After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the newly independent Central Asian republics had a historic opportunity to seek a new future, but found themselves to be the object of a great game at the same time. Three magnetic forces—Russia, the United States, and China—are competing for influence in the political and economic sphere (with India getting ready to join the game), while Iran and Saudi Arabia are active in the spiritual field.

As a result, the Central Asian states are being tested by two contradictory trends: Islamicization on the one hand, and the wish to be transformed into modern, secular societies on the other. The attempt to combine both—assuming a moderate form of Islam and suppressing the most radical manifestations of extremism—is not easily accomplished, since the Central Asian states not only must endure Eastern authoritarianism, but also suffer from extreme levels of corruption.

The great game is unpredictable and fraught with both external and internal threats, like the orange revolution. In order to ensure their security, the Central Asian states need reliable military forces, strong allies, and good relations with all of the states with power and influence in the region.

THE REGION AND WEAPONRY

Several years ago, the leaders of the newly independent states thought that an alliance with the United States would ensure prosperity. As early as 2002, speaking in Washington at a meeting with American businessmen, leader of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov declared, «Uzbekistan can become a true friend and supporter of the United States in Central Asia.» The «color revolutions» and other similar, unsuccessful attempts at revolt harmed, rather than strengthened, the U.S. positions in the region. In 2005, after the events in Andizhan, speaking this time in front of a Russian audience, Karimov said, «I would like to express my thanks to Russia for the appreciation and assistance which we have received. There is a Russian saying, ‘a friend becomes known in misfortune.’ It says everything.»

Russia has historically enjoyed the strongest influence in Central Asia: both economic and cultural ties (the shared Soviet education and Russian language, which the Central Asian elite have not forgotten), as well as common security interests. But it is Soviet weapons that tie the Central Asian states to Russia more strongly than anything else in the unsettled times of the post-Soviet period.
The Central Asian states have few of the newest weapon types. The Soviet Union kept these weapons close to NATO—in Ukraine and Belarus. Central Asia was used more like an attic, where old junk that could be moved and shot with was brought and stored just in case it might be needed in a large war. As a result, the region ended up with significant (and in some locations, enormous) quantities of weapons that are not new, but are reliable. These are the weapons—inexpensive and simple to use—that are being used in local conflicts. There is a steady global demand for them. This demand has even allowed Uzbekistan to become one of the world’s main arms exporters.

Table 1. Conventional Weapons Suppliers, 2001–2005 (in SIPRI Trend Indicator Values, expressed in $millions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even simple weapons require maintenance and repairs, spare parts, and ammunition. Like people, equipment ages, and the time of Soviet weaponry is coming to a close. For example, helicopters have service lives of about 25 years. This means that helicopters built in the early 1980s should be prepared for scrap. The seemingly endless Soviet military inheritance is coming to an end.

With the exception of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, the Central Asian republics are only adding to their arsenals through miniscule procurement programs. The defense capabilities of these countries are being increased in part by military gifts from Russia, the United States, China, and Turkey. Information on military procurement and defense expenditures are often contradictory. The following table provides SIPRI’s interpretation of the data.

Table 2. Receipts of Conventional Weapons, 2001–2005 (in SIPRI Trend Indicator Values, expressed in $millions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Today, the armed forces of the Central Asian states are quite weak and predominantly equipped with either old Soviet weapons or second-hand weaponry received as gifts. Only Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have relatively strong militaries. Kazakhstan has received quite...
a few weapons from Europe that are unfit for action, left in storage at regional bases. The Kyrgyz and Tajik armies are purely symbolic.

Table 3. Military Forces of the Central Asian States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Military Forces</th>
<th>Kazakhstan</th>
<th>Kyrgyzstan</th>
<th>Tajikistan</th>
<th>Turkmenistan</th>
<th>Uzbekistan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of military (in thousands)</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8 (+ 8 Russian)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paramilitary (in thousands)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat aircraft</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>72 MiG-21 (+10 Russian)</td>
<td>None (+10 Russian)</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helicopters</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>32 (+20 Russian)</td>
<td>18 (+10 Russian)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antiaircraft assets</td>
<td>147 S-75, S-125, S-200, &amp; S-300P launchers</td>
<td>36 S-125, S-75 &amp; Krug launchers &amp; 48 anti-aircraft systems</td>
<td>20 S-75 &amp; S-125 launchers &amp; 48 anti-aircraft systems</td>
<td>50 S-75, S-125 &amp; S-200 launchers &amp; 48 anti-aircraft systems</td>
<td>45 S-75, S-12 &amp; S-300P launchers &amp; launchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanks</td>
<td>930 tanks (280 T-62 &amp; 650 T-72)</td>
<td>215 T-72</td>
<td>44 T-72 &amp; T-62 (+128 Russian)</td>
<td>702 T-72</td>
<td>340 T-62, T-64, T-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>1,278</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>63 (+314 Russian)</td>
<td>1,929</td>
<td>842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>8 ships and attack boats</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table based on a variety of published sources

Estimates of Central Asian defense expenditures are contradictory. Compare, for example, the data contained in tables 4 and 5.

Table 4. Military Expenditures of Central Asian States, 1996–2005 (in $millions), SIPRI data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>155</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>98.0</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>91.9</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Supporting the military is a large burden on the weak economies of the Central Asian states. None of them have been able fundamentally to reequip their troops. However, change is under way. Although Soviet weapons continue to form the basis of their military power, the post-Soviet militaries have begun to have their own national personnel, along with weapons from NATO countries and China. The Central Asian states have not acquired many new weapons in the past 15 years, instead relying on foreign military assistance; they have also become accus-
tomed to the charity of their neighbors. In the absence of financial resources and the political will to increase combat capabilities, military cooperation with Russia under the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) has become critical to regional militaries.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$ million</th>
<th>$ per capita</th>
<th>Percent of GDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>1,680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>2,200</td>
<td>2,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE CSTO

Russia has bilateral military and technological cooperation agreements with all five of the Central Asian states. Four of the five (with the exception of Turkmenistan, which is a neutral country) are CSTO members. Although military cooperation with each of them has its distinctive features, they have several things in common:

- Within the CSTO Russian standards and armaments, and even military organization, remain the rule.

- Member states are obligated to provide one another military and technical assistance. In accordance with Article 4 of the Collective Security Treaty, in cases of aggression against any member state all of the remaining members will provide the necessary assistance, including military assistance. The Treaty provides a legal foundation for the prompt supply of ammunition, fuel, spare parts, urgent equipment repairs, and the training of specialists in cases of emergencies.

- Members aim to undertake joint efforts to produce, modernize, and repair arms and equipment, and to establish joint enterprises.

- Servicemen from these countries can obtain instruction in Russian military academies on favorable terms. Since 2005, military servicemen from allied countries have studied at Russian Defense Ministry institutions of higher education on a grant basis. Thus, in 2005 Russia provided $15 million from the federal budget for this purpose. To compare, the United States spends approximately $11.6 million per year to train CIS military servicemen. At present, nearly 2,500 officers and cadets from CSTO member states are enrolled in Russian military institutes of higher learning.

- CSTO partners are also given favorable conditions for the purchase of Russian military equipment. Of course, there is one key condition: the military equipment that is acquired must enter into the service of a national military service, including the Collective Rapid Reaction Force. Only then will the export price correspond to the procurement price for the Russian Army.
The low price of armaments may be one of the most attractive privileges of CSTO membership. Russia offers members a comprehensive deal: member payments for weapons are not subject to value-added tax, and delivery is charged at Russian domestic rates.

True, there is one other important reservation: upon leaving the treaty these benefits are withdrawn and the difference between the export price and the member price becomes national debt.

Figure 1. Russian weaponry before the early 18th century

Despite the fairly large number of defense enterprises in Central Asia, not one of the states in the region can produce military equipment independently. Without Russia, there is no Central Asian defense industry. There are plans within the CSTO to enact a package of integrating measures in the area of military and technical cooperation to establish joint enterprises, corporations, and financial-industrial groups to facilitate joint design and production of armaments and military equipment. In addition, the CSTO states jointly will undertake the modernization, repair, operation and dismantlement of existing weapon systems and military equipment.

At the same time as one observes a trend toward the disintegration and disengagement of military forces in the various CIS states (many of which are going over to NATO standards), the CSTO is restoring the unity and uniformity that existed in Soviet times, creating integrated military systems of combat readiness, operational planning, administration, reconnaissance, air defense, rear and technical support, etc.

Air defense systems make up the largest portion of expenditures among the integrated defense programs in the post-Soviet space. A full 70 percent of all expenditures of the CIS states’ Ministers of Defense Council is for the improvement and development of the United Air Defense System. While some CIS countries have only agreed to an exchange of information within the framework of the CIS air defense system, the CSTO United Air Defense System has a single command center and allows members to operate in a single airspace. That is, nation-
al air defense systems that are part of the system can operate throughout this system regardless of their nationality. The command center for Central Asian Regional Air Defense is located in Astana. The air defense forces of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Uzbekistan are on integrated military alert.

If the integrated air defense system only restores the unified organization for air defense that existed under the Soviet Union, the Collective Rapid Reaction Force for the Central Asian region should be seen as the prototype for a future unified CSTO military.

The CSTO Rapid Reaction Force was created on May 25, 2001 by the decision of the heads of four CSTO states—Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan—due to the worsening regional situation. Their aim was to stop extremists if tensions were to increase and armed conflict erupt on the southern borders of the CIS.

The CSTO Rapid Reaction Force consists of ten battalions: three each from Russia and Tajikistan, and two each from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The total number of personnel in the collective forces is about 4,000 servicemen. The air component (10 aircraft and 14 helicopters) is located at Russia’s Kant air base in Kyrgyzstan. The Rapid Reaction Force permanent command headquarters is in the Kyrgyz capital. It is headed by a representative of the Kyrgyzstan Armed Forces.

It is precisely to equip them that Russia has been willing to supply weapons on favorable terms, so that the Rapid Reaction Force can become a model force, an elite, and the «calling card» of the CSTO.

These forces must be equipped with uniform weaponry and materiel. The Rapid Reaction Force is funded as follows: Russia—50 percent; Kazakhstan—30 percent; and Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan—10 percent apiece.

Specialists have noted a significant increase in the number of mutual orders for military equipment.

Plans call for the creation of a united Central Asian Collective Security Force on the basis of the CSTO Rapid Reaction Force by 2010. This force should be capable of resisting not just terrorist attacks, but also «major armed conflict» threatening CSTO member states. Proposals call for giving the Collective Security Force the job of localizing and curtailing potential conflicts near the CSTO’s external borders, defeating an aggressor’s military units, and creating the conditions for a cessation of hostilities. The organization, composition, and numerical strength of the force in peacetime and during conflicts will have to be confirmed by the presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan.

The CSTO Rapid Reaction Force is not just a combined military force created to deflect current threats. It is the prototype of an allied army that in future will be able to resolve problems both small (mitigating the consequences of natural calamities) and large (regional military conflict).

Equipping this future combat force with modern weapons is a matter of paramount importance for all member governments. A new model of allied interaction is developing around the CSTO Rapid Reaction Force, and programs for mutual assistance in the area of military equipment, programs for special military technical aid, procedures for building national armed forces, and mechanisms for cooperation among enterprises in the defense industry are being formed.

Now let us examine the individual states of the region in more detail.

KAZAKHSTAN

With a relatively strong army for a Central Asian state, Kazakhstan maintains an independent policy that is coordinated with Russia in many respects. Fifteen years ago Kazakhstan had 5,000 tanks and thousands of aircraft in its possession. The majority of this equipment had to be destroyed under the terms of the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE). At the time, the authorities could not afford to cut up their armored corps. Instead, they poured
cement into the tanks. They are standing in the steppe today, a museum to the military might of the Soviet Union.

During the Soviet era, many Kazakh enterprises produced military equipment. Ironically, Kazakhstan, though located deep inland, supplied weapons to the Soviet fleet. Today the majority of these enterprises have converted to peaceful products, particularly for the petroleum industry. The remaining Kazakh defense enterprises overhaul and provide spare parts for the combat equipment used by the Russian Navy: ground, anti-amphibious, and self-propelled mines; several types of naval and aerial torpedoes, and mine sweepers.

After obtaining independence, Kazakh enterprises began to produce coastguard cutters and patrol ships for the protection of naval borders and combating poaching in the North Caspian: the cutters Sunkar and Sapsan, Burkit-class ships, as well as the Bars patrol ship.

Cooperation with Kazakhstan in air defense is the most important part of Russian defense procurement cooperation with this country. Since the Soviet era, Kazakhstan has had MiG-31 aircraft and S-75 and S-125 anti-aircraft systems in its arsenal. Kazakhstan’s air defense forces are also equipped with S-300P air defense systems, ensuring the necessary level of protection against potential threats. These air defense systems were transferred to Kazakhstan in compensation for military equipment repatriated from its territory after the Soviet collapse. In 2000 alone, three complexes were transferred, along with eight Su-27 aircraft and two Su-27UB aircraft.

For a long time after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia’s and Kazakhstan’s military leadership maintained their old ties. This helped them to maintain equipment readiness: the Kazakh military got components from their Russian colleagues, while the Russian Defense Ministry often sent air defense systems for repairs to Kazakhstan’s Granit plant.

It would seem that the conditions for military and technical collaboration between the two countries that were developed during the Soviet era were ideal. But the cost of Russian weapons became a stumbling block: the Kazakh military knew the Russian arms market and its moderate prices perfectly well, but Russian government middlemen tried to set prices for arms exports at world prices.

At one time Russia supplied Kazakhstan with diverse equipment—including military equipment—for use at the Baikonur Cosmodrome. More than half of the yearly rent for Baikonur, some $115 million, Russia paid for in kind, by supplying weapons. Deliveries of weapons and military equipment were also used to pay the rent for the Sary Shagan and Emba military test sites and the facilities and military fields of the 4th State Test Site and 929th State Flight Test Center, all located on Kazakh territory. However, presidential interference was once needed to resolve one of the frequent conflicts that arose over the cost of equipment. Today Russia pays for Baikonur in cash.

For a long time the sale of weapons to Kazakhstan at internal Russian prices, repeatedly promised by first Russian president Boris Yeltsin personally, was mired in an abyss of bureaucracy and red tape. Changes began to occur just some years ago: since 2003 Russian enterprises have repaired Kazakh equipment and delivered spare parts at reduced prices. However, a real agreement on reduced-price supplies of Russian weapons to CSTO member states was only initiated in 2004. Military and technical cooperation between the two countries, which until that time was dying at the negotiating stage, immediately improved: in 2005–2006 Kazakhstan acquired 80 BTR-80A armored cars. Today the MiG Aircraft Corporation is negotiating the replacement of MiG-31s with MiG-25s via a trade-in.

Kazakhstan is a country with a small population and enormous territory. There are just 15,233,244 citizens inhabiting a territory of 2,717,300 sq. km, while a national border 12,012 km in length is protected by an armed forces numbering less than 100,000. For comparison: the European Union, with a territory of 4,325,675 sq. km and a population of 496,198,605 is defended by 1,606,050 servicemen. To defend the gigantic Kazakhstani border with a comparatively small armed force requires high mobility and modern tracking systems and communications. It is likely that Kazakhstan will soon have to re-arm, or more accurately, to create, an air cavalry. This means the purchase of transport and training aircraft and...
helicopters. All aircraft, without exception, will need repair. It is possible that producers of aircraft and certain aircraft accessories will sign military equipment service contracts with the Kazakh military. All armored vehicles and missile systems will need repair and modernization. As Kazakhstan Defense Ministry military inspector Lieutenant General Bakhytzhan Yertayev has acknowledged, only 20 percent of the military equipment in today’s Kazakh armed forces is of the necessary quality and combat-ready. By the way, the officer corps is shrinking catastrophically: in 2002 650 officers were discharged from the armed forces, while in 2004 this number had risen to 1,134.

When he became Minister of Defense in January 2007, Danial Akhmetov received carte blanche from the president to modernize the army thoroughly: in 2007 the national defense budget was doubled, to over $1 billion, while defense procurement appropriations also doubled. Kazakhstan plans an intensive rearmament of its army and the creation of a Caspian Navy.

The new minister did not take long to get in gear, directing his experts, together with their Russian colleagues, to develop a program for the reorganization of Kazakhstan’s armed forces. «The period for the development of the program is one month. This will allow us to change the character of our armed forces substantially by 2015,» said the minister. The first change will concern the Air Force: pilots will be trained and will obtain new equipment.

On April 7, 2007, Kazakhstani President Nursultan Nazarbayev affirmed the new military doctrine. In accordance with this doctrine the armed forces of Kazakhstan must be provided with high-tech weaponry and military equipment that meets the «threats specific to Kazakhstan in the new international situation.» The document emphasizes that priority will be given to the «deepening of a strategic partnership with the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China on the basis of common military and political interests in the region.»

Kazakhstan’s military doctrine was indeed developed with the help of NATO experts. However, at the end of the 20th century Russian experts were invited to consult with the Kazakhstani military leadership about the defense-industrial complex.

There are plans to develop cooperation between defense enterprises: Russian experts have repeatedly visited Kazakhstani defense enterprises, without which Russia would have difficulty maintaining its navy’s combat readiness. The tone for joint defense production is being set by the peaceful research and exploration of outer space, and ensured by the personal attention of the leaders of the two countries and the associated state financing. Already in May 2006, the Kazan helicopter plant and the NK Kazakhstan Engineering joint-stock company signed an agreement on the establishment of a joint enterprise in Kazakhstan. During its initial stage it will produce Mi-17 and Ansat helicopters, and later the entire line of KVZ helicopters.

At the same time, Kazakhstan supports a wide range of military contacts: with the United States, United Kingdom, China, Turkey, and Ukraine. For instance, NATO partners are also ready to help build Kazakhstan’s military. Robert Simmons, NATO’s Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia, has emphasized that «we would like to provide comprehensive assistance in reforming your armed services and developing a new military doctrine so that you can better meet modern threats and challenges.»

NATO is already providing assistance «through the development of and in bringing its mobile forces to NATO standards, specifically KazBat, which recently became KazBrig.» The United States has transferred several coastguard cutters, off-road vehicles, and equipment for mountain rangers to Kazakhstan. Under the framework of military cooperation with the U.S. military, over the course of four years more than 160 professional sergeants in the Kazakh Armed Forces have received training. In 2004, Washington gave Astana $5 million to help create a
modern coast guard and navy to protect offshore facilities and combat drug trafficking and smuggling at sea. In 2005, Washington rendered $30 million in military assistance to Astana. In December 2006, the Interior Ministry of Kazakhstan acquired the foreign helicopter R44 Raven II as air support for the police for the first time, although before they had used Soviet equipment.

Facts like these give Russians occasion to worry about the prospects for military and technical cooperation between Russia and Kazakhstan.

Two years ago the media even discussed the possibility of the installation of NATO air defenses in Kazakhstan. Possible suppliers of radars and other military equipment were named: the United Kingdom’s BAE Systems and the EADS concern. The Kazakhstani military consulted with the British specialists on several occasions, causing a commotion in Russia’s military leadership.

Theoretically, the Russian air defense systems could be exchanged for western systems. But the adoption of complex western systems would require gigantic financial outlays and the retraining of military air defense forces—the intellectual elite of any armed forces. And most importantly: this would require a radical political reason, a change in foreign policy. However, Kazakhstan traditionally demonstrates political moderation and stability. If the United States had not been providing American cutters and Hummer jeeps, there would be no reason at all to expect that Kazakhstan’s military leadership would want to reorient themselves to NATO standards.

UZBEKISTAN

Uzbekistan is a nation of born traders. This could be the reason why, according to SIPRI data, the Uzbek military have achieved a steady increase in the volume of exports of basic types of conventional weapons. In 2003, Uzbekistan occupied seventh place in world weapons sales ($510 million).

However, the time has come for the large-scale rearmament of the Uzbekistan military as well. Armored vehicles, aviation, and air defense are all in need of modernization. And although among the Central Asian states Uzbekistan occupies first place in terms of purchases of Russian weapons (with a volume in the tens of millions of dollars), these volumes will have to expand by several times in the very near future. The conditions for this exist: an agreement on military collaboration signed by Uzbekistan and Russia provides for the training of Uzbek servicemen in Russia, permission for access to Russian test sites, and the possibility of repairing military equipment in Russia on favorable terms.

In 1999 and 2000, when Islamic extremists attempted to invade Uzbekistan, Russia provided 50 BTR-80s to Uzbekistan’s Interior Ministry and 80 BTR-80s to its Ministry of Defense, about 100 mortars of various calibers as well as their ammunition, Utes machine guns, grenade launchers, sniper rifles, means of communication, Mi-8 helicopters, ammunition worth about $30 million, as well as Alazan anti-hail rockets.

The two countries have been developing a joint helicopter program for several years now that includes: the assistance of Russian experts in organizing the repair of Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters at the Chirchik Aviation Repair Plant, training aircraft technicians and test pilots, spare parts delivery, and conversion of Mi-24P helicopters into Mi-24PK2 helicopters. According to the UN register, in 2005 Russia provided 10 unspecified missiles to Uzbekistan. Small consignments of spare parts for aircraft and armored vehicles, as well as artillery ammunition are regularly purchased.

The main orders today are small arms and ammunition, special equipment for the national security service (SNB) and Interior Ministry, police equipment, and crowd control equipment: tear gas and clubs. In 2007, Uzbekistan will spend about $1 billion on military needs. In the next few years Uzbekistan’s entire air force is due for refits. Russian producers already have been conducting negotiations regarding this work for a long time. In the longer term,
Uzbekistan has indicated its interest in acquiring Ka-50 helicopters as well as MiG-29 and ZRK S-300 aircraft.

Russian business, much of which receives state support, could be involved in the privatization of a whole series of important Uzbek enterprises. By the way, since 2000, Uzbekistan has reserved up to 250,000 tons of cotton each year to exchange for Russian military equipment (about a fourth of the country’s entire cotton crop). Payment for weapons supplies also includes the transit of Turkmen gas through Uzbek territory. In addition to mining and processing plants and metallurgical combines, they include aviation and motor vehicle plants. The list of Russian-Uzbek investment projects includes 37 with a total value of $2.09 billion. The creation of the UkRosAvia joint venture for the repair of helicopter equipment is one of them.

Russian-Uzbek business related to the Il-76 aircraft has been quite dramatic: the Chkalov Tashkent Industrial Aircraft Association (TAPOiCh) produces the aircraft from Russian parts. On several occasions there have been serious fights over the right to sell the finished product in third countries and for the share of profits from such sales: three aircraft with A-50 radar reconnaissance systems for India, 30 Il-76M transport planes and eight Il-78M refuelers for China (various estimates put the value at anywhere from $800 million to $1.5 billion), as well as two Il-76MF for Jordan. The in-depth modernization of the Il-76MF continues to be haggled over today: large orders from both Russian (over 100 aircraft) and a number of foreign militaries are expected. It had appeared that the parties were in agreement that TAPOiCh would become part of the United Aircraft Construction Corporation that is being created in Russia. However, Uzbekistan rejected the proposal, and then Russian Air Force Commander-in-Chief Vladimir Mikhailov announced the transfer of Il-76MF transport plane construction from Tashkent to Ulyanovsk. Russian security requires that the process of constructing heavy transport planes be strictly controlled. «This is an acute and complicated question, since it will then be necessary to assign the plant work and guarantee that it has orders. We agreed that we would work on this in the near future,» explained then Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov. The future of TAPOiCh will most likely be tied to Il-114 passenger plane.

More than 100 cadets and students from Uzbekistan are being trained at Russian military educational institutes; moreover, a substantial number of them are attending free of charge.

Military cooperation with Uzbekistan is increasing as well: joint anti-terrorist exercises have been conducted every year since 2005. A decision has been made within the CSTO framework to establish a large force grouping in the Central Asian region. In order for Uzbekistan legally to rejoin the CSTO, Tashkent must join nearly 70 international treaties and agreements. Plans call for this to be completed by January 1, 2008. In the beginning of April 2007 for the first time representatives of Uzbekistan took part in the CSTO Collective Rapid Reaction Force’s «Rubezh-2007» (Frontier-2007) exercises that took place at Tajikistan’s Lyaur Test Site—though thus far only as observers. Undoubtedly, Uzbekistan’s military cooperation with Russia and the CSTO will only grow: there is simply no alternative.

The West’s significant past military assistance to Uzbekistan ended after the events in Andizhan and the closing of the U.S. military bases in Khanabad and Kokand. The United States and the EU have maintained in force a prohibition on supplying Uzbekistan with «weapons, military and police equipment, and dual-use equipment.» Ukrainian defense contractors are maintaining their activities on the Uzbek market: they overhaul tanks and air defense systems, supply spare part for aircraft and helicopters, and produce Gyurza patrol boats for Uzbek border guards. However, for Ukraine these are now commercial, not political projects.

KYRGYZSTAN

Kyrgyzstan has few military resources. Since it is situated between powerful neighbors in an unstable region, its policy emphasizes the active use of others’ interests for its own benefit.
Kyrgyzstan’s political and military leaders have learned to reap the benefits of the country’s broad range of international contacts. The Kyrgyz government has agreed to host a Russian military base at Kant airfield. The air base is primarily intended to ensure Kyrgyz and Russian security. The Kyrgyz leadership has tried actively to make use of the advantages of the Collective Security Treaty, in particular in order to obtain weapons either for free or at Russian domestic prices. A representative office of Rosoboronexport, Russia’s military export agency, is active in Bishkek for this reason, as well as to develop industrial cooperation.

The nation’s armed forces are in need of communications equipment, ammunition, helicopter engines, and uniforms. As a rule, Kyrgyzstan does not have the funds to buy these items, and has proposed instead that it forgo collecting rent for the lease of Russian army bases in the Chuysk and Issyk-Kul regions in lieu of payment. As one member of a Russian delegation explained in a simple, military manner: «Russia provides military equipment to Kyrgyzstan as payment for the lease of four military bases on Kyrgyz territory, among them the Kant air base. The lease is valued at $4.5 million per year. Within the framework of mutual debt cancellations Kyrgyzstan receives $2 million in military training for its servicemen in Russian military academies.» He further indicated that in 2006 the difference made up for by the transfer to Kyrgyzstan of Russian property totaled $2.5 million and included 10 KAMAZ trucks, as well as spare parts for armored and other vehicles.47

From 1998 through 2003 the Russian Ministry of Defense gave Kyrgyzstan an average of 3 million rubles worth of air defense equipment and technology per year. In 2002, Russia provided the country with various equipment for air defense worth 4.1 million rubles gratis, while in 2003 it provided 3.5 million rubles worth, including: small arms, military equipage and uniforms, and radio communications equipment. Also in 2003, Russia provided Kyrgyzstan a set of radars worth 20 million rubles and repaired a Mi-8 helicopter. In 2005, Russia again provided weapons and military equipment to Kyrgyzstan, valued at $3 million. Russia is currently considering the provision of several S-300 air defense systems to Kyrgyzstan. Although the Russian supplies are gratis, it is Kyrgyzstan that determines which weapons it requires.

However, gifts do not cover all of Kyrgyzstan’s military needs. According to the Minister of Defense, the new budget includes «a certain sum for the purchase of technology and weapons from Russia.»48 The hope for extra-budgetary financing remains as well: to obtain it the Kyrgyzstan Ministry of Defense must sell surplus aircraft and armored vehicles.

Russia is training officers for the Kyrgyz armed forces: of the 13,000 Kyrgyz servicemen who underwent training in Russian military institutes from 1992 through 2005, more than 1,000 were ensigns and officers.49 Today, there are about 100 Kyrgyz servicemen at Russian Ministry of Defense institutes of higher education.50

Kyrgyzstan is interested in close industrial integration with Russia, viewing cooperation as a way to ensure orders for its enterprises and employment in its cities. The development of cooperation in the military industrial area is also in Russia’s interest: it makes the restoration of cooperation that was disrupted when the Soviet Union collapsed possible, and will enable Kyrgyzstan independently to produce military equipment, communication equipment, ammunition, and uniforms.

The government of Kyrgyzstan has expressed its willingness to transfer 23 enterprises to Russia in exchange for state debt (which totals $150 million), including the Aynur plant, Bishkek Machine-Building Plant, and Dastan transnational corporation, as the basis for the subsequent creation of a Kyrgyz-Russian defense-industrial corporation for the production of border control equipment. Among Kyrgyz defense plants, the most important for Russia is the Dastan plant in Bishkek, which produces the VA-111 Shkval rocket torpedo.

Kyrgyzstan is one of Russia’s most important partners in the CSTO. It is the home of the Kant airbase, a Russian base the main task of which is air support for the movements of CSTO Rapid Reaction Force battalions.
While other Central Asian states are decreasing their defense expenditures through military cooperation with Russia, Kyrgyzstan has learned to profit from it by playing on contradictions between great powers.

In October 2001, Kyrgyzstan agreed to the temporary basing of a U.S. Air Force squadron. In exchange for the use of the airfield, Kyrgyzstan received gratis assistance worth $3.5 million. A year ago this sum was increased to $150 million per year in payment from the United States in exchange for the base on Kyrgyz soil.

From 1991 through 2005, the United States gave $750 million in support to the country. U.S. military aid is valued at $4–11 million a year for the acquisition of spare parts and repair of Mi-24 helicopters and L-39 training aircraft. The United States has also provided Kyrgyzstan’s law enforcement agencies mountaineering and rescue equipment.

China has resolved its territorial dispute with Kyrgyzstan, and today gives the country assistance in combating the threats posed by separatists and Islamic fundamentalists. Military supplies from China are small, worth approximately $1 million per year; China mostly provides uniforms, hardware, and other equipment. China is chiefly concerned about instability near Kyrgyzstan’s borders that could spread into China’s Uighur regions.

Turkey began to provide the Kyrgyz military with military and technical assistance in 1999. The yearly amount of this assistance is worth a little over $1 million. Turkey provides Kyrgyzstan with communications equipment and military uniforms.

Ukraine is trying to profit from military industrial cooperation with Kyrgyzstan. In early 2003 Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan agreed to renew military and technical cooperation and established a military and technical cooperation commission. The main area of cooperation will be the repair of specialty equipment and military hardware. Minsk sees Kyrgyzstan as a potential market for its weapons. Belarus is counting on supplying specialty equipment and control and monitoring instruments in exchange for Kyrgyz cotton.

**TAJIKISTAN**

Tajikistan’s military is the weakest in Central Asia. Its small defense budget is barely enough to pay the servicemen’s modest salary. There is no money for military procurement whatsoever and no defense industry. Given this, military cooperation with Russia is of exceptional importance for the Tajik armed forces.

Cooperation was initiated in the 1990s, when Russia took decisive measures to end the country’s civil war. In those years, Moscow supplied everything to the young state: from ordinance to food. Emomali Rakhmon unified Tajikistan using Russian weapons. By 2000 Russia had gradually managed to shift cooperation from the purely military to the combating of terrorism and crime.

Tajikistan has a fairly significant place in Russian military plans: the Okno optical observation station, located in Nurek, which is now Russian property, is part of Russia’s space surveillance system. This facility is important for the national security of Russia and its allies.\(^51\)

Russia’s 201st Motorized Rifle Division (8,000 men) is stationed in Dushanbe, Kulyab, and Kurgan-Tyube and has 128 T-72 tanks, 314 armored fighting vehicles and personnel carriers, 120 armored artillery weapons, and its own air defense system. The air component of the Russian base is located at the Ayni airfield 10 kilometers from Dushanbe; with up to 10 Su-25 and Su-27 aircraft\(^52\) and at least 10 combat helicopters.\(^53\) The combat capabilities of the Russian division noticeably exceed those of the Tajik military.

The Main Military Advising Staff at the Ministry of Defense of Tajikistan operates on the basis of an intergovernmental agreement between Russia and Tajikistan. Russian advisors, as well as graduates of Russian military institutes (each year up to 300 cadets from Tajikistan study in Russia), shape the Tajik armed forces.
Russia provides repairs, supplies spare parts, modernizes weaponry, and instructs future officers practically gratis. The greatest expenditures are connected to the repair and modernization of Tajik air defenses.

The United States, China, and Iran also provide support for the Tajik army. The United States pays for the basing of garrisons at airfields in Dushanbe and Kulyaba. China provides $1 million in material and technical equipment to Tajikistan each year.\(^5\) Iran contributes through the training of military personnel, including border guards.\(^5\) The military assistance provided by these three states can be summarized as the provision of financial support and the training of specialists in border protection.

**TURKMENISTAN**

A neutral country, Turkmenistan has a fairly large number of modern weapons inherited from the Turkestan military district. If official numbers are to be believed, Turkmenistan spends less than all of its neighbors on defense: the country’s military expenditures comprise, according to varying estimates, from 0.5 % to 1.4 % of budget expenditures. It has no defense industry of its own. Nevertheless, the country’s rearmament rate is so high that it even gave occasion to Azerbaijan to talk about an arms race and to threaten Ashkhabad that it would appeal to the United Nations and request that Turkmenistan be deprived of its neutral status.

Turkmenistan mainly obtains modern weapons not for the money, but in exchange for gas. Gas frees the Turkmen regime from many of the problems that have remained insoluble for its less fortunate neighbors: in order to cover its $340 million gas debt, Georgia repaired 43 Su-25 attack aircraft for Turkmenistan as well as six Mi-24 and Mi-8 helicopters;\(^5\) Ukraine’s gas debt to Turkmenistan ($400 million) was also paid for by Ukraine’s weaponry.

For Ukraine, military industrial cooperation with Turkmenistan has become an extremely important national program. Gas even gave life to a new form of Ukrainian defense service: the comprehensive organization of an air defense system for a customer. In 2003, Turkmenistan got on the list of Ukraine’s priority partners in defense cooperation: Ashkhabad bought military equipment from Kiev valued at over $200 million (two Kolchuga passive early warning radar stations, a Kalkan-M cutter for the border patrol service, and the refit of 12 MiG-29 fighter jets). In 2004, it purchased $80 million worth\(^5\) (Grif cutters, anti-aircraft weapons and ammunition).\(^5\) In the future, the Ukrainian defense industry is counting on the construction of a plant to repair and modernize armored and other special equipment in Turkmenistan.\(^5\) There are prospects for Ukrainian-Turkmen cooperation in the creation of a technical base in Turkmenistan to service MiG-29 fighter jets, supply new aviation trainers, as well as overhaul and extend the service lives of air-to-air weapons.\(^5\)

Although the first president of Turkmenistan, Saparmurat Niyazov, emphasized that ‘in the provision of modern equipment to the military, we will continue to increase intergovernmental cooperation steadily,’\(^6\) he was clearly not talking about cooperation with Russia.

The history of Russian defense industry cooperation with Turkmenistan is the history of the withdrawal of Russian troops from Turkmen soil. Its stages were: the break-up of the united command in January 1994; the end of the agreement on the joint protection of the Turkmenistan border in May 1999; and the complete withdrawal of Russian border guards from the state’s territory in December 1999.

Since February 1995, Turkmenistan has formally been a member of the CIS United Air Defense System. The participation of the Turkmen military consists exclusively of sending observers to military exercises.

Turkmenistan has also rejected joint arms control measures: Ashkhabad was the only CIS member that did not agree to the mutual exchange of information on exports of man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS).\(^5\)

In the area of defense industry cooperation, Turkmenistan has demonstrated its independence from Russia; if it sometimes engages in rare business cooperation, then it does not interact with
a government intermediary but directly with producers. Thus the Urals Optical and Mechanical Plant signed a cooperation agreement with the Ministry of Defense of Turkmenistan on conducting service maintenance of onboard electronics for the Turkmen Air Force.\(^6\)

Nevertheless, the country really is one of the most neutral states in the post-Soviet region. While Russia should not expect a breakthrough in military industrial cooperation with it, Ashkhabad is not part of the problematic area in Central Asia to which the Russian military have to pay attention. Turkmenistan does not want to support the CSTO, but also it never belonged to GU (U) AM, the grouping of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova, and, at certain periods of time, Uzbekistan. Even during the most severe conflict in Afghanistan, Niyazov managed to maintain equal relations with the Northern Alliance and the Taliban, and since the beginning of the military operations in Afghanistan, citing Turkmenistan’s neutral status, has refused to allow the use of its airports for the forces of the anti-terrorist coalition.

Ashkhabad’s defense policy is consistent and predictable: in the military area it is ready for contacts with the most varied of states. Turkmenistan obtained patrol ships from both the United States and Iran as gifts. Turkmenistan’s officer corps is trained in Ukraine (200 men), Turkey (200 men), Russia, Pakistan, and NATO countries (up to two dozen men).

The prospects for a new national foreign policy since Niyazov’s death have remained uncertain; many governments are trying to use the transfer of power in Turkmenistan to establish closer ties to the oil-rich country. The new leader initially paid his respects to the presidents of Ukraine and Georgia (and touched on military industrial collaboration); a bit later Mikhail Fradkov discussed a «wide circle of questions» with the new president of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov.

The new president kept Agageldi Mamedgeldyev as Minister of Defense, who is called the guardian of the peace of the Turkmen «gasocracy» behind his back. One can assume that the new leader will also preserve his authority over defense policy. For Russia this will mean the participation of Turkmen representatives as observers during all CSTO exercises and meetings as well as in the CIS air defense system, intermittent contracts for the supply of spare parts for former Soviet equipment, and some hope for an expansion of cooperation in combating drug trafficking and international terrorism. Turkmenistan’s neutral status has justified itself over the course of a decade, and a new authority has few reasons to reject something that has been accepted by the world community and proven itself over time.

**IN ORDER FOR THE SUN TO RISE IN THE EAST…**

Central Asia has accumulated a large, tangled web of problems that not one of the region’s states has the power to solve independently. The broad acceptance of Islam has spread to all social strata, including the most educated. Mufti that have received education abroad are returning traditional Moslem values to the peoples of Central Asia, but they frequently spread extremist propaganda as well. Radical ideas find adherents both among the poorest believers and among Moslems with higher education.

Drug trafficking lines the road to Europe with dollars, corrupting both the people and the authorities. According to UN data, a record opium harvest was gathered in Afghanistan in 2006, making the production of over 600 tons or heroin possible.\(^6\)^ About one third of the Afghan narcotics are shipped to the West through Tajikistan and Kazakhstan.\(^6\)

Poverty, corruption, and difficult interethnic relations complicate the relations between these neighboring countries. The territorial disputes of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan have not been resolved, and Uzbekistan still has territorial claims against Kazakhstan. The problem of how to make use of regional water resources also has yet to be determined and, as a consequence, there is a migration problem. The dissatisfaction accumulating in the population gives extremists and radical Islamists, who are bringing their ideologies in from abroad, hope for success.

Russia, with its historical experience and authority, should–and is capable of–becoming a unifying center today. Russia currently has both a conscious policy to recreate its alliance relation-
ships with the Central Asian states and the resources to achieve this goal. It is important that Russia be ready to bear a substantial part of the burden of the formation of a new military alliance. Military-industrial cooperation with Central Asia will be a guarantee of peace and stability in this region.

The prerequisites for a significant expansion of defense cooperation now exist: the supply of Russian weapons at privileged prices, the restoration of old and creation of new defense industry ties, and the joint development of promising weapon types.

Moreover, Russia is prepared to provide military supplies gratis. «As concerns the CSTO, in addition to military cooperation and defense industry collaboration, we are looking at a new area: military technical assistance. This method has worked successfully for the last two years. Here were are primarily talking about deals whereby Russia renders military technical aid to CSTO members states that need it, both in the form of direct supplies of arms and military equipment and through the gratis training of these countries’ military personnel in Russian Defense Ministry institutes of higher education,» stated Sergey Ivanov.

The potential for military cooperation with these states is becoming ever broader. Common security problems, undoubtedly, are a main unifying stimulus for the countries of the region. It is for good reason that the struggle against Islamists who have gained in authority and are striving to establish a caliphate, as well as perfecting counter-terrorist operations, are the main themes at joint exercises conducted by the CSTO.

The CSTO parliamentary assembly conducted its first plenary meeting on March 30, 2007, in St. Petersburg. The new organization has been officially called upon to harmonize the legislation of treaty member states. However, the desire to give it the functions of an organization where the foreign policy activities of member governments can be coordinated is utterly obvious.

This military alliance also holds new possibilities for economic cooperation. The Central Asian states have great plans for the creation of a Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC). If EurAsEC is able to revive commercial and economic ties between our countries significantly, the CSTO will become a way to protect the common political and economic interests that are being realized within the EurAsEC framework.

Notes

1 Central Asia is defined here as the countries included under this geographical designation in courses for foreign students at the Russian Armed Forces General Staff Academy. Of the former Soviet republics, it includes Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan.


5 Ibid., p. 477.


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