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**Convergence of Counterterrorism Policies: A Case Study of Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia**

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## **Convergence of Counterterrorism Policies: A Case Study of Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia**

### **Abstract**

Why do counterterrorism policies of the Central Asian states grow more alike amid propensities for divergence? This article engages with this question. It focuses on the counterterrorism measures of Kyrgyzstan and attributes their growing intensity to influence of the neighbouring states and regional organizations. It is the contention of this research that Kyrgyzstan's increasingly vigorous responses aimed at combating terrorism is a part of a broader process of convergence of counterterrorism policies and measures targeting religious extremism adopted by Kyrgyzstan's neighbours. The three mechanisms that lie at the roots of this process are direct coercive transfer, harmonization of security policies, and emulation of counterterrorism responses.

During the last two decades, Central Asian states have witnessed an intense revival of Islamic faith. Along with its moderate and traditional forms, radical and militant Islam has infiltrated communities of Muslims in Central Asia. Alarmed by the border incursions, sporadic terrorist violence and religious anti-governmental campaign, the leadership of the Central Asian states adopted extensive measures against radical Islam and intensified counterterrorism policies.

Traditionally, the Kyrgyz government exhibited a softer, more lenient approach toward radical Islam. Since recently, however, the republic's vigorous counterterrorism responses have become to resemble policies of other Central Asian states. According to regional security experts, the threat of terrorism, religious extremism and Islamic insurgency in Central Asia is far less critical than it has been officially proclaimed.<sup>1</sup> In spite of this, the Kyrgyz authorities continue to harden the republic's security responses stomping on a wide range of religious and political freedoms under the pretext of fighting terrorism. What explains Kyrgyzstan's counterterrorism policies and measures targeting Islamic radicalism?

Contrary to other approaches to counterterrorism that emphasize domestic determinants of state's measures aimed at combating terrorism, this study underscores the importance of international setting that shapes the governments' choices of counterterrorism policies and responses. I develop a theoretical framework for explaining states' responses to terrorism that not only systematizes the mechanisms of international and domestic influence but also integrates instrumental, expressive, and psychological motives of policy-making.

It is my contention that Kyrgyzstan's increasingly repressive approach to national security is a part of a broader process of convergence of counterterrorism policies and measures targeting religious extremism adopted by the Central Asian states and their neighbors. The three mechanisms that lie at the roots of this process are direct coercive transfer, harmonization of security policies, and emulation of counterterrorism responses. As a small landlocked state dependent on its neighbors for access to the outside world and supply of natural resources Kyrgyzstan has been vulnerable to the coercive transfer of counterterrorism policies ensuing from external pressures of powerful states, particularly, Russia, Uzbekistan, and China. As a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation organization (SCO) established to cope with trans-national security threats, Kyrgyzstan has been compelled to

harmonize its security legislation and institutions with those of the CSTO and SCO. Lacking sufficient knowledge, experience and expertise for addressing security problems, the Kyrgyz leadership chose to emulate practices of similar and geographically proximate states perceived as successful in limiting the spread of terrorism and Islamic radicalism.

The study begins with an overview of alternative approaches to studying counterterrorism followed by a description of the theoretical foundations of policy transfer and convergence. The next three sections examine direct coercive transfer, harmonization, and emulation of different aspects of Kyrgyzstan's counterterrorism policy. In section three, I survey the Kyrgyz officials' views on the nature of terrorist threat and examine how their understanding of terrorism has evolved under the influence of Kyrgyzstan's neighbors. Next, I analyze how Kyrgyzstan's participation in regional organizations spearheaded by Russia, China, and bolstered by other Central Asian states has affected the legislative and institutional frameworks of Kyrgyzstan's counterterrorism responses. Finally, I illustrate how the powerful states of the region have influenced Kyrgyzstan's human rights practices in the context of "war on terrorism".

### **Explaining Counterterrorism**

The academic interest in studying counterterrorism has exploded recently triggered by terrorist attacks in New York, Madrid, and London, and ongoing instability in the Middle East and other parts of the world. A volume of studies of states' approaches to the threat of terrorism as well as counterterrorism efforts of international organizations has provided invaluable knowledge about the individual governments' experiences with terrorism, and advanced our understanding of factors affecting counterterrorism policies.<sup>2</sup>

It has been common to classify the existing explanations of states' behavior in one of the two competing analytical paradigms, namely Rationalism and Constructivism.<sup>3</sup> Rationalism explains states' policies in functional terms as a product of utility maximization - the actor performs an action if the costs associated with enacting it do not exceed the expected benefits from the action.<sup>4</sup> In a broader sense, Rationalism focuses on goal-seeking as a source of state behavior. According to this axiom, the magnitude of terrorist violence and national capabilities determine the scope of states' responses to terrorism. These two variables have been widely regarded as decisive factors affecting states' counterterrorism measures.<sup>5</sup>

Constructivist theories focus on the social construction of politics. Whereas in rationalist explanations state actors behave autonomously, driven by their egoistic definition of state interest, in constructivist accounts, states act as social actors whose interests and identities are shaped by commonly held ideas, norms, knowledge, and culture.<sup>6</sup> A number of studies of states' counterterrorism policies have underscored the historical and cultural-institutional context of policy making, and the constructed identity of states as determinants of national security policies.<sup>7</sup>

The scholarship has also spawned perception-based explanations of states' counterterrorism measures in which the states' choices of counterterrorism policies are shaped by the governments' perceptions of terrorism.<sup>8</sup> By perceiving terrorism as a type of criminal offence, the state confines its counterterrorism responses to the prescribed rules of law and the prerogatives of due process. By perceiving terrorist attacks as acts of war, the state relies on the institutions, rules, strategies, and tactics used in the wartime.<sup>9</sup>

The rationalist, constructivist, and perception-based approaches to states' counterterrorism responses taken in isolation are limited in providing a comprehensive account of the states' choices of counterterrorism measures. The interest-based explanations tend to sacrifice a nuanced understanding of the nature of terrorist threat and appropriate responses to it in favor of parsimonious accounts of how states respond to objective levels of terrorist violence. In other words, Rationalism assumes that states respond to threats by using the most cost-effective means but it does not explain why the assessment of similar levels of threat associated with terrorism varies across states, and how the governments' understanding of the "menu" of all available responses to terrorism is formed.

Many constructivist accounts lack the description of mechanisms and scope conditions explicating how and why policy-makers look at security issues through the lens of culture or social norms as far as perceiving, reasoning, and responding to security problems is concerned. Perception-based explanations, on the other hand, don't make explicit the micro-foundations of the processes of perception formation. Neither do they enumerate the factors that account for differences in governments' perceptions of terrorism. Another weakness shared by many rationalist, constructivism, and perception-based explanations of counterterrorism is that they tend to ascribe considerable autonomy and initiative in policy making to domestic forces at the neglect of international influences, and are inclined to privilege either methodological individualism or the social context as sources of state action.

In this study, I develop an integrative theoretical framework for explaining states' responses to terrorism that combines international and domestic determinants of counterterrorism and systematizes instrumental, expressive, and psychological sources of policy-making. It is my contention that by nesting domestic processes within a larger international setting and studying the interplay of strategic behavior with non-instrumental goals of policy-making our understanding of how states form their views on the terrorist threats and devise their counterterrorism policies can be considerably improved.

### **Coercion, Harmonization, and Emulation: the Mechanisms of Counterterrorism Policy Formation**

It has been noticed that policy-making is "an extraordinary imitative art"<sup>10</sup> displaying a natural tendency of individuals and states to borrow and adopt other societies' processes, structures, and ideas. This observation is premised on the belief that actions of other social actors can be instructive to individuals in defining and acting upon their own internal drives and needs. A growing number of studies have underscored the importance of social context in which individuals and states operate, and demonstrated how cross-national practices are having increasingly powerful effects on policy-making processes at home.<sup>11</sup> In this research, I show that counterterrorism policies and practices of individual states are also prone to international influence. The three mechanisms that underlie this process are direct coercive transfer, harmonization of security policies, and emulation of counterterrorism responses.

The notion of the coercive transfer, also known as "penetration",<sup>12</sup> "external inducement",<sup>13</sup> and direct coercive transfer<sup>14</sup> describes external pressures applied by various international actors to achieve homogeneity of states' policies, programs, or

responses.<sup>15</sup> At the root of the coercive transfer is a dependency of some states on others with more power and higher status in the international system. In a global economy, for example, the poorer countries of the world have been dependent on affluent states and international institutions for the provision of monetary assistance. The governments of impoverished states have been compelled to adopt structural reforms prescribed by the international donors to secure the much needed financial and political support.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, in the realm of security, those states, which national security has been dependent on others, may accede to security measures imposed by other states in order to secure material benefits, such as military assistance or political and economic support, or to avoid punishments mediated by others.

Convergence of security policies through harmonization is triggered by trans-nationalisation of security problems that necessitate the development of joint security responses to common cross-border concerns. It is typically spearheaded by international security organizations, which facilitate the adoption and monitor the implementation of transnational security programs. To be able to enjoy the benefits of harmonization that follow from the membership in an international organization or affiliation with a state or a group of states, governments bring their domestic legislation and practices in conformance with security measures and standards of these groups and organizations.

Contrary to coercive transfer and harmonization, which both contain an element of imposition of foreign policy models by various external forces, emulation denotes a voluntary goal-oriented effort of a state to borrow and adopt overseas policy approaches, tools or institutions. The lack of knowledge about effective ways of addressing a policy problem is, typically, a trigger of policy emulation, which helps the decision-makers to cope with ambiguities concerning the success of their policy choices.<sup>17</sup> It also assists in sorting out various policy options since the spectrum of alternatives can be too large for rationally-bounded decision-makers to weight each of them.<sup>18</sup>

Numerous policy models are typically available for emulation. A government is more likely to turn to the policies of those states which are perceived as similar to the borrowing state in some important ways and geographically proximate.<sup>19</sup> States sharing social, political and institutional characteristics that are salient to the borrowing state are more likely to be perceived as appropriate models for emulation.<sup>20</sup> Since geographical proximity increases familiarity and decreases informational costs, neighbouring states are often looked first for policy emulation.<sup>21</sup> In addition to the “social psychological” and geographic proximity, other factors, such as prominence, status, and prestige also influence governments’ decisions about emulation.<sup>22</sup>

It is the expectation of this study that the interplay of the defined processes - direct coercive transfer, harmonization, and emulation – explains the convergence of counterterrorism policies of the Central Asian states, in general, and the transfer of counterterrorism policies in Kyrgyzstan, in particular. Counterterrorism, in its turn, is a complex multidimensional phenomenon encompassing a wide range of legislative, administrative, diplomatic, military, and other measures and concomitant institutions working to prevent and deter the threat of terrorism. To make a vast array of measures and agencies available for fighting terrorism suitable for systematic cross-national analysis, it is important to define which aspects of counterterrorism policy are being compared across states. For the purpose of this study, I, first, examine how the Central

Asian governments define the nature of terrorism that counterterrorism policy seeks to prevent. Second, I explore official manifestations of counterterrorism policies in the form of laws, decrees, and regulations, as well as institutional tools for policy administration established in the Central Asian republics. Finally, I compare the “style” of counterterrorism responses, which denotes the balance of punitive and preventive measures and the degree of respect for human rights in the context of struggle against terrorism.

A brief note on the methodology of analysis warrants inclusion. To establish convergence of security measures of the Central Asian states, it will not be enough to simply demonstrate the similarity of their counterterrorism policies that may arise for non-comparative reasons. Each of the identified processes of policy transfer has a distinct underlying “logic” – coercion is based on a dependency of one state on others for realizing its goals; transnationalisation of global problems and interdependency of means for their resolution is the basis of harmonization; while policy emulation is triggered by uncertainty and bounded rationality accompanying a search for effective and efficient ways of addressing policy issues. Thus, the demonstration of individual processes of policy convergence will require the establishment of different empirical conditions.

To establish convergence through coercive transfer, it will be necessary to show that stability and security of one state is dependent on practices and policies of others, who use this dependency as leverage to push for modification of policies in the dependent state. Instrumental considerations must underlie the adoption of external counterterrorism models. In other words, the government of a borrowing state should believe that compliance with other states’ policies is beneficial to the state, while defiance is detrimental for realization of its security goals.

The process of harmonization can be inferred from the government’s express recognition of interdependency of security problems, the significance of mutual efforts for addressing security concerns, and the existence of international institutions for advancing the multi-lateral security measures. The emulation of security policies can be established by demonstrating the expressed uncertainty about the ways to approach a policy task and references to experiences and expertise of other states. The latter should be viewed as similar to the borrowing state, geographically proximate, and successful in coping with security problems.

Since it is the policy makers who become directly involved in the policy transfer, the state’s policies need to be considered in the context of their actions and discourse. I will examine political elite’s speeches, statements and other evidence accompanying their political decisions concerning the formulation, implementation, and modification of the state’s counterterrorism policies. In Kyrgyzstan, public and foreign policy has been decisively shaped by the president in tandem with a small circle of elites in foreign ministry and presidential apparatus, which has been tightly controlled by the regime.<sup>23</sup> Until recently, the Kyrgyz parliament has been largely sidetracked in its power of public and foreign policy making. Therefore, in the study of Kyrgyzstan, the president’s statements and documents issued by the presidential apparatus will be the primary sources of data. The communiqués of the “power ministers” will also be analyzed to establish the government’s perspectives on different aspects of Kyrgyzstan’s counterterrorism program. This information will be supplemented with careful content

analysis of the legislative acts, regulations and the artefacts of meetings of the public officials.

### **Convergence of Views on the Nature and Magnitude of Terrorist Threat in Central Asia**

The threat of terrorism in Central Asia has traditionally been associated with activities of Islamist movements in the region. Radical Islamic groups have been a major challenge to the secular rule of the Uzbek President, Islam Karimov, since Uzbekistan's independence. In Tajikistan, too, Islamists who fought against governmental forces in the 1992-97 civil war have been viewed as the principle security threat and challenge to the governing regime. The governments of both states have blamed radical Islamic groups for all incidents of political violence in their countries. In contrast, during the 1990s in Kyrgyzstan, the public authorities believed that their state, where Islam has traditionally had a less profound influence on the social and political life, provided poor soil for Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism. In an interview to a Russian newspaper, the first Kyrgyz president, Askar Akaev, plainly stated, "If I don't have a real problem of religious extremism, why would I create an artificial one?"<sup>24</sup>

Following the February 1999 bombings that targeted key government buildings in the center of Uzbekistan's capital, president Islam Karimov assailed radical Islamic groups for what the authorities called "terrorist" attacks. Since then, the label of terrorism has been routinely used in connection with any activity within unofficial Islam in Uzbekistan. The Tajik leadership, too, appropriated the terrorist terminology in reference to the remnants of Islamic military underground. Similarly to the governments of other Central Asian states, the leaders of Kyrgyzstan declared terrorism as a threat to the republic's security and began treating all forms of political and social activity within Islam as manifestations of fundamentalism and a prelude to religious and political conflict.

Undeniably, Islamist incursions and sporadic attacks have raised concerns of the Kyrgyz officials about the extent of threat posed by radical Islam in Kyrgyzstan. In the summer of 1999, for example, the armed militants of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)<sup>25</sup> crossed into Kyrgyzstan taking a number of hostages, including foreign citizens. The following year, the Islamists' attempts to penetrate the territory of Kyrgyzstan resulted in clashes with the Kyrgyz military forces. The overthrow of the Taliban regime and the destruction of Al-Qaeda strongholds in Afghanistan severely weakened the IMU. Other Islamist groups have been able to gain only marginal public support, particularly in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan. Although, the threat of terrorism, religious extremism, and low-scale insurgency continues to persist in Central Asia, the Kyrgyz leaders' interpretations and reactions to this threat mismatch the objective levels of violence in the republic and region.

Kyrgyzstan's neighbours have always exerted strong impact on the republic's views, policies, and conduct. Kyrgyzstan is the second-smallest state of the Central Asian region. It is squeezed between two giants: Kazakhstan to its north and China to its south-east. To its west, Kyrgyzstan shares a common border with Uzbekistan, the most militarily advanced Central Asian nation. Devoid of energy resources, Kyrgyzstan relies on its oil and gas-rich neighbours for the sale of fuels. A landlocked state, Kyrgyzstan depends on Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan for access to the outside world. To



avoid interruptions in the fuels supply and transit of air and ground vehicles, Kyrgyzstan has made frequent concessions to the governments of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.<sup>26</sup>

Uzbekistan has been the foremost exponent of a view stressing the dangers of radical Islam and a champion of vigorous counterterrorism responses in Central Asia. Following the 1999 raids of the IMU militants, the Uzbek authorities were particularly disgruntled with the Kyrgyz government's playing down the Islamist threat, while Uzbekistan's security forces harshly criticized their Kyrgyz counterparts for passivity in coping with the crisis.<sup>27</sup> President Karimov exercised pressure on the government of Kyrgyzstan forcing its authorities to adopt stricter counterterrorism measures.

The new Kyrgyz administration appears to be interested in intensifying counterterrorism cooperation with Uzbekistan. The Kyrgyz and Uzbek presidents and security officials held talks in which they decided to join forces in fighting terrorism and extremism. Kyrgyzstan's reports of the IMU activity and the growing threat of Islamic radicalism in the country appeared at a time of thaw in the relations between the two Central Asian republics. Another sign of Uzbek influence on Kyrgyzstan's views of the terrorist problem is the tendency of the Kyrgyz officials to conflate Hizb ut-Tahrir, a radical Islamic group that has not been implicated in violence in the region, with the IMU, a terrorist organization with ties to Al-Qaeda.<sup>28</sup>

The Russian government, too, has raised concerns with religious extremism and terrorism in Central Asia. The speeches and statements of the Russian leaders and documents adopted within the framework of Russia-led organizations have stressed dangers arising from activities of Islamists in the Central Asian states. Kyrgyzstan's political stability, security, and economic performance have been largely affected by the extent of the Russian political support, security assistance, and economic protection.<sup>29</sup> Such dependency has left Kyrgyzstan with no other option but to take into consideration Moscow's interests in its domestic and international affairs. Kyrgyzstan's counterterrorism policy, too, has generally dovetailed Moscow's security policies and priorities for security cooperation in the region.

Anti-Islamic sentiments find a great deal of support in the mainland China. The Chinese government has long been battling the East Turkistan Liberation Organization, a group of ethnic Uighurs, the Muslims of Turkic decent. The group resides in the north-western region of China and seeks to establish an independent state. The Chinese officials have been keen to bolster the view equating terrorism with Islamist movements in Central Asia. Under the pretext of fighting Islamism and terrorism, China has pressured the Central Asian states to crackdown on Uighurs and to forcefully return the asylum seekers of the Uighur descent to China.

The government of Kyrgyzstan has always recognized the transnational character of its security concerns and limited national capabilities to cope with security threats on its own. Subsequently, it sought active collaboration with regional organizations set up to address those security concerns. Kyrgyzstan's participation in the regional security arrangements required harmonization of its views on regional security threats.

The Anti-Terrorism Center established in 2000 under the auspices of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) requested the Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Tajik authorities to submit courts' decisions recognizing the IMU, Hizb ut-Tahrir, and other Islamist groupings as terrorist or extremist organizations. These courts' decisions were used for preparing a single roster of terrorist and extremist groups operating in the CIS. In

2003, the Supreme Court of the Kyrgyz Republic issued a ban on several Islamic groups from the list. Hizb ut-Tahrir and the IMU (also known as the Islamic Party of Turkestan, the East Turkestan Liberation Organization and the East Turkestan Islamic Party) were declared terrorist.<sup>30</sup>

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a regional security forum uniting Russia, China, and Central Asian states, has also contributed to the locally-bounded understanding of terrorism. The SCO member states do not view terrorism as a distinct abstract phenomenon with global relevance. Instead, for the SCO terrorism is “locally defined by the ruling elite and left to sovereign states to combat by any means they see fit”.<sup>31</sup> The governments of the SCO member states accept each others’ understandings of security concerns. For the Central Asia states, it is religious extremism and terrorism, for Russia – Chechen separatism, and for China – Uighur secessionist movement. All SCO members are expected to support the combat of other member-states with the perceived threats to their national security.

### **Convergence of Legislative and Institutional Frameworks for Fighting Terrorism**

During the 1990s, fighting terrorism was a low priority for the Kyrgyz government. The republic had no counterterrorism legislation and the only act that alluded to terrorism was Kyrgyzstan’s Penal Code. Adopted in 1997, the Penal Code criminalized terrorism and a number of illegal activities that could lead to the perpetration of terrorist attacks.<sup>32</sup> The definition of terrorism repeated the language of terrorist crime contained in Russia’s 1996 Criminal Code. In 1999, the Kyrgyz Parliament approved a law on combating terrorism that resembled the Russian act on measures to combat terrorism adopted a year earlier. The Kyrgyz law established counterterrorism agencies with functions and authorities similar to their Russian counterparts. As in the Russian Federation, the primary responsibility for combating terrorism in Kyrgyzstan lies with the National Security Service, a successor of Soviet Kyrgyzia’s KGB. In preparing and carrying out counterterrorism operations, the Kyrgyz National Security Service cooperates with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, the Security Council of Kyrgyzstan, the Office of the Prosecutor General, the Border Service and other government structures.<sup>33</sup>

After independence, the national security agencies of Kyrgyzstan were understuffed with specialists with expertise in counterterrorism, and severely under-funded. The republic lacked a national army. According to Kyrgyzstan-Russia security agreements, the Russian military forces safeguarded the republic’s security interests, while the Russian border guards patrolled the Kyrgyz border.<sup>34</sup> The Russian military establishments provided education and training for the Kyrgyz servicemen, while the Russian military-industrial complex supplied arms, military equipment, and gear. On several occasions, the former President of Kyrgyzstan, Askar Akaev, stated that only Russia could guarantee stability and security in the Central Asian region.<sup>35</sup> The rhetoric of the current Kyrgyz leadership suggests that many in the Bakiev’s government feel Russia, more so than the United States or any other state, is willing and able to provide the desired level of security and political support to the governing regime, and economic assistance to the country. It is not surprising, then, that the Kyrgyz government has often looked up to Russia in devising its policies, establishing institutions, and even building relations with other states.

Bishkek had its eyes glued on Moscow, yet, for another reason. The old political leadership of Kyrgyzstan as well as the new political leaders that replaced Akaev's political protégés were members of the Soviet political elite.<sup>36</sup> The senior officer corps in Kyrgyzstan served in the Soviet Army and, according to the military analysts, the command of the Kyrgyz military forces has been affected by the "soviet thinking".<sup>37</sup> The common Soviet roots and familiarity with the Russian/Soviet thinking created a strong foundation for emulation of Russia's policies in Kyrgyzstan. That was reinforced by the perceived cultural, ideological, and value similarity of the two states, as well as their historical and geographical connection.<sup>38</sup> The former Kyrgyz President, Askar Akaev, reinforced this view by noting that the centuries of back-to-back existence on the Eurasian space, the similarity of national characters, histories and aspirations laid down a solid foundation for the union of Russia and Kyrgyzstan.<sup>39</sup> Many Kyrgyz share with the former president this fondness of Russia. In a survey conducted by the InterMedia Survey Institute (Washington, DC) on a random sample of 1,000 citizens of Kyrgyzstan, almost 92% of respondents expressed positive attitude toward Russia. Only the youth in Kyrgyzstan has been increasingly oriented toward the West.<sup>40</sup> There are many public officials, particularly those in the security circles, and the Kyrgyz intelligentsia clustered around the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University, who sympathize with Russia.<sup>41</sup>

Kyrgyzstan has been one of the most stalwart supporters of the Russia-led regional organizations founded on the post-Soviet space. Security problems in the neighbouring states furthered its interest in strengthening the existing regional security arrangements. Active collaboration on security issues with the CIS, SCO, and the bordering states induced harmonization of Kyrgyzstan's counterterrorism measures with policies adopted by the regional security organizations.

After the OSCE Istanbul summit of 1999 that highlighted the importance of regional and global cooperation in coping with the threat of international terrorism, the CIS Heads of States adopted a series of documents related to the implementation of joint measures for combating international terrorism. Among those documents were the 1999 Treaty on Cooperation between the CIS Members in Combating Terrorism and the Program of CIS Member States to Combat International Terrorism and Other Forms of Extremism up to the Year 2003.<sup>42</sup> In 2004, the CIS member states developed the concept of the Program to Combat International Terrorism and Other Forms of Extremism for 2005-07 and adopted the Program of Joint Measures to Combat International Crime for 2005-07.<sup>43</sup> The Kyrgyz government devised national plans for the implementation of the CIS counterterrorism treaties and programs.<sup>44</sup>

By joining the CIS counterterrorism conventions and signing bilateral and regional agreements with Russia, China, and Central Asian states, Kyrgyzstan transposed counterterrorism provisions contained in the international legislation into the Kyrgyz domestic law.<sup>45</sup> The Kyrgyz parliament, for example, increased penalties for certain types of crimes related to terrorism and criminalized terrorism-related activities. This was done with the view of harmonizing Kyrgyzstan's legislation with that of its neighbours and in compliance with agreements it acceded to.<sup>46</sup>

The signed agreements propelled the creation of regional structures for carrying out the joint measures aimed at combating terrorism and religious extremism. In the summer of 2000, the CIS member states, at Russia's initiative, decided to establish a CIS Anti-Terrorist Center (ATC) with headquarters in Moscow. A year latter, the CIS Heads

of States supported Putin's idea of a Central Asian branch of the CIS ATC. In January 2002, a structural subdivision of the ATC was opened in Bishkek. It is also in Bishkek that the Russian President has chosen to establish the headquarters of the CIS rapid-deployment forces created within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

The member states of the CSTO and SCO can purchase the Russian-made military hardware and gear at the lower costs that increases interoperability of the Russian and Central Asian forces. This also encourages joint exercises and training under the aegis of the CIS, CSTO, and SCO. The Kyrgyz law enforcement authorities took part in numerous CIS-staged operations – “Arsenal,” “Border,” “Passenger,” “Traffic,” “Alien,” and others - aimed at preventing and suppressing terrorist attacks and activities of transnational criminal groups. The Kyrgyz military participated in the CIS Anti-Terrorism Center joint command-post exercises “Commonwealth-2000 Southern Shield,” “South – Anti-terror-2002,” “Azov – Antiterror – 2003,” and others. In 2004, Kyrgyzstan hosted the CSTO rapid-deployment forces exercise “Rubezh 2004,” and sent its troops for participation in similar exercises in 2005-07.

Thus, the legislative and institutional contours of the Kyrgyz counterterrorism program, as well as concrete measures aimed at combating terrorism have been developed through the processes of emulation and harmonization of Kyrgyzstan's counterterrorism policy with that of regional organizations and neighbouring states. The Kyrgyz counterterrorism legislation mimics Russia's counterterrorism laws and model legislation adopted within the CIS and SCO frameworks. The structure and authority of the Kyrgyz counterterrorism agencies resembles the neighbours' counterterrorism institutions.

### **Human Rights and Counterterrorism: Convergence in the “Style” of Counterterrorism Responses**

In the 1990s, Kyrgyzstan exhibited more lenient and conciliatory approach toward radical Islamic groups. Explaining this position on radical Islam, the former Kyrgyz president, Askar Akaev, alluded to tolerance of the Kyrgyz and inadmissibility of the use of force against his own people.<sup>47</sup> In practice, caught for the first time, members of radical Islamic groups used to receive police warnings and fines, while the subsequent detentions could lead to the short- or medium-term imprisonment. Islamists were charged for incitement of religious and ethnic strife, a minor offence compared to terrorism-related charges.<sup>48</sup> In comparison, in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, members of radical Islamic groups received up to 15 years of imprisonment for distribution and possession of anti-government materials, and tried for attempts to topple the government and other grave crimes against state.<sup>49</sup>

Following the general crackdown on radical Islam in the region, the government of Kyrgyzstan, too, has undertaken vigorous steps to track down Islamists and halt the spread of radical Islam. The Kyrgyz courts began handing down harsher sentences, and the number of cases of detention has been on the rise.<sup>50</sup> There have been numerous complaints about violations of detainees' rights, falsification of charges, and torture of prisoners in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>51</sup>

Uzbekistan was a fervent critic of Kyrgyzstan's lenient approach to radical Islamic groups. The Uzbek air forces bombed the Kyrgyz villages under the pretext of destroying the IMU targets in response to Kyrgyzstan's ineptness to stop the advance of

the IMU militants in 1999. Following the Islamists' incursions and subsequent areal attacks by the Uzbek troops, Uzbekistan's security forces received carte blanche to pursue Islamists in the territory of Kyrgyzstan.<sup>52</sup> Uzbekistan's spies have carried out videotaping in the Kyrgyz mosques and detained and interrogated the Kyrgyz citizens.<sup>53</sup> Commenting on activities of the Uzbek secret services in Kyrgyzstan, the Kyrgyz authorities lamented that as a small country Kyrgyzstan could not do much when a larger neighbour behaved as Uzbekistan did in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>54</sup>

The Uzbek government exploited its exclusive right to gas supply to Kyrgyzstan to exert further concessions from the Kyrgyz government. For example, following Kyrgyzstan's refusal to send Andijon refugees back to Uzbekistan (a decision made under international pressure), the Uzbek authorities cut off gas shipments to the republic. Under the pressure from the Uzbek authorities, the Kyrgyz military units joined security forces of Uzbekistan in the raids on the alleged bands of terrorists in Kyrgyzstan. The new Kyrgyz administration allowed the Uzbek secret service to conduct its operations in the country, including occasional abductions and forced repatriation of Islamic activists.<sup>55</sup>

The government of China has been exerting strong influence over the Central Asian states in dealing with Uighurs. In a series of trials, which observers labelled as politically motivated, the Kyrgyz courts sentenced Uighur defendants for terrorist bombings and attempts to set up a branch of the Uighur separatist movement in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>56</sup> Bowing to pressure from the Chinese officials, the government of Kyrgyzstan suppressed any support to the Uighurs. In 2005, Kyrgyzstan approved a new law on counteracting extremist activity. According to experts, China pushed the Kyrgyz government into the adoption of this piece of anti-extremist legislation.<sup>57</sup> The law contains a very broad definition of extremism allowing for prosecution of activists from various Islamic groups operating in the country.

There is little doubt that the Kyrgyz leadership, similarly to the ruling elites of other Central Asian states, has taken advantage of the novel context of the "war on terrorism" for its own interests: to put increasing pressure on the oppositional forces and to fortify power of the governing regime. In much of this, the international community has been passively complicit. Neither Russian, nor Chinese, or American assistance to Kyrgyzstan has been conditioned by progress in the area of human rights. Only international human rights organizations put forward scathing criticism of the Central Asian governments' increasingly authoritarian style of counterterrorism responses. The governing elites have exploited the context of the global "war on terrorism", as well as the fear of Islamic extremism, to justify and intensify their suppression of dissent, without much concern about international condemnation.<sup>58</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In this study I attempted to demonstrate that international environment strongly influences the content of security policies of individual states. I suggested an integrative theoretical framework that included coercion, humanization, and emulation as mechanisms of international influence and policy transfer, and used this framework for explaining Kyrgyzstan's responses to terrorism and convergence of counterterrorism policies in Central Asia.

Kyrgyzstan's dependency on Russia, China, and other Central Asian states made it vulnerable to the coercive transfer of security policies and perspectives of the more

powerful neighbours. Under the mounting pressure from the government of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan began treating all manifestations of unofficial Islam as security threats associated with religious extremism and terrorism. The Russian and Chinese officials have reinforced this position. Despite the limited evidence of the risks of terrorism in Kyrgyzstan, its public authorities hold on to a view that radical Islamic groups remain the primary threat to the republic's security, and Kyrgyzstan's security forces direct their counterterrorism efforts toward the elimination of Islamists.

Since Kyrgyzstan's security has been tightly intertwined with safety and stability of other states in the region, the Kyrgyz government has been compelled to take part in the regional security arrangements. The transnationalisation of security threats and interdependency of security policies of the Central Asian states created a basis for harmonization of their counterterrorism responses. Through the membership in the CIS and SCO, Kyrgyzstan translated into its domestic legislation and practices counterterrorism measures promoted by these groups of states. Various security agreements signed by Russia, China, and the Central Asian republics laid juridical grounds to demand from the Kyrgyz government that it takes decisive steps to prevent the recruitment of individuals for terrorist activities in other states. The Kyrgyz government intensified prosecution of Islamists and became implicated in the increasing number of human rights violations in the name of combating terrorism. The punitive and military aspects of struggle against terrorism have been brought to the fore of Kyrgyzstan's counterterrorism program, as it has been the case with the counterterrorism policies of Kyrgyzstan's neighbours.

Kyrgyzstan has been susceptible to the influence of Russia, China, and the Central Asian states, yet, for another reason. The Kyrgyz leadership chose to emulate the policies of closest, in a geographical sense, states, whose political styles, mentality, and strategies originate from the common Soviet past. Amidst political and social instability, as well as uncertainty concerning the most effective ways to tackle security threats, the Kyrgyz leadership has turned to the most familiar others. The counterterrorism practices in the neighbouring states reinforced Kyrgyzstan's belief in the acceptability of the use force. The perception of impunity for slighting human rights in the "war on terrorism" has been an important factor in intensification of Kyrgyzstan's counterterrorism responses.

The explanations advanced in this study promote a worldview emphasizing the impact of international environment on policies and behaviour of individual states. In this framework, states are treated as social actors whose actions express not only individual but also collective intentionality. Other states, organizations, and institutions affect the governments' understanding of security threats, as well as their views on the acceptability, legitimacy, and appropriateness of responses. These explanations are different from the dominant rationalist accounts of state behaviour that explain states' security policies by referencing the magnitude of threat and states' capabilities to combat it. I explain states' perceptions of security threats and their counterterrorism policies through social context, where the social groups of states determine much of behavior of other actors. This position is common to the burgeoning constructivist studies and literature on policy transfer. Yet, contrary to the constructivist approaches, this study suggests a framework describing the mechanisms of different types of international influence on states' policies and behavior.

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<sup>6</sup> M. Finnemore and K. Sikkink, "Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics," *Annual Review of Political Science* 4, no. 3 (2001): 391-416.

<sup>7</sup> J. Hocking, *Terror Laws: ASIO, Counter-Terrorism and the Threat to Democracy* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2004); B. Hoffman, "Is Europe Soft on Terrorism?" *Foreign Policy*, no. 115 (1999): 62-76; A. Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture." *International Security* 19, no.4 (1995): 32-64; P. Katzenstein, ed. *The Culture of National Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); T. Miyaoka, "Terrorist Crisis Management in Japan: Historical Development and Changing Response (1979-1997)." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 10, no.2 (1998): 23-53; A. Pedahzur and M. Ranstorp, "A Tertiary Model for Countering Terrorism in Liberal Democracies: The Case of Israel," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13, no.2 (2001): 1-27; W. Rees and R. Aldrich, "Contending Cultures of Counterterrorism: Transatlantic Divergence or Convergence?" *International Affairs* 81, no.5 (2005): 905-923.



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<sup>8</sup> R. Crelinsten, "Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism and Democracy: The Assessment of National Security Threats," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 1, no.2 (1989): 242-269; A. Oliverio, *The State of Terror* (Albany: SUNY, 1998).

<sup>9</sup> Crelinsten 1989 (fn. 8).

<sup>10</sup> H. M. Leichter, "Comparative Public Policy: Problems and Prospects," *Policy Studies Journal* 5, no.1 (1997): 588.

<sup>11</sup> There is a laundry list of concepts and a profusion of models that have been used to describe a process in which policies, ideas and institutions in some states become the exemplars for policies, processes and institutions in other states (for further discussion, see C.J. Bennett. "What is Policy Convergence and What Causes it?" *British Journal of Political Science* 21, no. 2 (1991): 215-223; D. Dolowitz and D. Marsh, "Who Learns What from Whom: a Review of the Policy Transfer Literature," *Political Studies* XLIV (1996): 343-357; and K. Weyland, "Theories of Policy Diffusion: Lessons from Latin American Pension Reform," *World Politics* 57, no. 2 (2005): 262-295. This study does not aim to delve into the subtleties of the nomenclature of terms. It utilizes the term "convergence" to denote various patterns of increasing institutional, operational and normative similarity across states.

<sup>12</sup> Bennett 1991 (fn. 11), 227-228.

<sup>13</sup> C.J. Ikenberry, "The International Spread of Privatization Policies: Inducements, Learning and 'Policy Bandwagoning'", in E. Suleiman and J. Waterbury, eds. *The Political Economy of Public Sector Reform and Privatization* (Bolder, CO: Westview Press, 1990).

<sup>14</sup> Dolowitz and Marsh 1996 (fn.11), 347.

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<sup>15</sup> P.J. DiMaggio and W.W. Powell, “The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields,” *American Sociological Review* 48, no. 2 (1983).

<sup>16</sup> Dolowitz and Marsh 1996 (fn. 11), 348.

<sup>17</sup> W.J. Henisz, B.A. Zelner and M.F. Guillén, “International Coercion, Emulation, and Policy Diffusion: Market-Oriented Infrastructure Reforms, 1977-1999,” Working paper of the Reginald H. Jones Center. The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania (2004).

<sup>18</sup> DiMaggio and Powell 1983 (fn. 15).

<sup>19</sup> C.Z. Mooney, “Modelling Regional Effects on State Policy Diffusion,” *Political Research Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (2001).

<sup>20</sup> A. Brown, “Transnational Influences in the Transition from Communism,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 16, no. 2 (2000): 186; R. Rose, *Lesson-Drawing in Public Policy: a Guide to Learning Across Time and Space* (Chatham NJ: Chatham House, 1993); F. Weil, “The Development of Democratic Attitudes in Eastern and Western Germany in a Comparative Perspective,” in F. Weil, ed. *Research on Democracy and Society: Democratization in Eastern and Western Europe*, Vol.1 (Greenwich CT: JAI Press, 1993), 195–225.

<sup>21</sup> S.W. Rivera, “Elites and the Diffusion of Foreign Models in Russia,” *Political Studies* 52, no. 1 (2004), 43-62.

<sup>22</sup> Weil 1993 (fn. 20), 198; K. Weyland. “Learning from Foreign Models in Latin American Policy Reform: an Introduction,” in K. Weyland, ed. *Learning from Foreign Models in Latin American Policy Reform* (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2004), 11.

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<sup>23</sup> T. Wood, “Kyrgyzstan’s Place in the World.” Paper presented at the TOSCCA Workshop: Kyrgyzstan at the Crossroads, Oxford, 3-4 March (2006).

<sup>24</sup> I. Rotar, Interview with A. Akaev. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 15 July (1999), 2; G. Saidazimova, “Kyrgyz-Uzbek Authorities Battle Religious Dissent,” RFE/RL 11 August (2006). <http://www.res.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?ID=16514&nav1=1&nav2=1&nav3=0> (accessed 4 July 2007).

<sup>25</sup> The IMU is a terrorist organization infamous for a series of terrorist attacks and raids in Central Asia and implicated in ties with the Taliban and al-Qaeda networks.

<sup>26</sup> I. Grebenshchikov, “Central Asian Pawn,” *Reporting Central Asia*, 17 November (2000). [http://iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=162731&apc\\_state=henirca2000](http://iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=162731&apc_state=henirca2000) (accessed 3 July 2007).

<sup>27</sup> L. Jonson, “The Security Dimension of Russia’s Policy in South Central Asia,” in G. Gorodetsky, ed. *Russia between East and West: Russian Foreign Policy on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century* (London & New York: Frank Cass, 2003), 143.

<sup>28</sup> D. Kimmage, “Extremist Threats, and Doubts, in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan,” RFE/RL 24 July (2006). <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/07/212f8957-a0bf-4963-aacb-0efe6fbf28a5.html> (accessed 11 March 2008).

<sup>29</sup> As of 2003, Kyrgyzstan’s principal debt to Russia was over US\$183 million (L. Saralaeva, “Russia Offers Kyrgyzstan a Hand,” RCA, No.410, 17 September 17 (2005). [http://www.iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=255822&apc\\_state=henirca2005](http://www.iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=255822&apc_state=henirca2005) (accessed July 4, 2007). The restructuring of multi-million dollar debt of Kyrgyzstan to Russia has been a top priority of Kyrgyzstan’s leadership. According to the estimates of the Central Asian analysts, Gazprom, Russia’s state-controlled natural gas monopoly, owns 90 percent of the petroleum-product market in Kyrgyzstan (B. Pannier, “Gazprom Works to Advance Russia’s Interests in Central Asia,” RFE/RL 19 October (2008).

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<sup>30</sup> A. Aslanbekova, “Islamic Groups Banned in Kyrgyzstan, Central Asia,” *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst* 14 January (2004). <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/1763> (accessed 8 September 2008).

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<sup>32</sup> UN Security Council, Report by the Kyrgyz Republic to the Counter-Terrorism Committee established pursuant to paragraph 6 of Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001). S/2002/204. 4 March 2001; *idem*, Supplementary report of the government of the Kyrgyz Republic in response to the preliminary questions and remarks of the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee. S/2003/776. 30 July (2003).

<sup>33</sup> See UN Security Council (fn. 32); *idem*, Report by the Russian Federation to the Counter-Terrorism Committee Established Pursuant to Paragraph 6 of Security Council Resolution 1373(2001). S/2001/1284. 27 December 2001; *idem*, Reply of the Russian Federation to the Letter Dated 21 October 2005 from the Counter-Terrorism Committee Chairman, Ms. Ellen Margrethe Lei. S/2006/98. 13 February (2006).

<sup>34</sup> G.E. Curtis, ed., *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan: Country Studies* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1997).

<sup>35</sup> Y. Semenov, “Russia – Kyrgyzstan: Sovmestny Poisk Resheniya Global’nyh Problem [Russia – Kyrgyzstan: Jointly Seeking to Solve Global Problems], 20 September (2003). <http://old.radiomayak.rfn.ru/schedules/1/11465.html> (accessed 4 July, 2007); A.

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<sup>36</sup> M.B. Olcott, *Central Asia’s Second Chance* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), 3.

<sup>37</sup> R.N. McDermot, “Countering Global Terrorism: Developing the Antiterrorist Capabilities of the Central Asian Militaries,” Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College (2004). <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/PUB370.pdf> (accessed 5 July 2007).

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<sup>43</sup> Council of Heads of State CIS, Programma sovместny mer po bor’be s mezhdunarodnoi prestupnostju na 2005-07 [A Program of Joint Measures to Combat

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<sup>44</sup> UN Security Council, Response of the government of the Kyrgyz Republic to the letter of the chairman of the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee of 11 October 2005. S/2006/350. 31 May (2006).

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