the modes in which they are played out. Below the level of this general finding, we can make out some important dif-

89 On the police, see ICG (2002c, I): “The police are feared, mistrusted and viewed as ineffective in protecting the population from crime.”

ferences between the countries concerned. Against the background of very different experiences, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have made the greatest progress toward greater legitimacy and conflict-resolution capacities in their political systems. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan still have the longest way to go. Kazakhstan is positioned somewhere in between, still somewhat closer to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

The dimension of the problem can be illustrated with reference to a question that is frequently asked in Central Asia and worries many observers: **What happens if the president dies**, or is, for one reason or another, suddenly no longer available? In every one of the five Central Asian countries confidence in the stability of the system is very highly dependent on the person of the respective head of state. **But due to the low civil conflict-resolution capacities in society, some observers fear the very worst scenarios, down to and including civil war, for the supposedly most stable countries of the region, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.**

3.2 Economy

Problems in coming to grips with transformation and rapid change

All Central Asian countries suffered economically from the collapse of the Soviet Union. High inflation rates, unemployment or vocational uncertainty, irregular and insufficient government benefits (like pension payments) led in the first half of the 1990s to a deep uncertainty among the populations of these countries. Highly respected population groups (teachers, doctors, scientists) lost their social status, and professional groups that had earlier not even existed gained considerable influence in the economy (e.g. bankers). Major migration movements materialized. The political elite was rapidly shaken up, and although this did not mean any genuine change in elite structures, it did lead to a forced generation change. These changes most markedly affected Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan the governments sought to alleviate the social impacts of radical change, but without being able to spare their populations inflation, income losses, and social insecurity. In view of the civil war there, the people of Tajikistan were forced wholly to rely on their own resources.

In the meantime the picture has become further differentiated. **Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan** have completed the most crucial processes of economic and social change. Efforts there must now focus on harnessing a stable economic upswing to alleviate a new, widespread poverty (pro-poor growth), although no one would be willing to rule out the possibility of a new recession, particularly in Kyrgyzstan. In any case, a – decelerated – **process of structural change will continue**, giving rise to **further uncertainty and experiences of downward social mobility**. For Kyrgyzstan, for example, dramatic estimates assume a

youth unemployment ranging between 80 and 90 %.⁹⁰ Due to its resource wealth (and larger domestic market) Kazakhstan has the potential to mitigate any possible future shocks. Kyrgyzstan on the other hand is in a far worse position, especially in view of its high foreign debt.

The most radical economic changes are still to come for Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan may be able to continue, for a while, to fund its unproductive, unreformed economic and social system from revenues from exports of raw materials (even though there is some reason to assume that rent-seeking strategies of the elite and general distributional inefficiencies are substantially contravening the mitigating effects of this policy). Uzbekistan, on the other hand, is faced with a more difficult situation. High population growth rates in the 1980s and 1990s and a shortage of jobs in the country's most densely populated areas (mainly in the Ferghana Valley) require economic growth rates just to stabilize the national economy that are as good as impossible under the conditions presently given. What this means is that **large segments of the population are threatened with further social decline and a lack of future prospects.** Without systemic change, a socio-economically motivated crisis, starting out e.g. in the Ferghana Valley, is certainly conceivable in the long run. Unlike the situation in Turkmenistan, however, a **discussion over economic-policy strategies** is definitely underway in **Uzbekistan**, at least in expert circles. Below the level of radical system reform, experiments are being conducted with individual free-market elements (e.g. stepped-up promotion of SMEs). However, such approaches have remained foreign bodies in a setting dominated by a government determined everywhere to assert its control.

Growing socioeconomic disparities

A sharp decline in economic output and a subsequent upturn in growth in all Central Asian countries led first to a **rapid material and social decline of large segments of the populations** and then to a **highly selective recovery**. It may generally be said that the costs of transformation have been (and, thanks e.g. to declining quality in the education and health sector, continue to be) far more broadly distributed than the later gains.⁹¹ Even though no comparable statistical income-distribution data (Gini index) are available for all five countries,⁹² recent figures (1998) show, e.g. for Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, distribution patterns far more inequitable than those noted for all Western European countries. For

90 USAID (2002, 5).

91 On the consequence of this for reform policy, the danger of a "freeze on partial reforms," see Hellman (1998).

92 The 2002 World Development Indicators cite for the five countries different reference years ranging from 1996 to 1999. Since the same period experienced the most dynamic divergence in the development of the economies of these countries, the individual country data cannot be reasonably compared; see World Bank (2002a).

Kyrgyzstan a value was determined in 1999 which is likewise above the Western European average, although the disparity is considerably lower than in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The available data would seem to indicate that market liberalization in Kyrgyzstan has led to less inequality than the continuation of a paternalistic state-run economy, with its selective introduction of individual market elements (privatization of small and microenterprises) in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

There is too little reliable data available to permit any precise comparative statements concerning the incidence of income poverty in the Central Asian countries, although it can generally be said that **income poverty has become a mass phenomenon, a new experience for the generations living today, and one that is, in this form, difficult to deal with for many people.** There are, in addition, **enormous regional disparities within the Central Asian countries,**⁹³ and these hold special intrasocietal conflict potential, since they make it possible to subjectively link experiences of socioeconomic injustice with regional and/or ethnic identities.

Competition for natural resources

Fertile land, clean water, and a healthy environment are scarce resources in Central Asia. Almost everywhere, people lack at least one, in many cases two, of these three factors; and in ecological disaster areas like the region around the Aral Sea, the contaminated weapons testing facilities in Kazakhstan, or the densely populated, monoculturally farmed areas in the Ferghana Valley, salinized soils, scarce and heavily polluted water, and a general ecological degradation are joining forces with population growth and intermittently very high population densities to form a potentially fatal mixture. We can illustrate some of the potentially most conflict-laden factors on the basis of a number of selected natural geographic and demographic data (see Table 8).

In all Central Asian countries large tracts of land are desert, steppe, or high mountainous and are therefore practically uninhabitable. What this means is that actual average population density is many times higher than the ostensible statistical average. In particular, the percentage of land under cultivation, 4-11 %, is very low. In the desert countries Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan extensive irrigation systems are used to maintain agriculture, while at the same time water is an extremely scarce resource that depends on inflows from neighboring countries, and the Aral Sea continues to dry up. In a parallel development, these two countries, together with Tajikistan, have experienced substantial population growth in the last twenty years. **A growing generation now sees itself confronted with a combination of ecological degradation and relative shrinkage of – in any case scarce – resources.**

93 See Müller (2003, III).

Table 8: Natural geographical and demographic factors					
	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
Area	2,717,300 km ²	198,500 km ²	143,100 km ²	488,100 km ²	447,400 km ²
Population	15 million	5 million	6.5 million	5.5 – 6 million	25 million
Average population growth, p.a., 1980-2000, in %	0.0	1.5	2.2	3.0	2.2
Average population growth, p.a., 2000-2015, in % (forecast)	0.2	1.1	1.5	1.3	1.3
Geography	approx. 90 % steppe	approx. 90 % mountains	approx. 90 % mountains	approx. 90 % desert	approx. 90 % desert
Arable land	11 %	7 %	5 %	4 %	11 %
Rural population density (rural. population per km ² of arable land)	22	236	611	173	342
Freshwater resources per capita (thousand m ³)	7.4	9.5	12.9	11.7	4.6
Share of freshwater from other countries (in %)	31	0	17	98	86
Sources: EBRD (2002a); EBRD (2002b-d); EBRD (2001a-b); World Bank (2002a); Gumpfenberg (2002a); in part author's calculations					

In summary, the picture emerging in the field of economy shows clear-cut regional differences, and, on the whole, gives some reason for concern. Against the background of its total population, its central geographic location, its lack of a plausible development strategy, **Uzbekistan** must be seen as **the Central Asian country with the largest long-run socioeconomic risk potential**. **Kyrgyzstan** and **Tajikistan**, the countries with the region's lowest per capita incomes, are **likewise encumbered with severe socioeconomic burdens**. Moreover, they are, **through the Ferghana Valley, linked closely** with developments in Uzbekistan. By comparison, **Kazakhstan has been the most successful coun-**

try of all in **managing the process of economic transformation**. The difficult social situation of a large portion of the population and the country's substantial ecological burdens are at least in part mitigated by the country's large agriculturally utilizable areas, its positive economic development over recent years, and its current investment potential, which is largely due to its wealth in natural resources. Still, national experts are cautious even in Kazakhstan. A survey of experts conducted in the summer of 2002 by a Kazakh research institute arrived at an overall assessment indicating there is reason to anticipate growing economic, social, and ecological risks in the future, with the ecological dimension threatening to become an extreme risk factor, while the anticipated economic and social risks are seen as "above-average" or "high."⁹⁴ Long-term negative developments in many resource-rich countries of the world also give reason for caution in coming up with overly optimistic prognoses.

3.3 Sociocultural factors

Political instrumentalization of cultural and other differences

Central Asia is marked by a diversity of ethnic, linguistic, religious, regional tribe- or clan-related, and other cultural identities which break national populations down into a large number of different identity groups. However, the cleavages between these various characteristics are often cross-cutting in nature and thus serve to create **multiple identities that are not per se suitable for purposes of political mobilization**.

Violent conflicts have erupted **along local regional identities** in the recent past in the south of the Central Asian region (**Tajikistan, Ferghana Valley**). Here, particularly unfavorable socioeconomic circumstances had created the conditions among the (younger male) population for an openness to violence which was channeled by rival parts of the political elite in their own specific interests.

Aside from this recent history of conflict, however, Central Asia is also marked by a tradition of **cultural diversity and tolerance**. In its own way, the Soviet Union continued this legacy by proclaiming equal rights for all ethnic groups, by pressing for industrialization and urbanization, with their side-effect of creating a widespread sense of "multiculturalism" for segments of the populations, and by making available a lingua franca, Russian, which served in particular to link the region's elites. This **legacy is alive even today**. But political developments since independence have also cast light on the limitations of Soviet nationality policy. In the early 1990s the system's coercive character provoked the emergence of national and religious liberation or revivalist movements which were devoted to the search for the roots of the respective national identities and thus automatically served to reinforce social cleavages. To be sure, most ethnic national movements soon lost much of

94 ARG (2002, 2).

their new support, when the Central Asian governments themselves took charge of promotion of national ethnic groups with a view to creating a new, post-Soviet legitimacy for themselves. At the same time, the political leaderships were at pains to prevent the emergence of any major tensions among the different ethnic groups. The (proud) reference to the multiethnic character of the nation, which was already a cornerstone of the Soviet ideological edifice, is today an essential element of political rhetoric in all Central Asian countries. It is generally thought that in recent years a more relaxed attitude has emerged toward the Russian language, which, in the years following independence, was pushed into the background in all Central Asian countries (though to different extents) in favor of the respective national language.

One factor that has turned out to be **more problematic**, however, is the way in which the Central Asian countries have **dealt with resurgent religiosity**. In **Uzbekistan** official efforts to suppress all religious currents other than a government-controlled Islam were **instrumental in the emergence of the militant IMU** and the growing sympathy enjoyed by the Hizb ut-Tahrir.⁹⁵ In **Tajikistan**, too, stigmatization of the Islamic-oriented opposition as “Islamists” by President Rahmonov in the early 1990s contributed only to radicalizing the opposition. However, the situation following the civil war appears to have a thrust in the opposite direction. By involving **Islamic forces in the present coalition government**, Tajikistan has set the clearest signal of all countries of the region for religious tolerance. **Due to the religious traditions in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan**, the **initial situation** there was **more relaxed**. The respective governments saw no threat in the resurgence of a traditional Islamic popular religiosity of the kind long cultivated by the nomadic peoples, and were accordingly more tolerant. For the same reason, though, the **more strict, dogmatic Islamic religious practices common in the Ferghana Valley** are likely to remain more or less alien to the Kyrgyz elite in Bishkek. Recently the Kyrgyz government has been increasingly warning of Islamist movements, pointing both to Hizb ut-Tahrir and the IMU, which is now claimed to have reconstituted itself as the “Islamic Movement of Central Asia.” The countermeasures undertaken by the security forces have been concentrated on the south of the country. Whether and to what extent these are real threats, or whether the government is merely seeking to discredit the political opposition from the south by linking it with militant extremists, as critics of the government suggest, is a question that can at present not be answered.

Regional identities, defined neither in strictly ethnic nor in strictly religious terms, are in some cases **just as important** in Central Asia as the allegedly primordial characteristics mentioned above. For instance, one factor that unites ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in the Kyrgyz part of the Ferghana Valley is a certain resentment of the south toward the north of the country, while Christian Kyrgyz in Bishkek have much in common with the Russian-descended population living there. Furthermore, in the urban areas of Tashkent, Bishkek,

95 On the emergence of the IMU, see Rashid (2002, 177–189).

or Almaty “mixed marriages” between members of different ethnic groups and religious denominations are a perfectly natural part of everyday life, while for many people there is a clear-cut civilizational divide between town and country, particularly when these people are first-generation town-dwellers.

The ethnic, religious, and other cultural diversity of Central Asia would seem to suggest the existence there of major potential for tensions. But in view of international realities this potential should not be overestimated. There are hardly any attempts to openly mobilize individual identity groups. In many cases overlapping identities tend to run counter to any overly one-sided instrumentalization of identities. Even so, it is important not to overlook individual risk potentials. The greatest risk would be a **mobilization of border-area ethnic minorities** by their neighboring “motherland”; in concrete terms – and in view of the ethnic and military givens: attempts by the Uzbek government to mobilize Uzbek minorities in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, or Turkmenistan. **At present**, however, there are **no overt signs** of this.

3.4 Security

Legacy of violence

Tajikistan in particular, a post-conflict country, has had to grapple with the difficult legacy of widespread social violence. It is here that we encounter the phenomena typical associated with civil war – a **low threshold of violence, widespread possession of firearms**. The **other Central Asian countries** have no comparable history of violence. The rioting in the Ferghana Valley in 1989 and 1990 has remained singular in this respect, and the main sentiment resulting from it has been fear, not any willingness to escalate violence. Still, there are some **worrying signals**. The use of massive government **force as a means of repression** against opposition members, as in **Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan**, could one day spark a similar reaction against the ruling regime and its representatives. In this respect, the attacks undertaken by the IMU must be understood as a warning. In **Kyrgyzstan**, particularly in Bishkek, there have recently been reports of growing, **excessive violence on the part of youthful street robbers**, a fact that has aroused concern about a general decline in the threshold of violence, and in recent years a sizable number of economically motivated **contract killings in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan** has attracted public attention. While violence as a means of conflict resolution is generally taboo in society, it is not necessarily out of the question if the matter concerned appears to justify violence.

Arms proliferation and irregular armed units

In the Central Asian countries, and particularly in **Tajikistan, widespread possession of small arms** is, as mentioned above, a serious problem. Furthermore, starting out from the

north of Tajikistan, the activities of the IMU in 1999 and 2000 have made the **Ferghana Valley**, with the surrounding mountainous regions, into an important **center of trafficking in small arms**. There is speculation on possible connections between arms-trafficking and the crisis regions in the Caucasus. Problems faced by central government institutions, particularly in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, in extending their authority to the remote sections of the Ferghana Valley have paved the way for the activities of criminal gangs. The war against terrorism and the stationing of Western troops have, however, led to a new situation there. There are hardly any reliable data available on the current situation, but there are many indications that the extent of illegal arms-trafficking has declined in the region, even though the related criminal structures are still in place. Like drug-trafficking, the **arms trade** is, for many of those involved, not least an **economic survival strategy** in a region which offers hardly any regular chances for individual economic advancement. Furthermore, it may be assumed that one reason why many small arms came into circulation in the early 1990s in Central Asia, as in other parts of the former Soviet Union, was that military personnel offered weapons for sale from the inventories of the former Soviet army to improve their insufficient pay levels. The involvement of underpaid Russian soldiers stationed in Tajikistan – whose tasks should actually include suppression of arms sales – in trafficking in arms and drugs has been widely documented.

In **Tajikistan** an additional threat is posed by **landmines** that were set out by enemy units in the civil war and have until today not been cleared for lack of suitable equipment and adequate funding. In 2002 alone 60 people, most of them women and children, fell victim to mine incidents. Most of the minefields are located along the border to Uzbekistan, but thousands of mines are also suspected in other former front-line areas. Many farmers face grave danger to life and limb in tilling their fields. In February 2003 the OSCE launched an initiative on a coordinated, internationally supported mine-clearance program.⁹⁶ The **mining of the Uzbek border** to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan likewise poses a danger to the civilian population. This situation is now reported to have improved, in part in response to international pressure, although the danger has not yet been fully eliminated for the population living in border areas.

Nothing is known about the existence of major irregular armed units in Central Asia – with the above-mentioned exception of the IMU, whose present situation remains unclear. Past estimates (1999/2000) assumed figures somewhere between several hundred and several thousand fighters, though most of them are unlikely still to be under arms today. In other words, the IMU no longer appears to pose a military threat, although it may still be in a position to use terrorist attacks to spread fear and uncertainty.

96 Zakirova (2003).

Uncontrolled government security forces

In many countries of the world the regular military forces are in a position to exert considerable pressure on civilian governments, to secure unjustified privileges for themselves, and to weigh heavily on society at large as a quasi-parasitic organization. This description does not apply for the armies in Central Asia. The military is relatively weak and has only very limited political influence. This stands in marked contrast to the **interior ministries of the Central Asian republics**, which, in the old Soviet tradition, are almost exclusively centralized police authorities that have quasi-military units of their own to suppress internal unrest, and which cultivate a strong esprit de corps: Their **influence on politics is sometimes considerable, and their day-to-day activities often largely elude effective government control**. Viewed in the context of government reform geared to the model of good governance, they represent one of the most powerful veto-wielding groups.

In none of the Central Asian republics has there been any structural reform of the internal security forces in line with the economic and social changes that have been effected in at least some of these countries. Looking at the present state of the internal **security forces** in Central Asia, a study by the International Crisis Group, which calls for urgent and comprehensive efforts in the field of police reform, regards these security forces as **worse in many respects than they were in Soviet times: more corrupt, less concerned with the needs of the population, more deeply involved in organized crime, and often no longer under the control of the political leadership**. The security sector, the study further notes, suffers from a lack of equipment and poor pay, a lack of qualified staff and enormous corruption.⁹⁷ Kyrgyzstan's interior ministry receives only a quarter of its funds from the national budget. The remaining funds are acquired through a mixture of economic activities, extortion, and other involuntary levies (fines etc.). In other Central Asian countries the situation is similar, or worse (Tajikistan). Citizens have very little trust in the security forces, and by using excessive force (torture, abuse during arrests procedures, etc.) the security forces are themselves contributing to even further lowering the threshold of violence in society.

These **“security forces” are thus one of the major sources of insecurity for the societies of Central Asia**. In individual prominent cases at any rate, the security forces have proved more than willing to be instrumentalized to carry out political orders going beyond established law, and in day-to-day life they are primarily concerned with satisfying of their own needs and interests. By contrast, the task of guaranteeing the protection and security of the population, much in the sense of human security, plays no more than a subordinate role.

On the whole, though, **the picture that emerges in the field of security is, while worrying, not an especially alarming one**. The risk that the security situation may deteriorate and develop negative intrinsic dynamics due to inherent crisis factors must be assessed as more or less small. Viewed in combination with other crisis factors, however, the situation

97 ICG (2002c).

assumes a far more threatening aspect. The reason for this is that the type and structure of the problems given in the security sector give **little reason to expect that a stable security situation would do much to effectively prevent an escalation of violent conflict that might emerge in connection with a persistent deterioration of the political and economic framework and related growth in conflicts of interest.**

It is also clear that the canon of problems faced by these countries in the security sector is marked by **more common elements shared by all Central Asian countries** than is the case in the fields of governance and economics. The factors that play a role here obviously include the Soviet legacy and the inherent tendency of certain security risks (drugs, weapons, illegal armed units) to cross borders.

3.5 External factors

Negative impacts of external intervention

None of the Central Asian states is subject to massive external intervention with any clearly definable thrust. Below this threshold, however, we can identify a number of factors with **economic, political, and military impacts** that must be seen as at least ambivalent and could possibly, within a given conflict constellation, serve to aggravate a conflict.

In **Russia's** view Central Asia is its natural geostrategic "sphere of interest," and Russia is engaged in the region in a number of different ways. Russia's positive influences include its efforts to avoid heating up the multifarious problems of the Russian-descended minorities in the Central Asian countries by indulging in confrontational rhetoric and its commitment to search for more or less pragmatic solutions. On the other hand, one negative factor is the large measure of congruence between the political notions held by the Russian leadership and the authoritarian methods of rule adopted by the Central Asian presidents. This finds expression in particular in Russian support (including military) for the massive suppression of the Islamic opposition in Central Asia. The fact that Russia's notions of stability for Central Asia are closely linked with continuity in the leaderships in place in the region means that the Russian government exerts absolutely no democratization pressure on the political regimes in the region.

Kazakhstan's **Caspian oil** was early to attract the interest and economic engagement of foreign oil companies, which were interested both in developing the country's oil wells and in building new pipelines. While Turkmenistan was of far less interest because of its smaller reserves and unfavorable political-economic framework, Kazakhstan managed to attract substantial foreign investment into its oil sector. For the industry itself this modernization meant new jobs and higher incomes, while for the economy as a whole it meant growth driven by greater exports and more purchasing power. At the same time, though, this offered the political elite considerable opportunities for self-enrichment. President Nazarbayev is accused by his opponents of transferring a large share of the proceeds from

the oil business to private bank accounts abroad, in this way deceiving the population on a grand scale. Even though the president himself vehemently disputes these accusations, they do contribute to further exacerbating the confrontation between the government and its opponents.

The problematic **consequences of foreign aid** for the Central Asian countries include the high foreign debt of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Both countries are now categorized by the World Bank as “highly indebted low-income countries,” its most difficult category.⁹⁸ As regards Kyrgyzstan, some local observers are also of the opinion that the country has long since exceeded its absorption capacity for external aid. Too many donor-induced measures and advisory projects have, it is claimed, failed to achieve effects or have deflected the government from developing a coherent strategy of its own. The widely publicized announcement of Western donors at a Consultative Group Meeting in October 2002 that Kyrgyzstan would be provided additional aid amounting to US \$ 700 million over the coming years is not seen as particularly helpful by critics in view of the widespread view held in the south of the country that the government in Bishkek had in the past itself profited from foreign financial aid money while the rest of the country felt no positive effects. Although it is generally difficult to cite facts to prove such allegations, they are a clear indication that donor coordination and respect for the principle of country ownership need to be improved considerably in the case of Kyrgyzstan.⁹⁹

The most powerful recent change in the constellation of external influence on the Central Asian countries was brought about by the **stationing there of Western armed forces** in the context of the anti-terror coalition. One of the undoubted positive effects has been a short-term stabilization of the security situation in the Ferghana Valley due to a weakening of the IMU. On the other hand, the long-term effects are far more difficult to predict. One of the fears expressed is that the alliance between the region’s authoritarian rulers and Western governments could drive the political opposition into the camp of extremist, anti-Western movements and thus, in the long term, contribute to polarizing the political situation, in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in particular.

Negative impacts of the regional / international setting

One of the greatest regional security risks must be seen in the **internal borders** between the Central Asian countries, which have already been addressed.¹⁰⁰ The different economic-policy strategies pursued by the governments concerned, divergent notions on security policy, corrupt border and customs authorities, borders that cut apart grown social

98 World Bank (2002c, 121).

99 Information from interviews with Filip Noubel, ICG, und Charles Buxton, INTRAC, Bishkek, 26 and 27 Nov. 2003, as well as with other interviewees.

100 See also above, p. 43.

relationships and separate individual territories from the mother country, and disputed border demarcations constitute massive obstacles to the development of productive economic relations and peaceful exchanges that foster the willingness of people to cooperate. In this connection a central role falls to Uzbekistan, which borders on all of the other Central Asian countries and thus far has left largely untapped the chances offered by efforts to overcome its narrow, autarkist notions of security.

It must also be noted that the structural stability of each individual Central Asian republic is closely linked with the stability situation prevailing in neighboring countries. Severe socioeconomic, political, or economic crises in one country would necessarily set in train refugee movements to neighboring countries and could therefore entail an expansion of these crises. Concern about a “**domino effect**” of this kind has until now had a moderating influence on the governments in the region. Still, the prevalent atmosphere continues to be one of distrust vis-à-vis the alleged intentions of Uzbekistan, but also of Kazakhstan.

Furthermore, the **water issue** is closely linked with the problem of an insufficient willingness to cooperate among the Central Asian countries. A solution which took into account the needs of all countries concerned would focus on new forms of cooperation to break out of the logic of the zero-sum game and at the same time pay adequate attention to the question of energy supply for the small, resource-poor countries Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. A comprehensive approach of this kind would, however, presuppose trust, and trust could be built only on the basis of integrative institutions and the step-by-step development of solutions, an approach which would entail positive effects going beyond the narrow technical purpose intended.¹⁰¹

As a neighbor region of **Afghanistan**, Central Asia is also immediately affected by the development of the political and social situation there. A deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan would once again drive refugees across the borders to the north. Should it prove impossible to establish an effective government authority in all of Afghanistan's territory within the foreseeable future, there would be every reason to fear a renewed deterioration of the drug problem in the region. At the end of the 1990s estimates were that 80 % of the heroin traded worldwide stemmed from Afghanistan. The Central Asian countries have developed into one of the central drug transit corridors to Europe. Success in combating the drug trade in Central Asia is therefore closely linked to the situation in Afghanistan.

In a different way, Kyrgyzstan is linked with its neighboring region to the *north*. The number of Kyrgyz citizens who earn their livings outside the country and support their family members at home is estimated to be about 500,000 (10 % of the total population!). The

101 Such a neofunctionalist approach would borrow on the experiences made during the beginnings of European integration in the “European Coal and Steel Community” and the “European Atomic Energy Community.”

transfers made by these **migrant workers** contribute substantially to the disposable incomes of the population in Kyrgyzstan. The largest share of these (mostly illegal) migrant workers is employed in Russia, primarily in Siberia.¹⁰² Recently Russia has repeatedly announced its intention to expel these people. Should this project in fact be realized, it would have immediate consequences for the social situation in Kyrgyzstan.

Commodity prices in the world market are another potential crisis factor for the Central Asian republics. In recent years low cotton prices have caused substantial problems for both Uzbekistan, one of world's major cotton producers, and Turkmenistan, and the situation also has effects on Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Moreover, gold exports are of major importance for Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Kazakhstan - like also Turkmenistan - is mainly dependent on the price of crude oil, although it also exports sizable amounts of nonferrous metals as well as titanium, uranium, and gold.¹⁰³

Altogether, Central Asia is embedded in a regional and international environment which involves no immediate threats, though it does involve a number of risk factors. Some are difficult to influence (commodity prices), while others are in some ways open to political influence by neighboring countries or Western donors.

3.6 Result

It is first of all important to note that there is **no acute violent conflict underway in any of the five Central Asian countries**. One country, Tajikistan, is in an advanced phase of post-civil-war deescalation and consolidation (a phase, though which – to remain with the image of the conflict cycle – could in principle swing back to escalation at any time). While the other four countries have experienced isolated violent internal conflicts in the recent past, they are, generally speaking, in what may be referred to as a pre-conflict phase, i.e. in the phase of a *possible* emergence and escalation of violent conflict.

There is little reason to anticipate either an immediate outbreak of violent internal conflicts or any threat of international conflicts. **In the long term, however**, the region is faced with **considerable risks** bound up with the negative dynamics of the conflict potentials to be observed in most Central Asian countries.

If we transfer the conflict potentials identified in the five focus areas and crisis factors discussed above to the three problem levels of “structural causes of conflict, constructive conflict-resolution capacity,” and “conflict-aggravating security risks,” we come up with the overview presented in Table 9 (below).

102 Interview with Filip Noubel, ICG, Bishkek, 26 Nov. 2002.

103 See Havlik / Vertlib (1996).

Table 9: Crisis and conflict potentials in Central Asia, broken down by problem areas		
Structural causes	Constructive conflict-resolution capacity	Conflict-aggravating security risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantial economic uncertainties persist • Widespread income poverty is a new, difficult experience for many people • Income disparities have grown substantially • Major regional disparities exist within the countries concerned • Social infrastructure (healthcare, education) has deteriorated • A large cohort of young people are without jobs and perspectives • Fertile land is becoming increasingly scarce due to population growth and environmental degradation • Poverty and environmental degradation are causing more and more diseases • National borders cleave grown sociocultural and economic spaces • Natural resources are unevenly distributed among the countries concerned • Certain (regional, ethnic, religious, etc.) identity groups feel systematically discriminated against or are persecuted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As conflict mediators, government institutions suffer from legitimacy deficits, corruption, and weakness in their implementation capacities • The legal system lacks trust among the population • Civil-society activities are mainly weakly developed and are sometimes massively obstructed • Government intolerance toward and use of force against opposition provokes counterviolence • Government denial of the existence of legitimate conflicts encourages conflict escalation • Western aid regarded as overly regime-oriented (major investments, military, DC) could serve to undercut a conflict-moderating role for donors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The threshold of violence within societies is declining • Government security forces spread uncertainty, not security • Due to the civil war in Tajikistan, many weapons are circulating there as well as in neighboring regions • Organized crime (trafficking in drugs and arms) is undercutting the government's monopoly on power and encouraging the spread of an illegal economy • Acute crises in one country have the potential to spread quickly to neighboring countries • Dependence on exports of raw materials may lead to unforeseen socioeconomic tensions • Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan's high external debt is saddling the populations with additional burdens

Proceeding on this basis, we will then sum up the crisis and conflict potentials in Central Asia, broken down by individual countries and specific geographic areas. The emphasis will be on those factors which deviate positively or negatively from the overall picture of the region. Of all the Central Asian countries, **Kazakhstan**, with its lower poverty rates, more stable economic situation, lower population growth, and greater utilizable land area, has the relatively lowest level of structural conflict causes, even though the country's major ecological burdens must be seen as a particularly negative factor. Although the ability of state and society to resolve conflicts constructively is not very highly developed there, Kazakhstan does have a more or less broad spectrum of civil-society organizations that in principle can be seen as a potential basis for cooperative efforts to seek solutions to pressing problems. Geographically, Kazakhstan is farther removed than the other Central Asian countries from some of the crisis-aggravating security risks besetting the region; however, an increasing propensity to violence in society, the country's problematic security forces, and a high degree of dependence on commodity exports continue to be virulent problem factors.

Under the present conditions, **Uzbekistan** must be seen as Central Asia's most endangered country over the long run. The severe structural problems dogging the country include an economic development stagnating at a low level in a setting urgently in need of reform, a large and extremely young population, a high population density in the habitable parts of the country, and a lack of reliably stable sources of government revenue. These problems are exacerbated by a general absence of established cooperative conflict-resolution mechanisms and a government policy of repression which contributes to the escalation of violence. Furthermore, the country's central geographic location links it with nearly all potential regional flash points in Central Asia, in particular with the Ferghana Valley and Tajikistan.

Kyrgyzstan is likewise marked by substantial structural conflict potentials. A gradual economic upswing has thus far had hardly any effects on the predominantly very poor population in most parts of the country. No solution has yet been found for the country's high foreign debt. The tensions between the country's south and north have increased, and the events of 1990 are reminder enough that violent conflicts could also break out along ethnic divides. Kyrgyzstan is closely bound up, through the Ferghana Valley, with its neighbors Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as well as with regional security problems like drug-trafficking. Despite the recent political disturbances, however, Kyrgyzstan has the relatively best social prerequisites of all the Central Asian countries for civil conflict resolution and the search for participatory solutions. Much will depend on whether or not the government manages to activate this potential for purposes of constructive crisis management.

Since 1997, following the civil war, **Tajikistan** has developed more positively than many observers had dared to hope. It nevertheless remains the region's poorest, most underdeveloped, and most traumatized country. Bordering directly on Afghanistan, it is also (still) the Central Asian country most threatened in its external security. Furthermore, in no other

country in Central Asia is the state monopoly on power less secure. Tajikistan's high foreign debt is an additional problematic factor. At the same time, however, no other country in Central Asia has made greater progress on the road from violent conflict to civil conflict resolution.

Turkmenistan shows an overall balance equally as unfavorable as Uzbekistan's but aggravated by a *complete* absence of legitimate conflict-resolution capacities. The country does, though, benefit from more or less stable export revenues which it can, at least for the time being, use to mitigate negative socioeconomic effects, and it is faced with considerably lower population pressure – although its population has grown enormously in the last 20 years.

Regionally, two crisis potentials that have the form of country-overlapping problems deserve to be mentioned separately: first, a pervasive **water** scarcity which, far from being merely a possible source of a cross-border water-distribution conflict, is even today, in its ecological consequences, adversely affecting agriculture and the living conditions of people living in degraded zones like the Aral Sea region; second, as a geographic focus, the **Ferghana Valley**. In its combination of structural, process-related, and conflict-aggravating crisis potentials, this region stands out like no other region in Central Asia. Here, in a zone of transboundary ecological degradation, the following problems come together in one small area, mutually reinforcing one another: socioeconomic and demographic pressure from Uzbekistan, the status of a structurally weak, ethnically highly heterogeneous, and in part ungovernable periphery in the case of Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan's poverty and security problems.

Apart from a possible “major” crisis in the Ferghana Valley, however, it is important not to disregard the small, “quiet” crises besetting more remote peripheries. In the view of many people living in the remote western parts of Uzbekistan (Autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan) and the province Khorezm, both of which are affected by the Aral Sea disaster), or in the poor, mountainous region of Gorno Badakhshan, which makes up one third of Tajikistan's territory, the Ferghana Valley is still a comparatively rich - because fertile - region which, thanks to its geographic location, benefits from worldwide attention, while elsewhere the hopeless situation of the population is hardly known, even in the capital.

4 German bilateral development cooperation with the Central Asian republics

4.1 Principles

4.1.1 The BMZ's Central Asia strategy

The “Central Asia strategy of the BMZ” of December 18, 2001, is the central conceptual basis of official German development cooperation with the countries of Central Asia.¹⁰⁴ In it the BMZ expressly derives the special attention accorded by Germany to this region from the goal of **crisis prevention** (Point 1: “Contribution of the BMZ to crisis prevention necessary”). In its “endeavor to contribute to crisis prevention” the BMZ is now set to go appreciably beyond its previous, very limited engagement. The strategy therefore proposes according the **status of a partner region to the whole of Central Asia** and intensifying cooperation with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. Turkmenistan “will be included in this partnership once its general environment, especially in terms of democratization, is developing more favorably than at present.”

The Central Asia strategy is based on a very **critical analysis** of the economic and political situation in the countries concerned. The strategy notes that these “countries are faced with substantial socioeconomic reform tasks and that their political systems are still far from being stable democracies with active civil societies.” This, in connection with widespread poverty, “makes them vulnerable with regard to extremist tendencies, also, and especially, of Islamist origin.”

Accordingly, the BMZ defines its contribution as **support of these countries** “in their social and economic development towards democracy and market economy.” The BMZ places alongside a bilateral approach its intention to undertake “efforts ... to strengthen **cross-border cooperation** among the countries,” pointing in particular to the problems water, energy, and the environment. Finally, “special priority” will be accorded to the **Ferghana Valley**.

Proceeding from this goal profile, the BMZ has defined **three fields of cooperation on which the German contribution will concentrate**:

- Strengthening of democratic structures and the rule of law
- Support for economic reforms and poverty reduction
- Promotion of cross-border cooperation

The first field, *strengthening of democratic structures and the rule of law*, basically sets out four points of departure: continuation of an existing regional **legal advice program**;

104 BMZ (2001c).

support for the grassroots work of political foundations and private-sector institutions as a contribution toward **building civil society** and strengthening democracy; **decentralization** of political power and decision-making competences, again involving political foundations and private-sector institutions; and measures (capacity-building / education, dialogue functions) aimed at strengthening the **media**.

A very broad spectrum of approaches is cited in the field of *support for economic reforms and poverty reduction*. Specifically linked with the issue of economic reforms are: different forms of **economic-policy advice**; initiatives on **reform of the banking system**; help with the development of **vocational training systems**; **promotion of business and trade and advisory services for business startups**. The direct aid measures envisaged include **employment programs** (in the sense of job-creation measures) and food-for-work programs targeted on youth unemployment; these programs are at the same time intended to contribute to the rehabilitation of a local and regional infrastructure, and they include different measures in the field of healthcare (combating tuberculosis, family planning, mother-and-child programs, basic health services).

The field of *cross-border cooperation* focuses on three approaches: further development of an existing **anti-desertification program**; projects in the field of **drinking-water supply**; and participation in coordinated, internationally harmonized measures designed to find a **regional solution to the water problem**, the idea being to address the issues of water use, energy production, and agricultural irrigation in one common context.

4.1.2 The German government's Central Asia strategy

A "German Government Central Asia strategy," which was worked out under the leadership of the Foreign Office and approved by the Federal Security Council on March 18, 2002, serves as a political reference framework for the work of federal ministries with the countries of Central Asia.¹⁰⁵ In essence, this document reaffirms the strategic goals set out in the BMZ's strategy, in particular the aim of using dialogue and support measures to help "**promote peaceful social, ecological, and market-oriented economic development,**" the objective being to "**creat[e] ... democratic and transparent political structures.**" The document refers in particular to possibilities for an active participation of the population, respect of human rights, rule of law, social justice, and sustainable management of natural resources. More directly than the BMZ strategy, however, the German government's Central Asia strategy also cites among its objectives "support [for] the independence and sovereignty of our Central Asian partner countries and, in particular, their **fight against terrorism** and organized crime."

105 Bundesregierung (2002).

The document also cites as an aim “the development and application of effective strategies and instruments of **crisis prevention**, peaceful conflict settlement and post-conflict peace-building.” The aim here is “to help prevent violent conflicts in the Central Asian crisis and conflict area in good time.”

To implement these goals, the strategy assigns a “central role” to “increased **development cooperation** by the German government.” Particular emphasis is also placed on “cross-border approaches” in the environmental sector, but also on providing more support for education and science. The document also explicitly calls for close coordination with international partners (above all in the framework of EU, UN, OSCE).

4.2 Instruments

4.2.1 Priority area WIRAM

In the process of concentrating official German development cooperation (DC) on selected priority areas, the German government reached agreement, in 2001/2002, with the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan to define “**economic reform and market systems development**” (WIRAM) as a priority area of bilateral cooperation with these countries. The respective portfolios of German technical and financial cooperation are in the process of being restructured in compliance with this new priority.

For a number of reasons, the choice of this priority area appeared reasonable and promising both for the German side and for the partner countries concerned. In the view of the partner governments an incomplete transformation of economic systems, with the many social, economic, and ecological burdens this state of affairs implies, is the greatest social and political problem they face. In the region of Central Asia (as in the whole of the former Soviet Union) Germany enjoys an extraordinary reputation when it comes to economic issues and is seen as the motherland of the “social market economy,” the aim of which is to seek a balance between the hardships of a capitalist economy and the social security that was once provided by Soviet state socialism.¹⁰⁶ Of the ten possible priority areas of German DC, WIRAM proved to be, from the German perspective, the one area under which most measures in the current portfolio could be subsumed and which therefore involved the lowest reorganization costs. Moreover, formation of a uniform priority area for all countries concerned is a good way to simplify a coordinated regional approach.

106 The fact that this view was already represented among the Central Asian governments in the early 1990s is demonstrated by the preliminary work that went into the establishment, from 1992 on, of a multiyear government advisory service for Kazakhstan by German economics experts. See Hoffmann (2001).

Abstracting from institutional interests, the crisis analysis presented here might just as well lead us to the conclusion that the priority area “democracy, civil society, and public administration” would not have been any less justified for the Central Asian republics. Possibly, even better arguments could be advanced in favor of this approach. On the other hand, there is reason to doubt that it would have been possible to gain the consent of partner countries for a priority of this kind, which might have smacked somewhat of political interference.

4.2.2 Regional approach

One field not affected by the priorities set in bilateral cooperation is the BMZ’s *regional* approach to support, in the context of which **cross-border measures** are carried out in Central Asia. In the framework of this approach the aim is to implement a regional legal advice program as well as healthcare measures (in particular tuberculosis prevention) and environmental projects. Pro-democracy measures are likewise set to be embedded in this context. The cross-border approach must be seen as an attempt by the BMZ to provide instruments in line with the aims of the Central Asia strategy without rejecting the instrument of prioritization for Central Asia.

4.3 Priority areas of ongoing activities

Altogether, Germany is at present still the third-largest bilateral donor in Central Asia after the US and Japan and has - measured in terms of the number of sectors involved - the most broadly diversified portfolio.¹⁰⁷ At present, there is very little cooperation with **Turkmenistan** due to the political framework given there. Only two older projects continue in the region of Tashaus, one of them concerned with improvement of healthcare services, the other with promotion of private-sector agriculture. The agricultural project is hobbled by the narrow latitudes set for private-sector activity in Turkmenistan. A study and expert fund is still available to ensure a more or less rapid reentry if the opportunity arises. The following sections present an overview of priority activities in the other four countries, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

4.3.1 Kazakhstan

The largest portion of the measures underway in Kazakhstan is associated with the WIRAM priority area. As far as financial cooperation is concerned, these include above all measures aimed at promoting the financial sector by providing a credit line for SMEs. Technical cooperation likewise focuses on promotion of SMEs and business startups.

107 EU (2002, 15). On the volume of aid as per ODA criteria, see the overview at the beginning of Chapter 5.

InWent is organizing measures in the field of management qualification. In addition, there are projects designed to support the national statistics agency and the securities exchange. Besides WIRAM, there are also activities underway in the health and energy sectors as well as in the field of legal advice. In the health sector FC funds are being used to support an anti-tuberculosis project which is also being conducted, in a similar form, in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in the framework of cross-border cooperation. Likewise in the context of cross-border cooperation, Kazakhstan is receiving in TC support for a legal advice project. In the energy sector a feasibility study is being conducted in the framework of FC to examine the possibility of rehabilitating an existing hydroelectric power plant and building a new one.¹⁰⁸

4.3.2 Kyrgyzstan

Even now, most of the measures underway in Kyrgyzstan are bound up with the priority area of WIRAM. Aside from projects in the financial sector, though, FC funds are also being used to conduct projects in the electricity industry and in the health sector. The support being provided in the energy sector is set to be concluded in the near future, while the health-related projects are set to continue in the framework of cross-border cooperation. TC already has a clear-cut orientation to the field of economic reform. Here the focus is on projects on advice on economic reform, export and investment promotion, vocational training, support for rural financial systems, and the deployment of several integrated experts in various industry associations. In addition, however, the work underway here includes one environmental measure (Issyk-Kul biosphere reserve; in the framework of cross-border cooperation) and several projects in the south of Kyrgyzstan (Ferghana Valley). These are components of an established project designed to promote private farms and their support institutions (province of Osh) as well as two new projects designed to promote self-help initiatives in rural areas (provinces of Osh and Jalal-Abad) and food security, regional cooperation, and stability in the province of Batken.¹⁰⁹ This last-named project which got underway only in September 2002 and covers three areas includes the goal of strengthening the conflict-resolution capacities of local actors.¹¹⁰

4.3.3 Tajikistan

Up to 2002, Germany provided only emergency aid to Tajikistan. At present, a TC and FC portfolio is being developed, and, as an exception, agreement has been reached with the Tajik government on **basic education** as a **second priority** in addition to WIRAM with a

108 Information from BMZ, KfW, and GTZ.

109 Information from BMZ, KfW, and GTZ.

110 For more information on this project, see Section 4.3.3 on the food security program in Tajikistan.

view to meeting substantial needs in this sector. Furthermore, in 2002 anti-terror funds were used to conduct education measures aimed at reintegrating combatants.¹¹¹

The **food-security program**, which has been underway since 1995 in the framework of emergency aid, and is being conducted by the GTZ on behalf of the BMZ, was extended in 2002 to form a regional program including additional components in southern Kyrgyzstan (Batken) and northern Afghanistan. For the present total of four local components (the program is being conducted in two regions of Tajikistan), additional funds amounting to nearly € 8 million have been provided for the period up to 2005. Altogether, the regional program, which is managed from Dushanbe, is set to run until 2007. In keeping with the selection of crisis-prone target regions – and in compliance with a condition set by the BMZ – the program will explicitly contain crisis-prevention and conflict-resolution elements.¹¹² In this connection, the GTZ recently commissioned a report looking into possibilities of and approaches to promotion of tolerance in the framework of community development programs in the target regions of the food-security program.¹¹³

4.3.4 Uzbekistan

At present, FC funds are being used to conduct a broad pallet of measures in Uzbekistan. However, a concentration on the WIRAM priority area as well as on the cross-border areas of health, legal advice, and environment / resource protection is also in the making. An FC project in the telecommunications sector has been completed, a further project in the transportation sector (Tashkent airport) is set to be completed in the medium term. Furthermore, FC funds are being used to support an additional project in the drinking-water sector. The cross-border approach is being used to support projects in the health sector, while a credit line for SMEs is being provided in the framework of WIRAM. In TC a clear-cut concentration on the fields of economic reform and development of a market economy has already emerged. Projects are being carried out to promote initial vocational training, to support the development of a training bank (a contribution to the establishment of a dual training system), to promote export development, and to provide advice to the government tax authorities. Besides this, a multicomponent project is being conducted on the recultivation of desiccated Aral Sea soils and promotion of agriculture; the project is set to be continued in the future in the framework of the regional approach. While there are also plans to direct special attention to the Ferghana Valley, this geographic focus has not yet been implemented.¹¹⁴

111 Information from BMZ and GTZ.

112 Interview with Dietrich Fezer, GTZ-ESP, Dushanbe, 17/20 March 2003.

113 Oral information from GTZ.

114 Information from BMZ, KfW, and GTZ.

4.4 Activities of other German institutions in the field of crisis prevention and conflict resolution

4.4.1 Foreign Office

Since 2000 the German Foreign Office (AA) has been promoting, from its budget section “Peacekeeping Measures” (FEM), **individual** crisis-prevention and conflict-resolution **projects conducted by German and international nongovernmental organizations** and designed to support peacekeeping measures of the United Nations or other international organizations. Since April 2001, the AA has supported the so-called **zivik Project** (civil conflict resolution), which was implemented by the Berlin Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa) and plays a role in identifying and selecting suitable project applications for FEM funding and advises NGOs on application procedures and project implementation.¹¹⁵

In 2001 two of 63 approved projects had a direct reference to Central Asia. These were two projects in Tajikistan, one on technical support for local parties, the other on promotion of dialogue with moderate Islamists. In 2002 five of 75 approved projects had a focus on Central Asia, three of them had a cross-border approach. These projects focused on **promotion of intellectual competence and training of multipliers in the field of crisis prevention** in Central Asia. Altogether, in 2002 roughly 75 NGO projects were supported with an overall volume of over € 9 million from the FEM budget section. Nearly € 3 million of this was allotted to a total eleven projects in the context of Central Asia and Afghanistan.¹¹⁶

4.4.2 Political foundations

Of the German political foundations, the **Friedrich Ebert Foundation** (FES) and the **Konrad Adenauer Foundation** (KAS) are represented in Central Asia with programs and regional offices. Both foundations attach **great importance** to the **goal of crisis prevention** and the building of civil conflict-resolution capacities in their work in the region. They see their role primarily in supporting local civil-society and political actors in providing dialogue forums and promoting and/or initiating discussions on important issues and problems both within these countries and between the countries of the region.¹¹⁷

115 See <http://www.ifa.de/zivik/>.

116 Written information from the project and interview with Barbara Unger, zivik project head, Berlin, 24 Oct. 2002.

117 Interviews with Günter Fichtner and Dr. Reinhard Krumm, FES, Berlin, 25 Oct. 2002 as well as with Dr. Lars Hänsel, KAS, St. Augustin, 12 Nov. 2002 and Dr. Heinz Bühler, KAS, Tashkent, 20 Nov. 2002.

Represented by a foreign staff member, the FES has been present in Tashkent since April 2003; it also has two offices run by local staff in Almaty and Bishkek, which are supervised from Tashkent. For its activity in Central Asia the FES has identified three regional focus areas: security cooperation, economic development, and state and society. Measures directly bound up with crisis prevention and conflict resolution include, among others, in particular involvement in finding solutions in the problems areas water, energy, and the environment (focus area: security cooperation), promotion of pluralistic structures, promotion of dialogue between state and civil society (focus area: state and society).¹¹⁸

The KAS likewise manages its activity in Central Asia from a regional office in Tashkent which has been run by a foreign staff member for several years now. Since the summer of 2002 an additional temporary foreign staff member has been employed there, especially to look after projects in Tajikistan, but also to handle regional tasks. In its geographically broad “Regional Conception Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Caucasus, and Iran. 2003 to 2005,” the KAS names seven priority fields, which largely coincide substantively with the two above-named FES focus areas (security cooperation; state and society) and accordingly are clearly relevant to crisis prevention and conflict resolution: promotion of democratic structures; building and development of rule-of-law structures; municipal self-administration; security dialogue; interethnic / interdenominational dialogue; promotion of regional cooperation and integration; media work.¹¹⁹

In other words, both foundations mainly focus on areas that are of major importance for the promotion of civil conflict-resolution competence in Central Asian societies.

Furthermore, the Hanns Seidel Foundation is active in Kyrgyzstan in the training and advanced training of local administrative staff.

4.5 Crisis prevention and conflict resolution in German development cooperation with the Central Asian republics

There are no more than **limited points of contact** between the goals of **crisis prevention and conflict resolution** – as formulated in the principles set out by the German government and the BMZ for cooperation with Central Asia – and the WIRAM priority area. A discussion paper recently prepared for the GTZ on the structuring of the WIRAM priority area, for instance, lists only two fields of activity (business-startup and microfinance programs aimed at reintegration of former combatants and civil war victims as well as financing of reconstruction measures) that intersect with the priority area “peace development

118 Graphic: “Die Arbeit der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in den zentralasiatischen Republiken,” FES, Berlin, December 2002.

119 KAS (2002, 15–19).

and crisis prevention.” Both are concerned only with post-conflict situations.¹²⁰ In addition, reference could be made to the role of the private sector as a stakeholder in civil conflict resolution as well as to the long-term effects of successful economic reforms on mitigating the structural causes of conflict and undercutting economies of violence. But these are, for now, more or less theoretical connections. WIRAM has hardly any concrete instruments for dealing with serious deficits in a partner country’s civil conflict-resolution capacity. Indeed a conceptual integration (“mainstreaming”) of a crisis-prevention perspective into the WIRAM priority area has yet to be accomplished. Any such attempt would presumably run up against structural limits. As a very comprehensively reform-oriented priority area, WIRAM presupposes a relatively higher degree of governance capacity than other, more specific priority areas (e.g. education, health, energy). Crisis regions, on the other hand, are generally regions in which poor performance is more common than good governance. In other words, the recently initiated conceptual discussion over the best way to deal with poor-performing countries in German DC appears to be extremely urgent for Central Asia as well¹²¹.

In view of the **goal divergence between the commitment to WIRAM** and a far more broadly conceived approach of the kind formulated in **the political strategies**, there is at present a marked tendency to resort to the regional approach as a way to find room for time-tested measures that no longer fit the bilateral portfolios. Indeed, measures that might appear reasonable in the sense of intensified crisis prevention (in particular with a view to giving greater emphasis to the priority area in the Ferghana Valley, which is mentioned in the BMZ strategy, but hardly to be found in practice), even though they do not fit in with WIRAM, could – and for good reasons – be funded through a *regional* approach. But one thing that speaks against this is the fact that the financial resources available for the regional approach are far lower than those available for bilateral measures.

Viewed in terms of the three fields of cooperation identified in the BMZ’s Central Asia strategy, i.e. democracy / rule of law, economic reform / poverty reduction, and cross-border cooperation, **the instruments involved may thus be said to show a marked imbalance**. The by far largest share of funds is made available for one component of these three fields (economic reform), while the other components, which would be of particular significance from the view of a policy devised with an eye to crisis-prevention, are considerably more poorly endowed.

120 Altenburg / Radtke (2002, 35 and 37).

121 On this debate, see BMZ (2002).

5 Crisis prevention and conflict resolution in the Central Asia strategies of other donors

The most important multilateral donors in Central Asia include the World Bank, the Asian Development bank (ADB), the European Union, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The bilateral donors with major DC commitments in the region include especially the USA, Japan, Germany, and Switzerland. Table 10 presents an overview of the data on the ODA flows committed to Central Asia in 2000 and 2001 by the most important donors. However, the data do not fully reflect the relative weight of the multilateral donors, since they do not include the share of the financial commitments of development banks that do not fall under the ODA criteria. This applies in particular to the commitment of the EBRD, but also to that of the ADB and the World Bank. In the case of Uzbekistan the World Bank also envisioned for the first time a commitment for the 2002-2004 budget period at IDA terms¹²² instead of the IBRD loans that had exclusively been granted the country until then.

The following sections look into the Central Asia strategies of the most important multilateral and bilateral donors with a view to determining how much importance they attach to the field of crisis prevention and conflict resolution in Central Asia and what shape they have given to their commitments. Account is also taken of indirect references to crisis factors or conflict potentials. **Among the multilateral donors, only the European Union and – in a qualified sense – UNDP have until now made crisis prevention and conflict resolution focal points of their strategies.** As an organization specialized in crisis prevention, the OSCE plays an **important role** in Central Asia. The development banks are at best only indirectly relevant here. The **picture is different** when we look at the **bilateral donors**. The US, Switzerland, and the UK (which is included here because of its conceptual approach, and despite its relatively low level of financial commitment) have made crisis prevention and conflict resolution an essential element of their strategies for cooperation with the Central Asian countries. Only Japan has in this regard lagged behind until now.

We note that the donors who pursue a **targeted crisis-prevention strategy** do so **on the basis of comprehensive regional plans** for Central Asia, while the development banks (and UNDP) continue to work with the traditional instrument of the country strategy. One reason for this is the specific institutional logics of the development banks and the UN institutions, although this may also indicate that regional strategies offer more leeway in addressing the at times politically sensitive issue of crisis prevention and conflict resolution with the emphasis it deserves. Furthermore, individual country strategies are not in a position to adequately factor in many regional conflict potentials.

122 World Bank (2002b, IV).

Table 10: Official development assistance (ODA) provided by the most important donors in 2001 (2000)						
	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan	Total
Multilateral						
World Bank/IDA	- (-)	27 (52)	35 (23)	- (-)	- (-)	61 (75)
ADB	3 (4)	58 (21)	3 (12)	- (-)	4 (1)	68 (39)
EU/TACIS	4 (5)	11 (15)	29 (13)	3 (3)	6 (11)	53 (46)
EBRD	3 (1)	1 (0)	1 (0)	1 (0)	1 (0)	7 (2)
UNDP	1 (1)	1 (2)	2 (2)	1 (1)	1 (1)	7 (7)
UNHCR	1 (1)	1 (1)	2 (2)	1 (1)	1 (1)	5 (5)
Arab develop. agencies	2 (0)	5 (2)	4 (0)	- (-)	- (-)	11 (3)
Bilateral						
US	56 (58)	28 (25)	40 (23)	14 (8)	50 (36)	189 (149)
Japan	44 (83)	23 (48)	5 (2)	16 (1)	31 (82)	119 (216)
EU members, total	20 (16)	14 (11)	10 (7)	2 (1)	23 (15)	69 (49)
Germany	8 (10)	7 (5)	5 (3)	1 (1)	14 (9)	35 (28)
Spain	7 (2)	0 (0)	- (-)	- (-)	3 (0)	10 (2)
France	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (4)	5 (6)
UK	1 (1)	2 (2)	1 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	5 (4)
Netherlands	2 (0)	2 (2)	1 (0)	0 (-)	1 (0)	6 (2)
Sweden	1 (0)	1 (0)	1 (2)	1 (-)	0 (0)	3 (2)
Switzerland	0 (0)	5 (7)	7 (5)	- (-)	1 (1)	13 (13)
Turkey	1 (2)	2 (2)	0 (0)	1 (3)	0 (0)	5 (7)
0: rounded zero (value lower than US \$ 0.5 million) -: no activity Source: DAC, Destination of Official Development Assistance and Official Aid - Disbursements (Table 2a), http://www.oecd.org/scripts/cde/viewbase.asp?dbname=cde_dac ; 14 May 2003						

5.1 World Bank

The central management instrument used by the World Bank Group for development cooperation is the country strategy (“Country Assistance Strategy”); these strategies are as a rule revised every three years. **As an instrument, crisis prevention and conflict resolution have yet to find their way into the country strategies for the Central Asian countries.** The World Bank’s situation analyses refer to economic risks, including macroeconomic factors and socioeconomic problems like poverty and unemployment. Great weight is also attached to the issue of governance, which is analyzed critically with a particular view to transparency, legitimacy of government action, and responsibility of government actors.

The programs planned are concentrated on issues of economic reform policy, infrastructure, healthcare, and poverty reduction. Increasingly, however, **issue complexes** that may be **regarded as crisis potentials** are also coming in for attention. To cite an example, the World Bank’s most recent Tajikistan strategy of February 2003 provides for a program on management of water resources in the Ferghana Valley that is set to include all three neighboring countries. As yet, however, there are no concrete plans to **embed** such measures in an **action framework oriented explicitly to conflict and crisis prevention.**¹²³

5.2 ADB

The ADB’s current country strategies are set out in the “Country Strategy Program Update” documents published in August / September 2002 and valid for all Central Asian countries except Turkmenistan. The documents contain **no systematic reference to conflict potentials** or a strategic orientation in the sense of crisis prevention. As in the case of the World Bank, however, some **indirect references are made** in the context of promotion of **good governance**. In addition, **specific problem potentials** are mentioned in the country strategies: the environment in Kazakhstan, an improved security situation in Kyrgyzstan in connection with the stationing of foreign troops there, drug trafficking in Tajikistan, youth unemployment and the need for regional cooperation in Uzbekistan.

Of the program areas supported by the ADB, the issue of “regional cooperation” has particular relevance to crisis prevention. The ADB seeks in this context to provide dialogue forums for economic cooperation between the Central Asian republics, and it supports cross-border infrastructure projects.¹²⁴

123 World Bank (2001, 2002b, 2003).

124 ADB (2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2002d).

5.3 EU/TACIS

The current European Union strategy for Central Asia is set out in a joint document for the overall region adopted in October 2002.¹²⁵ The “Strategy Paper 2002-2006” at the same time contains the TACIS Indicative Programme for 2002–2004. The **central objective** of the new EU strategy is defined as **promotion of stability and security** in the Central Asian countries and support for their efforts aimed at sustainable economic development and poverty reduction. Cooperation is set to take place along three “tracks”: a program on promotion of regional cooperation; a regional support program implemented at the national level; and a poverty-reduction program in selected pilot regions. Two of the three higher-level goals to be pursued on all three “tracks” are: “**promotion of security and conflict prevention**” and “**elimination of the causes of political and social tensions.**”

In its structure, the analysis of the region presented in the strategy paper is oriented to important aspects of conflict analysis. As “common problems” of the region, it addresses: democratization; terrorism, fundamentalism, and security problems; demographic pressure; and socioeconomic development and poverty. The “shared challenges” of the Central Asian countries addressed in the paper include: border disputes; shared use of natural resources; access to world markets; and investment. Accordingly, the **EU strategy is designed to address, in parallel, all three problem levels of crisis prevention and conflict resolution**:

- long-term structural social, economic, ecological, and demographic problems;
- the area of process-oriented crisis prevention (good governance, protection of basic civil rights, promotion of civil society, confidence-building between the countries involved, and integration within regional projects);
- acute security issues (help in the fight against terrorism; the fight against drugs; and border surveillance).

At the same time, the EU Commission is seeking to more clearly focus the concrete measures on a limited number of fields as well as on programming of a longer-term character than has usually been the case with the two-year national action programs in the framework of TACIS. One of the intentions here is to achieve more sustainability.

5.4 EBRD

The issue of **crisis prevention and conflict resolution plays no role** in the EBRD’s (five separate) country strategies for the Central Asian countries. The strategies do, however, contain an openly **critical assessment of the economic and political reform policies** of the governments concerned. In the case of Uzbekistan, for instance, the 2001 strategy

125 EU (2002).

speaks of only “slow progress” toward multiparty democracy and development of a market economy. The new Uzbekistan strategy adopted in March 2003 goes even further and speaks in unmistakable terms of “setbacks.” The EBRD has now decided to condition stepped-up activities in Uzbekistan on seven “benchmark criteria” which not only refer to economic reform measures but also, and in particular, call for **respect of basic human rights**. Two months prior to its annual meeting in Tashkent in early May 2003, which was seen by human rights groups as highly problematic because of the choice of venue,¹²⁶ the EBRD thus sent out a clear political signal. The extreme case, however, is the country strategy for Turkmenistan of July 2002, which is marked by even stronger **political conditionality** and makes any appreciable engagement on the part of the EBRD dependent on substantial improvements in the political and economic framework.¹²⁷

In the EBRD strategies the references to issues of democratization, good governance and the rule of law are restricted to the background analysis and the formulation of necessary prerequisites. The orientation of the measures in the Central Asian countries is in keeping with the classic portfolio of a development bank. Three areas are foregrounded: development of the private business sector; development of the financial sector; improvement of infrastructure and resource use. No crisis-prevention perspective is provided for in the measures selected.

5.5 UNDP

Like nearly all multilateral donors, UNDP’s active involvement in Central Asia is based on individual country strategies (“country cooperation frameworks”).¹²⁸ As a UN organization, UNDP is particularly reliant on the willingness of its partner countries to cooperate, and the country strategies therefore reflect an intensive process of discussion and negotiation with partner governments. Against this background it is not surprising that while the focus area **crisis prevention and conflict resolution** has found its way into **the strategy for Kyrgyzstan**, it is **not to be found** in the strategies **for Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan**. There is no talk of any resolute crisis-prevention strategy in the case of **Tajikistan** either, but the country strategy does include a focus on **approaches to dealing with conflict impacts** (reintegration of ex-combatants, reconstruction) as well as on **containment of long-term conflict potentials** (by strengthening governance capacities, local self-administration, etc.).

The strategy for Kyrgyzstan goes even further by setting out “**preventive development**,” together with decentralization, as one of three independent program components in the program segment “Political and administrative governance.” This program segment also

126 Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 5 May 2003, 2 and 11, and 6 May 2003, 13.

127 EBRD (2001a, 2001b, 2002b, 2002c, 2002d, 2003).

128 UN (2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2000d, 2001).

contains some additional components like “Reform of public administration” and “Support for democratic institutions.” In addition, the components of this segment are complemented by a component “Development of civil society,” which is part of the second program segment (“Social governance”). Thus the issue of crisis prevention and conflict resolution in the UNDP strategy for Kyrgyzstan is both seen as an explicit element of one program component and supported substantively by a number of additional program components.

The “Preventive development” component in Kyrgyzstan has led to targeted **measures in the particularly crisis-prone regions of Batken and Osh** in the Ferghana Valley. In selected communities identified on the basis of regular local conflict analyses, local organizations are trained in methods and instruments suited to constructively mitigating conflict potentials and jointly overcoming concrete problems of local development, most of which can be seen as the actual causes of conflict at the local level. Another component of the program is preparation of “early warning reports” at the local and regional level; these are an important supplement to conflict-related macroanalyses and are intended to make possible a more precise adaptation of the program to local conditions. At present thought is being given to an expansion of the program to Tajikistan. Uzbekistan, which originally was also set to be included as well, has completely withdrawn after having engaged in some initial negotiations.¹²⁹

5.6 OSCE

Although the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is not a donor, or indeed even a development agency in the classic sense of the term, it does play a **prominent role in international efforts concerning security and crisis prevention in Central Asia**. As successor states of the Soviet Union, all of the Central Asian republics were officially accepted as members of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in January 1992, which two years later spawned the OSCE. These countries have thus committed themselves to the principles set out in the OSCE documents. Unlike e.g. the case of the Council of Europe, though, these are purely political, voluntary commitments which have no binding legal effect.

The OSCE operates not with country or regional strategies but on the basis of its charter. In accordance with the three “baskets” of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 which established the basic principles of the CSCE, the OSCE’s activity today extends to **three “dimensions”**: the human, the political-military, and the economic / ecological. The OSCE thus raises the claim to pursue a **comprehensive approach to security**, one keyed to a great range of security-related issue, including arms control, preventive diplomacy, confidence- and security-building measures, human rights, democratization, and economic and envi-

129 Interview with Ruslan Monolbaev, UNDP, coordinator of the “Preventive Development” component, Bishkek, 29 Nov. 2002.

ronmental concerns. In addition, problems of regional international cooperation and – more recently – issues bound up with religion and religious freedom have been moved into the foreground in Central Asia.

In the context of its mandate, the OSCE was active as mediator between the belligerent parties in bringing the Tajik civil war to a close.¹³⁰ And if conflict resolution and peace-building were at the center of efforts in Tajikistan in recent years, the concern in the other four Central Asian republics is crisis prevention.¹³¹ In organizational terms, the OSCE is represented in all five countries with so-called “OSCE centers” led by ambassador-level diplomats and in part with additional field offices in special crisis regions. The field missions are supported in organizational and conceptual terms by the OSCE’s central offices, in particular the Secretariat in Vienna and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in Warsaw. Within the Secretariat, the Conflict Prevention Center constitutes an important pillar of the organization’s activities. Other institutions of particular relevance in Central Asia include the offices of “High Commissioner on National Minorities” and the “OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.”

The “core business” of the OSCE centers on the ground – as well as of the OSCE as a whole – is, translated into the language of development cooperation, **policy dialogue** in the dimensions outlined above. In addition, however, an important and growing role is played by issue-specific seminars, trainings, and other education and training functions conducted with the participation of nonstate, civil-society actors. The OSCE’s activities in the fields of freedom of the media, human rights, protection of minorities, prison reform, police and judiciary reform, but also election observation, often extend into sensitive areas of internal national affairs.¹³² However, the **impacts** developed by the OSCE in this connection are seen, even by OSCE staff, as at times very **limited**. Since the highly comprehensive security strategy subscribed to by the OSCE as an institution is, in this form, in practice not shared by the Central Asian governments, they are not particularly willing to support the OSCE in its concerns, to respond actively to its initiatives, or indeed to make active use of its good offices as a mediator in conflicts.¹³³ Moreover, due to its cooperative decision-making structures the OSCE is in most cases not able to point, publicly and clearly, to obvious deficits, a fact which at times costs it the confidence of civil-society actors. On the other hand, due to its unique design the OSCE has genuine **possibilities to initiate policy dialogue in all crisis-relevant focus areas**, which are often not available to the classic donors involved in development cooperation, even after years of effort.

130 Seifert (1999).

131 Gumpfenberg (2002b, 5).

132 Interviews with OSCE ambassadors István Venczel, Almaty, 4 Dec. 2002, and Marc Gilbert, Dushanbe, 19 March 2003.

133 Gumpfenberg (2002b, 5).

5.7 The United States

Crisis prevention and conflict resolution play a central role in the US' DC strategy for Central Asia. At present, USAID, the official US development assistance agency, is operating on the basis of a uniform Central Asia strategy which is dated July 2000 and was drafted for the period between 2001 and 2005.¹³⁴ The strategy defines “**mitigating potential for conflict** through active dialogue and civil society, employment and income growth, and improved health and environmental conditions” as the **primary cross-cutting goal** for all sectors.¹³⁵ In addition, one secondary cross-cutting objective is reduction of corrupt practices. The priority sectors of USAID measures are set out in four primary sectoral objectives for all five Central Asian partner countries: support of SMEs and trade; an open, democratic culture; improved use of critical water and energy resources; primary health-care. In addition, two country-specific objectives are pursued in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan: improved tax administration and responsible local government.

The great importance attached by USAID to crisis-prevention and conflict-related measures in Central Asia even before September 11, 2001, derives from a **conflict analysis** in the strategy paper which proceeds on the assumption of a variety of overlapping and inter-related conflict causes.

In July 2001 USAID published its “Peaceful Communities Initiative” (PCI), a program component designed – in a way similar to UNDP’s “Preventive Development” approach – in particular to support the objective of crisis prevention and to contribute to mitigating conflict potentials and eliminating the causes of conflicts at the local level in selected communities close to the border in the Ferghana Valley. Additional funds for crisis-prevention measures in Central Asia made available by the US government following the September 2001 terror attacks led to the creation, in May 2002, of the “**Community Action Investment Program**” (CAIP), which operates in the same way but has a larger volume of funds and is projected for a longer period of time. In addition to the Kyrgyz part of the Ferghana Valley, the measures now extend to many other regions in Central Asia, including Raasht Valley in Tajikistan, the south of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. **Implementation** of the CAIP (like the PCI before it) is **in the hands of international NGOs**, which are themselves responsible for implementing the project components set out in contract profiles. The NGOs contracted are Mercy Corps, the Aga Khan Foundation, ACDI/VOCA, and the Cooperative Housing Foundation. In addition, CAIP funds are being used to finance a UNDP project in Tajikistan.¹³⁶

134 USAID (2000).

135 USAID (2000, 3).

136 Interview with Wayne McDonald, Robert Birkenes, und Laura Harvey, USAID, Almaty, 3 Dec. 2002. See also “Conflict Prevention” on USAID’s website: http://www.usaid.gov/regions/europe_eurasia/car/caip_pci.html, 13 May 2003.

5.8 Japan

Although Japan is the largest bilateral donor in Central Asia next to the US, it is the only major bilateral donor whose Central Asia strategy **makes no mention of the issue of crisis prevention and conflict resolution.**¹³⁷ According to information of the Japanese development agency, JICA, on the Internet, the agency has no general strategy on this issue, either, which could serve as a frame of reference.¹³⁸ Japanese DC in Central Asia is basically geared to dispatching experts and making funds available in the fields of market systems development, qualification, and basic infrastructure. JICA has tended to avoid potential crisis regions like the Ferghana Valley and Tajikistan in recent years since a Japanese UN staff member was killed in Tajikistan in 1998 and a Japanese mining engineer was abducted in southern Kyrgyzstan in 1999.¹³⁹

5.9 Switzerland

With its DC engagement focused on the two countries of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Switzerland is **one of the most visible bilateral donors** in Central Asia. Despite this focus on only two countries – including some cautious activities in Uzbekistan – Switzerland has also summarized its strategy in a paper on Central Asia as a whole; it was last updated in November 2002.¹⁴⁰ In it “**governance, security and conflict prevention,**” represent **one of five priority areas** of cooperation. The other four areas are: macroeconomic framework conditions; development of the private sector; management of resources and infrastructure; and health. Furthermore, gender and the environment are set out as cross-cutting issues.

In the framework of its priority area “Governance, Security and Conflict Prevention,” Switzerland subscribes to a strategy of institutional support and capacity-building for local partners, in particular marginalized groups and actors with a special interest in peaceful conflict settlement (“peace constituencies”). The aim here is to strengthen **local capacities for peaceful conflict settlement**, to promote the development of tolerance in civil society, and to support the development of transparent and participatory political decision-making processes and a functioning legal system. The measures are based on a critical assessment-taking of the political and social context which views the situation in terms of the influence on it of a paternalist and Soviet-style authoritarian legacy, emphasizing the importance of regional and clan-based power structures and underlining lack of participation, rapidly

137 See the Internet document “Country and Region-Specific Aid Studies. Central Asia and Caucasia,” <http://www.jica.go.jp/english/activities/regions/04asi.html>, 08 May 2003.

138 See <http://www.jica.go.jp>.

139 Interview with Kiyoshi Ishii, Resident Representative, and Yoshiko Yamanaka, Program Officer, JICA Bishkek, 29 Nov. 2002.

140 SDC / SECO (2002).

diminishing standards of living, closed borders, competition for resources, and criminal networks as potential causes of conflicts.¹⁴¹

5.10 The United Kingdom

The UK is one of the countries that were early to make crisis prevention and conflict resolution an important field of action of their development cooperation. In its current strategy for Central Asia and the southern Caucasus, which dates from October 2000, the British development agency, DFID, emphasizes, as the main challenge facing the region: “Conflict remains a central problem for the region, posing real threats to regional stability.”¹⁴² While this statement applies particularly to the southern Caucasus, it also explicitly refers to Central Asia. Looking at conflict causes, DFID points to the Soviet legacy and the great number of current conflict potentials resulting from it, but also to acute problems like unemployment and drug-trafficking. Mention is also made of particularly conflict-prone regions like the Ferghana Valley.

Among the eight countries of the region of Central Asia and the southern Caucasus, the 2000 DFID strategy identifies **three priority countries**: Armenia, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan – the only Central Asian country mentioned. This selection was geared to the criteria of poverty and the seriousness of the economic and political reform efforts that have been undertaken. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan in particular are seen as having made no more than “very limited progress on reform.”

For its priority countries DFID defines three key focus areas: good central and local public administration; favorable framework conditions for economic growth, including rural development, basic services for the poor, and adequate environmental protection; and a good healthcare system that is open to all segments of society. The aspect of crisis prevention and conflict resolution is addressed in three additional *regional* focus areas that are not restricted to the priority countries: democracy and human rights, civil society, strengthening of citizens’ capacities; integration of these countries into the world economy; and improved regional stability based on measures designed to prevent and mitigate conflicts. In other words, **crisis prevention** is an important **field of action** for DFID in **Central Asia** as well.

141 SDC / SECO (2002, 16 and 14).

142 DFID (2000, 2).

6 Conclusions and recommendations

The present analysis of the conflict and crisis potentials in Central Asia has made it clear that **the region** is faced with **substantial medium- to long-term risks** and that the region is in **need of measures with crisis-prevention effects**. The **strategies** of the German Government and the BMZ take this need into account by assigning an important place to the objective of crisis prevention. In principle, the combination of the fields promotion of democracy, economic reform, and poverty reduction, and support of regional cooperation is well suited to taking sustainable action aimed at reaching the objective of crisis-prevention. In these fields it is possible both to tackle structural conflict causes with a long-term perspective and to address deficits in conflict-resolution capacities and immediate security risks with a view to the short- and medium-term perspective. The decision to define the Ferghana Valley as a cross-border priority region may also be seen as a reasonable and meaningful decision.

At the instrumental level, however, German DC has difficulties in translating the highly comprehensive aspirations expressed in its political strategies into concrete measures. Three main reasons appear to be responsible for this state of affairs: (1) The priority set in the field of WIRAM can hardly be said to suggest the use of measures with an immediate reference to crisis prevention. Looked at in terms of crisis prevention and conflict resolution, WIRAM is concerned almost exclusively with long-term, structural effects. (2) Transferring successful measures from the bilateral portfolio to the framework of cross-border cooperation (in connection with portfolio adjustment) reduces the financial leeway for projects in the narrower context of cross-border promotion of democracy or direct crisis prevention and conflict resolution. (3) The process of translating the crisis-prevention and conflict-resolution strategies into manageable instruments of TC (and FC) still is in its infancy.

In principle, there are for these reasons three possible approaches to giving a higher profile to the objective of crisis prevention and conflict resolution:

1. A highly flexible design of the WIRAM priority area which also leaves space for measures focusing on procedural and security-related crisis factors.
2. A specific design of the regional approach making use of measures with a more direct reference to crisis prevention.
3. A more intensive use of the instruments currently being developed for crisis prevention and conflict resolution within German DC as well as of the experiences of other bilateral and multilateral donors.

These approaches, for which recommendations are formulated below, should be used in combination. A more pronounced use of the instruments of crisis prevention and conflict resolution is a necessary prerequisite for the two other points, for which reason it will be dealt with first.

6.1 Use of the instruments of crisis prevention and conflict resolution

With a view to crisis potentials and latent, smoldering conflicts in the region, the role desirable for German DC should be defined along the possible alternatives suggested by “**working in, on, or around conflict.**” If the intention here is to continue to pursue the existing Central Asia strategies, the “working around conflict” variant would not be relevant in this case.

The present DC portfolio for the region should be subjected to a **conflict-related impact analysis** to identify unintended negative impacts, but also positive effects that have not yet become evident. The results of this analysis should be used to correct the negative impacts identified and to activate positive potentials.

Selection of new measures and programs should be based on conflict-related impact analyses that identify the relative value of the measure within the crisis scenario and hoped-for positive effects and point to negative effects that it may not be possible to exclude.

The condition required for conflict-related impact analyses is a joint analysis of **existing conflicts and crisis potentials** shared by the key German DC organizations and the actors and groups of actors concerned. Such country-related conflict analyses should be prepared for in a dialogue between the BMZ, the implementing agencies, and the staff on the ground, and should be continued on a regular basis. Regular country dialogues could, for instance, be conducted with the implementing agencies with a view to exchanging crisis-relevant information and coming up with a joint situational analysis. More emphasis should be given to debriefing experts deployed abroad and identifying the inputs contributed by other ministries (AA, BMI, BMVg) as well as by academic institutions.

Sensitization of DC staff, both in Germany and on the ground, to the issue of crisis prevention and conflict resolution should be supported through targeted **training measures** which contain – apart from subject matter of a more general nature – a concrete orientation to the region of Central Asia.

6.2 Design of WIRAM

Within the priority area of WIRAM more efforts could be undertaken to tackle “**more political**” issues, like the need for decentralization of decision-making competences (e.g. in the field of local business promotion).

Special attention should be accorded to projects with a marked component in **rural areas**, several of which are already underway. Such projects should be strengthened and enlarged. In this context preference should be given in particular to projects with a high degree of participation (e.g. credit cooperatives) which may serve as a counterweight to the feeling of powerlessness widespread among local populations.

In regions which are marked by high levels of tension (the Ferghana Valley) and in which an illegal economy has become established (trafficking in drugs, arms), **measures with a high employment effect could contribute** to “recivilizing” the economy.

The pending formulation of the **priority strategy** for the Central Asian republics should accord prominent significance to the objective of crisis prevention and conflict resolution.

6.3 Design of the regional approach

In view of the asymmetry of the fields of action involved, what would be called for in the long-term, as soon as existing obligations expire, is to **shift funds from the bilateral portfolios to the regional approach** in order to be able to support new measures in the field of democracy promotion that have relevance for crisis prevention.

For measures in the field of **promotion of democracy** it would be possible to seek to gain a stronger involvement of **private-sector organizations** in addition to the political foundations; the former could, for their part, cooperate with nonstate partners on the ground and provide help in developing NGO networks.

Projects in the area of democracy promotion should also be aware of and address the great **importance of informal rules and networks** in the societies in transition in Central Asia. This can help to gain a better understanding of conflict situations and the ways in which crises can be prevented and would have positive effects on conflict-related impact analyses.¹⁴³

Efforts should be stepped up to in fact implement **cross-border projects** – which are at present, in concrete terms, often bilateral measures due to resistance on the partner side – **as genuinely regional measures**. New regional projects should be designed in such a way as to allow them to at least be enlarged at any time to include participation of individual countries that may be initially expected to resist them.

One **important integrative force** in the region of Central Asia is the **sciences**, the reason being that the Central Asian republics show a high degree of similarity as far as the legacy of science-friendly Soviet socialization is concerned. This potential could be harnessed by regional measures in a great variety of fields (the environment, health, promotion of democracy, etc.) to intensify regional cooperation.

143 See the initial draft version of the Working Group on Development and Peace’s (FriEnt) “Methodischer Leitfaden zur Netzwerk- und Akteursanalyse,” which was field-tested in the summer of 2002 in a rural region in Kyrgyzstan.

6.4 Further-reaching considerations

To provide an effective contribution to crisis prevention and conflict resolution, it is essential to aim for more **coordination with international donors** and other (state and nonstate) partners. It would therefore be important to work at this level for a **joint crisis analysis**, an identification of priorities, and broad guidelines for use in defining a division of tasks. International standards like the DAC Guidelines can serve here as a meaningful frame of reference.

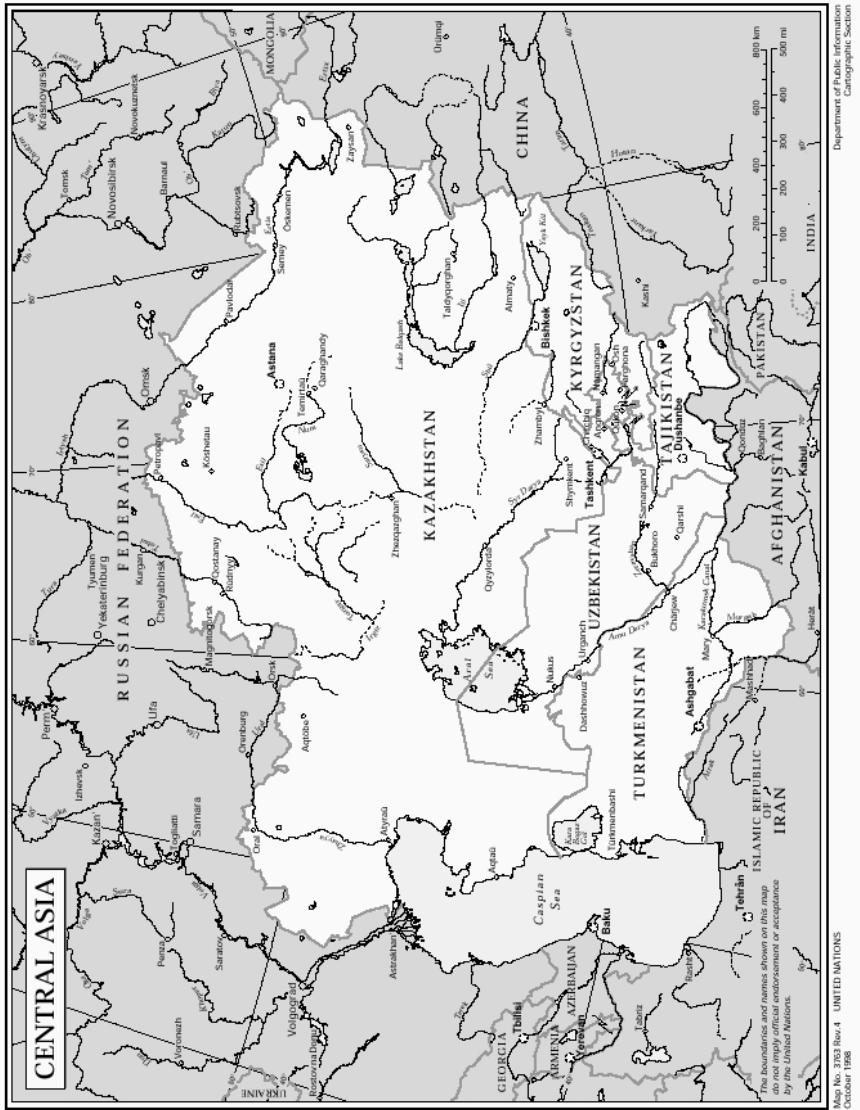
A more marked presence of the BMZ in **partner countries** would be highly conducive to a more effective coordination of donors. At present German DC staff in Central Asia is often perceived by foreign partners (including other donors) as unable to enter into commitments since local representatives (as a rule GTZ) lack a political mandate.

As far as individual countries are concerned, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan play a particularly important role at present. Since the political framework **in Uzbekistan severely restricts any attempts to influence circumstances there**, it is important to do whatever is possible to counteract any destabilization from the outside. **Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan** should therefore also **be supported** as an important “bridge” to the Ferghana Valley as a means of preventing social or political disturbances there from spreading to the overall region. This would call, among other things, for a solution of the debt problems of the two countries. The BMZ should consider supporting an inclusion of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in the HIPC initiative or working elsewhere for debt relief for the two countries. Such support could also be conditioned on movement on the issue of democratization.

Stabilization in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan should also be seen as a means to demonstrate to **Uzbekistan the chances** implied by a **greater willingness to engage in cooperation**. Corresponding crisis-prevention-related DC projects should therefore seek not to reinforce boundaries but to be seen as an open invitation to the Uzbek side. At the same time, it would be important not to rule out a certain measure of gentle pressure on the Uzbek government not to cut itself off from regional cooperation projects. **Measures** of particular interest to the Uzbek side (vocational training, financing of infrastructure) could be conditioned on **consent to cross-border projects**. This could also extend to projects conducted by other donors if such projects appear meaningful in the light of the objective of crisis prevention and conflict resolution.

Annex

Annex 1: Map of Central Asia



Annex 2: List of institutions and agencies contacted in Germany and the Central Asian republics

Germany

BMZ, Directorate 201; BMZ, Directorate 304; Foreign Office, Directorate 207; GTZ Eschborn; GTZ CCD Project, Bonn; KfW, Frankfurt; FriEnt Working Group, Bonn; Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen – zivik Project, Berlin; Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Berlin; Konrad Adenauer Foundation, St. Augustin; German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Berlin.

Tashkent, November 19-23, 2002

German Embassy in Tashkent; GTZ Coordination Office; GTZ project “Promotion of agriculture in Uzbekistan”; Konrad Adenauer Foundation; Institut für Internationale Zusammenarbeit of the Deutsche Volkshochschulverband; ZEF/CDR, Khorezm Project; British Embassy; Europe House - TACIS/EuropeAid; Asian Development Bank; UNHCR; World Bank; Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the Republic; Center for Economic Research; “Izhtimoiy Fikr” public opinion research institute; ZAKOVAT Social Foundation.

Bishkek, November 25 –29, 2002

German Embassy in Bishkek; GTZ Coordination Office; Swiss Cooperation Office; USAID; JICA/JOCV; OSCE Center; UNDP – Political and Administrative Local Governance Programme; CAMP Project (Central Asia Mountain Partnership); Office of the President of the Republic; Ministry of Finance; International Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic; American University of Kyrgyzstan; International Crisis Group; INTRAC – the International NGO Training and Research Centre.

Almaty, December 1–5, 2002

German Embassy in Almaty; GTZ Coordination Office; KfW; Friedrich Ebert Foundation; USAID Regional Mission for Central Asia; World Bank Central Asia Regional Office; UNDP; OSCE Center; Delegation of the European Commission; Institute for Economic Research; Kazakhstani Institute for Socio-Economic Information and Forecast; Assessment Risks Group; Institute of War and Peace Reporting; Center for Conflict Management.

Dushanbe, March 15-22, 2003

German Embassy in Dushanbe; GTZ Food Security Program; Aid Coordination Unit in the Office of the President of the Republic; Center for Strategic Research in the Office of the President; National Association of Political Scientists; “Shark” Research Center; Party of Islamic Rebirth; UNTOP; UNDP; EuropeAid/TACIS; OSCE Center; Swiss Cooperation Office; ACTED.

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