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Russia and Central Asia: Bilateral Cooperation in the Defence Sector

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Key Points

* One of Moscow's top priorities has been to maintain its key role in the former Soviet space, including Central Asia. Achievement of this strategic objective is directly related to developing military cooperation. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the development of a new approach by Russia to defence cooperation with Central Asia, along with defining the role of Central Asia within a system of national interests, has been rather slow and tortuous.

* In the 1990s, although relationships between Russia and the states of the region were supposed to be on the basis of partnerships, there was not much military cooperation between them, mainly because of political and economic factors within Russia itself. The Central Asian countries attracted the interest of a number of other military powers, especially the USA, the NATO countries and China. This in turn weakened Russia's position in the region, and its military presence there reduced considerably.

* By the mid-1990s, however, it had become clear that if Russia attempted to disengage from the region, this would only encourage trends there which would not be in Russia's interests. In the worst case, serious instabilities could lead to the fall of the existing secular regimes and to international conflicts directly threatening Russia's interests.

* In the late 1990s there were some signs of a revival of Russia's interest in the region, and Russia's approach became more consistent and coherent. This was largely due to the following factors: the deteriorating military and political situation on the southern borders of the CIS, notably in Afghanistan; a rapid growth in activity by Islamist organisations, stirred up from Afghanistan, and including armed incursions in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan; and the strengthening position in the region of foreign powers, especially the USA and NATO countries.

* When a new generation of politicians came to power in the Kremlin, headed by Vladimir Putin, it became possible for Russia to embark on a revival of cooperation. That is was done on the basis of strengthening bilateral military ties was characteristic of his team.

* The present defence relationships between Russia and the individual countries of Central Asia are generally characterised by mutual trust. This avoids the international squabbles and ambitions which come to the fore in more multilateral contexts. Furthermore, bilateral cooperation includes more specific and practical forms of interaction. These are detailed in this paper.

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Introduction

The present bilateral defence relationships between Russia and the individual countries of Central Asia are generally characterised by mutual trust. This avoids the international squabbles and ambitions which come to the fore in more multilateral contexts. The bilateral relationships include the following specific features:

- **military cooperation** (conduct of joint exercises; training for military personnel from Central Asian countries in Russian military training establishments; use by Russia of military and research facilities in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan);
- **cooperation in external border protection** (this was particularly intensive in the 1990s; now it is mostly in the form of consultation, and concerns primarily Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan);
- **cooperation in defence equipment supply** (supply by Russia of military equipment and provision of services and after-sales service);
- **cooperation in defence research, development and manufacturing** (placing by Russia of orders for military equipment in Central Asian companies, establishment of joint ventures for the manufacture and repair of military equipment, conduct of joint research and development work);
- **cooperation in space activities** (primarily between Russia and Kazakhstan).

Russia – Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan is Russia's closest military and political ally in the Central Asian region. It was, in 1992, the first CIS country with which Russia concluded a "friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance" treaty. This treaty envisages the creation of a joint military and strategic space, joint use of military bases, firing ranges and other military facilities in the event of a threat to Russia or Kazakhstan. Another fundamental bilateral document is the declaration of "eternal friendship and alliance for the 21st century" of 6 July 1998.

In addition to these documents, the mutual security of the two countries is assured in a wide range of subjects in the "military cooperation" treaty of 28 March 1994 and more than 60 bilateral documents and agreements signed since then.

Nevertheless, there was a period of cooling-off in the relations between Russia and Kazakhstan in the mid-1990s, and during this period the military cooperation documents and agreements which had been signed were largely neglected. Defence cooperation and trust between Moscow and Astana only became a reality when Vladimir Putin came to power.

Military cooperation

Since Russia and Kazakhstan became independent, the defence establishments of both countries have worked as partners, holding regular working meetings at various levels to agree a common line to take on a number of issues of mutual concern in respect of security and military cooperation. Additions and amendments to the basic agreements are produced at regular meetings at ministry and departmental level.

A key instance of military cooperation was the signing in January 2004 by the ministers of defence of Russia and Kazakhstan of an agreement on joint planning for the employment of military force in the interests of preserving the national security of both countries.¹ In 2007 Moscow and Astana were discussing the construction of a joint automated operational planning system for air forces, air defence forces and ground troops.

Training of military personnel

An important element in the military cooperation between Russia and Kazakhstan is the training in Russia of officers from Kazakhstan on favourable terms. In the period 1993-2006 more than 2500 citizens of Kazakhstan received training at training establishments of the Ministry of Defence, the FSB (Federal Security Service), the Foreign Intelligence Service and the Emergencies Ministry. This number constitutes about one third of all CIS citizens who have received military or other specialist training in Russia.²

In 2002 Moscow and Astana agreed that Kazakh citizens would be trained in common programmes with their Russian counterparts in accordance with the latest developments in military doctrine. Kazakhstan is also content that its specialists studying in Russian military training establishments generally satisfy the requirements of the Kazakhstan armed forces both in respect of the training methods and of the results achieved.

Furthermore, when a system of national military education was introduced in Kazakhstan, it took account of Russian experience. In particular, the existing Kazakh military training establishments were re-modelled on Russian lines. Instructional staff from Russian military training establishments have visited the National Defence University of Kazakhstan on a regular basis since 2003.³

Use of military facilities

The most important former Soviet military facilities in Russia's "near-abroad" are on the territory of Kazakhstan, and they continue to be of great importance to Russia's defence capabilities today. There are bilateral agreements enabling Russia to rent seven of these important facilities in Kazakhstan for its own use. The total land area of the facilities being leased to Russia is 11 million hectares.

- **№ 5 State Trials Range** of the Russian Ministry of Defence (the "Baikonur" cosmodrome). Situated in the Qyzylorda region of Kazakhstan. There are also several areas in the republic where the first stages of Russian rockets

can land. This is still the only cosmodrome for launching Russian large manned space rockets of the "Soyuz" or "Proton" types to put orbiting objects into orbit. In fact 70% of all Russian space launches take place at "Baikonur".⁴ The "Baikonur" leasing agreement was signed by Russia and Kazakhstan on 20 December 1994 for a 20-year term. In 2004 the term was extended to last until 2050.

- **№ 929 State Flying Trials Centre** of the Russian Ministry of Defence (named after V Chkalov). The headquarters of this unit is in Akhtubinsk in the Astrakhan oblast' of Russia, but the trials ranges (numbers 85, 171 and 231) are in Atyrau and West Kazakhstan region. This centre is used for trials of new weapons and for weapon firing training for Russian Air Force and Naval aviators.⁵
- **Facilities of № 4 State Inter-service Trials Range** of the Russian Ministry of Defence: the "Kapustin Yar" range in Astrakhan oblast', Russia; 20 Independent Trials Range and two measurement points (IP-8 and IP-16) are located in West Kazakhstan region and are used for trials of missiles and other ammunition.⁶
- **№ 10 State Trials Range** of the Russian Ministry of Defence (the "Sari-Shagan" range). This range is situated in the Qaraghandy, Zhambyl, Aqtöbe and Qyzylorda regions of Kazakhstan. This range occupies an area of 80,000 square kilometres, extending more than 250 km from north to south and 600 kilometres from east to west. This range is used for trials of air defence (anti-missile and anti-aircraft) missiles and strategic ballistic missiles. A specially-equipped route (the "Kapustin Yar - Sari-Shagan" route) was set up for ballistic missile flights.⁷
- **№ 11 State Trials Range** of the Russian Ministry of Defence (the "Emba" range). Located in Aqtöbe region, Kazakhstan. Used for research and trials of in-service air defence weapons and for training firings.⁸
- **Independent Radar Node** of the Third Independent Missile and Space Defence Army of the Space Forces of the Russian Armed Forces ("Balkhash-9") is part of an integrated missile-attack warning system. Located in Priozersk, by Lake Balkhash. This facility is also used for recording technical data from trials of missile systems on the "Sari-Shagan" range.⁹
- **Independent Regiment of the Air Transport Branch** of the Russian Air Force. Based at an airfield in Kostanai. This unit looks after the air transport requirements of the facilities listed above.¹⁰

Cooperation in external border protection

Under an agreement signed in 1995, Russia and Kazakhstan cooperate in the protection of Kazakhstan's borders. This cooperation takes the form of a permanent exchange of information about the situation on the border, especially at crossing points and other areas of activity by border troops. The border protection authorities of both countries regularly carry out joint special operations to detect and intercept illicit drug-trafficking or illegal migration activities, especially in the area to the north of the Caspian Sea and near the Chinese border.

Cooperation in defence equipment supply

In the first few years after becoming independent, Kazakhstan had no need to purchase arms and military equipment for its armed forces, as it inherited from the Soviet Union practically all the weapons and equipment which formerly belonged to the Central Asian Military District,¹¹ which included the territory of the Kazakh SSR. Furthermore, in the period 1992-8, in compensation for the withdrawal of strategic and tactical nuclear weapons,¹² as well as 35 TU-95 MS strategic bombers, to Russian territory, Russia provided Kazakhstan with ten SU-27 fighters, several MiG-29s and SU-25 ground-attack aircraft and three S-300 P air defence missile units.¹³

By the end of the 1990s, however, the armed forces of Kazakhstan had begun to feel the need to update their equipment, which was now wearing out. In February 2000 the Russian company Rosvooruzhenie signed an agreement with the Kazakhstan state company Kazspetseksport covering the main areas of cooperation in defence equipment supply between Moscow and Astana. In January 2001 a bilateral defence equipment supply committee was set up. Russia began supplying Kazakhstan with modern weapons and equipment, as well as supporting equipment and spare parts. On 1 January 2004 an agreement came into force enabling Kazakhstan to purchase Russian arms on favourable terms and at Russian internal prices.

In 2006 a contract was signed for Kazakhstan to buy 80 BTR-80 armoured personnel carriers from Russia in the period 2007-2008 for about 20 million dollars.¹⁴ At the end of 2006 Russia concluded an agreement with Kazakhstan to supply 12 Mi-17 multi-role helicopters and light Ansat helicopters as reinforcements for the national armed forces of Kazakhstan (in 2003 a contract had already been signed for the sale to Kazakhstan of 14 Mi-17 helicopters for 63 million dollars).¹⁵ There are plans for yet another contract, on privileged terms, to supply a further batch of these helicopters, which are manufactured by the Kazan helicopter factory in Tatarstan, Russia.¹⁶

In addition, at the MAKS aviation salon in August 2007, Russian and Kazakh representatives signed new contracts worth more than 60 million dollars.¹⁷ The agreements cover repair and modernisation work to be carried out in Rzhev, Russia, on ten Mig-31, MiG-29 and Su-25 aircraft, i.e. most of Kazakhstan's air assets. These contracts also covered the supply of modern simulators and other aircrew training equipment. Astana has also indicated that it is interested in modernising its national air defence system by purchasing the modern S-300 PMU2 "Favorit" and S-400 "Triumf" missile systems from Russia.¹⁸

Moscow has also repeatedly made proposals offering practical assistance to Kazakhstan's Caspian Sea Fleet including the construction of shipbuilding facilities and other elements of the shore infrastructure, and offering navigational and hydrographic information.¹⁹ Kazakhstan is considering purchasing new warships and patrol craft in Russia to reinforce its Caspian Sea Fleet. These vessels would be built at Zelenodolsk (Tatarstan, Russia).

Astana, as Moscow's closest military and political ally, has priority in the acquisition of the new types of weapon and military equipment which undergo trials on the ranges in Kazakhstan leased to Russia.²⁰

Cooperation in defence research, development and manufacturing

Kazakhstan has significant potential in the defence manufacturing sector, which can be useful to Russia. In particular, there are several industrial enterprises which used to be part of the Soviet military-industrial complex.

- **"Granit" Joint Stock Company**, located in Almaty. In the Soviet era this company was involved in the testing and maintenance of air defence systems.²¹
- **Mashinostroitel'ny zavod im. Kirova** (Kirov mechanical engineering works), located in Almaty. This company manufactured torpedoes.²²
- **"Ural'sky zavod "Zenit"" Joint Stock Company**, in Ural'sk. This company manufactured minesweeping equipment, mine-hunters and spare parts for torpedoes.²³
- **ZIKSTO Joint Stock Company** (formerly Kuibyshev mechanical engineering works), in Petropavlovsk. Manufactured anti-ship mines.²⁴
- **"Zavod im. Kirova" Joint Stock Company** (Kirov factory), in Petropavlovsk. Manufactured naval communications equipment.²⁵

After the collapse of the Soviet Union these firms stood practically idle, merely fulfilling individual orders for the Russian Ministry of Defence under inter-governmental agreements. Moscow and Astana both have an interest in preserving cooperation in defence production and the skills of these firms, and are looking at ways of reviving these facilities by means of new orders both for the Russian Navy and for joint export to third countries. In 2007 Russia and Kazakhstan started to draw up specific plans to translate this mutual interest into practical action.

Cooperation in space activities

In 2004-2005 agreements were signed which set up the legal basis for formalising the cooperation between Moscow and Astana in joint space research and exploitation, and in the development of the associated high technology. A joint Russian-Kazakh project was initiated for the construction of the "Baiterek" rocket centre at the "Baikonur" cosmodrome. On 18 June 2006 the first Kazakh communications satellite "Kazsat" was launched. This satellite was assembled by Russian specialists at the Khrunichev factory.²⁶ Another joint project is under way at the moment, under which Kazakhstan, with Russian assistance, will put a group of seven satellites into orbit, to be integrated into the Russian global satellite navigation system "Glonass".

Another promising avenue for cooperation between Russia and Kazakhstan in the space sector is the production of space payloads with nuclear-electric propulsion systems. A joint project group was set up in March 2006, comprising specialists from the Russian space rocket company "Energia" and the national nuclear centre of Kazakhstan.²⁷

Russia – Kyrgyzstan

The legal basis for cooperation between Russia and Kyrgyzstan is based on more than 120 treaties and agreements covering various aspects of bilateral cooperation. Cooperation in the defence area is based on the "friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance" treaty signed on 10 June 1992, the "cooperation in the defence sector" treaty dated 5 July 1993, the agreement "on cooperation in defence equipment supply" dated 25 August 1999 and the "security cooperation" agreement dated 5 December 2002. At the beginning of 2007 more than 40 documents were signed between Russia and Kyrgyzstan in the defence and security areas.

Military cooperation

In the early 1990s Russia played a major role in the construction of the national armed forces and other parts of the security apparatus of Kyrgyzstan. Although in principle there was a defence partnership between the two countries, this did not amount to much in practice. This was not only Russia's fault: there were also inconsistencies and changes of direction in Bishkek regarding their national security system.

Following the armed incursion by Islamist radicals in the Batken region of Kyrgyzstan in the summer of 1999, and with the coming to power in Russia of Vladimir Putin, cooperation between Moscow and Bishkek in the defence sector jumped to a completely different level. There started to be more regular contacts between the security organisations of the two countries, and there was now close cooperation between them, particularly in the coordination of the struggle against international terrorism. It was no accident that a regional CIS anti-terrorist centre was opened specifically in Bishkek in August 2001, on the initiative of the Russians, as well as a headquarters for the Collective Rapid Deployment Forces of the Central Asian Region. In 2002 a "security cooperation" agreement was signed by Russia and Kyrgyzstan.

In recent years there have been regular joint training activities involving anti-terrorist forces of both countries. In particular, during the joint exercise "Yug-2006", which took place in October 2006 near the town of Osh, in Kyrgyzstan, Russian and Kyrgyz special forces developed procedures for repulsing an attack by a theoretical enemy in the form of a band of international terrorists making an incursion into Kyrgyzstan.²⁸

In order to acquire practical skills, units of the air defence forces of Kyrgyzstan carry out joint firing exercises with Russian units on the "Ashuluk" range in Astrakhan oblast' in Russia almost every year. Russian specialists also assist Kyrgyzstan's military personnel to organise the control of their air defence systems to maintain them at a high alert state.²⁹

Training of military personnel

Military personnel from the armed forces of Kyrgyzstan undergo training at Russian military training establishments at privileged rates. During the period 1992-2007 more than 800 specialists from Kyrgyzstan received training at Russian military training establishments. More than 40 senior officers of the Kyrgyzstan armed forces have graduated from courses at Russian defence colleges, including the General Staff College, since 2000. Since 2006, officers from the Kyrgyzstan Air Force have also been undergoing flying training camps at the "Kant" air base.³⁰

Russia leases five major military facilities in Kyrgyzstan.

- **999th "Kant" Air Base** of the 5th Army of the Russian Air Force and Air Defence Forces.³¹ This base is located in the town of Kant in the Chuy region of Kyrgyzstan, 20 kilometres from Bishkek. This base accommodates a Group from the Russian Air Force which is capable of carrying out a wide range of missions, in the event of a serious external threat to a Central Asian country.³² The number of Russian armed forces personnel stationed at this base doubled in the first half of 2007.³³ SU-25 ground-attack aircraft, L-39 trainers and army helicopters are permanently based here.³⁴ The number of aircraft at this base changes constantly. Note that when flying from this base Russian aircraft are permitted to use other local airfields in the event of a deterioration in the weather or in other unforeseen circumstances.
- **954th Anti-submarine Weapon Trials Establishment "Koi-Sary"** of the Russian Navy, located in Karakol in the Ysyk-Kol region, on the eastern shore of Lake Ysyk-Kol. Also based here is the Russian-Kyrgyzstan joint enterprise "Ozero", which carries out development work and trials on new and in-service torpedoes. This base was acknowledged to be Russian property under an agreement signed between Russia and Kyrgyzstan on 5 June 1993.³⁵
- **338th Communications Centre** of the Russian Navy, in Kara-Balta (Chaldovar) in the Chuy region. This centre enables the headquarters of the Russian Navy to communicate with submarines and surface ships patrolling in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. It is also used for electronic surveillance activity by the headquarters of the Russian Navy.³⁶
- **1st Automatic Seismic Station** and **17th Radio-seismic Laboratory** of the seismographic service of the Russian Ministry of Defence. These are located in the Tian Shan mountains in the Ichke Suu and Majлуу Suu districts. They monitor nuclear weapon trials activities, especially in China and South Asia. Both these units are part of the verification regime for the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty.³⁷ The heads of the Ministries of Defence of Russia and Kyrgyzstan reached an agreement in 2005, under which these stations began to pass information to the national seismological institute and the Emergencies Ministry of Kyrgyzstan, to enable them to monitor the seismological situation both in Kyrgyzstan and the surrounding areas.

Russia plans to increase its military presence in Kyrgyzstan, mainly by increasing its manpower numbers and equipment strength at the "Kant" air base. The additional air assets will be front-line aircraft of the following types: SU-27, MiG-29, L-39 combat trainers, Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters.³⁸

Cooperation in external border protection

Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia took on the responsibility for helping Kyrgyzstan to protect its borders with China and setting up a national border troops service. To this end appropriate bilateral agreements were signed on 5 December 1992 to enable a group of Russian border troops (Osh, Naryn and Karakol detachments) with a total strength of 5000 men. As well as protecting the more than 1000 km long border with China, the Russian border troops also exercised border protection duties at the "Manas" International Airport in the capital city of Kyrgyzstan.

During the civil war in Tajikistan, when there was a lot of activity by drug runners, the Russian border troops also looked after a number of points on the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border. At the end of 1997, Kyrgyz border forces took over the responsibility for these posts. Russian border troops continued to protect the state border between Kyrgyzstan and China until 1999, when at Bishkek's request this responsibility also passed to Kyrgyzstan. Practically all the equipment used by the Russian border forces was handed over to Kyrgyzstan free of charge.³⁹

After the withdrawal of the Russian border troops, only a task force from the Russian FSB border service remained in Kyrgyzstan.⁴⁰ Under the agreement, this force assists the Kyrgyzstan border forces in a consultative role, helping to resolve organisational and technical problems and assisting with the training of border protection specialists. But after only a few years of independent border monitoring using their own forces, in May 2007 the parliament of Kyrgyzstan voted to "hand the border protection task back to the Russian border forces".⁴¹

Cooperation in defence equipment supply

This aspect of military cooperation between Russia and Kyrgyzstan, like all the others, has been through cycles of change. In the mid 1990s it was in decline, and then it revived at the beginning of the present century.

In the period 2001-2005 Russia provided Kyrgyzstan with weapons and equipment to a value of tens of millions of dollars. In 2003, for example, the Ministry of Defence of Kyrgyzstan was provided with a batch of modern infantry weapons⁴² and special equipment for special forces worth about 3 million dollars.⁴³

In 2004 the armed forces of Kyrgyzstan received from Russia ten KamAZ trucks, spare parts for soft-skinned and armoured vehicles, an Mi-8MTV helicopter and an air defence radar system, fully overhauled and updated at Russia's expense. Since 2005 Russia has been providing Kyrgyzstan with military equipment to the value of 4.5 million dollars annually as its rent for the use of military bases in the country.⁴⁴

In 2006 the Ministries of Defence of Russia and Kyrgyzstan signed an agreement for the supply to Kyrgyzstan of free military aid worth more than 27 million dollars in the period 2006-2008.⁴⁵ Even before the end of 2006 Russia had supplied Kyrgyzstan with four Mi-8MTV and Mi-24 combat helicopters,⁴⁶ plus ten KamAZ trucks and spare parts for soft-skinned and armoured vehicles. Furthermore since the beginning of 2007 Russia has been assisting Kyrgyzstan with the modernisation and life extension of its military aircraft and helicopters.

One of the main projects for development of Russian-Kyrgyz defence cooperation in the near future is the updating of Kyrgyzstan's air defence systems and the replacement of obsolete equipment with the more modern S-300 PMU-2 "Favorit" missile system.⁴⁷

Cooperation in defence research, development and manufacturing

On the basis of the intergovernmental "cooperation between defence research, development and manufacturing firms" agreement signed in 1994, some military equipment is manufactured in Kyrgyzstan to satisfy Russian orders. In order to coordinate these activities, a Rosoboronexport mission has been operating in Bishkek since 2003.

The most important producers of defence equipment in Kyrgyzstan from Russia's point of view are the following firms.

- **"Dastan" Joint Stock Company**, in Bishkek. This is the only company in the CIS which has been manufacturing the VA-111 "Shkval" rocket torpedo since the Soviet era, as well as proximity fuses and guidance and homing systems for use by the Russian Navy.⁴⁸
- **"Ozero" Russian-Kyrgyz Joint Venture** (in which Russia owns 95% of the shares). Located in Karakol by Lake Ysyk-Kol. Involved in development and trials of new torpedoes; in the period 1999-2000 this firm developed the "Shkval-E" export version of the "Shkval" torpedo.⁴⁹
- **"Ainur" Joint Stock Company and Bishkek Stamping Works**, in Bishkek. Manufactures cartridge cases for infantry weapons.⁵⁰
- **"Zhanar" Joint Stock Company**, in Bishkek. Former manufacturer of computer equipment for military aircraft; has been producing border protection equipment such as radar beam and magnetometric sensors for alarm systems since 2002.⁵¹

It should be noted that many of the items produced by industries in Kyrgyzstan have considerable export potential. Moscow and Bishkek are therefore working on options for joint production of these goods for export to third countries. This mainly concerns the manufacture of naval weapons to enable Russia to fulfil major contracts to build ships for India and China.⁵²

Russia – Tajikistan

The legal basis for cooperation between Russia and Tajikistan is expressed in more than 150 treaties and agreements covering various aspects of cooperation, including cooperation in the defence sector. Two of the main ones are the "cooperation in the defence sector" treaty of 25 May 1993 and the "cooperation between allies in the 21st century" treaty of 16 April 1999.

Military cooperation

After Tajikistan gained independence, Russia played an active part in setting up its new national defence organisation. Cooperation between Russia and Tajikistan grew to a climax at the beginning of the 1990s, when a civil war started in Tajikistan (1992-6). Russia in fact shouldered the main burden of supporting the security forces of Tajikistan during this period and seeking a peaceful outcome to the war.

In 1993, in accordance with a decision by the CIS heads of state, the CIS Collective Peacekeeping Forces were established in Tajikistan, based on the Russian 201st Motor Rifle Division. In this way Russia provided a kind of guarantee for peace in Tajikistan against the threat of escalation of tension in the country and the whole region, in view of the on-going military and political instability in neighbouring Afghanistan. When the CIS Collective Peacekeeping Forces were disbanded in 2000, Moscow and Dushanbe agreed that a Russian force based on the 201st Division and some logistics units would remain in the country.

With the loss of the unified air defence system of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan found itself unable to protect its own air space. Russia therefore assisted Tajikistan in the creation of its own air defence system, allocating about one million dollars for this purpose. In 2000 Tajikistan's first air defence battalion was combat-ready, and since 2001 detachments of the national air defence forces have regularly taken part in firing exercises on the Russian "Ashuluk" range in Astrakhan oblast'.⁵³

Nevertheless, the period 2001-2004 is characterised by a falling-off in the cooperation between Tajikistan and Russia. Against a background of increasing activity by the USA and other Western countries in the region, Tajikistan's leaders decided to review the position regarding the presence of Russian troops in the country. This manifested itself most clearly in protracted negotiations about the status and conditions of use of the Russian 201st Division. Dushanbe also put more stress on speeding up the programme for taking over the protection of the state borders with Afghanistan and China, and the withdrawal of the Russian troops.

A new stage in the relationship between Tajikistan and Russia can be said to have started in the autumn of 2004, when during a state visit to Dushanbe by Russian president Vladimir Putin there was a breakthrough in dealing with the problems that had arisen. Following this, the leaders of Russia and Tajikistan signed a whole series of bilateral treaties and agreements, including an agreement on the terms of the stationing of Russian forces in Tajikistan, with the 201st Division becoming the 4th Military Base of Russian Forces.

Training of military personnel

In the period 1993-2007 more than 500 citizens of Tajikistan received training leading to officer status. About 50 senior officers attended higher qualification courses at military colleges, including the Russian General Staff College.⁵⁴

Use of military facilities

At the present time there is treaty agreement for a substantial Russian contingent to be stationed in Tajikistan. This contingent comprises more than ten military units and detachments from various branches of the armed forces.

- **4th Military Base** (formerly 201st Division). This comprises the following units:
 - Headquarters of 201st Division, 92nd Motor Rifle Regiment, 998th Self-Propelled Artillery Regiment, 1098th Air Defence Missile Regiment, 783rd Independent Reconnaissance and Electronic Warfare Battalion, 1058th Communications Unit, 212th and 252nd Independent Communications Battalions, 295th Psychological Operations Unit and a number of auxiliary detachments. These troops are stationed in Dushanbe;
 - 191st Motor Rifle Regiment, stationed in Kurgan-Tyube;
 - 149th Motor Rifle Regiment, stationed in Kulyab.⁵⁵
- **670th Air Group and 303rd Independent Helicopter Squadron**, based at Aini airfield near Dushanbe. These units provide combat support to Russian and Tajik troops in the event of combat operations in Tajikistan. These units are equipped with six Su-25 ground-attack aircraft and 12 Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters.

- **1109th Independent Electro-optical Unit of the "Okno" Space Surveillance system (Object 7680).**⁵⁶ This unit is located in the Sanglok mountains near Nurek at a height of 2200m above sea level. Its task is to detect ballistic missiles when they are launched and to track them on their trajectories at all altitudes above Eurasia, North and Central Africa and the adjoining waters of the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic Oceans.⁵⁷ Some experts believe that this unit, positioned where it is, carries out its mission as effectively as does the US ground-based electro-optical deep space surveillance (GEODSS) system which is located at four equally-spaced sites on the equator, in the USA, on Diego Garcia island, in South Korea and in Hawaii.⁵⁸

In addition to the facilities mentioned above, Russia is planning to build a modern military hospital in Dushanbe in 2008, fitted out with the latest equipment. The finance for this project has already been approved by the Russian government.

Cooperation in external border protection

From the moment when Tajikistan acquired its independence, Russia has played an active role in protecting its borders while building up its own national border protection force. The Group of Russian Border Troops in Tajikistan consisted of the Kalaikhub border forces command post and five detachments: the Pyandzh, Moscow, Khorog, Ishkashim and Murgab detachments, each of which had 11-13 border patrols and responsible for a particular sector of the border. The costs of maintaining this force and protecting the border were borne almost entirely by the Russian federal budget.

The Russian border troops played a significant role in containing the civil conflict in Tajikistan. It was largely due to their efforts that the commanders of the united Tajik opposition were never able to supply their forces adequately with weapons and ammunition in the Pamir regions opposed to Dushanbe from bases in Afghanistan.

In 2000, however, at the initiative of the Tajiks, the process began of handing over sections of the border to the national border forces, and this process was completed at the end of 2004. In accordance with the "cooperation on border problems" agreement of 16 October 2004 the only Russian troops left are some military advisers from the Border Service of the Russian FSB cooperating in the establishment of the Tajik border forces and acting in a consultative role in the organisation of border security.

Cooperation in defence equipment supply

Tajikistan is the only country in Central Asia which inherited practically no equipment from the Soviet Army. In contrast to the national armed forces of other Central Asian republics, which were created on the basis of units formerly comprising parts of the Central Asian Military District (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) and the Turkestan Military District (Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan), the Tajik armed forces were formed from the so-called "National Front", who were effectively partisans.⁵⁹ Most of the military equipment in Tajikistan remained under the control of the Russian 201st Division.

Thus in the civil war conditions which had arisen in Tajikistan, Moscow began to render material assistance to the government forces, making regular supplies of

weapons and ammunition both from the stocks of the 201st Division and directly from Russia, and Russian technical specialists assisted with the repair of military equipment damaged in combat. Immediately after the end of the civil war, in the period 1999-2001, S-125 air defence radars and missile systems were repaired in Russian factories and handed over to the air defence forces of Tajikistan.⁶⁰

Following President Putin's visit to Dushanbe in autumn 2004, there was a notable increase in activity in the cooperation between Russia and Tajikistan in military equipment supply. In the period 2005-2006 Moscow provided Tajikistan with free military aid worth more than 26 million dollars. In autumn 2006 alone, the Tajikistan Air Force received four Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters and four L-39 combat trainer aircraft,⁶¹ and in 2007 another two Mi-24s were delivered.⁶² In October 2007 an agreement was reached for the free transfer of part of the equipment and ammunition of the 4th Russian Base over to Tajikistan in 2008.

It can thus be said that the army of Tajikistan has been considerably reinforced. In particular, the 4th Russian Base has about 160 T-62 and T-72 tanks, 160 BMP Infantry Fighting Vehicles and 140 BTR Armoured Personnel Carriers. Tajikistan will also take ownership of the divisional artillery, comprising three battalions of D-30 howitzers (72 guns), nine batteries of 81-mm and 120-mm mortars (72 mortars) and their ammunition, and air defence weapons, mainly hand-held SAM systems of the "Igla" type, but also "Shilka" and "Osa" self-propelled air defence weapons, a total of about 30 pieces.⁶³

The Ministries of Defence of the two countries are also considering the possibility of setting up a regional centre in Tajikistan for the repair and modernisation of armoured vehicles and artillery systems.⁶⁴

Cooperation in defence research, development and manufacturing

Russia and Tajikistan have a shared interest in several organisations which were formerly part of the Soviet military-industrial complex. These organisations are located in the Sughd region in the north of the country. The main ones are the 6th Vostokredmet mining and chemical complex in Chkalovsk,⁶⁵ where uranium enrichment takes place, and uranium mines in Taboshar, Adrasman and Naugarzan-Chigrik.⁶⁶ A 5-million dollar intergovernmental agreement was signed in 2006 for Russian specialists to salvage the solid rocket fuel residue from the manufacturing facility in Taboshar.

Russia – Uzbekistan

The legal basis for relations between Russia and Uzbekistan is expressed in more than 200 treaties and agreements covering various aspects of cooperation. Defence cooperation between Russia and Uzbekistan is based primarily on the "friendship and cooperation" treaty of 30 May 1992, the agreement on the "principles of mutual logistic support for the armed forces" of 2 March 1994, the treaty on the "further intensification of cooperation in the military equipment and defence spheres" of 11 December 1999, the "strategic partnership" treaty of 16 June 2004 and the treaty on "alliance relationships" of 14 November 2005.

Military cooperation

In the first few years following the independence of Uzbekistan, the relations

between Russia and Uzbekistan were fairly active and were based on partnership. It is not surprising that it was Russia and Uzbekistan who were the initiators of the CIS "collective security" treaty signed in Tashkent in May 1992. This treaty was the first attempt at creating a security system in the post-Soviet space. When the civil war in Tajikistan started, Moscow and Tashkent coordinated their efforts to assist the government forces in Tajikistan.

In the mid to late 1990s, however, largely due to the policies of the Yeltsin administration, the bilateral military cooperation between the two countries was more a question of paper cooperation than practical cooperation. Uzbekistan signed a number of parallel agreements on military cooperation with the CIS countries and with some foreign countries. In 1999, Uzbekistan decided not to continue to take part in the CIS "collective security" system.

When Vladimir Putin came to power in Russia there were positive moves in the bilateral relations between the two countries, including military cooperation. Against a background of increasing disillusionment with US policy in Afghanistan and in Central Asia as a whole, Uzbekistan aligned itself with Russia in 2005. Moscow and Tashkent agreed to cooperate actively in modernising and reorganising the armed forces of Uzbekistan, re-equipping them with modern weapons, training Uzbek officers in Russia and taking joint measures in respect of combat training.

The first joint tactical exercise by the special forces of Russia and Uzbekistan was held on the "Farish" mountain training range in Jizzax region in 2005. Similar exercises were held in 2006 on the Russian North Caucasus Military District range in Krasnodar district. The defence departments of the two countries agreed to carry out annual joint training of their air forces and air defence forces on the "Ashuluk" range in Astrakhan oblast' from 2008 onwards.⁶⁷

Training of military personnel

Since 1992 more than 250 Uzbek officers have received training in Russian military colleges and specialist institutions, and the number of Uzbek future officers undergoing training in Russian military training establishments has grown steadily since 2005.⁶⁸

Use of military facilities

There are no military facilities in Uzbekistan that the Russian Ministry of Defence is leasing. The "strategic partnership" treaty, however, did envisage the joint establishment of a military air base for use by the Collective Security Treaty Organisation. Article 8 of that treaty, in the interests of security, maintaining peace and stability and to counter external aggression, provided for Russia and Uzbekistan to offer each other the right when necessary to use military facilities on their territory, subject to separate agreements.

Furthermore in the most recent negotiations, in October 2007, the leaderships of the two defence departments considered the possibility of using Uzbek territory (the desert regions of the Ustyurt Plateau) as landing sites for the spent stages of Russian RS-20 ballistic missiles, fired for test purposes from the "Baikonur" cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.⁶⁹

Cooperation in defence equipment supply

Uzbekistan inherited a considerable logistics infrastructure from the Soviet Union's Turkestan Military District. For this reason, in the early years of independence, the

national armed forces of Uzbekistan did not experience critical shortages in the military equipment and weapons areas. Based on the agreement on the "principles of mutual logistic support for the armed forces" of 2 March 1994, in the early and mid-1990s Russia's main logistics activities with Uzbekistan were supplying Uzbekistan with ammunition and providing facilities for repairing military equipment under guarantee (in Russian firms).

In 1999-2000, however, when there was a growth in activity by Islamic radicals, the Uzbek army, particularly the special forces, began to be conscious of their need for modern infantry weapons. In December 1999, during an official visit to Uzbekistan, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin signed the treaty on the "further intensification of cooperation in the military equipment and defence spheres", which, in addition to closer cooperation between the Ministries of Defence and the armed forces of the two countries in the areas of strengthening security and the mutual struggle against international terrorism, provided for an increase in the range of military equipment to be provided by Russia. In early 2000 Russia started to supply Uzbekistan with the necessary equipment, mainly assault rifles, sniper rifles, light machine guns and night vision devices.

When Russia and Uzbekistan entered into this new phase of their alliance, the range and volume of military equipment supplied increased considerably. By the end of 2006, according to the Russian Ministry of Defence, the volume of defence equipment supplied to Uzbekistan had reached several tens of millions of dollars. The main items of equipment were modern infantry weapons, ammunition, spare parts for armoured vehicles, air defence systems and aircraft repair.⁷⁰

In 2006 alone, several Uzbek An-12 military transport aircraft were repaired at Russian factories.⁷¹ The Ural Optical and Mechanical Plant started servicing the electro-optical equipments for the MiG-29, Su-27 and Su-24 aircraft in the Uzbekistan Air Force.⁷² In May 2007 Russia agreed to supply the air defence units of the land forces of Uzbekistan with "Strela" and "Igla" man-portable SAM systems.⁷³

Cooperation in defence research, development and manufacturing

On the basis of the inter-governmental agreement on "cooperation in defence research, development and manufacturing" of 26 January 1994, the manufacturing links between Russia and Uzbekistan did not cease completely, but it is true that they experienced high and low periods of activity. This is particularly true of the aviation sector.

- **The Tashkent Chkalov Aircraft Plant** (TAPOiCh) is located in Tashkent. Since the Soviet era it has been the lead plant for the assembly of the Il-76 military transport aircraft and its variants, comprising the major part of the transport fleet of the Russian Air Force. From the mid-1990s to 2001 TAPOiCh received practically no orders for the construction of new Il-76 aircraft, but the plant continued to service Il-76s both in Tashkent and by sending representatives out to Russian Air Force units. The production capacity of the factory was only restored, partially, by the requirement to supply India with six Il-78 aircraft under the terms of a joint Russian-Uzbek-Indian contract in which Rosoboronexport plays a leading part. This contract is worth 150 million dollars.

Since 2003 the links between TAPOiCh and the Russian aircraft manufacturing industry have improved, particularly with the Ilyushin Aircraft Construction

Company, and new orders have led to a corresponding increase in the utilisation of TAPOiCh's capacity. In 2003 the Russian Volga-Dnepr Air Transport company signed a contract with TAPOiCh for the construction of two Il-76 TD-90VD aircraft, with an option to undertake the modernisation of 15 aircraft of the same type. In addition, Rosoboronexport placed orders with TAPOiCh for the construction of Il-76MD/78MK aircraft for third countries (in 2005, for the assembly of 34 Il-76 and 4 Il-78 aircraft for the Chinese Air Force⁷⁴ and in June 2007, for two Il-76MF aircraft for Jordan).⁷⁵

In October 2007 Moscow and Tashkent agreed that TAPOiCh would assemble a large batch of military reconnaissance aircraft based on the Il-114. Russia plans to acquire a total of 28 of these aircraft by 2015. The first eight, due to start being delivered in 2008, have already been paid for. This new reconnaissance aircraft is a version of the Il-114-300T military transport aircraft, fitted with modern photographic and radar equipments. This aircraft will replace the An-30 reconnaissance aircraft which have been in service with the Russian Air Force for more than 30 years.⁷⁶

At the beginning of February 2008 the presidents of Russia and Uzbekistan signed an agreement in Moscow on the integration of the Tashkent Chkalov Aircraft Plant and the Russian United Aircraft Corporation. By the end of 2008 the United Aircraft Corporation will own 50% of the shares of TAPOiCh plus one share.

- **Joint Russian-Uzbek enterprise UzRosAvia.** This firm was founded on the basis of inter-governmental agreements signed in Tashkent in March 2007. The material assets of this joint venture are located in the aircraft repair facility in Chirchik, in the Tashkent region. The firm will repair and service Mi-8 and Mi-24 military helicopters. Russian organisations will own not less than 51% of the capital of the firm. The founders of the firm will be the Russian Oboronprom and Rosoboronexport, and on the Uzbek side, TAPOiCh and the Uzmakhsusimpeks company. According to Russian officials, "this will be the first such joint venture in the aircraft industry in the CIS".⁷⁷

Cooperation in space activities

In 1996 Russia and Uzbekistan signed an inter-governmental agreement to work together on space research and exploitation using the "Sirius" laser optical system at the high-altitude Maidanak observatory. This observatory is on the western summit of Mount Maidanak (2650 m above sea level), 55 km to the south of Kitab in the Kashkadarya region of Uzbekistan.⁷⁸ This site is of interest to the Russian Ministry of Defence as an element in the overall missile-attack warning system.

Russia – Turkmenistan

Cooperation between Russia and Turkmenistan in defence matters has so far been of a different character to the cooperation between Russia and the other countries of Central Asia, due to the special place which Ashgabat has occupied since Turkmenistan acquired its independence.⁷⁹ Turkmenistan is the only country in the post-Soviet space which does not belong to any military or military-political alliance.

On 31 July 1992, Russia and Turkmenistan signed a treaty on "joint measures to create the armed forces of Turkmenistan", by which Moscow guaranteed the security of Turkmenistan. Under the treaty, the numerous units of the air force and air defence forces of the former Soviet armed forces, as well as the border troops, remained under Russian jurisdiction, but the other land forces of the former Turkestan Military District - four motor rifle divisions - were to be handed over to the Turkmenistan Ministry of Defence in the course of the next ten years. During this transitional period Moscow would provide Ashgabat with assistance in the form of military equipment and would pay compensation for stationing Russian troops in the country.

To coordinate the efforts of both countries in the defence sector, a task force from the Russian Ministry of Defence operated in Ashgabat from 1992-4. The force comprised a communications battalion, a communications centre, a guard company and an independent transport squadron. In 1994 an operational group of the Russian Federal Border Service was also established. This group, totalling 3000 men, comprised the 170th Air Regiment, the 46th independent border patrol boat flotilla and an NCO training establishment. The personnel of this group cooperated with the Turkmen border troops to protect Turkmenistan's borders with Iran and Afghanistan.⁸⁰

In 1994, however, after relations between Moscow and Ashgabat cooled, the joint command was disbanded. In 1999 the Turkmenistan leadership also reviewed the border cooperation question and asked for Russian border troops to be withdrawn. Turkmenistan then virtually ceased to have any defence cooperation with Russia until the middle of 2006. To support its armed forces, Turkmenistan cooperated closely with Ukraine, Georgia, and especially Turkey.

When Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov came to power in Turkmenistan in 2007, Ashgabat began to show signs of a willingness to revive cooperation with Russia, at least in the defence equipment sector. In 1997 the Russian Special communications systems, automation and control research institute accepted an order from Turkmenistan to develop an integrated control system for the national armed forces of Turkmenistan. Ashgabat has also expressed an interest in purchasing Russian military equipment, particularly the MiG-29, with which it plans to replace the obsolete aircraft in its air force.⁸¹

The attendance by the president of Turkmenistan at the 7th meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in 2007, is an indirect indication of some willingness by Ashgabat to participate in some regional projects. It is possible that this could lead to closer cooperation between Russia and Turkmenistan in the defence sector.

Conclusions

Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the process of developing new approaches by Russia to defence cooperation with the countries of Central Asia and defining their role and place in the system of national interests has been long and difficult. This was particularly the case in the 1990s, when Russia's actions in the region were of a purely reactive character, i.e. Russia reacted to events and had no control over them. Furthermore Russia's attitude to Central Asia changed several times, which led to a considerable reduction in Moscow's influence. Russia's military presence in the region also reduced, with the loss of most of the military bases of the former Soviet Union in Central Asia.

By the mid-1990s, however, it had become clear that if Russia attempted to disengage from the region, this would only encourage trends there which would not be in Russia's interests. In the worst case, serious instabilities could lead to the fall of the existing secular regimes and to international conflicts directly threatening Russia's interests.

The Russian ruling elite came to understand that any further surrender of Russia's positions in Central Asia would be against many of its long-term interests. And the events of 1999 and 2000 in Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan demonstrated that there was a real threat to Russia's security from its southern borders.

When a new generation of politicians came to power in Moscow, headed by Vladimir Putin, it became possible for Russia to embark on a revival of cooperation. That is was done on the basis of strengthening bilateral military ties was characteristic of his team.

What distinguishes Russia from Western countries is that it does not link its military assistance to political conditions. Nor does Russia seek to influence opponents of existing ruling elites or to interfere in the internal affairs of the countries of the region under the cover of human rights organisations, etc.

Russia plans to use the favourable strategic circumstances to strengthen its position in the region. Developing bilateral defence cooperation looks like a more cost-effective instrument of policy for Moscow than, for example, developing full economic relations.

* * *

Analysing the practical steps which Russia is taking to develop bilateral defence relationships with the countries of Central Asia, we can come to the following conclusions:

- 1.** In the post-Soviet period a fairly strong legal basis has been established between Russia and the countries of Central Asia, regulating nearly all aspects of their relationships. The practical realisation of all these agreements and treaties, however, depends mainly on the level of trust between Russia and the countries concerned, and on how prepared they are to take account of Russia's interests in the region.

On the other hand, Moscow has to bear in mind that many Central Asian countries have come to recognise the strategic position they occupy and their ability to affect the security and integrity of Russia, and they are prepared to exploit the international competition factor in their own national interests.

- 2.** Moscow continues to have an interest in using the military facilities left behind on Central Asian territory after the collapse of the Soviet Union, as these facilities are important to the defence capabilities of Russia itself. Transferring these facilities to Russian territory would be prohibitively expensive, and in many cases, simply impossible.

From these pragmatic considerations, it is more favourable to Russia to maintain them in the states of Central Asia, paying rent for them in military equipment and weapons. This approach also enables Russia to maintain a military foothold in

many Central Asian countries, while ensuring that Russian military standards prevail in the armed forces of the countries of the region.

3. Clearly, Russia has a great interest in maintaining and encouraging the development of manufacturing links with the companies in the Central Asian countries that were formerly part of the Soviet military-industrial complex. If these links are ruptured, or even weakened, there are serious consequences for the production of a host of types of weapons and military equipment at Russian factories.

If defence equipment cooperation between Russia and Central Asia continues to develop, it will become an increasingly important factor in strengthening bilateral, and possibly multi-lateral relationships. It could be just what is needed for Russia to cement its longer-term position in the Central Asian region.

Endnotes

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