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**“QUALITATIVE ENERGY DIPLOMACY” IN CENTRAL ASIA:  
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE POLICIES OF  
THE UNITED STATES, RUSSIA, AND CHINA<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> This article is an additional and extended version of the article “Ideological Energy Diplomacy of India in Central Asia” published by the *China and Eurasian Forum Quarterly* in Vol. 8-1, 2010, pp. 95-110, when the author was invited to submit the version by colleagues in the journal’s publisher from Johns Hopkins University after making one of his presentations during his visiting fellowship at the Brookings Institution. A few frameworking sections of this paper therefore also appear in that journal article.

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At the turn of the 21st century, Central Asia – especially Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan which are rich in oil and gas – has emerged as a new center of energy reserves. To compete for access to these resources in a pragmatic manner, the major powers also found it increasingly necessary to rationalize their ambitions qualitatively, if not necessarily ideologically. So the United States designed the platform of liberal democracy and “human rights above sovereignty,” Russia proffered its own idea of “sovereign democracy” to the Central Asians, and China posed as a non-interventionist “responsible state.” However, as this article will demonstrate, the effort and mode employed by the three powers to advance such qualities in the region vary, with Washington’s effort relatively greater and Moscow’s effort least. More importantly, these qualities, even if value-loaded, generally remain subservient to interests, with Moscow’s adherence to mere interest encroachment most obvious among all. This paper uses primary sources in these nations, and secondary accounts of their rivals, to re-map what it calls “qualitative energy diplomacy” (hereafter QED) in an attempt to assess the progress the three powers have made.<sup>3</sup> The paper is divided into three parts. The first part reviews how this new international relations school of QED has evolved from the original realist-driven antecedent. The second part, the main section, describes the tactics of QED of the three powers. The contrasting “combine-and-rule” and “divide-and-rule” approaches of QED in Central Asia are discussed in the conclusion as an explanation of the current stalemate.

## **FROM ENERGY DIPLOMACY TO “QUALITATIVE ENERGY DIPLOMACY”**

As various scholars have proposed, a qualitative, value-driven or ideology-based foreign policy, in combination with traditional realist interpretations, constitutes a new distinctive “constructivist” school of thought in the study of international relations.<sup>4</sup> However, the rules of this new game are not yet fully spelled out. This paper begins by seeking to strengthen the theoretical groundwork of the constructivist school of international relations, on which this analysis is based, by proposing the following core rules, which can be used to study how the three powers maneuver within Central Asia:

1. Most studies on energy politics share two common assumptions: that the stakeholders are rationality-based, and they are realist-orientated. It would be naïve to assume that states today are not seeking to maximize their energy and security interests. Yet, this alone is no longer sufficient for the 21st century either.
2. Since the end of the Cold War, realist tenets have been challenged by the rise of norms and ideas that call for qualitative justifications of interest-maximizing behaviors. Encroaching on overseas energy resources might be seen as a violation of some of the

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<sup>3</sup> In the earlier version of this paper, QED was called “ideologized energy diplomacy” (IED). It was renamed owing to two reasons: first, “qualitative” is a more generic term to cover the values discussed, that better describes the nature of our topic than the narrowly-defined “ideological.” For instance, the “lack of ideology” of the Chinese strategy is more easily understood as a qualitative principle. Second, “IED” might refer to “improvised explosive device” in the conventional U.S. context therefore avoiding the term can also help quelling possible misunderstanding.

<sup>4</sup> See Michael Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Christer Pursiainen, *Russian Foreign Policy and International Relations Theory* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2000); Sujian Guo and Shiping Hua, *New Dimensions of Chinese Foreign Policy* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007).

new norms, such as peace and conservation. Without offering values or ideologies to rationalize their behavior from the moral high ground, the powers could face considerable challenges domestically and internationally.<sup>5</sup>

3. As a result, states have to offer a state-sponsored qualitative dimension to rationalize their hunt for resources in seemingly non-interest-driven terms. To be effective, such qualities, values, or ideologies need to serve as a compelling alternative to offset conflicting norms that question the energy campaigns; be easily shared by domestic nationalists; and be potentially accepted by some audiences in the home countries that host the resources.
4. From the perspective of states, interests always trump qualitative values because blindly following the rules could result in deviation from national interests. If the two are in conflict, values in the political sense are often less important than interests in the economic sense; in particular, excessively fanatical ideological pursuit would be discouraged; reporting of the regimes' sacrificing of mere pursuit of values would be toned down. In other words, QED is different from mere ideological diplomacy in a sense that QED includes both carrot and stick: non-cooperative nations in terms of energy are more likely to be also denounced in moralistic terms by the powers.
5. The efforts spent by different powers on QED are, of course, different. Generally speaking, the more pluralistic a country is domestically, the more likely their values will be taken seriously on the diplomatic front. In this sense, it is expected from the paper that values play a relatively larger role in the United States' Central Asia policy and a lesser role in its Russian and Chinese counterparts.

Note that this article primarily studies the role of the governments in advancing QED, whereas the private agendas of other domestic actors like oil companies (other than state-owned enterprises / SOEs) or pressure groups are not the direct focus here, even though their roles are by no means insignificant. The following section of the article shows how the above tenets of QED have been adopted by the United States, Russia and China in Central Asia. For each of these major powers, three aspects are reviewed: (1) the official-sponsored qualitative values chosen; (2) how these qualities facilitate traditional energy diplomacy in the region; and (3) how interests trump values as proven by the insincerity of these nations in preaching mere ideologies when they go against interests.

## **QUALITATIVE ENERGY DIPLOMACY IN CENTRAL ASIA**

Scholarly interest in Central Asia, which is commonly perceived as “landlocked, poor, peripheral, fearful, defenseless, Muslim, and undemocratic,” has become widespread since the five republics gained independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>6</sup> There are many aspects of the importance of the region. Some stress the significance of its Islamic religion when discussing the

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<sup>5</sup> John Kurt Jacobsen, “Much Ado about Ideas: The Cognitive Factor in Economic Policy,” *World Politics*, 47(2) (Jan 1995), pp. 283-310; Albert S. Yee, “The Causal Effects of Ideas on Policies,” *International Organization*, 50(1) (December 1996), pp. 69-108.

<sup>6</sup> Charles William Maynes, “America Discovers Central Asia,” *Foreign Affairs*, 82(2) (March/April 2003), pp. 120-33.

security issue in Central Asia.<sup>7</sup> To some, geo-politics plays a greater role in the region, which has been described as the “second Persian Gulf,” a new “grand chessboard,” the “heartland of the heartland,” or the “Great Game II.”<sup>8</sup> The Cold War complex also haunts the republics themselves. Despite this unease, energy politics seem to be of greatest concern on this grand chessboard. The amount of energy resources in the region, and the demand of the powers on resources, are roughly summarized by Tables 1 and 2:

**Table 1: Energy Reserves and Exports of Central Asian States (2010)<sup>9</sup>**

	Oil Reserve (Billion Barrels)	Oil Export (Billion Barrels)	Gas Reserve (Cubic M)	Gas Export (Cubic M)
Kazakhstan	39,800,000,000	1,313,000	2,407,000,000,000	17,660,000,000
Uzbekistan	600,000,000	6,104	1,841,000,000,000	15,000,000,000
Turkmenistan	600,000,000	84,770	7,504,000,000,000	14,000,000,000
Kyrgyzstan	40,000,000	1,890	5,663,000,000	0
Tajikistan	12,000,000	349	5,663,000,000	0

**Table 2: Energy Figures of Great Powers (2010)<sup>10</sup>**

	USA	Russia	China
Oil Reserve	28,400,000,000 (bbl)	74,200,000,000 (bbl)	14,800,000,000 (bbl)
Oil Import	11,310,000 (bbl/day)	48,000 (bbl/day)	4,393,000 (bbl/day)
Oil Export	1,704,000 (bbl/day)	4,930,000 (bbl/day)	388,000 (bbl/day)
Gas Reserve	6,928,000,000,000 (cu m)	47,570,000,000,000 (cu m)	3,030,000,000,000 (cu m)
Gas Import	106,100,000,000 (cu m)	35,100,000,000 (cu m)	7,462,000,000 (cu m)
Gas Export	30,350,000,000 (cu m)	179,100,000,000 (cu m)	3,320,000,000 (cu m)

<sup>7</sup> David Hoffman, “Iran’s Drive to Rebuild Seen Posing New Challenges to West,” *The Washington Post*, 2 February 1992; Jim Nichol, “Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests,” CRS Report for Congress, 13 November 2008.

<sup>8</sup> See Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives* (New York: Basic Books, 1997); Mehdi Parvizi Amineh, *Globalization, Geopolitics and Energy Security in Central Eurasia and the Caspian Region* (The Hague: Clingendael International Energy Program, 2003); Sally Cummings, *Oil, Transition and Security in Central Asia* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003); Robert Legvold, “Greater Power Stakes in Central Asia,” in R. Legvold (ed.) *Thinking Strategically: The Major Powers, Kazakhstan, and the Central Asian Nexus* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).

<sup>9</sup> The figures come from *BP Statistical Review of World Energy*, June 2010 and *CIA World Fact Book* 2011.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

Of the global powers that have prime energy interests in the region, the United States, Russia, and China are the leading competing forces, although nations such as Japan, South Korea, and India also have sights on the region.<sup>11</sup> How are the energy ambitions of the powers facilitated by QED? We begin by studying the United States.

### **The United States: Preaching Liberal Democracy**

The United States has long been skillful in pushing national interests forward by preaching national values concurrently. The framework of liberal realism, devised by John Ikenberry and Charles Kupchan, could best describe contemporary U.S. strategy. There are three propositions in this framework: (1) a requirement that the United States must wield its superior strength in concert with others to ensure that it forestalls rather than invites balancing behavior; (2) the necessity to move with – rather than against – the secular diffusion of global power; and, most importantly for QED, (3) a commitment to reclaim its moral authority abroad, and to make disaffected allies feel like stakeholders in the international system.<sup>12</sup> Central to these visions of the world order is the assumption that “the United States is better able to pursue its interests, reduce security threats in its environment, and foster a stable political order when other states – particularly the other major great powers – are democracies rather than non-democracies.” To be more specific, in 2000 Ikenberry argued that such an approach encompassed the five tenets of vision and strategy that are liberal in nature in terms of their theoretical orientations, including democracy and peace; free trade, economic openness and democracy; free trade, economic interdependence and peace; institutions and the containment of conflict; and community and identity.<sup>13</sup>

From Washington’s perspective, although these values reflect the overall national ideology rather than being tailor-made for energy or Central Asia, liberal democracy can also be naturally and automatically applied to facilitate its energy interests in the region. Immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the U.S. Congress signed the “FREEDOM Support Act” in October 1992 to condition the provision of aid with suggested values. The intention of the United States to preach liberal democracy to Central Asia specifically was further spelled out in the Silk Road Strategy Act in 1999, which “authorized enhanced policy and aid to support conflict amelioration, humanitarian needs, economic development, transport and communications, border controls, democracy, and the creation of civil societies in the South Caucasus and Central Asia.”<sup>14</sup> In 2002, Washington regarded the promotion of liberal democracy as the unique U.S. mission in Central Asia in the wake of 9/11. As explained by Lynn Pascoe, who at the time was U.S. deputy

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<sup>11</sup> Annette Bohr, “Regionalism in Central Asia: New Geopolitics, Old Regional Order,” *International Affairs*, 80(3) (2004), pp. 485-502; Neil MacFarlane, “The United States and Regionalism in Central Asia,” *International Affairs*, 80(3) (2004), pp. 447-61; Dianne Smith, “Central Asia: A New Great Game?” *Research Monograph from Strategic Studies Institute*, 1996, p. 20.

<sup>12</sup> John Ikenberry and Charles Kupchan, “Liberal Realism: The Foundations of a Democratic Foreign Policy,” *National Interest*, 77 (2004), pp.38-49; John Ikenberry, “America’s Imperial Ambition,” *Foreign Affairs*, 81(5) (2000), pp. 44-60; John Ikenberry, “America’s Liberal Grand Strategy: Democracy and National Security in the Post-War Era,” in M. Cox, J. Ikenberry and T. Inoguchi (eds.) *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 103; 111-122.

<sup>13</sup> John Ikenberry, “America’s Liberal Grand Strategy: Democracy and National Security in the Post-War Era,” in M. Cox, J. Ikenberry and T. Inoguchi (eds.) *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.103; 111-122.

<sup>14</sup> White House, “Silk Road Strategy Act 1999,” Washington DC, 1999.

assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs and is now undersecretary-general of the United Nations for political affairs, the promotion of such values in the region is a key development to prove the universality of liberal democracy:

Not because democracy isn't right for Central Asia. Not because the citizens of these countries wouldn't prefer to exercise the everyday political freedoms democracy affords. Indeed, it would be folly to assume that the universal human desire for freedom and dignity that has swept the whole world somehow comes to an abrupt stop at the borders of the Central Asian region, skirts them briefly, and rushes on elsewhere. It is not their "Central Asian-ness" that has held back the growth of democracy in that region, but the leadership and socio-economic structures of these countries which have so far kept them frozen in a Soviet past.<sup>15</sup>

This orientation is not only endorsed by the U.S. executive. As stated in a 2007 report by the non-partisan Congressional Research Service, when the so-called color revolutions – in which the exact involvement of the United States is difficult to be proven by black and white words – were already waning after 2005, the U.S. legislature still asked for "narrowly [targeting] to support the economic and political independence as well as democracy building, free market policies, human rights, and regional economic integration of the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia," while "[supporting] United States business interests and investments in the region."<sup>16</sup>

Such a foreign policy concept again echoes Ikenberry's liberal realist theory. This school of thought not only survived the era of neo-conservatism, but also, as seen by Joseph Nye, has become "the foundation of a Democratic (Party) foreign policy" and a guiding principle for Barack Obama.<sup>17</sup> Although the Democrats seem to be far less unilateral than the Bush administration, the idea of using qualified values to facilitate national interests fits comfortably with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's latest notion of "smart power," which was originally coined by Suzanne Nossel in *Foreign Affairs* as follows: "U.S. interests are furthered by enlisting others on behalf of U.S. goals, through alliances, international institutions, careful diplomacy, and the power of ideals."<sup>18</sup> The question is how precisely has QED affected, or facilitated, U.S. energy interests in Central Asia?

*How have values facilitated U.S. energy interests in Central Asia?*

To start with, there is much in Central Asia that is attractive to the United States as the world's largest consumer of oil. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the consumption of petroleum in the United States in 2008 was 19,418 thousand barrels per day.<sup>19</sup> In that year, Kazakhstan exported only 1,231 thousand barrels of crude oil to the United States<sup>20</sup>; but the importance of Central Asia to the United States does not rest mainly on American

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<sup>15</sup> B. Lynn Pascoe, "U.S. Policy in Central Asia and the War on Terrorism," The Heritage Foundation, 30 August 2002.

<sup>16</sup> Jim Nichol, "Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests," CRS Report for Congress, 14 December 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Joseph Nye, "Toward a Liberal Realist Foreign Policy: A Memo for the Next President," *Harvard Magazine*, 110(4) (March-April 2008), pp. 36-38.

<sup>18</sup> Suzanne Nossel, "Smart Power," *Foreign Affairs*, 83(2) (March/April 2004), pp. 131-142.

<sup>19</sup> Energy Information Administration, "United States Energy Profiles," 15 May 2009.

<sup>20</sup> Energy Information Administration, "Petroleum Navigator-US imports by Country of Origin," 29 June 2009.

consumption of its resources but probably on other strategic fronts as well. For instance, Washington regards the strategic location of Central Asia as a fortress against easy Russian and Chinese energy access and a fortuitous region to monitor the rivalry between the two. Therefore, acquisition of energy resources from Central Asia remains a key U.S. concern in global rivalry, not to mention that it can also equip regional U.S. allies with a cheap energy supply, which provides an additional bargaining chip for Washington in dealing with countries like India and Pakistan.<sup>21</sup> Lastly, access to military bases for anti-terror operations in Central Asia, the Middle East, and Afghanistan also make the region especially attractive to Washington.

While it pushes forward its energy agenda, the United States explicitly vows to offer assistance, first to governments in Central Asia and then to non-governmental organizations, the media and political parties that could potentially agree with its liberal democratic goals. Dating back to the Clinton era, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan had joined NATO's Partnership for Peace Program (PfP) in 1994. Under the auspices of the program, the Central Asian Peacekeeping Battalion (CENTRASBAT) – a joint peacekeeping force from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan – was established. The U.S. Department of Defense set up links with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, and provided the armed forces of those nations with military aid and training. Whether the famous (or infamous) Tulip Revolution of Kyrgyzstan, together with several similar but unsuccessful attempts in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, were directly induced by the United States may be doubtful. However, the promulgation of liberal democracy in the region in general had inevitably created the environment for these political turnovers to have taken place.

If the above can be regarded as “carrots,” there are times that a “stick” would also be used by the United States as part of its QED. Parallel to this progression of events, Washington also exerted considerable pressure on the under-democratic nations of Central Asia to pledge cooperation on energy deals. President George W. Bush, in his national energy policy report released in May 2001 (later known as the Bush—Cheney Report), suggested that greater oil production in the Caspian region would not only benefit regional economies, but would also help mitigate possible world supply disruptions and “transmit liberal ideas.”<sup>22</sup> After 9/11, the war on terrorism provided the United States with an additional golden opportunity to reassert its quest for energy in Central Asia; this has been interpreted by Martha Brill Olcott of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace as the “second chance” for both Americans and the Central Asians to engage with one another.<sup>23</sup> In the White House's national security strategy report released in 2006, Central Asia was dubbed “an enduring priority for our foreign policy” for the United States to push for “the elements of our larger strategy [to] meet,” while the realist strategy nexus was defined as “promoting effective democracies and the expansion of free-market reforms, diversifying global sources of energy, and enhancing security and winning the War on Terror.” As a result, for example, the United States swiftly established military bases at Karshi-Khanabad in Uzbekistan. The Baku-Tbilisi Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline from Azerbaijan to Turkey via

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<sup>21</sup> Tariq Saeedi, “Mumbai Mystery: American Designs on Pakistan and India,” *News Central Asia*, 11 December 2008.

<sup>22</sup> National Energy Policy Development Group, *National Energy Policy of the United States* (Washington DC: Office of the President of the United States, May 2001).

<sup>23</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, *Central Asia's Second Chance* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005).

Kazakhstan, an alternative to shipping Caspian oil and gas through Russia or Iran, was built in 2002 and opened in May 2005. To the Central Asian leaders, QED is both carrot and stick, as exhibited by Washington's ability to reject an unlike-minded regime in energy-scarce Kyrgyzstan (the "stick") on one hand and its investments other regional nations (the "carrot") on the other. The combination of both factors has enabled the United States to penetrate into Kazakhstan, the all-important Central Asian nation for the superpower's policy makers, and exert control over 30 mega-firms involved in energy, metallurgy, and the steel industry in the nation. The belief that the United States made a deliberate attempt to encroach on resources through promoting different versions of the value of liberal democracy is widely circulated in non-Western sources, especially among Chinese scholars.<sup>24</sup> No matter whether the Central Asians opened their gates for the United States because of this, it can be framed partly as a successful promotion of the U.S. values.

*Interests trump values: limitations of preaching dogmatic ideology alone*

As explained in the theoretical section, we should pay attention to the fact that interests always trump values if the two are in conflict. After Central Asian leaders agreed to seal cooperative terms with Washington on the energy front, the ideal of preaching liberal democracy was more or less put aside by Washington, even though this may not have been noticed by domestic American audiences. Granted, the unrestrained propagation of liberal democracy in Central Asia inevitably undermines the authority of some of the authoritarian regimes. However, Washington seems to show no intention of replacing the dictators once they have sealed the energy cooperation plans; the exception in the region is the Tulip Revolution, which led to the overthrow of President Askar Akayev of Kyrgyzstan (and the United States' achievement to regard the Kyrgyz Bishkek airport as a supply base for the U.S. Air Force), but Kyrgyzstan is an energy-scarce landlocked nation. Afterward, discontent caused by U.S. criticism of his violations of human rights in the Andijon Incident in May 2005 resulted in President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan closing the U.S. air base in his country in November 2005.<sup>25</sup> Yet, what happened in Kyrgyzstan was not repeated. Rather, White House spokesman Scott McClellan backed off, saying that Washington was not targeting Karimov's dictatorship whose violation of human rights could be compared with the worst cases in the world, implying that it was the stability of his regime, which was cooperating with the United States in energy and the military, that the United States was more concerned about:

We have had concerns about human rights in Uzbekistan, but we are concerned about the outbreak of violence, particularly by some members of a terrorist organization that were freed from prison. And we urge both the government and the demonstrators to exercise restraint at this time. The people of Uzbekistan want to see a more representative and democratic government, but that should come through peaceful means, not through violence. And that's what our message is.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> H. Zhang, "Zhongya Guojia Xiang Zhongguo Chukou Youqi Chudong Eluosi Mingan Shenjing (Central Asian Nations Export Gas to China Irritates the Russian Nerve)," *Guoji Xianqu Daobao*, 15 July 2008; W. Wang, "Yanse Geming zhong de Meie Boyi (America-Russia Game in Colour Revolution)," *Social Sciences Review*, 6, (2007), pp. 50-51.

<sup>25</sup> On 13 May 2005, a crowd of protestors in Uzbekistan's Andijon was suppressed by the Uzbek military, resulting in the deaths of between hundreds and thousands, according to different sources. Whether the protestors were fighting for democracy, or whether this was staged by Islamic separatists, is still a subject of debate.

<sup>26</sup> J. Raimondo, "Behind the Headlines," *Antiwar.com*, 16 May 2005.

The discrepancies shown by the United States in preaching mere values, if interests are violated, can best be proven when we contrast the U.S. attitude to Karimov with that of the European Union. Compared with the continuous review of and sanctions imposed on Uzbekistan after Andijon from the EU, which had little energy interests in Uzbekistan at all, no further escalation of action was taken by Washington. Thereafter the existing U.S. energy agreements with Uzbekistan remained undisturbed. As observed by the veteran Uzbek commentator Galima Bukharbaeva during Andijon, “unfortunately for us, it is all about [the West’s – including both American and European] interests in [Uzbek] oil and gas... all those interests contradict statements that human rights and democratic values matter to them.”<sup>27</sup>

The following rule of QED then becomes clearer after Andijon: while preaching liberal democracy offers a legitimate groundwork for Washington to get into Central Asia, these values ceased to be a goal in itself when conflicting with other realist interests. It could be used to install friendly regimes and could also be used to coerce unlike-minded regimes to cooperate on the energy front. However, sticking to a dogmatic interpretation of the ideology at the expense of energy interests is not an option. As the idealist Olcott sadly concludes,

While a percentage of U.S. assistance is earmarked to promote the development of democratic societies in this region, in reality Washington has been content to do business with the existing ruling elite, no matter how insecure or grasping it may be. Part of the problem is that most U.S. policymakers give democracy as little chance of succeeding in the region as Central Asia’s rulers do themselves.<sup>28</sup>

This triumph of interests would become more obvious when the corporate agendas of the U.S. private energy companies have strong allies in the government, as their bargaining power in this issue is usually greater than that of the value-based NGOs like the human rights watch groups. As a result, the Central Asian leaders gradually understood this intrinsic preference, i.e. interests above ideas, within the American lines and the key elements leading to their survival. After the Tulip Revolution, compared with the advancements made on the energy front, the U.S. measures have not brought about any major regime change in Central Asia, even though Washington’s ideals might have gained influence among the younger and more highly educated of the population in the region.

### **The Russian Federation: Exporter of “Sovereign Democracy” in the Putin era**

In order to facilitate its own energy diplomacy and to counter U.S. ideological advancement in Central Asia, the largely statist-driven contemporary Russian government tends to place less emphasis on QED since the early 1990s. Still, they for some time managed to offer another state-run quality, or what can be called a value, for the region that can be named “sovereign democracy,” even though the effectiveness remains doubtful. Sovereignty as an emphasized Russian – or simply “Putinian” – value itself can be traced at least to the late 1990s when then-British Prime Minister Tony Blair promoted the “human rights above sovereignty” doctrine, or can even be traced back to 1976 when two international human rights covenants entered into force in the former Soviet Union. It was NATO’s intervention in Kosovo in 1999, against

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<sup>27</sup> G. Saidazimova, “Uzbekistan: Andijon Prompted International Power Shift,” Radio Free Europe, 12 May 2006.

<sup>28</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, “The Great Powers in Central Asia,” *Current History* (October 2005), p. 18.

Russia's traditional ally Serbia, that prompted Moscow to counter immediately with a reversal of the Blair Doctrine, i.e. sovereignty is higher than human rights (or at least the Western interpretation of human rights). In its response, Russia attempted to construct a comprehensive system of defensive networks by forming a sovereign state alliance. For instance, the Moscow-dominated Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) established the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in 2002, aimed at joining forces to combat international terrorism, illegal circulation of narcotics, illegal migration and organized crime. The CSTO members, which included Russia and all the Central Asian nations except Turkmenistan, agreed that external cooperation involving any member with a third party should be approved by all.<sup>29</sup> The Russian participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which has turned from a mere security platform to an increasingly strategically- or even ideologically-driven platform, will be discussed in the later section.

However, such technical efforts proved too weak and haphazard to check the influx of Western interests and ideas. Thus Russia, in parallel, unveiled a new direction in foreign policy toward Central Asia when Vladimir Putin released his *Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation* in 2000. As analyzed by the Berlin Information Center for Transatlantic Security, this policy paper called for the development of bilateral relations with the Central Asian sovereign states by dropping the traditional multilateral approach, focusing less on the region as a whole and more on the specific nations as strategic partners of Russia.<sup>30</sup> Since 2006, Putin, via his protégé legislator Vladislav Surkov, began to formally use the term “sovereign democracy” (*суверенная демократия*) to represent the official qualitative value of Russia, i.e. “the idea in a society's political life where the political powers, their authorities and decisions are decided and controlled by a diverse Russian nation for the purpose of achieving material welfare, freedom and fairness for all citizens, social groups and nationalities, for all the peoples forming that wider society,” even though the essentials of this had existed for quite some time in Putin's various speeches.<sup>31</sup> The term was invented primarily to preach to Russia's domestic audience, but it was also intended to counter the “color revolutions” in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan. Ivan Krastev offers an eloquent elaboration of this clumsy term in a rather cynical manner:

In the view of the Kremlin, sovereignty is not a right; its meaning is not a seat in the United Nations. For the Kremlin, sovereignty means capacity. It implies economic independence, military strength and cultural identity. The other key element of a sovereign state is a “nationally-minded” elite armed with a nationally-minded democratic theory. In the case of Vladislav Surkov's concept of sovereign democracy, this new democratic theory is an explosive mixture of anti-populism of the 19th-century French political thinker Francois Guizot (who was condemned in the *Communist Manifesto*) and the anti-pluralism and decisionism of the German political philosopher Carl Schmitt (who sided with Hitler).<sup>32</sup>

One might query whether sovereign democracy has actually shaped Russian foreign policy. Indeed, the inter-relationship between the terminology and Russian foreign policy has been manifested publicly. Referring to the change in Russian foreign policy after 2000, various senior

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<sup>29</sup> Jim Nichol, “Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests,” CRS Report for Congress, 14 December 2007.

<sup>30</sup> Berlin Information Center for Transatlantic Security, The NATO Russian Archive, 2005.

<sup>31</sup> V. Surkov, “Национализация будущего (Nationalization of the Future),” *Expert Magazine*, 537(43), 20 November 2006.

<sup>32</sup> Ian Krastev, “Russia vs. Europe: The Sovereignty Wars,” *Open Democracy*, 7 September 2007.

Russian officials ranging from Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to Putin argue that Moscow is operating in “the nature of a unipolar world dominated by the United States – a world marked by double standards, the use of force and instability, and one in which Russia would need to protect its sovereign independence”<sup>33</sup> The “new Russian doctrine,” coined by then-Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov, argues that contemporary Russian foreign policy would include cooperation with NATO, as well as the CSTO and SCO, in order to adapt the “challenge to national security” arising from a “violent assault on the constitutional order of some post-Soviet states.”<sup>34</sup> In other words, preaching sovereign democracy abroad means on one hand encouraging foreign authoritarian rulers to transplant a similar Russian system to rule their countries, while persuading these rulers to counter the Western ideal of liberal democracy.

Since 2008, there have been some twists in the development of sovereign democracy. Dmitry Medvedev, the next Russian president whose division of responsibilities with the still-active Putin remains unclear to outsiders, has announced a revision of the term, retaining only the word “democracy” as the descriptor of the Russian-European cultural link.<sup>35</sup> However, in reality, the essential Russian quality, at least to most Westerners’ eyes, remains more or less unchanged in the so-called early Medvedev era. The substance of sovereign democracy, no matter what it is called, so far still dominates the diplomatic principles of Russia in reflecting the country’s attempt to differentiate its own policy orientation from that of the United States and China.<sup>36</sup>

#### *How have values facilitated Russian energy interests in Central Asia?*

During the early period of the reign of Boris Yeltsin who was once disillusioned with the West, Central Asia – which can be seen as a potential cooperator as well as competitor with Russia on the energy front – was not the top priority issue for the Kremlin. Only after Putin rose to power in 2000 did Central Asia emerge as a key component in the Kremlin’s broader strategic roadmap. Unlike China, which has genuine energy needs from Central Asia, the participation of Russia in the quest for energy from the region rests more on the strategic front, as it simply has more-than-sufficient energy for its domestic consumption. On one hand, the potential infiltration of competing U.S. values through this backyard might well bring subversive elements into the Federation. On the other hand, the seemingly unlimited energy export from Central Asia to Europe would also adversely affect Russia’s energy trade if the Central Asians can export independently to Europe, making Moscow preferring to consume Central Asian resources at lower costs so that it can dominate the Western energy market.<sup>37</sup> Even if the Central Asian exports to Europe take time to materialize and the direct Russian consumption of Central Asian resources remain limited, as Iranian energy scholar Hooman Peimani suggests, Moscow still has the preference of turning itself into the main transit route for energy exports from Central Asia

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<sup>33</sup> Andrew Monaghan, “‘An Enemy at the Gates’ or ‘From Victory to Victory’? Russian Foreign Policy,” *International Affairs*, Vol. 84. No. 4 (July 2008), pp. 717-733.

<sup>34</sup> Derek Averre, “‘Sovereign Democracy’ and Russia’s Relations with the European Union,” *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2007), pp. 173-190.

<sup>35</sup> J. Buster, “Sovereign Democracy,” *The World Next Week*, 5-11 July 2008; P. Baev, (2008) “Medvedev Presents a Grand Design for Foreign Policy,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 5(136) 17 July 2008.

<sup>36</sup> Nazrin Mehdiyeva, “New Man in the Kremlin: What Future for Russian Foreign Policy,” *International Spectator*, 43(2) (June 2008), pp. 21-34.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Fiona Hill, Brookings Institution, 28 April 2010.

for the obvious economic gains and as part of its policy to turn itself into an energy superpower dominating the global markets directly or indirectly through its own exports.<sup>38</sup>

Therefore, it was also Putin who explicitly brought “energy” to the forefront of Russia’s foreign policy in Central Asia and made the transportation of energy resources a key geo-strategic issue. As Kyrgyz scholar Alexander Kniazev rightly observes, it means Moscow “finally placed its sovereignty above its foreign policy constants and began to slowly retreat from its previous devotion to Western liberal-democratic principles.”<sup>39</sup> Whether Russia had vowed to embrace authentic Western liberal-democratic principles prior to 2005, as Kniazev believes, seems highly debatable. What is probably more likely is that the Putinian concern for sovereign democracy, as acknowledged by the deputy head of Putin’s presidential administration Vladislav Surkov, “envisages certain economic restrictions...national capital should either control or dominate in several [strategic] areas.”<sup>40</sup> More symbolically for Moscow, “the Russian utilization of a more sophisticated and subtle leverage based on energy dependence among the former Soviet states affirmed the new Russian commitment to regaining ‘great power’ status and recovering its geopolitical relevance.”<sup>41</sup> It should be noted that Russia’s use of the term “sovereign democracy” was mainly in response to the Western challenge of liberal democracy. Still, Russian energy policy toward Central Asia witnessed advancement after the notion of sovereign democracy and the Putinian foreign policies were linked together.

In order to understand the change, the same Andijon Incident in Uzbekistan in 2005 can serve as a case study. While the EU and the United States expressed criticism of Karimov, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov more or less endorsed the official interpretation of Uzbekistan, saying that the incident was planned and prepared with local dissidents and Islamists from Afghanistan’s Ferghana Valley region, whereas the anti-Karimov gangs originated from “external extremist forces of the Taliban-type,” including the remnants of the Taliban, Chechen guerrillas, the allegedly Al-Qaeda-sponsored Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and *Hizb-ut-Tahri* (HuT).<sup>42</sup> In response to requests to mediate in the conflict by the West, Moscow declined outright by claiming that it was an internal Uzbek affair.<sup>43</sup> Russia, together with the SCO, denied granting asylum to any Andijon protestors, which is a decisive move to stabilize Uzbekistan from an intentional “color revolution” which might be favored by the United States<sup>44</sup> This shows that Russia is not only intent on offering a set of values to Central Asia, but also aims at rewarding authoritarian rulers in the region by encouraging them to practice sovereign democracy within their borders, and to be immune to human rights critics beyond.

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<sup>38</sup> Communication with Hooman Peimani, Head of Energy Studies Institute, National University of Singapore, 13 April 2011.

<sup>39</sup> Alexander Kniazev, “Russia in Central Asia: Return,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus: Journal of Social and Political Studies*, 5 (47), 2007.

<sup>40</sup> Derek Averre, “‘Sovereign Democracy’ and Russia’s Relations with the European Union,” *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2007), pp. 173-190.

<sup>41</sup> Richard Giragosian, “The Strategic Central Asian Arena,” *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, 4(1) (2006), pp. 133-153.

<sup>42</sup> M. Walker, “Analysis: Uzbek Leader Escapes Isolation,” *United Press International*, 7 May 2005; RadioFree Europe, RadioLiberty, “Fact box: Andijon Timeline,” 20 September 2005.

<sup>43</sup> G. Saidazimova, “Uzbekistan: Andijon Prompted International Power Shift,” *Radio Free Europe*, 12 May 2006.

<sup>44</sup> “CSTO to help Uzbekistan fight Extremists,” *Xinhua News Agency*, 22 June 2005.

Partly as a result, Russia has made considerable progress in Central Asia in general and Uzbekistan in particular in terms of energy hunting. Taking advantage of Karimov's unpleasant experience with the West after Andijon, and witnessing the closure of U.S. bases in Uzbekistan after the incident, Russia signed the Treaty on Allied Relations with Uzbekistan in November 2005 in which the respect of mutual sovereignty was highlighted. While confirming their qualitative overlapping, the Russian energy giants Gazprom and Lukoil have invested about US\$2.5 billion in Uzbekistan since then. In Kazakhstan, Moscow concluded an agreement in 2003 with its state-owned enterprise KazMunay Gas over the joint exploitation of three oil-rich sites of Kurmangazy (Rosneft), Tsentralnoye (Gazprom) and Khvalinskoye (Lukoil), estimating their reserves to be around 1.5 billion tons of oil and 800 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas. In 2005, the Russo-Kazakh joint venture KazRosGas was formally established, with the intention of producing 15 bcm per year from the Kazakh site of Karachaganak.<sup>45</sup> In 2007, another important energy agreement was signed between Putin, President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, and President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow of Turkmenistan on the construction of a new pipeline to transport Turkmen and Kazakh gas to Russia, an agreement seen by Russian politicians as advancing Moscow's geo-political importance.<sup>46</sup> These treaties paved the way for Russia's giant energy firms like Lukoil, Gazprom and United Energy Systems to invest heavily in various energy and transportation projects in Central Asia. These firms could then leverage their resources to bargain with Western interests. For instance, Gazprom made the best use of its control of routes to purchase relatively cheap resources from Central Asia and in turn charge its European customers high prices. Indeed, as a symbol of Russian grandiosity in the Putin era, Gazprom has come to represent an achievement of sovereign democracy.

*Interests trump values: limitations of preaching dogmatic ideology alone*

Just like the half-hearted U.S. attempt to push forward the most dogmatic interpretation of its liberal democratic ideals in Central Asia, the position of sovereign democracy as a subsidiary to Russia's energy interests also stands exposed. At one point, the promotion of sovereign democracy has generally delighted Russian nationalists. Like the committed value preachers in the United States, a faction of fanatical Russian nationalists – who often work ahead of Putin to project their own points of view – has gained considerable momentum in Russia. For instance, Vladimir Zhirinovsky, the leader of the Liberal Democratic Party who was still able to gain 9.48 percent of the total support in the 2008 presidential election and 40 seats in the last State Duma for his party, argues that the brutality and the poor economic performance in Russia, both past and present, are the result of a lack of Russian national power and he, thus, advocates “state egoism.”<sup>47</sup> Another nationalist leader Kharitonov alleges that the easiest way to stabilize the Russian regime is for Russia to keep a more explicit “hold” like the former Soviet Union on neighboring finance, gas and petroleum resources.<sup>48</sup> Famous (or infamous) for his anti-Americanism, scholar Igor Panarin even predicted that the United States, as Russia's competitor,

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<sup>45</sup> M. Laruelle, “Russia's Central Asia Policy and the Role of Russian Nationalism,” Washington DC: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2008.

<sup>46</sup> Regnum, “Russian MP: Agreement on Caspian Gas Pipeline Has Geopolitical Importance,” 21 December 2007.

<sup>47</sup> School of Russian and Asian Studies, “The World According to Zhirinovsky: The Politics of Russian Nationalism in Russia,” 31 March 2008.

<sup>48</sup> G. Kozhenvnikova, “The Hate Speech In and Out of the Election Campaign,” Media Monitoring: September 2003-March 2004, SOVA Centre for Information and Analysis.

would face dissolution and that Alaska, which Russia sold to the United States, would one day be returned to the Federation.<sup>49</sup>

However, the reality is that to maximize Moscow's energy gains, it is impossible for sovereign democracy to be followed perfectly in Central Asia, and as noted by Russia observers like Fiona Hill, the actual reception of sovereign democracy in the region is very limited.<sup>50</sup> First, sovereign democracy reminds the Central Asians too much of the limited sovereignty their territories previously enjoyed under Soviet or Russian rule or patronage. Russia's neighbors or protégés from previous epochs believe that Russia has a poor track record of behaving as a genuine sovereign protector. They still remember vividly that limited sovereignty was first coined as a theory, and practiced by Soviet leaders Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev. Since the independence of the Russian Federation from the Soviet Union, Moscow has stationed troops in many of these countries, including Tajikistan, Georgia, and Moldova. If sovereign democracy were used as the sole national ideology, these Central Asian countries would fear that Russian influence would become too great, as it was in the Soviet era. Such fear would only result in negative consequences for Moscow's energy quest in the region.

An even greater concern of Central Asian leaders is the fact that Moscow is behind many pro-Russian separatist movements in the former Soviet republics, like Transnistria in Moldova, or Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia. If Moscow simply wished to transplant the Russian system in Central Asia as widely as possible, theoretically it could also promote sovereign democracy in separatist regimes if it wished to. Moscow chose not to, simply because it is not practical for energy purposes. The bluntest message rejecting sovereign democracy that Moscow received from the Central Asians was recorded in August 2008 when the Russian army invaded Georgia to support the South Ossetian separatists, who had expressed their willingness to become independent or join the Russian Federation. This action is widely seen in the West as a counter-attack by Russia to protect its energy access to the Black Sea, to weaken the status of the South Caucasus as a long-term transit route for Caspian oil and gas exports, to prevent further expansion of the West in the Caucasus, and to weaken an American protégé neighbouring Russia.<sup>51</sup> Some Russian sympathizers in Central Asia, such as MP Murat Juraev in Kyrgyzstan, used this opportunity to coerce their countries to pledge solidarity with Russia again.<sup>52</sup> Yet the official collective gesture of the Central Asian leaders, best represented by Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, was to remain neutral and to offer a mediation service.<sup>53</sup> As noted by the Uzbek observer Alisher Taksanov, even Karimov of Uzbekistan, a beneficiary of the Russian promotion of sovereign democracy, was worried by the Russian action because:

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<sup>49</sup> S. Bai, "E Xuezhe Yuce Meiguo Wajie" (Russian Scholar Predicts the Dissolution of America), *Yazhou Zhoukan*, 15 February 2009.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Fiona Hill, Brookings Institution, 28 April 2010.

<sup>51</sup> United Press International, "Russian Troops Close Georgian Oil Ports," 19 August 2008.

<sup>52</sup> N. Yuldasheva, "Murat Juraev: Kyrgyzstan Cannot and Should Not Stay Aside from South Ossetia's Conflict," *Bishkek News Agency 24.kg*, 19 August 2008.

<sup>53</sup> Ferghana.ru Information Agency, "Kazakhstan Channels Humanitarian Aid to Georgia, South Ossetia," 13 August 2008.

Should it become angry at Uzbekistan, [Russia] could support separatist tendencies in Karakalpakstan... [and] the separation of the Khorezm area, Samarkand, Bukhara, Navoi and Dzhizak regions, and finally the Fergana Valley. In the end, Uzbekistan could be broken up into a number of small principalities.<sup>54</sup>

As a consequence of Central Asian reservations, Moscow expressed certain reservations in preaching sovereign democracy in separatist regions in Central Asia, despite the Russian populations in those regions calling for Russian intervention. To Moscow, more like Washington, it was its energy interests that stood to be prioritized ahead of preaching values or principles. As a result, especially since the apparent stepping-down of Putin from the presidency, domestic Russian nationalists have started expressing disapproval of Moscow's retreat from preaching sovereign democracy abroad. There have also been skeptical responses locally in Russia to Medvedev's understanding of "democracy" without "sovereignty."<sup>55</sup> The reality is that without considering the fact that value is simply used to serve realist interests, they have demanded more than what Putin or Medvedev could offer.

### **China: The Non-interventionist "Responsible State" in the "Harmonious World"**

While the United States and Russia rival each other along the lines of "liberal democracy" and "sovereign democracy," China stands somewhere in between – tilting slightly toward Russia – by claiming for itself the self-proclaimed role of a peacekeeper and honest mediator in the region. Although China is equally concerned with sovereignty, Chinese foreign policy no longer highlights supremacy of sovereignty – as it did in 1999 at the time of NATO's bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade – as its only cornerstone. Since Hu Jintao assumed the leadership of China in 2002-2003, China instead has striven to demonstrate to the world that it is a "responsible state" that is ascending the global arena peacefully. Together with British scholar Rosemary Foot, mainland Chinese scholars such as Qin Yaqing were among the first to propose that the People's Republic of China should assume the duty of an internationally responsible state, and continue its historical activism in terms of the fulfillment of responsibilities.<sup>56</sup> The way Beijing handled the SARS crisis in 2003 can be seen as a transitional milestone for China in pledging its commitment towards such a diplomatic goal.<sup>57</sup> Further Chinese efforts to become responsible to the world order can be observed in the UN, where China had been (in)famous for abstaining from voting on contentious international issues. Most notably, in August 2007, China supported UN Resolution 1769 to send peacekeeping troops to intervene in the humanitarian crisis in the Darfur region of its ally Sudan.<sup>58</sup> To some Western observers, China's new foreign policy is seen as having "a less confrontational, more sophisticated, more confident, and, at times, more constructive approach toward regional and global affairs," affording it the position of a "status quo power" in the international community.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> A. Taksanov, "Uzbek Government is Still Silent on Conflict in South Ossetia," *Newseurasia*, 14 August 2008.

<sup>55</sup> P. Baev, (2008) "Medvedev Presents a Grand Design for Foreign Policy," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 5(136) 17 July 2008.

<sup>56</sup> R. Foot, "Chinese Power and the Idea of a Responsible State," *The China Journal*, 45 (January 2001), pp. 1-19; Qin Yaqing, "Guannian Tiaozhen Yu Guoji Hezuo" [Idea Adjustment and International Cooperation], *Xiandai Guoji Guangxi*, March 2002, pp. 6-8.

<sup>57</sup> Simon Shen, "SARS Diplomacy of China and Taiwan," *Asian Perspective*, 28(1) (March 2004), pp. 45-66.

<sup>58</sup> *Xinhua News Agency*, "China Welcomes UN Resolution on Deploying a 'Hybrid' Force in Darfur," 2 August 2007.

<sup>59</sup> Evans Medeiros and Taylor Fravel, "China's New Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs*, 82(6) (2003), pp. 23-35.

Regarding its ideal global structure, Beijing has identified “peaceful development” in a “harmonious world” as its diplomatic, and also to some extents ideological, guiding principle. In December 2003, when new Premier Wen Jiabao made his first official visit to the United States, “peaceful rise” (*heping jueqi*) became the new mantra of Chinese foreign policy, by which China would remain actively involved in world affairs in a manner that “engaged,” “respected,” and “tolerated” other nations without harming their “different social systems and cultural traditions.”<sup>60</sup> When Hu attended the Boao Forum for Asia in June 2004, the theory was renamed “peaceful development” (*heping fazhan*) but the former name remains a more popular choice in everyday usage. What the terms really mean are explained by Chinese international relations scholar Jia Qingguo, who is one of the authors of the theory:

Despite initial resistance, the Chinese government gradually accepted the post-Cold War international reality and decided that it was not in China’s interest to challenge the most powerful country unless China’s own core national interests were involved.<sup>61</sup>

Party propaganda soon came up with a detailed justification for China to give up challenging the United States, claiming that “China is only one of a group of rising big powers, and any intervention by China also challenges the whole group of rising big powers.”<sup>62</sup> Therefore, Wen found it politically correct and nationalistically safe to stress the “peace-loving nature of China” when he first presented the argument to the United States in 2003. In sharp contrast with the United States or Russian intentions of preaching “democratic” values, these concepts of peacefulness were soon juxtaposed with China’s official pursuit of building a “harmonious world” (*hexie shehui*).

In the early 2000s, to the Chinese, maintaining and facilitating multilaterally- or mutually-beneficial harmonious business opportunities in the region would have already fulfilled their regional responsibility. Yet in recent years, the new Chinese leadership understands that to be accepted as a responsible state, China, by maintaining its non-interventionist tradition, must demonstrate a number of universal qualities acknowledged by the worldwide community, particularly in terms of unconditionality and impartiality in handling international duties, and transparency in making decisions that might influence the well-being of citizens beyond its borders. According to many mainland Chinese scholars, while the policies of the United States and Russia in Central Asia are highly realist-oriented, China adheres to a set of five moral responsibilities as its guiding principle for its own policy:

1. Respect other nations’ unique civilizations and do not interfere in their internal affairs;
2. Do not try to forge alliances with them or develop an exclusive sphere of influence;
3. Offer unconditional economic assistance to nations;
4. Emphasize equality to solve border disputes;
5. Focus equally on political and economic security in the region.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *People’s Daily*, “Full Text of Speech by Premier Wen Jiabao at a Dinner,” 10 December 2003.

<sup>61</sup> Jia Qingguo, “Learning to Live with the Hegemon: Evolution of China’s Policy toward the U.S. since the End of the Cold War,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, August, 14(44) (2005), pp.395-407.

<sup>62</sup> *Learning Times (Xuexi Shibao)*, “Zhongguo Heping Jueqi Mianlin Liangda Kan, Meiti Zhichu Bijiang Kefu (China’s Peaceful Rise Faces Two Holes, Media Points out that it will be Overcome),” 31 August 2004.

<sup>63</sup> Y. Zheng, *Zhongmei Zai Zhongya: Hezuo Yu Jingzheng (Cooperation and Competition: China, Russia and the US in Central Asia)* (Beijing: Shehui Kexue Wenxian Chubanshe 2007), pp.67.

## *How have values facilitated Chinese energy interests in Central Asia?*

The above evolving qualified principles in China have profound impacts on the realist platform of Sino-Central Asian relations. As acknowledged by Andrew Kuchins of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, when Central Asia regards Washington and Moscow as “too interventionist,” the new path offered by Beijing became an increasingly attractive alternative.<sup>64</sup> In China, domestic demand for energy has been greatly intensified by rapid economic growth. China’s consumption of oil and other types of energy dramatically increased from 88 million tons in 1980 to 334 million tons in 2006; the country has surpassed Japan to become, since 2003, the world’s second-largest oil consumer.<sup>65</sup> The widening gap between energy consumption and production means that China is highly dependent on imports, and the difference is anticipated to increase to 70 percent by 2020. No wonder that in November 2003, Hu declared that oil and finance constituted the two major components of China’s national economic security.<sup>66</sup> China used to rely heavily on the Middle East for oil, which accounted for 40-50 percent of China’s total oil imports, with over 75 percent of these imports transiting through the Malacca Strait, which is vulnerable to hostile action by external powers, terrorist attacks, and piracy.<sup>67</sup> With this risk in mind, Central Asia, sharing a 3,000-km border with China, has become a natural focal point in Beijing’s energy diplomacy. From January to September 2008, Kazakhstan alone exported 4 million tons of oil to China, which accounted for 3 percent of China’s total crude oil imports, and the trend is ever increasing.<sup>68</sup> Compared with the United States and Russia, whose domestic energy resources are far more abundant, China’s energy reliance on Central Asia is considerably more pressing. China is also keen to wipe out separatist activity on its Western borders and to counter American and Russian influence, as well as to monitor any rivalry from neighboring India, and Central Asia is a key arena for these policy objectives.

As compared with the ideologies offered by Washington and Moscow, one of the major attractions of Beijing’s version to Central Asia is its offering of multilateral networks as backup. By the ploy of building a harmonious neighborhood as part of its collective regional responsibilities, China is a strong advocate of building multilateral links in Central Asia which often offer economic opportunities to Beijing. As Chien-peng Chung soberly noted, one of the hidden purposes of China in engaging itself in regional organizations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is to safeguard its energy interests in Central Asia.<sup>69</sup> Some scholars even foresee that an energy alliance could be furthered between China, the SCO countries, and Iran, which is already an observer of the SCO (a role it takes more actively than other observers like Turkmenistan)<sup>70</sup> Unlike the confrontational tenets proposed by the

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<sup>64</sup> Interview with Andrew Kuchins, Washington DC, 21 April 2010.

<sup>65</sup> International Energy Agency, “China’s Worldwide Quest for Energy Security,” 2007.

<sup>66</sup> Hongtao, Shi, “Zhongguo Nengyuan Anquan De Qianzai Weixie: Guodu Yilai Maliujia Haixia (Latent Threat against China’s Energy Security: Dependent on the Malacca Strait),” *Xinhua News Agency*, 15 June 2004.

<sup>67</sup> M, Lanteigne, “China’s Energy Security and Eurasian Diplomacy: The Case of Turkmenistan,” *Politics*, 27 (3) (2007), pp. 147-155.

<sup>68</sup> China Oil Web, “China’s Crude Oil Import data for September,” 28 October 2008.

<sup>69</sup> Chien-peng Chung, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: China’s Changing Influence in Central Asia,” *The China Quarterly*, 180 (2004), pp. 989-1009.

<sup>70</sup> W. Engdahl, “Nengyuan Boyi: Zhongguo Xunqiu Tupo Meiguo Weidu (Energy Game: China Seeks to Break through the US Encirclement),” *AsiaTimes*, 6 January 2006.

Americans and the Russians targeted against one another, the sovereignty-centric and relatively non-interventionist nature of the Chinese ideology makes many Central Asian SOEs more ready to embrace cooperation with China. Some might argue that it is not an ideology at all, but to Beijing, as seen by its success in lobbying eighteen countries including Kazakhstan to boycott the presentation ceremony of Nobel Peace Prize in 2010 which was awarded to Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo, it is precisely their conservative and pro-status quo values – or what can be called their “non-ideological ideology” – that can appeal to non-democratic nations.

Most strikingly, energy cooperation between China and Kazakhstan was much intensified after 1997, which is in the immediate aftermath of the establishment of the SCO. For instance, the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC, China’s state-owned energy giant) acquired 60 percent of the shares of the Kazakh oil company Aktobemunaigaz in 1997, and took over the Canadian company PetroKazakhstan in August 2005. CNPC also cooperated with the Kazakh state-owned energy company KazMunayGas to construct a 1000-km pipeline to connect the western Kazakh province of Atasu to China’s Alashankou in Xinjiang, which was completed in December 2005. The construction of the pipeline puts Beijing in an advantageous strategic position in deciding whether or not Eurasian oil and gas could reach the Japanese and South Korean markets by coming through Chinese territory.<sup>71</sup> In 2007, Kazakhstan and China agreed to go ahead with a new gas pipeline project with a capacity of 30 bcm per year.<sup>72</sup> There were other agreements on oil and gas cooperation between China, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan signed in the name of building a harmonious neighborhood.

Another temptation of the Chinese values to the Central Asian leaders is the assumption that it would not feature any intervention or impose any condition on domestic politics when Beijing speaks of promoting universal well-being. One of the most notable energy advancements that China has made via QED in recent years is its agreement with Turkmenistan, in which the latter agreed in 2006/07 to export 30 bcm of natural gas annually for 30 years through a planned Central Asian pipeline to be built by CNPC. To the West and also to Russia, Turkmenistan is one of the most isolated and least cooperative of countries. Protected by his skillful diplomacy in proclaiming the nation permanently neutral, the late Turkmen “President-for-Life” Saparmurat Niyazov was one of the most eccentric dictators in the world and has sometimes been compared to Kim Jong-Il of North Korea. During Niyazov’s reign, Sino-Turkmen bilateral contact was restricted to the ceremonial, like the presentation of “blood-sweating horses” from Ashgabat to Beijing.<sup>73</sup> However, after the sudden death of Niyazov in 2006, and also partly owing to the Turkmen need to balance American and Russian influence by stressing its apolitical inclination, the supposedly non-interventionist China has gradually found it convenient to sustain the dictatorial regime’s isolation, provided Turkmenistan is willing to cooperate with its energy diplomacy. As a result of such cooperation between two authoritarian regimes, fostering regional harmony became a key point of the agenda of Sino-Turkmen relations and the “blood-sweating horses” were repeatedly presented to Beijing by Turkmenistanbashi to exhibit such harmony. As stressed by the incumbent Turkmen President Berdimuhammedow, the 2006/07 agreement was

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<sup>71</sup> Zha Daojiong, “China’s Energy Security: Domestic and International Issues,” *Survival*, 48(1) (2006), pp. 179-190.

<sup>72</sup> Shamil Yenikeyeff, *Kazakhstan’s Gas: Export Markets and Export Routes* (Oxford: Oxford Institute of Energy Studies 2008).

<sup>73</sup> *People’s Daily*, “Tukumansitan Zengsong De Hanxue Baoma Zuori Yundi Zhongguo (Blood-Sweating Horses Presented by Turkmenistan Arrived in China Yesterday),” 18 June 2002.

the first time since independence that his country had given a foreign company such an energy deal, the reason being the mutual-respect between China and Turkmenistan.<sup>74</sup> The overwhelming importance of these economic driving forces was reinforced by the 2008-09 economic recession, which caused Russia abruptly to slash its imports from Turkmenistan, in breach of contract, and encouraged Ashgabat to develop its relationship with China. After all, Turkmenistan had long-term concerns about over reliance on Russia for gas exports for both political and economic reasons, and the potential difficulties of developing the European market. China's gestures came at just the right time.

*Interests trump values: limitations of preaching dogmatic ideology alone*

Even though China is still an authoritarian state, different departments and units have already developed their self interests in response to QED. For instance, while the Ministry of Commerce would prefer to conclude as many energy deals with foreign states as is possible, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would prefer an incremental approach to prevent uncertainties. While local governments possess some fiscal autonomy in investing in SOEs, they also rely on the revenues from SOEs to bolster their political performance in the eyes of the central government. However, the value preaching of Beijing is less likely to violate its SOEs' interests, as the interests of the state and Chinese SOEs are already largely overlapping. Given the fact the Chinese SOEs can still receive official financial backing, their incentives to drive for mere interests are relatively less than their U.S. counterparts. Indeed, the SOEs would only compete for achieving the national goal more aggressively, as observed by Erica Downs:

“[China's national oil companies] view one another as rivals, competing not only for oil and gas assets but also for political advantage. The more high-quality assets a company acquires, the more likely it is to obtain diplomatic and financial support from the Chinese government for its subsequent investments. This is especially true for CNOOC, which does not have as much political clout as CNPC and Sinopec.”<sup>75</sup>

With the above observation in mind, although Beijing's engagement with Turkmenistan might marginally qualify for the “harmonious” prerequisite, and China might have been restrained from exerting influence over domestic politics in the country, the role of China in Sino-Turkmen relations still deviates from Beijing's supposed role as a responsible power. Claiming its leadership in the Six-Party Talks on the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula as a prime achievement of assuming such responsibility, China never attempted to persuade Turkmenistan to become engaged in the global arena in the manner it did with the North Koreans. Refusing to join the SCO as a formal member and quitting the CIS as a full member, Turkmenistan also rejects the very idea of concerted multilateral cooperation on regional security matters that Beijing has initiated via the SCO. At the same time, while Sino-Turkmen energy cooperation is facilitated by the expansion of Chinese influence in Central Asia, China has little intention, despite the organization's co-prosperity principle, of sharing Turkmen resources with other SCO members – most notably Russia. Like the more genuine believers of sovereign democracy in Russia or liberal democracy in the United States, those relatively genuine believers of the harmonious world and responsible state theory in China, such as the liberals in academic or civil

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<sup>74</sup> *Xinhua News Agency*, “Sino-Turkmen Cooperation on Natural Gas Commences Formally,” 10 August 2007.

<sup>75</sup> Erica Downs, “The Fact and Fiction of Sino-African Energy Relations,” *China Security*, vol. 3, no.3, 2007, pp.50.

society like Qin Yaqing or his colleague Chu Shulong, might well be disappointed by Beijing's compromise to interests.<sup>76</sup>

To most mainland Chinese scholars with official connections, China's oil diplomacy is interpreted as "not threatening" to the world, because China is not a status quo challenger.<sup>77</sup> However, to most non-Chinese observers, China is simply making best use of its "harmonious" and "responsible" masks to enter the Central Asian energy market and engage Central Asian statesmen and businessmen to challenge other energy powers. The self-proclaimed benevolent Chinese intention of tying regional energy economies from Japan to the Middle East via Central Asia was seen by other powers "as a bold attempt by China to dominate regional markets."<sup>78</sup> Indeed, there are vocal domestic voices to remind Beijing that ideologies should always go after interests. While there are Chinese international relations scholars such as Qin Yaqing who support the "responsible state" idea, there are other leading Chinese scholars such as Yan Xuetong, a prominent offensive realist, who always see the intention of the United States as that of claiming world leadership in terms of politics, and suggest that China has no choice but to respond to this directly and forcefully.<sup>79</sup> Being a responsible state in the harmonious world would simply be impractical in Yan's offensive realist universe. As we have seen, his advice is well-taken. What should be noted is the fact that not only is the United States cynical about the above Sino-Turkmen deals, the Russians also worry about the Chinese advance as the deal would violate the interests of Gazprom.<sup>80</sup>

## CONCLUSION: WHEN QUALITATIVE ENERGY DIPLOMACIES INTERACT

To conclude, as indicated in the preceding section, the United States, Russia, and China follow a similar pattern of QED in Central Asia, but their levels of emphasis in state-sponsored ideology are different. To some extent, they have all attempted to borrow a state-sponsored ideology to answer domestic and international critics regarding their energy hunt in Central Asia, and to differing extents have succeeded in pushing their realist agendas forward by concurrently preaching their ideologies in the region. However, when dogmatic interpretation of these qualitative principles or ideologies comes into conflict with the same energy interests, all the powers regard ideologies as subsidiary to their interest hunt. As a result, the three powers can roughly maintain their respective regional spheres of influence. In this situation, how do the powers interact with each other? How do the Central Asian countries respond to their interaction? In the following section, we look first at how two of the powers attempted to combine their QED together under the framework of the SCO, and then examine how the Central Asian nations adopted a divide-and-rule policy to handle the powers in response.

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<sup>76</sup> Qin Yaqing, "Guannian Tiaozhen Yu Guoji Hezuo" [Idea Adjustment and International Cooperation], *Xiandai Guoji Guangxi*, March 2002, pp. 6-8; S. Chu and Y. Guo. "Zhongguo Heping Fazhan Zhanlue ji Moshi (The Strategy and Model for Chinese Peaceful Development)," *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi*, 2 (2008), pp.1-9.

<sup>77</sup> Hongyi Harry Lai, "China's Oil Diplomacy: is it a global security threat?" *Third World Quarterly*, 28(3) (2007), pp.519-37; J. Guan, "Eluosi Weihe Mingan? (Why is Russia Sensitive?)," *Zhongguo Qingnianbao*, 3 July 2008.

<sup>78</sup> N. Swanstrom, et al, "China," in S. Frederick Starr (ed.), *The New Silk Road* (Washington: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute 2007).

<sup>79</sup> Yan Xuetong, "Heping Jueqi De Fengqi, Yiyi ji Celiu (The Disagreement, Significance and Tactics of Peaceful Rise)," *Zhongguo Shehui Kexue (China Social Science)*, November 2004.

<sup>80</sup> X. Zhang, "Cong Yanse Geming, Jietou Geming lun Meiguo Minzhuhua Zhanlue (On America's Democratized Strategy through 'Color Revolution' and 'Street Politics')," *Journal of Changshu Institute of Technology*, 1 (2008), pp. 44-47.

## Combine-and-Rule? The SCO in the Strategic Triangle

In the interaction between the three powers and the Central Asian countries, there are attempts by some of the powers to adopt a combine-and-rule policy. Since 1996, despite the subtle differences between Russia's would-be "sovereign democracy" and China's "harmonious world," these two nations have started building a loose strategic partnership using the framework of the SCO, a regional organization comprising China, Russia, and all the Central Asian nations except the neutrality-bound Turkmenistan (the organization was formally renamed and restructured in its present form in 2001). The nature of the partnership is reflected in the initial formation of the SCO: its organizational goals were issue-oriented; its organizational structure was loosely institutionalized; and its negotiation was mostly based on bilateral instead of multilateral mechanisms. The inward-looking role of the organization is often stressed in dealing with the members' common problems such as like water issues, tenuous borders, ethnic minorities, intraregional trade, narcotics smuggling, organized crime and extremist ideologies.<sup>81</sup> Its focus is clearly multifaceted.

As the U.S. export of values into Central Asia gained full momentum in the early 2000s, coincidentally, the SCO gradually strove to become a partnership with an increasing value-driven stance. The organization stresses the following values in its founding declaration: "mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for multi-civilizations, striving for common development," "good-neighborly friendship," and "security and stability," which are strikingly similar to China's five moral responsibilities described above.<sup>82</sup> Such values, which later came to be known as the "Shanghai Spirit," were purposefully different from the American values from day one.<sup>83</sup> The 2005 SCO Summit can be regarded as the watershed for highlighting these values: afterward, the SCO members collectively saw the U.S. presence in the region as a challenge to their own definition of combating the "Three Evil Forces" – terrorism, religious extremism, and ethnic separatism – and signed the summit agreement to implicitly demand that Washington give a clear timetable for evacuating its troops from the whole of Central Asia.<sup>84</sup> At the 2006 SCO Summit, its members further declared that "the diversity of human civilization should be respected and maintained," "cultural tradition, social and political institutions and value differences should not become an excuse to interfere with other countries' affairs," and that the "social development mode cannot become an export commodity."<sup>85</sup> Such a stance is in stark opposition to U.S. sponsorship of liberal democracy in the region, which promotes the exportability and universality of human rights across borders. Right-wing U.S. thinkers are no

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<sup>81</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, "The Great Powers in Central Asia," *Current History* (October 2005), pp.18.

<sup>82</sup> Shanghai Cooperation Organization, "Declaration on Establishment of Shanghai Cooperation Organization," Shanghai, 1996, <http://www.sectsco.org> (accessed on 1 July 2008).

<sup>83</sup> Chien-peng Chung, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: China's Changing Influence in Central Asia," *The China Quarterly*, 180 (2004), pp. 992-993.

<sup>84</sup> G. Germanovich, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: A Threat to American Interests in Central Asia?" *China and Eurasian Forum Quarterly*, 6(1) (2008), pp. 19-38.

<sup>85</sup> Shanghai Cooperation Organization, "The Manifesto of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in its Fifth Anniversary," Shanghai, 2006.

doubt worried by the threat that the SCO may one day pose toward their favored consensual ideology.<sup>86</sup>

To date, on paper, the organizational goals of the SCO have become mission-oriented, focusing on regional security rather than border disputes; its negotiation mechanism is increasingly multilateral in the hope of reaching collective consensus; its institutional framework is becoming more entrenched with standing agencies effectively established. Countering the “Three Evil Forces” has become the de facto official value of SCO.<sup>87</sup> Behind these slogans is the assumption that the SCO members should work more closely to achieve co-prosperity by utilizing their collective energy resources. In January 2011, the Russian companies Rosneft and Transneft started to supply oil through the extension of the eastern Siberia-Pacific Ocean (ESPO) Pipeline to China via the Skovorodino-Daqing Pipeline, and there are protracted discussions about a major piped gas deal. However, the above combine-and-rule cooperation among some of the powers and Central Asian countries faces notable limitations, simply because there is strong mistrust in Central Asia against all and any of the powers.

### **Divide-and-Rule? The Multi-Vector Response from the Central Asian Republics**

To many observers, in spite of the advancement of great powers, the Central Asians are currently deploying a “multivector foreign policy” among the powers in order to protect their valuable energy resources, because “hosting a foreign presence was largely a product of a complicated and contradictory calculation of interests and risks.”<sup>88</sup> Nazarbayev, the acknowledged Central Asian leader from Kazakhstan, was being rather frank in his *State of the Nation* address in 2005:

We are witnessing superpower rivalry for economic dominance in our region. We have to address correctly this global and geo-economic challenge... We have a choice between remaining the supplier of raw materials to the global markets and waiting patiently for the emergence of the next imperial master or to pursue genuine economic integration of the Central Asian region. I chose the latter.<sup>89</sup>

Despite stating a claim to want to “pursue genuine economic integration of the Central Asian region,” the Kazakh implication was nonetheless to avoid leaning to one side in the “superpower rivalry for economic dominance” in the region. Whenever the QED demands of the United States, Russia or China are seen as dominating or threatening, the Central Asians are likely to immediately invite one of the other powers to provide a counter-balance so as to serve their ultimate goal, that is to protect their energy interests against hunt by a single power. No matter how the values promoted by the great powers are coined and packaged, they are not seen as being totally trustworthy. That is probably why it is impossible for a single power to gain an exclusive advantage in securing a Central Asian energy supply.

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<sup>86</sup> Peter Brookes, “Club for Dictators: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization,” *Capitalism Magazine*, 17 June 2006.

<sup>87</sup> Simon Shen and Liu Peng, “Cong Celuexing Lianmeng Dao Yishi Xingtai Zuzhi (From Strategic Alliance to Ideology-based Organization,” *Xi'an Jiaotong University Journal (Social Science Edition)*, 27(2), (March 2007), pp. 67-76.

<sup>88</sup> D. Kimmage, “2005 in Review: The Geopolitical Game in Central Asia,” *Radio Free Europe*, 29 December 2005; Richard Giragosian, “The Strategic Central Asian Arena,” *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, 4(1) (2006), pp. 133-153.

<sup>89</sup> M. Walker, “Analysis: Uzbek Leader Escapes Isolation,” *United Press International*, 7 May 2005.

One might note the fact that there have been some half-hearted attempts by the Central Asians to form their own bloc. For instance, with the UN's support, Kazakhstan initiated a regional economic program in 1997 called the Special Program for Economics in Central Asia (SPECA) to monitor energy-related issues in the region. SPECA members include the five Central Asian nations and Azerbaijan, with Afghanistan considering joining, but the great powers are all excluded.<sup>90</sup> The Central Asians' wariness of all three powers is summed up by the much-echoed view of Farkhod Tolipov, who comments that a strategic partnership between the states of the region is "the best way to solve the strategic dilemma in Central Asia."<sup>91</sup>

However, even among the Central Asian Five, collective behaviors are also difficult. As a Chinese scholar noted a decade ago, the lack of supplementary economic incentives among the Central Asian nations led to a fragile basis for their mutual cooperation, resulting in the "formality-oriented," "inward-looking" security policy in the region.<sup>92</sup> Ten years on, his observation is still quite valid. The escalation in QED of the three outside powers is indeed prompted by the diffusive nature within Central Asia, meaning that primarily for their energy interests, they are likely to preach their values to one or two, instead of all, nations in the region. As a result of such a passively diffusive, rather than actively multi-vector foreign policy in Central Asia, different nations, or even different regions within these nations, are likely to be encroached upon by different powers in the future.

### **Legacies of Qualitative Energy Diplomacy in Central Asia**

Some commentators are beginning to view Central Asia as a warming-bed for a looming mini-scaled "new Cold War."<sup>93</sup> However, although identifying Central Asia as the venue of such a war is not simply casual journalistic comment, it is more likely that great power competition for QED in the region will continue but not reach the intensity of the Cold War-era rivalry, because the diffusive nature of Central Asia guarantees a balanced influence among the powers in different arenas. Central Asian energy transactions with the powers are like a sum of insurance that is paid in triplicate, because the three powers' QEDs target different demographic layers, and, thus, leave different legacies.

For example, the Westernized educated elite or younger population in Central Asia should be the prime targets for American preaching of liberal democracy. As a result, the seeds from which future "color revolutions" in civil society might sprout are already planted. On the other hand, the Russians focus extensively on the traditional regime-heads, bureaucrats, and regional leaders, which encourage conservative leaders to stick to authoritarianism. Since many of the Central Asian business elite are closely linked to the state leaders, Moscow would also be appealing to

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<sup>90</sup> SPECA, "SPECA Protocol," Bishkek, 5-6 April 2000.

<sup>91</sup> Charles William Maynes, "America Discovers Central Asia," *Foreign Affairs*, 82(2) (March/April 2003), pp. 120-33; F. Tolipov, "The Strategic Dilemma of Central Asia," *Russia in Global Affairs*, No.4, October-December 2006; Jim Nichol "Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests," *CRS Report for Congress*, 13 November 2008.

<sup>92</sup> Z. Sun, *Zhongya Wuguo Duiwai Guanxi (Foreign Relations of the Five Central Asian Nations)*, (Beijing: Dangdai Shejie Chubanshe, 1999).

<sup>93</sup> R. McMahon, "Central Asia: Russia and U.S. Often at Odds in Region," 25 October 2005, *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*; C. Bajpayee, "Energy Fuels Cold War," *Asia Times*, 2 March 2005.

them. But at the same time, an unwanted by-product is created, i.e. for the regional separatist leaders to look for Moscow's support. Thus, when Beijing presents an apolitical and non-interfering voice to Central Asian state leaders and business elite by saying that China has a responsibility, as a responsible stakeholder, to maintain order and security in the region, those in the region, particularly those who do not relish a strong external back-up, tend to favor the Chinese rather than the Russians and Americans. Multilateral negotiations between Central Asia and other powers are often cited as a legacy of China's efforts.

To the Central Asian regime leaders, the functions of the three powers in providing them with stability are also slightly different. Among other benefits mentioned above, involving the U.S. would grant them legitimate endorsement of their rights of existence in the liberal world; otherwise they might potentially become candidates for the list of tyrannies, like Belarus or Zimbabwe. Engaging China would grant them a rising regional economic locomotive that their business elite could look to for opportunities. In contrast, maintaining traditional friendship with the neighboring Russians could, in the last resort, offer them protection of their sovereignties and dictatorships.

Given the above divisions among the three powers and the Central Asian Five, the continuous presence of competing QED interests of the United States, Russia, and China is hardly surprising. The addition of a qualitative dimension has facilitated the powers to seize energy resources in the region, although any suggestions of advancing a dogmatic ideological face which are counter-productive to energy hunt are probably doomed to fail. Because the balance of power in Central Asia is likely to be sustained over the next decade, any one-sided transformation in the region favoring any of the powers is unlikely to take place. Such a stalemate in the region can be regarded as the final legacy of QED.