Russian Policy Toward Central Asia: Tools for Integration and Arguments for Security Involvement

with

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Russia is trying to preserve its influence in Central Asia, and for a few years has actively promoted integrative strategies in the framework of the Customs Union, and the Eurasian Union project. So far these structures are dominated mostly by the bilateral Russia-Kazakhstan relationship, while the other potential partners, above all Uzbekistan, have had a skeptical position toward Russia’s initiatives. Older projects such as the Eurasian Economic Union and the Collective Security Treaty Organization are viewed in the region as instruments of Russia’s influence. Central Asian governments are weary of these initiatives as they are trying not to be pressured by Moscow. Accordingly, Moscow does not have a lot of tools at its disposal to influence the domestic and foreign strategies of the Central Asian states. However, the Russian elites are increasingly concerned about Central Asia as a zone of potential conflict and about the possible spread of militant Islamic groups, using labor migrants as a way of penetrating Russia’s territory.

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Thursday, March 8, 2012,
5:30-7:00pm
Voesar conference room
1957 E Street N.W., Suite 412

This event is on the record