

# Central Asia Security Policy Brief № 6

## The Arab Spring: Implications for Europe- Eurasian Relations?

Graeme P. Herd and Violetta Yan

December, 2011



## The Arab Spring: Implications for Europe-Eurasian Relations?

By Graeme P. Herd and Violetta Yan

### Key Points:

- The Arab Spring has highlighted structural and systemic causal factors common to both the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and Eurasia. However, in reality the strategic effects appear superficial.
- EU and Russian responses to the Arab Spring have thrown into sharper relief a normative clash between Europe and Eurasia.
- It is likely that value promotion will become a more dominant feature of EU-Eurasian relations, and so normative contestation and clashes between the EU and Russia over the nature of modernity in Central Asia are set to increase.
- Over the longer term, the gradual stabilisation of North Africa and growing strategic insecurities in Central Asia will generate greater EU focus on this region.
- The quality of European-Russian partnership will be tested and reformed by their respective responses to a strategic agenda generated increasingly by Central Asia in the coming years.

NB: The views expressed in this paper are entirely and solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the OSCE Academy in Bishkek or the GCSP.

---

**Central Asia Security Policy Briefs** are published by the OSCE Academy in Bishkek and the Geneva Centre for Security Policy. Available on-line at [www.osce-academy.net](http://www.osce-academy.net). To order hard copies free of charge or submit a text write to [policybriefs@osce-academy.net](mailto:policybriefs@osce-academy.net). **Submission guidelines** are found at the end of each issue.

OSCE Academy in Bishkek, Botanichesky 1A, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 72004 Tel: 996 312 54 32 00

Fax: 999 312 54 23 13 [www.osce-academy.net](http://www.osce-academy.net)

Geneva Centre for Security Policy, Avenue de la Paix 7bis P.O. Box 1295, CH-1211 Geneva 1 [www.gcsp.ch](http://www.gcsp.ch)

Dr Graeme P. Herd is Co-Director of the International Training Course in Security Policy in Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) since November 2005. Between 2002-2005 he was Professor of Civil-Military Relations at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, Garmisch-Partenkirchen Germany, where he also was a guest lecturer at the NATO School in Oberammergau. Prior to this he was a Lecturer in International Relations at both the University of Aberdeen (1997-2002) and Staffordshire University (1994-97) and a Projects Officer, Department of War Studies, King's College London (1993-94). Dr Herd has over 100 publications.

Violetta Yan has been a Deputy Director of the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, since 2008. Previously, she was a Programme Director of the Early Warning for Violence Prevention Programme of the Foundation for Tolerance International in Kyrgyzstan and has an extended experience in Human Rights sensitive and public reforms oriented projects and programmes. She participated in two National Working Groups in Kyrgyzstan: on building civilian oversight over law enforcement agencies and on freedom of movement and migration. Her research interests are in the areas of governance, political economy and security. Violetta Yan is an alumna of the New Faces Conference of the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP).

## **Introduction**

Through 2011, uprisings, disorder, and regime change has rippled across North Africa, from Tunisia through Egypt to Libya. Its effects have been felt in Yemen and Bahrain and now Syria totters on the brink of implosion. On the eve of the twentieth anniversary of the collapse of the Soviet Union, might ‘revolutionary contagion’ once again become a driving dynamic in Eurasia? Throughout 2011, the media and analysts have debated the causes, course and possible consequences of the Arab Spring, including the potential of direct spill-over into Eurasia.<sup>1</sup> The Arab Spring has also implicitly questioned the viability of existing US and NATO, Russian and EU strategic approaches to the MENA region, especially the assumptions upon which these approaches rest and raise the question: what are the implications of a reassessment and recalibrations of European-Eurasian relations?

## **Arab Spring; Eurasian Winter?**

The commonalities between the Arab Spring in the MENA region and conditions on the ground in Eurasia are apparent: enduring inequalities and dignity deficits continue; longstanding authoritarian republicanism is in place; intra-regional transnational societal spill-over potential is ever-present; and, resource distribution and allocation is explained by pre-existing family, clan, tribal, ethnic, religious, gender allegiances and animosities. These commonalities have little resonance in Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. They have stronger resonance in Russia<sup>1</sup>, Armenia and Azerbaijan and are most striking in Central Asia. In Central Asia, authoritarian incumbents in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have held power for over twenty years. Dignity deficits are well attested.<sup>2</sup> Food price hikes and

---

<sup>1</sup> According to the Levada Centre, public support for Prime Minister Putin and President Medvedev has decreased dramatically from 60 and 53 points in December 2010 to 23 and 15 points in October-November 2011 respectively. See: Indexes by Levada Centre, <http://www.levada.ru/indeksy> (accessed 22 November 2011).

electricity cuts in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are ongoing and border regimes are opaque. Transparency International in its 2010 ‘Corruption Perceptions Index’ ranks Kyrgyzstan 164<sup>th</sup>, Tajikistan 154<sup>th</sup>, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan 172<sup>nd</sup> out of 178 states surveyed (Kazakhstan is 105<sup>th</sup>). Political rights are not guaranteed<sup>3</sup> and in regard to Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, these rights are suppressed with coercive force.<sup>4</sup> The rise of factional elites undermines the legitimacy of the state throughout Central Asia.<sup>5</sup> The government efficiency index in Central Asia averages out at 30.5 percent, which is less than average index of Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen which stands at 48.6 per cent.<sup>6</sup>

However, important differences between MENA conditions and Central Asia can also be identified. First, the post-Soviet authoritarian equilibrium differs from that of the Arab world. The ruling elites in Central Asia – the ‘electocracies’ – are centred on the presidential family, cronies (friends of the leading family), and leaders of business conglomerates. In contrast to the MENA region, the highest ranks within the military and security services are not visible parts of this power nexus. The Egyptian military, for example, holds a symbolic as well as functional role. The army has the status as core state institution (founded in 1953) and guardianship function, being at once above politics and the embodiment of the state itself (despite the fact that it supplies presidents). In Egypt the military as a classical state structure and institution, was able to stand above the fray, maintain its legitimacy, and then intervene for the good of society to “restore order”. In Central Asia the military reflects the state of the infrastructure – it is degraded and crumbling.<sup>7</sup> The role of elite military units that actually function is regime defence. In addition, the Soviet tradition firmly placed militaries under civilian control<sup>8</sup>. If an Arab Spring scenario did occur in Central Asia, would indigenous security and law enforcement agencies be willing or able to fill the resultant security vacuum?

While, the revolutionary ‘contagion’ from the MENA region to Eurasia is dismissed by political elites, the explanations put forward to suggest ‘immunity’ from ‘contagion’ differ in detail. The general claim is that there is an inherent predisposition and preference for gradualist reform in Central Asia rather than revolution. The burden of history has inoculated Tajikistan which still suffers from a civil war (1992-1997) fatigue. However, this assertion loses saliency as the emergent class of radicalised youth have increasingly weaker memories of these events.<sup>9</sup> Rather than being the object of an Arab Spring spill-over, President Roza Otunbaeva (following Ata Meken faction leader Omurbek Tekebaev) argued that the Kyrgyz revolution of April 2010 provided the model that gave impetus to the Arab Spring of early 2011. For Uzbekistan, the massacre in Andizhan in 2005 and the clashes in Osh and Jalalabad in Kyrgyzstan in June 2010 demonstrates that what little discontent exists is localised rather than widespread and can remain contained. Regime leadership change had occurred already in Turkmenistan in 2007 when President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov took power after the death of ‘Turkmenbashi’, so nullifying an Arab Spring scenario. President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan frames the causes of revolts in the MENA region as “declining living standards and lack of prospects”<sup>10</sup> for the citizens. In the President’s words: “The events in the Middle East and North Africa show that the main cause of upheavals were unsolved social and economic problems of these states. Since gaining its independence, Kazakhstan has prioritised the economic development for increasing living cost of our people, and we were right.”<sup>11</sup> However, Kazakhstan’s GDP, which is highest in the region, is unevenly spread through the population.<sup>12</sup> Nursultan Nazarbaev renewed his presidential mandate with ‘free and fair’ elections in 2011 so re-legitimising his hold on power.

There are two factors the Central Asian elites have been addressing since the Arab spring: social media and Islam. The Uzbek authorities immediately requested locally-operating mobile and internet operators to report on mass mailing lists with “suspicious” messages, monitor social networks and disconnect users on demand<sup>13</sup>. The Kazakh President stresses the direct connection between instability and social media: “...terrorism, religious extremism, separatism and drug dealers use Internet to penetrate our countries and the world. This net-destruction is, in fact, one more, the fifth, threat. Therefore the SCO countries should jointly block this... It is time to introduce the new notions ‘electronic border’, ‘electronic sovereignty’ to the international law... We could think of a special SCO body which would fulfil the functions of ‘Cyberpol’ against internet-aggressions”.<sup>14</sup> News reports on blocking websites are therefore frequent.<sup>15</sup> Access to information inside the country is almost impossible in Turkmenistan, the most isolated in its international neutrality status, geographic location and “introverted” politics.<sup>16</sup> Intensified anxiety over “religious extremism” is by and large, shared throughout the region.<sup>17</sup> The Tajik President introduced a law prohibiting the attendance of people under age 18 at religious services and/or to be member of any religious organisations (the law addresses parents “About Parental Responsibility”).<sup>18</sup> In addition, students studying at religious Islamic schools abroad were required to return to Tajikistan.<sup>19</sup> Religious leaders who had studied abroad were fired in Uzbekistan.<sup>20</sup> Kazakhstan warned its public to beware of religious extremist rhetoric in academic and political debates and introduced normative restrictions on religious freedoms.<sup>21</sup>

Lastly, in contrast to the EU, NATO and US strategic approach to the MENA region, the most powerful regional actors and institutions in Eurasia – the Russian Federation/Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and China/Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) – are conservative and cast normative shadows which strongly support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. Despite the Arab Spring, the notion that authoritarianism is the solution to instability, rather than its cause, still prevails. Eurasian normative unity was forged in many fires, not least 9/11 which legitimised pre-existing anti-radical Islamist narratives, and by power-elite understandings of the nature of Colour Revolutions in Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan and their consequent commitment to oppose the ‘export’ of such revolutions by western security services in collusion with NGOs.<sup>22</sup> Russia’s doctrinal lead helps socialise and institutionalise a common set of assumptions and norms in Eurasia. Russia’s military doctrine published in February 2010 included, for the first time, the notion that attempts “to destabilise the situation in individual states/regions and to undermine strategic stability” now constituted a key security threat.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, President Medvedev himself, when rejecting the notion that “Middle East-style scenarios” could occur in Russia, reinforced the notion of a Colour Revolution-type conspiracy to destabilise the state: “They prepared such a scenario for us previously. And now they will try to put it into practice. But in any case, they will not succeed.”<sup>24</sup>

### **Implications for “Europe in between”?**

In Europe and Eurasia, the reality of armed humanitarian intervention in Libya and growing pressure for external intervention in Syria, as well as regime changes and revolt throughout the region, have focussed thinking on crisis management and operational issues: the emergency evacuation of foreign nationals, disclosure/freezing of incumbent assets and sovereign wealth funds, elite travel bans, the recalling of Ambassadors, the redrafting of bilateral military-aid conditionality clauses, the imposition of no-fly zones, and the threat and then deployment of armed humanitarian

interventions in the name of ‘responsibility to protect’.<sup>25</sup> At what point should erstwhile external strategic partners pivot to counter-elites when longstanding incumbent allies become albatross, while still ensuring a dignified, orderly transition? How can grass-root activists demanding regime-change be supported in Egypt without extending such support to all mass protests? Incumbents, as was the case in Iran with the ‘Green Revolution’, use external support for legitimate protest to delegitimise the protest and protesters, labelling them a fifth column. Can this be avoided?<sup>26</sup> How can opposition groups in Syria be supported in their efforts to gain power while avoiding sectarian massacres or external military intervention?

In January 2005 US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice characterised six decades of US policy towards the Middle East as having sacrificed liberty on the altar of authoritarian stability but gaining neither. On the one hand, Western strategic interest (regional stability, the continuity of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, and access to the Suez Canal and Egyptian airspace) was secured through long-standing strategic partnerships with US-backed autocratic security-providers. On the other hand, Western market-democratic states promoted democratic principles and values (accountability and transparency). In 2011, the question was urgent: can there be a prudent blend of power and interests with principle and values, of *realpolitik* and idealism, or do blatant double standards and hypocrisy only serve to delegitimise both? Are Western interests and values now aligned?<sup>27</sup> Portuguese Foreign Minister Luis Amado has cautioned: “Foreign policy is not necessarily only based on principles but also on interests. And in that sense, our foreign policy is no different from that of all those European states which currently face the same type of foreign policy developments. It is absolutely ridiculous to wish to develop ties based on the democratic conditions of each country. If that were the case, we would not have ties with many countries with whom we have had ties for decades.”<sup>28</sup> Is then the real choice between having stable MENA states with independent foreign and security policies or weak, fragile authoritarian Western puppet regimes?

Does the Arab Spring signify an epitaph for an age of liberal interventionism, mirroring the US’ global and regional decline? By October 2011 NATO declared that its UN-mandated intervention in Libya (Operation Unified Protector) was a ‘success’. By contrast, Russia, China, India, Brazil and others in the UN Security Council argued that NATO had moved beyond its mandate, and that military ‘success’ had yet to be matched by political progress in the post-conflict and stabilisation phase.<sup>29</sup> As Philip Gordon has noted following a NATO April 2011 Berlin Ministerial Meeting, “NATO partnerships – allies agreed to enhancements for engaging partners across the globe, and indeed, Libya is a classic example of why NATO needs good mechanisms for partnerships, because we’re actually undertaking a partnership mission as we speak.”<sup>30</sup> The peace-building challenge in Libya, which is now underway will likely highlight the mismatch between the kind of internal systemic and structural sources of insecurity facing NATO Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative partner states, and the confidence building measures NATO partnerships are designed to provide. The MENA region is characterised by relative deprivation – the gap between high expectations and diminishing opportunities – and uneven resource distribution. This is an agenda centred on human and societal security concerns which are best addressed through broad development policies – an agenda that NATO partnerships do not address.

The Arab Spring has highlighted a collective action problem, with splits within and between the Non-Aligned Movement, Arab League, UNSC and EU. The EU, with 27 national governments, was in disarray over Libya, demonstrating that a pre-emptive humanitarian operation is much harder

to legitimise than one after the fact. On 17 March 2011 when the UN Security Council passed its Resolution 1973 on the creation of a no-fly zone over Libya, Germany abstained alongside Russia, China, India and Brazil. Among the big EU three (France, Germany and UK), the UK and France were unable to find a common cause with Germany in a high profile foreign policy challenge: “the vote represented a break with Germany’s foreign policy maxim to never oppose its European partners and the United States.”<sup>31</sup> Eighteen months since the Lisbon Treaty which led to the creation of the European External Action Agency (EEAS), it is clear that “‘a foreign ministry’ is not a foreign policy, and there is little sign that the EU will devise one anytime soon.”<sup>32</sup>

Russia, alongside other conservative status quo regimes in Eurasia, consistently emphasises stability and order at home, and criticises ‘humanitarian interventions’ abroad. The Arab Spring indirectly questions the viability of Russia’s domestic authoritarian governance model, political transition and power dispensation. This issue has been brought into even sharper relief by Prime Minister Putin’s announcement in late September 2010 that he intends to return to the Kremlin in March 2012: how resilient is the Russia’s system of authoritarian power and how sustainable are current legitimacy narratives? The 1990s represented a lost decade in which the decentralisation of power and authority resulted in chaos and anarchy. President Putin’s social contract provided stability and prosperity (guaranteed by the managerial competence and patriotism of incumbents) within a ‘sovereign democracy’ in return for a continuity of power in Russia. Variants of this narrative sustained authoritarian regimes in the MENA region, as much as Russia’s partners in Eurasia today. However, just as with the MENA region, by 2011 this legitimisation narrative was under serious stress.

The Arab Spring does not just raise questions relating to the sustainability of Russia’s internal governance system and structures, but also its role as an international actor, presenting a series of serious challenges to Russian foreign policy interests. On 24 September 2011, after announcing his intent to return to the president’s office, Prime Minister Putin announced his “Eurasian Union” initiative aimed at promoting Russia as the centre of geo-political gravity in former Soviet space.

Kazakhstan’s President Nursultan Nazarbaev fully supports this integration and proposes establishing Eurasian supranational agencies.<sup>2</sup> The Kyrgyz President-elect Almazbek Atambaev, in his first interview to Russian newspaper *Izvestia*, also envisioned Kyrgyzstan’s future in the Eurasian Union and views accession to the Customs Union as a one step in this integration process, noting: “our border will automatically become the Russian external border, which we will guard jointly”.<sup>3</sup> The Customs Union represents political-economic integration, a reformed CSTO presses forward integration in the political-military sphere. Three recent proposals to reform the CSTO were elaborated by President Medvedev’s think-tank (INSOR) and floated at the Yaroslavl Political Forum on 7 September 2011 are worth noting, as the Arab Spring provides one reference point for this initiative. First, decision-making within the CSTO could be by majority rather than by consensus. Second, consideration could be given to “ensuring at least partial operational compatibility between CSTO contingents and the alliance’s rapid reaction contingents”. Third, the CSTO could develop the capacity to carry out peace-enforcement operations in Central Asia in the face of domestically-rooted calamities, in addition to interstate attacks.

<sup>2</sup> Nursultan Nazarbaev, ‘Eurasian Union: From Idea to the History of Future’, *Izvestia Kazakstan*, 26 October 2011, [http://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/articles/evraziyskiy\\_soyuz](http://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/articles/evraziyskiy_soyuz)

<sup>3</sup> ‘U nas obshee proshloe, i ya viju budushee Kyrgyzstana v Evraziyskom Soyuze’, <http://www.izvestia.ru/news/506878>

While we can question the extent to which such changes would be symbolic, cosmetic or real (given political will, capability deficits, and capacity and implementation gaps among the key actors), these changes can themselves be attributed to three factors. First, it acknowledges that Russia and the CSTO (alongside all other international organisations) were strategically paralyzed in the face of the events in Osh and Jalalabad of June 2010. Second, it demonstrates a fear of Arab Spring-type spill-overs into Central Asia in 2012. Indeed, in September 2011, CSTO “Tsentr-2011” military exercises were hosted simultaneously by Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. President Medvedev and Defence Minister Anatoliy Serdyukov attended a military exercise in the Chelyabinsk region in which the scenario involved “mock terrorists dressed in white Arab robes taking over a school, infantry fighting vehicles advancing, airborne troops conducting a parachute drop, *spetsnaz* catching insurgents.”<sup>33</sup> Fourth, it recognises that, in the words of Fedor Lukyanov, editor-in-chief of the *Russia in Global Politics* journal: “In light of the situation in Afghanistan, a viable CSTO is not only necessary for Russia but also for NATO.”<sup>34</sup>

NATO’s humanitarian intervention in Libya raised a set of strategic dilemmas for Russia. Russia did not want to support and thus justify a humanitarian intervention in Libya, as this would only serve to advance US and European interest, as well as reinforce dangerous precedents set in Kosovo and Iraq.<sup>35</sup> However, there was significant regional support for the resolution. In addition, the Obama administration was willing to decide the issue of military intervention within the UNSC. This was a demonstration of multilateralism, and so a repudiation of Bush era unilateralism and implicit support for the US-Russia Reset agenda. For all these reasons, a veto from Russia would have sent the wrong strategic signal. Abstention from UNSCR 1973 had the strategic advantage of “placing Russia in a position to benefit from any political outcome.”<sup>36</sup>

In contrast and with regards to Syria, Russia (along side China and other BRICS) strongly opposed UNSC resolutions condemning violence, sanctions and foreign intervention against Syria and have threatened to veto any such UNSC resolution.<sup>37</sup> Unrest here is considered a purely internal affair. Syria, as Russia’s one remaining strategic partner in the region, buys virtually all its weaponry from Russia and provides naval bases in warm waters.<sup>38</sup> In August 2011 it appeared that Russia had begun to soften its stance and hedge its bets; President Medvedev warned Bashir al Assad to open dialogue with the opposition: “If he cannot do this, he will face a sad fate and at the end of the day we will also have to take some kind of decision.”<sup>39</sup> However, there is a strong feeling in Russia (and China) that UNSCR 1973 should have been vetoed at the time, as NATO exceeded its mandate and has emerged as a strategic winner. This perception reinforces the will to veto an equivalent resolution on Syria were it drafted and presented to the Security Council.<sup>40</sup> An additional factor is that in 2012, Russia and the US have presidential elections which, inevitably, will encourage “toughness” and blame, rather than further accommodation or compromise.

One other set of dilemmas centres on the notion of a dichotomy between ‘Southern Engagement’ and ‘Eastern Enlargement’. It is not in Russian interests to see the MENA region rise in strategic importance for Europe, as this will increase European engagement and therefore influence in this region. Anders Fogh Rasmussen, NATO’s Secretary General, has stressed the need for a “free, democratic and stable” outcome in Libya. He argues that NATO core values are “freedom, democracy and human rights” and that the intensification of political dialogue and new partnerships in North Africa are distinct possible outcomes.<sup>41</sup> The new Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Secretary General Lamberto Zannier signals democracy promotion in

MENA region will become an OSCE priority, given shared interests in oil, trade, migration and combating terrorism.<sup>42</sup> On 25 May 2011 the EU rejuvenated its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).<sup>43</sup> It announced that the post of EU Special Representative for the Southern Mediterranean would be created, that the European Investment Bank and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development would extend its operations (and funding) to the MENA region, and that the EU would support “deep democracy” efforts.<sup>44</sup> However, might zero-sum logic become apparent within the EU and Russia? A reinforced European southern engagement will, in an era of financial constraints and Euro-zone crisis (which leaves no opportunity for strategic thinking), result in less time, attention and resources being spent on states in the common neighbourhood, which gives Russia more power and influence within its self-declared zone of privileged interest.

Before the Arab spring, the EU had been gradually enlarging its presence in Central Asia. In 2005-07, a special Representative for Central Asia was designated, the new Development Cooperation Instrument introduced a special component of Central Asia, Individual Partnership Agreements were signed with each of the region’s countries, and the EU’s Central Asian Strategy was adopted under the German EU Presidency. However, EU interest in Central Asia is easily trumped by North Africa as an overriding strategic priority. The “southern neighbourhood” is referred to in the EUs Neighbourhood Policy as “our neighbourhood”, one in which the EU considers part of a future “common” economic and security zone. Central Asia, by contrast, is relegated to “Neighbours of the EU Neighbourhood”, as a region where dialogue and networks have to be built to serve the EU’s growing needs in energy resources and to fulfil security commitments in Afghanistan. The European Security Strategy of 2003 makes it clear that potential conflict and WMD proliferation through the Middle East trump disorder and drug trafficking in Central Asia.<sup>45</sup> Twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the paucity of EU economic trade with Central Asia (less than 1 percent of EU external trade) further underscores this lack of visible interest and the failure of “assistance to democracy” programmes in the region.

### **Conclusions: a European-Eurasian Union?**

The Arab Spring has highlighted structural and systemic causal factors common to both the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and Eurasia. This Policy Brief has argued that the effects of the Arab Spring on Eurasia are superficial, weak and incidental in reality. However, official discourses seek to instrumentalise them to reinforce the status quo. The post-Soviet authoritarian equilibrium is composed and structured differently from those in the MENA region. As a consequence, should instability and upheaval occur in Eurasia, the unintended disruptive consequences will be equally hard to predict, manage and contain. Damage limitation will be extremely difficult to coordinate.

The Arab Spring has thrown into sharper relief a normative clash between Europe and Eurasia. Might lessons identified in the EU engagement with North Africa prior to the Arab Spring be relevant for its longer term engagement with Central Asia? Hitherto, with regards to North Africa, the EU focussed on attaining *realpolitik* interests through improved relations with local power elites, rather than pressing value-orientated good-governance promotion, democratisation and respect for human rights. Given EU interests in Central Asia are so minimal, it is likely that value promotion will become a more dominant feature of the future, and so normative contestation and clashes between the EU and Russia over the nature of modernity in Central Asia are set to increase.

Clearly, the outcome of the political transformations that are taking place will very much determine the emphasis and stress both Russia and the EU place on advancing their stated interests and norms. A pragmatic Russia would cooperate where possible with consolidated market-democratic regimes in the MENA region, though this outcome would have a demonstration effect and impact through former Soviet space, implicitly challenging the normative status quo. A market-democratic outcome would undercut Russia's contentions that revolutions which allow for free and fair elections encourage the rise of radical Islamist regimes and transition democratisation means instability. Should the conservative reactionary regimes return to power in the MENA region, Western rhetorical/public support for representative and participatory institutions, structures and processes in the region, rather than elite personalities, will grow, whatever the pragmatic *realpolitik*. For the EU a market-democratic outcome in the MENA region would reinforce its underlying strategic rationale for engagement with states in its common neighbourhood – that is, democratic transformation will occur via trade and economic integration. This notion is embedded to a greater or lesser extent in all EU policy instruments, giving them a degree of strategic unity and coherence. EU dilemmas arise in addressing the means to foster a market-democratic end, not the final outcome. For the EU, it remains to be seen whether the Arab Spring has reinforced or destroyed the notion that economic prosperity and political freedom go hand in hand.

Over the longer term, the gradual stabilisation of North Africa and growing strategic insecurities in Central Asia will generate greater EU focus on this region. These include open questions surrounding the nature of Afghanistan following US drawdown after 2014, continued Kyrgyz internal instability, the vulnerability of Tajikistan to insurgency (and remittances from Russia as highlighted by tension over the arrest of Russian pilots), the inability of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to effectively mobilise coercive force to control domestic flashpoints, and, in the case of Kazakhstan, the issue of succession and an agreed plan for political modernisation. As the Eurasia Union concept appears to be a central pillar of Russian foreign policy over the next two presidential terms, Russia's renewed focus on its own periphery will likely take place at the expense of developing EU relations. The quality of European-Russian partnership will be tested and reformed by their respective responses to a strategic agenda generated increasingly by Central Asia in the coming years.

---

<sup>1</sup> Aleksandr Rybin, 'Will Kazakhstan become another Egypt...' and Zafar Abdulloyev (director of the Kontent centre for political analysis), 'Social inequality and the 'Libyan question'', in *Biznes i Politika*, Dushanbe (in Russian), 17 March 2011; Mikhail Dvoryanchikov, 'Yermukhamet Yertysbayev: 3 April will be a great day', *Ekspress-K*, Almaty (in Russian), 4 March 2011. (Yertysbayev is a presidential advisor).

<sup>2</sup> "As is the case in Egypt, social unrest could erupt in Tajikistan because of poverty. A recent government survey in the southern Hatlon region revealed that some 70 percent of the population is essentially subsisting on bread and tea. Each resident of Hatlon spends an average of \$21 a month on food.", 12 February 2011,  
[http://www.rferl.org/content/central\\_asian\\_dictators\\_belarus\\_egypt\\_mubarak/2306999.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/central_asian_dictators_belarus_egypt_mubarak/2306999.html)

<sup>3</sup> Freedom House ranks Central Asian's republics as "Not Free", as of 2010, <http://www.freedomhouse.org>

<sup>4</sup> According to 'Political Terror Scale' (PTS) at <http://www.politicalterrorscale.org/ptsdata.php?start=168>

<sup>5</sup> 'The 2011 Failed States Index', The Fund for Peace at <http://www.fundforpeace.org/global/?q=fsi-grid2011>

<sup>6</sup> 'Worldwide Governance Indicators', [http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/mc\\_chart.asp](http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/mc_chart.asp)

<sup>7</sup> 'Tajikistan: The Changing Insurgent Threats', International Crises Group, Asia Report no. 205, Bishkek/Brussels, 24 May 2011: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/central-asia/tajikistan/205-tajikistan-the-changing-insurgent-threats.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> "During the last 19 years, the National Security Ministry (known until 2002 as the National Security Committee) has been headed by nine different people. According to official information, four were convicted and sentenced to prison terms: Dangatar Kopekov (eight years), Saparmurat Seydov (six years), Muhammad Nazarov (20 or 25 years, depending on the source), and Poran Berdiyev (25 years).", 'Turkmenistan's Failing Political Culture', 5 April 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/turkmenistan\\_failing\\_political\\_culture/3547713.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/turkmenistan_failing_political_culture/3547713.html); In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, Turkmen President Berdymukhamedov publicly dismissed Charymyrat Amanov, his powerful Minister for National Security: 'The Arab Spring: The Turkmen Case' - Tahir In 'Foreign Policy', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 22 April 2011, at [www.rferl.org/articleprintview/9502585](http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/9502585)

<sup>9</sup> On 20 April 2011 President Emomali emphasized addressing the challenge of youth radicalism in his speech on domestic and foreign policy, at [www.president.tj/rus/novostee\\_200411.html](http://www.president.tj/rus/novostee_200411.html)

<sup>10</sup> Nursultan Nazarbaev, "Not many countries may compete with Kazakhstan's economic indicators", *The Washington Post*, 1 April 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Address by President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev at the 38th OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, Astana, 28 June 2011 at:

[http://www.akorda.kz/en/speeches/external\\_forums/vystuplenie\\_presidenta\\_rk\\_nazarbaeva\\_na\\_38m\\_smid](http://www.akorda.kz/en/speeches/external_forums/vystuplenie_presidenta_rk_nazarbaeva_na_38m_smid)

<sup>12</sup> 'Kazakhstan', The World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org/country/kazakhstan>

<sup>13</sup> "V Uzbekistane opasayutsya nachala SMS-revolutsyi", *Central Asia News*, 15 March 2011, [www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1300184820](http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1300184820)

<sup>14</sup> Address by President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev at the SCO Summit in Astana, 15 June 2011, [http://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/external\\_forums/](http://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/external_forums/)

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.neweurasia.net/media-and-internet/kazakhstan-blocks-websites-to-battle-religious-extremism/>

<sup>16</sup> "The most expensive Internet in the world is in Turkmenistan. The cost of using unlimited internet access at \$2048 kbps reaches \$6821.05 per month..." in "Access to information is the most expensive in Turkmenistan", *Eurasia Lift*, 9 February 2011, at <http://eurasialift.wordpress.com/2011/02/09/access-to-information-in-turkmenistan-is-the-most-expensive/>

<sup>17</sup> 'Uzbeks Extradited From Kazakhstan Stand Trial For Extremism', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 23 August 2011: [http://www.rferl.org/content/extradited\\_uzbeks\\_tried\\_for\\_extremism/24305622.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/extradited_uzbeks_tried_for_extremism/24305622.html)

<sup>18</sup> Emomali Rakhmon, 8 April 2011, at [http://www.president.tj/rus/novostee\\_060411.html](http://www.president.tj/rus/novostee_060411.html)

<sup>19</sup> 'Pochti 80% Tadzhikistantsev, obuchavshihsyu v islamskih uchrezhdeniyah za rubezhom, vernulis na rodinu', ("Almost 80% of Tajik citizens, Studying in Islamic Schools Abroad Came Back Home"), 11 April 2011, <http://ca-news.org/news/653521>

<sup>20</sup> According to the Uzbek media, three prominent religious officials were fired including the Pro-Rector of Tashkent Islamic Institute Saidjamol Masaiidov, Imam of the capital's "Jurabke" Mosque Najmiddin Hasanov, and

Imam of "Yalangoch" Mosque Jabborali Nurmatov - "V Uzbekistane uvolnyayut obuchavshihsha v arabskikh stranakh religioznyh slujitelei" ('In Uzbekistan, They Sack Religious Leaders Educated Abroad'), 6 April 2011, <http://ca-news.org/news/649371>

<sup>21</sup> 'Following Terror Attacks, Kazakhstan Hurriedly Tightens Religious Law', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 27 September 2011, at <http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/24341450.html>; 'OSCE human rights chief expresses concern over restrictions in Kazakhstan's new religion law', OSCE: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 29 September 2011, at <http://www.osce.org/odihr/83191>

<sup>22</sup> For an analysis of this understanding, see: Graeme P. Herd, 'Colourful Revolutions and the CIS: "Manufactured" versus "Managed" Democracy?' *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 52, no. 2, March/April 2005, pp. 3-17.

<sup>23</sup> Stephen J. Blank (ed.), *Russian Military Politics and Russia's 2010 Defence Doctrine*, Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) March 2011, p. 41.

<sup>24</sup> 'No Middle East Scenario for Russia – Medvedev', *Russia Today*, 22 February 2011:  
<http://rt.com/politics/middle-east-russia-medvedev/>

<sup>25</sup> Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury and Yang Razali Kassim, 'Libya and the UN: Whose Responsibility to Protect?', *RSIS Commentaries*, No. 34/2011, 4 March 2011: <http://www.rsis.edu.sg/publications/Perspective/RSIS0342011.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Bassma Kodmani, 'To Topple Assad, It takes a Minority', *The New York Times*, 31 July 2011.

<sup>27</sup> 'No time for doubters', Charlemagne, *The Economist*, 26 February 2011.

<sup>28</sup> Luis Amado, Diario de Noticias website, Lisbon, in Portuguese, 27 February 2011; Fareed Zakaria, 'A doctrine we don't need', *The Washington Post*, 7 July 2011, p. A13.

<sup>29</sup> Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury and Yang Razali Kassim, 'Libya and the UN: Whose Responsibility to Protect?', *RSIS Commentaries*, No. 34/2011, 4 March 2011: <http://www.rsis.edu.sg/publications/Perspective/RSIS0342011.pdf> (accessed 20 August 2011). A.J Bellamy and P.D. Williams, 'The new politics of protection? Côte d'Ivoire, Libya and the responsibility to protect', *International Affairs*, 87(4), (2011), pp. 825-850.

[http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/87\\_4BellamyWilliams.pdf](http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/87_4BellamyWilliams.pdf) (accessed 11 November 2011),

<sup>30</sup> 'NATO's Berlin Ministerial'. Special Briefing, Philip H. Gordon, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, US Department of State, Washington D.C., 18 April 2011:  
<http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2011/161159.htm> (accessed 20 August 2011).

<sup>31</sup> Ralf Neukirch, 'Germany's Woeful Security Council Record', *Der Spiegel*, 21 September 2011:  
<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,787322,00.html>

<sup>32</sup> Giles Merritt, 'Where is Europe's Foreign Policy?', *Korea Times*, 31 July 2011.

<sup>33</sup> Presenters of "Den" news: Alena Vasilyevykh and Yaroslav Borodin, Yermak TV, Yekaterinburg (in Russian), 27 September 2011.

<sup>34</sup> Alexander Gabuyev and Vladimit Solovyev, 'CSTO Turns to NATO – Russia Prepares Plan to Reform Organisation', *Kommersant* website, Moscow (In Russian), 6 September 2011. Igor Yurgens (ed.), 'Collective Security Treaty Organisation: Responsible Security', (Synopsis of Report of Institute of Contemporary Development), Moscow, August 2011, pp. 1-26.

<sup>35</sup> David Miliband (former UK foreign secretary), 'Whatever you do, Mr. Obama, don't play safe; we – and the Middle East – cannot afford the United States to 'lead from behind', *The Times* (London), 23 May 2011, p. 20: the Arab Spring "sets a new legitimacy bar for the exercise of power."

<sup>36</sup> Roland Dannreuther, 'Russia and the Arab Revolutions', *Russian Analytical Digest*, No. 98, 6 July 2011, p. 2. See also Mark Katz, 'Russia and the Arab Spring', *Russian Analytical Digest*, No. 98, 6 July 2011, pp. 4-6.

<sup>37</sup> 'Russia Reiterates Rejection of Foreign Interference on Syrian Affairs' – SANA news agency website, Damascus (in English), 2 August 2011; 'Accidental heroes. Britain, France and the Libya operation'. An Interim RUSI Campaign Report. September 2011: <http://www.rusi.org/> downloads/assets/RUSIInterimLibyaReport.pdf (accessed 11 November 2011); A. de Vasconcelos, 'BRIC countries must prove their mettle on Syria'. *Deutsche Welle International*, 19 September 2011: <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,15398211,00.html> (accessed 11 November 2011).

<sup>38</sup> Philippe Conde, 'EU-Russia: much ado about nothing?', *IPRIS Viewpoints*, July 2011, pp. 1-3.

<sup>39</sup> *Interfax news agency*, Moscow (in Russian), 4 August 2011. The EU has pressed for sanctions, targeting oil exports which constitute one third of all state revenues. See James M. Dorsey, 'Syria's widening Protests: Assad Increasingly Beleaguered', *RSIS Commentaries*, No. 118/2011 dated 10 August 2011.

<sup>40</sup> 'Libyan scenario in Syria unacceptable – Russian president', *Russia Today*, 9 September 2011: <http://rt.com/politics/official-word/medvedev-uronews-interview-ukraine-159/>

<sup>41</sup> Anders Fogh Rasmussen, 'NATO and the Arab Spring', *The International Herald Tribune*, 2 June 2011, p. 6. See also: Anders Fogh Rasmussen, "NATO After Libya: The Atlantic Alliance in Austere Times," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90, Issue 4, July-August 2011, pp. 2-6.

<sup>42</sup> 'OSCE offers to Aid for Arab Spring Democratization', *AssA-Irada*, 21 July 2011. Realizing this 'priority' will be problematic given the lack of both capacity and unity within the OSCE.

<sup>43</sup> Catherine Ashton, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission, noted: "The European Union was the first to offer a serious response to the Arab Spring. This new set of decisions is the result of the new and ambitious European Neighbourhood Policy launched in May and it confirms that the EU has made it one of its main priorities to support 'deep' and sustainable democracy, but also economic recovery, in North Africa and the Middle East." See: 'EU response to the Arab Spring: new package of support for North Africa and Middle East', European Commission – Press Release, 27 September 2011: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/11/1083&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

<sup>44</sup> 'A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood: A review of European Neighbourhood Policy', Joint Communication by the High Representative of The Union For Foreign Affairs And Security Policy and the European Commission, 25 May 2011, pp. 1-26: [http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com\\_11\\_303\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com_11_303_en.pdf). The ENP has a dual function: ENP status is offered as an alternative to enlargement; "it is an attempt to (re)inject the Union's normative agenda and strengthen the application of conditionality in relations with non-candidate countries." See: Hiski Haukkala, 'Russian Reactions to the European Neighbourhood Policy', *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 55, no. 4, September/October 2008, p. 41.

<sup>45</sup> 'A Secure Europe in a better world. European Security Strategy', Brussels, 12 December 2003, at <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>

## About OSCE Academy and Geneva Centre for Security Policy

**The OSCE Academy in Bishkek** is a Central Asian institute of graduate education, training and research. Through its Masters programme, professional trainings, conferences and research the OSCE Academy contributes to professional capacity building in Central Asia, facilitates regional policy dialogue and provides policy-relevant analysis.

**The Geneva Centre for Security Policy** (GCSP) is an international training centre for security policy based in Geneva. An international foundation with 42 member states, it offers courses for civil servants, diplomats and military officers from all over the world. Through research, workshops and conferences it provides an internationally recognised forum for dialogue on issues of topical interest relating to security and peace policy.

### OSCE Academy - GCSP International Security Programme

#### Central Asia Security Policy Briefs Series

This series deals with current issues of comprehensive security relevant for Central Asia. This includes but is not limited to such themes as socioeconomic determinants of security, identity-based conflicts, political Islam, ethnopolitics, security organizations, bilateral relations, the situation in Afghanistan and other neighbouring states. **Central Asia Security Policy Briefs** will be published on-line in the pdf format, with printed copies available. The language of publication is English. Submissions can be made in English or Russian. We will make Russian translation of select Briefs.

#### Submission guidelines:

1. OSCE Academy – GCSP ISP **Central Asia Security Policy Briefs** are submitted to the OSCE Academy and GCSP preferably after preliminary discussion.
2. The content of **Central Asia Security Policy Briefs** does not necessarily reflect views of the OSCE Academy or GCSP
3. A **Central Asia Security Policy Brief** is a 3000-3500 words (inclusive of key findings and endnotes) paper. The Security Policy Briefs should include a short author bio noting one or two recent publications, research focus and e-mail contact details.
4. Submissions have to be sent to [policybriefs@osce-academy.net](mailto:policybriefs@osce-academy.net) in the **.doc** or **.docx** format
5. Use of diagrams for presentation of arguments is welcome and clear identification of
6. **recommendations** will be enhanced by setting them apart from other text in a box
7. To acknowledge sources and relevant literature, please use endnotes.
8. At the beginning of the Brief will be a list of key findings/recommendations
9. While the structure of a **Central Asia Security Policy Brief** may vary depending on the preferences of the author, as a product addressing policy and expert communities it must outline (1) existing challenges, (2) proposed or implemented responses, (3) policy dilemmas and trade-offs, and present (4) recommendations based on analysis of alternative policy options.