

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The five independent Central Asian countries, namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan had to undergo a transition period during which they had to develop their own foreign policies including border management, an experience they have not had before the independence. Border management is seen as a means to promoting an open and secure border, allowing for the unimpeded flow of people, goods and means of transport. The unimpeded flow through the border should not, however, compromise border (national) security. Meanwhile, trade is acknowledged as a significant instrument contributing to social and economic development of a country. Thus an efficient border management would have to bring about a balance of ensuring security whilst at the same time facilitating trade.

Border management in these countries is essentially maintained under a “Customs, Immigration and Quarantine” (CIQ) environment. This requires the presence of a number of public agencies at the border crossing points to carry out their responsibilities. Common to all the countries, this included five major bodies namely, the Border Service (Frontier Guard), the Customs Service, Health, Sanitary & Phyto-sanitary, and Transport agencies.

The border management of the four countries do not vary substantially. Each agency looks after its own interests and fulfils their mission based on the governing legislations. There has been no attempt to subsume the functions of agencies at the border points and empower an appropriate organization to take over their tasks. Only Kazakhstan has indicated through a government decision to empower the Customs to function on behalf of the other controlling agencies except the Border Service. However, the law has not been made and the effect of the decision was still not known at the time of this publication.

The Central Asian countries though landlocked are not totally disadvantaged in improving their trade positions. Their unique location in proximity to three major economies of China, India and Russia and the progress of transport corridors within the region constitute an enormous advantage that is still to be exploited. They can act as transit hubs for the movement of goods to and from the three economies to destinations in Asia and beyond.

The improvement of their border management is essential in respect of facilitating trade. One possibility is the adoption of Integrated Border Management (IBM)<sup>1</sup> with the objective of subsuming all the functions of the agencies concerned under a single authority. The establishment of an IBM can be successful if the following conditions are met. First, inter-agency cooperation and coordination exists with the single authority receiving regular training to enable it to take on all the responsibilities of the controlling agencies. Second, the country must operate under a single window environment with respect to its trade declarations and regulatory control. Third, there should be constant feedback of information and intelligence from all agencies concerned. Customs is viewed to be in the best position to hold the reins of the single authority. However, other agencies may also be mandated as the single authority in border management. In Singapore, for example, it was not the Customs

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<sup>1</sup> The World Customs Organization prefers to use the term Coordinated Border Management (CBM) which refers to a coordinated approach by border control agencies, both domestic and international, in the context of seeking greater efficiencies over managing trade and travel flows, while maintaining a balance with compliance requirements. See <http://www.ifcba.org/UserFiles/File/backgroundpaper.pdf>

which took on the IBM, but the immigration authority despite the fact that Customs owned the single window system.

Apart from building up a sound border management system to preserve national security and facilitate trade, other measures must also be instituted to further enhance trade facilitation. Some of the measures listed include development of a single administrative document (SAD) for trade purposes and regulatory control, establishing single windows, establishing a preferred trader scheme (sometime known as a Gold Card), promotion of the risk management system, advance lodgement of trade declarations and modernization of border posts and provision of adequate technical aids to facilitate clearance.