

CENTRAL ASIA AND THE ARAB SPRING: GROWING PRESSURE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS?

HEARING BEFORE THE COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS FIRST SESSION

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COMMISSIONERS

	Page
Hon. Christopher H. Smith, Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe	1
Hon. Steve Cohen, Commissioner, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe	3

WITNESSES

Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State	4
Paul Goble, Professor, Institute of World Politics	13
Dr. Stephen J. Blank, Professor of National Security Affairs, U.S. Army War College	17
Dr. Scott Radnitz, Assistant Professor, University of Washington	19
Gulam Umarov, Sunshine Coalition, Uzbekistan	21

APPENDICES

Prepared statement of Hon. Christopher H. Smith	38
Prepared statement of Hon. Benjamin L. Cardin	39
Prepared statement of Hon. Alcee L. Hastings	40
Prepared statement of Amb. Robert O. Blake	41
Prepared statement of Paul Goble	44
Prepared statement of Dr. Stephen J. Blank	47
Prepared statement of Dr. Scott Radnitz	64
Prepared statement of Gulam Umarov	67

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May 11, 2011

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
WASHINGTON, DC

The hearing was held at 2 p.m. in room 2322, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC, Hon. Christopher H. Smith, Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, presiding.

Commissioners present: Hon. Christopher H. Smith, Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; and Hon. Steve Cohen, Commissioner, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Witnesses present: Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State; Paul Goble, Professor, Institute of World Politics; Dr. Stephen J. Blank, Professor of National Security Affairs, U.S. Army War College; Dr. Scott Radnitz, Assistant Professor, University of Washington; and Gulam Umarov, Sunshine Coalition, Uzbekistan.

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

The Commission will come to order.

Good afternoon. Sorry for the delay to all of our witnesses and guests; the House is in a series of votes. Matter of fact, I'm going to head back momentarily; we'll suspend. And hopefully, the other members will be able to come back and join us for the remainder of the hearing.

Welcome to this hearing on the potential impact of the Middle East revolutions on Central Asia. Though it is far too early to know what will come of the Arab Spring even in the Middle East itself, it is clear that the revolutions and uprisings have already changed the Middle East, and it may well yet change other parts of the world.

This hearing will inquire whether the uprisings and protest movements in the Middle East and North Africa might inspire and invigorate popular movements for democracy in post-Soviet Central Asia, or even trigger similar uprisings and crackdowns, and what our government's policy ought to be.

Obviously, much distinguishes the countries and peoples of Central Asia from those of the Middle East, but they also have a lot in common, especially in what they have suffered. Broadly speak-

ing, in both regions, people are ruled by undemocratic and corrupt dictators, many of whom have been in power for decades. Where they exist, parliaments are largely rubber-stamp institutions, and the judiciary is either corrupt or beholden to the executive. National resources and state authority have been illegitimately appropriated by small groups of people closely bound to the ruling class.

There are many differences between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, but presidential longevity in office is a defining regional characteristic. Central Asian dictators have monopolized power for two decades since the independence movement began, while the public has effectively been removed from politics. Only Kyrgyzstan is a striking exception to this rule: In that country, street protests have toppled two heads of state since 2005, and last year, the country commenced parliamentary governance.

Sadly, in most of Central Asia, democratic reform and observance of human rights commitments have progressed little in the 20 years since independence. In general, elections have been controlled and rigged; rarely has the OSCE given them a passing grade. Opposition parties have been harassed—where they are permitted at all—and independent media, where it exists, has been put on a very short leash.

In the most repressive states, there is little or no space for civil society to function. Access to the Internet is tightly controlled; religious liberty, particularly for nontraditional religious groups, is constrained; torture and mistreatment in custody are routine; corruption is common at all levels, and thwarts not only human rights but also economic development.

Central Asian leaders often claim that their citizens are not ready for democracy because of their history and culture. This is insulting, bigoted, unacceptable and absolutely untrue. It is also sadly familiar: Many Middle Eastern tyrants said the same thing about their peoples, but the recent events in the Middle East show once again that it is not democracies that are unstable, but dictatorships.

The conventional wisdom is that similar protest—popular protest movements are unlikely in Central Asia. Yet a few months ago, that was the accepted wisdom for the Middle East as well. It is time that we rethink and we need to challenge our conclusions on both regions; gross and systematic human rights violations have surely created a just sense of popular grievance in Central Asia. And Tunisia showed that it is impossible to predict when a people will decide that a situation is, indeed, intolerable.

Of course, it is our hope that there will be peaceful, democratic movements in Central Asia, and equally that the governments will respond peacefully and with significant reforms. Yet we need to think about the potential for violent crackdowns and what our government policy ought to be in the region.

I'd like to introduce our—maybe I'll wait until the other members get back; I think that would be better. But I want to thank Secretary Blake and our other witnesses for your patience. And I apologize again; there is a series of votes on. How many votes do you think?

[Off-side conversation.]

Mr. SMITH. I think we have four remaining votes, and then the Commission will convene once again. We stand in recess.

[Break.]

Mr. SMITH. The chair recognizes—reconvenes its sitting, and recognizes Mr. Cohen.

**HON. STEVE COHEN, COMMISSIONER, COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate your recognition, and I appreciate the opportunity to sit here. This is my first meeting as a member of this Commission. And it's an honor to have been appointed by my leader and the speaker. I look forward to working together on issues of importance to the United States and Europe, and our joint solidarity and cooperation in human rights as we see them, and the need to go forward.

This panel today on what's occurred in Northern Africa and the Middle East is most germane. And I welcome the testimony, and I'm very interested to hear what you say. It's been inspiring to see all of the folks who seem to be yearning for democracy, and I think they are—and they should. But it's always a constant battle; we have to be vigilant and make sure that the bad guys don't take over.

So I look forward to learning today, and then working with the Chairman who I have great respect for, and his work on human rights over the years. And with that, I thank you for allowing me to come here. I also look forward to the second panel where Mr. Umarov will be testifying; he's a graduate of the University of Memphis, which is above water and doing well, as is our city. And I look forward to his story. And I yield back for the remainder of my time.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Cohen, thank you very much. I'd like to now introduce Bob Blake, who is a career foreign service officer. Ambassador Blake entered the foreign service in 1985; he has served at the American embassies in Tunisia, Algeria, Nigeria and Egypt. He has held a number of positions at the State Department in Washington, including senior desk officer for Turkey, deputy executive secretary and executive assistant to the undersecretary for political affairs.

Ambassador Blake served as deputy chief of mission at the U.S. mission in New Delhi, India, from 2003 to 2006, and as ambassador to Sri Lanka and the Maldives from 2006 to May 2009, and as assistant secretary for South and Central Asian affairs from May 2009 to the present.

Ambassador Blake earned his B.A. from Harvard College in 1980, and an M.A. in international relations from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in 1984.

Mr. Ambassador, welcome. And thank you for your patience as we went through a long series of votes.

AMBASSADOR ROBERT O. BLAKE, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Well, thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. It's a great pleasure to be here with you and Mr. Cohen today, and I appreciate the invitation to discuss this very important topic.

With your permission, I have a longer statement for the record, and I'll just make a shorter statement.

Mr. SMITH. Without objection, so ordered.

Amb. BLAKE. Mr. Chairman, differences in history, culture and circumstances make direct comparisons between the Middle East and Central Asia difficult. However, in some important respects, the Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan share a dynamic similar to those causing the upheavals in the Middle East, including unemployment, poverty, corruption, little outlet for meaningful political discourse, and a lack of opportunity particularly for young people.

However, there are also significant differences with the North African and Middle East countries, which in our view make popular uprisings in the near term less likely in Central Asia. First, the economic situation is not as dire in Central Asia. IMF unemployment projections for 2011 in Central Asia range from a low of .2 percent in Uzbekistan to a high of 5.7 percent in Kazakhstan, compared to 9.2 percent and 14.7 percent in Egypt and Tunisia respectively—of course, that's all official data.

Second, significant proportions of the workforce in poor countries such as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have found work outside the country, primarily in Russia, easing unemployment and providing a very valuable source of remittances for those poor countries.

Third, the hydrocarbon wealth of countries like Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan has enabled them to cushion the impact of economic hardships in those countries.

While citizens in Egypt and Tunisia and elsewhere have turned to Facebook and Twitter as forums through which to interact, organize and exchange ideas, the vast majority of Central Asia lacks access to the Internet, with 14 percent Internet penetration in Kazakhstan in 2008 marking the highest of all the Central Asian countries.

Although Internet access has since grown, governments have succeeded in blocking outside influences and tightly controlling domestic media through harassment, prosecution and imprisonment of journalists. The lack of independent media allows governments to control the dissemination of news and information.

Another factor is the lack of meaningful political opposition in most of Central Asia. With the exception of Kyrgyzstan, significant opposition parties are largely nonexistent, and organized opposition groups are for the most part either illegal or tightly constrained by the authorities. While these same conditions seem oppressive to Western observers, residents in some parts of Central Asia value this stability and are wary of the turmoil and unpredictability in recent years in neighboring Afghanistan and, to a certain extent, Kyrgyzstan.

Still, the profound change that is taking place across North Africa and the Middle East has profound lessons for Central Asian gov-

ernments and societies. One of the messages we have given to our friends in Central Asia is that they need to pay attention to these events and to their implications.

In my meetings with Central Asian leaders over the last several months, I have encouraged them to provide more political space and allow for more religious freedom to allow for the development of robust civil society and democratic institutions, and to chart a course for economic reform.

Leaders in Central Asia express support for gradual change, and concern that too much freedom too fast could lead to chaos and upheaval. They are suspicious of democratic reforms, and with some exceptions have maintained tight restrictions on political, social, religious and economic life. We think that's mistaken. Democracy, as we advocate it, is not violent or revolutionary. It is peaceful, tolerant, evolutionary, and demonstrated primarily through the ballot box and a free civil society.

To strengthen our engagement in Central Asia, we instituted in 2009 annual bilateral consultations that I chair with the foreign ministers and deputy foreign ministers in each of these countries. I'm happy that Helsinki Commission staff have participated in many of these meetings. Each of these consultations constitutes a face-to-face, structured dialogue based on a jointly developed, comprehensive agenda that includes human rights and media freedom.

We've also used the annual consultations as a forum to engage civil society and the business community in the Central Asian countries. In the annual consultations that we held earlier this year in Kazakhstan, for example, the Kazakhstani deputy foreign minister co-hosted with me a meeting with Kazakhstani civil society in the foreign ministry, a welcome precedent that we hope to duplicate elsewhere.

In the 20 years since independence, the leaderships in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan have frequently and publicly called for building democratic institutions. They have given speeches and issued decrees, but have done little to put them into practice.

As you've said, Mr. Chairman, Kyrgyzstan has been the primary exception in Central Asia. The democratic gains there made since the April 2010 events are cause for optimism, even as the ethnic violence in June of last year demonstrates the fragility of democracy in that country.

Kyrgyzstan faces its next test in presidential elections scheduled for later this year. We look forward to working with the Helsinki Commission and others to help organize international support and monitoring efforts.

Other Central Asian states are at different stages in their democratic development, but there are signs of some hope in all. Kazakhstan hosted the first OSCE summit in 11 years last December, which included a robust civil society component which Secretary Clinton found extremely encouraging. Kazakhstan has also made some progress towards meeting its Madrid commitments on political pluralism and reform of media and electoral law, although much more needs to be done.

President Karimov of Uzbekistan gave a speech in November of 2010 calling for greater political pluralism and civil society develop-

ment. Uzbekistan has done little thus far to turn this vision into a reality, but we will encourage the president and his team to meet the commitments that he made in that speech.

Tajikistan has the region's only legal Islamic party, the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan, even though that party and other opposition officials continue to be subject to various forms of harassment.

Even in Turkmenistan, President Berdimuhamedov has spoken publicly of the need to expand space for other voices in the political system.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, nearly 36 years ago, leaders from North America, Europe and the Soviet Union came together to sign the Helsinki Accords, committing themselves to a core set of human rights, including the fundamental freedoms of association, expression, peaceful assembly, thought and religion.

As Secretary Clinton presciently asserted at last year's OSCE summit in Astana, and as events this spring underscore, these values remain relevant today and are critical to the building of sustainable societies and nations that are committed to creating better opportunities for their citizens.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I look forward to your questions.

Mr. SMITH. Ambassador Blake, thank you very much for your work and for your testimony here today. And I do want to thank you for, you know, being so effective over these many years of a very, very stellar foreign service career.

Amb. BLAKE. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. I do want to ask you just a couple of questions. When Kazakhstan was seeking to be chair-in-office of the OSCE, I opposed it and spoke out repeatedly against it, both at the parliamentary assemblies and through our venues that we would hold as part of a commission.

I made it very clear to Kazakh government here in Washington that significant progress needed to be made before they got that position. Obviously, I didn't win; they got the chairmanship-in-office. And frankly, hopefully, the message or the consequences will be positive ones.

But I would appreciate your take on how well or poorly they've done with regards to making improvements in human rights. I mean, you hope they catch the good infection working with ODIHR and working with other instrumentalities of the OSCE, working with other governments. But you know, the record seems not to point in that direction. Your view?

Amb. BLAKE. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me just say with respect to Kazakhstan that we did support their chairmanship-in-office, and we did support their holding a summit. And I think in retrospect that we feel that was a good decision on our part.

I think in the run-up to the OSCE summit, Kazakhstan played quite a significant role on many human rights issues. They hosted a conference on tolerance in Astana; they allowed a whole series of quite robust civil society events, again, in the week running up to the conference itself, I think surprising many of the skeptics. And I think they have taken some steps, but not all steps, to fulfill their Madrid commitments, as I said.

They've allowed at least two political parties now to serve in the Majilis, and so the—in the next elections that will take place next year in 2012, for the first time will provide automatically for another opposition party in the Majilis.

They've eliminated some forms of criminal liability for libel, which if you talk to civil society in Kazakhstan, as we do frequently, that's their number-one demand. And now they're also looking at implementing their own national human rights action plan, which was drafted by Yevgeny Zhovtis who remains in jail and is, again, a case that we bring up frequently with our Kazakhstan friends.

So I think there is progress. Could there be more progress? Definitely. And we will continue to work towards that.

Mr. SMITH. Let me ask you with regards to—I know we now have an ambassador-at-large for religious freedom. And certainly, Uzbekistan remains one of the most egregious violators as it relates to the International Religious Freedom Act. They are a country of particular concern.

I don't think it's likely they will be soon taken off that list. And I'm wondering what we convey to Karimov with regards to religious persecution, what his response is.

And in light of what is, again, happening in Egypt and elsewhere where the violence against the Coptic church, for example, has gotten worse rather than ameliorate or get better, are they cracking down? Are they getting worse? What's the glide slope there?

Amb. BLAKE. Thank you for that very important question. I was—[chuckles]—just talking about religious freedom with somebody from the Commission on International Religious Freedom. And as you know, both Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are countries of particular concern. We have not made any decisions about the designations for this year, but they will be made shortly.

With respect to all of the countries in Central Asia, but particularly those two and Tajikistan, we have made the point that it is very, very important for all of these countries to allow peaceful worship, and that it's a mistake to try to constrain or ban that in any way because it's only going to drive it underground and make it even more destabilizing, and in fact provide an opening for extremists who might try to exploit that.

So we have urged that religious freedom really be one of the pillars of what we see as a good opportunity for an opening. And again, this is a very important part of our dialogue. Just yesterday, our office that handles religious freedom was meeting with the Uzbek ambassador about this, so this remains a very important subject for us. As I say, I don't want to try to predict what our decision is going to be on this, but again, let me just tell you that it remains a very important part of our dialogue.

Mr. SMITH. Understood. Let me just ask you one something along those same lines—I'll never forget years ago in Moscow, learning from a China watcher that the Chinese government—Beijing—had learned from what happened in the East bloc with the break—or the demise of the Soviet Union that one of the mainstays that gives people the ability to endure just about anything is faith, and that—especially, beginning with Solidarity, and the Catholic church and then the other churches, obviously, throughout all of the East bloc

that remained truly faithful—that there were a number of people who were not motivated by faith, but many others, including Lech Walesa, who were able—and the Pope—to bring about a remarkable stunning change from dictatorship to democracy and that the Chinese government had learned this will not happen here, which is why they have significantly ratcheted up their persecution of all things that is faith-based, including the Falun Gong, because they're seen as threats. If they can control it, they allow it; if not—the “-stans,” the—each of them—what do you think they're learning in terms of further repression on religious believers, but also on any pro-democracy individuals who might want to—in Uzbekistan, the People's Movement of Uzbekistan, they're calling for a[n] act of civil disobedience on June 1st. How do you think these countries will react when some of these kinds of manifestations take place: iron fist or open hand?

Amb. BLAKE. I think it's a combination of both, Mr. Chairman, to be honest. I think the countries of Central Asia are not so much looking at what's happening in the Arab Spring, although they are certainly aware of it; they're looking much more at what's happening in Afghanistan.

And they are very focused on both the transition that is taking place in Afghanistan now—they see that our troops are making advances in Helmand province, Kandahar, they see that a lot of the Taliban and others that are working with them are being driven into the north and are there now—therefore now beginning to rub up against their own borders in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. They're worried about—particularly—the porous border in Tajikistan where people are going back and forth without too much in the way of border security on the part of the Tajiks, just because it's a 1,400-kilometer border and very difficult to patrol.

So they are very aware of this and, again, I think we make the point to them that it's very, very important to draw a distinction between those who are engaged in terrorism and violence and those who are engaged in—who want to engage in peaceful worship and peaceful political discourse and that, if you drive the latter category underground and don't allow them to do that—as you yourself said, Mr. Chairman—that's going to be destabilizing. And so it's very, very important to allow these release valves, if you will.

With respect to religious freedom, I think again, it's a fairly nuanced situation. I mean, even in a place like Kazakhstan, you see that Catholics and Protestants and Jews all have freedom of worship there, and it's kind of the smaller sects that are quite strictly controlled. Even in a place like Turkmenistan, which is otherwise quite controlled, they made a decision in 2010 to allow—to open a Catholic church there.

So, again, I think we have openings to try to work with all of these countries, and we do, and I think that the recent appointment of our international religious freedom ambassador is really going to help because we're going to be working very closely with her. I'm going to be meeting with her next week to figure out a strategy now on how to, again, work with these countries to persuade them that it's in their own interest to do this—not because it's something that's some favor to the United States—and we really believe that it is in their interests to do it.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Cohen?

Mr. COHEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the testimony, and then just looking over this—kind of hard to fathom that in 2011 that this—the—“-stans” have such a poor record on human rights. And from my notes I’ve got here, it suggests that the worst—it’s hard to—really, I guess, distinguish too much, but Uzbekistan is one of the worst, most repressive, and Turkmenistan—I think they win the prize as the most repressive. We have relations with all these countries, do we not?

Amb. BLAKE. We do.

Mr. COHEN. Do we have any restrictions whatsoever on what we do them?

Amb. BLAKE. We do. [Chuckles.] There are some quite significant restrictions. In Uzbekistan, for example, there’s now a prohibition on military assistance to Uzbekistan because of the events in Andijan in May of 2005 when officially 187 people were killed, but unofficially, many more. So yes, there are restrictions.

Mr. COHEN. But that’s military.

Amb. BLAKE. Correct.

Mr. COHEN. But otherwise we engage in trade.

Amb. BLAKE. We do.

Mr. COHEN. Do we give foreign aid to these countries?

Amb. BLAKE. We do. We think it’s quite important. Mr. Cohen, many of these countries—in fact, almost all of them—are very important partners for us in Afghanistan. The majority of supplies that are now going in for our troops in Afghanistan transit through Central Asia, through what’s known as the Northern Distribution Network.

Mr. COHEN. So to bring democracy and the 21st century or the 20th century into Afghanistan, we make friends with folks that don’t really do much for democracy or care too much about human rights.

Amb. BLAKE. Well, we do what we need to do to support our troops. And, again, I think the situation is more nuanced than you might think and, as the Chairman said in his opening statement, most of these countries are governed by people who came up under the old Soviet Union and remain in power, and they’re suspicious of a lot of the things that we’re trying to encourage.

But at the same time, I think it’s important to recognize that there’s an entire new generation that has grown up since the breakup of the Soviet Union, that are now 20 years old, and these are people who are quite agile with the Internet. They know how to get around Internet restrictions, they watch television, they watch closely what’s going on in the Middle East.

And so, again, I think it just underscores that all of these leaders in all of these countries have to pay attention to what’s happening in the Middle East and North Africa, and they have to provide openings—political openings, religious freedom openings and also economic openings to allow opportunities for these young people.

Mr. COHEN. I realize your specialty and your unique area right now is in this area. Have you ever had responsibilities in the—in Latin America or the Caribbean?

Amb. BLAKE. I have not.

Mr. COHEN. You haven't? I visited Cuba recently, and when I was there, I was told by the bishop that they have pretty much religious freedom, and they can worship wherever they want and that members of the Jewish faith can worship and really there was freedom of religion.

They're starting to have some opportunities for people to engage in free enterprise and have more of a market economy.

I don't know how you quantify or—the conditions compare to Cuba, but it's just kind of—I'm just thinking here about how we don't deal with Cuba at all.

How does Cuba compare as far as human rights and religious freedoms with this next to most repressive nation?

Amb. BLAKE. [Chuckles.] I'm not much of an expert on Cuba, Mr. Cohen. But, again I think we're—

Mr. COHEN. But if it was a given that they do allow—that the bishop says that they can worship wherever they want and that—our representative there in Cuba from our government who said, I go to every Catholic church in the—Havana's province and we have worship every Sunday, and it's not a problem. If that—with that as a given, where would they rank compared to these countries on a level of religious freedoms?

Amb. BLAKE. Well, again, I think there's quite a variance in between the countries.

A country like Kazakhstan has got a reasonably good record on the major religions, but again there's still problems with respect to these sects, as they call them.

Even Turkmenistan, which is probably the most controlled of all the countries, as I said, has allowed the Catholic church now to begin to operate and so—and we are engaged right now in a dialogue with Turkmenistan about getting the Commission on International Religious Freedom to go to Turkmenistan, and I think they've agreed to allow that.

So we're just sort of setting up the parameters to make sure that the visit, when it does take place, will actually have real results and will not just simply be a one-off visit in which, you know, nothing really results from it. So I think that's a good example of the kind of engagement that we're really trying to promote and we ourselves attach a lot of importance to this.

Mr. COHEN. Which of these countries, if not all of them, have nuclear weapons?

Amb. BLAKE. None.

Mr. COHEN. None.

Amb. BLAKE. Kazakhstan had nuclear weapons and renounced them, and that was obviously a major nonproliferation step forward.

Mr. COHEN. That's reassuring.

Amb. BLAKE. Yes.

Mr. COHEN. And in reading these notes that the previous president—it doesn't give his title, I don't know if he's president or whatever—"dictator" is what he has here—Niyazov?

Amb. BLAKE. Niyazov.

Mr. COHEN. He eliminated open law—successor has eliminated—oldest policy, such as banning the opera? And circus? What did he have against the opera and circus?

Amb. BLAKE. [Chuckles.] You'll have to ask him that, Mr. Cohen. I don't know.

Mr. COHEN. Yeah. Well, I'm not too keen on the opera either, but banning it? Banning it's certainly a mistake. I yield back the remainder of my time.

Mr. SMITH. Let me ask you one final question, Mr. Ambassador, and that is on the issue of human trafficking.

Amb. BLAKE. Sure.

Mr. SMITH. We know that the TIP report will be coming out very shortly—

Amb. BLAKE. Yes, sir.

Mr. SMITH. —early June. And I just wanted to ask you—Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan—are all watch list countries, and obviously we're now at that point where they need to be moving up or down. It's no longer a parking lot, and I'm just wondering what your sense is as to progress that they are making, each of those countries.

Amb. BLAKE. Thank you very much for that question, Mr. Chairman, and let me just say that on trafficking in persons, this is something that I personally and that my bureau has attached a lot of importance, and we've made this a real priority of ours over the last two years—not just in Central Asia, but in South Asia where India and Bangladesh are also Tier 2 watch-list countries.

And you know, I think that our efforts and of course those with Luis CdeBaca and his whole team have borne some fruit. Obviously I don't want to get ahead of the decisionmaking process here, but I'm proud to say that we've made a lot of progress in Tajikistan. I think we've made good progress in Uzbekistan as well where, for the first time—and you'll appreciate this, Mr. Chairman, because you worked a lot on these issues—Uzbekistan has agreed to set up a committee—an interagency committee—to implement and establish an action plan to implement its ILO convention requirements. And so, that's a fairly significant statement, because in the past, we've had problems even getting them to allow the ILO into the country to do this kind of stuff.

So I think that, again, Uzbekistan—and now, they still have to do that, of course—but the fact that they're talking about now, again, an action plan and really taking steps forward on this—they've always had a pretty good record on the sex trafficking side, and they've done quite a lot on that, but the labor, as you know, particularly on the cotton harvest, has been a real issue.

And so I think that this is a real step forward. Now we're going to have to decide how we therefore factor that into our rankings and that's a subject that's under discussion.

Likewise, I can't say we've made as much progress on Turkmenistan. I mean, I think there we got to do more. But overall our record, I think you'll see, in the SCA bureau's going to be—we're going to have a pretty positive record in, if not graduating several countries, at least keeping them on Tier 2 watch list with kind of solid action plans to move them up. So this is something we've really worked hard on and will continue to work hard on.

Mr. SMITH. Appreciate that. Appreciate your work on that. Is your sense that the possibility of being sanctioned if they were to

drop to Tier 3, did that play any role? I mean, hopefully you used it to its maximum—

Amb. BLAKE. Yeah. I'm not so sure it's the sanctions part of it. It's just sort of being the Tier 3, being put in the international penalty box that really worries a lot of countries, and so in that sense, it can be useful in some ways. And we try—and certainly we try to leverage that as best we can.

Mr. SMITH. [Chuckles.] Leverage away. Mr. Ambassador, thank you so much.

Mr. COHEN. One other question—thank you, Mr. Chair—I've got a learning curve. As I said, this is my maiden voyage—

Amb. BLAKE. Please, please.

Mr. COHEN. —and I read here how this—the president here in Uzbekistan got his sole challenger to say he would vote for the incumbent. You know, that's terrible, but nevertheless I kind of like it with my elections coming up—[laughter]—[you know ?] how he achieved that?

[Laughter.]

Mr. COHEN. What did he—how did he—that's pretty strange, isn't it?

Amb. BLAKE. I—I don't know—I would be hard-pressed to name who that challenger even was, Mr. Chairman, so I'm not—Mr. Cohen—

Mr. COHEN. He was a long shot.

Amb. BLAKE. [Chuckles.]

Mr. COHEN. And then he's got these two daughters he put in nice spots in Geneva and Paris; the one was named one of the “world's worst daughters.” I didn't know there was such a list. Does Mr. Trump have any children on that list?

Amb. BLAKE. I have no comment on that, sir. [Chuckles.]

Mr. COHEN. You're a good State Department employee. I'm going to check that list out, though. Interesting, thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Ambassador, thank you again so much and look forward to working with you going forward.

Amb. BLAKE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. And call us if we can ever be of any assistance—

Amb. BLAKE. I appreciate it. Thank you so much.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

Mr. COHEN. [Off mic.] That's some bad stuff.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. I'd like to now welcome our second panel, beginning with a man who is no stranger to our Commission, Paul Goble, who is a renowned specialist on ethnic and religious questions in Eurasia, whose daily blogs are read by experts and journalists all over the world.

He is currently a professor at the Institute of World Politics in Washington. Previously, he served in various capacities in the State Department, CIA and International Broadcasting Bureau, as well as Voice of America and Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He writes frequently on ethnic and religious issues, and has edited five volumes on ethnicity and religion in the former Soviet space.

Paul Goble is an old friend, as I said. Matter of fact, I'll never forget when we had—when I had one of my first hearings on the issue of the rising tide of anti-Semitic behavior in the OSCE and

the U.S. back in the '90s right after the Soviet Union's demise, or soon thereafter. It was Paul Goble who talked about how it had been privatized, if my memory is correct, and that what used to be done by governments was being taken over by private citizens with the acquiescence of government. And it was a very, very keen insight, and certainly was accurate then, and unfortunately in some places remains accurate.

Dr. Stephen Blank is a professor of national security affairs at the Strategic Studies Institute at the U.S. Army War College in Pennsylvania—since 1989. In 1998 to 2001, he was Douglas MacArthur professor of research at the War College. He has published or edited 15 books and hundreds of articles and monographs on the Soviet, Russian, U.S., Asian and European military and foreign policies, as well as testifying frequently for Congress on Russia, China and Central Asia, and consulting for the CIA, major think tanks and foundations.

Scott Radditz—Radnitz, I'm sorry—is assistant professor in the Jackson School of International Studies at the University of Virginia—sorry, the University of Washington, Seattle. I was working with somebody from Virginia—University—earlier; I apologize. So that's the University of Washington in Seattle.

He received his Ph.D. in political science at MIT in 2007. His research deals with protests, state building and authoritarianism, with an emphasis on Central Asia and the Caucasus. Dr. Radnitz's book "Weapons of the Wealthy: Predatory Regimes and Elite-Led Protests in Central Asia" was published by Cornell University Press in 2010.

This is Dr. Radnitz's first appearance before the Commission. And the other Commissioners look forward to what he has to say.

And then finally, we'll hear from Gulam Umarov, who was born in Uzbekistan and attended high school in Starkville, Mississippi. After graduating from the University of Memphis, he returned to Uzbekistan where he launched the first Uzbek-owned private telecommunications company.

In 2005, Gulam's father Sanjar Umarov founded an independent political movement called the Sunshine Coalition. After the Andijan events in May of 2005, widespread repression of human rights activists began. Gulam left Uzbekistan for the U.S. in September, and Sanjar was arrested in October.

In March of 2006, he was convicted and sentenced to 14-and-a-half years in prison. In the United States, Gulam tried to get his father released while representing the Sunshine Coalition. He also managed various programs funded by the National Endowment for Democracy, the Center for International and Private Enterprise and Freedom House.

Sanjar Umarov was released from prison in November of 2009. Since then, Gulam has been serving as president of the Silk Road Group. I'm very pleased to welcome him to the Commission, and look forward to each of our very distinguished panelists' comments today before the Commission.

We'll begin with Paul Goble.

PAUL GOBLE, PROFESSOR, INSTITUTE OF WORLD POLITICS

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Without objection, the full statement will be made a part of the record.

Mr. GOBLE. Nowhere in the world has the Arab Spring given greater promise of real political change for democracy and freedom than in the authoritarian states of post-Soviet Central Asia. The reasons for that are clear, but not always clearly understood. It is not because these countries are also Muslim-majority states, and it is not because they too are ruled by brutal authoritarian regimes.

There are Muslim-majority states where the Arab Spring has not had an impact, and is unlikely to. And there are authoritarian regimes which either by brutality or accident have blocked the spread of the ideas of the Arab spring.

Rather, it is because the events in the Arab world have dispelled the myth promoted by the governments of the region that fundamental change is impossible or dangerous, and that the populations there must put up with the status quo because the regimes that rule over them enjoy international support as bulwarks against Islamic fundamentalism and supporters of the international effort against terrorism in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

It is important to understand that this development is not something that is going to lead to immediate change, or to demonstrations in the street, and overthrow governments in weeks or months. But it is a fundamental change in mental attitudes, which matters a great deal.

The argument that the governments in Central Asia are using did not save the authoritarian regimes in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and elsewhere, and they will not save the authoritarian regimes in post-Soviet Central Asia, although it is entirely possible that the support they've received from abroad and will continue to receive from abroad, as well as their own repression, will keep them in office for some time. But when a people changes its views of what is possible, that is the beginning of the change in the societies and the politics on the ground.

But just as the Arab Spring has affected the peoples of this region, so too it has impressed the rulers there. It has convinced them that they must take even more draconian measures in order to retain their hold on power. And the changes the Arab Spring have wrought in the consciousness of the peoples of Central Asia thus pose a serious challenge to us. Some of the regimes there may believe that they can get away with suppressing the opposition with extreme violence as long as they blame Islamists or outside agitators, as Uzbekistan president Islam Karimov did this week, everything will be well, and as long as they support the northern supply route into Afghanistan.

Consequently, it is terribly important that the United States find a way of encouraging these governments to yield to democracy rather than taking actions to defend their own power that will ultimately lead to a conflagration which will produce in Central Asia exactly what they say they are fighting against. They are the biggest producers of an Islamist threat by their own repressive policies. That is not something we are very articulate about as a government and as a people, and it is absolutely essential we say that.

That is no easy task, but the Obama administration, I believe, deserves a great deal of credit for the way in which it managed the

situation in Egypt. With all the to-ing and fro-ing, nonetheless this combined message was conveyed. And that approach, one that led to the exit of an increasingly weak authoritarian president and has opened the way for the possibility of genuine democratic change, I believe, provides a model for what we should consider doing when as is inevitable the peoples of Central Asia move to demand their rights. Whether that will happen this year or next, I do not know. What I do believe is that the changes in the minds of these people will change the way in which the future of that region proceeds.

First and foremost, the people of Central Asia now know that a spring in their countries is no longer impossible. They have not believed that for 20 years. There was great hope after 1991 that they would be in the position to create democratic societies, even though in almost none of these countries was there a genuine national movement seeking independence.

In Uzbekistan, it is sometimes said that Uzbekistan did not leave the Soviet Union; the Soviet Union left Uzbekistan. But over the intervening period, we have seen the governments of these regions, and, it should be said, some of their foreign supporters indicate that the current arrangements must be maintained because any possible change risks something even worse: Especially since 9/11, there has been the view that any change from authoritarianism could open the way to Islamist fundamentalism, which gets it exactly wrong: It is the absence of change toward democracy, it is the absence of being willing to make concessions, that makes Islamist fundamentalism more likely in Central Asia in the coming years.

The reason that authoritarian leaders use such arguments and come down so hard on any display of collective demands for freedom is that such demands are contagious. When people in any country dare to be free, to live not by lies, as Solzhenitsyn said, or to be not afraid, as the Holy Father said in Poland.

Others elsewhere are inspired to do the same, and that is why there have been waves of democratization. We saw a wave of democratization in '91 and '92 which was beaten down in the name of stability; we are now going to see another wave inspired by outside events that will spread through the region.

I think we have to understand that the greatest defeat to al-Qaida in the last month was not so much the execution of Osama bin Laden, as welcome as that event was; it is rather the movements of the peoples in the Middle East demanding the rights of electoral democracy and the basic human rights that no one should take away from them. That is the true answer to what bin Laden has been propagating.

But if we understand that for the Middle East, we should understand it in spades for Central Asia rather than assuming that we have no choice but to support authoritarian regimes who promise minimal stability short term so that we can supply our troops in Afghanistan. That is a recipe to creating eventually states in this region which will be more hostile to us than anyone can imagine.

Clearly, as the events of the Arab Spring showed, the peoples of Central Asia are going to need friends and support from abroad. What happened in Cairo was the action of the Egyptian people, but it was with the support of millions of others around the world who were watching television and reading and sending text messages.

And we need to be open to the possibility that we can do the same, and will do the same, in Central Asia. Unfortunately, there are reasons to think that we are going to be less likely to do that in Central Asia, which puts the timing of the Arab Spring for Central Asia off some time. On the one hand, we know a great deal more as a country and a government about Egypt than we do about the countries in Central Asia. It is still unfortunate that in our government, these countries are routinely collectively linked as the “-stans,” or even worse in some quarters, not thought of as countries. We still are talking about former republics, almost.

And it is the case that we are increasingly taking a short-term approach to dealing with them, and worrying about Afghanistan above everything else. I'm quite concerned that if that continues, we will see in Central Asia within finite time—that is, within several years—at least one Islamist state, and probably more. And that is something that would be much worse than any instability that would be produced by support for basic human rights.

We need to get beyond focusing on specific problems like drug flow, human trafficking, corruption and the like, and start—and as important as all of those things are—but rather begin to understand that they are integral parts of the corrupt authoritarian regimes that exist in this part of the world, and we need to begin addressing the fundamental problem. That is something which unfortunately many in this city do not yet appear to grasp.

But if we are to be a true friend to the Central Asians, we need to understand that the only approach which gives hope of a truly better freedom—or future for them is a commitment by us to the careful and continuing promotion of human rights and democracy in that region, rather than assuming that occasional statements are enough.

Again, I want to stress that what I'm talking about is a mental change, is a mental sea change in the attitudes of people. That happened in Eastern Europe in the early '70s; it was not for some years later that we saw the fruition of 1989. It happened in the Soviet Union, perhaps we can say in 1985; it did not reach fruition there until 1991.

But we should remember a story which circulated in Eastern Europe in 1968 because it tells us exactly what all this means. There was a Soviet anecdote at that time about two dogs meeting at the border of Poland and Czechoslovakia, the time of the Prague Spring. The Polish dog in this story is sleek and fat, while the Czechoslovak dog is skin and bones. The Czechoslovak dog, who is heading toward Poland, asked the Polish dog why he was heading toward Czechoslovakia. The Polish dog replies that he is doing so because he would like just once in his life to bark.

What we are beginning to see is that people are beginning to have an understanding that they may have a chance to bark—[chuckles]—and that is the real message of the spring, rather than the details. It is the beginning of a sea change, a recognition that that which is on the ground now need not remain there in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Well, thank you very much for your testimony. Dr. Blank?

**DR. STEPHEN J. BLANK, PROFESSOR OF NATIONAL SECURITY
AFFAIRS, U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Congressman Smith, it is once again a great honor to testify to this Commission on a matter of critical importance. The Arab revolutions of 2011 have captured the world's attention and demonstrated the power of the revolutionary idea to spread like wildfire.

In this regard, they resemble Europe's revolutions of 1848 and 1989 that were also analogized to the spring. But it is precisely this very capacity for rapid spread, and as in 1848, for subsequent resistance by imperiled autocracies, that is on Russia, China and every Central Asian government's political agenda even if those states will not admit it. And Russia and China are important here because they stand behind the governments of Central Asia.

Even if these governments suppress news of these revolutions, they and their partners in the Russian and Chinese governments are extremely concerned about the possibility of this crisis spreading to their doorstep. Indeed, we already see demonstrations in Azerbaijan, hardly the worst of these regimes, and there is talk of demonstrations in Uzbekistan, one of the very worst regimes in the area.

As of May 2011, governments have fallen in Tunisia and Egypt, and are on the point of falling in Yemen. However, violence has been used or imported by rulers with some success in Syria, Libya and Bahrain, attesting to the determination of these pillars of the old order to retain their power and prerogatives, and perhaps their staying power.

Indeed, even in the newly constituted governments of Tunisia and Egypt, it is by no means certain that democracy in one of its variants will ultimately prevail. It already appears that the best-organized party and movement in Egypt is the Muslim Brotherhood and the constellation of Salafist organizations around it.

As happened in 1848, democrats could fail, and new despotisms backed by force could come to the fore, or old ones could reconstitute or reinvent themselves. It is indeed quite conceivable that despite the excitement of the Arab Spring, the practical alternatives before different Arab societies could boil down to the new form of military authoritarianism, or Islamic and clearly anti-liberal and anti-democratic parties.

For a revolution to break out in Central Asia in the immediate or foreseeable future, it is likewise by no means certain that it would bring liberals or convinced democrats to power. Democratic outcomes cannot be taken for granted, and euphoria is clearly unwarranted.

Moreover, these regimes have very powerful advantages: They exercise total control over their media, and are intensifying those controls. They have organized their own forces to suppress not only external threats, but also internal uprisings.

As Secretary Blake testified, they have a safety valve as long as the Russian economy continues to grow because they can then export many of their unemployed young men, the usual incendiary element in demonstrations, to Russia for work, and benefit from their remittances. And most crucially, they can count on Russian

and possibly Chinese military protection should there be a revolutionary crisis.

They may well also be able to count on U.S. political support as well if they can credibly argue that their opposition is Islamist and affiliated with terrorism. This would be an especially strong argument in the context of the war in Afghanistan.

There are also other factors working for them: Liberal democratic political activists on the ground in Central Asia who command genuine authority and mass support are scarce; they have been subjected to 20 years of unrelenting and ruthless suppression. Moreover, it is by no means clear, neither should it be taken for granted, that Central Asian populations embrace our concept of liberal democracy and want what we want.

And past mistakes have undermined the attraction of U.S. or European models. There is nothing in their experience to justify the simplistic, unfounded and misleading policy advocacy that Central Asians want what the United States has.

Nonetheless, they do want freedom, even if the middle classes, the historical mass support for liberal democracy, are weak, dependent and lack organizational resources and traditions. And civil society may be a concept without a deeply rooted reality except in limited situations. These governments are, as Paul said, undermining their own position and sawing off the limb on which they stand by their repression, and are making it more and more inevitable that the day of reckoning when it comes will be longer, more protracted and more violent than would otherwise be the case.

Furthermore, these regimes, backed up by Moscow and Beijing, have learned from the color revolutions of 2003 to [200]5, the Moldovan and Iranian elections of 2009, demonstrations in Tibet in 2008 and Xinjiang in 2009. They have learned the importance of blocking media transmission of foreign news, of repressing or threatening to repress media owners and transmission agents. They've learned to tighten up their control over their armed forces and police, and to stimulate xenophobic backlashes against minorities and to batten down the political hatches on their precarious ships of state.

My longer written statement goes into detail concerning those tactics. But what has long been clear is the fact that these policies not only make it likely that the inevitable day of reckoning for them will likely be even more violent an upheaval than would otherwise be the case, and that their repressive policies create serious obstacles, not just to democratization and democracy promotion, but also to regional security and to U.S. policy.

Therefore, the U.S. Government must, under the circumstances, balance its priority attachment to these governments' valued allies in the war in Afghanistan with a robust and visible commitment to democratization and its insight into the fact that these regimes are ultimately undermining their own term—their own long-term security by their increasing harshness and greed.

Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Blank, thank you very much, and, without objection, your full statement will be made a part of the record as well. Doctor Radnitz.

DR. SCOTT RADNITZ, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the Commission for letting me testify at this very important hearing on the potential impact of the Arab Spring in Central Asia, a region vitally important to American interests, but one that is poorly understood and often neglected by scholars and policy-makers. If you have no objection, I'd also to read a shorter version of my statement.

Mr. SMITH. No objection.

Dr. RADNITZ. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Statement will be made part of the record.

Dr. RADNITZ. The Arab Spring is a watershed event in the history of the Middle East, a part of the world that was unfortunately bypassed by the global trend of democratization of the past several decades. The events in Tunisia and Egypt offer new hope to millions whose future prospects have long been stifled by corrupt and repressive elites. The tremendous force behind these grassroots uprisings caught many off guard, not least the rulers themselves.

The people of post-Soviet Central Asia have also endured hard times over the past two decades. These countries are led by some of the most repressive leaders on the planet. Human rights abuses are rampant and basic freedoms are severely curtailed.

Yet people in Central Asia, like others around the world, yearn for democracy.

Unfortunately, I believe the grassroots uprisings in the Arab world, while inspirational to many, are unlikely to take root in Central Asia due to the region's inhospitable soil.

I want to highlight two sets of factors that I think are most relevant. First is a weakness of linkages between the Middle East and Central Asia. Second is the capacity of authoritarian regimes in Central Asia to withstand challenges from below.

A critical feature of the spread of protest movements across the Arab world is the dense cultural and economic ties between societies. Like the Eastern European revolutions in 1989, the Arab Spring is being driven by citizens separated by national boundaries who have never met, but nonetheless face similar challenges and share a common identity. Arab citizenries also share connections through various channels of communication. People in one Arab country could rapidly learn of protests in other states through international travelers such as businessmen or labor migrants, by telephone or email, and through blogs, social networking websites, and cable channels like Al-Jazeera.

The effect of these dense networks of communication were visible in the spread of protests from Tunisia to Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and beyond.

But these forces run up against major obstacles when they reach the former Soviet Union. Even 20 years after the breakup, the attention of former Soviet states and citizens is still directed inward, toward the territory of the former empire. These states share similar kinds of regimes and forms of corruption. Their citizens still speak Russian as a first or second language and watch Russian television, including pro-government news broadcasts. Russian news, unsurprisingly, has portrayed events of the Arab Spring as chaotic,

violent, and provoked by Islamic radicals. People in the former Soviet Union continue to interact personally through ties of trade and labor migration, and virtually through the Russian-language blogosphere.

When events happen in the Middle East, dissidents and opportunistic politicians in post-Soviet states may take advantage by organizing rallies as they have done in Armenia and Azerbaijan thus far and are rumored to be planning in other states. But the Arab Spring is unlikely to embolden the mass public. A success in one Arab state has a galvanizing effect on other Arab societies, but people in the post-Soviet region have no reason to believe that the constraints on their political and civil liberties in their own countries have changed significantly.

Even the societies of Central Asia, which are predominantly Muslim, tend to look north rather than south or west. Economic, cultural and political ties with Russia remain strong, despite efforts of the region's leaders to distance themselves from the former imperial corps. Young people seeking work abroad from Central Asia learn English, or sometimes Turkish, but rarely Arabic.

There is a recent precedent, though, for the spread of protests between former Soviet states, and that is the so-called "color revolutions" in Georgia in 2003; Ukraine, 2004; and Kyrgyzstan, 2005. These uprisings happened in a short time period and involved similar dynamics, in part because activists communicated across borders and learned from one another.

At the same time, however, the region's governments also showed a willingness to apply lessons from the mistakes of their counterparts, and this brings me to my second point: the resilience of Central Asian regimes. In response to these color revolutions, rulers took measures to shore up their power. Examples included the closure of Western nongovernmental organizations; the expulsion of the Peace Corps from Russia; the arrest and harassment of journalists and human rights activists; the use of violence against peaceful demonstrators in Azerbaijan and Belarus; the Kremlin's creation of the pro-government youth movement Nashi and copycat groups in other states; the investment and building up of ruling parties in Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Georgia, and Azerbaijan; the use of surveillance technology to monitor public gatherings and Internet activity; and the nationalization or increased state control of private businesses.

The upshot of all these measures is more resilient authoritarian regimes. Regime strength can be viewed as a kind of natural selection, in which the weakest ones were overthrown, while those that adapted survive.

Central Asia also suffers from a deficit of civil society in comparison with the Middle Eastern states. Despite their limited political freedom, Tunisia, Egypt and others in the Middle East have organized trade unions, a history of student activism, Islamic movements, and political parties with grassroots appeal. Central Asia, in contrast, has few organizations that are independent and have popular support so that they can facilitate mass protests.

To conclude my remarks, I just want to say a word about Kyrgyzstan, which is an exception in a lot of ways—people believe it may give cause for hope. However, although the country has seen

many protests, these are mostly not grassroots demands for democracy. The 2005 Tulip Revolution occurred when businessmen and politicians led protests against Askar Akayev, the president, after losing parliamentary races, inadvertently causing his downfall. Since then, politician and businessmen have continued to use street protests to advance their interests. Ordinary people, although they sometimes protest on their own, still find it hard to make their voices heard.

Kyrgyzstan, rather than Egypt and Tunisia, may be the most instructive case for the future of Central Asia. As Kyrgyzstan shows, opposition may not come from below or occur through conventional channels such as political parties or grassroots organizations. Threats to regimes can also come from above: for example, rival political elites or businessmen who strategically ally with the president, but also have their own power base.

If the president's coalition collapses abruptly, it will not necessarily lead to democracy, but may, in fact, be violent. For 20 years, the rules of managing power in countries such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have worked to safeguard elite interests. But these elites have no experience in dealing with rapid political change, and may not be able to resolve their differences peacefully when the old rules no longer function.

In short, political change will come eventually to Central Asia, however their governments—however stable their governments appear on the surface. But change will not necessarily come from below. It may instead come from within the regime. And if this happens, we will see new opportunities for democratization, but also a new set of challenges.

Thank you, and I look forward to answering your questions.

Mr. SMITH. Doctor Radnitz, thank you for your testimony and insights. I'd like to ask to Mr. Umarov if you would proceed.

GULAM UMAROV, SUNSHINE COALITION, UZBEKISTAN

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Mr. Cohen, for the opportunity to discuss the future of democracy in my homeland. I would like also to take this opportunity to personally thank the members and staff of the Commission for their assistance and support in securing the release of my father, Sanjar Umarov, from an Uzbekistan prison in 2009. Our family is forever grateful for the unwavering support of the members of Congress: Senator Alexander, Senator Corker, representatives Mr. Cohen and Mr. Tanner; State Department overseeing Central Asia region headed by Honorable Assistant Secretary of State Robert Blake; and all the governmental agencies working closely with National Endowment for Democracy, Human Rights Watch, and other human rights groups around the world. We particularly want to recognize U.S. Ambassador Richard Norland and his staff at the U.S. embassy in Tashkent for their enormous support in securing my father's release and bringing him safely back to on American soil.

In thinking about the impact that the Arab Spring may have on the Central Asia republics, one needs to remember the recent history of our region. My country, Uzbekistan, was founded on the ruins of Soviet Union. As a result, we have never had a tradition of democracy, individual rights, freedom of assembly, or freedom of

speech. We have always been ruled from top with no opportunity for average people to impact our government. Sure, people are tired of permanent rulers and tyranny. But there is no tradition of free speech, and there is certainly no room for any expression of dissent.

It is also important to remember that the vast majority of Uzbekistan citizens are very, very poor. Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria, on a relative scale, possess much more wealth than people of Uzbekistan. Their citizens, therefore, have a closer connection to the modern world and great expectations for the future.

Moreover, because of the terrible poverty in Uzbekistan, young people have left the country for work in Russia and other faraway places. Those that are left behind, especially in the countryside, are elderly women and men. This does not mean that people are happy with existing regime. It means their livelihood is suppressive to this regime. Discontent grows widespread, but almost everyone is too preoccupied trying to put food on the table to think of anything else.

We also need to remember some of the specific characteristics of the Uzbek regime. Time and time again, entire extended families are destroyed because a son, a nephew or cousin has offended even the most junior of bureaucrats in the local administration. The use of violence, terror and torture are so common that they have ceased to shock the society and are, in a very sad way, accepted as the regular order of things. It is no surprise that people stay off the streets, fearful that the events that took place six years ago, in May 2005, will repeat again.

Nonetheless, there is a growing expectation of change in Uzbekistan that is based not on democratic events, but on demographics. The current leadership is old, and behind-the-scenes struggle for power has begun.

Evidence for this power struggle can be seen in the often irrational actions of the government. While 2011 was supposed to be the year of the support for small and medium businesses, at the same time, the government began to destroy all the marketplaces, bazaars, in major cities including the capital city of Tashkent. This policy was adopted in the name of “city beautification” and ultimately destroyed thousands of jobs and raised the cost of living for everyone. Why? One can only deduce that the disruption will enrich one faction of the governing elite at the expense of another.

As a change in the government is inevitable, it will be useful to think about ways in which the United States can further engage with the government as it evolves.

From our experience in the field of human rights, we took cases to the United Nations, engaged in extensive advocacy in the United States, and pursued international legal remedies. But of course, it would be better if you could achieve the same aims through an open dialogue with authorities. The imposition of sanctions or even the threat of sanctions has proven to be counterproductive. As a result, the United States should consider a series of incentives that could be implemented, provided that Uzbekistan accepts responsibility for its action.

Of primary importance is a continued assistance for use—assistance reducing threat posed by religion extremism. Let there be no

mistake: There is an active, an increasingly assertive extremism threat in Uzbekistan. In order to address this threat, United States needs to focus not only on police and military action, but also on underlying causes of religious extremism in Uzbekistan.

Among these are a widespread sense of injustice caused by the absence of functioning civil institutions, monopolies in virtually all spheres of business and the destruction of Uzbekistan's most popular, most important asset: its agriculture. There are specific initiatives that might begin to address these issues:

A concerted effort to support the authority and operation of the parliament. If Uzbekistan can make a real transition towards democracy, a truly functioning parliament is essential.

Demopolization. Over the past few years, the United States has invested tens of millions of dollars in the development of the Northern Distribution Network to support operations in Afghanistan. Almost all of the economic benefits occurring from operation of the NDN benefit a very small group of insiders. The United States should use its investment in the Northern Distribution Network to encourage the growth of competition in Uzbekistan.

Finally, as has been noted by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the mismanagement of the water resources in Central Asia and Uzbekistan is causing great damage to agriculture, which accounts for two-thirds of the population's livelihood. The U.S. should greatly increase its support for the development of local, national and international water management, SIMS [ph], in the region.

In conclusion, just as Egypt has been considered the linchpin of the Arab world, so Uzbekistan is considered to be the linchpin of Central Asia. All good citizens of my homeland fervently pray that we can avoid a situation where the people utterly give up hope and take the streets. Should this happen, it will be disaster, not only for Uzbekistan, but for the region as a whole.

Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Umarov, thank you very much. Let me just ask you: When you talk to the people taking to the streets, what do you think it'll look like on June 1st? What is this called civil disobedience—could you elaborate?

Mr. UMAROV. Well, civil disobedience has been called from abroad to Uzbekistan. In my personal belief, I don't think anybody will go on streets or they will protest. So, yes, this has been very promoted from the outside of Uzbekistan, but from within Uzbekistan, no one really knows about it other than militia, police, and the people who have access to the Internet, which is very limited number of people.

Mr. SMITH. Let me just ask you, in terms of how is information conveyed to the Uzbek people: Are the Chinese cyberpolice advising the Uzbek government in a way that Lukashenko in Belarus is being, we're told, mentored in how to use the Internet for those few people who might have it so that dissidents are spotted and apprehended as they do in China, in Vietnam and elsewhere? How do people get information? Is it all through the state-run media?

Mr. UMAROV. I'm sorry.

Mr. SMITH. No, please.

Mr. UMAROV. If this is the fact, I'm not aware of any Chinese representatives advising our government. I just know that our se-

cret service is very good in making sure that they'll stop whatever is going—whatever might happen before it will happen. They're very good at it.

Mr. SMITH. Let me just ask you, and the others who might want to respond to any of this. Was Andijan kind of like the Tiananmen Square of—did that send a message that if you take to streets, you'll be killed, you'll be slaughtered? We know that the Chinese government has had numerous—matter of fact, the biggest was in response to the one-child-per-couple policy where a mini-Tiananmen Square occurred and people were just brutalized, especially women, and I held a hearing on that a year and a half ago. But I'm wondering, did Andijan have that chilling effect that they were looking for?

Dr. BLANK. I think it would appear that Andijan had a chilling effect on domestic unrest in Uzbekistan and perhaps in Central Asia as a whole. But beyond that, it also crystallized the emergence of a kind of coalition or alliance of states determined to prevent the color revolutions at that time, or anything like that from coming on. If you follow what these governments learn from the color revolutions, and what they have learned from China's and Iran's efforts to deal with internal unrest in the examples I cited, it's very clear—and for example, there's a big article in today's Financial Times about this in China's case—that they have emulated each other.

There's a learning curve going on. I have little doubt that officials in all of these states are sharing information and experiences with each other in order to prevent this from happening. So I would suspect that Andijan had a chilling effect, but it also had a chilling effect not just because it frightened anybody who might think of opposing, but because it gave strength to the resistance of the counterrevolutionaries.

Mr. GOBLE. I think it was a defining moment in three ways, just to extend what's been said. First, I think it was an effort that was directed at a group of people who were not primarily Islamist, but by using the invocation that they were Islamist, the government ended up becoming an advertisement for the worst opposition rather than the best.

Second, I think the fact that calling the people who stood up in Andijan Islamists or Islamic radicals played so well in so many places in Europe and the United States as a justification, and there were a great number of people in the West who were saying that if these were Islamist radicals it was OK. It taught the people in the regimes how they could present what they were doing against them.

And third, I think it is that Andijan is responsible for some of the things that we're talking about today. And that is the notion that societies in Central Asia, which lack many of the traditions that we know about in Eastern Europe, are likely when they go—when there is a public manifestation—that it will turn to violence. And that has made it even more difficult.

And I'd just like to footnote the business about June 1st, I believe that has probably been arranged as a lost battalion strategy by the Uzbek security forces that is only going to be too pleased

to say, look, no one showed up, as a way of demobilizing the opposition.

But all of these things, all these things taken together, have the effect of meaning that those who will continue to oppose the regime will be the people we say we most don't want to see in power. And that the people that we would like to be able to see come to power will be less likely to take action. But I really think that we're, as much as these governments move to control the media and the Internet, the amount of a success they have in that direction should not be overstated.

The splash effect from a small number of people, who have access to information to spread it in society, is rather larger than we suspect. And if you look at the way in which revolutionary information or transformational information has spread, you don't need all that many people to be the primary nodes; then it becomes spread elsewhere. And I think we make a mistake if we simply measure the number of people who have an Internet account and say that's the measure of the impact of the Internet on that society.

Dr. RADNITZ. So I think the Andijan Massacre was also an attempt by the government to set an example, and in particular because the Andijan protests occurred two months after the Kyrgyzstan revolution of 2005. And at the time there was real fear in Uzbekistan and other places that there was another domino to fall. And so I think at that moment the president of Uzbekistan decided to put his foot down and say, right, this is where it ends.

But it's also instructive of how, under certain circumstances, people are willing to come out onto the streets and assert their demands even though it might be dangerous. In Andijan these protests, as Mr. Goble mentioned, occurred without the use of technology. Facebook wasn't even around in 2005.

Word spread from person to person, through local neighborhoods, perhaps through mosques even though Imams are appointed by the state, and gradually it built up. And I think somewhere around 10,000 people ended up joining these protests in the central square in Andijan. And it was at that point, I think, that they decided, you know, if we let this go on longer it's going to get out of hand.

It's also worth noting that these protests didn't spread beyond Andijan, it was a localized event. It was people rallying around a local grievance; that is, local community benefactors had been arrested. So it was important for Andijan, but people in neighboring provinces of Uzbekistan perhaps saw what was going on but didn't see that it was so relevant for them and that's why it didn't spread more widely.

Mr. SMITH. Let me ask the next question with regards to the consequences of having the Kazaks in the chair-in-office, have any of you looked at whether or not that had any positive consequences or was it nothing?

Mr. GOBLE. Mr. Chairman, I can only agree with your opposition to Kazakhstan being a member of the—to getting the chairmanship-in-office. One of the great tragedies that has happened since 1991 is propensity on the part of Western governments to label as democracies countries that are anything but. To act as if having ceased to be communist, the only remaining option is to be a liberal democratic free-market ally of the United States, and to call people

democrats just because they're not communists anymore is one of the things that we have done that has devalued democracy in the eyes of many people.

I believe that kind of activity played a significant role in the recession of interest in promoting democracy in these countries because democracy came to be seen—as defined by us for them, as opposed to defined by us for us—as not all that wonderful. I think that it's useful if Kazakhstan is in the chair that people can say, you are in the chair, therefore you should do certain things. But I think the idea that we should reward a country that is, shall we say, far from democratic in any real sense with that position was a mistake. And is part of a much larger set of mistakes to label as democratic things which are not.

I wish we would be willing to say that just because you're [sic] a communist doesn't make you a democrat. And that's something we have been very, very reluctant as a country to say in this part of the world.

Dr. BLANK. Yes, fine. I'd like to add that I think your opposition to giving this plum to Kazakhstan was completely justified. We heard that they made some minor steps forward, but in reality during this period when they were, as you might say, on probation, before assuming the leadership and then after the leadership, they passed draconian Internet and media laws, they had an election which made the president president-for-life—they just had a snap election, and Mr. Zhovtis, who is the author of this human rights plan, is sitting in jail on trumped-up charges, although he was in an automobile accident.

And even more now the government is talking about creating what can only be described as a Potemkin opposition, the government's own opposition party, in order to ensure somehow that when President Nazarbayev leaves office that he can be certain that the, as the Russians would say, the dacha stays within the family. [Laughter.] And that nothing untold would happen to jeopardize the elite's security.

Rewarding Kazakhstan by making it OSCE chairman I think undermines the credibility of the OSCE, it weakened its ability to stand up for human rights under its mandate, and I think suggests to other governments who are members of the OSCE, but whose record leaves something to be desired, that the mandate for human rights is not something they have to take all that seriously.

Mr. SMITH. I appreciate that. I have a markup in the Foreign Affairs Committee on Libya resolution and the vote is at 4:45, but Commissioner Cohen has graciously agreed to chair the remainder of the hearing. And I do thank you for your extraordinary insights; it does help us do our job better, and also by extension all who will read the transcript because it does get widespread publication. So I want to thank you so much and please continue providing those—the information to our Commission, it is most helpful. I thank you. Commissioner.

Mr. COHEN. Thank you, sir. Mr. Umarov, where is your father now?

Mr. UMAROV. He's in Germantown.

Mr. COHEN. Germantown?

Mr. UMAROV. Germantown, yes sir.

Mr. COHEN. He didn't want to get complete freedom and move to Midtown?

Mr. UMAROV. [Chuckles.] No, not yet. He's thinking about downtown though.

Mr. COHEN. Tell me, what did he tell you about his time when he was in prison? How was he treated?

Mr. UMAROV. He wasn't treated very well. I mean, though it was a very long time where he had no communication with anyone at all. His last three months before he was released he was placed in psychiatric department in the prison hospital. I mean, he was talking about all sorts of torture that was applied to him where they would basically cuff him to the bed and there was—it's not a very pretty picture.

If you look at him right now, though, he's already got the belly and he's looking great. The only mark of the torture is his voice; he still has the harsh voice. I mean his voice cords were torn apart due to torture. That's the only physical—

Mr. COHEN. Was he beaten?

Mr. UMAROV. Oh he was beaten and—I mean, all sorts of things. Yes, beaten as well, on several occasions, not once.

Mr. COHEN. And his crime was forming this political party?

Mr. UMAROV. Well, officially they put all different crimes, of course. But, it was very interesting, all the problem—trouble began right after he announced about a political movement, Sunshine Coalition. So it was, like, literally right afterwards. And nothing happened before and then all of a sudden all of the relatives began having troubles. And it's not just our family but our extended family. They were forced to leave the country and they're still in many, many places, I mean, different places.

Mr. COHEN. Was that typical of how the prisoners were treated or was he treated particularly worse?

Mr. UMAROV. It is typical for political prisoners. For other prisoners, it's not quite that typical but, I mean, they also have other ways to get even the food to them. I mean, their relatives, their family members, at least are able to pass the food—some packages from home to them. In our case we couldn't even do that.

Mr. COHEN. Did you get a chance to visit your father during those four years?

Mr. UMAROV. My mother did, I hadn't had a chance because it was too dangerous for me to go back there and it was unpredictable if I would be arrested or not due to my activity here in the United States.

Mr. COHEN. Where are you spending—are you spending time totally in the United States now or are you over there as well?

Mr. UMAROV. I'm totally here in the United States.

Mr. COHEN. OK. Has there been cessation of activities against your family since your father's release?

Mr. UMAROV. We haven't experienced any yet, but we'll see what's going to happen after this public event. We'll see.

Mr. COHEN. You don't expect much on June 1st?

Mr. UMAROV. On June 1st? No.

Mr. COHEN. What is this—the group that's putting this together, the—what's the name, the People's Movement?

Mr. UMAROV. The People's Movement, people from—basically it's still the same people. I mean, one day they—it's called one movement and another day it's another movement, but the core of the group, it's all the same. I mean, this is the same group of people that are trying to make a difference in the country. I mean, they are active. But they're outside of the country.

Mr. COHEN. They're outside of the country?

Mr. UMAROV. They're outside of the country, correct.

Mr. COHEN. I see, I see. Otherwise they'd probably be arrested, I presume?

Mr. UMAROV. Most likely.

Mr. COHEN. Yeah. What's happened to the group that your father was involved with or started? Was it the Sunshine Group, or—?

Mr. UMAROV. Sunshine Coalition? The people are still there, they're just—it's wiser not to talk about it; at least openly. But folks are there, organization is not functioning, but whatever everyone else can do they're trying to do in terms of influencing the direction that the country is going to be going, because it's—we also, we don't want to see Uzbekistan to become the next Afghanistan.

Mr. COHEN. When you say the next Afghanistan, and this could be for anybody on the panel, what I find interesting is that these countries are so repressive and have such a poor record on human rights, political freedoms, anything we find basic to civilization. And yet, we support these countries. Mr. Goble, you were saying we're creating the seeds of an Islamic takeover by not permitting democracy, these countries are—

Mr. GOBLE. That's right.

Mr. COHEN. And by supporting these countries in essence we're somewhat sureties for [inaudible] to come.

Mr. GOBLE. I think it could be said that we are facilitating in some respects, by looking the other way or talking about nuanced changes, rather than being very clear that what these countries are doing, in many cases, are creating—are taking the kinds of actions that will lead to eventually exactly what they say they, and we say we, are against.

If you do not allow any kind of organized opposition, if you make all opposition illegal, then anyone who opposes the system is engaged in an illegal activity. What that means is that people who are angry enough will be underground, or they will be out of the country and come in underground. People who are in that kind of environment are vastly more likely to pursue an authoritarian agenda, a revolutionary agenda, that would bring—that would, when/if it achieved power be as repressive or even more repressive than the existing regimes and lead to a whole variety of violence.

What we need to do, and what I fear we are unwilling to do because we take a very short-term approach to these things, is to make it very, very clear any time we interact with them that they are taking steps that are against their own interests, their own interests of stability and progress of their country, and making the likelihood of extreme radicalism more—its emergence more likely.

One of the reasons that we see the emergence of very radical groups around the world is because they come out of societies where basic possibilities of participation are prevented, and therefore people seek other ways. I once had occasion to tell the former

president of Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev, that the best thing that could happen to Azerbaijan was his reelection with 60 percent of the vote, because if he got 60 percent of the vote that would mean there would be other people who got 40 percent. But he came out of a society which thought that elections are referenda and therefore 90 percent plus is the only possible answer.

The consequence is that you deprive yourself of, not only safety valves, not only the expression of multiple points of view, but what is especially serious, and it's been alluded to in several of the comments here, democracies make possible succession. No other system does that very well. Except, perhaps, a monarchy if you have enough children and even that doesn't always work, as we have reason to see.

If you have elections, you have a process by which you can replace people and go forward. We are looking in a number of these countries to aging leaderships which will eventually go away because the actuarial tables will kick in. And if there is no process, there will be instability, which some of the worst elements will exploit.

And then, when the worst elements exploit it, those who want to maintain an authoritarian system will invoke that fact as justification for behaving even in a more authoritarian fashion. And we will see this cycle up in exactly the wrong way. Because we have certain short-term goals with respect to these countries, and because we have, I think, utterly failed as a society in the post-communist world to make clear that just because you're not a communist doesn't make you a democrat, because we say some very strange things about people who are anything but democrats, with a small "d."

We have made that process less—that transition in a positive direction—less likely. We're not to blame for all of this, we're not to blame for Islam Karimov's thuggishness. What we're to blame for is failing to give aid and comfort by our statements that Islam Karimov's regime is not a democratic regime. That what it is doing is producing the extremism that it says it is fighting. And that if it wants to fight extremism in a serious way, it's got to open up to a more democratic system, or you will get extremism. That is the lesson of authoritarian regimes around the world.

Mr. COHEN. Dr. Radnitz, you wanted to comment?

Dr. RADNITZ. In terms of American policies towards the region, because you asked, why is the U.S. still working with these authoritarian regimes. If you look over the past 20 years the U.S. has actually pursued a wide variety of policies towards the Central Asian countries, sometimes more engagement, sometimes less, sometimes more incentives and foreign aid, sometimes sanctions or the threat of sanctions.

And the result, more often than not, has been they will—those regimes will continue to do what they're doing because the leadership has their own interests and they do pretty well from the system as it is; mostly thinking short-term. They also get support from Russia and China when the U.S. withdraws our foreign aid. And so, in the long run, I think we've discovered that our leverage is quite limited.

I think the Obama administration's sense of its policy toward is that, we tried emphasizing democracy and human rights previously, we tried speaking out, shaming regimes for their human rights abuses. In the end it hasn't made any difference to human rights on the ground. And so the Obama administration has been prioritizing operations in Afghanistan over all else.

Whether that's the correct policy or not, I'm not sure. But I think we've been extremely frustrated over many years by the fact that we tried everything and everything in the middle and we're still stuck where we began.

Mr. COHEN. Let's assume that tomorrow Jimmy McGovern and Dennis Kucinich take over the world and we withdraw from Afghanistan, and then the day after that we go back to the government like it is today. How does our government deal with the "-stans" in Central Asia if Afghanistan is not a factor?

Dr. BLANK. If I may, if Afghanistan is not a factor then our current strategy towards Central Asia, regardless of who the president may be, has disappeared because if—every statement of official U.S. policy toward Central Asia, not just by this administration but by the Bush administrations, both terms, and even before that the Clinton administration, took as a priority geopolitical interests of the United States.

Since 2001 that has been the war in Afghanistan and it is understandable that this war, which is very important to us, has taken priority and we can see that it has taken priority over the promotion of democracy. Indeed, Secretary Blake's statement today is very clear, where he said in summation, and I quote, "In conclusion, we seek a future in which the United States and the countries of Central Asia work together to foster peace," that means victory in Afghanistan, "security, economic development and prosperity, and advance the democratic values and human rights that unite free nations in trust and respect." Democratic values comes last.

And that, unfortunately, has been the case, despite the fact that many private and public organizations within and without the government have and are continuing to make efforts both privately and publicly to advance human rights. So it's not a question of Congressman Kucinich or former Senator McGovern or, let us say, the extreme right-wing of the Republican Party. It is rather the national interest of the United States. It's not a partisan political—

Mr. COHEN. Oh, I understand that, but it's all about Afghanistan, really.

Dr. BLANK. It is.

Mr. COHEN. So I'm saying—but if Afghanistan disappears—

Dr. BLANK. Then we have no strategy for Central Asia, plain English.

Mr. COHEN. You don't think—but do we withdraw some of our foreign aid, do we eliminate our air base in—

Dr. BLANK. Well, on the conditions of—given the economic conditions in the country now, and some statements to the fact that we are going to withdraw from Central Asia and the fact that, in the case of Manas in particular in Kyrgyzstan, there is ferocious Russian pressure to get it out. It strikes me as being entirely plausible that if the Afghanistan were to go away, hypothetically, then the base in Manas would leave with it, and with it a lot of U.S. mili-

tary and economic influence including the Northern Distribution Network.

Mr. COHEN. So we could save a lot more money with getting out of Afghanistan than just simply the money we're spending in Afghanistan. We could save money throughout the Central Asia territories as well.

Dr. BLANK. No, because what you would do then is probably create a situation that brings about much more security dangers within the region. I mean, there is a threat from Afghanistan to the governments and that's real enough threat. But the real threats in Central Asia are from within and between states.

If you look at Uzbekistan, for example, Uzbekistan has terrible relations with all of its neighbors and almost went to war with them last year. As I pointed out in my paper, all of these states are spending more and more money on military budgets because of, A, their determination to repress domestic unrest and B, they feel threatened by their neighbors.

So even if Afghanistan were somehow to be converted into a Jeffersonian democracy, that would not alleviate the fundamental security equation in Central Asia. We would save money from combat operations in Afghanistan, but the amount of money being spent to maintain Manas or other government programs in Central Asia is quite small relative to that sum. And by creating, excuse me, a field for larger security crisis we don't end up saving very much at all. This is not a question of dollars and cents but of fundamental strategic conception and policy.

Mr. GOBLE. It also is terribly important to understand that making the Afghan war go away means getting the Americans out of it. We've left Afghanistan before. The fundamental strategic problem that Afghanistan presents is that Afghanistan and the Pashtuns spread into the North-West Frontier province of Pakistan which has nuclear weapons. And that the instability that would happen in Pakistan with our departure would necessitate ultimately some kind of re-American intervention down the pike which would probably be even more expensive.

It is the inconstancy of our policy, our in-and-out in Afghanistan, our in-and-out advocacy of democracy that has, more than anything else, subverted what we say we want to achieve. I'm much more worried about Afghanistan spreading into the North-West Frontier provinces of Pakistan because Pakistan does have nuclear weapons, than I am about its impact north. But it will spread north, because the Northern Alliance is a heavily Tajik organization with people across the boarder—there the IMU is in the North-West Frontier provinces and also in Afghanistan, which means you're talking about an Uzbek threat emerging if there is no longer an American force to contest it.

If we define what we were going into as only being a counterterrorist operation that's one thing. We have now faced a counterinsurgency which is something quite different. And we're also facing the possibility of what is in effect an internationalization of the war with the North-West Frontier province being drawn in.

Now, if we make a decision that we want to save money by not fighting in Afghanistan now, that is a decision that I can imagine being made. The consequences of that, however, will be that there

will be the spread of the fighting that is in Afghanistan and it will go into Pakistan and it will constitute a greater security threat to the United States. And as we pull out of Central Asia, as in our eyes we draw down we will see others all too willing from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's end to invest in there.

And if, as we do all of this, we do not make very clear what it is we want, I've often had the opportunity to testify before Congress and my usual response to—the first question I get is, what do we do? And I would say the first thing we do is we don't lie. Don't lie to ourselves. Do not kid ourselves in thinking that these countries are democracies because they're no longer communist. Do not think that Afghanistan is about us—not just about us. It is about Pakistan. And Pakistan is decisively about American strategic interests in the Indian Ocean area.

Mr. COHEN. Thank you, sir. Dr. Radnitz?

Dr. RADNITZ. Just to bring things back to Central Asia briefly, if the war in Afghanistan were to end, we do still have ongoing democratization policies in Central Asia. We still have—we give \$10 or \$20 million to each country a year in foreign aid through USAID, through organizations like the National Endowment for Democracy, NDI, IRI, we have these ongoing programs.

It doesn't add up to a strategic vision of what we want to happen in Central Asia, but on the level of our governments and quasi-governmental organizations to their societies, there are still connections that have been made and that are still being developed. And below the radar the U.S. is still working, I think, toward strengthening civil societies toward at least the possibility of future democracy and toward greater development of their societies. It's not prioritized, but this still goes on.

And regarding the issue of the base in Central Asia, that is, Manas Base in Kyrgyzstan, I actually don't think that that constitutes much of stabilizing force in terms of the region. The U.S. presence in Kyrgyzstan is very contained on the base, it acts as a logistical stepping stone to Afghanistan and perhaps my colleagues know better than I do, but I think if the U.S. were to remove that base perhaps the Russians would like to move in. But I don't see any immediate destabilizing impact, if the war in Afghanistan had ended already, if the U.S. were to withdraw its troops from Kyrgyzstan.

Mr. GOBLE. I don't think—I agree that the simple closing of a single base would not necessarily be destabilizing, although it could entail destabilizing consequences over time. I would suggest that many of the programs that have just been mentioned are very good. However, they are often predicated on three things which I think are not true.

The first is that a DONGO or GONGO is not an NGO. A donor-organized or government-organized nongovernmental organization is not a nongovernmental organization. And yet we make our assessments, in many cases, about how much progress there is to democracy by counting DONGOs and GONGOs as if they were NGOs. They aren't; they're something else. Otherwise you have to say the Soviet Peace Committee was a NGO, which I don't think anyone would really want to do.

Second, I think that the—we are very, very—we as a people are very good at individual cases. I've said to I don't know how many national movements, give me an Anne Frank. If you can give me an Anne Frank for your nationality then people will pay attention because we're very good at focusing on individual cases, which is a good thing. The consequence, however, is that we can be manipulated into looking at certain cases and we have been.

And the third thing, I think, is that precisely because these things are below the radar screen, precisely because they're not what's being done by the top leadership and we aren't saying these things very clearly about our broad vision of social transformation and political opening, that people in these regimes treat this as a necessary evil rather than as a fundamental thing.

There are many people in these regions who say, they hear something from our ambassador but they hear something else from the secretary of state and if that's the case, guess who they decide they should pay attention to? It's a high-level thing, and if you do the under-the-radar things, which sometimes you have to do—they're not alternatives—if you do only that, you may find at the end of the day that you accomplish less than you intended, than the more public kinds of expressions of where we want to go.

Mr. COHEN. I understand we've got this room until 5:00. I don't know what happens and who comes in at 5:00, but obviously we go out. But let me ask you this. I know we used to have a Radio Free Europe and now we've got—what, Radio Free Asia—

Mr. GOBLE. We've still got RFE/RL, it still exists.

Dr. BLANK. We do have Radio Free Asia, that's more recent.

Mr. COHEN. Right. Are they at all effective at maybe opening up—Dr. Radnitz? Are they effective in Central Asia, do you think?

Dr. RADNITZ. I have strong feelings toward the American broadcasting programs.

I think they're extremely important, especially in these societies where the media environment is deteriorating rapidly, especially in rural areas of Central Asia where people may not even be learning Russian, may not even be able to watch Russian television broadcasts, flawed as they are. They'll instead become captive to their own government's horrible propagandistic news.

Mr. COHEN. Do the governments try to block the broadcast of these—of those radio signals?

Dr. BLANK. Absolutely. In the last several—and it's not just Central Asia, it's Russia and China, and their practices then are emulated by the local governments. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have essentially created a blackout of what's going on in the Middle East now.

Mr. GOBLE. I was director of research at Radio Liberty and I was later director of communications for RFE/RL, and I'd like to speak to this. We have created a situation which is where the governments are in—have much greater ability to shut down the messages. A decision has been made to shift from shortwave broadcasting to FM broadcasting. And one of the consequences, if you're going to broadcast on FM, what you have to do is do it from a base somewhere in the country which means you have to have a license from people.

In the old days, in the Cold War, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty broadcasted in short-wave. We've moved away from short-wave which is a mistake because lots of people in these countries still have it, and we have not moved, which would be the next revolutionary step, to direct-to-home satellite television. If that happens, if we get to that—and that's an expensive thing, mind you—we would be able to have the same kind of penetration.

And one last point about these broadcasts. The most striking thing I have ever seen in my relations with the leaders of these countries came when the president of Estonia showed me the notebooks in which he had recorded each day from 1953 until 1989 whether he could listen through the jamming to our RFE/RL, Voice of America, Deutsche Welle, and the BBC.

This is important for the following reason, and this is something that the domestic-radio-driven policies of the BBG have gotten us away from. What you want to do with international broadcasting is a long-term strategy rather than a short-term commercial selling of soap. And second, it's about influencing key elites. It's about influencing people who are going to matter. It is not, by the nature of things, going to be something where you're talking about a mass audience. What we have done in the last decade is to shift away from a concern from reaching key elites, which is what we always did during the Cold War—we were much more interested that—[inaudible]—and Sakharov listened to Radio Liberty than we were that 18-year-olds on the streets of Moscow.

I was once told by the member of the BBG that an 18-year-old who listened to us counts just as much as the president of the country. Well, I think that's silly, saying things like that. I don't care whether we have 6 percent of the audience of 18-year-olds in a population, but if you can give half of the political elite and you'll let me get them on a regular basis to communicate the kinds of thing that RFE/RL and the Voice of America can do well, BBC used to, we can transform the world. I think international broadcasting played a key role in the spread of democracy into Eastern Europe and some of the former Soviet space and I think it can do the same elsewhere.

But we have now moved away from shortwave, which means we're dependent on licensing in local countries, we have shifted in many cases away from broadcasting entirely to Internet delivery. And those are very different things in terms of your ability to reach populations and they're very different things in terms of host governments being able to block them.

And that's something I would hope that you and the Congress would look at this as an issue because I think we completely need to revisit the question of how we try to reach audiences, rather than assuming that the proper model is the model of selling soap on AM/FM radios in the United States.

Dr. BLANK. I might add that if you go through the expert literature on this question, it is now quite clear that governments who have a vested interest in suppressing freedom of information have capabilities that are no less impressive than we do for disseminating information, and as a result, the idea that the Internet—that because people have Internet, or that the Internet is present in their country, that somehow this is what's going to drive

the revolution or make them liberals and democrats and that's because they're on Facebook and Twitter, that doesn't hold water.

It's not empirically proven and it's not factually grounded. Certainly you can use those technologies to disseminate information, but these governments have at their disposal the means, effectively, to suppress and counter these techniques and to essentially put a whole province, like the Chinese did in 2008 and 2009 in Xinjiang, under lockdown from the information point of view.

Mr. GOBLE. It is like military action, it is a constant struggle of offence and defense, that each side can make progress. We surrendered largely in a wholesale fashion by deciding to go over to FM radio broadcasting in these countries because it gave these countries the right to take away the license anytime. And it meant that RFE/FL broadcasts in many countries, the first question journalists and editors ask is, will this cost us our license? That changes the nature of what you're communicating and that's a huge thing which the drawdown from shortwave broadcasting has cost us enormously.

Mr. COHEN. Well, I thank each of you for your testimonies and for giving us—and for educating me some, particularly on this issue of Radio Liberty and—because that's something I visited when I was in Prague, and have got some interest there. And particularly, Mr. Umarov, nice to see you, thank you on behalf of all the members of the Tennessee delegation who worked, and others, on your father's release, for your statement. I'm happy—and Germantown's a wonderful place. [Laughter.] One of the—I have a precinct in Germantown, it's a fact that I won't—but it's a wonderful place. I live in Midtown.

But I want to thank each of you for your testimony and I believe—I presume like any other committee, the Commission could possibly have questions that could be submitted later and you'll have time to respond and then if you—all your statements will be made a part of the record. And with that I will declare this meeting—[sounds gavel].

[Whereupon, at 5 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

PREPARED STATEMENTS

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Welcome to this hearing on the potential impact of the Middle Eastern revolutions on Central Asia. Though it is far too early to know what will come of the “Arab Spring,” even in the Middle East itself, it is clear that the revolutions and uprisings have already changed the Middle East—and it may well yet change other parts of the world.

This hearing will inquire whether the uprisings and protest movements in the Middle East and North Africa might inspire and invigorate popular movements for democracy in post-Soviet central Asia—or even trigger similar uprisings, and crack-downs—and what our government’s policy should be.

Obviously, much distinguishes the countries and peoples of Central Asia from those of the Middle East. But they also have a lot in common—especially in what they have suffered. Broadly speaking, in both regions people are ruled by undemocratic and corrupt dictators, many of whom have been in power for decades. Where they exist, parliaments are largely rubber-stamp institutions and the judiciary is either corrupt or beholden to the executive. National resources and state authority have been illegitimately appropriated by small groups of people, closely bound to the ruling elites.

There are many differences between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, but presidential longevity in office is a defining regional characteristic. Central Asian dictators have monopolized power for the two decades since independence while the public has effectively been removed from politics. Only Kyrgyzstan is a striking exception to this rule—in that country street protests have toppled two heads of state since 2005, and last year the country commenced parliamentary governance.

Sadly, in most of Central Asia, democratic reform and observance of human rights commitments have progressed little in the 20 years since independence. In general, elections have been controlled and rigged; rarely has the OSCE given them a passing grade. Opposition parties have been harassed—where they are permitted at all—and independent media—where it exists—has been put on a short leash. In the most repressive states, there is little or no space for civil society to function. Access to the Internet is tightly controlled. Religious liberty, particularly for non-traditional religious groups, is constrained. Torture and mistreatment in custody are routine. Corruption is common at all levels and thwarts not only human rights but also economic development.

Central Asian leaders often claim that their citizens are “not ready” for democracy because of their history and culture. This is insulting, bigoted, unacceptable, and untrue. It is also sadly familiar—many Middle Eastern tyrants said the same thing about their peoples, but the recent events in the Middle East show, once again, that it is not democracies that are unstable but dictatorships.

The conventional wisdom is that similar popular protest movements are unlikely in Central Asia—yet a few months ago that was the accepted wisdom for the Middle East. It is time we re-think and to challenge our conclusions on both regions—gross and systematic human rights violations have surely created a just sense of popular grievance in Central Asia. And Tunisia showed that it is impossible to predict when a people will decide that a situation is intolerable.

Of course it is our hope that there will be peaceful democratic movements in central Asia, and, equally, that the governments will respond peacefully and with significant reforms. Yet we need to think also about the potential for violent crack-downs, and what our government’s policy should be in the region.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, CO-CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION
ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Mr. Chairman, this hearing raises an important and timely topic. The events in the Middle East and North Africa have already redrawn the geopolitical map, evoking fears of worse instability and religious radicalism but also raising hopes of democratic development that will lead to a more peaceful world.

Perhaps the main lesson from the last six months is that where politics does not offer citizens a say in governance and redress of grievances, the street is the only outlet. Corruption and lack of economic opportunity fuel public resentment towards those in power, who use their positions to line their own pockets. Unfortunately, these conditions also characterize much of Central Asia, where leaders have generally consolidated super-presidential systems that allow them to remain in office while impeding the rise of any competing institutions. The question naturally arises if similar unrest could erupt in that region.

In many post-Soviet states over the last few months, officials have leaped to deny the possibility of such events in their countries. "It could never happen here" they claim, citing the popularity of their presidents or the public's fear of instability or the absence of some other prerequisites for mass demonstrations of discontent.

It is not surprising that officials in Central Asian countries would reject the possibility that their regimes are vulnerable to the wave that has swept over the Middle East and North Africa. Our task is to investigate to what degree their assurances are well-founded or whether we have reason to expect protests in Central Asia. What seems clear already is that some leaders are concerned enough to tighten control of new technologies—such as mobile devices that can access the Internet—which were used in North Africa and the Middle East. For example, Uzbekistan recently instructed mobile operators to notify regulators of any bulk distribution of text messages with "suspicious content," to monitor social networking sites, and to be prepared to immediately switch off their Internet networks if directed by authorities.

Events in North Africa and the Middle East have taken many by surprise, including the region's rulers—some of whom are now ex-rulers. This hearing will elucidate whether Central Asian leaders have good reason to be nervous. I look forward to hearing the views of our witnesses.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS, RANKING MEMBER, COMMISSION
ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I commend you on holding this hearing. The ongoing drama of the Arab Spring is clearly the most important story of the year and possibly of our time. It is at least as significant, in my view, than our great success in finally ridding the world of Osama bin-Laden. In fact, developments in the Middle East and North Africa, where people have arisen to pursue democratic change, undercut al-Qaeda's entire narrative, while rejecting its methods. Whether these events might spur similar outcomes in other parts of the world, specifically Central Asia, is a natural question for this Commission to investigate.

As former President and current Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, I have visited all the states of Central Asia, as well all of those of the OSCE's Mediterranean Partners. Throughout my travels in these regions, I have been struck by certain structural similarities between them. Setting aside Israel, both regions are primarily Muslim. Both, you might say, are struggling with the consequences of colonialism. Both have large and growing young populations, which are to varying degrees frustrated by the lack of opportunity, and which have faced entrenched elites that resist systemic reforms, even when they talk about their necessity.

On the other hand, the states of Central Asia are full-fledged members of the OSCE, which they voluntarily joined in 1992. They thereby promised to carry out the organization's commitments in the human dimension. How well they have done can be gauged in the State Department's annual reports, which on the whole, present a pretty depressing picture.

It is easy to become discouraged. We should remember, however, that Central Asian countries have been independent for not quite 20 years. I say that not to excuse their well-known shortcomings in democratization and human rights but simply to state a fact. The lands of the Middle East and North Africa have had far more time to build a modern polity with accountable government and rule of law but sadly, little has been accomplished. Only now, because of the stirring courage displayed by many thousands of people, has the opportunity for a real paradigm shift finally emerged.

The obvious question that arises is whether possibilities for reform, without major uprisings, exist in Central Asia. I'm sure our witnesses have strong opinions about that key issue but I just want to say that I hope the answer is "yes." In my contacts with Central Asian leaders, I have always stressed the need for gradual, positive change.

Today, everyone knows instantly what is happening all over the globe. Both for societies seeking examples of successful pressure on governments and for regimes determined not to yield to such pressure, the power of precedent is important. Experiences in one country or region naturally engender hopes or fears in others. But nothing is inevitable and that doesn't necessarily mean similar conditions will lead to similar conclusions.

Moreover, Tunisia and Egypt have responded quite differently to the popular call for change than Syria or Libya, and they have more in common with each other than any of them has with Central Asian states. It is not so easy to make predictions about how events in one region or country might influence outcomes in another.

These are difficult questions to answer; frankly, I am glad I don't have to. That is precisely why we're here—to hear from smart people who have thought long and hard about the issues. I salute their willingness to tackle such knotty topics and I look forward to learning from them.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR ROBERT O. BLAKE, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Chairman Cardin, Chairman Smith, members of the Commission, thank you for inviting me to discuss with you the potential implications for Central Asia of the ongoing events in North Africa and the Middle East. I welcome this opportunity to consider with you the contours of U.S. engagement in Central Asia that will most effectively promote peaceful, democratic development.

Mr. Chairman, we are witnessing with cautious optimism events unfolding across North Africa and the Middle East, but truly regret the lives that have been lost and the extent to which some governments have resorted to greater repression and violence in response. Though it is easy to say in retrospect that these changes were going to take place eventually, no one could have predicted the pace with which citizens of these long repressed countries could turn the tide.

Differences in history, culture and circumstances make direct comparisons impossible. However, in some important respects the Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, with the partial exception of Kyrgyzstan, share dynamics similar to those causing the upheavals in the Middle East, including unemployment and chronic underemployment, poverty, corruption at all levels of society, little or no outlet for meaningful political discourse, and a lack of opportunity, particularly for young people. Over 50 percent of the populations in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan are under the age of 25, and these youths face closed and inefficient economies, with few prospects for personal advancement. If not addressed by these governments, these circumstances are likely to present considerable social, political, and economic challenges in coming years.

There are also significant differences with the North Africa and Middle East countries, which in our view make popular uprisings in the near term less likely in Central Asia. First, the economic situation is not as dire in Central Asia. IMF unemployment projections for 2011 in Central Asia range from a low of 0.2% in Uzbekistan to a high of 5.7% in Kazakhstan, compared with 9.2% and 14.7% in Egypt and Tunisia, respectively—based on official data. Second, significant proportions of the work force in poor countries such as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have found work in Russia, easing unemployment and providing a valuable source of remittances. Third, the hydrocarbon wealth of countries such as Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan has enabled those countries to cushion the impact of economic hardships. Unlike North Africa and the Middle East, regions which have maintained considerable ties to the United States and the West, the Central Asian states remain relatively less exposed to the West and its history of democratic institutions, personal freedom and liberty. Instead of travelling to the United States or to Western Europe for employment, educational, or recreational purposes, most citizens of Central Asia instead head north to Russia. This lack of exposure is exacerbated by government controls over the internet and social media.

While citizens in Egypt, Tunisia, and elsewhere have turned to Facebook and Twitter as forums through which to interact, organize, and exchange ideas, the vast majority of Central Asia lacks access to the internet, with 14 percent internet penetration in Kazakhstan in 2008 the highest of all the Central Asian countries (according to the International Telecom Union). Governments have succeeded in blocking outside influences and tightly controlling domestic media through harassment, prosecution, and imprisonment of journalists. The lack of independent media allows governments to control the dissemination of news and information.

Another factor is the lack of meaningful political opposition in most of Central Asia. Significant opposition parties are largely nonexistent, and organized opposition groups are for the most part either illegal or tightly constrained by the authorities. While these conditions seem oppressive to a western observer, residents in some parts of Central Asia value the stability and certainty afforded by their otherwise undemocratic governments. In Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan the governments derive some measure of legitimacy, at least for now, from their emphasis on stability as residents warily monitored the turmoil and unpredictability in recent years in neighboring Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan.

Still, this profound change taking place across North Africa and the Middle East demonstrates equally profound lessons for Central Asian governments and societies. One of the messages we have given to our friends in Central Asia is that they need to pay attention to these events and their implications. Leaders everywhere, not just in Central Asia, should heed the lessons of the Arab Spring. In my meetings with Central Asian officials over the last several months, I have encouraged them to provide more space for political, personal, and religious freedoms, allow for the develop-

ment of a robust civil society and democratic institutions, and chart a course for economic reform.

Leaderships in Central Asia express support for gradual change, and concern that too much freedom too fast could lead to chaos and political upheaval. They are suspicious of democratic reforms, and with some exceptions have maintained tight restrictions on political, social, religious, and economic life in their countries. We think this is a mistaken view. While democracy can be messy and at times appear chaotic, it nevertheless provides for greater stability and security as it provides societies a necessary and peaceful release valve for political and economic tensions. Democratically elected governments that respond to unfettered public opinion build greater trust and confidence between peoples and their governments. Democracy as we advocate it is not violent or revolutionary. It is peaceful, tolerant, and evolutionary and demonstrated primarily through the ballot box and a free civil society. Democracy does not equate to street violence and economic chaos. Quite the contrary—democracy provides hope and realistic, peaceful approaches to address pent up problems.

We view this moment as an opportunity to re-inforce our engagement with Central Asia on issues related to religious, political, and personal freedoms. To strengthen our engagement in Central Asia, we instituted in December 2009 Annual Bilateral Consultations with each country. Each bilateral consultation constitutes a face-to-face structured dialogue, based on a jointly developed, comprehensive agenda which facilitates candid discussions on the full spectrum of bilateral priorities, including human rights and media freedom. These discussions result in work plans to address key priorities and outline practical steps to advance U.S. policy goals. While pursuing these goals often poses serious challenges, our robust engagement and assistance to Central Asia have yielded important results, including support for ongoing efforts in Afghanistan. We have also used the annual consultations as a forum to engage civil society and the business community in the Central Asian countries. In the annual consultations we held earlier this year in Kazakhstan, for example, the Kazakhstani Deputy Foreign Minister co-hosted with me a meeting with Kazakhstani civil society in the Foreign Ministry, a welcome precedent that we hope to duplicate elsewhere.

In the twenty years since independence, the leaderships in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan have frequently and publicly called for building democratic institutions in their countries. They have given speeches and issued decrees, but they have done little to put them into practice. The parliaments, media, and public institutions are still dominated by the head of state and his views. In our engagement with these leaders, we challenge them to make the choice for the greater stability and security that real and responsible democracies provide. We also continue to provide support for those elements in civil society who remain committed to building democracy peacefully albeit under restrictive and even harsh conditions.

Kyrgyzstan has been the primary exception in Central Asia. The democratic gains recently made in Kyrgyzstan since the April 2010 events—the passing of a new constitution establishing a parliamentary republic and the subsequent elections of a President and Parliament—are cause for optimism even as the ethnic violence in June of last year demonstrates the fragility of democracy in the country. As President Obama told President Otunbaeva earlier this year in Washington, we are prepared to support democratic institutions to help Kyrgyzstan succeed as a democratic example in the region. Kyrgyzstan's democracy requires substantial international support to build strong, publicly accountable institutions. We estimate the U.S. provided over \$140 million in humanitarian aid, economic development, support for democratic elections and good governance, and other foreign assistance in response to the events in FY 2010, and we urged others to provide such support. Kyrgyzstan faces its next test in presidential elections slated for later this year. We look forward to working with the Helsinki Commission and others to help organize international support and monitoring efforts.

Other Central Asia states are at differing stages in their democratic development, but there are some signs of hope in all. Kazakhstan hosted the first OSCE Summit in 11 years last December, which included a robust civil society component which Secretary Clinton found extremely encouraging. Kazakhstan has also made some progress toward meeting its Madrid commitments on political pluralism, and reform of media and electoral laws, although much more needs to be done.

President Karimov of Uzbekistan gave a speech in November 2010 calling for greater political pluralism and civil society development. Uzbekistan has done little to turn this vision into a reality thus far, but we will encourage President Karimov to meet the commitments he made in that speech. Tajikistan has the region's only legal Islamic party, the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), even though

IRPT and other opposition officials continue to be subject to various forms of harassment. And even in Turkmenistan, President Berdimuhamedov has spoken publicly of the need to expand space for other voices in the political system.

To be clear: I am not predicting extensive changes in the near term. The Arab Spring notwithstanding, democracy is a long-term process, and we will work with all of our Central Asian partners to help them develop stronger democratic institutions and more open societies.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, nearly thirty-six years ago leaders from North America, Europe, and the Soviet Union came together to sign the Helsinki Accords, committing themselves to a core set of human rights, including the fundamental freedoms of association, expression, peaceful assembly, thought, and religion. It was argued by those gathered in Helsinki in 1975 that security among states was directly connected to the way that those states treat their own citizens. As Secretary Clinton presciently asserted at last year's OSCE summit in Astana and as events this Spring further underscore, these values remain relevant today and are critical to the building of sustainable societies and nations that are committed to creating better opportunities for all of their citizens.

In conclusion, we seek a future in which the United States and the countries of Central Asia work together to foster peace, security, economic development and prosperity, and advance the democratic values and human rights that unite free nations in trust and in respect. We recognize that the pace of change will be defined by the citizens of the countries of Central Asia and that our efforts must focus on long-term, meaningful results.

The most important lesson gleaned from the events that have occurred in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and elsewhere is that governments must respond to the needs and the desires of their people. People everywhere want to provide for their families and to ensure that their families have proper education, and adequate livelihoods. And people everywhere want to have basic democratic freedoms.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PAUL GOBLE, PROFESSOR, INSTITUTE OF WORLD POLITICS

A Renewed Sense of the Possibility of Change: The Peoples of Central Asia Respond to the Arab Spring

Nowhere in the world has the Arab Spring given greater promise of real political change toward democracy and freedom than in the authoritarian states of post-Soviet Central Asia. The reasons for that are clear but not always clearly understood. It is not because these countries are also Muslim majority states, and it is not because they too are ruled by brittle authoritarian regimes. There are Muslim majority states where the Arab Spring has not had an impact, and there are authoritarian regimes which, either by brutality or accident, have blocked the spread of the idea people in the Middle East are seeking to promote.

Rather it is because the events in the Arab world have dispelled the myth promoted by these governments that fundamental change is impossible or dangerous and that the populations must put up with the status quo because these regimes enjoy international support as bulwarks against Islamist fundamentalism and supporters of the international effort against terrorism in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Those arguments did not save the authoritarian regimes in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and elsewhere in the Middle East, and they will not save the authoritarian regimes in post-Soviet Central Asia. The peoples of those countries have been transfixed and transformed by the Arab Spring. They see that the arguments of their rulers no longer are convincing, and they see that the West and above all the United States, which often has pursued a policy of convenience with regard to these regimes, has changed as well. As a result, an increasing number of the people of these countries are ready to try to gain what is their natural right, freedom and democracy.

But just as the Arab Spring has affected the people, so too it has impressed the rulers in Central Asia. It has convinced them that they must take even more draconian measures in order to retain their hold on power. And the changes the Arab Spring have wrought in the consciousness of the peoples of Central Asia thus pose a serious challenge to Western governments including our own. Some of the regimes in that region may believe that they can get away with suppressing the opposition with extreme violence and that as long as they blame Islamists or outside agitators, as Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov did this week, all will be well. Consequently, the United States must find a way of encouraging these governments to give way to democracy rather than taking actions to defend their own power that will ultimately lead to a conflagration.

That is no easy task, but the Obama Administration deserves a great deal of credit for the way in which it managed the situation in Egypt. And that approach, one that led to the exit of an increasingly weak authoritarian president and opened the way to the possibility of genuine democratic change, in which the next elections will not be the last ones, provides a serious model for how the United States should behave when, as I hope and believe, the Arab Spring will be succeeded by a Central Asian Spring, allowing the peoples of that region at last to gain what they were denied in 1991—genuine freedom, real democracy, and the human rights that all peoples should enjoy.

In my brief remarks today, I would like to focus on three things: first, the way in which the Arab Spring has affected thinking in Central Asia both among the populations and among the powers that be, underscoring the differences among the peoples of those states; second, the particular risks of regime change in the countries of that region, again country by country; and third, the way in which the U.S. and the international community can best proceed to ensure the next step toward genuine freedom for the peoples of this region.

Spring is Not an Impossible Dream

The peoples of the post-Soviet countries of Central Asia have been told by their rulers that they must accept the status quo both because it is the only one that can prevent still worse things, including the imposition of Islamism, and because it enjoys widespread international support from Western democracies who for one reason or another believe that such authoritarian regimes are either useful or even more necessary for peoples like themselves. But the events in the Arab Spring have made such arguments less compelling than they were. After all, the governments that have been toppled in the Arab world made exactly the same arguments with perhaps even greater effect—until it became obvious that the peoples of that region no longer accepted them and that the West had begun to recognize that these claims were unjustified and wrong.

The reason that authoritarian leaders use such arguments and come down so hard on any display of collective demands for freedom is that such demands are contagious. When people in a country dare to be free, to live not by lies, and to not be

afraid, others elsewhere are inspired to do the same. That is why there have been waves of democratization across large parts of the world at various points in the last generation, and it is why there is a new wave which has started in the Middle East but which will not end there.

In defense of their positions, authoritarian regimes rely not only on propaganda and police methods. They also rely on direct control of what people can find out about what is going on elsewhere. But the ability of these regimes to do that is small and declining. The Internet and other forms of social media mean that it is almost impossible to cut key groups off from learning what others are doing in other countries. That does not mean that regimes won't try—almost all of the regimes in Central Asia are doing so—but rather it means that they will not succeed. And the splash effect of such knowledge is larger than many understand.

Statistics on Internet penetration are less important than the fact of such penetration. If a few people can learn the truth, they can tell others. And that process means that even if the number of Web surfers in Central Asia is still small, the number of those who benefit from such knowledge is far larger. Indeed, one can argue that in many of these countries, it has reached critical mass. And to the extent that the Internet is supplemented by international broadcasting, both radio—and for obvious reasons, it has to be shortwave—and direct-to-home television broadcasting, the expansion in the spread of information will lead over time to the expansion of human freedom.

On this as on all other measures, there are enormous differences among the countries of this region, just as there are enormous differences among the countries of the Arab world. Consequently, just as the outcomes at any one point in the Arab world have ranged from quiescence to peaceful demonstrations to mass violence, so too the range of patterns in the Central Asian countries is likely to be large. At the same time, however, because within the Arab world and within the Central Asian world, people in one country often take their cue from what is happening in another in their region, so too a breakthrough in one Central Asian country, such as Kyrgyzstan, in response to developments in the Arab world, is likely to play out across the other Central Asian states more or less quickly.

Elections Rather Than Bullets Defeat Islamism

As an increasing number of American commentators are now pointing out, the execution of Osama bin Laden is likely to have a smaller on the future of terrorism than are the actions of Egyptians, Tunisians and Libyans who are pressing for democratic rights. Indeed, the least reflection will lead to the conclusion that the actions on the streets of Cairo are a more definitive defeat of Al Qaeda than even the liquidation of bin Laden. This message is increasingly being absorbed among U.S. government leaders, who are ever more inclined to recognize that the purchase of short-term stability through reliance on authoritarian rulers gives a false sense of security.

That eliminates one of the key arguments that authoritarian rulers in Central Asia have advanced, many Central Asian populations have accepted, and that many Western governments including our own have made the basis of policy. Supporting a dictator who claims he can hold off Islamist extremism is a fool's errand: Such regimes are more likely to produce Islamist responses than are democratic ones. That does not mean that managing the transition from dictatorship to democracy is easy: It is obvious that those who support democracy must ensure that no free election will be the last one in any country.

But as Washington's approach in Egypt has shown, that is not an impossible task. There are ways to develop safeguards against backsliding, and there are ways to marginalize the extremists. That is one of the things that democracy truly understood does best. Another thing democracy does extremely well is allow for succession, an issue that arose in the first instance in Egypt and that will arise soon in many Central Asian countries whose presidents are aging Soviet-era officials. If such individuals can be led to see that they will be remembered as fathers of their countries if they allow the emergence of a genuine opposition via elections, they will be more likely to take that step than if they are encouraged to "keep the lid on" Islamic assertiveness.

Everyone Needs Friends

As the events of the Arab Spring show, people who aspire to democracy need friends abroad, but they need friends who understand that support from abroad must be carefully calibrated lest it allow authoritarian regimes to claim that the democratic movement is a cat's paw for foreigners or it provoke the regimes into even more violent action in "defense of the nation." The United States showed that kind of understanding in the case of Egypt, carefully calibrating its statements and

actions to the situation on the ground. But it has been less successful elsewhere in the Arab world not only because the leaders are less willing to see reason and yield to the people but also because the United States has either immediate interests it wants to protect or has less knowledge of the situation.

Unfortunately for the peoples of Central Asia, both of those factors are even more on view there. The US relies on several of the Central Asian countries for the passage of logistical support to the US-led effort in Afghanistan and not surprisingly does not want to see anything happen that might disrupt the flow of needed military supplies. And the US knows far less about Central Asia than it does about the Arab world. Few American representatives there speak the national languages, instead continuing to rely on the former imperial one; few US officials appear to view the Central Asian countries as independent actors in their own right, instead viewing them as part of Moscow's *droit de regard*. (The infamous case in which an American president thanked the Russian president in public for allowing a US base in Uzbekistan but did not thank the president of Uzbekistan is a symbol of this.)

There is little appreciation of the nature of Central Asian societies and the opportunities they have for development in a positive way. Instead, the focus in Washington is almost exclusively on the problems they represent: drug flows, human trafficking, corruption, violence, and unemployment among the urban young. All of these things are true, but they are neither the whole story nor can they be adequately addressed by authoritarian measures. Indeed, addressed in the ways that the regimes of this region have, these problems collectively can be the breeding ground for further violence and the replacement of the current authoritarian regimes by perhaps even more authoritarian Islamist ones.

That is something that the US does not yet appear to grasp, but if we are to be a friend to these peoples, we must understand that the only approach which gives hope of a truly better future for them is a commitment by us to the careful and continuing promotion of human rights and demography. Our doing that will add to the courage of those who are already inspired by the Arab Spring and will thus promote a change of seasons in Central Asia as well.

The authoritarian governments of Central Asia have maintained themselves not only by pointing to the threat that any change would bring Islamist regimes to power—something they make more likely the longer they are in office—but also by arguing that they have provided security and increasing prosperity for their peoples. In fact, they have provided neither. The peoples of Central Asia are less secure and less well off than they were. But even if it were true that they had done so, that is not enough for the peoples of the region, and it should not be enough for us.

In thinking about the situation in the post-Arab Spring Central Asia, one cannot fail to recall a Soviet anecdote from 1968. The story has it that two dogs meet at the border of Poland and Czechoslovakia. The Polish dog is sleek and fat, while the Czechoslovak dog is skin and bones. The Czechoslovak dog who is heading toward Poland asks the Polish dog why he is heading toward Czechoslovakia. The Polish dog replies he is doing so because he would like, for once in his life, to bark.

That message reverberated through Eastern Europe and then through the USSR with increasing power. It convinced many that, in Mikhail Gorbachev's words, "we cannot continue to live like that"—and more important still it led them to conclude that they didn't have to any more. That is what the peoples of Central Asia are learning from the Arab Spring. They want what all people want and deserve, and with the help of the people and government who pioneered human rights, they have a chance to gain sometime soon what they were promised but did not get twenty years ago.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. STEPHEN J. BLANK, PROFESSOR OF NATIONAL
SECURITY AFFAIRS, U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE

Introduction

The Arab revolutions of 2011 have captured the world's attention and demonstrated the power of the revolutionary idea to spread like wildfire. In these regards they resemble Europe's revolutions of 1848 and 1989 that also were analogized to the spring. But it is this very capacity for rapid spread and (as in 1848) for subsequent resistance by imperiled autocracies that is on Russia, China, and every Central Asian government's political agenda even if those states will not admit it. Even if they suppress news of these revolutions, they and their partners in the Russian and Chinese governments are extremely concerned about the possibility of this crisis spreading to their doorstep. Indeed, we already see demonstrations in Azerbaijan, by no means the worst of these regimes. And there is talk of demonstrations in Uzbekistan, one of the very worst regimes in the area.¹

As of May 2011 governments have fallen in Tunisia and Egypt and are on the point of falling in Yemen. However, violence has been used, or imported by rulers with some success in Syria, Libya, and Bahrain, attesting to the determination of these pillars of the old order to retain their power and prerogatives and perhaps their staying power. Indeed, even in the newly constituted governments of Tunisia and Egypt it is by no means certain that democracy in one of its variants will ultimately prevail. It already appears that the best organized party and movement in Egypt is the Muslim Brotherhood and the constellation of Salafist organizations around it. As happened in 1848 the democrats could fail and new despotisms, backed by force, could come to the fore or old ones could reconstitute or reinvent themselves. It is quite conceivable that despite the excitement of the Arab spring the practical alternatives before different Arab societies could boil down to some new form of military authoritarianism or Islamic and clearly anti-liberal and anti-democratic parties. That outcome would undoubtedly retard the appearance of democratic movements across Eurasia and give comfort to the current upholders of the status quo. But even if a revolution broke out in Central Asia in the immediate or foreseeable future it is likewise, by no means certain that it would bring liberals or convinced Democrats to power.² Democratic outcomes cannot be taken for granted and euphoria is clearly unwarranted.

Moreover, these regimes have some very powerful advantages. They exercise total control over their media and are intensifying those controls as noted below. They also have organized their armed forces to suppress not only external threats but also internal uprisings.³ They also have a safety valve as long as the Russian economy continues to grow because they can then export many of their unemployed young men, the usual incendiary element in demonstrations, to Russia for work and benefit from their remittances.⁴ And they can count on Russian and possibly Chinese military protection should a revolutionary crisis occur. They may well be able to count on US political support as well, at least for a time, even though the Administration is now counseling governments like Kazakhstan to undertake reforms. This would especially be true if they can credibly argue that their opposition is Islamist and affiliated with terrorism.⁵ This would be an especially strong argument in the context of the war in Afghanistan.

There are also other domestic factors working for them. Liberal Democratic political actors on the ground in Central Asia who command genuine authority and mass support are scarce and have been subjected to twenty years of unrelenting and ruthless suppression. Moreover, it is by no means clear, neither should it be taken for granted, that Central Asian populations want our concept of liberal democracy, i.e. want what we want. Moreover, past mistakes have undermined the attraction of the US or European models. Culturally and historically there is almost nothing in their experience to justify such simplistic, unfounded, and misleading policy advocacy or prescriptions.⁶ The middle classes, the historical mass support base for liberal democracy, are quite weak, dependent, and lack organizational resources and traditions. Civil society may be a concept without a deeply rooted reality here except in limited situations. Moreover, the region faces enormous political and economic challenges both within each state and on a regional basis. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that these rulers are afraid.

Tajikistan's President, Emomali Rahmon told his Parliament on April 20, 2011 that,

Much has been said and written about the possibility of the repetition of such events in Central Asia,—I want to reiterate that the wise people of Tajikistan, who were once the victims of such events, know the meaning of peace and stability. They are aware of the importance of peace and stability.—They have

gone through civil wars; therefore, they reject military solutions to any problem.⁷

Similarly Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov recently said that abundance of goods at domestic markets, especially food, and cheap prices are key indicators of progress and stability.⁸ As a result governments in the region are doing their best to leave nothing to chance.⁹

The Status Quo and Its Defenders

Twenty years after the fall of Communism at least two of Central Asia's states may fairly be described as failing states, i.e. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan while Paul Quinn-Judge of the International Crisis Group believes that Uzbekistan is not far behind.¹⁰ Indeed, a succession crisis there, which he deems inevitable given the absence of any discernible plan or order for succession to the seventy-two year old President, Islam Karimov, could throw Uzbekistan into that kind of tailspin characteristic of such states. But even if Uzbekistan is not currently failing, it, like all the other Central Asian states except Kyrgyzstan is a strong autocratic despotism and all of them share many characteristics of patrimonial or even in some cases Sultanistic states. Hence succession crises may be not only something they have in common given the nature of their governance, but also in each country such crises could well be the major threat to the stability of the state, not just the particular regime in question. In turn that succession crisis and ensuing crisis of the state could possibly create an opening for a genuine Islamic movement to attempt to seize power. Likewise, although it does not seem likely right now, in the future one or more of these states could fall prey to a form of unrest analogous to what we now see in the Arab world, a succession crisis could ignite a much deeper and broader upheaval.¹¹ Kyrgyzstan's "revolution" of 2010 is such an example, and as suggested below, the sudden death of Turkmen President Sapirmurad Niyazov in 2006 triggered widespread apprehensions about just such a major crisis in Turkmenistan and even beyond its borders.

Therefore we should be alert to the possibility of state failure in one or more Central Asian states. Indeed, it could happen almost suddenly without warning. A recent analysis of North Korea reminds us that the more repressive and artificially maintained the regime is the more sudden and precipitous is its fall. Likewise, the worse the level of oppression, e.g. state violence as in Uzbekistan, is, the greater is the nightmare upon liberation.¹²

For Russia, China, and the post-Soviet governments of the CIS, these revolutions' implications for these regimes' domestic prospects these revolutions represent a clear and present danger. Moreover, all these rulers fully appreciate the dangers they could face if these revolts migrate to their countries. For example, Russia's anxiety about the possibility of the Arab revolutions spreading to Central Asia was the topic of a public discussion in the Duma. Accordingly members of the Duma and Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin called on these states to make timely reforms from above lest they be swept away like those in North Africa. Since Russia's goals are stability, without which these states cannot draw closer to Russia he recommended the formation from above of a civil society, international and inter-religious peace, responsibility of leaders for the standard of living of the population, the development of education and work with youth.¹³ Clearly this is not enough and no mention is made of economic development or freedom or genuine political reform. In other words, Russia is only willing to tolerate cosmetic reforms and it is doubtful that Central Asian leaders will go beyond those limits even if they approach them.

Thus in Kazakhstan, President Nursultan Nazarbayev called for an instant election rather than a palpably stage-managed referendum to give him life tenure because that latter option was too egregious a move in the current climate. Meanwhile in Uzbekistan, an already draconian state in many ways, we see a further crack-down on mobile internet media along with denials by government agencies throughout the area that revolution is possible. Indeed, Uzbekistan has taken control over cellular companies there instructing companies to report on any suspicious actions by customers and on any massive distributions of text messages through their cellular lines.¹⁴ Azerbaijan too has attacked Facebook and Skype.¹⁵ We also see that Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have instituted news blackouts.¹⁶

Such moves emulate the draconian laws put in place by Russia and, Iran, and Kazakhstan as a result of the earlier color revolutions of 2003-05, the Iranian elections and Xinjiang uprisings of 2009, and China's move to intensify its already harsh controls on the Internet in 2011.¹⁷ These harsh moves against electronic media come on top of a situation demonstrating that press freedom in Eurasia is at its "lowest ebb" in over a decade.¹⁸ Meanwhile, in Azerbaijan, where unrest has been growing since late 2010 in response to the regime's moves to crack down on dissent and Islamic agitation (not necessarily the same thing), large demonstrations

are now occurring. Thus the Azeri government, seeing the failure of earlier tactics is now trying to work with influential Western media outlets to change public opinion so that it will believe no changes are expected even as mild criticism is tolerated. Similarly the government will organize tours from Western elites to persuade people that the West is cooperating with Baku, and it will raise pensions, salaries, and social services while either coopting or suppressing the opposition.¹⁹

Clearly these regimes are whistling in the wind and have good reason for anxiety. Such events undoubtedly stimulate Moscow's and Beijing's anxieties as well. They might also stimulate US anxieties since the US has inclined to support these regimes as allies in the war in Afghanistan despite their checkered domestic records, thereby showing the military priority of US policy over the impulse towards democracy promotion.²⁰ Furthermore were a revolution to break out in Azerbaijan there would be major grounds for foreign concern for there is very good reason to believe that Iran is a major force behind the opposition AIP party whose leader was imprisoned for advocating the regime's overthrow.²¹

Certainly there are points of similarities between Arab and Central Asian societies, e.g. youth bulges with large ranks of unemployed young men and "starkly autocratic regimes."²² Based on statistical analysis Ralph Clem recently wrote that,

The empirical data available suggest a very close fit between socioeconomic conditions in Egypt and Tunisia on the one hand and the five Central Asian countries on the other, especially with regard to the youthfulness of the population. In other respects and in some countries, the pre-conditions associated with political unrest are even more problematic in Central Asia than in North Africa. Certainly Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are assessed to be more corrupt and less free than either Egypt or Tunisia. However, Kazakhstan ranks higher than any of the North African or Central Asian countries in the human development indices and is less corrupt and freer than any of its neighbors. Recognizing that none of these measures capture perfectly the reality on the ground, and that other, non-quantifiable influences can be crucial to political outcomes, and if conventional wisdom regarding the importance of these structural factors is correct in the Egyptian and Tunisian cases, then this comparison with Central Asia portends turbulence ahead, particularly for Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.²³

To be fair, Clem's conclusions are by no means universally agreed upon. Several writers have recently argued that revolutionary upheavals are unlikely in Central Asia in the immediate future. And it is clearly the case that internal factors rather than external ones will be the determining factors concerning the incidence of a revolution.²⁴ But even if one accepts the argument that the indigenous forces of liberalism are quite weak and that the populations are not visibly disposed at present to support democracy as in North Africa, the domestic conditions singled out by Clem are telling in that they create an immense amount of internal pressure for change which, if bottled up, will sooner or later explode. And, of course, that explosion need not assume a liberal-democratic character. At the same time, however, it also should be pointed out that virtually every analysis of Central Asia confirms the incidence of these pressures that Clem listed.

As discussed above, widespread official corruption, growing Islamic fundamentalism, ethnic minority and/or clan and family concerns, burgeoning populations the inability to provide basic social services for the population extant, unemployment and underemployment, large-scale out-migration and the growing dependence on remittances, increasing involvement in the international narcotics trade and the attendant rise of domestic drug use, as well as environmental degradation and squabbles over increasingly scarce water supplies all pose significant challenges to the Central Asian states now and in the future. Add to this rising food prices, inflation, power outages, deteriorating medical care, and an underperforming educational system and the prospects for Central Asia appear even bleaker.²⁵

Consequently an upheaval in Uzbekistan, particularly during continuing conflict in Afghanistan, has immense geopolitical repercussions throughout the region given Uzbekistan's centrality to the war effort in Uzbekistan and the fact of its being the most geopolitically central and key prize of all the Central Asian states.²⁶ Indeed, despite Uzbekistan's rank misrule it is sustained by its alliances with all of the major powers having interests in Central Asia and its key position astride the Northern Distribution Network to Afghanistan (NDN) has led US diplomats, who are fully aware of this misrule, to stress the necessity of maintaining at least "minimally decorous relations" with it to sustain the NDN.²⁷

But Uzbekistan might be the worst governed of these states only in a relative sense. Governance in all of these states displays the triumph of informal relationships: clan, tribe, and/or family, triumphing over formal and legal ones. That trend

is the opposite of most modern states. So we see in Central Asia at best an incomplete modernization and the persistence of archaic social structures and practices that have nonetheless become functional in these states. Moreover, because these rulers fear any reform there is a constant temptation and tendency towards the accumulation of ever more power and wealth at the expense of the nation and ever-present tendencies towards more, not less authoritarian or even quasi-totalitarian forms of rule. Nepotism and systematic corruption are rife everywhere. And with the rise of narcotics trafficking, widespread criminality pervades several governments. Alternative forms of corruption and predation lead to the same conclusion. These states' rulers enjoy control over or access to hugely disproportionate amounts of the state's economy which in many cases are dominated by one or two crops or raw materials like oil, gas, cotton, copper, gold, etc. At the same time they have preserved previous socio-economic structures like the Soviet system of cotton farming in Uzbekistan as highly serviceable forms of socio-political control and exploitation, e.g. child labor in Uzbek cotton farming.²⁸ This phenomenon too exemplifies the melange of old and new that characterizes the region's socio-political structures and creates so much difficulty for analysts and external policymakers wishing to ameliorate conditions there.

Thanks to their ability to forge this control over people and resources Central Asian leaders have translated that power and access into personalized forms of rule and rent seeking that displays and characterizes all the pathologies listed above. There is abundant evidence of widespread corruption, accelerating income differentials in income and extremely unbalanced concentrations of wealth, and pervasive signs of anomie and anomic behavior. Those signs take the form of family breakdowns, huge increases in drug addiction, criminality (including official corruption), torture of dissidents, more brutal forms of sexual discrimination and exploitation of women, ecological devastation, widespread poverty, ethnic intolerance (as in Osh in 2010), etc. Consequently most foreign observers see this region as being plagued by multiple overlapping structural crises embodying all these pathologies if not more.

Kyrgyzstan, which is anything but an autocracy, is perched precariously on the brink of ungovernability and subject at any times to mass unrest either ethnic or political, as its own officials admit. And while its leaders claim to be building democracy, this only applies to the ornamental or dignified parts of the state not its effective governing aspects. And in its case these effective aspects of governance are often carried out not just on the basis of regional, clan, tribal, or ethnic affiliation, but also by thinly disguised criminal enterprises.²⁹ Therefore rhetoric aside, we cannot and should not term Kyrgyzstan a democracy or a state that is building one. Indeed, it is barely a consolidated state.

Tajikistan, though clearly an autocracy, is on the verge of economic and presumably political collapse.³⁰ It permanently confronts multiple, reinforcing, and often overlapping pressures: economic, political, climactic, and external. Even without the spark provided by the Arab revolution it exists in a state of permanent insecurity and as a result for a long time has had to outsource its security to outside powers, particularly Russia. Therefore it is at the mercy of these outside powers. Recently China forced Tajikistan to cede it about 1 percent of its territory supposedly in return for assurances of Tajikistan's long-term security, clearly a dubious rationale. Tajikistan is also on very bad terms with its neighbor Uzbekistan over questions of water and electricity use and almost went to war with it in 2010. Tajikistan's decision to restart the Rogun dam project in 2010 triggered this spike in tensions and the Tajik media if not government clearly worries that a war with Uzbekistan might ensue that could then be exploited by unnamed third parties. Thus these media stories advocate mediation by neutral parties like the EU.

Although the Sarikamysh gas fields explored by Gazprom may satisfy Tajikistan's power needs through 2060, these reserves do not satisfy Dushanbe's goal of using water-generated hydropower to become an energy exporter in Central and south Asia. Thus Tajikistan and Uzbekistan still confront each other, increasing the need for outside mediation. But Tajikistan's problems do not end here. Instead they only begin here. Its regime is notoriously corrupt with President Ermomali Rahmon having built a \$300 million presidential palace in a state whose annual GDP is about \$700 million. He justifies this expense by claiming it is necessary to impress foreign heads of state. But clearly neither Beijing nor Tashkent is sufficiently impressed to refrain from threatening Tajikistan. Likewise, Russia, its main protector, has now raised energy tariffs on Tajikistan just before the crucial spring planting season when farmers need oil for their tractors. Russia used similar tactics in 2010 to ignite the Kyrgyz revolution of that year and to signal its unhappiness with Kyrgyz policies. Now Russia is unhappy with Rahmonov's efforts to seal of the border with Afghanistan. Instead Russia wants to resume control of the border, probably not just to curtail the drug traffic from Afghanistan against which it habitually rails.

There are other issues wherein Moscow wants Tajikistan to make an overt declaration of fealty and subservience to it rather than pursue what its neighbors call multivector policies towards all the outside actors. Thus Moscow wants to confirm Tajikistan as a satellite of Russia, not an independent actor who can play other states off against each other.

Since Tajikistan depends on Russia for its energy imports and support on water issues this is a strong form of pressure. But it also faces the specter of domestic unrest, possibly inspired by the Arab revolution. Media reports criticize the regime for “cosmetic” reforms that amount to very little and warn that the “Google generation” is longing for radical change and very frustrated. Journalists have also written recently “the people’s patience is limited.” A recent public opinion survey by TOJNews Information Company concluded that the boss of Tajikistan’s Islamic party is more trusted than is Rahmonov who got only 6.5% of the vote, another disturbing sign of potential unrest.

Yet at the same time the threat paradigm in Central Asia is not confined to the internal pathologies of misrule and what Max Manwaring of the US Army War College has called illegitimate governance.³¹ Neither is the primary threat the possibility of terrorism emanating from Afghanistan. While this would be a threat should NATO withdraw from Afghanistan before achieving either a victory or political resolution there, that is currently and for the foreseeable future not the main external threat to Central Asian states. In fact, as discerning observers recognize, there is almost as much potential for inter-state conflict in Central Asia as there is for a domestic crisis that could precipitate a state’s disintegration.³² Indeed, the two phenomena could overlap if an internal crisis inside one state exploded, and every Central Asian leader understands this linkage and consequently strives to the utmost to avoid it. So while security in Central Asia must be understood in broad, holistic terms, the interaction of these rivalries among the local governments, combined with this illegitimate governance and external interest creates a hideously complex security situation.

The Security Equation in Central Asia

Therefore if we were to assess the implications of the Arab Spring or the Arab Revolution for these governments those implications might look very different to them than they do to us. While Americans generally welcome these trends but have some concerns for their future, they haunt Central Asian and Russian, and Chinese rulers with the specter of an unmitigated disaster. The first conclusions that they drew long preceded the Arab revolutions and were inspired by the only partially successful color revolutions in the CIS of 2003–05 if not the Iranian, and Moldovan unrest of 2009. These regimes then learned what is clearly the central lesson of the Arab upheaval, namely that victory goes to he who controls the loyalty of the armed forces, usually armed forces that are deliberately multiplied and divided into several different formations, many of which have a primary mission of preserving internal security and suppressing unrest. In Russia and China we see an expansion of the number of police, paramilitary, and military units and of these organizations’ missions.³³ Although little research has been done on these organizations in Central Asia, it is quite likely that they have been beefed up to squelch internal manifestations of dissent as in the Andijan Massacre of 2005.³⁴

Second, they have long since moved to suppress potential for organizing, again in response to much earlier crises. Elections throughout the CIS and China are a foregone conclusion and parties are essentially either created from above by the regime or denuded of any real capability for challenging the status quo.³⁵ Third, they have moved, as noted above, like China, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan to suppress new information technologies. In fact, according to some commentators, Russia is working to prevent a “Facebook Revolution” by proposing that the owners of online social media be responsible for all content posted on their web sites.³⁶

Indeed, the haste and comprehensiveness with which these regimes have moved since 2003 to batten down all the hatches eloquently testifies to the fact that the structures of governance throughout much of Eurasia remain fundamentally unstable and certainly illegitimate. This was certainly clear in 2009 given unrest in Moldova, Iran, and Xinjiang. These manifestations of unrest showed the power of the new information technology and social networking programs, and how they can be used to threaten corrupt and repressive regimes that seek to rule through electoral fraud, repression, and internal colonialism in China. There is also no doubt that these manifestations of unrest have serious repercussions beyond their borders. Often the silence of official media in authoritarian states is itself an eloquent testimony to this impact because the rulers fear the impact of such news upon their populace. We have evidence of deep scrutiny of Iranian events in 2009 in neighboring Azerbaijan whose independent media thoroughly reported the news from Iran while its official

media was very quiet.³⁷ Indeed, the Azeri government actually called for stability in Iran despite its wary relationship with Tehran, a sure sign of its anxiety over the demonstrations there.³⁸

This kind of reaction to signs of spreading unrest suggests not just that these regional governing structures are fundamentally unstable but also that they are prone to recurring crises and may again be entering a dynamic phase of political development. In fact these episodes testify to the inherent fragility of anti-democratic regimes and their recurring susceptibility to internal violence. Consequently these regimes will try to ensure beyond any doubt that the outcome is foreordained and then ratified as legitimate. In practice this suggests that across Eurasia, especially if domestic tensions grow stronger in these states we may see repeat manifestations of policies adopted against the demonstrators of 2009. Those policies comprise the following developments across Eurasia:

We can expect increased interference with the operation of free media and in particular a crackdown on the information technology of social networking. Authoritarian regimes' success in this endeavor to date calls into question the previously unquestioned assumption that this technology inherently favors freedom and its supporters.³⁹ The most extreme example of this kind of repression evidently occurred in Xinjiang in 2009.

After ethnic riots took place in July 2009, the Internet was cut off in the entire province for six months, along with most mobile text messaging and international phone service. No one in Xinjiang could send e-mail or access any website—domestic or foreign. Business people had to travel to the bordering province of Gansu to communicate with customers. Internet access and phone service have since been restored, but with severe limitations on the number of messages that people can send on their mobile phones per day, no access to overseas websites, and very limited access even to domestic Chinese websites. Xinjiang-based Internet users can only access watered-down versions of official Chinese news and information sites, with many of the functions such as blogging or comments disabled.⁴⁰

This repression can also go beyond suppression of the free use of the internet and of other forms of information technology and social networking to include periodic or at least intermittent efforts to isolate the country from foreign media, including expulsions of foreign writers, denial of visas to them, interference with the internet, news blackouts, and increased threats if not use of repression against news outlets and their reporters. These threats need not include violence, they can be effectively implemented by economic means, denying revenue from advertising, or by what Russians call telephone justice, i.e. telephone calls from authorities to compliant editors. This also means greater efforts to develop a “patriotic” media and mobilize popular support around those tamed and docile “house organs.” So it is quite likely that those repressions of new and older media will also be accompanied by favoritism for the “patriotic” media and the systematic inculcation of nationalist xenophobia, something we see already in China, Russia, and Iran. Thus Karimov, has now charged the West with funding the Arab revolutions to gain access to oil, gas, and mineral reserves.⁴¹

Increased restrictions upon opposition political movements are also likely. This repression will occur, not just in terms of their freedom of communication or access to the media, but also in terms of the right to assembly and publicly protest their condition. Invariably this also entails heightened forms of repression. In Iran in 2009 the regime essentially blanketed the country with police forces and some officials threatened the opposition with heavy jail terms or even with being labeled enemies of the state.⁴² And in Xinjiang that year the authorities followed suit and threatened any demonstrators with the death penalty.⁴³ This likely trend also means more show trials and repressions like that of Mikhail Khodorkovsky in 2009–10 and of Iranian protesters during the same period. These kinds of show trials may also be used to settle factional and clan scores in Central Asia whose states are governed by clan and patron-client politics.⁴⁴ In whatever form they appear they will be educational as Soviet rulers intended, and a deterrent to political activity in their impact. Here we should remember that Russia once again has a Gulag with political prisoners in psychiatric institutions, repressiveness and insecurity of property and the reintroduction of a “boyar”-like retinue around an all-powerful ruler who rules through a state-sponsored cult of personality.⁴⁵ Neither can we doubt Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan's verified records of torture of prisoners.⁴⁶ The numerous reports of the Russian authorities' fears of social unrest during a time of economic crisis, the government's adoption of new repressive measures to deal with them, and the strengthening of the CSTO's capability to intervene in Central Asian states suggests that a strong effort will be made to suppress any sign of political unrest in both Russia and Eurasia at the first moment lest it connect with growing economic griev-

ances.⁴⁷ Indeed, Russia has also recently enacted many new regulations designed to forestall and repress any expression of mass unrest due to the economic crisis.

Besides this fact a recent study of Kyrgyz and Kazakh counter-terrorism legislation openly links developing trends in these two sets of laws that are increasingly repressive in the absence of much terrorist activity to these states' perception of Russia whose laws they are clearly emulating as a "reference group" for them, i.e. a state that has crated the basis for persuading these states to internalize its legislation.⁴⁸ Thus Russia's counterterror legislation which serves as a template for countries like Kazakhstan, has served as a potent instrument for the repression of democratic political activity in Russia and in these countries. As a recent study of that legislation indicates,

Aside from provisions of counterterrorism legislation that strip individuals of many of their basic rights and judicial protections, the Russian law On Counteraction to Terrorism contains a number of loopholes surrounding the definition of terrorism. Terrorist activity, according to the Russian law, includes among other things, "informational or other types of assistance" at various stages of terrorism, as well as "the propaganda of terrorist ideas. Dissemination of materials or information which urge terrorist activity, substantiate and justify the need for such activity." The liability for "informational assistance" threatens to become a major deterrent to the circulation of unofficial information about terrorist attacks by broadcasting organizations. Liability for the "justification of terrorism" which was established by an amendment to Russia's Criminal Code in July 2007, has already had a chilling effect on the freedom of speech and open debate concerning terrorism. There are considerable risks of a politically motivated enforcement of these legislative proposals. The federal law on mass media has been amended with a new restriction that prohibits public justifications of terrorism by mass media sources. Given that terrorism has always been a politically charged item, it is very difficult to separate terrorism from other manifestations of politically motivated violence. The imposition of the ban the vaguely defined justifications of terrorism can promote editorial self-censorship and restrictions on the freedom of expression. It may stifle investigative journalism and promote censorship of news media articles on contentious topics related to terrorism.⁴⁹

And new legislation to silence the media even more is currently being proposed.⁵⁰ Such actions betray a traditional Russian (not just Soviet) military-police approach not only to terrorism, but to the whole question of internal dissent and regime stability. Thus Andrei Soldatov observes that the FSB and Ministry of Interior, (MVD) reacted to these revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt by proposing to amend the criminal code to make the owners of social networks responsible for all content posted on their sites and to force them to register with the state.

Kazakhstan's efforts to ban the book of Rakhat Aliyev, Nazarbayev's ex-son in law and the 2009–10 purge of former high-ranking officials on corruption charges also opens the door to the possibility of a larger campaign to stifle any potential political opposition. Similar phenomena can be expected and should not be ruled out in other Central Asian states, especially given a prolonged economic crisis that could shake the pillars of the state. Indeed, even though Kazakhstan was the OSCE Chairman in 2010 its human rights situation essentially deteriorated still further.⁵¹ The new media law and the law on political parties that were supposed to embody promises made to the OSCE for reforms signed into effect by President Nazarbayev in February 2009 do not meet OSCE standards.⁵² Certainly Kazakhstan's earlier elections and the awarding of life tenure to Nazarbayev cannot be portrayed as manifestations of democracy. Although Kazakh authorities have rightly emphasized the country's basic religious tolerance, its freedom of religion law was found to violate the country's constitution and was withdrawn. Nonetheless it needs to be redone.

Worse, the new law on the Internet restricts freedom of expression via the Internet and aroused a large amount of controversy.⁵³ Indeed, according to US experts this law is even more draconian than Russia's law and could easily serve as a template for other Central Asian governments.⁵⁴ Beyond the fact that Nazarbayev openly advocated limitations on the freedom of the Internet, there have been recent massive hacker attacks on opposition websites and Internet resources.⁵⁵ Andrey Richter, an expert from the OSCE, has confirmed that this law completely contradicts the promises made by Kazakh authorities concerning civil and human rights.⁵⁶ As Alexei Simonov, Head of the Glasnost' Defense Fund observed,

Kazakhstan's desire to be a European power is quite noticeable despite its Asian location. So I think that Astana will have to listen to the opinion of human rights activists, because the image of Kazakhstan, which is already not

the most glowing, will be ruthlessly torpedoed by these amendments [to the law on the media and concerning the internet], Kazakhstan will quickly find itself at the bottom, among states that are not liked because they severely violate the human right to freedom of speech and opinion.⁵⁷

Although Foreign Minister Marat Tazhin and Ambassador to the US Erlan Idrissov have repeatedly stated that a genuine multi-party system, independent media, and term limits for the president are or have been enacted into legislation and that Kazakhstan is “determined to continue our policy of democratization in conformity with international human rights standards,” Kazakhstan is and remains a Potemkin democracy.⁵⁸

Authoritarianism has remained inviolate and unchanged since 1991 and much of the social science literature that could be used to analyze Kazakhstan’s political system would point to a continuing authoritarianism and little reform. However, there is the possibility that Kazakhstan’s commitment to the accords it made with the OSCE in Madrid in 2007 could enable activists to utilize those principles of international and domestic accords to launch a more vigorous campaign for the Kazakh government to observe human rights as it committed itself to doing and thus replicate the experience of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union a generation ago.⁵⁹

It also is clearly ruled in dynastic fashion with Nazarbayev astutely balancing clans and factions. Niyazov’s death reportedly forced Nazarbayev to start thinking about succession in 2007 and it also alerted these clans who had hitherto not challenged him or the regime to follow suit. The result has been something of a series of continuing intrigues around this issue. According to Stratfor.com,

Nazarbayev decided to step down in 2010 in order to be able to bolster whoever succeeded him and keep the peace. But the infighting proved too strong and risky, compelling Nazarbayev’s supporters to name him “Leader of the Nation”—meaning he would always be in charge, no matter the position. The declaration was more a safety net than anything. The political theater surrounding rumors of succession decisions grew more dramatic over the past year, leading to the decision in January to call for a snap election for April.⁶⁰

At the same time he had originally planned to call for a referendum to certify his position and make it unassailable till 2020. Unfortunately Western governments communicated their unhappiness with this move and it certainly seemed impolitic as the Arab revolution gathered steam. So it was shelved and a snap presidential election called.⁶¹ Nevertheless the election was widely reported to have major shortcomings and Nazarbayev’s political advisor Yermukhamet Yertsybayev told reporters that “I think the president is going to run the country for ten years more, and if someone in the West doesn’t like it, they’ll have to get used to it.”⁶²

However, in the meantime a game of balancing rival clans and factions continues while members of the inner circle, especially his daughter and son-in law, Timur Kulibayev, who are worth an estimated \$2.5 billion, become targets of corruption investigations abroad and bywords for corruption.⁶³ Under these circumstances it is not surprising that in the wake of his election Nazarbayev announced his intention to strengthen the Parliament and regional governments while deconcentrating central executive power.⁶⁴ Whatever the democratizing implications of his plan may be or whatever ambitions for democracy Nazarbayev has, this move widens the circles of elites, dilutes the clans and factions close to him, and strengthens his hand to pick his successor while diffusing power so that nobody can amass too much power in the future. Nazarbayev’s charge to his new government is to reduce corruption although that is hard to do given the corruption at the top. Second, Yertsybayev apparently envisages reforms from the top to create state-led parties of power and of opposition.⁶⁵ This system would allegedly be a “Presidential-Parliamentary system” able to function in Nazarbayev’s absence. And there are rumors that Kulibayev would duly lead the opposition party, thus confirming the continuation of a kind of Potemkin democracy.⁶⁶

This plan has apparently infuriated opponents of the regime but they are in no position to stop it. It would appear that Nazarbayev’s concept of reform is to ensure a smooth transition to his successor whoever that may be, not to strengthen the overall system’s responsiveness to society. Instead he apparently aims at building a relatively closed but seemingly self-sustaining system of presidential-Parliamentary relationships. But this is likely to be a chimera in the absence of the rule of law, governmental accountability, and genuine reform. Indeed, it may lead to new authoritarianism or to sustained political strife after Nazarbayev leaves the scene.⁶⁷ Since the succession remains unresolved and nobody can stop the ruling family’s corruption or machinations to revise the constitution whenever it likes, it is doubtful

that genuine democracy can be initiated from the top or that the nature of the state will change substantially as long as Nazarbayev rules and possibly for some time after that. Whether it works or not, this and other trends in Kazakhstan highlight the unresolved nature of the succession and the fact that the astute economic policies followed until now depend too much on one man's wisdom. Despite his great achievements this is not the best augury for the future. Meanwhile in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan we do not even see this much effort to advance reforms but it is clear that there are struggles for power and position within the inner circles of these regimes.

Finally along with the growth of repression and electoral chicanery we can also expect a growth in officially sponsored xenophobia and nationalism. We already saw that in Kyrgyzstan in 2010 and it would not be hard to stimulate such feelings since every government in Central Asia has been busily proclaiming a kind of state nationalism since 1991. As a result, and given the widespread phenomenon of ethnic diasporas and minority nationalities in Central Asia there are ready targets for such campaigns in almost all of these states.

The point is that these regimes are so aware of their inherent fragility that they know very well that the spread of democracy or even of reform, not to speak of revolution in any one nearby state immediately puts them all at risk. To them ultimately there is no difference between the spread of democracy or military defeat in their peripheries because it will amount to the same thing, the loss of their power. It is not by chance that in 2006 Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov wrote that for Russia wrote that the greatest threat to Russian security was efforts to transform the "constitution" of any of the CIS members.⁶⁸

Therefore we can expect more resistance to the US' calls for democratization and human rights, which, in fact, have been attenuated under the present Administration. It makes no sense to demand that states like Turkmenistan conform to human rights obligations when we refuse to press China or Russia, the latter being a signatory of the Helsinki treaty, to uphold their treaty commitments. Since Russia is in many ways an alibi and a cover for other Eurasian states who are merely adding to their ultimate insecurity by these practices, this makes pressing Russia to adhere to its human rights obligations doubly important even if Moscow does not like to hear it. For if we refrain from doing so, this only tells Russian leaders that we are not serious in our commitment and that they can therefore disregard us with impunity. And we leave ourselves wide open to charges of hypocrisy throughout the CIS. Moreover, when the reckoning for these states comes, as it surely will, we will once again be caught unprepared without a policy response to that crisis.

Practical Policies of Repression

Another lesson that was learned even before these Arab uprisings was to crack down on Islamic beliefs, practices, and institutions. For example, in Azerbaijan the government has struck against both Islamic trends and their political advocates. The latest episode in Azerbaijan's "twilight struggle" between the government and the Islamist opposition revolves around the government's ban of the Hijab for teenage girls in Azeri high schools. As we know from other Islamic countries like Iran, the Hijab signifies not just extreme religious affiliation but also a political statement about the nature of the society, state, and the role of women in society. Azerbaijan's government, with its traditional tolerance for a looser form of Muslim observance and Western tendencies, has opposed this kind of medievalism and sought to ban it from its schools. Naturally this ban aroused the ire of the apparently growing religious Islamic community leading to demonstrations at the end of 2010 and beginning of 2011. The leader of the outlawed and overtly pro-Iranian Islamic Party of Azerbaijan (AIP), Movsun Samadov was then arrested on January 7 after he posted videos denouncing President Aliyev. While this arrest may have violated his civil rights, as we understand them, Samadov was not just opposing the Hijab ban. Instead his screed came right out of the Iranian and Islamic playbook. He accused Aliyev of destroying mosques, trying to ban the Muslim call to prayer, harassing women who wish to wear the Hijab and compared him to a 7th century caliph vilified by Shi'a Muslims. He urged a revolution to oust the despotic regime and its personality cult, quoted Mohammed for people to give up their lives for religion's salvation, and asserted that Azerbaijan will face even bigger tragedies as long as the government is fully controlled by the Zionists.

The government rightly claimed that he was not only inciting revolution and suicide attacks on the government but that they also found weapons in his home as he and over 20 other believers were arrested. The AIP naturally denied all these charges and from here we cannot ascertain who is right. But Samadov clearly was inciting revolution and violence and his party rejected the authority of the official Muslim religious leader of Azerbaijan who is appointed by the government. And

since the controversy began, the Iranian media has weighed in by attacking the Azeri government for the Hijab ban, suggesting again that it is led by or inspired by Israel to attack Islam. In Tajikistan, President Ermomali Rahmonov has launched a crackdown on Mosques, called home 100 students from Iran who were allegedly being exposed to subversive religious dogmas. But over 90 percent of them are not continuing their studies. Meanwhile Rahmonov also inveighs against “alien” religious sects that are allegedly active in Tajikistan.⁶⁹ Such moves are intended to prevent any organized opposition from arising. Similarly in Uzbekistan the Karimov regime has launched a new crackdown on religious Muslims.⁷⁰

Militarization and the Threat of Inter-State Intervention

But Central Asian practical responses to the Arab revolution hardly end here. As the Arab revolution has become an international affair, triggering both domestic and international violence, most notably in NATO’s Libya operation, Central Asian leaders understand that first they must maintain total control over the organs of force and repression and that if they do not do so they risk foreign intervention, either from Russia (and possibly China) or from their neighbors. Though our knowledge of Central Asian militaries is incomplete, it is clear that in the last few years we see a growing militarization of Central Asia that has expressed itself in increased defense spending, a tried and true method of cementing military loyalty. This militarization is also directly attributable to the rivalries among Central Asian states.

Kiril Nourzhanov’s analysis of Central Asian threat perceptions highlights this sense of threat from each other. Nourzhanov notes the need to break away from a Western-derived threat paradigm that sees everything in terms of the great power rivalry commonly called the new great game and the main internal threat to regimes, namely insurgency even though these are certainly real enough threats.⁷¹ While these threats surely exist, they hardly comprise the only challenges to Central Asian security. Thus he writes that,

Conventional security problems rooted in border disputes, competition over water and mineral resources, ubiquitous enclaves and ethnic minorities, generate conflict potential in the region and are perceived as existential threats by the majority of the local population. One of the very few comprehensive studies available on the subject arrived at the following conclusions. 1) relations among the countries of Central Asia are far from showing mutual understanding on the whole range of economic issues; 2) the most acute contradictions are linked to land and water use; and 3) these contradictions have historical roots and are objectively difficult to resolve, hence they are liable to be actualized in the near future in a violent form.⁷²

This is not just another academic analysis. In fact, border problems, mainly between Uzbekistan and all of its neighbors, have long impeded and today continue to retard the development of both regional security and prosperity.⁷³ Indeed, it is not too far to say that given the antagonism between Uzbekistan and its neighbors, especially Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, hostile relations and even the use of force is never far from a possibility.⁷⁴ Nourzhanov is not alone in calling for this new approach to regional security. As S. Frederick Starr also noted,

On the other hand this perspective on Central Asian security or the second alternative of seeing it in the context of local governments’ internal stability is arguably incomplete. Anyone studying security issues in Central Asia quickly recognizes that environmental factors—the use and control of land, water, energy, and other raw materials, and the reclamation of polluted lands—play an extremely important role in that region’s security and political agendas.⁷⁵

Similarly the International Crisis Group likewise concluded that the international community must urgently approach the issues of border delimitation with more urgency than before.⁷⁶ Anyone looking at Central Asian security can readily see that tensions over borders, particularly between Uzbekistan and its neighbors, generate constant inter-state tensions in Central Asia.⁷⁷ The same is true for water use, an issue that has already brought the EU and UN into efforts to help arrange multilateral solutions among Central Asian states to prevent what could easily become a war among or between them.

Due to these trends a regional arms race has taken root in Central Asia. In 2007 alone military spending in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan rose by 48%.⁷⁸ As Nourzhanov further notes,

The bulk of the money would be spent on heavy weapons, fixed-wing planes, and navy vessels which is hard to explain by the demands of a fight against terrorism alone. Remarkably the danger of intra-regional armed conflict is not seriously analyzed in any official document. The current Military Doctrine of

Kazakhstan (2000) which talks about the tantalizingly abstract ‘probability of diminished regional security as a result of excessive increase in qualitative and quantitative military might by certain states’, may be regarded as a very partial exception that proves the rule.⁷⁹

Much evidence corroborates this last point. For example Kazakhstan has increased defense spending by 800% in 2000-07.⁸⁰ And the state defense order is expected to double in 2009.⁸¹ Indeed, the trend towards militarization was already evident by 2003.⁸² Nourzhanov also notes that Central Asian leaders have put themselves or been put in an impossible position by having to recite public paeans to regional cooperation when they are contradicting it in their actions. Likewise, their invocations of Western threat scenarios that prioritize terrorism and insurgency are belied by events since only in Kyrgyzstan has there been an insurgency.⁸³

Thus there is good reason to believe that Central Asian states fear their neighbors as much as they do the possibility of Russian and/or Chinese intervention. While China, in line with its overall policy remains wary of direct military intervention in the domestic affairs of a Central Asian state, Russia does not. Indeed, it clearly contemplates this possibility and is implementing the means to effectuate such intervention to prevent revolution either with a local government or regardless of its views. In the first case, after protracted bargaining in 2006 Uzbekistan granted Russia the right to use its airfield at Navoi as a base, but only under special conditions. Russia will only be able to gain access to Navoi in case of emergencies or what some reports called “force majeure” contingencies. In return Russia will provide Uzbekistan with modern navigation systems and air defense weapons. In other words Uzbekistan wanted a guarantee of its regime’s security and Russian support in case of a crisis. But it would not allow peacetime Russian military presence there.⁸⁴

But in other cases Russia sees no reason to solicit the host state’s cooperation. Russia, in particular seems to be so anxious about the possibility of unrest in Central Asia spreading from a domestically triggered insurgency in other states like Kyrgyzstan, that here too it has suggested has suggested joint intervention with Kazakhstan. Thus in a 2006 assessment Ilyas Sarsembaev writes that,

Some Russian military analysts consider that if Kyrgyzstan were overtaken by a complete political collapse, Russia and Kazakhstan could impose some kind of protectorate until stability could be reestablished and new elections held. In this scenario, the United States would allow Moscow to take action in Kyrgyzstan, because most of its own resources would already be mobilized in Iraq and Afghanistan—and probably in Iran and Syria. Russian help would then be welcomed and much preferred to that of China. Indeed, if Russia did not dare to put itself forward as a stabilizing force, China might use Uyghur separatism.⁸⁵

Obviously this assessment links the prospect of state collapse in Kyrgyzstan to international rivalries (the so called new great game) and to the possibilities of separatism among China’s Uyghurs. Thus it implicitly postulates the paradigm outlined above, i.e. a direct link from state failure to foreign invasion or intervention and even the threat of state dismemberment. And where there is not an actual sign of state failure but a domestic situation that could be manipulated to provide pretexts for intervention, Russia has already prepared the legal ground for doing so. On August 11, 2009, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev sent a letter to the Duma urging it to revise Russia’s laws on defense. Specifically he urged it to revise the existing laws to pass a new law,

The draft law would supplement Clause 10 of the Federal Law On Defence with paragraph 21 specifying that in line with the generally accepted principles and provisions of international law, the Russian Federation’s international treaties, and the Federal Law On Defense; Russian Armed Forces can be used in operations beyond Russia’s borders for the following purposes:

- To counter an attack against Russian Armed Forces or other troops deployed beyond Russia’s borders;
- To counter or prevent an aggression against another country;
- To protect Russian citizens abroad;
- To combat piracy and ensure safe passage of shipping.

The draft suggests that the Federal Law On Defence be supplemented with Clause 101, setting, in accordance with Russia’s Constitution, the procedures for decisions on use of Russian Armed Forces beyond the country’s borders.⁸⁶

The ensuing law goes beyond providing a “legal” basis for the offensive projection of Russian military force beyond Russia’s borders and thus justifying the war of

2008 and any subsequent attack against Georgia in response to alleged attacks on “the Russian citizens” of the supposedly independent states of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It also provides a basis for justifying the offensive use of Russian force against every state from the Baltic to Central Asia on the selfsame basis of supposedly defending the “honor and dignity” of Russian citizens and culture from discrimination and attack. In the context of our discussion attacks on Russians could well be or be twisted to mean that a state has lost control of the situation at home and requires or the situation requires direct forceful intervention from outside.

This should not surprise us. After all, in the wake of the Russo-Georgian war President Medvedev announced that he would form now on base his foreign policy on five principles. Among them are principles that give Russia a license for intervening in other states where the Russian minority’s “interests and dignity” are allegedly at risk. Medvedev also asserted that Russia has privileged interests with countries which he would not define, demonstrating that Russia not only wants to revise borders or intervene in other countries, it also demands a sphere of influence in Eurasia as a whole.⁸⁷

Yet even as it postulates a diminished sovereignty throughout Central Asia, Russia has responded by strongly supporting the current status quo in all of these countries, clearly believing that the only alternative to it is worse. Thus logically, if not pragmatically its policy is ultimately contradictory. On the one hand it has become the bastion and alibi for Central Asian states behind which they hide and whose justifications for autocracy they emulate. On the other hand, it is a revisionist state whose policies clearly express its belief that Central Asian states are not truly sovereign. As Yuri Fedorov writes regarding the 2009 law on military intervention,

Russia’s self-proclaimed right to defend its troops against armed attacks affects Moscow’s relations with Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, all of which are parties to the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and, with the exception of Belarus, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and which also have bilateral arrangements on military assistance with Russia. Russian troops and military facilities are deployed in all of these states, with the exception of Uzbekistan. Neither the Collective Security Treaty, nor any bilateral arrangements imply Russia’s right to make unilateral decisions about the form, scope and very fact of employing its forces in the aforementioned states. All of these issues were to be decided either by all parties to the CSTO collectively, or by parties to the corresponding bilateral treaty. Decisions on counter-terrorist activities in the framework of the SCO are made by consensus. The new Russian legislation did not cancel out the multilateral or bilateral decision-making procedures yet it devalued those procedures in a sense. If Russian troops deployed in some of these countries are involved in international or internal conflicts, which is quite possible, Moscow will have a pretext for using them and duly deploying additional units in a unilateral manner. The right to defend Russian troops on foreign soil is of particular importance for Russia’s relations with Ukraine and Moldova. The Ukrainian government has demanded the withdrawal of the Russian naval base after 2017, while Moldova insists on the immediate departure of Russian troops from Transdnistria. In turn, Moscow has set its sights on stationing its troops there indefinitely. In such a context, skirmishes of any degree of gravity involving Russian servicemen in these countries may furnish Moscow with a pretext for military intervention.⁸⁸

Kyrgyzstan’s revolution in April 2010 and ensuing ethnic pogroms against resident Uzbeks in June 2010 also exemplify Russia’s propensity to intervene to ensure its preferred domestic outcome. Although Russia’s fingerprints were all over the April 2010 coup, it and many external observers felt that the new regime was not stable enough. Even before the ethnic rioting began on June 10-11, Russian figures announced that Russia and Uzbekistan had agreed that they should intervene to stabilize the situation there.⁸⁹ But Uzbekistan had actually refused to do so. Indeed, President Karimov openly stated that Kyrgyzstan’s problems were exclusively its own internal affair and that the violence and instability were being fomented from outside, i.e. probably Russia, a view also shared by the Tajik media.⁹⁰

Instead Uzbek President Islam Karimov turned to China. We can see this from the communiques of his meetings with President Medvedev and Hun Jintao as they arrived for the SCO summit on June 10-11, 2010. The communique with Medvedev was correct but formal. But Karimov’s meeting with Chinese President Hu Jintao reported a fulsome communique extolling the millennium of relations between Uzbekistan and the Celestial Kingdom at the start of this meeting followed by a statement that the two presidents then conducted an extensive review of regional and geopolitical issues that could only mean Kyrgyzstan’s stability.⁹¹ President Hu

Jintao offered a six point formula for Sino-Uzbek relations where point 6 called on both countries to intensify multilateral coordination to safeguard both states' common interests and stated that both countries must cooperate against threats to security in Central Asia. Karimov welcomed these proposals, suggesting quite strongly that Uzbekistan was leaning away from Moscow towards Beijing, not least because of Moscow's unceasing efforts to obtain a second military base in the Ferghana valley around Osh so that it could control that valley.⁹² It also appears that Uzbekistan also obtained China's support for a position blocking Russian intervention in Kyrgyzstan in the SCO and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) where China is not a member, but also where a clear-cut Chinese policy aligned to that of Uzbekistan, would carry weight.

Possibly Russia lacks the necessary forces to conduct a peace support operation in Kyrgyzstan, or does not want to have to choose between the Kyrgyz and the Uzbeks, standard practice in Russian "peacemaking operations," or else the mission was murky, protracted, costly, and uncertain at best. Nevertheless troops were apparently ready to go to Kyrgyzstan and at least some leaders in Moscow wanted to carry out this operation.⁹³ However, since then Moscow has prevailed upon its military alliance in Central Asia, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) to develop both the forces and the conditions for domestic intervention in member states in the event of upheaval there.

With Bishkek's consent, the CIS Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) amended its charter in December 2010 to include intervention in internal conflicts of member states, a change clearly related to Kyrgyzstan's ethnic clashes.⁹⁴

Consequently it is not just an urgent domestic policy affair for Central Asian leaders to suppress unrest not to mention democratic reform, by all means possible, it also is also an equally urgent matter of the sovereignty of their states. The prospect of state failure leads interested external actors to prepare policies of neo-colonial subordination of Central Asia to their interests and ambitions. As we noted above the prospect of losing power due to a revolution equates to losing power due to defeat by an external government. Although Central Asian claim that they have had largely stable governments for twenty years and resent the implication that they have to learn governance from the West, in fact the paradigm of ongoing potential instability has much validity to it. Moreover, it teaches harsh but true lessons. Failure to master internal security dynamics opens the way to long-standing hard security threats. Moreover, such interventions are hardly confined to Russia.

Many observers feared Uzbek intervention in Kyrgyzstan's ethnic pogrom of 2010. Indeed, the default posture in dealing with major or potentially major Central crises in Central Asia is the expectation that they could jump state lines and lead to a general regional or at least interstate crises. When Turkmenistan underwent a succession due to the sudden death of President Niyazov in late 2006 there was widespread apprehension internally and in Central Asia that it could lead to war both at home and throughout the region. This particular crisis also showed that there is an all too ready acceptance by analysts and governments interested in the region that such crises or other kinds of threats to state stability justify calls for foreign intervention.

When Niyazov died Senior Research Associate of International and World Economics Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Academician Vladimir Yevseyev, argued that to prevent internal instability in both Turkmenistan and the region Russia and Kazakhstan should play a key role in the post-Niyazov Turkmenistan.⁹⁵ This observation captures the fact that instability in one Central Asian state is widely perceived as being likely to spread to neighboring states. In other words, something like the mentality of the domino theory is deeply rooted in elite calculations here. In the Niyazov succession we saw a simultaneous belief in the fundamental uncertainty of the Turkmen and even regional security equation coupled with the belief that major change might be even worse. While many argued that a succession struggle, could, if done in a peaceful fashion, deescalate tensions, a violent struggle would further inflame inherent deep-seated tensions throughout the area. Shokirjon Hakimov, the leader of Tajikistan's opposition Social Democratic Party of Tajikistan, stated that, "Undoubtedly, if the forthcoming political activities in Turkmenistan concerning the designation of the country's leader take place in a civilized manner, then they will certainly have a positive influence on the development of pluralism in the region."⁹⁶ At the same time, Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister Kasymzhomart Tokayev revealed both his government's hopes and its apprehensions by saying that his government has an interest in Turkmenistan's stability. Therefore "Kazakhstan is not going to get involved in any wars for Turkmenistan."⁹⁷ The sentiments behind this statement speak for themselves.

This kind of sentiment is still the case. Uzbekistan's hostile relations with Tajikistan emerge from the following example. Uzbek papers, obviously under gov-

ernmental control, openly speculate that due to a poor food security situation, in other terms undernourishment, Tajikistan's situation is potentially explosive. They charge that due to this poverty and hunger families sell their daughters to Chinese people or engage in narcotics trafficking to make money and that the government is not even always feeding its soldiery. Therefore they charge that Tajikistan might be vulnerable to an Egyptian style revolution.⁹⁸ There are many such examples, most notably in the general skepticism and pessimism concerning the staying power of the new Kyrgyz government. But they are not confined, as we have seen, to expectations or assessments concerning Kyrgyzstan's "democracy."

Implications for US Efforts at Democracy Promotion

All of these phenomena present a bleak picture for all foreign efforts, private or public, US or EU, or other parties' efforts to promote democracy in these states. To the extent that these organizations exist they infuriate the leaders of Central Asia, and provide ever ready pretexts for them to blame the US or other forces for attempting to undermine them. Since it is unclear if the US has a definite media policy for this region to make clear that such charges are unfounded, and essentially the work of Russian and local government propagandists seeking to blind people from comprehending their own domestic situation or the failure of the Russian efforts at intervention in the Ukraine and Georgia after 2003, the field has been left open to the purveyors of such charges. Second, more recent assessments of democracy promotion has suggested that they are too tied to the US or other foreign governments or organizations and though well intentioned, misconceived in terms of local realities.⁹⁹

To the extent that the Arab revolutions continue and possibly become more violent and to the degree that other governments fall victim to this tide, e.g. Libya and Syria, it is likely that repressive measures directed against these democracy promotion programs will grow. This will be even the case if it looks to local rulers like pressure for reform is growing in their own countries. This poses a serious problem for US policy in the region. That policy today has the overwhelming priority of establishing lasting ties with local governments, particularly in the military sphere, because of our quest for victory in Afghanistan. Every indicator of policy, whether it be the record of defense and other assistance, the statements issued after high-level visits, etc indicates that the priority of establishing lasting military, political and economic ties far outstrips the commitment on the ground to improving governance and human rights in these countries.¹⁰⁰ This is said as fact, not as critique, for one can credibly argue that our priority is indeed the war on terrorism centered in Afghanistan. Nonetheless we will be blamed for democracy promotion whether or not the US promotes democracy. Our strategy must therefore not only highlight human rights shortfalls in Central Asia, but also in Russia and China and do so in a way more consonant with local realities as suggested in some of the recent critiques of those programs.¹⁰¹ To the degree that Central Asia becomes more important for the US and we seek to build a lasting, multi-dimensional US presence there, we have no choice but to be a strong and effective advocate throughout Eurasia for principles that local governments have accepted in solemn international accords. For if we fail in that task the inevitable day of reckoning that will come will also sweep aside our previous policy achievements that will have then be shown to be built on sand.

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. SCOTT RADNITZ, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for inviting me here to testify about the potential impact of the Arab Spring on Central Asia, a region vitally important to American interests, but one that is poorly understood and often neglected by scholars and policy makers.

The Arab Spring is a watershed event in the history of the Middle East, a part of the world that was unfortunately bypassed by the global trend of democratization of the past several decades. The events in Tunisia and Egypt offer new hope to millions whose future prospects have long been stifled by a corrupt and repressive elite that monopolizes political and economic power. The tremendous force behind these grassroots uprisings caught many off guard—not least the rulers themselves.

The people of post-Soviet Central Asia have also endured hard times over the past two decades. These countries are led by some of the most repressive rulers on the planet. Human rights abuses are rampant and basic freedoms are severely curtailed. Due to the decline in their living standards beginning in the early 1990s, many people are nostalgic for the old Soviet system, where they could at least count on basic physical and economic security, if not political freedom.

People in Central Asia, like others around the world, yearn for democracy yet face many challenges to attaining it. Could this be their time? I believe, unfortunately, that the barriers to democratization in Central Asia are overwhelming. The grassroots uprisings in the Arab world, while inspirational to many, are unlikely to take root in Central Asia due to the region's inhospitable soil.

I want to highlight two sets of factors that I believe make uprisings like those in the Middle East unlikely to occur in the near future in Central Asia. First is the weakness of the personal and technological linkages between the Middle East and Central Asia. Second is the capacity of authoritarian regimes in Central Asia to withstand challenges from below. I'll close with a brief comment on the prospects for political change in Central Asia in the longer term.

A critical feature behind the tendency of protest movements in one Arab country to migrate to another is the dense cultural and economic ties between societies. Like the Eastern European revolutions of 1989, the Arab spring is being driven by citizens separated by national borders, who have never met, but who nonetheless face similar challenges and see themselves as sharing a common predicament. Their political systems are characterized by presidents who have held power for decades, economies that are dominated by a narrow ruling elite, entrenched corruption that needlessly raises the cost of public services, and a pervasive but antiquated apparatus of propaganda that people encounter on a daily basis on television, in newspapers, and on billboards on their way to work.

In addition to sharing similar life experiences, Arab citizenries are also connected to one another through various channels of communication. People in one Arab country could rapidly learn of protests in other states through international travelers such as businessmen and labor migrants; by telephone and e-mail; and through blogs, social networking websites, and cable channels like al Jazeera. The effects of these dense networks of communication were visible in the spread of protests from Tunisia to Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, and beyond. Protesters in different countries, sharing common cultural references and life experiences, framed their grievances in similar ways, in terms of demands for justice, of the people against the ruling class, and as an expression of the frustrations of the young generation, which has been prevented by older generations from sharing in the benefits of the system.

There was also a common repertoire of protest that included an emphasis on non-violence and a visible role for people who would draw a sympathetic reaction from the public. Demonstrations involved humor directed against cloistered, out-of-touch autocrats; and posters and signs highlighting injustice and the illegitimacy of the incumbent regime. Clearly, the perception of common identity among Arab citizens, especially youth, was crucial in the rapid and unrelenting spread of uprisings across national boundaries.

But these forces run up against major obstacles when they reach the former Soviet Union (FSU). Even 20 years after the breakup, the attention of ex-Soviet states and their citizens is still largely directed inward, toward the territory of the former empire. States in Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Western part of the FSU share similar regime types and forms of corruption. Their citizens still speak Russian as a first or second language and watch Russian television, including pro-government news broadcasts. Russian news, unsurprisingly, portrayed the events of the Arab Spring as chaotic, violent, and provoked by Islamic radicals. People throughout the FSU continue to interact through ties of trade and labor migration, and vir-

tually, through the Russian-language blogosphere. They commiserate by relating their experiences of post-Soviet social disruption and financial hardship, and find common cause in joking about their dysfunctional political systems.

When events happen in the Middle East, dissidents and opportunistic politicians in post-Soviet states may take advantage by organizing rallies, as they have done in Armenia and Azerbaijan, and are rumored to be planning in other states. But the Arab Spring is unlikely to embolden the mass public. Whereas a success in one Arab nation has a galvanizing effect on other Arab societies, in the post-Soviet region, people have no reason to believe that the institutional constraints on protest and freedom of expression in their own countries have changed significantly.

Even the societies of Central Asia, which are predominantly Muslim, tend to look north rather than south or west. Economic, cultural, and political ties with Russia remain strong, despite the sporadic efforts of the region's leaders to distance themselves from their former imperial core. Young people who intend to seek work abroad learn English, or sometimes Turkish-but rarely Arabic. Central Asians see Turks as cousins, albeit patronizing ones. Central Asians consider Arabs distant ancestors, not relatives. Religious Central Asians feel somewhat insecure in comparison to Arabs, whom they consider "good Muslims" while calling themselves "bad Muslims" due to the Soviet legacy of atheism. But the dominant view among Central Asians is to see themselves as culturally more advanced than Arabs or Afghans. They see Arab Islam as too extreme and fundamentalism as retrograde and dangerous. I am, of course, generalizing about the opinions of diverse groups of people, but I believe this reflects the views of the majority, who would be in the vanguard of a pro-democracy revolution.

There is a recent precedent for the spread of protest throughout the FSU, and that is the so-called color revolutions in Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004, and Kyrgyzstan in 2005. These uprisings happened in a short time period and involved similar demands and tactics, in part because activists monitored events in neighboring countries and communicated across national boundaries. All three revolutions involved unpopular autocrats, fraudulent elections, and large protests in the central squares of national capitals. All three caught their nations' leaders off guard and ended in a peaceful transfer of power. Protesters acted with the knowledge of what had happened in previous revolutions, and demonstrated the ability to learn from their predecessors' triumphs and mistakes. At the same time, the region's incumbent autocrats also showed a willingness to apply lessons from the missteps of *their* counterparts. And this brings me to my second point—the resilience of Central Asian regimes.

After the overthrow of Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev in March 2005, the next domino that may have fallen was Uzbekistan, which faced an unprecedented large and peaceful protest in the city of Andijan in May of that year. As you know, it resulted in a humanitarian tragedy when the army opened fire on the crowd and killed hundreds of people. This was only the most severe of the measures that rulers took around the time of the color revolutions to shore up their power. Other examples included the closure of Western non-governmental organizations; the expulsion of the Peace Corps from Russia; the arrest and harassment of journalists and human rights activists; the use of violence against peaceful demonstrators in Azerbaijan and Belarus on several occasions; the Kremlin's creation of the pro-government youth movement *Nashi* and copycat groups in other states; the investment in building up ruling parties in Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Georgia and Azerbaijan; the use of surveillance technology to monitor public gatherings and Internet activity; and the nationalization or increased state control of private businesses.

The upshot of these measures was more resilient authoritarian regimes. Regime strength can be viewed as a kind of natural selection, in which the weakest ones were overthrown while those that could adapt would live on. Having endured a trial by fire in the last decade, incumbent post-Soviet regimes are highly adept at staving off opposition challenges without using overt repression, allowing them to preserve stability and even claim popular legitimacy. This is most apparent in Kazakhstan, where President Nursultan Nazarbaev appears to be genuinely popular despite closing off all space for independent voices. His soft touch enabled him to win the most recent presidential elections with a reported 91% and 96% of the vote without facing street protests. Kazakhstan's chairmanship of the OSCE, whatever its merits, also provided his regime an international stamp of approval. This is in contrast to the Mubarak and Ben Ali regimes, which had seemingly grown complacent from their many decades of successfully managing power. They appeared to have underestimated their citizens' frustration and their willingness to brave violence to make their voices heard.

Central Asia also suffers from a deficit of civil society in comparison with Middle Eastern states. Despite their limited political freedoms, Tunisia, Egypt, and others have organized trade unions, a history of student activism, Islamic movements, and political parties with grassroots appeal. These organizations, although debilitated, aided in attracting ordinary people once protests began. Mobilization against authoritarian regimes is a high-risk activity, so the trust that held these groups together was a vital asset for the opposition.

In contrast, civil society in Central Asia is very weak. In large part due to the Soviet legacy, there are few independent organizations with popular support through which people can be recruited to join protests. With the exception of Kyrgyzstan, people in the region lack collective memories of bottom-up political change, and have few cultural resources to draw on to build support for mass protests.

This leads me to bring up one caveat to the premise of Central Asia's political stagnation—and that is the exceptionally tumultuous nature of politics in Kyrgyzstan. Some might even argue that Kyrgyzstan offers a way forward for the region. Unfortunately, though the country has seen many protests, these are mostly not grassroots demands for greater democracy. Instead, as I show in my book *Weapons of the Wealthy*, the 2005 Tulip Revolution occurred when businessmen and politicians launched protests against President Akaev after they had lost their parliamentary races, and inadvertently caused his downfall. Since then, politicians have continued to mobilize mobs to assert their interests; most street protests are elite struggles over spoils, not grassroots demands for democracy. The violence that occurred in April and June 2010 stemmed directly from these struggles.

The Kyrgyz case, rather than Egypt or Tunisia, can be most instructive for the future of Central Asian regimes. As Kyrgyzstan demonstrated, opposition to the incumbent need not emanate from below, or occur through conventional channels such as political parties or NGOs. Threats to regimes can also be latent, undeclared, and informal, and can come from above: rival political elites within the regime, or businessmen who have pledged their loyalty but also have their own power base. A president's coalition can hold together for a long time, but it can also unravel abruptly, for example, as a result of imminent succession and the failure of officials to rally around a successor who can assure their privileges. Struggles over power can also occur over a shrinking economic pie, or from personal disagreements between influential figures. If such a struggle leads a regime to collapse, the unraveling will not necessarily lead to democracy and may in fact be violent. For 20 years, the rules for managing power in countries such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan have worked well within the limited domain of satisfying elite interests. But these elites have no experience dealing with rapid change, and may not be able to resolve their differences peacefully when the old rules cease to function.

In the coming decades, there is reason to expect Central Asian regimes to become increasingly vulnerable. With the partial exception of Kazakhstan, leaders have neglected to invest in maintaining capital inherited from the Soviet Union. The degradation of education systems, in particular, is causing a crisis in human capital. When the last generation of Soviet-educated professionals retires, it will be difficult to find qualified people to replace them. Young people today either seek to leave the country or invest in connections to help them to gain access to the state's diminishing spoils, rather than develop the skills needed to make a positive economic contribution. Unless governments in the region make basic investments to replace decaying capital, not only regimes, but also state institutions are at risk of collapsing. In the long run, the U.S. might be forced to reassess how it can best assist Central Asia: not by jumpstarting a stalled democratization process, but, more urgently, by helping to stave off state failure. There is a closing window of opportunity for the leaders of the region and their external partners to avert this scenario.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GULAM UMAROV, SUNSHINE COALITION, UZBEKISTAN

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the future of democracy in my homeland. Also, I'd like to take this opportunity to personally thank the members and staff of the Commission for their assistance and support in securing the release of my father, Sanjar Umarov, from an Uzbekistan prison in 2009.

In thinking about the impact that the "Arab spring" may have on the Central Asian republics, one needs to remember the recent history of our region. My country, Uzbekistan, was founded on the ruins of the Soviet Union. As a result, we have never had a tradition of democracy, individual rights, freedom of assembly or freedom of speech. We have always been ruled from the top with no opportunity for average people to impact our government. Sure, people are tired of permanent rulers and tyranny, but there is no tradition of free speech and there is certainly no room for any expression of dissent.

It is also important to remember that the vast majority of Uzbekistan's citizens are very, very poor. Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria on a relative scale, possess much more wealth than the people of Uzbekistan. Their citizens, therefore, have a closer connection to the modern world and greater expectations for the future. Moreover, because of the terrible poverty in Uzbekistan, young people leave the country for work in Russia and other far away places. Those that are left behind, especially in the countryside, are the elderly and women. This does not mean that people are happy with the existing regime. It means their livelihood is submissive to this regime. Discontent grows widespread, but almost everyone is too preoccupied, trying to put food on the table, to think of anything else.

We also need to remember some of the specific characteristics of the Uzbek regime. Time and time again, entire extended families are destroyed because a son, a nephew or cousin has offended even the most junior of bureaucrats in a local administration. The use of violence, terror and torture are so common that they have ceased to shock society and are, in a very sad way, accepted as the regular order of things. It is no surprise that people stay off the streets, fearful that the events that took place 6 years ago in May 2005 will repeat.

Nonetheless, there is a growing expectation of change in Uzbekistan that is based not on a democratic movement, but on demographics. The current leadership is old, and a behind-the-scenes struggle for power has begun. Evidence of this power struggle can be seen in the often irrational actions of the government. While 2011 was supposed to be the year of support of small and medium Business, at the same time, the government began to destroy all of the major markets—bazaars—in major cities including capital city of Tashkent. This policy was adopted in the name of city beautification and ultimately destroyed thousands of jobs and raised the cost of living for everyone. Why? One can only deduce that the destruction will enrich one faction of the governing elite at the expense of another.

As change in the government is inevitable, it will be useful to think about ways in which the United States can further engage with the government as it evolves. From my experience in the field of human rights, we took cases to the UN, engaged in extensive advocacy in the United States, and pursued international legal remedies, but of course it would be better if you could achieve the same aims through open dialog with the authorities. The imposition of "sanctions", or even the threat of sanctions, has proven to be, counterproductive.

As a result, the United States should consider a series of incentives that could be implemented, provided that Uzbekistan accepts responsibility for its actions. A primary importance is the continued assistance reducing threat posed by religious extremism. Let there be no mistake, there is an active and increasingly assertive extremist threat in Uzbekistan. In order to address this threat, the United States needs to focus not only on police and military action, but also on the underlying causes of religious extremism in Uzbekistan. Among these are a wide spread sense of injustice caused by the absence of functioning civil institutions, monopolies in virtually all spheres of business and the destruction of Uzbekistan's most important asset, agriculture. Three specific initiatives that might begin to address these issues are:

- A concerted effort to support the authority and operation of the Parliament. If Uzbekistan can make a real transition towards democracy, a truly functioning Parliament is essential.
- De-monopolization. Over the past three years, the US has invested tens of millions of dollars in the development of the Northern Distribution Network to support operations in Afghanistan. Almost all of the economic benefits accruing from the operation of the NDN benefit a very small group of insiders. The US should use its investment in the NDN to encourage the growth of competition in Uzbekistan.

- Finally, as has been noted by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the mismanagement of water resources in Central Asia and Uzbekistan is causing great damage to agriculture, which accounts for 2/3s of the population's livelihood. The U.S. should greatly increase its support for the development of local, national, and international water management schemes in the region.

In conclusion, just as Egypt has been considered the lynch pin of the Arab world, so Uzbekistan is considered the lynch pin of Central Asia. All good citizens of my homeland fervently pray that we can avoid a situation where the people utterly give up hope and take to the streets. Should this happen, it would be a disaster not only for Uzbekistan but the region as a whole.



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