

RUSSIA AND THE CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES: BILATERAL SECURITY COOPERATION

Vladimir PARAMONOV

*Ph.D. (Political Science), independent expert
(Tashkent, Republic of Uzbekistan)*

Oleg STOLPOVSKIY

*Independent military analyst
(Tashkent, Republic of Uzbekistan)*

Retaining its key role in Central Asia (CA) and in the post-Soviet expanse as a whole is one of the main priorities of the Russian Federation's current policy. Carrying out this strategic task was and still is directly related to the development of security cooperation, which, in

addition to being of mutual benefit in the difficult regional and international circumstances, also has a significant political and propagandist effect.

Despite the many disintegrating factors that accompanied the sovereign emergence of each of the post-Soviet republics after the collapse of the Soviet Union, their common historical past, as well as economic, cultural, linguistic, and other traditional ties continue to prompt both the Russian Federation and Central Asia to seek cooperation in both collective and national security. Whereby preference goes to bilateral relations

since it is this format that implies more specific and practical forms of military cooperation and is more confidential, making it possible to avoid any negative overtones associated with ambitions and mutual lack of understanding that are particularly vividly manifested in the multilateral format.¹

¹ Particularly within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Russia and Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan is currently Russia's key partner in the Central Asian region, with which Moscow is building alliance relations.

Military cooperation. Since the time Kazakhstan gained its independence, partnership relations characterized by regular working meetings at different levels and the drawing up of common approaches to several issues of mutual interest in security have been established between the security ministries of both states.

Carrying out joint exercises. In order to elaborate an algorithm of joint actions, exercises are held on a regular basis involving detachments and contingents of the Russian and Kazakh armies, both within the framework of the CSTO and SCO and in the bilateral format. An agreement has even been reached between the military departments of Russia and Kazakhstan on holding annual joint large-scale military maneuvers from 2009 to 2011 in each of the states in turn.

Since the beginning of 2008, two major joint undertakings have been held, in which contingents of the Russian and Kazakh military departments participated. For example, in the first ten days of July 2008 the Russian-Kazakh Vzaimodeistvie-2008 exercises were held at the training center of Kazakhstan's Armed Forces land troops in the village of Gvardeiskiy (near Almaty), in which more than 2,000 Russian and Kazakh paratroopers, more than 40 airplanes and helicopters, and more than 240 units of military hardware participated. In turn, from the end of August until 27 September, 2008, Center-2008 tactical-strategic exercises involving troops from the Volga-Ural Military Okrug were held in compliance with the training plan of the RF land troops, at certain stages of which joint actions of detachments of the Russian and Kazakh Armed Forces were elaborated, including antiterrorist measures.

Training military personnel. An important element of Russian-Kazakh military cooperation is the training of Kazakh servicemen in Russia. Moscow and Astana have agreed to carry out training of Kazakhstan's citizens according to the same programs as Russian servicemen based on contemporary military-doctrinal developments. More than 2,500 Kazakh citizens underwent training at higher educational institutions of the Russian Defense Ministry and other security structures. This amounts to approximately one third of the total number of citizens of the CIS countries who obtained military and specialized education in Russia.

Using military facilities. Kazakhstan boasts the largest military facilities of the former Soviet Union in the Near Abroad, which are still vital for ensuring Russia's defense potential. Russia is continuing to operate several large facilities in Kazakhstan on the basis of bilateral agreements:

- the 5th state firing range of the Russian Defense Ministry (the Baikonur space-launch complex) in the Kzyl-Orda Region;
- the firing ranges of the 929th Chkalov State Flight Test Center of the Russian Defense Ministry in the West Kazakhstan and Atyrau regions;
- the 20th detached test station of the 4th state multiservice firing range of the Russian Defense Ministry (the Kapustin Yar firing range, Astrakhan Region) in the West Kazakhstan Region for testing missile technology and ammunition;
- the 10th state firing range of the Russian Defense Ministry (the Sary Shagan firing range) on the territory of the Karaganda, Zhambyl, Aktiubinsk, and Kzyl-Orda regions for testing anti-missile and anti-aircraft defense systems;²
- the 5580th test base (former 11th state firing range of the Russian Defense Ministry—the Emba firing range) in the Aktiubinsk Region for combat firing practice, scientific research, and testing tactical air defense weapons;
- the detached radio-technical unit of the 3rd detached army of ballistic missile defense of the Russian Space Forces (the Balkhash-9 facility) in Priozersk on Lake Balkhash belonging to the united missile attack warning system.

What is more, a detached regiment of the Russian Transport Air Forces is stationed at the aerodrome in Kostanai for carrying out the transport support measures being executed at the abovementioned military facilities.

Military-technical cooperation. During its first years of independence, Kazakhstan did not need additional purchases of military hardware and ammunition for its national armed forces. Kazakhstan inherited essentially the entire material-technical base of the Central Asian Military Okrug (SAMO), to which the Kazakh S.S.R. belonged, from the Soviet Union. But by the end of the 1990s, the combat materiel of Kazakhstan's Armed Forces was in need of renovation. There was also the need for state-of-the-art weapons.

In February 2000, the Kazakh Kazspetsekспорт State Enterprise and Russia's Rosvooruzhenie Company signed a general contract that set forth the main vectors of military-technical cooperation between Moscow and Astana, and in January 2001 a corresponding bilateral commission had already been created. Russia began to supply Kazakhstan with the latest weapons, combat materiel, spare parts, and components. On 1 January, 2004, an agreement came into force on privileged conditions for selling Kazakhstan military equipment at Russia's domestic prices.

In recent years, military-technical cooperation between Moscow and Astana has become noticeably more active. In this respect, it is also characteristic that Kazakhstan's mid-term national security strategy until 2015³ envisages in particular that further renovation of the national armed forces' combat materiel will mainly be realized by purchasing exclusively Russian weapons and materiel.⁴

Military-economic and scientific-technical cooperation. Kazakhstan has immense military production potential. In particular there are several large industrial enterprises in the republic that used to belong to the Soviet military-industrial complex:

- the Granit Joint-Stock Company in Almaty that tested and serviced air defense complexes in Soviet times;

² Due to organizational-establishment measures, the 10th firing range (Sary Shagan) was included as a structural subdivision in the 4th state central multiservice firing range of the Russian Defense Ministry.

³ Adopted in February 2007 at a session of Kazakhstan's Security Council.

⁴ Repair and modernization will also be carried out at Russian enterprises.

- the Kirov Machine-Building Plant (for the manufacture of torpedo battery) in Almaty;
- the Uralskiy zavod Zenit Joint-Stock Company (for the manufacture of trawls, mine sweepers, and spare parts for torpedoes) in Uralsk;
- the ZIKSTO Joint-Stock Company (formerly the Kuibyshev machine-building plant for the manufacture of anti-ship mines) in Petropavlovsk;
- the Zavod im. Kirova Joint-Stock Company (for the manufacture of maritime communications) in Petropavlovsk.

The listed enterprises largely fell idle after the collapse of the U.S.S.R., executing only isolated orders from the Russian Defense Ministry under intergovernmental agreements. Moscow and Astana, which are interested in preserving and developing these ties, are looking at the possibility of placing new orders with these enterprises both for the needs of the Russian Armed Forces and to organize joint export to third countries. Russia and Kazakhstan have already begun drawing up specific agreements aimed at realizing this mutual interest.

* * *

On the whole, the relatively high level of Russian-Kazakh security cooperation at the current stage is the result of the intensive and rather enhanced interaction throughout the entire range of key issues in bilateral relations. Security cooperation between the two countries will continue to thrive if the present level of confidence between Moscow and Astana is retained in the future. Kazakhstan, like other CA states actively carrying out a multi-vector approach in their foreign policy, is showing a greater interest in expanding security cooperation with the West too, particularly with the U.S. and other NATO member states. The Steppe Eagle tactical special peacekeeping exercises held in September 2008 at the Ili firing range of the Kazakhstan Armed Forces in the Almaty Region with the participation of NATO contingents is graphic confirmation of this.

Russia and Kyrgyzstan

Russia regards Kyrgyzstan as an important element of the regional security system. In turn, despite Bishkek's multi-vector approach to its choice of foreign policy orientation, relations with Moscow have always been one of the republic's top priorities.

Military cooperation. Russia played an important role in building Kyrgyzstan's national armed forces and other security structures. And although Russian-Kyrgyz military cooperation in the 1990s was mainly partnership in nature, it did not have many practical achievements to show for it. This was not entirely Russia's fault, it was also the result of inconsistent steps and Bishkek's frequent change in orientation when forming its national security system.

Military cooperation between Moscow and Bishkek reached a qualitatively new level after an armed group of militants of the so-called Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan broke into the Batken Region of Kyrgyzstan in the summer of 1990 and after Vladimir Putin and his team came to power in Russia. Contacts between the security structures of Russia and Kyrgyzstan became more regular, particularly with respect to coordinating the fight against international terrorism. It is no accident that, on the initiative of the Russian side, Bishkek was chosen as the site for setting up a regional branch of the CIS Antiterrorist Center (ATC) and headquarters of the Joint Rapid Deployment Force (JRDF) of the CSTO in Central Asia in August 2001. The opening of a Russian air force base in Kant on Kyrgyzstan's territory

in 2003, which became a component of the CSTO JRDF contingents in the region, was a propitious event in Russian-Kyrgyz military cooperation.

Carrying out joint exercises. In order to intensify interaction between the military departments of the two countries, joint training exercises are carried out on a regular basis. In particular, in order to acquire practical skills, air defense contingents of Kyrgyzstan's Armed Forces carry out joint field firing practice with Russian contingents almost every year at the Ashuluk firing range in the Astrakhan Region of Russia. In addition, in October 2006, Yug-2006 joint antiterrorist exercises were held near Osh during which special antiterrorist contingents of both countries worked out cooperation issues to the last detail while carrying out exercises to hold off the attack of a potential enemy in the form of a group of international terrorists who burst into (according to the exercise scenario) the republic's territory.

Training military personnel. More than 800 Kyrgyz specialists have undergone training at Russia's higher military institutions. Since 2000, more than 40 senior officers of Kyrgyzstan's Armed Forces have taken advanced training courses at military academies in Russia. In addition, since 2006, Kyrgyzstan's air pilots have participated in flight training camps at the Kant airbase.

Using military facilities. Russia has several major facilities in Kyrgyzstan:

- the 999th Kant airbase of the 5th army of the Russian Air Force and air defense armed forces at Kant in the Chu Region (20 km from Bishkek);
- the 954th Koi-Sary test base of antisubmarine weapons of the Russian Navy at Karakol in the Issyk Kul Region (east shore of Lake Issyk Kul);
- the 338th communication unit of the Russian Navy in Kara-Balta (Chaldovar) in the Chu Region, which ensures communication of the Main Headquarters of the Russian Navy with submarines and surface ships on military duty in the Pacific and Indian oceans;
- the 1st automatic seismic station and 17th radio-seismic laboratory of the Seismic Service of the Russian Defense Ministry in Ichke-Suu in the Issyk Kul Region and in Mailuu-Suu in the Jalal-Abad Region for monitoring nuclear weapons tests.

In the future, Russia intends to expand its military presence in Kyrgyzstan, primarily by increasing the number of personnel and amount of combat materiel at the Kant airbase. In particular there are plans to carry out additional deployment of front aviation airplanes, Su-27, MiG-29, operational trainers L-39, and Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters.

Military-technical cooperation. Military-technical cooperation between Russia and Kyrgyzstan, like security cooperation between the two countries on the whole, is cyclic in nature. Whereas in the mid-1990s it underwent a slump, at the beginning of this century it experienced an upswing.

Between 2001 and 2005, Russia delivered a wide range of combat materiel and weapons to Kyrgyzstan totaling tens of millions of dollars. Beginning in 2005, Russia began to supply Kyrgyzstan with military equipment totaling 4.5 million dollars annually as rent compensation for use of the military facilities on its territory. In 2006, the defense ministries of both countries signed an agreement on rendering gratuitous military-technical aid to Kyrgyzstan for more than 27 million dollars.

In so doing, modernizing the air defense equipment of Kyrgyzstan's Armed Forces is one of the main vectors in the development of Russian-Kyrgyz military-technical cooperation in the near future.⁵

Military-economic and scientific-technical cooperation. On the basis of an intergovernmental agreement On Production and Scientific-Technical Cooperation of Defense Enterprises signed in

⁵ In particular, there are plans to replace the outmoded C-125 missile divisions with more up-to-date C-300 PMU-2 Favorit surface-to-air missile systems.

1994, certain pieces of military equipment are produced in Kyrgyzstan under Russian contract. Russia is most interested in the following industrial enterprises:

- the Dastan Joint-Stock Company in Bishkek, which is the only enterprise in the CIS that manufactures VA-111 Shkval underwater missiles for the Russian Navy;
- the Russian-Kyrgyz Ozero Joint Venture (Russia owns 95% of the shares) in Karakol on Lake Issyk Kul engaged in the development and testing of new types of torpedo battery;
- the Ainur Joint-Stock Company and the Bishkek stamping plant in Bishkek that manufacture cartridges for small arms;
- the Zhanar Joint-Stock Company in Bishkek, which used to manufacture on-board computer equipment for military aircraft but since 2002 has switched to putting out technical border defense equipment.

It should be noted that a whole series of weapons manufactured in Kyrgyzstan have high export potential. In this respect, Moscow and Bishkek are elaborating ways to organize joint production of military equipment for exporting to third countries. This essentially concerns the manufacture of naval weapons for ensuring Russia's fulfillment of major contracts with India and China.

Cooperation in border security. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia assumed the obligation of helping Kyrgyzstan to defend its border with China, as well as create national border troops. For this purpose, on 5 December, 1992, corresponding interstate agreements were signed on forming a Group of Border Troops (GBT) of the Russian Federation in Kyrgyzstan totaling 5,000 men. Russian border guards defended Kyrgyzstan's state border with China until 1999, after which Bishkek asked that border defense be transferred to Kyrgyz border detachments. Essentially the entire Russian GBT material-technical base was gratuitously transferred to Kyrgyzstan.

After the Russian border group was withdrawn only an Operative Group of the RF FSS Border Service was left in Kyrgyzstan. In compliance with the agreements, the Group's tasks included rendering the Kyrgyz border structures consultation assistance in resolving organizational issues related to technical support, border defense, and the training of border service specialists.

* * *

On the whole, security cooperation between Russia and Kyrgyzstan is on the up and up. Moscow appears to be trying to expand its military presence there by means of cooperation in this vector, since the Russian leadership is concerned about the instability of the domestic political situation in the republic and the high level of influence of external forces on it. Russia has to keep in mind the multi-vector nature of Kyrgyzstan's cooperation with other countries, particularly the U.S. (keeping in mind the American base on Kyrgyz territory), as well as with other NATO member states and China.

Russia and Tajikistan

Tajikistan occupies a special place in Russia's bilateral security cooperation system with the Central Asian states. Since the time the republic acquired its independence to the present day there has been a rather large contingent of the Russian army on its territory, which has also been taking the most direct participation in ensuring Tajikistan's security and stability.

Military cooperation. Russia has been taking extremely active and efficient part in building Tajikistan's national security structures. The peak of Russian-Tajik military cooperation came at the beginning of the 1990s when the civil war began in Tajikistan (1992-1996). It was the Russian Federation that largely bore the main responsibility for maintaining the Tajik security structures at that time and ensuring the success of the peace process.

In 1993, in compliance with a decision of the Council of Heads of the CIS Member States, Joint Peacekeeping Forces (JPF) were created in Tajikistan based on Russia's 201st motorized infantry division. In so doing, Russia became a kind of guarantor of the peace in Tajikistan and prevented escalation of the tension in the region as a whole, particularly keeping in mind the permanent military-political instability in neighboring Afghanistan. After dissolution of the JPF, an agreement was reached between Moscow and Dushanbe on retaining a Russian military group in Tajikistan within the 201st motorized infantry division, as well as several support units.

In addition, keeping in mind that when the Soviet united air defense system collapsed and Tajikistan was essentially deprived of the possibility of ensuring the security of its own airspace, Moscow also helped Dushanbe to create a national air defense system. The first Tajik air defense division began its combat duty as early as 2000, and since 2001 squads of national air defense forces have been regularly traveling to the Russian Ashuluk firing range in the Astrakhan Region to conduct firing exercises.

At the same time, it was precisely between 2001 and 2004 that military cooperation between Russia and Tajikistan underwent a certain slump. Due to the more active role played by the U.S. and other Western countries in the region, the Tajik leadership decided to re-examine the nature of Russia's military presence in Tajikistan. This was primarily expressed in the foot dragging at the talks on the status and conditions of Russia's 201st motorized infantry division's stay in the republic. Dushanbe also stated the need to accelerate transfer of defense of Tajikistan's state border to the Tajik border guards and withdrawal of the Russian border troops that had been defending the Tajik-Afghan and Tajik-Chinese border.

The fall of 2004 can be considered the beginning of the new stage in Russian-Tajik military cooperation, when Russian President Vladimir Putin's state visit to Dushanbe saw a breakthrough in settling the contradictions that had emerged. As a result, the Russian and Tajik leaders signed a whole series of bilateral agreements, including on the conditions of the Russian military contingent's stay on Tajik territory and on the transformation of the 201st motorized infantry division into a Russian Federation armed forces military base.

Subsequently, the contractual and legal base of Russian-Tajik military cooperation was enhanced and expanded. On 11 June, 2008 the Russian State Duma ratified an agreement with Tajikistan on joint planning of the use of troops (forces) in the interests of ensuring joint security. The Russian chiefs-of-staff believe that ratification of the agreement will help to consolidate efforts in ensuring joint defense within the military-strategic space of both countries.

Carrying out joint exercises. In order to elaborate algorithms of joint actions of the Russian and Tajik armed forces, exercises are being carried out on a regular basis at the Tajik Liaur firing range (20 km north of Dushanbe) involving contingents from the 201st Russian military base and Tajik army.

Training military personnel. More than 500 Tajik citizens have undergone training at Russia's military higher education institutions and acquired regular officer ranks. Approximately 50 senior officers finished advanced training courses at Russia's Armed Forces military academies.

Using military facilities. A large Russian military contingent is currently stationed in Tajikistan, including more than 10 military units and detachments of different types of troops:

- the 201st military base (former 201st motorized infantry division) in Dushanbe as part of the 201st motorized infantry division, the 92nd motorized infantry regiment, the 998th self-pro-

- pelled artillery regiment, the 1098th surface-to-air missile regiment, and several other detachments;
- the 191st motorized infantry regiment in Kurgan-Tiub and the 149th motorized infantry regiment in Kulob belonging to the 201st military base;
- the 670th aviation group and 303rd detached helicopter squad at the Dushanbe aerodrome for rendering air and fire support to Russian detachments and Tajik armed forces units in the event of hostilities on Tajik territory;
- the 1109th detached optical-electronic unit of the Nurek space control system (the 7680 Okno facility) near Nurek for detecting the launching of ballistic missiles and following their flight path throughout the entire range of altitudes of spacecraft movement over Eurasia.⁶

Military-technical cooperation. Tajikistan is the only country in Central Asia that received practically nothing during the divvying up of the former Soviet Army's property. In contrast to the national armed forces of other Central Asian republics created on the basis of military detachments belonging to the Central Asian Military Okrug (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and partially Tajikistan) and the Turkestan Military Okrug (Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan), the Tajik armed forces were essentially created from national militia detachments. Arsenal of combat equipment, weapons, and ammunition in Tajikistan remained mainly under the control of Russia's 201st motorized infantry division.

So due to the civil war that broke out in Tajikistan, Moscow began rendering every possible military and technical assistance to the government forces. Deliveries of weapons and ammunition were regularly made from the storehouses of the 201st motorized infantry division and from Russia, and technical specialists helped to repair the combat materiel damaged during the hostilities. At the end of the civil war, the weapons and combat materiel of the Tajik Armed Forces continued to be serviced at Russian enterprises.

After President Vladimir Putin visited Dushanbe in the fall of 2004 military-technical cooperation between Russia and Tajikistan underwent a noticeable upswing. Between 2005 and 2006 Tajikistan was offered gratuitous military aid totaling more than 26 million dollars. In addition, in October 2007, an agreement was reached on transferring a large part of the combat materiel and ammunition of the 201st Russian military base to the Tajik Armed Forces. This process began in 2008 and is continuing at a steady pace. The equipment and ammunition transferred will total around 1 billion dollars.

Military-economic and scientific-technical cooperation. Several enterprises of the former Soviet military-industrial complex in Tajikistan are of interest to Russia. These enterprises are mainly located in the Sogd Region. They are primarily the 6th integrated mining and chemical plant (the Vostokredmet state enterprise) in Chkalovsk, at which uranium enrichment is carried out, as well as ore-mining uranium mines in the villages of Taboshar, Adrasman, and Naugarzan-Chigrik.

Cooperation in border security. Russia has been playing an active part both in creating national border structures and in defending Tajikistan's state border, for which the Group of Russian Border Troops (GRBT) was formed. Russian border guards played a perceptible role in localizing the civil conflict in Tajikistan. Largely thanks to the actions of the GRBT, the command of the United Tajik Opposition was unable to supply the regions of the Pamir area officially opposed to Dushanbe with enough weapons and ammunition from the bases on Afghan territory.

But at the beginning of 2000, on the initiative of the Tajik side, sections of the border began to be transferred to the defense of national border detachments, a process which was completed by the end of 2004. On the basis of the Agreement On Cooperation in Border Issues of 16 October, 2004

⁶ On the basis of an intergovernmental agreement, in 2006 the Nurek optical electronic unit was transferred to the Russian Federation by way of settling Tajikistan's debt to Russia.

only military advisors of the Russian FSS Border Service remain in Tajikistan, who are called upon to help create Tajik border detachments and provide consultation in organizing defense of the republic's state border.

* * *

On the whole, in recent years Russian-Tajik security cooperation has reached a sufficiently high level precisely with respect to its benefit both to Moscow and to Dushanbe. It is of vital importance for the Russian Federation that facilities with a significant role to play in the Russian security system in Central Asia are located on Tajik territory. The Tajik leadership, in turn, which is concerned about the extremely unpredictable situation in neighboring Afghanistan, regards Russia's military presence as an important external factor of the country's stability and security. Nevertheless, Russian-Tajik security relations are not entirely bright. The Tajik leadership, which has been increasingly counting on alternative sources for obtaining military aid in recent years, primarily from the West, is showing a growing capacity for adopting decisions (as was the case, for example, in 2001-2004) that run counter to Russian-Tajik partnership relations.

Russia and Uzbekistan

The Republic of Uzbekistan occupies an extremely important place in Russia's security cooperation with the Central Asian states since along with Kazakhstan and due to the republic's geopolitical, economic, demographic, and military potential, it is objectively a key state in the region. Uzbekistan has the most combat-ready and well-equipped armed forces in the region, which also have direct combat experience in carrying out special operations in mountain conditions.

Military cooperation. In the first years of independence, military cooperation between Russia and Uzbekistan was quite active; they were partners at that time. It is no accident that it was Russia and Uzbekistan that initiated the signing of the CIS Collective Security Treaty (CST) in Tashkent in May 1992, which was the first attempt to form a security system in the post-Soviet expanse. At the beginning of the civil war in Tajikistan Moscow and Tashkent closely coordinated their actions to render military assistance to the Tajik governmental formations. Along with Russia's 201st motorized infantry division, a composite battalion of the Uzbek Armed Forces formed part of the joint peace-keeping forces for maintaining peace in Tajikistan.

But largely due to the policy of Yeltsin's administration from the middle to the end of the 1990s Uzbekistan began to actively implement a strategy aimed primarily at rapprochement with the U.S. and NATO. Correspondingly, the intensity of Russian-Uzbek bilateral military cooperation noticeably declined at that time, and cooperation itself began to be increasingly for the record, limited to inconsequential meetings and sittings. In 1999, Uzbekistan decided not to participate in the collective security system within the CST.

The events of 9/11 brought Uzbekistan and the U.S. even closer together. Uzbekistan became a key link in Central Asia in the U.S.'s antiterrorism struggle in Afghanistan, and an American military base was created in the settlement of Khanabad.

But due to the slowly growing disappointment in the efficiency of the U.S.'s policy both in Afghanistan and in the Central Asian region as a whole, Uzbekistan began to take systemic steps to restore its relations with Moscow. On 16 June, 2004 a Treaty on Strategic Partnership was signed between Russia and Uzbekistan, and in 2005 Uzbekistan reached the level of alliance relations with

Russia after enforcing them in a corresponding treaty. According to this treaty, Russia and Uzbekistan pledge each other support in the event of aggression against one of the sides. In this case, the other side, by exercising its right to collective self-defense, renders the necessary assistance, including military, and also provides support using other means at its disposal.

Carrying out joint exercises. In contrast to the armed forces of other Central Asian states, the Uzbek Armed Forces have been taking very infrequent part in joint measures with Russian detachments to organize combat interaction. The first joint tactical exercises of special detachments of the Russian and Uzbek armed forces were not held until 2005 at the Farish firing range (Djizak Region) in the Uzbek mountains, in which 200 Russian servicemen took part. Similar exercises called Combat Fraternity-2006 were held at the firing range of the North Caucasian Military Okrug (the Krasnodar Territory). In addition, at the end of 2007, the military departments of both countries reached an agreement on annual, beginning in 2008, joint training sessions of air defense and air force specialists at Russia's Ashuluk firing range (the Astrakhan Region).

Training military personnel. More than 250 Uzbek officers have taken training courses at military higher educational institutions and specialized establishments of the Russian Federation. Compared with other Central Asian countries, this small number is explained by the fact that Uzbekistan itself has an extensive network of military training institutions, including two academies (of the Armed Forces and Ministry of the Interior), and its officers have also been undergoing partial training in specific fields of education in countries of the Far Abroad.

Using military facilities. There are no military facilities in Uzbekistan that Russia could rent in the interests of its military department. However, the Treaty on Strategic Partnership envisages the possibility of creating a CSTO military airbase. In addition, according to Art 8 of this Treaty, in order to ensure security, maintain peace and stability, and repulse external aggression, Russia and Uzbekistan grant each other the right, when necessary, to use their military facilities on the basis of additional agreements.

Military-technical cooperation. Uzbekistan inherited the impressive material-technical base of the former Turkestan Military Okrug from the Soviet Union. So in the first years of the country's independence the national armed forces did not experience any particular need for combat materiel and weapons. On the basis of the Agreement on Principles of Mutual Technical and Material Support of the Armed Forces signed on 2 March, 1994, in the 1990s Russia mainly delivered only ammunition to Uzbekistan and carried out warranty repair of military hardware at Russian enterprises.⁷

When Russia and Uzbekistan reached the level of alliance relations, the range and amount of military equipment delivered significantly increased. According to the estimates of the Russian Defense Ministry, the volume of military-technical cooperation with Uzbekistan amounts to several tens of millions of dollars. The matter primarily concerns deliveries of the latest small arms, ammunition, spare parts for armored tank hardware, air defense equipment, and the repair of aerotechnics.

Military-economic and scientific-technical cooperation. On the basis of an intergovernmental agreement On Production and Scientific-Technical Cooperation of Defense Enterprises of 26 January, 1994, production relations between Russia and Uzbekistan in this sphere have been continuing, although they are cyclical in nature. At the current stage, enterprises of the Uzbek aviation industry are of the greatest interest to the Russian Federation:

- the Tashkent Chkalov Aviation Production Association, which since Soviet days has been the head enterprise in the assembly of Il-76 military transport planes and their modifications that comprise the basis of the Russian air force transport aviation fleet;⁸

⁷ But it should also be noted that Yeltsin's administration essentially sabotaged the rendering of urgent military-technical assistance to Uzbekistan (mainly deliveries of ammunition) in the summer of 1998 (the assistance was necessary because of the advance of Taliban formations toward the Uzbek-Afghan border), which noticeably complicated bilateral relations.

⁸ From the mid-1990s to 2001, the Tashkent Chkalov Aviation Production Association essentially received no orders from Russia for the assembly of new planes, although the plant did not cease servicing Il-76 airplanes (both at the head

—the Russian-Uzbek UzRosAvia Joint Venture in Chirchik (the Tashkent Region) created on the basis of intergovernmental agreements signed in March 2007 and intended for repairing and servicing military Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters.

* * *

On the whole, the current level of Russian-Uzbek bilateral security cooperation is quite high. Moscow is showing an interest in Uzbekistan since the republic is objectively a key link in the collective security system being formed under Russia's aegis in the region and has strong armed forces and high military-technical and military-economic potential. Uzbekistan, in turn, is vitally interested in stability in Central Asia and maintains sufficiently close and affiliate relations with Russia in the security sphere. At the same time, Uzbekistan is also willing to develop cooperation with other countries, including the U.S. and its NATO allies, as well as China. It appears that this is based on the strict understanding that, particularly due to the instability in neighboring Afghanistan, ignoring the desire of other external forces to cooperate with Tashkent will obviously not promote regional stability.

Russia and Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan traditionally occupies a special position in security cooperation issues with Russia. This is largely explained both by Moscow's mistakes and blunders in its policy in the post-Soviet expanse as a whole and in the Turkmen vector in particular and by the foreign policy Ashgabad has been following since it acquired national independence. Noteworthy in this respect is the fact that Turkmenistan is the only state in the post-Soviet expanse that is not a member of any military-political bloc.

As early as 31 July, 1992, Moscow and Ashgabad signed a basic document, the Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation, on the basis of which Russia has been acting as the guarantor of Turkmenistan's security. At the same time the Treaty on Joint Measures Regarding the Creation of the Armed Forces of Turkmenistan was signed. On the basis of the agreements reached, numerous detachments of the air force and air defense of the former U.S.S.R. Armed Forces, as well as contingents of border troops in Turkmenistan, were under Russian jurisdiction. The other land military contingents of the former Turkestan Military Okrug—three motorized infantry divisions and one training center with mobilization resource for one division, as well as several other detachments—were to be completely transferred to the Turkmenistan Defense Ministry over the following ten years.

During this transition period, Russia was obligated to render military-technical assistance to the national armed forces, as well as pay the Turkmen side compensation for the right to deploy its contingents in Turkmenistan's territory, while Turkmenistan shouldered the expenses for maintaining and supporting the joint affiliation detachments. The Joint Command created in 1992 was called upon to

Tashkent enterprise and by means of plant specialists traveling directly to Russian flight detachments). Since 2003 there has been a revival in relations between the Tashkent Chkalov Aviation Production Association and the enterprises of the Russian aviation industrial complex, in particular with the Iliushin Aviation Complex, and corresponding loading of the plant with new orders. Rosoboronexport began placing orders with the Tashkent Chkalov Aviation Production Association for Il-76 airplanes for third countries. In October 2007, an agreement was reached on the assembly at the Tashkent Chkalov Aviation Production Association of a large consignment of military reconnaissance planes on the basis of Il-114 airplanes. Russia is planning to receive a total of 28 planes of this type before 2015.

coordinate the security efforts of the two states. A task force of the Russian Defense Ministry functioned in Ashgabad to participate in the work of the command between 1992 and 1994.

In addition, in 1993 Moscow and Ashgabad signed the undated Treaty on Joint Defense of Turkmenistan's State Border and Status of the Russian Border Guards in the Republic. In compliance with it, in March 1994 a Task Force of the Russian Federal Border Service was created with a total of up to 3,000 people. The personnel of the Federal Border Service Task Force rendered assistance to Turkmen border guards in defending the Turkmenistan border with Iran and Afghanistan.

Whereas the signing of these two documents initially helped Russia to retain a rather strong position in Turkmenistan, over time the situation began to rapidly change. Due to Russia's essentially pro-Western orientation and extreme underestimation of the importance of the post-Soviet expanse, in the mid-1990s the vector of Ashgabad's foreign policy tipped in favor of Turkey and the U.S. In 1994, Turkmenistan became the first Central Asian state to join NATO's Partnership for Peace program and acquire the right to partial participation in NATO's undertakings. This, along with other actions of the Turkmen and Russian leadership, had a negative effect on security cooperation between Moscow and Ashgabad.

As a result of the progressive cooling off in relations between Russia and Turkmenistan, Ashgabad withdrew from the Treaty on Joint Measures Regarding the Creation of the Armed Forces of Turkmenistan and later decided to disband the Joint Command. In 1999, the Turkmen side announced its desire to withdraw from the Treaty on Joint Defense of the State Border as well, as a result of which the Russian border guards were forced to leave Turkmenistan. By the end of the 1990s, security cooperation between Turkmenistan and Russia had essentially been curtailed.

Significant improvement in these countries' relations was first seen after Vladimir Putin's administration came to power in Russia. Expressing his extreme interest in Turkmen gas, the newly elected Russian president picked Turkmenistan as one of the places for his first trips in May 2000, whereby reviving the dialogue with the Turkmen leader on a wide range of issues, primarily the gas problem. But the main breakthrough in relations occurred at the beginning of 2003 during Saparmurat Niyazov's visit to Moscow, when the sides signed two main agreements—on long-term (for 25 years) gas export from Turkmenistan and on security cooperation. The latter envisaged in particular cooperation between Russia and Turkmenistan in the fight against international terrorism and the illicit circulation of arms and drugs, which correspondingly implied closer coordination of actions between the Russian and Turkmen security structures.

In particular, a protocol was signed at that time which set forth the basic vectors and primary tasks for stepping up military-technical cooperation. Specific tasks were defined by the Russian side for rendering assistance to the Turkmen Defense Ministry in the technical servicing, repair, and metrological support of weapons and military hardware and in creating a joint repair enterprise. The composition and functions of the Committee for Military-Technical Cooperation between the military departments of both countries were also stipulated. But the agreements reached were not implemented due to the political crisis that arose the same year between Moscow and Ashgabad regarding dual citizenship. Until Niyazov's death at the end of 2006, relations between Russia and Turkmenistan were more political and declarative in nature and limited only to deliveries of Turkmen gas to Russia.

When President Berdymukhammedov came to power in Turkmenistan at the beginning of 2007, Ashgabad showed a growing willingness to raise relations with Russia to a new level, including in security. This issue, along with the energy question, was examined as early as the spring of 2007 at the talks between presidents Berdymukhammedov and Putin, during which Moscow managed to convince Astana and Ashgabad to participate in building the Caspian gas pipeline. Since this time, Turkmenistan has been gradually restoring its security cooperation with Russia as well, primarily developing the military-technical component of cooperation.

In July 2008, on the eve of new Russian President Dmitri Medvedev's visit to Turkmenistan, the Russian defense minister visited Ashgabad for the first time in the last few years. During the talks with his Turkmen colleague Army General A. Mamedgeldyev, A. Serdiukov noted the activated cooperation between the military departments of the two countries and its ascent over the past two years to a qualitatively new level. This was evidenced in particular by the renewed training of Turkmen servicemen at the military educational institutions of the Russian Defense Ministry, which is currently being carried out on a privileged basis.

The signing of a contract in the summer of 2008 for Turkmenistan's purchase of six sets of Smerch multiple launch rocket systems from Russia also shows the intensification of Russian-Turkmen military-technical cooperation. This is the first large military-technical deal between Russia and Turkmenistan in the past ten years (the sum of the contract amounts to some 70 million dollars).

So it appears to be no coincidence that the head of the Turkmen military department visited the international Nizhny Tagil-2008 exhibition of weapons, military hardware, and ammunitions, at which time he expressed the intention of his country to purchase materiel and weaponry in Russia, as well as have the old equipment upgraded.

Russian President Dmitri Medvedev's visit in July 2008 to Ashgabad and the fact that more agreements were reached with the Turkmenistan leadership on gas projects, particularly on the volumes and directions of Turkmen gas transit until 2025, show the importance of the Turkmen vector for Moscow. This circumstance will largely determine Russia's striving to develop multifaceted cooperation with Turkmenistan, including in security, where Russia, compared with other players in the Central Asian expanse, still has significant advantages.

* * *

On the whole, it can be said with a certain amount of confidence that the development of security cooperation between Moscow and Ashgabad has recently found its second wind. Whereby it is obvious that the desire to cooperate is mainly motivated by a pragmatic approach and taking mutual account of national interests. Russia wants to establish long-term relations with Turkmenistan, including in security, which is helping to fortify Russia's energy position. In turn, Turkmenistan is striving today as never before to go beyond cooperation exclusively in the gas sphere when building its relations with its partners, including Russia, in order to diversify its economy. It seems that the extent to which Russia is able to offer Turkmenistan advantageous forms of economic cooperation in particular, by coordinating its geopolitical and energy interests with Ashgabad's interests, will largely predetermine the future of Russian-Turkmen relations, including in security.

Conclusion

By gaining a clearer understanding of Central Asia as an expanse in which it can realize its vitally important interests, Russia does not want to allow other states to become entrenched there. This is directly related to strengthening its security cooperation with the Central Asian countries, primarily in the bilateral format, which is the most effective and at the same time less costly (for example compared with developing full-fledged economic relations) policy tool.

In turn, the security threats and challenges in Central Asia posed by global, regional, and domestic problems and contradictions are shaping the CA countries' reciprocal interest in developing closer security cooperation with Russia.

- **First**, none of the Central Asian states feels completely safe being located next to one of the most unstable zones on the planet—Afghanistan. The ongoing chaos, which could at any moment spread to the neighboring states, is mainly generated by the growing resistance to Hamid Karzai’s ruling pro-Western regime from anti-governmental forces in the context of the ruined economy and ubiquitous corruption and the existence of regional ethnic leaders’ armed groups that are not subordinate to Kabul.
- **Second**, in conditions of the unresolved socioeconomic problems in the Central Asian countries, the influence of different religious extremist organizations, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, the Islamic Movement of Turkestan, and others, is continuing to steadily rise despite the measures being carried out to expose, prevent, and stop their activity.
- **Third**, the complicated issues involving borders, territories, and natural resources are also feeding the continuing contradictions and problems among the Central Asian countries and could lead to interstate conflicts in the future.

However, there has been no significant progress so far in security cooperation between the Russian Federation and Central Asia. Nor has the level of confidence inherent in strategic allies been reached. By implementing a multi-vector approach in their foreign policy, all of Moscow’s Central Asian partners without exception are also showing an increased interest in greater security cooperation with the West, particularly with the U.S. and other NATO member states.

It also seems that the new trends in the development of the international situation around Russia, largely caused by the most recent events in the Caucasus, as well as the world financial-economic crisis, could make significant adjustments to the cooperation issues in security between the Russian Federation and Central Asia. Whereby these adjustments may not necessarily help to strengthen the Russian-Central Asian alliance.