



DIIS REPORT

KAZAKHSTAN-RUSSIA

ENDURING EURASIAN DEFENCE PARTNERS

Roger N. McDermott

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About the Author

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I. Introduction

A serving general in Kazakhstan's Armed Forces once told the author that it often struck him as a mystery as to how his ancestors had protected such a vast territory. Twenty years after independence, many experts in the country and abroad also similarly ponder how one of the youngest and largest members of the UN achieves national security in the present unpredictable and, arguably, post-ideological era.

This report is not intended to sit on shelves and gather dust. Rather its aim, in time-honoured tradition, is to inform policymakers of the aims, scope and changing dynamics in the complex and evolving defence and security relationship between Kazakhstan and Russia. This analysis will also prove of interest to any specialist or student of the development of Central Asia generally or Kazakhstan specifically since its independence in 1991.

Kazakhstan is a Eurasian country, with traditions, and history, a young and vibrant people and an emerging economy that leads the way in Central Asia. Its political–military elite are drawn from a complex background and they differ in outlook from those of NATO member states, but perhaps not in aspirations. In terms of defence and security the countries in the region are defence recipients rather than contributors. However, Kazakhstan has broken away from this mould and is marked out by a number of different achievements that are unique in Central Asia.

Kazakhstan became the first country in the region to develop its relations with NATO to include access to its Partnership and Review Process (PARP) and the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP). It became the first country in the region to develop and sustain a level of NATO interoperability in its peacekeeping brigade (KAZ-BRIG), and this pattern of achieving firsts in the region was underscored when the country became the first to send soldiers to peace support operations in Iraq in 2003. Kazakhstan has the only Humvee repair centre in Central Asia, as well as hosting the NATO PfP centre in Almaty.

Indeed, in its defence policy Kazakhstan is arguably a pioneer in Central Asia, not least in its potential to be the first country in the region to deploy operationally to an overseas peacekeeping operation in the future, possibly under a UN mandate. It has received justified credit for nuclear disarmament, following its decision to aban-

don Soviet-inherited nuclear weapons in the 1990s, and remains at the forefront of countries advocating nuclear non-proliferation.

The following analysis does not intend to question these achievements, or limit the future scope for Astana to develop similar constructive defence policies. This study concentrates on the nature, changes, trends, and long-term dynamics of Kazakhstan's defence relations with Russia. It seeks to place this in the context of its threat assessment and security policy, the country's international military cooperation agenda and to address the question as to what Kazakhstan wants from this relationship and how it may limit NATO policy in the region.

The analysis is based on extensive open source research and augmented by research interviews. In the course of the research the author was struck by just how little Western planning staffs know about the region, or Kazakhstan in particular, with one policymaker admitting he felt proud that he at least knew the names of the Central Asian presidents. The system of desk rotation in Western government departments and lack of strategic engagement with the region, coupled with the tendency to see it in security terms as an add-on to policy on Afghanistan contributes to the bleeding of knowledge and at times senseless policymaking.

Kazakhstan's contribution to the NATO Northern Distribution Network (NDN) to take non-lethal supplies to Afghanistan as an alternative to supply routes through Pakistan, and its early agreement in April 2012 to 'reverse transit', to assist in its territory being involved in the NATO drawdown from Afghanistan, mark out the country as an active security partner for the Alliance and its members.

How the future of Kazakhstan's cooperation with NATO may be influenced or limited by its close defence relations with Moscow is here examined in detail and, unlike many Western analysts, the author questions the unproven thesis that in defence and security terms Russia's role and influence is on the decline. But Moscow, contrary to the views of some Western analyses or commentaries, is not the primary mover in this process. On the contrary, as is shown in this study, Astana is entirely capable of independent security policymaking.

2. Background: Kazakhstan's Threat Assessment and Strategic Priorities

The Republic of Kazakhstan not only faced the challenge of creating and sustaining its own armed forces following independence in December 1991, but had to gradually form a security apparatus, including revised security documents and necessary legislation, that would suit its own needs and evolving strategic environment.¹ During the country's first twenty years as an independent state, Kazakhstan produced its own security documents and regulatory framework initially heavily reliant upon the Soviet heritage and Russia's enduring security influence upon the country.²

How and why Astana pursues defence cooperation with Moscow must begin with an analysis of Kazakhstan's security architecture, more specifically its military doctrine, in order to clearly establish the nature of defence relations between Kazakhstan and Russia and how this relationship might evolve through 2015–2020.³

Some preliminary observations concerning what may be gleaned from such an analysis are equally useful, particularly following erroneous foreign media coverage concerning Kazakhstan's latest military doctrine in October 2011, which attempted to tie the doctrine too closely to the government's response to the crisis on its Caspian coast in the autumn of 2011.⁴

Any country's military doctrine must be read carefully and with reference to its defence documents and national laws governing the structure, purpose and use of the armed and security forces. Placed in this context, it is possible to discern shifts and changes in key areas of military doctrine over time, especially linked to threat assessment and how the political–military leadership sets the priorities for international

¹ Niklas Swanström, 'Traditional and Non-Traditional Security Threats in Central Asia: Connecting the New and Old', *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Summer 2010; Paul Quinn-Judge, 'Conventional Security Risks to Central Asia: A Summary Overview', *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Summer 2010; Jonas Claes, 'Preventing Conflict in the "Stans"', United States Institute of Peace, April 2010.

² Roger N. McDermott, 'Kazakhstan's 2011 Military Doctrine and Regional Security beyond 2014', *Central Asia–Caucasus Institute*, June 2012.

³ For more detail on the 2001 Military Doctrine, see: Roger N. McDermott, 'Kazakhstan's 2011 Military Doctrine: Reassessing Regional and International Security', FMSO, Fort Leavenworth, July 2012.

⁴ Presidential Decree No. 161, Military Doctrine of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 11 October 2011, <http://mod.gov.kz/mod-cn/index.php/2009-06-26-02-25-27>.

defence cooperation.⁵ The focus of this chapter, however, will be on Kazakhstan's threat assessment, to identify some of the changes since it passed its first military doctrine in 1993, the country's strategic environment and will only touch briefly on international defence cooperation, from which its behaviour in this policy arena flows and which will be examined in more detail in chapter three.

An important factor is to understand that security documents are intended to be linked together, and this makes reading Kazakhstan's military doctrine more complex. Like other states in Central Asia not all the security documents are published. In neighbouring Uzbekistan, for instance, all the security documents are classified as secret. However, the military doctrines are published in all other Central Asian states, including Turkmenistan (latest Military Doctrine, 2009).⁶

While all the laws on defence and security, military doctrines and other regulatory documents are openly available in Kazakhstan, there is one arguably crucial omission: the National Security Strategy, upon which the military doctrine is based, remains a closed document. However, although this renders an analysis of the country's military doctrine partially blinded, in relation to threat assessment the Law On National Security signed by President Nazarbayev in January 2012 offers a much fuller picture of the country's threat assessment, though this might mistakenly lead to the conclusion that Kazakhstan faces innumerable security threats.⁷

Some Central Asian defence specialists with a background in government see the process of initiating a new military doctrine as largely mechanical; resulting effectively from the whim of the head of state who deems a fresh doctrine necessary and often

⁵ Law 'On National Awards', December 1995; Law 'On Mobilisation Training and Mobilisation', July 1997; Decree 'On Authorisation of Rules of Usage of Arms and Armaments', September 2002; Decree 'On Authorisation of a List of Classified Military Towns Armed with Defence Technologies', July 2004; Decree 'On Some Issues of Permission of Activities in Development, Production and Supply of Military Technologies', July 2004; Law 'On Military Police Structures', February 2005; Law 'On Military Duty and Military Service', June 2005; Decree 'On Authorisation of Rules of Military Transport Responsibilities in the RK', July 2005; Law 'On Defense and Armed Forces of the RK', December 2005; Decree 'On Authorisation of Rules and Provision by State Structures of Preparation of Civilian Population for Military Service', May 2006; Decree 'On Authorisation or Rules of Military Duty Registration', May 2006; Decree 'On Authorisation of Organisational Rules of Conscription of Civilians into Military Service', June 2006; Strategy of RK's Development until 2030; National Security Strategy 1999; Law 'On Border Service of the National Security Committee', January 1993; President's decree 'On Republican Guard', December 1995; Law 'On Civil Defense', June 1997; Law 'On State Secrets', March 1999; Law 'On National Defense Order', January 2001; Law 'On State of Military', March 2003; Decree 'On Issues of Protection of the National Border', July 2005; Law 'On Preventing Extremism', February 2006, www.zakon.kz, last accessed 21 August 2012.

⁶ Author discussions with Central Asian military specialists, Almaty, Astana, April and July 2012.

⁷ Law on National Security, 6 January 2012, *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, 17 January 2012. 'Nazarbayev Held a Meeting of Kazakhstan's Security Council', http://en.tengrinews.kz/politics_sub/5306/, 28 October 2011.

for unclear reasons. In the case of the four military doctrines in Kazakhstan (1993, 2000, 2007 and 2011) there have been both local and international factors driving the need for revisions.⁸

This has also been accompanied by organisational changes and reform of the armed forces. In the early 1990s the fledgling armed forces were more identifiably Soviet-legacy in their doctrine, composition, training, equipment and approaches to manpower. By 2011 and the latest military doctrine, Kazakhstan's armed forces were different in most areas, and the comparison with their Russian counterparts no longer fitted. However, that is not to argue that the process of change and reform eliminated all similarities with Russian forces, but the roots of enduring bilateral defence cooperation between Astana and Moscow now lie elsewhere.⁹

During the ongoing transformation of the Russian Armed Forces, which commenced in late 2008, many of the earlier features of change in Kazakhstan's military may well have served as forerunners of the process; such as the latter's regional command structure, its switch from divisions to brigades and even the three-year courses in the non-commissioned officers (NCO) school opened in Schushinsk.¹⁰

Kazakhstan's first military doctrine in 1994 was heavily influenced by Soviet approaches to drafting and presenting military doctrine and even contained reference to large-scale warfare that seemed entirely misplaced. Such Cold War vestiges puzzled even the country's leading international specialists. However, the changes in the country's armed forces, increased foreign military cooperation, and the changing threat environment compelled a new doctrine by 2000.¹¹ However, following the War On Terror, creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and forming of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and abandoning of the country's system of military districts in 2003 much of the 2000 doctrine was rendered largely outdated. By 2007, the military doctrine had caught up with such internal and external changes and no major change has occurred in the structure

⁸ Author interviews with Central Asian experts, Almaty, April, May 2012.

⁹ Presidential Decree No. 299, Military Doctrine of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 21 March 2007, *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, 7 April 2007; Presidential Decree No. 334, Military Doctrine of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 10 February 2000, http://ru.government.kz/docs/u000334_20000210.htm; Presidential Decree No. 1094, Military Doctrine of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 11 February 1993.

¹⁰ Author discussions with US military officers, August 2012.

¹¹ M. Laumulin, 'Strategicheskie Aspekty Otnosheniy Kazakhstana s Zapadom: SSha, NATO', in B. Sultanov (ed.), *Kazakhsta v Sovremennom Mire: Realii I Perspektivy*, Almaty: KISI, 2008; M. Nurgaliev, 'Kazakh-US Military-Political Cooperation In The Context of US Geopolitical Interests In Central Asia', *Central Asia And The Caucasus Journal of Social and Political Studies*, No. 2 (44), 2007.

of the armed forces since that doctrine was signed into law. Although the CSTO and the SCO, as well as seeking to cooperate with individual actors bilaterally, are mentioned in several places in the latest doctrine, there is no sign that Astana overly relies on any of these arrangements for its national security.¹²

It is unclear then precisely which factors stimulated the drafting of the 2011 Military Doctrine, however in April 2011 President Nazarbayev ordered the Security Council to oversee the formulation of a new military doctrine; the entire process lasted six months. The creation of the CSTO Collective Rapid Reaction Forces (*Kollektivnyye Sil Operativnogo Reagirovaniya* –KSOR) in June 2009, the US announcing its draw-down from Afghanistan by 2014, or the crisis in southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010 stemming from inter-ethnic violence may have been loosely influencing the need to reframe the military doctrine.¹³ But the resulting statement of Kazakhstan's threat assessment made clear that the training, equipment and tactics of the armed forces will transition to include a much wider range of mission types, moving away from a preoccupation with counter-terrorism and peacekeeping.

Despite the promotion of the Kazakh language in the country in recent years, there is no body of knowledge in Kazakh to which any official or advisor can turn during the drafting of the military doctrine. The country's military doctrine, therefore is written and published in Russian, crafted by Russian language speakers and thinkers and the state still prefers to publish the final version in Russian. Twenty years after independence the most sensitive aspects of Kazakhstan's national security can neither be thought about nor formulated in official documents other than in Russian, using not only Russian idioms but also specifically Russian military terminology. Moreover, when the country's governmental structures consider these issues, or explore strategic and threat assessment-linked issues, they are often steeped in reading Russian-produced sources (i.e. Russian Federation), while Kazakhstan has an underdeveloped network

¹² Sébastien Peyrouse, 'Central Asia's Long Term Questions Remain Unanswered After the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit', German Marshall Fund of the United States, July 2012; Sébastien Peyrouse, Jos Boonstra, Marlène Laruelle, 'Security and Development Approaches to Central Asia: The EU Compared to China and Russia', EUCAM: EU – Central Asia Monitoring – Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior and the Centre for European Policy Studies, May 2012.

¹³ Viktor Litovkin, 'INSOR Tests CSTO', *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye*, http://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2011-09-16/1_inzor.html, 16 September 2011; Collective Security Treaty Organisation Issues 34 [sic] Documents', Interfax-AVN Online, 13 December 2010: http://www.dkb.gov.ru/session_twelve/a.htm; 'CSTO Formed to Deter External Threats – Kazakh President', ITAR-TASS, 10 December 2010; Oleg Gorupay, 'The Kyrgyzstan Crisis Triggered Adjustments', http://www.redstar.ru/2010/09/17_09/1_02.html, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 17 September 2010; Yuriy Simonyan, 'CSTO Begins to Imitate NATO: Lessons Must be Learned from the Situation that has Emerged in Kyrgyzstan', http://www.ng.ru/cis/2010-08-23/1_odkb.html, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 23 August 2010.

of independent think tanks. To some extent, this renders Astana partly dependent upon Moscow for its threat assessment.¹⁴

Far from being a criticism of Kazakhstan, these observations are intended for Western policymakers to avoid misreading of the military doctrine, or drawing the wrong conclusions from it. Equally, Astana is able to draft and conclude such security documents without merely replicating the Russian Federation templates; and this independence from Moscow on the 2011 Military Doctrine is most notable in the avoidance of using Russian advisors in the process.

Kazakhstan's National Threat Assessment

On external threats to Kazakhstan's national security the 2011 Military Doctrine defines these as follows:

- Socio-political instability in the region and the likelihood of armed provocations;
- Military conflict flashpoints close to Kazakhstan's borders;
- Use by foreign nations or organisations of military–political pressure and advanced information–psychological warfare technologies to interfere in Kazakhstan's internal affairs to further their own interests;
- Increasing influence of military–political organisations and unions to the detriment of Kazakhstan's military security;
- The activity of international terrorist and radical organisations and groups, including cyber terrorism and growing religious extremism in neighbouring countries;
- Production by some countries of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles, and illegal proliferation of the technologies, equipment and components used to manufacture them, as well as of dual-purpose technologies.¹⁵

While internal threats are considered to be:

- Extremist, nationalist and separatist movements, organisations and structures seeking to destabilise the domestic situation and change the constitutional order through armed methods;
- Illegal armed groups;
- Illegal proliferation of weapons, munitions, explosives and other devices that could be used for sabotage, terrorist acts or other illegal actions.¹⁶

¹⁴ Author's interviews with Kazakhstani military experts, Astana, 4 July 2012.

¹⁵ Republic of Kazakhstan 2011 Military Doctrine, op. cit.

¹⁶ Ibid.

The order and the listing of these threats to national security is not accidental, and reflects the priority assigned to their likelihood, and as such these are used in framing the structure, posture and training of the armed and security forces, as well as consequently influencing the defence cooperation needs of the defence ministry. It is crucial to identify the move away from ascribing any focus on terrorism, either internationally or domestically inspired, as guiding the country's defence and security policies.

More broadly, Kazakhstan's 2011 Military Doctrine reaffirms the defensive nature of its military doctrines since independence, emphasising that Astana regards 'no state' as a potential enemy, and it avoids overly stressing either internal or external threats to the state. However, the doctrine places "Priority importance in the medium-term development of the armed forces, and of other troops [security forces] and military formations constituting the foundation of the state's military organisation, will be given to the maintenance of their readiness to guarantee inner political stability, and to fulfil tasks in low- and medium-intensity military conflicts".¹⁷ For some observers ensuring 'inner stability' suggests or implies that the regime considers domestic threats within society to be the main source of security threat. The evidence within the doctrine does not support this assertion.

If the threat assessment in the 2011 version is contrasted with that of the 2007 Military Doctrine the shifts are more subtle than at first sight. External sources of threat have declined from eight to six, and internal threats from four to three. This may be offset by the seriousness of some threats, but the doctrine also stresses a potential linkage between these threats. In other words, the threat environment facing the country may experience crossover or, in certain cases, a dangerous nexus between external and internal threats. Equally, the 2011 Military Doctrine highlights the rapidly changing and unpredictable security environment.¹⁸

Astana has downgraded the level of threat posed to the state by international terrorism, and regards the potential for military conflict in the region to have *increased* since 2007. Elements of the wording on threats contained in the previous doctrine have been tightened, particularly on the issue of interference in the country's internal affairs, which is now elaborated to include the use of information and networking tools. In presidential statements, there is increasing reference to the need to strengthen information security, and such themes influence Astana's initiatives within the CSTO

¹⁷ 'Inner Stability First Priority For Kazakhstan Armed Forces – Doctrine', *Interfax*, 11 January 2012.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

and the SCO, even to the point of talking about the need to protect ‘sovereignty’ in cyberspace.¹⁹ In practical terms this could either relate to Arab Spring type scenarios, or to concern about the freedom of Internet users within the country to undermine state security. However, the 2011 Military Doctrine does not stress the internal sources of threat, and many of those involved in drafting the doctrine see no credible ‘Arab Spring’ scenario as a potential threat to state security.²⁰

Expert analyses by indigenous specialists of the local, regional and international threat environment also played a role in formulating the threat assessment in the 2011 Military Doctrine, which is well described in an article in *Central Asia and the Caucasus* in early 2011, authored by the President of the Military Strategic Studies Centre (*Tsentr Voyenno Strategicheskikh Issledovaniy – TsVSI*), Colonel (retired) Georgy Dubovtsev and Erlan Galymzhanuly, assessing the trends in the country’s security environment.²¹

In the article the authors also examine the international threat environment and conclude that in the short to medium term a direct military threat in Central Asia looks unlikely. Yet, the region is characterised, according to the authors, by numerous security issues ranging from terrorism and religious extremism to drugs trafficking from Afghanistan etc. The article also offers an insight into how experts in Kazakhstan came to regard the two regime changes in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan in 2005 and 2010 negatively, before concluding that the conflict potential will most likely increase due to the following factors:

- the worsened military–political situation in Afghanistan caused by religious extremists;
- the gradual strengthening of Islamic extremism amid the unfavourable social and economic developments;
- the negative impact of the world financial crisis on the local economies;
- the aggravated interstate contradictions in many spheres, including border issues, distribution of water and energy resources, etc.;
- the continued internal contradictions and the weak ruling elites in some of the countries.²²

¹⁹ Jim Nichol, ‘Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for US Interests’, Congressional Research Service (CRS), October 2011; Jim Nichol, ‘Kazakhstan: Recent Developments and US Interests’, CRS, June 2011.

²⁰ Republic of Kazakhstan 2011 Military Doctrine, op. cit. See: Marlene Laruelle, ‘Israel and Central Asia: Opportunities and Limits in a Post-Arab Spring World’, German Marshall Fund of the United States, July 2012.

²¹ Georgy Dubovtsev and Erlan Galymzhanuly, ‘Forecast on the Military–Political Situation Emerging in the World and the Central Asian Region’, *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 12, No. 1, 2011, pp. 42–43.

²² Ibid.

Such experts and the TsVSI were involved in the process of producing the 2011 Military Doctrine, and their work also took account of the failure to create a regional security system in Central Asia since the collapse of the USSR; the long-term outlook for the region is that each state is likely to pursue isolationist policies. There seems little opening for Western policymakers to influence these trends. Other factors, such as the potential for other actors to increase political pressure on Central Asian countries, or competition between these powers or within the region, as well as disputes over water, energy or transportation routes all complicate Astana's assessment of the security environment.²³

Other Kazakhstani analysts willing to assess the security environment realistically, though not directly linked to the process of formulating the 2011 Military Doctrine, considered that the stable development of the region would depend on a number of factors. These ranged from the state of the economy throughout the region in each country, the level of consensus between or antagonism among competing geopolitical powers, the political situation in Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan and changes in ruling elites in both countries and Uzbekistan, the influence on the region by Afghanistan, possible US military operations against Iran, and the level of involvement of new actors such as India, Iran or Turkey in regional processes.²⁴

The period to 2015 may witness shifts in the political development of regional countries, which may include new regimes in Tashkent and Dushanbe, though no trend towards close Uzbek–Tajik ties. Central Asia's development will be dependent upon how the local regimes address economic problems, as well as political instability that might erupt as a result of extremism. A longer term forecast, up to 2030 or later, becomes yet more complex still.²⁵

Global factors are likely to complicate the threat environment including:

- a shift in economic vectors of development and scientific–technological breakthrough (shift in energy priorities);
- radical changes in the correlation between the dimensions of the economies and the general balance of forces between Western and non-Western countries;
- a demographic slump in the old industrial countries ('the global North') and a

²³ Republic of Kazakhstan 2011 Military Doctrine, op. cit.

²⁴ Eldar Gabdullin, 'Central Asia: Geopolitics, Security And Development Scenarios', *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2011, pp. 22–35.

²⁵ Ibid.

- sharp increase in population in the developing countries ('the global South');
- global competition between the new and old world nations and an uncertain world order.²⁶

In such analyses, as well as the more directly linked work published by the TsVSI, it is clear that unpredictability in the security environment and the potential for unexpected conflict is heavily influencing strategic thinking. Such thinking, in turn, is therefore present in the 2011 Military Doctrine, and is also shaping Astana's force structure and its procurement and international defence cooperation agenda. Given that the military doctrine is revised on average every five years, the latest version offers clear aims and fixes the agenda until at least 2016, but the slowing of change to the structures over the past twenty years suggests that little will alter, at least in the structures, over the next decade.

In terms of producing the 2011 Military Doctrine, it is important to note that Kazakhstani experts involved in the process believe the following drivers are active within the threat environment; military conflict may become more likely depending on the future of Afghanistan, or a growth of Islamic extremism based on exploiting the poor economic and social development in Central Asia, or the susceptibility of local economies to fluctuations in the global market, inter-state conflict over water or energy or differences between ruling elites.²⁷

If the threat assessment in the 2011 Military Doctrine may seem understated, the 2012 Law on National Security assesses the nature of threats facing the country in a much more detailed manner, arguably attempting to define all possible threats to the state abstractly:

1. Decreasing level of law and order including: growth of crime; merging of state agencies with criminal organisations, terrorist or extremist organisations; the protection on the part of corrupt officials of illicit capital, corruption, and illicit trafficking of arms and drugs with the effect of reducing the degree of protection of national interests;
2. Deterioration of the demographic situation and population health, including a sharp decline in fertility and increased mortality;

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Dubovtsev and Galymzhanuly, 'Forecast on the Military–Political Situation Emerging in the World and the Central Asian Region', op. cit.

3. Uncontrolled migration;
4. Reduction in the level and quality of healthcare, education and of the intellectual potential of the country;
5. The loss of the cultural and spiritual heritage of the people of the Republic of Kazakhstan;
6. Exacerbation of the social and political situation, reflected in ethnic and religious conflicts, mass riots;
7. Activities aimed at changing the constitutional order, including acts infringing on the unitarity of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the integrity, inviolability and inalienability of its territory, and the security of protected persons;
8. Terrorism, extremism and separatism in all their forms and manifestations;
9. Reconnaissance and subversive activities of foreign special services, as well as organisations and individuals, to the detriment of national security;
10. Disruption of public authorities, the violation of their smooth operation, reducing the degree of control in the country;
11. Damage to the economic security of the state, including the use of strategic resources against the interests of the country, hindering development and growth of innovative investment activity, the uncontrolled export of capital and goods outside the country, the growth of the shadow economy;
12. Decrease in the stability of the financial system;
13. Reduced production, lower quality, competitiveness, export, transit potential and availability of products and goods, reducing the supply of products from other countries and of goods that are not produced in the Republic of Kazakhstan;
14. Reduction in defence capabilities of the country, the threat to the integrity of the state border and of the use of force against the Republic of Kazakhstan, aggression against it;
15. The establishment of paramilitary forces that are not allowed by the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan;
16. Reduction in the level of protection of information space of the country [sic], as well as protection of national information resources from unauthorised access;
17. Informational impact on social and individual consciousness associated with the deliberate distortion and spread of false information to the detriment of national security;
18. A sharp deterioration in environmental conditions, including water quality, natural disasters and other emergencies including natural and man-made disasters, epidemics and epizootics;
19. Damage to national interests at the international level, political credit and economic rating of Kazakhstan.

According to the 2012 Law on National Security, the country faces a large number of potential threats, and at the forefront of these it locates organised crime and its possible crossover with state agencies, followed by terrorism, extremism, corruption and arms or drugs trafficking. Certain possible threats such as those listed in relation to demographics or healthcare are clearly beyond the remit of the defence ministry. However, the law attempts to cover every conceivable threat to the state, rather than actually outlining which are more specifically realistic in the threat assessment.²⁸

The law, however, identifies the existence of ethnic or religious tensions within society, which might contribute to mass riots or destabilise the country in certain circumstances. In some circumstances this may involve a response by defence ministry units, if requested by other agencies. Also, in theory, during a period of military operation the defence ministry and the General Staff would assume control over other power ministry forces, including the KNB and interior troops. The language of the law is loosely framed or vague in places, such as referring to subversive work by foreign intelligence agencies in the country without being specific.²⁹

A potential risk to the country's financial system, according to the 2012 Law on National Security, stems from corruption linked to the possible growth of the shadow economy, which may in turn reduce the country's defence capabilities. The law also refers to possible threats to the state or state borders, which could involve state or sub-state actors, though these elements again appear vague. However, concern related to information security resurfaces in points sixteen and seventeen echoing the 2011 military doctrine and the plans to develop cyber security and IW capabilities.³⁰

While the 2012 Law on National Security at first sight appears to offer a somewhat grim portrayal of the threat environment facing Kazakhstan, what it in fact does is attempt to cover all or most potential sources of threat. These are brought into sharper focus in the threat assessment in the 2011 Military Doctrine. Nonetheless, there are clearly areas of agreement and complementarity between these official statements on national security threats. Indeed, this is most obvious in the highly dynamic and unpredictable nature of the international security environment, characterised within the 2011 Military Doctrine, marked by growing competition between leading actors and organisations. The growth of separatism and ethnic and religious extremism is

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

further complicated by certain actors seeking to pursue unilateral or coalition of the willing solutions to international crises that bypass legal norms. Latent disputes and the potential risk of inter-state military conflict persist in Central Asia, and the 2011 Military Doctrine calibrates these dangerous factors into the threat assessment.³¹

Moreover, the modern tendency is that in addition to the means of conventional conflict, a strong state has the ability to pursue military–political objectives through asymmetric destructive power using information and networking technologies, which presents further risks and complicates any analysis of the threat environment. Uneven distribution of resources, the impact of globalisation or other factors that might result in inter-state conflict are compounded in Central Asia by the possible negative impact of the Afghanistan conflict or Afghanistan-related instability within the region, or of border, water, or territorial disputes. The 2011 Military Doctrine sees economic, religious or other types of conflict as being possible in Central Asia, particularly in the absence of a system of conflict prevention or resolution of the region’s own. Disputes over oilfields, or the unresolved legal status of the Caspian Sea could also play a role in the outbreak of military conflict within the region in the future.³²

Threat Assessment, Force Structure and Enhanced Readiness

Kazakhstan’s 2011 Military Doctrine has little to say on the issue of force structure and force development, principally because the bulk of the transformation of the armed forces was completed much earlier. The changes and priorities, therefore, noted in the latest doctrine are more modest in their nature, and as such link both to the threat assessment and to the long-term defence cooperation requirements involved in military modernisation. According to the 2011 Military Doctrine, the medium-term priority in developing the Armed and Security forces is to “train them to maintain domestic stability and carry out missions in low- and mid-intensity military conflicts”.³³

This aims to improve overall combat capability and will involve the following:

1. Reorganise the Ministry of Defence Joint Chiefs of Staff into the armed forces General Staff and increase their role in joint planning and inter-agency coordination and cooperation;

³¹ Republic of Kazakhstan 2011 Military Doctrine, op. cit.

³² Ibid.

³³ Republic of Kazakhstan 2011 Military Doctrine, op. cit.

2. Optimise and rationalise the structure of the armed forces and other troops and military formations and strengthen their fighting component;
3. Set up in strategic areas multiservice self-sufficient force groupings capable of ensuring military security in their zone of responsibility and adequately responding to potential military security threats;
4. Improve command and control through automation and telecommunication, and expand the network of stationary and mobile command points of the armed forces and other troops and military formations;
5. Standardise and align the weapons and materiel of the armed forces and other troops and military formations, especially the means of communication and command and control;
6. Establish an effective information warfare system;
7. Upgrade the country's air and missile defence;
8. Enhance combat capability by equipping the military with modern weapons and materiel, including precision weapons, and incorporating modern simulators and information and technology tools into combat training;
9. Set up integrated structures regionally to provision the armed forces and other troops and military formations in accordance with deployment and engagement plans;
10. Centralise government purchases of weapons, materiel, special equipment and other material supplies for the armed forces and other troops and military formations, and optimise defence spending;
11. Modernise military education and personnel training, and develop military science based on advanced international experience;
12. Upgrade military and other infrastructure in the Caspian region.³⁴

Joint planning and inter-agency coordination will be strengthened, essentially by reverting to the earlier system of using an enhanced General Staff. Indeed, in July 2012 President Nazarbayev signed an edict to ascribe overall authority during military operations to the General Staff, which would subordinate the Ministry of Defence to their control. The General Staff would also assume operational command and control over all security forces.³⁵

Many of the development priorities for the armed forces revolve around increasing troop mobility and rapid reaction during a crisis situation. This will include enhanc-

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

ing C2 and investing in advanced technologies especially digital communications systems. Designing and implementing an IW system is also given priority, in order to facilitate military operations and enhance existing defence capabilities.³⁶ Air defence is considered an important area to improve, and although not explicitly stated in the doctrine, this will tie Astana more closely into Russia's air defence network and demand closer cooperation.³⁷

Procurement will be centralised and streamlined, to make the decision-making process more transparent and efficient. In addition military education and training will also be modernised to keep in step with the gradual modernisation of the TOE. Finally, the doctrine promises that Kazakhstan's naval infrastructure in the Caspian Sea will be further strengthened in the future.³⁸

A number of changes to the structure of the country's armed forces occurred during its first twenty years of independence. In the 1990s although Kazakhstan had four defence ministers with differing views on various issues, they largely based their opinions on force development on Soviet doctrine. Launching genuine military reform in the 1990s was inhibited by economic problems, and the state budget set no guidelines for the percentage of GDP to defence until 1999. The only new equipment appearing the military in the 1990s was offered by Moscow in exchange for access to military testing sites in Kazakhstan. Since 2000 the level of defence spending has hovered at just under 1% of GDP; which was officially set in the 2000 Military Doctrine.³⁹

The 2000 Military Doctrine divided the country into four military districts: southern, western, eastern and central. Mobile Forces were formed and, "...the number of contract servicemen has increased to around 12,000. The armed forces are outfitted with S-75, S-200 and S-300 air defence missile systems, as well as Su-25, Su-27, and MiG-29 aircraft"⁴⁰

³⁶ Astana's interest in enhancing IW capabilities precedes the crisis in its western region in December 2011. For an informed consideration of the information struggle related to the crisis, see: Matthew Stein 'Violence and Videos in Kazakhstan: The Information Struggle Over Zhanaozen', *Small Wars Journal*, May 2012.

³⁷ Republic of Kazakhstan 2011 Military Doctrine, op. cit.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Roger N. McDermott, 'The Crisis in the Kazakh Armed Forces', *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, 4 (16), 2002, pp. 65-74.

⁴⁰ 'Kazakhstan Launches Patriotic Drive to Improve Army Prestige', *Interfax-Kazakhstan*, 2 May 2002.

Army-General Mukhtar Altynbayev was re-appointed as Defence Minister in December 2001, and in the aftermath of 9/11 he implemented the last set of real reforms in the armed forces.⁴¹ Altynbayev boosted international military cooperation, instigated structural reforms, developed the system of military education, and publicly admitted the existence of numerous serious problems in the armed forces. An important milestone in this process of structural reform occurred on 7 May 2003, when President Nazarbayev signed a decree to legalise the division of responsibility between the defence ministry and general staff, completing transition to a three branch structure of the armed forces (air defence forces including the air force and air mobile forces, ground forces and the navy), and the military districts became regional commands.⁴²

Armed Forces: Strength and Structure

Nazarbayev's decree in May 2003 called for more flexible armed forces capable of counter-terrorist and peacekeeping missions, and envisaged basing this upon the mobility of a brigade-based structure. Thus, the divisions melted away and their place emerged the existing brigade structure of the ground forces. The air mobile forces were created out of the earlier military doctrine references to 'mobile forces' and these gained combat experience during Tajikistan's Civil War in 1990s. The navy essentially existed on paper only, and the infrastructure, training of personnel, and even development of naval doctrine has depended largely upon seeking Western and NATO advance and assistance. Procurement and defence cooperation in developing naval capabilities will most likely remain a sensitive issue for Astana.⁴³

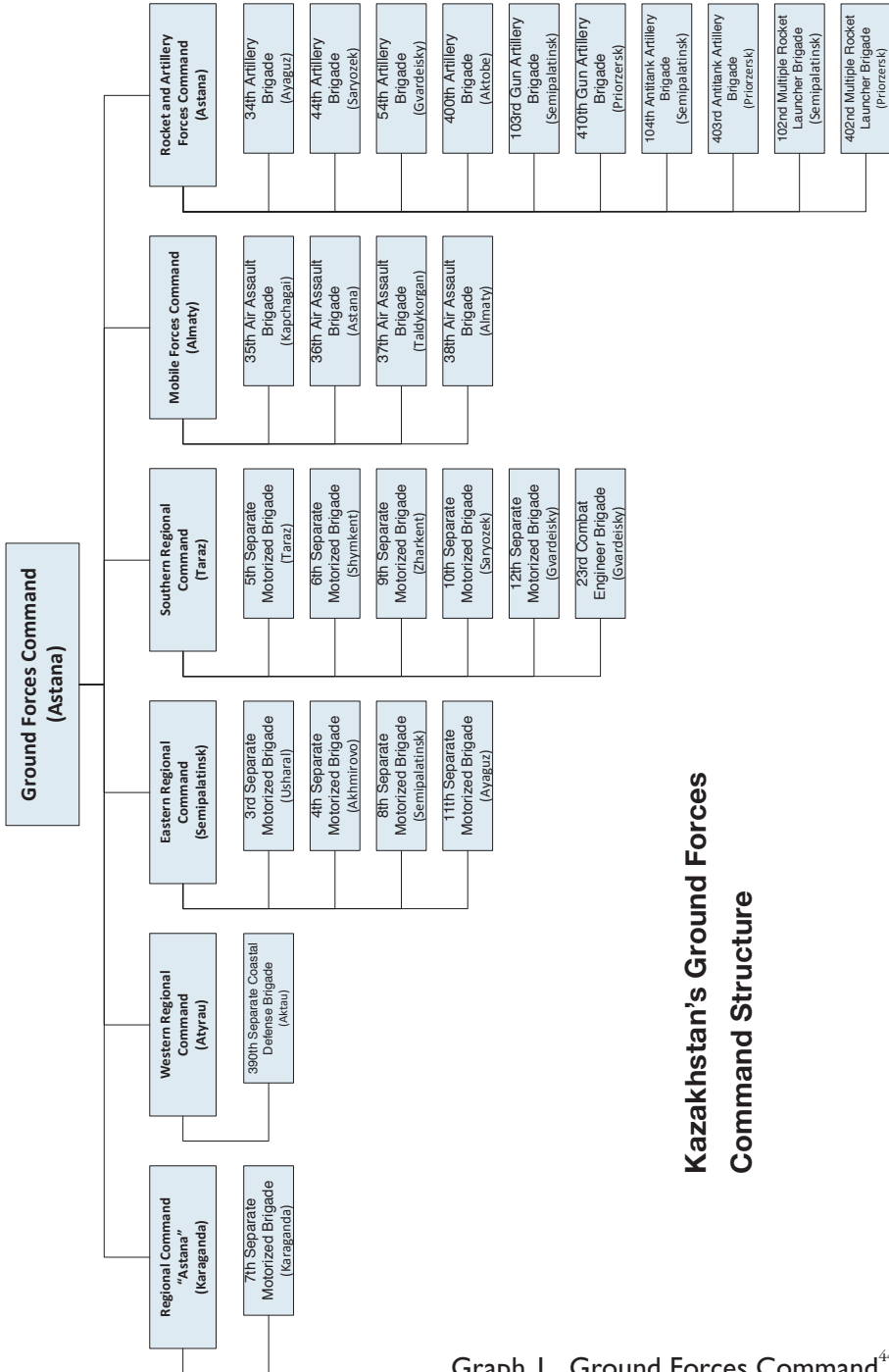
Ground Forces

Since 2009, the ground forces have been subordinated to a new ground forces command. The manpower strength of the ground forces is approximately 16,500 personnel. The following graph illustrates the structures of the ground forces.

⁴¹ V. Georgiev, 'That Same Altynbayev: Kazakhstan's New Defence Minister Has Already Once Directed the Country's Armed Forces', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 20 December 2001.

⁴² Author Interviews with Kazakhstani defence specialists, April and July 2012, Almaty and Astana; Roger N McDermott, 'Kazakhstan's Military Reform Creeps Forward', *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 1 Issue 71, 11 August 2004.

⁴³ Paul Holtom and Mark Bromley, 'The Limitations of European Union Reports on Arms Exports: The Case of Central Asia', Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, September 2010; Paul Holtom, 'Arms Transfers to Europe and Central Asia', Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, February 2010.



Kazakhstan's Ground Forces Command Structure

Graph I. Ground Forces Command⁴⁴

Many of the brigades in the ground forces structure may not be fully staffed, and in some cases these units may exist only on paper. The cluster of air mobile forces, which represent the most combat-capable elements of the ground forces, offer insight into how the state would respond to a crisis situation; these higher readiness formations would be among the 'first in' during any military operations. Astana attaches importance to developing the air mobile forces though the goal of expanding the availability of these forces to involvement in NATO operations has been abandoned.⁴⁵ The pattern for this structural organisation was certainly arrived at by replicating the structural organisation of the Russian Armed Forces, and demonstrates that, since 2003, Astana has deliberately sought to construct an armed forces suited its own security needs.

The basic armament of the ground forces consists of 936 main battle tanks (T-72s and older T-62s), 2,062 armoured combat vehicles (ACVs) and approximately 1,044 artillery pieces, all of which remain serviceable. The artillery troops have been absorbed into the regional commands, while the air mobile forces consist of three air assault brigades as well as Kazakhstan's peacekeeping brigade (KAZBRIG). These structures, apart from 37th Air Assault Brigade in Taldykurgan assigned to the KSOR, suffer from insufficient numbers of contract personnel and a shortage of skilled NCOs, which consequently impacts on their combat readiness.

Navy

The formation and development of Kazakhstan's Navy and maritime patrol and coastal defence capabilities has proved slow and often subject to setbacks. However, advances are being made, and not simply on paper, in relation to forming a command structure and training officers and enlisted personnel. In April 2012 the first of three planned missile patrol boats, Russian designed Katran class vessels (Project 20970), was launched from the Zenith shipyard in Uralsk. Initial plans to complete naval development by 2010 have now been delayed until 2015 at the earliest, and will most likely see the Zenith shipyard entering fresh joint ventures with foreign defence companies in order to meet the growing ambition of the political leadership to build a respectable Caspian Navy.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Author's open source analysis with Charles K. Bartles, FMSO, July 2012.

⁴⁵ William D. O'Malley, 'Asian and South Caucasus as an Arena of Operations: Challenges and Constraints', in *Fault lines of Conflict in Central Asian and the South Caucasus. Implications for the US Army*, eds. Olga Oliker and Thomas S. Szayna, Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2003; R. Burnashev and I. Chernykh, *Security in Central Asia: Methodological Frames of Analysis*, Almaty 2006; The Military Balance 1992–2011, London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1993–2008; Phillip Petersen, 'Control of Nuclear Weapons in the CIS', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Jane's Information Group, 1 July 1993; Author Research Interviews in Kazakhstan's MoD, July 2012.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, Rear Admiral Zhandarbek Zhanzakov, explains the need to develop such naval capabilities with reference to the other naval powers in the Caspian region. Zhanzakov states that this is guided by the fact that “an analysis of the naval forces of our neighbours shows their rapid development in order to change the current state of affairs in their favour. For example, two frigates – ‘Tatarstan’ and ‘Dagestan’ – equipped with modern missile systems – and the new generation gunnery ship ‘Astrakhan’, built using stealth technology, joined the effective combat strength of Russia’s Caspian fleet. A coastal infrastructure, including observation posts is being developed in the area of the Caspian Sea”. He also notes the assistance from NATO and the US to Azerbaijan to build and strengthen its own naval capabilities in the region, as well as the effort by Iran to increase its naval forces and the growing interest in such capabilities in Turkmenistan.⁴⁷

Moscow initially opposed Kazakhstan’s steps to develop any naval capabilities in the Caspian, mainly due to its own interest in the Caspian being designated a lake rather than a sea; which would suit Russia’s claims in the Caspian. However, even though Astana may in fact simply be prioritising building its navy to advance the case that the Caspian should be regarded as a sea in any future resolution to its legal status, it is fair to say that Moscow is much more closely cooperating with the country in naval development at defence ministry rather than foreign ministry levels.

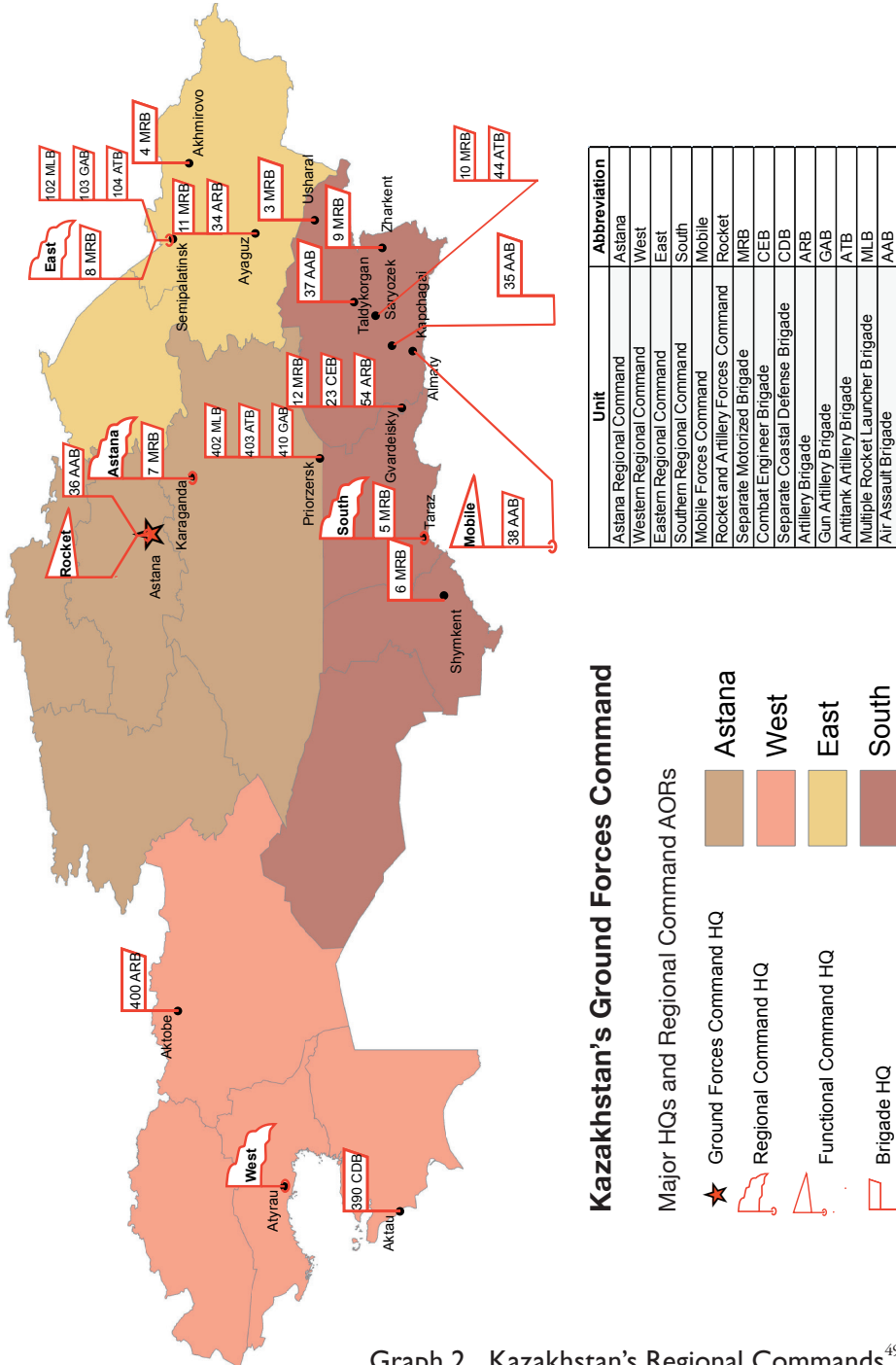
Air Defence Forces

Kazakhstan’s Air Defence Forces (ADF) consists of an air force and ground-based AD forces. They have an estimated strength of 13,000. Organisationally, the ADF consists of four airbases, one aviation training centre and a ground-based AD regiment. The air fleet consists of approximately 115 combat aircraft (MiG-29s, Su-25s, Su-24s, Su-27s, MiG-25s and MiG-31s), a number of transport aircraft (Tu-134, Tu-154), 79 helicopters (Mi-8, Mi-17, Mi-24 and Mi-26) and a large number of trainers. Ground-based ADF largely rely on Soviet legacy assets (SA-2, SA-3, SA-4, SA-6 and S-300).⁴⁸ Kazakhstan’s ADF face serious challenges during what is likely to prove to be a protracted period of modernisation, and these issues range from pilot flying hours and training and career development to the presence in the aircraft fleet of a number of aging platforms.

⁴⁷ Pavel Voronin, ‘Naval Bastions’, Express-K, 13 December 2011.

⁴⁸ Author Research Interviews in Kazakhstan’s MoD, July 2012.

⁴⁹ Author’s open source analysis with Charles K. Bartles, FMSO, July 2012.



Graph 2. Kazakhstan's Regional Commands⁴⁹

A number of observations can be made with reference to defence posture by examining graph 2. The first is to note the markedly light military infrastructure in West Regional Command; Astana has a very long way to go before it can be accused of militarising the Caspian region. Astana's naval and maritime security plans, as far as can be gleaned from its international cooperation and reported interest in procurement for these structures, indicates relatively modest aims. In the period to 2020 and beyond, these developments will not change the balance of naval power in the Caspian Sea, particularly in relation to the supremacy of the Russian Caspian Flotilla.

Moreover, the limited military infrastructure in northern Kazakhstan suggests, naturally, that there is no threat perception to support the need to build bases and other facilities to defend the sovereignty of the country from the north. However, the brigade locations in the east and south of the country do indicate that the source of potential threat stems from the south, or that its forces would move south in order to offer support to regimes within the CSTO. In this sense East Regional Command seems to function as a strategic reserve for the south. Finally, the vast distances involved in moving troops rapidly during a crisis highlight the need for air assets to transport such forces.

During its first twenty years as an independent state, Kazakhstan has issued four military doctrines and in these security documents the evolution of distinctive threat assessment, strategic environment, force structure and national defence priorities including the search for defence partners and military-technical assistance are all perfectly clear. While the subtle shift in threat assessment points to the need to build the armed forces and to train and equip these units to meet a broader range of security threats and not simply to ascribe the overarching security issue facing the military as the countering of international or regional terrorism, the force structure and sophisticated high-tech procurement agenda in turn compel Astana to pursue complex international defence relationships. These transcend its traditionally close defence ties with Moscow, although in no way negating their continued importance.

3. National Policy: Astana's Evolving International Defence Cooperation

Establishing the contours, intricacies, long-term trends or priorities of Kazakhstan's defence and security cooperation with its allies and international partners requires careful reference to the underlying drivers in its national security strategy and threat assessment.⁵⁰ Changes, already noted, in how Astana perceives the country's actual and potential threat environment are not only important elements in any consideration of its defence policy or the future priorities for the armed forces and security structures but these also drive the country's interests in forming and sustaining international defence cooperation arrangements. While the formulation of national defence policy cannot be divorced from analysis of its security documents, likewise the emergence of defence cooperation on a bilateral basis requires a close grounding in the evolution of Kazakhstan's military doctrines since 1994 to its latest version in 2011.⁵¹

Moreover, understanding the nature of Kazakhstan–Russia defence relations necessitates first setting out how the country cooperates with a wide range and increasingly diverse set of security partners. At a multilateral level this includes membership of the CSTO, SCO and cooperation with NATO.⁵² Are these relationships broadly similar, or if not where do the differences really lie, and how does this illuminate Kazakhstan's real defence priorities? This raises interesting additional questions as to whether there is any discernible political decline in the importance Astana attaches to its defence cooperation with Moscow, whether there are consistent patterns in diversifying its international military cooperation agenda, which areas Astana assigns particular significance to in formulating its military–technical policy, or how successful Kazakhstan's domestic defence industry will prove to be in meeting ambitious goals to rearm the military with modern and advanced weapons systems and equipment.

Prior to focusing more exclusively on Kazakhstan–Russia defence cooperation, it is therefore necessary to contextualise this relationship in a much wider framework of how and why Astana develops military cooperation with a range of countries. Setting out the scale of such cooperative arrangements with a seemingly endless and random

⁵⁰ Republic of Kazakhstan 2011 Military Doctrine, op. cit.

⁵¹ Author research interviews, Almaty, 16 April 2012; 8 & 12 May 2012.

⁵² Law on National Security, 6 January 2012, *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, 17 January 2012. 'Nazarbayev Held a Meeting of Kazakhstan's Security Council', http://en.tengrinews.kz/politics_sub/5306/, 28 October 2011.

search for new partners compels reference to the country's military doctrine. To avoid confusion over the political drivers involved in forming the defence partnerships, it is equally important to consider Kazakhstan's 2011 Military Doctrine in the context of its previous versions, and to establish patterns in policymaking and national strategy.⁵³

Kazakhstan has more international defence partners than any country in Central Asia and a burgeoning domestic defence industry, as well as hosting the only arms exhibition in the region. Defence cooperation *per se* may be limited in scope to sending officers to foreign military courses, or receiving in-country training, or to developing the indigenous military education system, or conducting joint training or military exercises such as the annual Steppe Eagle held in Kazakhstan originally with the US and UK militaries. One of the innate weaknesses of Kazakhstan or any non-NATO former Soviet country cooperating in this manner with Alliance members is that too many of the officers receiving a Western education and training do not survive for long on their return to the armed forces; it effectively blights their careers.⁵⁴

In what follows the main focus is on military–technical cooperation as an indicator of the level of cooperation and trust in the defence cooperation sphere. Kazakhstan's special forces are equipped with Turkish rifles and vehicles, the elite air mobile forces use French-supplied advanced digital communications equipment, while its defence industry actively develops joint ventures with Western, South Korean and Israeli defence companies; in 2013 the defence ministry will receive its first Airbus platforms to enhance troop mobility while the country is also purchasing more Eurocopters.

In this context, Russia emerges as one among many of the country's defence partners, though arguably it is also an ally bound together within the CSTO and through multiple bilateral defence cooperation agreements, but nonetheless an important partner. Astana's military–technical policy, as outlined at ministerial level and more thoroughly in the 2011 Military Doctrine, consequently guides its defence relations with its foreign partners and shapes the agenda for the domestic defence industry.⁵⁵

⁵³ 'Inner Stability First Priority For Kazakhstan Armed Forces – Doctrine', *Interfax*, 11 January 2012; Georgy Dubovtsev and Erlan Galymzhanuly', Forecast on the Military–Political Situation Emerging in the World and the Central Asian Region', *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 12, No. 1, 2011, pp. 42–43.

⁵⁴ 'NATO–Kazakhstan Defence Cooperation: Recasting the Conceptual Approaches Beyond 2014', Roundtable, Al Farabi Kazakh National University, Department of International Relations 27 April 2012.

⁵⁵ Author research interviews, Almaty, 16 April 2012; 8 & 12 May 2012.

In Kazakhstan's 2011 Military Doctrine, section 3.6 on international military cooperation, its priorities are elaborated as follows:

1. Strengthen confidence-building measures and military transparency in the region;
2. Make every effort to strengthen international regimes for non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, abide by the international standards of trade in arms, materiel, and military and dual-purpose technologies, and pertinent international treaties;
3. Complete the regulatory legal base for military and military–technological cooperation with members of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation based on the need to pool efforts to create a single defence space and ensure collective military security, as well as further develop CSTO assets and resources;
4. Extend the strategic partnership within the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation based on common military–political interests;
5. Expand military and military–technological cooperation with the United States of America and the European Union;
6. Develop the national peacekeeping capability, take part in joint exercises and share experience in planning, conducting and providing comprehensive logistical support for peacekeeping operations;
7. Use the NATO method and standards to train peacekeeping units so as to ensure operational compatibility;
8. Cooperate on a mutually beneficial basis with foreign companies to supply arms and materiel, and set up coproduction in Kazakhstan.⁵⁶

Although politically it is interesting to note that cooperation with the CSTO and SCO receives much higher priority in terms of order, the reference specifically to the US and EU before NATO is also worth highlighting; individual partnerships are preferred above any relationship such as with NATO that might complicate relations with Russia. Equally, the emphasis on cooperating with foreign defence companies and forming 'co-production' in Kazakhstan is consistent with Astana's recent surge in signing joint ventures and is clearly also enshrined in law in its security documents.⁵⁷

Here the pivotal role is being played by the Joint Stock Company (JSC), Kazakhstan Engineering. This process needs unpicking, and can go some way to explaining the

⁵⁶ Republic of Kazakhstan 2011 Military Doctrine, op. cit.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

level of foreign participation in KADEX 2012 (Kazakhstan's second international arms exhibition in Astana on 3–6 May 2012 following the inaugural KADEX two years earlier) as well as why trends in procurement are now revealing a complex and dynamic wide-scale international defence cooperation agenda that is only likely to expand.⁵⁸

In September 2010 Kazakhstan's defence minister Adilbek Dzhaksybekov referred to a concept for the development of arms and military equipment. According to Dzhaksybekov, the concept "determines the priorities for the development of formations and units of the armed forces, other troops, and military formations in technical respects, and includes a group of mutually associated measures whose implementation will make it possible to increase the combat capabilities of the army and to ensure guaranteed protection of the country's national interests". Moreover, the concept sets as its basic goal the modernisation of the weapons and equipment inventory for the armed and security forces on a par with 'the best foreign models.'⁵⁹ However, given the fledgling status of Kazakhstan's defence industry, these goals, not least the remarkable reference to modernising weapons systems on a par 'with foreign models', remain way beyond the capability of the state to meet.

There are three features in this conceptual approach: introducing new and progressive technologies to prolong the service life of weapons systems; creating a stable balance between weapons systems and the military infrastructure; and developing new methods of command and control in order to maximise the speed of response and approaches to combat.⁶⁰

Kazakhstan's defence minister explained that the concept for the military–technical policy of the country was still in development in September 2010, but he expressed confidence that it would become the basis of a rational military modernisation process and assure "stable rates of growth in the production of competitive military and special purpose products; and the conduct of effective international military–technical cooperation". The concept itself, according to Dzhaksybekov, will determine the "objectives, tasks, principles, and the basic directions of development in the field of technical equipment of the armed forces, other troops, and military formations with arms, military, and special equipment, materiel, other products (works and services) in

⁵⁸ Daniyal Okasov, 'II International Exhibition of Weapons and Military–Technical Equipment "KADEX-2012"', *Tengri News*, 3 May 2012.

⁵⁹ Oleg Gorupay, 'Vector of Development', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 28 September 2010.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

order to raise the combat capability of the state and to protect the country's national interests". Its main aims are:

- Introducing new and flexible technological production methods;
- Developing design capabilities and inter-plant cooperation;
- Expanding production and scientific–technical links internationally;
- Creating joint production facilities;
- Preserving and developing the cadre potential [human resources] of Kazakhstan's defence companies in order to expand their capacity to modernise;
- Repair and production of new types of arms and military equipment;
- Introducing international standards for monitoring quality in weapons systems production.⁶¹

The aims included in this concept, ranging from the country's interest in high technology military assets and increasing the capacity of the defence industry to enhancing joint ventures in pursuit of these modernisation goals, are interconnected with Kazakhstan Engineering and its future ability to meet increasingly demanding targets, and the fuller expression of military–technical and international defence cooperation policy in the 2011 Military Doctrine.

In the 2011 Military Doctrine, section 3.6 dealing with international military cooperation, states that Astana will “cooperate on a mutually beneficial basis with foreign companies to supply arms and materiel, and set up coproduction in Kazakhstan”. This is a guiding theme in section 3.7, which defines the country's military economic defence resourcing policy. Although the 2011 Military Doctrine continues to cap defence spending at no more than one per cent of GDP, it outlines the key priorities in such defence resourcing policy, which will:

- Update legislation governing military–economic relations;
- Adequately fund the armed forces and other troops and military formations on a timely basis to carry out their military security tasks;
- Pursue a unified national military–technological policy and set up a *national procurement office*;⁶²
- Speed up high-tech development of the domestic defence industry to supply the armed forces and other troops and military formations with weapons, materiel,

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Author's emphasis, Ibid.

- special equipment and defence assets;
- Upgrade domestic enterprises which manufacture military and dual-purpose products by introducing organisational-economic mechanisms to make them operate and develop efficiently;
 - Update and upgrade the stock of weapons, materiel and other defence assets using budget appropriations, proceeds from the sale of redundant and idle defence assets and other sources allowed under Kazakhstan law;
 - Pursue mutually beneficial bilateral and multilateral international military–technological cooperation;
 - Expand cooperation between domestic and foreign enterprises to design, manufacture and repair aviation equipment, armoured vehicles and automotive equipment, missile and artillery weapons, communication equipment and ACS, munitions and other types of materiel and special equipment;
 - Attract investment, step up innovation to qualitatively update the defence industry’s research-and-engineering and manufacturing–technological base, and conduct R&D;
 - Develop the domestic military industry’s export potential by expanding into new markets and increasing the number of lines and the volume of exportable military products;
 - Streamline the procedure for state acceptance testing of defence products.⁶³

While much that is contained in the doctrine in relation to defence economic and procurement issues appears to be aspirational, if not simply way beyond the capabilities of the state, many of these features will compel Astana to seek fresh joint ventures with foreign defence companies and invest more in domestic enterprises. In this regard it is particularly worth noting the emphasis placed upon high-tech acquisitions and in making a transition towards meeting the needs of the armed and security forces, while also steadily developing access to the international arms export market. However, it should be highlighted that the 2011 Military Doctrine acknowledges the weaknesses of the defence ministry in developing and designing a system of procurement to meet the requirements of the armed forces, and instead ascribes high hopes to remedy these ills by creating a national procurement office.⁶⁴

Identifying the need to fill a void in the national security machinery may also reflect the trouble, experienced in a similar fashion, by the much more developed but systemically challenged Russian defence industry, and Moscow’s experiment with a

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Russian variant of the US Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA, until 1972 ARPA).⁶⁵ Though the defence economic plans expressed in Kazakhstan's 2011 Military Doctrine are high in ambition and lacking in detailed supportive state measures to achieve these goals, any move in this direction will necessitate closer cooperation with Western defence industries.

Kazakhstan Engineering and Joint Ventures

Some of the drivers behind Kazakhstan's defence policy in the area of these high targets set for the domestic defence industry relate to the formation and development of Kazakhstan Engineering. Others are to be found in the reasons that have been propelling Astana to greatly expand Kazakhstan's international military cooperation since the late 1990s.⁶⁶

In 2003 Kazakhstan Engineering was formed on the basis of the inherited Soviet-era defence companies in Kazakhstan, and since 24 January 2007 it has been operating as part of Samruk Holdings JSC. Kazakhstan Engineering, based in Astana, consists of 25 domestic defence companies.⁶⁷

In its formative years Kazakhstan Engineering required close support from the state. As it lacked sufficient numbers of trained professionals and specialists, many of the companies were essentially idle and consequently, given their level of debt, they struggled to recruit and retain the most valued employees. With state support, this gradually changed, but there are still shortages of trained specialists in key areas, and there is almost no capacity to manufacture high technology items, which drives these companies to seek joint ventures with foreign defence companies, as well as technology transfers where possible.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Aleksei Matveev, 'How to Rearm Our Army? Realising the GPV-2020 May Collide With a Series of Problems', <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/6439>, *Voyenno Promyshlennyi Kuryer*, 6 October 2010; Vladimir Korchak, Aleksandr Leonov, Igor Borisenkov, Aleksandr Yurin, 'There is a Need for a Qualitative Quantum Leap in the Field of Weapons Development', *Vozdushno Kosmicheskaya Oborona*, 10, 2008.

⁶⁶ Shamil Khayrullin, 'Interview with Kazakhstani Defence Minister Adilbek Dzhakysbekov', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 9 May 2012.

⁶⁷ Kazakhstan Engineering's website lists 21 of these companies: Tynys, Aircraft Repair Plant No. 405, Aircraft Repair Plant No. 406, 811 KE Auto Repair Plant, ZIKSTO, KAMAZ Engineering, Petropavlovsk Heavy Machine Building Plant, KazInzhElektroniks, Munaymash, Zavod, im SM Kirov, Machine Building Plant SM Kirov, Semipalatinsk Machine Works, Instrument Factory 'Omega', Semey Engineering, Research institute 'Gidropibor', 832 Repair Plant KE, Ural Plant 'Zenit', Kazakhstan Engineering Distribution, Arsenal Engineering, Avaisnab and United Centre Management Systems Armament; http://www.ke.kz/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&id=5&Itemid=27&lang=en.

⁶⁸ 'Kazakhstan Celebrates the Twentieth Anniversary of Founding the Armed Forces', www.zakon.kz, 25 April 2012.

Kazakhstan Engineering has improved the terms and conditions for its approximately 6,000 employees to make this sector more alluring than alternative employment in areas of the commercial economy and many defence companies offer insurance, healthcare, financial assistance, or even housing or health resort treatment. Productivity and profitability in these defence companies is also rising. In 2011 the consolidated profit of Kazakhstan Engineering reached 2.2 billion Tenge, a five-fold increase year-on-year. This is also remarkable given that in some sectors of the defence industry these companies have had to be built from scratch, ranging from ship-building to support naval policy, to helicopter production and electro-optical device manufacturing.⁶⁹

Kazakhstan Engineering cooperates with more than eighteen countries worldwide. Its Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) partners are Belarus, Russia and Ukraine; in Europe: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Slovakia, Switzerland and Turkey; in Asia they are: China, India, Singapore, South Korea, and then they are also working with the United States and Israel. Kazakhstan Engineering cooperates on major projects with Russia including co-manufacturing of military vehicles, joint work air defence modernisation, joint production of the overhaul and modernisation of armaments, ammunition and An-3T, with co-production of military vehicles, munitions and aircraft parts with Ukraine, and with aircraft upgrades in Belarus.⁷⁰

Kazakhstan Engineering is also closely cooperating with French companies such as Thales and Sagem on communications and UAVs. It has joint European ventures such as Eurocopter and is developing ties with Madrid to jointly build and maintain radar stations and EW and reconnaissance assets, and with Rome on modernising armaments. The company also cooperates with Turkish counterparts on modernising armoured vehicles, producing munitions, and joint shipbuilding projects (also supported by South Korea), while cooperation with Israel concentrates on MRLS joint production of UAVs and modernising armaments. Its cooperation with China is restricted to jointly manufacturing armaments.⁷¹

Kazakhstan Engineering faces enormous challenges in modernising its enterprises in order to maximise the production process and use advanced technologies. It must

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Kazakhstan Engineering, accessed 15 August 2012, <http://www.ke.kz>; http://www.ke.kz/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=71%3A2010-12-20-20-38-45&catid=61%3A2010-12-20-20-35-35&Itemid=2&lang=en; http://www.ke.kz/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=20&Itemid=37&lang=en.

⁷¹ Ibid.

not only attract highly skilled engineers, offering sufficiently competitive conditions to retain their services, but also it needs effective managers. It will need to constantly seek fresh joint ventures and develop a skilled domestic workforce capable of retaining and developing such skills in the long term and reducing dependency upon foreign companies. However, the real driving force in this process is the target set by President Nazarbayev to achieve 80% domestic supply of weapons and equipment for the armed and security forces by 2020. Kazakhstan Engineering, therefore, is the key player in meeting the high demands of the state defence order. To reach these ambitious targets it must achieve 7% annual growth in supplying new hardware domestically.⁷²

According to Bolat Smagulov, Chairman of Kazakhstan Engineering, a critical element in the state programme to modernise the weapons and equipment inventory involves making the transition from analogue to digital forms of communications. Kazakhstan engineering must meet these requirements, and is providing the armed forces with electronics, including digital radios and computers, as well as engaging in the modernisation and repair of existing weapons systems and equipment. Smagulov defined Kazakhstan Engineering's long-term priorities as follows:

The state has initiated a large-scale technical re-equipment of the security forces. Therefore, the priorities for defence are modern communications, intelligence and control, electronic warfare, unmanned aerial vehicles, advanced aircraft, personal protective equipment, and military precision weapons. The principle of public-private partnership in the defence industry and cooperation with leading multinational companies having advanced technology, experience and willingness to invest, would increase the competitiveness of Kazakh products, to achieve its goals more effectively.⁷³

Smagulov, therefore, notes the link between the high aspirations of the state for the technical re-equipment of the armed and security forces and its intrinsic need on this basis to develop multiple foreign partnerships. This will assist in moving some way towards realising these goals, and also in adding to the niche export market into which Kazakhstan Engineering wishes to enter. This already involves the export of aircraft parts to China, Vietnam and Uzbekistan and naval aviation spare parts to India.⁷⁴ But, as Smagulov admits, these partnerships are also innately political in their origins, resulting

⁷² 'Kazakhstan Celebrates the Twentieth Anniversary', op. cit.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

from agreements signed at bilateral level during President Nazarbayev's foreign trips. How these defence relationships emerge, and are maintained and harnessed will prove to be important in determining Kazakhstan Engineering's future success.

Kazakhstan's Search for International Defence Partnerships

Kazakhstan's formal defence relationships with its allies and foreign partners began within two years of the creation of its armed forces following independence. These defence relations, limited in scope in the 1990s and steadily growing in the following decade, were only very loosely tied to the 'multi-vector' foreign policy paradigm and initially reflected weakness and overdependence on Russia, both for military assistance and infrastructure support.⁷⁵ In 1994 Kazakhstan entered official defence cooperation arrangements with Russia and Ukraine, followed in 1996 by China and Turkey, and Belarus in 1998. There was also some level of defence cooperation opening up with the United States in 1997, though this was largely symbolic.

Low-level defence cooperation, prior to the terrorist meta-attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001 (hereafter 9/11) was initiated with Pakistan in 1999 and Saudi Arabia in 2000. However, a comparison of Kazakhstan's international defence cooperation partnerships pre-9/11 with the apparently endless expansion since then reveals a consistent policy of diversification. Some of these bilateral relationships were no doubt linked to Astana's growing appetite to pursue closer partnership arrangements with NATO through PfP. In 2001 Astana began defence cooperation with Germany, India, Israel and the UK. In the following years, apparently consistent with the country seeking to play greater roles in international peacekeeping and counter-terrorism, defence relations were formed with Austria, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, France, Italy, Singapore, Slovenia, South Korea and Spain. Following the experience of deploying a contingent of its peacekeeping battalion (KAZBAT) to Iraq 2003–2008 under Polish command, in July 2012 Astana opened official defence ties with Poland and also Japan.⁷⁶

Some of these post-9/11 defence ties are revealing, in terms of what Astana specifically wants from such cooperation. Its bilateral agreements in July 2012 with Poland and Japan illustrate this. During a visit to Astana on 12 July 2012 by a Polish military delegation, in addition to signing a bilateral defence cooperation deal, officials from

⁷⁵ Author research interviews, Almaty, 16 April; 8 & 12 May 2012.

⁷⁶ V. Canas, 'NATO and Kazakhstan', NATO Parliamentary Assembly, October 2005, pp. 16–20.

Warsaw visited Kazakhstan Engineering to discuss possible joint ventures and the potential for Poland to assist in the development of Kazakhstan's Navy. Also in July 2012, Japan opened a defence attaché office in Astana in order to strengthen bilateral ties in the military sphere. Astana wants to agree joint ventures with Japanese defence companies to manufacture communications equipment, thermal imaging devices and aircraft, and also to develop the country's peacekeeping capabilities and further strengthen military education.⁷⁷

Nonetheless, it is mistaken to reach the conclusion that the process of expanding the country's defence ties was driven by the need to develop its counter-terrorist capabilities. This much can be demonstrated from the type of procurement Astana is pursuing and in terms of its 2011 Military Doctrine, combat training and joint exercises with Russia. In fact, one element of the 2000 Military Doctrine shed much light on the underlying desire of Astana to seek to diversify its defence cooperation with foreign countries. Among the internal threats to national security listed in the 2000 Military Doctrine was the insufficient military-industrial potential of the country, leaving the armed forces dependent upon other states for their military procurement.⁷⁸

Yet, it is equally erroneous to conclude that identifying potential problems stemming from dependence upon Russia in developing Kazakhstan's Armed Forces suggests a political 'move away' from 'Moscow's orbit'. In large measure, the defence cooperation diversification, including the expansion of NATO PfP ties, was aimed at gaining access to additional training courses and, more importantly, enhancing commercial options, given the absence of any real defence industry before 2003, or more realistically 2007.⁷⁹

Officers in Kazakhstan's Defence Ministry Department for International Military Cooperation explained that during this process of diversification Astana was effectively able to 'shop around' for competitive prices on repairs or upgrades to aircraft or other military assets. This would entail discussing prices in Moscow, then trying to find a better deal in other capitals.⁸⁰ The interests were mainly commercial, but underlying

⁷⁷ Oksana Parpura, 'Kazakhstan to Increase Military Cooperation with Poland and Japan', www.mod.kz, 9 August 2012.

⁷⁸ Military Doctrine of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 10 February 2000, http://ru.government.kz/docs/u000334_20000210.htm.

⁷⁹ Author research interviews, Astana, 4 July 2012.

⁸⁰ Author discussions with Kazakhstani military officers, February 2008 and Western defence officials, Brussels, January 2010.

the diversification of defence cooperation was a level of political ambition among the ruling elite that wanted the very best for the military, even if these aspirations were not always matched by sustained policies to improve and develop military manpower and training. No one initiated this policy to offend Moscow.

Three features of the expansion of Kazakhstan's international defence cooperation since 9/11 need to be understood before more detailed consideration of the country's defence relations with Russia can be properly contextualised. These are the extent to which Kazakhstan deepened its partnership with NATO, particularly after May 2005 when the tragic events in Andijan in neighbouring Uzbekistan became part of a process leading to a downturn in Tashkent's relations with the US and NATO.⁸¹ Elements of Kazakhstan–NATO cooperation will be considered in chapter five linked to the close and long term defence partnership between Moscow and Astana. However, Astana also developed five-year defence cooperation programmes with Washington and Ankara in 2003, placing these efforts on a more sustainable, predictable and structured format.

United States defence cooperation has achieved very little in terms of helping the development of Kazakhstan's Armed Forces, this stems from Washington's limited understanding, and even lack of interest, in the realities confronting the country or the region. US policymakers sometimes daydreamed of grand plans such as the fiasco over the Caspian Guard, while they underestimated the extent to which the Kazakhstani officials were talking to Moscow about the very same cooperation issues.⁸² US defence cooperation with Kazakhstan leapt forward after 2003, when the US DoD agreed to place the cooperation programmes on a five-year framework.

In order to promote consistency and facilitate policy planning, reviewed annually, Washington and Astana agreed a five-year defence cooperation plan in September 2003. This also aimed to support NATO efforts to engage with Kazakhstan. The main tenets of the original plan revolved around strengthening Kazakhstan's Caspian security and counter-terrorist capabilities and developing its military infrastructure. Its key aims were to:

⁸¹ John C. K. Daly, 'Kazakhstan Withdraws Troops From Iraq', *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 5, Issue 204, 24 October 2008.

⁸² V. Ivanov, V. Mukhin, 'Kaspiyskiy Strazh Primeryayet Amerikanskuyu Formu', *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye*, 22 April 2005; V. Mukhin, 'Voyennye Vyzovy Kaspiyskogo Regiona', *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye*, 22 January 2004.

1. Create, train and develop a NATO-interoperable rapid reaction unit capable of responding fast to any type of attack on Kazakhstan's offshore or coastal infrastructure;
2. Develop a rapid response force capable of protecting oil pipelines and other sensitive energy infrastructure;
3. Establish a helicopter unit capable of carrying out support operations in the Caspian region;
4. Assist in the creation of Kazakhstan's naval capabilities, in order to protect its interests in the Caspian, tasked with monitoring and patrolling Kazakhstani and foreign vessels transiting through Kazakhstan's waters;
5. Develop the Naval Academy at Aktau with the aim of it gradually evolving into a training centre to support all forms of water-related military training such as counter-terrorism, counter narcotics, search and rescue and SCUBA for special operations.⁸³

These plans were further enhanced by closely coordinating US–Kazakhstan defence cooperation with Turkey. Consequently, many of these aims were supported through Turkish–Kazakhstan defence cooperation, particularly in terms of strengthening Kazakhstani special forces and naval capabilities. Turkey assisted in building the naval base at Aktau, in constructing the port at Yeraliyev and supplied communications equipment, a training centre and several ships of up to 1,000 tonnes displacement. It has also supplied reconditioned Land Rover military vehicles for Kazakhstan's special forces.⁸⁴ Turkish mobile training teams trained Kazakhstan's special forces and, since 2004, more than 400 Kazakhstani officers have been trained in Turkish military educational centres. Ankara also assisted in developing KAZBAT and has facilitated numerous NATO PfP programmes with Kazakhstan. These programmes were renewed in 2008 and have been subject to re-negotiation in 2012.⁸⁵

⁸³ 'US and Kazakhstan Team Up to Improve Border Security', Astana: US Embassy, 18 May 2006; 'Military Cooperation with USA Developing Dynamically', Interfax-Kazakhstan, Almaty, 19 February 2004.

⁸⁴ Author Research Interviews with senior officials in Kazakhstan's MoD, July 2012, October 2004 and December 2005.

⁸⁵ R. Barylski, 'Kazakhstan: Military Dimensions of State Formation over Central Asia's Civilizational Fault Lines' in *Civil–Military Relations in the Soviet and Successor States*, eds. Constantine P. Danopoulos and Daniel Zirker, Oxford: Westview Press, 1996, pp. 123–151; S. Kushkumbayev, 'Turkey in Central Asia: Search for the Optimal Model of Interactions' in the *Proceedings of International Conference on Interrelations of Turkey and Central Asia in the Context of Enlarging Europe*, 2006, pp. 174–184, Almaty: Dike Press; I. Radionov, 'Kogda perestanut glumit'sya nad armiei i derzhavoi?' *Molodaya Gvardiya*, No. 9, 1990, pp. –9; P. Robins, 'Turkey's Ostpolitik – Relations with the Central Asian States' in D. Menashri (Ed.) *Central Asia Meets the Middle East*, London: Frank Cass, 1997, pp. 135–136; M. Soysal, 'The Future of Turkish Foreign Policy' in L. G. Martin and D. Keridis (Ed.) *The Future of Turkish Foreign Policy*, MIT Press, 2004, p. 38; B. Sultanov, 'Cooperation of Turkey and Kazakhstan on Struggling against Terrorism and Extremism', in the *Proceedings of the International Conference on Interrelations of Turkey and Central Asia in the Context of Enlarging Europe*, Almaty: Dike Press, 2006, pp. 108–111.

KADEX 2012 and Defence Procurement

The level of ambition of the domestic defence industry, and the sheer scale of Kazakhstan's successful defence cooperation diversification were displayed during KADEX 2012, staged in Astana on 3–6 May 2012, involving defence companies from among the country allies and partners. KADEX 2012 also showcased Kazakhstan's developing defence industry and saw the signing of more than \$1.8 billion in defence deals to 2020. KADEX 2012 also showcased weapons and equipment for the ground forces and navy, aircraft and air defence assets, special purpose equipment including non-lethal weapons for counter-terrorist operations, C4ISR assets and logistical and technical equipment.⁸⁶

The largest numbers of companies from individual countries with stalls in the exhibition were Russia (39) and Turkey (15). Belarus and France sent 14 each, Germany (7) and Ukraine (6). Offering five or fewer were Bulgaria, Israel, Italy, Pakistan, Poland and Spain, and one company from each of the following: Austria, Czech Republic, China, India, Slovenia, UK and the US (though some of these represented conglomerates). China's military–technical cooperation with Kazakhstan is comparatively small, represented by only one main company and limited to joint manufacture of ammunition. The Russian Federal Service for Military–Technical Cooperation reported higher figures than those represented in the official KADEX 2012 catalogue, but the pattern remained broadly similar.⁸⁷

The Main Directorate of Kazakhstan's Armed Forces for Ammunition, Kazakhstan Engineering and the Russian Federal State Unitary Enterprise 'Splav' State Research and Production Association, agreed to work on extending the range of Kazakhstan's 'Grad' MRLS to 40km and to conduct joint inspection and repairs of the systems. Joint production agreements and after sales maintenance of the Turkish Kobra armoured vehicles were signed between Kazakhstan Engineering and the Turkish defence company OTOKAR.⁸⁸

An MoU was signed with the US defence company 'Cessna Aircraft' on maintenance and assembly in-country of the Cessna Grand Caravan 208B aircraft. There were no reported deals signed with the UK. Kazakhstan Engineering signed a protocol of

⁸⁶ 'CASSIDIAN at Kazakhstan Defence Exposition KADEX 2012', <http://www.defpro.com/news/details/35058/>, 3 May 2012.

⁸⁷ 'KADEX 2012 Weapons Exhibition', <http://www.fsvts.gov.ru/materialsf/23BCDF3D5B306C6F44257A17001DDA35.html>, accessed on 23 June 2012.

⁸⁸ Results of Weapons Systems Exhibition, www.mod.kz, 29 May 2012.

intentions with 'Eurocopter' on the acquisition of EC-725 helicopters and organising their assembly in Kazakhstan. The navy, Kazakhstan Engineering, MDBA (France) and Indra Sistemas (Spain) signed agreements on naval procurement related to coastal defence systems. Naval cooperation was also formed through a joint venture with STX Offshore & Shipbuilding (South Korea) to include joint shipbuilding in Kazakhstan's sector of the Caspian Sea and possible technology transfer. Kazakhstani military specialists also expressed interest in Russian and South Korean mine sweeping ships.⁸⁹

Agreements were also signed to jointly manufacture ammunition and equipment with the Ukrainian Lugansk Cartridge Plant, and Kazakhstan Engineering concluded a high profile \$150 million agreement on the joint production of BTR-4 with the Ukrainian Ukrspetsexport.⁹⁰ As well as indicating the continued interest on the part of Astana to further diversify the country's long-term defence cooperation partnerships, these agreements and the scale of KADEX 2012 reveal the areas of special interest to the defence ministry, future procurement priorities and the likely transition to smaller, better-trained and more professional and well-equipped armed forces.

There are three important procurement trends to identify in the following section. They have implications for explaining features of Kazakhstan's armed forces and offer an indication of Astana's threat perception. They also throw light on a crucial point of national defence policy: how does Moscow view these developments? Does it support the aims pursued by Astana in this military modernisation process? This will place the nature of Kazakhstan–Russia defence cooperation and its likely future trends in a much wider context.

The first point to note, despite Astana proving to be sensitive about discussing the issue at NATO level, relates to naval development. Naval procurement will support the creation of serious Kazakhstani naval capabilities in the Caspian Sea by 2020. This will involve joint shipbuilding projects, improving coastal defences, acquiring sophisticated missile systems and improving the C2 structure and Kazakhstan will achieve these goals through its defence ties with Western defence companies, as well as in partnership with Russia and South Korea. The presence of the Russian United Shipbuilding Corporation at KADEX 2012 is one indication that Moscow is not opposed to Kazakhstan forming and strengthening its naval capabilities.⁹¹ By 2020

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ KADEX 2012 Catalogue, *op. cit.*

Kazakhstan's navy is likely to emerge as relatively small, well armed, and staffed with professional servicemen with exchange and training experience abroad.

Second, Kazakhstan's air and air defence procurement to 2020 confirms a greater interest in rapidly moving troops during a crisis, support for other power ministries, and long-term close cooperation with Russia on air defence. Joint air defence systems and integrated networks will become so intertwined as to render the two inseparable – the political implication of joint Kazakhstani–Russian air defence is that any actor attacking Kazakhstan will immediately trigger a response from Moscow.⁹²

Third, Astana is placing high-tech weapons systems and equipment at the heart of its procurement policy. This is revealed in its interest in C4ISR, high-tech automated C2, as well as in upgrades and modernisation initiatives in relation to existing platforms. However, the procurement pattern and interest in specific systems and subsystems does not fit with preparing forces primarily for counter-terrorist operations. Consistent with Kazakhstan's 2011 Military Doctrine, which lowers the threat presented to the state by international terrorism and defines the principle external threat facing the country as stemming from socio-political instability in the region, it appears that Kazakhstan is developing and modernising its armed forces to engage in medium-intensity conflict.⁹³

The full extent of Russian support on offer during KADEX 2012 for the military modernisation of Kazakhstan's armed forces reflects not only tacit backing for naval development but also for the high-technology-centric approach being pursued by Astana. Russian defence companies are actively engaging in assisting Kazakhstan to upgrade, repair and maintain aircraft including helicopters, to upgrade tank armour and to sell non-lethal weapons for counter-terrorist operations, air defence systems and radars. They are working on upgrading MRLS systems, jointly producing ammunition for artillery, conducting projects to determine the service life of hardware, managing R&D on special purpose and other military vehicles, supporting C4ISR development, digitising communications systems, supplying navigational systems and C3I to the Navy, and optoelectronic equipment for aviation.⁹⁴

While Moscow supports this transition to introduce high-tech assets into Kazakhstan's armed forces, this also raises questions about how it perceives Astana occasionally

⁹² See chapter 4.

⁹³ Republic of Kazakhstan 2011 Military Doctrine, *op. cit.*

⁹⁴ Author research interviews, Astana, 4 July 2012; Almaty, 8 & 12 May 2012.

favouring Western companies for some high-profile procurements such as Airbus. Does Moscow consider these purchases to be a sign that Astana is moving away from preferring to procure from the Russian defence industry?

Here it is vital to highlight for policy planners a key distinction in how Western capitals and Moscow understand Kazakhstan's defence policymaking. Moscow considers the defence ministry in Astana to be utterly irrelevant, merely functioning to implement policy rather than possessing decision-making powers. In this sense, defence specialists and officials in Moscow may regard the same policies in Kazakhstan in an entirely different manner, but their views are much closer to Kazakhstan's policymaking reality than are those of their Western counterparts.⁹⁵

In the area of decision making on major defence procurement deals, Russian defence specialists ignore the Kazakhstani defence ministry, and attribute the 'trend' to seek to agree high profile Western contracts rather than buying Russian military assets to the presidential administration in Astana. Moreover, this decision making is considered transient and subject to the whims of those involved in the presidential administration, rather than constituting a political 'move away' from the Russian defence industry.⁹⁶ It may well be the case that President Nazarbayev receives advice on choosing a contract such as Airbus, rather than a Russian version, but given the staff turnover in the presidential administration it is unlikely to account for a consistent policy since 2000 to diversify international defence cooperation; this could only have been consistently guided by President Nazarbayev.⁹⁷

This is a salient point to grasp. Looking into the Kazakhstani governmental system from an external vantage point; what may at first appear as evidence that Russia's 'power' or influence in the country or region is declining, may simply denote change, in this case predominantly linked to commercial considerations. Where the political barometer rises, in acutely sensitive areas such as air defence or intelligence sharing, Russia remains Kazakhstan's friend, partner and its trusted ally.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Author research interviews with military experts in Astana and Moscow, 4–6 July 2012.

⁹⁶ See, for example: James Nixey, 'The Long Goodbye: Waning Russian Influence in the South Caucasus and Central Asia', http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Russia%20and%20Eurasia/0612bp_nixey.pdf, Chatham House, June 2012.

⁹⁷ Author research interviews with military experts in Astana and Moscow, 4–6 July 2012.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

Policymakers in Western capitals failing to understand this crucial feature of Kazakhstan's defence policy may wrongly identify opportunities where, in fact, none exist; the calamitous efforts by BAE Systems in the UK to enter Kazakhstan's air defence market or NATO's failed aspirations to expand KAZBAT to include the entire Kazakhstani air mobile forces are cases in point.

Kazakhstan's increasingly diverse and complex international defence cooperation patterns do not offer convincing evidence of any political drift away from its close defence and security ties with Russia. Indeed, while President Nazarbayev publicly asks what the point in NATO's existence might be in the post-Cold War era, he would never imagine asking anyone, let alone in a policy speech, why Russia exists.⁹⁹ What is conveyed as part of the process of Astana choosing defence partnerships on a case-by-case basis is the long-term project to build and strengthen national security capabilities that are ultimately independent of other actors and clearly a decision has been taken to place greater stress on acquiring high-tech assets.

⁹⁹ 'President Nursultan Nazarbayev Interviewed', *Rossiia* 24, 26 April 2012.

4. Kazakhstan–Russia Defence Cooperation: Long Term Trends and Challenges

Kazakhstan and Russia cooperate across a very wide range of spheres ranging from cultural exchange to economic issues and trade.¹⁰⁰ Sharing the world's longest land border, bound by a common history stretching back from before the Soviet era right up until the present day; Kazakhstan also has the highest number of ethnic Russian citizens of any country in Central Asia.

According to a study carried out by reyingt.kz concerning the frequency of high level diplomatic visits by Kazakhstani officials between July 2011 and July 2012, Russia was in pole position with 18 meetings to Russia by senior government officials, compared with 15 for Kyrgyzstan and Belarus with 10. What is true in the foreign policy and diplomatic sphere equally holds for how Kazakhstan conducts its defence policy and international military cooperation; the level and frequency of contacts with Russian officials and officers is significantly higher.¹⁰¹

In this broader context as well as in light of Kazakhstan's international defence cooperation policy, which extends to include Israel, India and NATO through the PfP and its members on a bilateral basis, Astana's defence relationship with Moscow may appear to be just another 'partnership'. However, this would be to entirely misrepresent and risk underestimating the deep and enduring nature of the country's defence relations with the Russian Federation. This is crucial to identify from a policy planning perspective, prior to exploring the trends, shifts and longer-term implications stemming from Astana–Moscow defence cooperation.

The roots of this security relationship are legal, historical, military and cultural, and extend into shared thinking on doctrine, force structure, threat assessment, tactics as well as similarities in their respective weapons and equipment systems. On 28 March 1994 Kazakhstan signed a military treaty with Russia and since then this legal framework has been further deepened by numerous bilateral and

¹⁰⁰ A. Nissanbayev, 'Cooperation of Kazakhstan and Russia in the Sphere of Human Dimension: New Opportunities and Prospects', *Central Asia's Affairs*, Almaty, KazISS, 2010, No. 3, pp. 21–24; M. Laumulin, 'Kazakhstan and Russia: Relations as Part of Russia's Central Asian Strategy', *Central Asia's Affairs*, Almaty, KazISS, 2008, No. 4, pp. 20–27.

¹⁰¹ 'Russia Ranked First in the Ranking of Partner Countries of Kazakhstan', *Regnum*, 16 July 2012.

multilateral agreements related to military–technical cooperation and a range of other issues.¹⁰²

Some of the articles from the 1994 Military Cooperation Treaty between Russian and Kazakhstan severely restricted the potential for Astana to pursue deeper relations with NATO.¹⁰³ For example:

Article 10: The contracting parties will cooperate in the sphere of military intelligence. Each of the contracting parties pledges not to conduct military intelligence activities directed against the other party.¹⁰⁴

NATO cannot participate in sensitive discussions with Astana without this information being shared with the Russian Federation, and thus there will always be limits on how close the relations or discussion might prove to be. Moreover, the treaty tied both countries to pursue close defence ties in highly sensitive areas:

Article 19: The contracting parties will retain the existing network of all types of communications, air defence, antiballistic missile defence, and early warning systems and supply lines and will agree on measures for their development.

The contracting parties will cooperate in the sphere of military transport movements. The procedures of this cooperation will be defined in a separate agreement.

The contracting parties will retain the common air space for flights by military and civilian aircraft and the joint flight control system on the basis of the corresponding agreements.¹⁰⁵

Almost all NATO defence cooperation with Kazakhstan is subject to the terms of its bilateral treaty with Moscow, and Moscow can at any time object to the Alliance contravening the terms of the treaty. One final example shows the full extent of the

¹⁰² M. Gubaidullina, B. Somzhurek, *The Formation of the Legal Basis for Military and Political Cooperation Between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation*, Information and Analysis Centre, Moscow State University, Moscow, 22 August 2007.

¹⁰³ 'Treaty between the Republic of Kazakhstan and Russian Federation on Military Cooperation, signed in Moscow on 28 March 1994', <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/940328.htm>, accessed 9 September 2012.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

treaty's coverage, and the very close defence relationship between Kazakhstan and Russia it originally envisaged:

Article 17: The contracting parties will agree on policy in the sphere of the joint development, production, repair, and shipment of arms, military vehicles, and material and technical resources in the interest of the comprehensive support of the armed forces, facilities used for defensive purposes, and integrated military units, and will coordinate aspects of military–technical cooperation, securing the preservation and development of existing cooperative relationships between enterprises developing and producing weapons and military hardware.

Deliveries and services will be performed on a duty-free basis at prices set by each of the contracting parties for their own needs. Prices and rates will be agreed upon by the parties and will be defined in a separate agreement in each case. Questions connected with the coordination of policy in the sphere of arms and military hardware and reciprocal deliveries of goods (and work or services) will be addressed in special agreements on the basis of joint weapons programmes.

The contracting parties will cooperate in the defence industry and in scientific research and experimental design projects with the preservation and development of existing patterns of specialisation and cooperation.

The contracting parties will create an intergovernmental commission on industry and scientific research and experimental design projects for the pursuit of the policy agreed upon in the military–technical sphere, with the preservation and development of existing patterns of specialisation and cooperation.

The contracting parties will create an intergovernmental commission on military–technical cooperation by the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation for the pursuit of the policy agreed upon in the military–technical sphere.¹⁰⁶

These features remain in force, renewed automatically every ten years unless either party notifies the other of its formal abrogation, and thus limits the scope for NATO to cooperate at a deeper or more systemic level with Kazakhstan. The Russia–Kazakhstan axis remains the crucial defence and security relationship for Astana, despite its multi-vector foreign policy and the increasing diversification of its international defence ties.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Multilateral agreements involving both countries are mainly linked to their responsibilities within the CSTO. Some agreements, however, often take a lengthy period for the Kazakhstani parliament to ratify. One illustration of this related to President Nazarbayev finally signing into law on 12 June 2012, a bilateral military agreement to settle financial obligations in accordance with various treaties concerning military education and the use of test ranges. The original agreement, however, was concluded in Moscow on 25 November 2005.¹⁰⁸

Flowing from these legal arrangements and agreements there is a whole complex host of military and military–technical bilateral cooperation between Kazakhstan and Russia. Astana sends large numbers of its military and intelligence officers annually for education and training in Russian establishments. This extends beyond defence ministry personnel to include emergencies ministry and intelligence officers receiving training from the Russian emergencies ministry, the Federal Security Service (FSB) and Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR). According to Russian experts, by 2006 Kazakhstan was sending more officers to attend such courses in Russia than any other CIS state.¹⁰⁹

This close military educational and training relationship extends into Kazakhstan's own military educational infrastructure where Russian instructors are frequently used. Moscow has regularly sent instructors to Kazakhstan's National Defence University.¹¹⁰ Russia's influence on Kazakhstan's armed forces, consequently, is simply way beyond that of even its foremost Western defence partners. Former Defence Minister Mukhtar Altynbaev, stated that in the 1993 to 2006 period, 2,475 Kazakhstani defence ministry officers were trained in Russia compared to the United States, which accounted for a mere 220 officers. This may seem a damning statistic, but in real terms the impact of the US training is significantly less due to the high numbers of Kazakhstani officers who later leave the armed forces after receiving such training.¹¹¹ At any one time, when Kazakhstan's military officers are attending courses in Western countries, significantly higher numbers of their colleagues are receiving education and training in Russia. Another distinction between Kazakhstan's officers attending courses in Russia or the

¹⁰⁸ 'Kazakhstan Ratifies Military Related Agreement with Russia', *Interfax-Kazakhstan*, 12 June 2012.

¹⁰⁹ A. Tsyganok, 'Heirs of the Empire: Military cooperation by CIS countries', *Centralasia.ru*, 10 February 2006.

¹¹⁰ 'What We Need is a Small, Mobile Army', Interview with Mukhtar Altynbayev, *Liter*, 28 January 2007.

¹¹¹ Zhanna Oyshybayeva, 'Kazakhstani Defence Minister Eyes Cooperation with Russia', *Almaty Liter*, 17 October 2006; 'Kazakh Defence Minister Praises Army Reforms, Cooperation with World Powers', *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, 6 May 2006.

US is the length of these since many of the former last for years, while the United States' military courses may be as short as a few weeks or months.

Kazakhstan also supplies Russia with access to military facilities, leasing more than 11 million hectares of its territory for such purposes. Moscow has access to the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, accounting for up to 70 per cent of its space launches. The lease was first agreed in 1994, renewed a decade later and now extends to 2050. Russia has access for its air force and naval aviation trials of new weapons at Kazakhstan's military ranges in Atyrau, western Kazakhstan as well as of the Chkalov State Flying Trials Centre. Russia can also test missiles and ammunition at firing ranges in western Kazakhstan, as well as at those located in Karaganda, Aqtobe, Kyzlorda and Zhambyl adding up to 80,000 square kilometres to test air defence and strategic ballistic missiles. It uses an independent radar node 'Balkhash-9' as part of Russia's Aerospace Defence Forces (*Vozdushno Kosmicheskaya Oborona – VKO*) integrated missile attack warning system; a regiment from the Russian Air Transport Branch is located at Kostanai to facilitate air transport requirements for these military ranges and other sites.¹¹²

Western security experts also recognise that Astana actually pursues much closer defence and security ties with Moscow in such a way as to contradict its official 'multi-vector' foreign policy based on avoiding a preference for any one state. Richard Weitz, Senior Fellow and Director of the Center for Political–Military Analysis at the Washington-based Hudson Institute, states:

Despite Kazakhstan's 'multi-vector' approach to foreign policy, Moscow is clearly Astana's premier partner in the defence and security sector. These close ties result from their shared military heritage, culture, perceived threat as well as their geographic proximity, shared alliances, and similar military doctrine, strategy and tactics. Former Defense Minister Daniyal Akhmetov openly stated that, 'Russia's armed forces are the main strategic ally of the Kazakh armed forces.'¹¹³

This level of complementarity, similarities in military culture and shared language means that Kazakhstan's armed forces do not have to work hard to attain interoper-

¹¹² M. Lukin, 'All the Russian Bases', *Kommersant*, Moscow, 21 May 2007, <http://www.kommersant.ru/document.aspx?docid=766827>; 'Trials Ranges Strengthen Military Alliance', 18 April 2006, http://www.vpk-news.ru/article.asp?pr_sign=archive.2006.130.articles.cis_02.

¹¹³ Richard Weitz, 'Kazakhstan and Russia Complete 'Aldaspan-2012' Military Exercises', *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 9 Issue 139, 23 July 2012.

ability with their Russian counterparts; it simply comes naturally and flows from these numerous influences and a higher level of trust. Such defence cooperation levels are further reinforced through the collective defence mechanisms in the CSTO and Astana and Moscow's initiation, in late 2008, of a process leading to the creation of the CSTO's KSOR, as well as to a lesser extent through the SCO and its biannual military exercises.

Drawing upon the shared Soviet armed forces heritage and, more recently, the legacy forces, even a new generation of Kazakhstani and Russian officers and soldiers can readily share experiences and more easily identify with each other's experience of military life, its problems and challenges. They incur no risk to their professional careers by completing courses in military educational establishments in Russia; whereas, among the considerably fewer Kazakhstani officers sent to training or educational courses in the West, the level of subsequent haemorrhaging from the military within a relatively short period of their return to Kazakhstan is comparatively high.

Senior officials and officers in Kazakhstan's armed forces have also frequently highlighted that the most special defence relationship for the country is its enduring partnership with Russia. In an article published in the Russian defence ministry's *Krasnaya Zvezda* in May 2009, Lieutenant-General Abay Tasbulatov, Commander of Kazakhstan's Republican Guard, reviewed the development of the military training and military education. Tasbulatov noted the closure of the Semipalatinsk test site and abandonment of nuclear weapons in the 1990s and its contribution to Kazakhstan's reputation as a peaceful state committed to non-proliferation mechanisms.¹¹⁴

Turning to the role played by Russia in Astana's defence and security policies, as well as the crucial importance of bilateral defence cooperation with Moscow, Tasbulatov stated that the 2007 Military Doctrine had put high priority on CSTO development. Indeed, he tied the modernisation of the armed forces to the 'purposes and tasks of the CSTO'.¹¹⁵ Tasbulatov then highlighted the growing security role of the SCO as an additional layer of defence and security cooperation between Astana and Moscow in a wider multilateral framework, before commenting on the nature of bilateral defence cooperation:

¹¹⁴ Lieutenant-General Abay Tasbulatov, 'Towards Establishing Military Security', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 28 May 2009.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

The Russian Federation occupies a special place among our regional security partners. Multiple documents that legally bind our mutual aspiration to eternal friendship and partnership regulate all areas of cooperation, including in the military sphere. Servicemen from Kazakhstan are educated at Russian military educational institutions; agreements to deliver weapons and military hardware are being implemented.¹¹⁶

In discussion with Kazakhstani officers, defence officials or experts, as well as in the numerous public statements by defence officials and published security documents, Kazakhstan's close defence and security relationship with Russia is both strong and enduring. This is an axiomatic point and must be understood by NATO and its members' national defence planning staffs: Kazakhstan and Russia have and will continue to foster in the longer term an enduring partnership based on more than 60 legally binding treaties, alliance arrangements, as well as mutual trust, understanding, and a wide range of factors uniting or at least yielding very similar views on major strategic or security related issues.

In the preceding chapters and in what follows, therefore, there is no effort to plumb the depths of this relationship or question its endurance or survivability. Rather the focus is on what the main areas of bilateral defence cooperation entail, what if anything is changing in this relationship, which areas are simply off limits for NATO–Kazakhstan cooperation and finally, by grasping the full strength of these ties, NATO and Western national defence planning staffs may avoid repeating some of the pitfalls of pursuing deeper defence cooperation with Astana that have often occurred in recent years.

For such decision makers the first fundamental lesson to learn and use in policy planning is that there has never been nor is there likely to be in the future any division within the Kazakhstani defence ministry between 'pro-Western' and 'pro-Russian' officers and officials. It may seem a simple point, but the author can recall conversations in the period 2003 to 2005 with Pentagon officials involved in US security cooperation with Kazakhstan who were convinced that a 'pro-Western' camp existed in the defence ministry in Astana.

What in fact they were doing may have been deliberately misreading the declarations and ideas of key officials within these structures, or simply misunderstanding their

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

motives and intentions. No one in Kazakhstan's defence ministry or General Staff wishes to disturb the close relationship with Russia.

However, none of this implies that Astana is interested in cooperating with Moscow to the exclusion of cooperation with NATO and its other international partners. There are naturally tensions and problems in implementing a 'multi-vector' approach to the country's defence relationships, but the aim of Astana's defence cooperation is to achieve a balance, while understanding that at bilateral level, and also through multilateral mechanisms, its main defence partner is Russia.

Military–Technical Versus Security Cooperation

Consideration of the value of defence cooperation with Russia, seen from Astana's perspective, must be understood by reference not only to the country's level of cooperation in this area with Moscow but also to how this compares to similar arrangements with Washington. To assess this it is necessary to appreciate the terminology involved and the overall aims of Russian and US defence cooperation with Kazakhstan. At first sight these terms appear different and imply widely differing aims and approaches, however, this is actually quite misleading. US defence cooperation is framed in terms of security assistance and the Russian equivalent is military–technical cooperation. According to a former director of the Russian Federal Service for Military–Technical Cooperation, Mikhail Dmitriyev, Moscow defines such cooperation as:

In principle, military and technical cooperation is a system of interstate relations which involves supplying foreign countries with military weapons, equipment and technology, providing military and technical services, and investing in the field. At the same time, arms trade and the entire military and technical cooperation system is a Russian foreign policy instrument designed to mark Russia's presence in a region and influence a region's balance of forces.¹¹⁷

The terms used are broadly similar, and the aims and goals of Russian and US defence cooperation are also practically identical. In an important study of the distinctions and similarities in these approaches the Foreign Military Studies Office analyst, Captain Charles K. Bartles noted:

¹¹⁷ 'Military and Technical Cooperation as a Factor in the Growth of Russian Influence', *Russian Military Review*, No. 6, June 2004.

There is little difference between the US Definition of Security Assistance and the Russian definition of Military–Technical Cooperation. The terms ‘Security Assistance’ and ‘Military–Technical Cooperation’ are practically identical, and are defined as any military/security related activity that involves training, technology transfer, military financing, equipment servicing, and non-proliferation.¹¹⁸

Bartles refers to earlier Russian outlines of its military–technical cooperation goals contained in the 1993 Military Doctrine, and these remain the main source guiding the concepts and direction of its defence cooperation. Moscow uses military–technical cooperation to maintain or retain its influence in various parts of the world, or promote Russian dominance. It raises hard currency through exports of conventional weapons and hardware, it develops the scientific potential of its defence industries through joint ventures and scientific research and such cooperation provides a source of support for Russia’s domestic defence industry.¹¹⁹

Although one vital distinction in this type of cooperation is the extent to which the Russian government uses such cooperation as a tool to promote its own defence exports, unlike the US security assistance which does not directly promote the interests of the US defence industry (though it does do so indirectly). Other differences lie in the scale and scope of this defence cooperation. In short, Astana can access the type of military training essential for its own security needs through its close cooperation with Moscow that is simply either not on offer, or too sensitive to pursue, either with NATO or bilaterally with any other foreign partner. For example, Kazakhstan only receives training for its officers or education and exercise support abroad that contributes to increasing the capability or combat readiness of its armed forces to conduct combined-arms operations from Russia and not from other countries.

Moreover, the close intelligence sharing and cooperation that exists between the intelligence agencies in Russia and Kazakhstan also facilitates such a close defence relationship; the level of intelligence sharing has a direct bearing on Kazakhstan’s national security, providing access to much greater intelligence assets through intelligence cooperation with Russia and this also influences how Astana perceives its threat environment. The National Security Committee (KNC) and the Foreign

¹¹⁸ Charles K. Bartles, ‘Understanding Security Cooperation: A Comparison of the US and Russian Systems of Security Cooperation’, <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/understanding-security-cooperation.pdf>, FMSO, June 2010.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

Intelligence Service, Syrbar, cooperate very closely with the Russian FSB and SVR, at levels simply unimaginable to compare with Western agencies.

Equally, it is through Russia that Kazakhstan receives training and support that has a direct bearing upon its own or regional security; no international training or joint military exercise would have any bearing on the capability of Kazakhstan's armed forces to deploy operationally in a crisis within Central Asia. This capability is only exercised and trained in the CSTO and SCO context.

Another limiting factor, which serves to restrict the level of defence cooperation Kazakhstan may conduct with foreign countries, is linked to sharing sensitive information. The Law on State Secrets 1999 acts to prevent Kazakhstan's officials and officers from open discussion concerning a wide range of security issues with NATO or its members. This does not serve to restrict similar discussions with its close ally and partner, Russia.

Bartles also identifies a crucial distinction between the Western training and education received by officers from Kazakhstan and the value of Kazakhstani officers attending similar courses in Russia:

The value of equipment and spare parts to the Kazakh armed forces is obvious, but the importance of Russian training for the army needs some explanation. Training is an important part of any modern military, it is necessary to acquire and maintain necessary technical and leadership skills. Unfortunately, training requires much from the state in terms of resources. The Kazakh military is relatively small, making little sense to dedicate resources to sole purpose schools that train 'low-density' skill sets [sic]. Kazakhstan has tackled this problem by sending to Russia those officers that need to learn low-density skills. All air defence artillery, some aircraft, and most naval training is conducted in Russia. This training, through security assistance programmes, is essential for Kazakhstan to maintain a modern military. In all, 700–800 Kazakh officers are enrolled in Russian Federation institutions at any given time.¹²⁰

It is not primarily about the differences in personnel numbers accessing courses in Russia or the US, in fact Astana attaches high value to its defence cooperation with

¹²⁰ Charles K. Bartles, 'Challenges in Building Partner Capacities: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Security Assistance Programs in Kazakhstan', FMSO: Kansas, 2010.

Moscow at a much deeper level. As Kazakhstan developed its own military educational infrastructure, the numbers of officers that have received training in Russia is actually quite small compared with the overall total numbers of serving officers, but this is still significantly higher than the numbers of officers with Western education and training.

The difference lies in two key areas: Astana needs to send officers to Russia in order to boost and support leadership skills and technical expertise in relation to equipment and weapons systems. In short, if hypothetically Russia suspended access to these courses this would damage the combat capability and combat readiness of Kazakhstan's armed forces, whereas if a similar suspension of NATO or bilateral Western security assistance programmes occurred it would not degrade or damage the armed forces.¹²¹

The priorities, changes and trends in Kazakhstan's defence cooperation and partnership with Russia fall into the following categories and will be assessed in turn: joint air defence, military training and joint (including multilateral) military exercises, military–technical cooperation linked to procurement and modernisation, and the further development and strengthening of cooperation on regional security, mainly through the CSTO as well as to a lesser extent the security dimension of the SCO.

Priority One: Joint Air Defence

As difficult as joint air defence ventures have proved in the CIS context, the development of joint air defence between Kazakhstan and Russia is now placed at the very heart of the bilateral defence relationship. This needs to be explained in terms of the systems Kazakhstan seeks to procure from Russia as well as the underlying threat assessment drivers in Astana and Moscow which are compelling both countries to pursue air defence integration. A crucial influencing factor is the creation in Russia of the new VKO and its centrality to the entire process of conventional armed forces reform. The long term trend, therefore, in bilateral defence cooperation is towards the creation of a single integrated air defence system; which has implications for NATO cooperation with Astana and will also act as a barrier against the involvement of Western defence companies in this highly sensitive area of the Kazakhstani defence sector.

¹²¹ Ibid.

Although the prospect of creating a joint air defence system between Kazakhstan and Russia has been discussed for several years, there are indications that both capitals attach higher priority to achieving the rapid implementation of such an ambitious scheme. In July 2012, the Commander of Kazakhstan's ADF, Colonel Nurjan Mukanov, explained that Astana and Moscow are drafting an agreement on joint air defence that would be signed by 2013. In Mukanov's view, this is likely to resolve outstanding issues on the delivery of additional Russian S-300 PSU SAMs.¹²²

The 62nd meeting of the CIS Council of Defence Ministers in Kaliningrad on 5 July 2012 marked a deepening of security cooperation on a broad range of issues with a special emphasis upon integrated air defence architecture and access to the Russian orbital satellite groupings and participation in related exercises. Viewed from Moscow, the meeting underscored Russia's critical role in joint air defence initiatives, and drew Central Asian states into a highly sensitive area of cooperation while effectively closing the door to NATO in such sensitive defence spheres.¹²³

Russia's Defence Minister, Anatoliy Serdyukov, highlighted the switch in emphasis by Moscow on the issue of CIS air defence, moving towards signing a series of bilateral agreements to promote deeper air defence cooperation. Serdyukov stated: 'We are now switching to the execution of practical measures in working up specific tasks that could arise on the territory of any CIS country'. The frequency of meetings of the CIS Air Defence Coordination Committee will increase, and it is expected that an integrated radar identification system will emerge as a result of the various bilateral defence agreements. The focus initially is on Russia–Kazakhstan and Russia–Belarus, though other CIS members are expected to be included in such agreements in the future.¹²⁴

As part of bilateral air defence cooperation, Kazakhstan will be included in the Russian unified system of state identification used by Russian armed forces and security structures: the radar beacon transponders of the *Parol* (password) system (*Yedinaya Systema Gosudarstvennogo Radiolokatsionnogo Opoznavaniya –YeSGRLO*). This applies to the CIS member countries that signed the 1992 Minsk Agreement (Armenia,

¹²² 'Russia, Kazakhstan to Merge Their Air Defense Systems in 2013 – Kazakh Air Defense Commander', *Interfax-AVN*, 11 July 2012.

¹²³ Roger N. McDermott, 'Central Asia Commits to Russian Joint Air Defense Plans', *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 9, Issue 141, 25 July 2012.

¹²⁴ Ulyana Vylegzhanina, 'The Security of the CIS Air Borders has Been Discussed in Kaliningrad', *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 8 July 2012.

Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Russia). This system is the Russian version of the Mk XII Identification, Friend or Foe (IFF) system used by the US and NATO.¹²⁵

In order to achieve this level of integration, the legal framework governing access to the system will need to be amended. At present only Belarus has such access to the Russian *Parol*, while there are issues linked to a lack of spare parts that may present technical barriers in the path of full integration. These units will demand regular repair and maintenance in order to ensure that they continue to function. Russian air force and air defence reorganisation has occurred three times since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 1992 it decreased fivefold, in 1997 by 2.5 times, and when the latest 'optimisation' is complete, it will involve an additional twofold decline. Air defence formations will be converted into aerospace defence brigades (VKO) and air divisions into first category air bases (air regiments will form second category air bases).¹²⁶

Although the plan to deepen and integrate joint air defence cooperation remains in its early stages and will clearly be a long-term project, there are already signs of growing involvement of the Russian defence industry in helping Kazakhstan to upgrade critical platforms such as MiG-31 jets. According to the director of the Russian Federal Military–Technical Cooperation Service, Konstantin Biryulin, Russia is repairing and upgrading a total of nine MiG-31s from the Kazakhstani ADF. In May 2012 Russia completed the first two upgrades to MiG-31s and is working on two more. Depending on the success of these upgrades and the financing involved the plan is to modernise an additional five MiG-31s making a total of nine. Kazakhstan's ADF required such upgrades due to the obsolescence of the radio-electronic equipment on board these platforms.¹²⁷

Kazakhstan's senior defence officials have long attached importance to the development of air defence, even though it is unclear against which hypothetical opponents it is seeking to protect its main cities and strategic assets. It has relied heavily upon Soviet-inherited and Russian air defence systems and air force assets, ranging from SA-2, SA-3, SA-4, SA-5, SA-6 and SA-10 or air platforms such as MiG-31s.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Roger N. McDermott, 'Russian Air Defense Weakness: Modernizing or Optimizing?' *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 7, Issue 139, 20 July 2010.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ 'Russia Modernizing Interceptor Fighters for Kazakh Air Force – Federal Service', *Interfax-AVN*, 5 May 2012.

¹²⁸ *The Military Balance 2012*, IISS: London, Chapter 6, Asia, p. 256.

Kazakhstan already possesses two S-300 systems deployed in protection of Astana and Karaganda. In February 2008 a bilateral defence meeting in Moscow between Kazakhstani and Russian delegations discussed supplying air defence tools to the Kazakhstani armed forces. This including purchasing additional S-300s and Astana expressed interest in the S-400 (Triumph). It appeared that the Kazakhstani government was interested in enhancing the SAM coverage in the country, especially for main population centres and energy assets. The then defence minister Mukhtar Altynbayev was cautious on the issue of procuring S-400: "In future, we expect to buy the S-400 complex. This is a complicated and very expensive complex, and I am against hurrying to purchase it. It is necessary that the Russian military breaks it in within their country".¹²⁹

In 2006 Astana sent defence delegations to Moscow to discuss Russian assistance for modernising the country's armed forces, and this reportedly extended to include S-300 SAMs. This was to be financed on the basis of a revised agreement with Moscow to use four training ranges in Kazakhstan. Russia was to pay Kazakhstan about \$3.2 million annually and provide some \$19.6 million in military hardware, equipment and military training.¹³⁰

On 22 August 2007, during the Russian military air show MAKS 2007, Altynbayev, as the Deputy Defence Minister signed an agreement to purchase Russian military aviation equipment and missile defence systems. This involved \$60 million worth of Russian equipment, including the repair and modernisation of MiG-31s, MiG-29s and Su-25s, as well as Russian S-300PS, 300PMUS2 (Favourit), and supplying S-400s. Altynbayev said: "We are part of the CSTO. We have the same tasks, and we will focus on purchasing Russian military equipment in future".¹³¹ Despite this level of procurement ambition, Astana has not made any further advances towards acquiring S-400 though it remains interested in additional S-300s.

Kazakhstan has also looked to Russia to address the problems stemming from an ageing fleet of aircraft and helicopters. On 22 August 2012, a Mi-17 training flight crashed

¹²⁹ 'Kazakhstan to Buy Russian Air Defense Missile Systems', Interfax-Kazakhstan, Almaty, 14 February 2008.

¹³⁰ 'Kazakhstan Asserts Interests in Buying Russian Arms', RFE/RL, 6 June 2006, <http://www.hellenic.org/cgi-bin/brief?news/balkans/rferl/2006/06-06-16.rferl.html#12>.

¹³¹ 'Kazakhstan Signs Agreement to Buy More Russian Military Aviation Equipment', RFE/RL, 23 August 2007, <http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2007/08/230807.asp>; 'Kazakhstan Plans to use Russian Equipment for Air Defense System', Interfax-Kazakhstan, Almaty, 22 August 2007.

near Astana leaving its four-man crew dead, resulting in the temporary grounding of all Mi-17 flights pending the outcome of an investigation. The helicopter in question was produced in the Soviet era, and the crash followed a series of similar incidents highlighting the need to modernise much of the existing ADF assets.¹³²

On 12 February 2008, a MiG-29 fighter jet from the ADF crashed while landing at a military airfield in Almaty region, killing its highly experienced pilot and leaving the co-pilot severely injured despite his 800 hours flying experience. The investigation that ensued established that human error was not to blame, and confirmed that an on-board electrical power supply failure had caused the crash. Similar incidents involving MiG-31 crashes have served to focus the minds of Kazakhstan's defence ministry officials on the need to overhaul the MiG-31s, as many are now more than 30 years old.¹³³ Frequent crashes and negative publicity has worried senior defence officials in Kazakhstan, though they also understand that the costs are simply too high to procure new or modernise the existing air fleet overnight, and consequently this is likely to persist until greater progress is made to eliminate these older platforms. Crashes of Mi-8 helicopters have claimed the lives of senior officials from the emergencies ministry and several journalists. Malfunctioning fuel injection units are often identified as the cause.¹³⁴

Shygys 2011, staged on 20–29 June 2011 in eastern and southeastern Kazakhstan, was a bilateral exercise that witnessed Kazakhstani air assets used for the first time to rehearse repelling cruise missile attacks. The exercise involved 3,000 servicemen, 500 armoured and other military vehicles and 30 aircraft. Although the exercise was not staged under a CSTO banner, both countries sent force elements to the exercise that are included in the CSTOs KSOR; the 31st Air Assault Brigade (*Vozdushno-Desantnyye Voiska –VDV*) and 37th Air Assault Brigade (air mobile forces) based in Taldykorgan (northeast of Almaty) and Russian VDV units.¹³⁵

The most curious aspect of Shygys 2011 was the air operation by Kazakhstani ADF to repel cruise missile attacks. Although the exercise was officially counter-terrorist in its aims and scope, the rehearsal to protect Kazakhstan's territory from a massive

¹³² 'Four Killed In Kazakh Helicopter Crash', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 22 August 2012.

¹³³ *Komsomolskaya Pravda Kazakhstan*, 1 March 2008; *ITAR-TASS*, Moscow, 12 September 2007; *Delovaya Gazeta*, 12 December 2006.

¹³⁴ 'Helicopter Crash Investigation', *Express K*, 1 March 2008.

¹³⁵ 'Shygys 2011', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 25 June 2011.

cruise missile strike evidently envisaged a state actor. Lieutenant-General Saken Zhassuzakov, the Chairman of Kazakhstan's Joint Chiefs of Staff outlined the cruise missile issue:

For the first time, we have been working on repelling cruise missiles. We did not have such missions before. It is topical because the analysis made of the latest events happening in the world shows that the first strikes are the ones with cruise missiles, which can be fired from the range of one and a half, two and three thousand miles, and almost without the use of an aircraft. We have created a layered system of interception. The Taldykorgan aviation fleet also worked to capture these cruise missiles. We used Mig-31 aircraft from an airbase in Karaganda, which conducted the second interception on the second phase. We used the training aircraft L-39 from Balkhash for simulation purposes.¹³⁶

Zhassuzakov's allusion to a layered air defence system being tested during the exercise may explain why only the air assets used were included in the simulated event. The exercise may have been influenced by the joint air operation over Libya to impose a no-fly zone initially conducted by France, UK and US air forces. During the exercise, however, Kazakhstani Air Force MiG-31 and Su-27 fighter aircraft 'repelling cruise missiles' seems puzzling, especially when the identity of the hypothetical opponent is considered; which state actor could have been envisaged launching cruise missile attacks in eastern and south-eastern Kazakhstan? Equally, there was no simulated use of S-300 or Russian S-400 SAMs.¹³⁷

Priority Two: Military Training and Military Exercises

As already noted, Moscow offers and provides training for Kazakhstan's armed forces in essential and key areas that actually impact directly on the combat capability and combat readiness of Kazakhstan's armed forces. This includes highly technical and challenging areas such as artillery, aviation and naval doctrine, as well as leadership skills for officer training. Without continued access to such courses Kazakhstan's military would undoubtedly be degraded; this cannot be said of any other defence cooperation arrangements including through NATO PfP.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Bartles, 'Challenges In Building Partner Capacities', op. cit.

Russia's unrivalled and insurmountable importance to Kazakhstan in terms of defence cooperation demonstrates itself most visibly in the culmination of the training processes; in other words in the frequency and scale of bilateral and multilateral military exercises.

Kazakhstan participates in various multilateral security organisations and initiatives. With NATO it is active through PfP and aims to enhance its peacekeeping battalion (KAZBAT) into a fully NATO interoperable peacekeeping brigade (KAZBRIG) and to this end it hosts annual Steppe Eagle exercises which began with US and UK participation, and this has widened to include a company from Tajikistan and observers from France, Germany, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Switzerland and Ukraine. Through PfP the country partners with the Arizona National Guard.¹³⁹

It is also involved in the Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA), the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC), the UN Centre for Regional Preventative Diplomacy in Central Asia, and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) which it chaired in 2010.

Kazakhstan is involved in a number of CIS security initiatives, including the joint air defence, CIS Council of the Commanders of Border Troops (SKPV), and the CIS Anti-Terrorist Centre. It is a member of the SCO and actively involved in the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent. However, the dominant defence organisation in which it holds membership is the CSTO.¹⁴⁰

In SKPV it participated in the Caspian Sea in 2006. In the SCO: in Cooperation 2003 and Peace Mission 2007, 2010 and 2012. In the CIS: in Combat Southern Shield 2001, Combat Commonwealth 2001, 2009 and 2011 and Unity 2010. In the CSTO: in Cobalt 2010, Kanal 2010 (operation and not an exercise), Rubezh 2004–2008, 2010, Cooperation 2009, 2010, 2012, as well as in numerous bilateral exercises with Russia that also contain an element of CSTO rehearsal such as Tsentr 2008 and Tsentr 2011. The frequency, scale, scenario planning and seriousness attached to these exercises are way beyond anything to which NATO or its members might aspire to achieve.

¹³⁹ Roger N. McDermott, "Kazakhstan Hosts Steppe Eagle 2012," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 9, Issue 164, 11 September 2012.

¹⁴⁰ Konstantin Syroezhkin, 'The SCO's Image Among Central Asian Countries is Close to Zero', <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1301978160>, 5 April 2011.

Under the Collective Security Treaty (CST), Kazakhstan participated in Commonwealth Southern Shield exercises in 1999, 2000 and 2001, and following the creation of the CSTO and its *Kollektivnyye Sily Bistrogo Razvertyvaniya* –KSBR (Collective Rapid Deployment Forces) it took part in Commonwealth Southern Shield in 2002.

Commonwealth Southern Shield 1999 involved Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and was staged in Osh province in Kyrgyzstan and in the Uzbek part of the Fergana Valley, the Vorukh mountain region in northern Tajikistan and in Shymkent, southern Kazakhstan from 27 October to 2 November. The scenario focused on repelling incursion by militants similar to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan's incursion into the Batken region of Kyrgyzstan earlier in 1999.¹⁴¹ All participants joined a similar exercise held in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in March 2000, staged in three phases using a militant-related scenario. This exercise was larger in terms of firepower and equipment, involving the air forces of several members as well as elements of the Russian 201st Motorised Rifle Division in Dushanbe.¹⁴² This was repeated in Commonwealth Southern Shield in April 2001, with the non-participation of Uzbekistan, and officers sent from other CIS states, involvement of the CIS Anti-Terrorist Centre in Moscow and the SKPV. Again the scenario envisaged a response to an assault on Central Asian states by an armed sub-state group.¹⁴³

Commonwealth Southern Shield 2002 was conducted in two phases in June 2002, with the first stage held near Bishkek before relocating to Almaty. This exercise also tested the CSTO's KSBR, and the counter-terrorist scenario was repeated from previous exercises. These exercises were in general too large in terms of manpower and weapons and equipment to offer convincing evidence of there being an exclusively anti-terrorist driving force underlying the exercises. Uzbekistan's non-participation resulted from Tashkent's decision not to renew its CST membership.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Vladimir Georgiev, 'Korotko, Manevry na yuge SNG', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 5 November 1999, http://nvo.ng.ru/wars/1999-11-05/1_korotko.html; Vladimir Mukhin, 'Voennye kontakty aktiviziruyutsya', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 17 December 1999, http://nvo.ng.ru/notes/1999-12-17/8_contacts.html.

¹⁴² Vladimir Georgiev, 'Voyska treniruyutsya', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 4 April 2000, http://www.ng.ru/cis/2000-04-04/5_arm.html; Yuriy Mashin, 'Preventivnyy udar vakhkhabistam v Sredney Azii nachalis' voenniye ucheniya', *Kommersant*, 30 March 2000, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/144009?isSearch=True>.

¹⁴³ Roman Streshnev, 'Chuvstvo Loktya', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 11 April 2001, http://www.redstar.ru/2001/04/11_04/r_w31.html; Vladimir Georgiev, 'Virtual'nye manevry v Moskve', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 4 April 2001, http://www.ng.ru/cis/2001-04-04/5_virtual.html.

¹⁴⁴ Roman Streshnev, 'Shchit Sodruzhestva derzhit udar', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 18 June 2002, http://www.redstar.ru/2002/06/18_06/1_01.html.

KSBR was also tested and participated in the Rubezh series of military exercises between 2004 and 2008, and in 2010.¹⁴⁵ Rubezh 2004 was a CSTO exercise staged in August 2004 in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan with a counter-terrorist scenario, against a terrorist group operating in the Fergana Valley. The second phase concentrated upon destroying 'terrorist' formations using ground and air assets. CSTO forces included 1,700 personnel with Russia sending a special forces unit, Su-25s and MiG-29s as well as Mi-8, Mi-24 and Ka-50 helicopters.¹⁴⁶ Rubezh 2005, held in Tajikistan in April 2005, also used similar scenario planning and Russia deployed ground attack aircraft.¹⁴⁷

By 2006, any semblance of a counter-terrorist dimension to Rubezh 2006 was difficult to sustain. In August 2006 the CSTO staged the next Rubezh exercise 30 kilometres northeast of Aqtau in Kazakhstan. The exercise involved 2,500 troops, more than 60 armoured vehicles, 35 aircraft and around 14 warships. The exercise used a combined arms response to destroy a 'terrorist' group, with naval forces used to assist deploying air mobile units and marines landing on the Caspian shore to launch a ground assault, in addition to airpower and artillery support.¹⁴⁸ After Uzbekistan joined the CSTO in 2006 it sent observers to Rubezh 2007, held at the Lyaur training range in northern Tajikistan in March 2007. The exercise was smaller, featuring around 500 troops, but again it witnessed the use of airpower assets inconsistent with an officially anti-terrorist scenario.¹⁴⁹

If the CSTO officially claimed that the Rubezh series of military exercises were about strengthening counter-terrorist capabilities, then Rubezh 2008 was more remarkable still. The CSTO members Armenia, Russia and Tajikistan held the exercise in Armenia in July 2008, featuring 4,000 troops mainly from the Russian and Armenian armed forces. The exercise used strategic, operational and tactical elements, and the CSTO in fact did not claim the exercise to be counter-terrorist.¹⁵⁰

Kazakhstan joined Rubezh 2010 in northern Tajikistan in April 2010 along with Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. The exercise used around 1,000 troops and 150

¹⁴⁵ 'Former Soviet States Boost Defence Capability in Joint Drills', *RIA Novosti*, 22 July 2008.

¹⁴⁶ 'CSTO Countries Launch Joint Exercise in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan', *RIA Novosti*, 2 August 2004.

¹⁴⁷ Roger N. McDermott, 'Russia Plays Peace Advocate in Kyrgyz 'Regime Change'', *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 2, No. 67 5 April 2005.

¹⁴⁸ 'The Rubezh-2006 Military Exercise', *RIA Novosti*, 2 September 2006.

¹⁴⁹ Sergei Permyakov, 'Kontrataka s Rubezha-2007', *Voenna-Promyshlennyy Kuryer (VPK)*, 4 April 2007, <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/3525>.

¹⁵⁰ 'The Active Phase of the CSTO Rubezh 2008', *RIA Novosti*, 22 August 2008.

pieces of hardware; the air assets were limited to transport aircraft. In the second phase of the exercise a 'terrorist group' was destroyed after the CSTO deployed along a border area, evacuated civilians, and blocked off any escape route for enemy forces before annihilating them.¹⁵¹

Kazakhstan's participation in the SCO Peace Mission military exercises persists, which were developed on the basis of Sino-Russian exercises under the SCO banner with Peace Mission 2005 and 2009 only involving forces from China and Russia, and the country regularly sends units to these multilateral drills. Peace Mission 2007 was the first such exercise involving all members of the organisation and, unlike earlier exercises, it appeared to conform more closely to the anti-terrorist scenario that formed the official purpose in staging the exercises. This exercise fielded a combined force strength of 6,500. In 2010, Kazakhstan hosted Peace Mission 2010, although Tashkent refused to participate in the exercise.¹⁵²

Earlier SCO Peace Mission exercises witnessed the use of submarines, early warning aircraft, long-range strategic bombers, cruise missile strikes and other pieces of heavy equipment that entirely contradicted the anti-terrorist dimension of the exercise. Peace Mission 2007 broke this pattern and sent a signal that the SCO was serious about boosting the counter-terrorist capabilities of the Central Asian states.¹⁵³

Kazakhstan hosted Peace Mission 2010 on 9–25 September 2010 in Zhambyl Region. The combined force strength reached 5,000 and they rehearsed the SCO's capabilities to respond to security challenges on the territories of its member states.¹⁵⁴ However, the exercise itself witnessed a demonstration of Chinese strategic airpower, using two J-10 fighters and four H-6H bombers taking off from airbases in Urumqi in western China and returning after rehearsing air operations in Kazakhstan. These People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) assets, with the support of early warning aircraft

¹⁵¹ Oleg Gorupay, 'Rubezh 2010', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 27 April 2010, http://www.redstar.ru/2010/04/27_04/1_02.html).

¹⁵² 'China, Russia to Launch Military Drill', *China Daily*, 2 August 2005, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-08/02/content_465587.html; 'Fissures in the Force – Multilateral Cooperation Can Only Go So Far', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 1 June 2007, p. 4; Marcel de Haas: *The 'Peace Mission 2007' Exercises: the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Advances*, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Advanced Research and Assessment Group, September 2007, p. 12; R. N. McDermott, *The Rising Dragon: SCO Peace Mission 2007*, The Jamestown Foundation, Washington October 2007, p. 3; 'Peace Mission 2010 Concludes and Opens a New Page for the SCO', *Xinhua*, 25 September 2010.

¹⁵³ Viktor Litovkin, 'Chinese Army Trains on Russian Territory', *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, 3 August 2007.

¹⁵⁴ 'Uzbekistan to Skip Participation in SCO Exercise in Kazakhstan', *ITAR-TASS*, 9 September 2010.

and a mid-air refuelling, simulated precision strikes against hypothetical targets in Kazakhstan.¹⁵⁵ PLA and PLAAF units also used the exercise to display advances in network-centric warfare capabilities, possibly for the benefit of the Russian armed forces still struggling with their own ongoing conventional armed forces reform and remaining locked in the early stages of harnessing their own network-centric approaches to combat operations.

Peace Mission 2012 was smaller still in scale, with around 2,000 troops, held in July 2012 in northern Tajikistan. The exercise scenario centred upon conducting a special operation in response to militants seizing a village in a mountainous area. Reportedly, the exercise included the rehearsal of 'new methods' to block and destroy a notional 'terrorist' group. However observers of the exercise noted the typical combined-arms features of the drill and the dominance of PLA personnel in conducting briefings and other events.¹⁵⁶

Setting aside the growing role and influence of Beijing within the SCO and specifically in the development of the security agenda in the organisation, a number of common features of these exercises emerge since its forerunner in 2003. At an official level the SCO explained the purpose of holding these exercises in terms of promoting joint action against the 'three evils' of extremism, separatism and terrorism, while more practically they were advancing interoperability and showcasing the capability of the SCO to act in a regional crisis to prevent escalation.¹⁵⁷

Kazakhstan's armed forces arguably benefitted from their involvement in the SCO Peace Mission exercises by gaining access to another multinational format in which combined-arms operations were rehearsed against hypothetical opponents. Nonetheless, the inconsistency in the units Astana sent to these exercises probably undermined, in practical terms, the extent to which real value could be gained from the country's involvement. Its participation was most likely rooted in political calculations linked to being seen as an active member of the SCO, rather than in any specific military and defence considerations.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ The margin for error in the PLAAF's bombing of ground targets was within 10 metres, confirming the use of precision-guided weapons, while there was no real military purpose in carrying out the mid-air refuelling; its purpose was political: Zhang Yuqing, Li Kaiqiang, Cao Chuanbiao, 'Long-range Air Raid Mission: On-the-spot Account of the Performance of the Chinese Air Force's Battle Group in the 'Peace Mission-2010' Cross-country Air Raid Mission', *Xinhua*, 9 October 2010.

¹⁵⁶ Roger N. McDermott, 'SCO Peace Mission 2012 Promotes Security Myths', FOI, *RUFBS Briefing No. 14*, Stockholm, July 2012.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Murat T. Laumulin, *The Geopolitics of the XXI Century In Central Asia*, Almaty, 2007, pp. 82–90.

Beyond these multilateral military exercises Kazakhstan also participated in numerous bilateral exercises with Russia. The most prominent of these exercises were Tsentr 2008 and Tsentr 2011. Tsentr 2008 was a joint Kazakhstan–Russia exercise held in September 2008 at several military facilities in Russia. The exercise was conducted while Moscow was preparing to initiate the most radical reform of its conventional armed forces, certainly since 1945. Kazakhstan sent 700 troops to join 2,000 Russian personnel at the Chebarkul training range in Chelyabinsk for only the first stage of the exercise on 1–5 September 2008. The scenario envisaged an enemy incursion into Kazakhstan’s territory to a depth of 60km. This resulted in Kazakhstan’s armed forces units moving to defensive positions and Russian airborne forces units being inserted by air to conduct offensive operations supported by artillery, Su-24 bombers and Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters. The scenario and the exercise actions were clear: an attack on Kazakhstan resulted in an offensive Russian military operation, with Russian units in the lead role and Kazakhstani units providing support and adopting defensive positions.¹⁵⁹

Tsentr 2011 was staged mainly as a joint military exercise involving Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan at several locations in each participating country. It was a profoundly complex exercise seeking to test multiple issues and new developments within the context of Moscow reforming its armed forces. Kazakhstan sent 3,500 troops, 19 aircraft and several naval vessels with participation by the air force, ground forces, navy, KNB, border troops, interior ministry troops and troops from the ministry of emergency situations.¹⁶⁰

Aleksandr Khramchikhin, the Deputy Director of the Moscow-based Institute of Political and Military Analysis, was among many Russian military analysts to note some oddities concerning Tsentr 2011, particularly linked to the scenario in the Caspian region used by Kazakhstan and Russia:

The Russo–Kazakh joint grouping of the ships of the RF Caspian Flotilla and the Kazakh navy, together with the air forces of both countries, repelled massive enemy air missile strikes, the landing of a hostile amphibious assault force and a ground invasion of the aggressor’s mechanised columns, the goal of which was the seizure of the oil fields. Then strikes were conducted from the

¹⁵⁹ ‘Russian and Kazakhstan Military Training in Chebarkul’, *RIA Novosti*, 2 September 2008.

¹⁶⁰ Aleksandr Kharmchikhin, ‘Tsentr 2011’, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 7 October 2011, http://nvo.ng.ru/maneuvers/2011-10-07/1_center.html.

sea and air against the enemy ship groupings, after which the Russo–Kazakh grouping itself landed an amphibious assault force. Su-24s and Mi-24s under the cover of Su-27s suppressed the air defence and destroyed the enemy artillery which, of course, was ultimately defeated.¹⁶¹

Khramchikhin questioned how plausible an Iranian military attack might be on Kazakhstan's energy infrastructure. However, Moscow and Astana had together constructed a military exercise scenario that marked out Iran as the potential enemy in the Caspian region.¹⁶²

In July 2012, Kazakhstan and Russia held the Aldaspan 2012 exercises in southern Kazakhstan. The three-stage scenario concentrated on rehearsing combat skills at tactical and operational level against a group of terrorists who had established a mountain stronghold. More than 3,000 personnel participated in the joint exercise, with Kazakhstan sending troops from the air mobile forces in South Regional Command (35th air assault brigade) and ADF. These were supported by troops from other power ministries. Russia sent mainly combat aircraft and special forces to the exercise. Again, the size of the force structure and the firepower involved were more consistent with a combined-arms exercise.¹⁶³

In joint exercises with Russia or through multilateral mechanisms such as the CSTO or the SCO, Kazakhstan is evidently able to gain experience and training that would otherwise not be available or offered through NATO PfP or by staging an exercise with a NATO member bilaterally. Judging from the exercises referred to, it is partly as a result of interoperability and the ease of staging such exercises. There are no language, tactical, doctrinal, cultural, political, structural, equipment, weapons, manpower, or other issues that impede or slow the progress of such exercises. The commonality of language, military culture, equipment and weapons systems, the similarity in approach to combat operations, or the structural similarities make staging an exercise with Russia much simpler for Kazakhstan's armed forces.

However, Kazakhstan is able, by staging or participating in military exercises with Russia, to rehearse and hone skills for larger combined arms operations, or to use approaches to counter-terrorism that simply do not fit with NATO models or approaches. Equally in some instances such as combined arms training this may actually be of greater value

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Weitz, 'Kazakhstan and Russia Complete 'Aldaspan-2012' Military Exercises', op. cit.

to Astana since it would have a direct bearing on the state's ability to protect territory in a national crisis, whereas the skills gained through PfP or by training with NATO members bilaterally would have no real bearing on combined arms operations.

Moreover, in addition to commitment to strengthen the security dimension of the SCO, both Russia and Kazakhstan attach great importance, and prioritise in their military doctrines, the future strengthening of the CSTO, especially linked to KSOR and developing CSTO peacekeeping capabilities. By reference to some exercises, including Tsentr 2008 and Tsentr 2011, it is also clear that if there were a high-level threat to Kazakhstan's national security this would automatically involve a military response by Russia. Moscow attaches too much importance to Kazakhstan strategically to ignore the country during a serious security crisis.¹⁶⁴

Priority Three: Military–Technical Dynamics (Procurement and Modernisation)

A critical element in Kazakhstan's enduring defence partnership with Russia is about securing access to the Russian arms market, to procure, maintain or upgrade military hardware. While this functions at a bilateral level and is rooted in numerous legally binding treaties and agreements, it is also further consolidated through various other cooperative frameworks ranging from CIS Air Defence to organisations such as the CSTO or the SCO.

All of these frameworks act as additional routes through which the country has to deal with or rely upon Russian technical cooperation for the weapons and equipment in the armed forces inventory. In February 2000 the Russian defence company Rosvooruzhenie signed an agreement with the Kazakhstani state company Kazspetsekспорт on supplying defence equipment to Kazakhstan. Additional agreements complemented this by receiving Russian arms on favourable terms, and resulted in procurements of BTR-80 APCs, Mi-17 multi-role helicopters, Mig-29, Mig-31 and Su-25 fighter jets and air defence systems. Russia has also used such agreements to offer assistance for the development of Kazakhstan's navy. By February 2007, Kazakhstan's Security Council had agreed and adopted a strategy to procure and upgrade equipment for the country's armed forces primarily from the Russian Federation.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ See: Mikhail Barabanov, Konstantin Makienko, and Ruslan Pukhov, 'Military Reform: Toward the New Look of the Russian Army', CAST, Moscow, July 2012.

¹⁶⁵ 'Azerbaijan Buys 'New' Old Russian Weapons Again', Zerkalo.ru, 15 August 2007, www.zerkalo.az/print.php?id=22125; 'MAKS-2007: Major Contracts for the Volga Area', AviaPort.Digest, www.aviaport.ru/digest/2007/08, 28 August 2007.

During the KADEX 2010 exhibition in Astana in May 2010, Russia's Ambassador to Kazakhstan, Mikhail Bocharnikov, noted that Kazakhstan's military had received new weapons systems mainly through its cooperation with Moscow. Bocharnikov tied this bilateral military–technical success to the fact both countries also cooperate closely within the CSTO. “The sides are certainly interested in promoting cooperation in high technology and strengthening integration in this area. Of course, all this proceeds as part of our joint efforts to develop cooperation, primarily in high technology. However, we have not forgotten the traditional aspects of military–technological cooperation, including direct weapons deliveries, as well as the maintenance and modernisation of military hardware”, Bocharnikov added.¹⁶⁶

The emphasis on high-technology military cooperation was certainly unsurprising, though reference to the preferential terms offered to the other CSTO members by Moscow is clouded in mystery and a lack of transparency.¹⁶⁷ There is no clear reporting on how precisely the CSTO members use or benefit from these preferential terms, not least since only a small number of members could afford to engage in military procurement and, according to some sources, Russia's arms sales to Central Asia account for a mere 5% of its total market.¹⁶⁸

On the sidelines of KADEX 2012 in Astana in May 2012, Kazakhstan's First Deputy Defence Minister and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colonel-General Saken Zhasuzakov, Deputy Defence Minister Talgat Zhazhzhumenov, and the leadership of Kazspetsexport, met with officials from the Russian arms export monopoly Rosobonexport. The purpose of the bilateral meeting was to explore mechanisms to further deepen military cooperation.¹⁶⁹

It appears that the meeting paved the way to an agreement for Russia to open up to ten maintenance and repair centres in Kazakhstan for Russian arms in the inventory of Kazakhstan's armed forces. Moscow also made clear it was prepared to use these centres to further future technology transfers to Kazakhstan and, despite the sketchy details on the priority areas or timescale involved, the first centre will facilitate aircraft upgrades.

¹⁶⁶ ‘Russia, Kazakhstan Will Continue Promoting Bilateral Military–Technological Ties’, *Interfax*, 1 June 2010.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ Z. Baizakova, ‘CSTO and the Caspian Sea: Central Asian Countries in the Crossfire. Survival or War?’ FMSO: Kansas, September 2012.

¹⁶⁹ ‘Kazakhstan, Russia to Negotiate Military–Technological Cooperation at Exhibition in Astana’, *Interfax*, 3 May 2012.

As additional centres open, these will assist Astana in repairing and maintaining Russian equipment and hardware as it is replaced in the inventory or perhaps even with modernised assets. These would include Russian built tanks, armoured vehicles or artillery systems such as Uragan and Grad MRLS. The CSTO's ambitious plans to strengthen its KSOR and peacekeeping capabilities also envisage the creation of CSTO defence industries, presumably constructed on the basis of joint ventures.¹⁷⁰

Russian officials also admit that military–technical cooperation with Kazakhstan does not always proceed at a pace that meets Astana's demands. The building of a small artillery ship of the Project 20970 'Katran' in Uralsk, Kazakhstan, using the blueprints of the Russian Almaz Central Naval Design Bureau is reportedly behind schedule. The Katran has a displacement of 350 tonnes and a speed of 30 knots, designed to carry a 57 millimetre cannon, as well as the AK-130 artillery system and a Gibka anti-aircraft missile system.¹⁷¹

In 2001, following the Kazakhstani defence ministry recognising that it needed to step up efforts to replace or upgrade obsolete Soviet inherited hardware, steps were taken to intensify this area of defence cooperation by activating the earlier 2000 bilateral agreement. In 2006, Kazakhstan ordered 146 BTR-80As (delivery occurred in 2004), one BTR-80 and 35 Vystral armoured wheeled vehicles produced by KamAZ (these started to appear in the Kazakhstani armed forces in 2007).¹⁷²

Astana contracted to procure from Moscow 80 BTR-80A APCs in 2007–2008, and to purchase 12 Mi-17 multirole helicopters, which built on the \$63 million agreement signed in 2003 for 14 Mi-17s.¹⁷³ In August 2007 Astana reached similar \$60 million deal on procuring new MiG-31s, MiG-29s and Su-25s. This deal also included supplying specialist training equipment such as simulators.¹⁷⁴

Astana and Moscow recognised their common interest in utilising several Kazakhstani defence companies that had survived from the Soviet era to form a more solid basis

¹⁷⁰ 'Russia to Set Up Military Maintenance Centres in Kazakhstan', *RIA Novosti*, 4 May 2012.

¹⁷¹ 'Katran Shipbuilding For Kazakh Navy Dragging Out – Federal Military–Technical Cooperation Service', *Interfax*, 5 May 2012.

¹⁷² Mikhail Barabanov, 'Military–Technical Cooperation Between Russia and Central Asia', *Moscow Defence Brief*, CAST: Moscow, No. 4, 2010, accessed online 12 September 2012.

¹⁷³ 'Azerbaijan Buys 'New' Old Russian Weapons Again', <http://www.zerkalo.az/print.php?id=22125>, 15 August 2007.

¹⁷⁴ 'MAKS-2007: Major Contracts for the Volga Area', <http://www.aviaport.ru/digest/2007/08/28/127218.html> 28 August 2007,

for cooperating in R&D as well as to develop the manufacturing potential to meet Kazakhstan's domestic procurement needs. The Granit Joint Stock Company (OAO) had experience in testing Soviet air defence systems, Kirov Mechanical Engineering works in Almaty was involved in the manufacturing of torpedoes, Zenith OAO had played a role in niche areas for the Soviet navy, manufacturing minesweeping equipment as well as spare parts for torpedoes, ZIKSTO OAO made anti-ship mines and Kirova OAO produced naval communications equipment.¹⁷⁵

Astana will use this solid basis to complement its bilateral military–technical cooperation with Russia and expand the capacity of its domestic defence industry. Consistent with the deepening nature of bilateral defence cooperation between Kazakhstan and Russia in the period to 2020, Astana will look to Moscow to assist in achieving the following priorities for the technical modernisation of Kazakhstan's armed forces:

- ADF modernisation and maintenance;
- Armour upgrades for the ground forces, ADF and the Navy;
- Helicopter repair and maintenance;
- Procurement of advanced technology linked to acquiring C4ISR capabilities;
- Re-equipping forces assigned to KSOR;
- Navigation systems for the Navy;
- R&D on special purpose military vehicles;
- Increasing the number of joint ventures between its defence companies and the Russian defence industry.¹⁷⁶

These features of Kazakhstan's military–technical cooperation policy with the Russian Federation will serve to limit the extent to which it may seek Western alternatives; since the bulk of the weapons and equipment inventory in its armed forces will continue to be Russian it is natural that Astana looks primarily to Moscow to assist in its military modernisation.

Priority Four: CSTO KSOR and Peacekeeping

In several parts of the 2010 Russian Military Doctrine, Moscow affirms the high value placed on the CSTO and the intention to continue to develop the organisation in key areas such as its rapid reaction and peacekeeping capabilities. Moscow

¹⁷⁵ 'Still Partners in Deficit', *VPK*, 10 April 2007.

¹⁷⁶ Author interviews with defence specialists, Moscow and Astana, July 2012; KADEX 2012 Catalogue, op. cit.

also reaffirms the collective security dimension of the organisation by referring to an automatic response to aggression against one of its members, similar to NATO's Article Five, though the source of such aggression must prove to be external. However, while alluding to the allied status of the CSTO members, Russia's 2010 Military Doctrine clarifies that the CSTO KSOR can act across a broader range of threats, and also offers commitment to continue the training and potential use of the smaller KSBK. It is important to note the common vision for such developments shared between Moscow and Astana. First the 2010 Russian Military Doctrine states:

III. 24. The Russian Federation assigns troop contingents to CSTO peacekeeping forces to participate in peacekeeping operations in accordance with a CSTO Collective Security Council decision. The Russian Federation assigns troop contingents to the CSTO Collective Rapid Response forces for the purpose of responding promptly to military threats to CSTO member countries and resolving tasks determined by the CSTO Collective Security Council for their utilisation in accordance with the procedure envisioned by the Agreement on the Procedure for the Operational Deployment, Utilisation, and Comprehensive Support of the Central Asia Collective Security Region Collective Rapid Deployment Forces.¹⁷⁷

The CSTO agreements signed in June 2009 on the creation of KSOR (to which Tashkent had objected in an important precursor driving Uzbekistan to suspend its CSTO membership in June 2012), is effectively enshrined in Russian security policy, and this is also reflected in Kazakhstan's 2011 Military Doctrine. In section two of the 2011 Military Doctrine reference is made to the KSOR, although it is dealt with in a more muted manner than in the Russian doctrine: 'Collective Rapid Reaction Force (KSOR) units were created within the Collective Security Treaty Organisation and have been increasing their cooperation through joint operational and combat training.' In section 3.6 the CSTO is given high priority in the country's national security policy: 'The Republic of Kazakhstan will strengthen cooperation with the Collective Security Treaty Organisation within the framework of coalition military capability development aimed at ensuring joint security and collective defence in the event of military aggression'. And in the same section there is clear commitment to develop joint air defence through the CSTO.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ Military Doctrine 2010 Russian Federation, www.kremlin.ru, 5 February 2010.

¹⁷⁸ Military Doctrine 2011 Republic of Kazakhstan, *op. cit.*

The chronology and driving force behind the initiative to create greatly enhanced rapid reaction capabilities within the CSTO must be followed closely in order to avoid a number of common errors in Western commentaries and analyses of this development specifically and, more widely, on the nature of the CSTO's transformation. One of these is the common theme that the CSTO is completely dominated by Moscow; this neither reflects the actual dynamics within the CSTO nor does it represent the real limits of Russian power. There are many examples of Moscow simply being unable to secure enough support for its own initiatives within the CSTO, such as in its efforts to open a second airbase in Kyrgyzstan in 2009, which ultimately failed to garner sufficient support. Moreover, the country that first tabled the need to create the KSOR was Kazakhstan, and the initiative was not developed and then presented to other members by Moscow simply to be rubber-stamped. At a deeper level the KSOR was born out of the need to develop a force capable of taking action in response to internal rather than simply external acts of aggression against a CSTO member state. It also reflected the need to create peacekeeping capabilities for the organisation, rather than cobble these together during future regional crises.

Certainly the loose idea of forming some type of new rapid reaction force for the CSTO had been floated much earlier in Moscow, but there was no real substance to it until Astana began to flesh out the practical issues involved in forming, training and equipping such a force structure. The idea, first proposed during an informal CSTO summit in Borovoye in December 2008, was to create a force in addition to the existing KSBR, and the new force would be both larger and capable of acting across a wider range of crises.¹⁷⁹

The CSTO possessed the 4,500-strong Rapid Deployment Forces, the KSBR, tasked with operating in the Central Asian CSTO area of responsibility in an anti-terrorist capacity. In September 2011, during Tsentr 2011, KSOR exercises were staged in Tajikistan, while the KSBR was trained in Kyrgyzstan.¹⁸⁰

All member state presidents, with the exception of Uzbekistan, attended the Borovoye informal CSTO summit. Tashkent knew in advance of the summit that Astana would table the new initiative and opposed the force on principle. It seems that Tashkent

¹⁷⁹ Larisa Kucherova, Oleg Gorupay, 'The Formation of the Collective Operational Reaction Forces is Continuing', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 30 October 2009.

¹⁸⁰ Sergei Kononov, 'The Main Threat – Internal: Tsentr 2011 Attended By Russian President', *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, http://www.ng.ru/politics/2011-09-19/1_menace.html, 19 September 2011; 'CSTO Plans Large-Scale Exercises In 2011', *Interfax-AVN*, 8 June 2011.

was reluctant to see a CSTO force structure in place that might act during a domestic crisis in a neighbouring Central Asian state, and also had reservations concerning its size and structure, as well as the mechanisms through which it might be activated. For example, to restrict its size and influence its overall structure, Tashkent had suggested through various channels that all members should contribute equal sized units. Had this been accepted it would have limited the KSOR to being no more than seven battalions, due to the smaller and less numerically strong members such as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. However, the process of transformation had been initiated in October 2007 after Moscow first advocated forming CSTO peacekeeping capabilities. This was important in terms of Kazakhstan's cooperation with NATO, as the latter had pushed for the extension of the country's interoperable peacekeeping forces to cover all the brigades in the air mobile forces. Astana has since closed the door to this option; its commitments now lie in other vectors.¹⁸¹

By June 2009, at the Moscow CSTO summit, the KSOR was formed, with Uzbekistan and Belarus initially refusing to sign the agreement. Tashkent has still not agreed to recognise the KSOR and has since exited the organisation. The peacekeeping element is 3,500 strong and the remaining 17,500 personnel assigned to KSOR include non-defence ministry forces. It is mandated to combat organised crime, drug trafficking, terrorism or domestic crises including man-made or natural disasters; in the words of a senior CSTO official it can 'localise small conflicts'.¹⁸²

In November 2009 Kazakhstan's foreign ministry explained that KSOR can be used against existing or potential threats, including terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking, preventing and eliminating emergencies linked to disasters, combatting organised crime, or even becoming involved in "special operations to detect, remove, dispose, transport and destroy explosives".¹⁸³

The backbone of KSOR, when formed in June 2009, was elite Russian and Kazakhstani airborne forces. Russian airborne forces (VDV) and Kazakhstan's air mobile forces constituted the bulk of the force. Russia contributes the VDV 98th Airborne Division

¹⁸¹ Author interviews with Uzbek officials, March 2009; 'CSTO Peacekeepers to Hold Exercise in Kazakhstan', *Interfax-AVN*, 8 June 2011; 'Peacekeeping Force To Make CSTO More Effective In Regional Security Matters', *Agentstvo Voyennykh Novostey*, 8 October 2007.

¹⁸² Valeriya Bichurina, Oleg Gorupay, 'Combat Readiness, Step by Step', http://www.redstar.ru/2011/04/07_04/3_03.html, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 7 April 2011.

¹⁸³ 'KSOR Organisation of the CSTO', http://www.mamf.ru/odkb_mamf/ksor/ksor.pdf, accessed on 26 July 2011.

(Ivanovo) and 31st Air Assault Brigade (AAB) (Ulyanovsk), while Kazakhstan offers its 37th AAB (Taldykurgon).¹⁸⁴ Both countries provide Special Forces – Kazakhstani Arystan and Russian Rys and Bars, along with combat air support. In addition Kazakhstan contributes a marine battalion. Other CSTO members contribute much smaller forces (Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan each provide one battalion). Belarus ratified its participation in KSOR on 26 May 2010, originally contributing 2,000 personnel including the 5th Spetsnaz Brigade, an interior ministry Almaz unit and a KGB Alpha antiterrorist unit, as well as an additional emergencies ministry unit. It has since assigned a brigade to the KSOR.¹⁸⁵

Following the formation of the CSTO's KSOR, members understood the need for additional legal reform of the organisation in the aftermath of the security crisis in southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010, and this prompted revision of the need for complete consensus among CSTO members to authorise military action. Consequently, the CSTO summit in Moscow in December 2010 saw 33 documents signed by its members, excluding Uzbekistan, including critical amendments to the Collective Security Treaty (1992) and the CSTO Charter (2002) to allow just such a political decision authorising the use of force on the basis of a ballot among member states, rather than on achieving full consensus: the CSTO fundamentally changed as an organisation on that day.¹⁸⁶

Signing these agreements effectively streamlined the CSTO's crisis reaction mechanism. Joint measures, according to Kremlin statements in advance of the December 2010 summit, would enhance the CSTO's capability "to neutralise threats to security, territorial integrity and sovereignty", and create an efficient 'collective security system' and to protect members' "security, stability, territorial integrity and sovereignty". Moscow revealed that members were to discuss "streamlining the collective security system, developing military–economic and military–technical cooperation, military build-up and streamlined reaction to emergency situations, information security, and several organisational and administrative issues of CSTO operations".¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ 'Medvedev Signs Law On Ratification Of CSTO Rapid Reaction Force Agreement', *ITAR-TASS*, 27 December 2010.

¹⁸⁵ 'KSOR and ODKB', http://www.soldati-russian.ru/news/ksor_i_odkb/2011-07-11-104; 'Russian Peacekeepers Will Equip Belarusian CSTO', <http://n1.by/news/2011/06/13/118411.html>, 13 June 2011.

¹⁸⁶ 'Collective Security Treaty Organisation Issues 34 [*sic*] Documents', *Interfax-AVN Online*, 13 December 2010. These amendments were signed in documents 5 and 6, while document 18 made additional changes to the circumstances in which KSOR may be deployed: http://www.dkb.gov.ru/session_twelve/a.htm.

¹⁸⁷ 'CSTO To Streamline Crisis Reaction Mechanism', *ITAR-TASS*, 10 December 2010.

On 15 March 2012, President Nazarbayev signed the law ‘on ratification of the agreement on the status of forming forces and means of the collective security system of the CSTO’. The parliamentary committee for international affairs, defence and security noted that the agreement was signed in Moscow on 10 December 2010 and stated: “In line with the agreement, forces may be sent to the territory of a host country in accordance with the host’s official appeal for the right to collective defence in case of threat and (or) an armed attack (aggression) against one or more parties to counter other challenges and threats to collective security and to deal with emergency situations, as well as to conduct joint command and staff exercises and military training”.¹⁸⁸

The CSTO is no longer an exclusively collective security organisation, having formed a more cooperative basis for action against a wider variety of threats and created the legal basis to act during a domestic crisis within a member state, providing a request is made for assistance by the host government.¹⁸⁹

The importance attached to the CSTO KSOR in Kazakhstan’s security policy is attested to in its military doctrine, its ratification of the CSTO amendments and agreements related to this development and also in its large force contribution to the KSOR and especially in its military exercises. In April 2012, the CSTO secretariat confirmed plans to stage the Vzaimodeistviye 2012 CSTO exercises in Armenia to test the KSOR, stating that “The military–political scenario of the exercises is intended to help CSTO bodies adopt military–political decisions to deploy and use KSOR as part of joint operations to neutralise irregular armed groups”. Cooperation 2012 simulated operations to free hostages, suppress a prison mutiny, disrupt terrorist activities in towns and villages, conduct clear-up operations at buildings and dams and deal with disasters at chemical facilities and train stations; all confirming the enlarged scope for missions involving the new force structure.¹⁹⁰

KSOR military exercises, including Vzaimodeistviye 2009, 2010 and 2012 and Tsentri 2011, show continued commitment by Astana to contribute to and further develop the KSOR. Most detail concerning the units, equipment and scenario planning for a KSOR exercise relates to Vzaimodeistviye 2010 held on 25–28 October 2010, in

¹⁸⁸ ‘Kazakhstan Ratifies Pact On Formation of CSTO Forces’, *Interfax-Kazakhstan*, 15 March 2012.

¹⁸⁹ Roundtable, Kazakhstan National University, ‘Kazakhstan’s Role and Influence Within the CSTO and SCO’, 24 October 2011.

¹⁹⁰ ‘September Maneuvers to Focus on CSTO Collective Force Use Against Irregular Armed Groups’, *Interfax*, 27 April 2012.

the Chebarkul training range in Chelyabinsk, Russia. This was overseen by the VDV Deputy Commander, Major-General Aleksandr Lentsov and involved a joint Kazakh–Russian airdrop of 400 personnel (a company of 52 Kazakhstani servicemen in 37th AAB and 348 Russian personnel from 217th Parachute Regiment/98th Airborne Division) and nine BMD-2 airborne combat vehicles from 12 IL-76 military transport aircraft. It included 1,700 military personnel and around 270 pieces of combat and special military hardware, 30 aircraft and helicopters (frontal, army and transport aviation) with the KSOR rehearsing antiterrorist operations and containing a local conflict, simulating the use of non-lethal weapons in populated areas.¹⁹¹

The scenario appeared to envisage a militant group launching an incursion from the Fergana valley, supported by a foreign power. The exercise rehearsed C2 over units and subunits stopping an enemy advance, culminating in its destruction during the live-fire part of the exercise. However, the ‘650-man illegal formation’ that featured in the exercise scenario was reportedly ‘armed to the teeth’ in motorised vehicles. The KSOR commander ordered intelligence and reconnaissance collection and analysis prior to engaging these forces. The scenario seems to have linked a mixture of issues, including the potential for neighbouring Afghanistan to pose a threat to Central Asia, though it still relied on an ‘external’ aggressor.¹⁹²

Kazakhstan’s Air Mobile Forces Deputy Commander for Airborne Training, Colonel Viktor Zhitnik, highlighted the performance of Kazakhstani airborne units during the exercise. Zhitnik stressed the commonality of language and military culture between Kazakhstani and Russian military personnel. He also said that these units had ‘practically identical’ training methods and tactical approaches toward operations. Moreover, Zhitnik stated that in the 37th AAB, which Astana assigns to the KSOR, the number of contract personnel is very high, at around 80%.¹⁹³ Zhitnik stated that it: “consists of 80% contract servicemen. The remaining 20% (servicemen based upon conscription) are in positions, which do not determine combat readiness. We did not even take them to the exercise”.¹⁹⁴ Thus, even in the level of contract personnel numbers in units assigned to the KSOR, Astana clearly shows high commitment to the organisation, and by doing so reveals the seriousness it attaches to further strengthening this force capability.

¹⁹¹ ‘CSTO War Games End In Chelyabinsk Region’, *Interfax-AVN*, 29 October 2010.

¹⁹² Yuriy Belousov, ‘The School of Interaction At Chebarkul’, http://www.redstar.ru/2010/11/03_11/1_10.html, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 3 November 2010.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.* Legally, Kazakhstani conscripts cannot be operationally deployed abroad.

Conclusion: Astana–Moscow Defence Cooperation and Implications for NATO

Astana's defence partnership with Moscow, while not exclusive in nature, undoubtedly runs much deeper than its defence cooperation with NATO or its members. Legal and doctrinal issues serve to bind Kazakhstan and Russia in this enduring defence partnership.¹⁹⁵ While the bilateral military–technical cooperation is important in and of itself, this is further cemented through the multilateral formats such as the CSTO and the SCO. Astana's most important multilateral security roads lead to Moscow.

The Alliance cannot aspire to re-craft the armed forces of Kazakhstan in its own image, and must recognise that in the long term much of the Kazakhstani military will remain outfitted and trained to standards that make them interoperable with Russian forces.¹⁹⁶ The key features of military–technical cooperation in Kazakhstan's bilateral defence partnership with Russia will restrict Western access to air defence, supplying equipment or interacting with force elements designated for KSOR, or promoting any armed forces reform that negatively impacts on Kazakhstani and Russian interoperability. This leaves NATO effectively nibbling away at the periphery of the Kazakhstani force structure. But this does not result from Moscow's 'geopolitical pressure' on Kazakhstan vis-à-vis NATO or the US; rather it is Astana's strategic choice.

Nonetheless, as noted, Astana is also pursuing a policy of diversifying its international defence cooperation, partly to support and develop its national defence industry and partly to fill niche areas in its military modernisation policy. This trend is likely to persist, and will function at a bilateral level on a case-by-case basis. Astana's international defence cooperation policy contains some surprises, for example in terms of the limited scale of its cooperation with China or the outfitting of much of its special forces weaponry with Turkish-supplied rifles, and its interest in acquiring high technology C4ISR.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ 'Legal Framework for the Russian Arms Exports Moscow', *Moscow Defense Brief*, <http://mdb.cast.ru/mdb/3-2001/ee/lfrae/>, accessed 14 August 2012; Anatoliy Antipov, 'VPK Is Prescribed for the Defense Establishment', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 25 March 2006; Igor Khripunov, 'The Politics and Economics of Russia's Conventional Arms Transfers', *Dangerous Weapons, Desperate States*, New York: Routledge, 1999, pp. 132–133.

¹⁹⁶ Lieutenant-Colonel Michael J. McCarthy, *The Limits of Friendship: US Security Cooperation in Central Asia*, USAF, October 2077, pp. 92, 178.

¹⁹⁷ See chapter three.

Although Astana–Moscow remains the key bilateral relationship in the defence and security spheres this has not prevented Kazakhstan from forging the closest partnership in Central Asia with NATO; but this partnership is strictly limited. In short, Astana may pick and choose which specific partnership goals to prioritise in its IPAP and there is no real damage or setback if these targets are not met. But its cooperation with Russia is deeper, more systemic and based on its allied status. It is clear with reference not only to Kazakhstan’s 2011 Military Doctrine but also in evidence during its joint military exercises with Russia that Moscow offers security support at a strategic level that simply far eclipses what NATO can offer or hope to achieve.

An armed attack on Kazakhstan that poses a threat to its sovereignty would almost certainly invoke a Russian military response. At this level, NATO can never hope to serve in such a role in Central Asia due to the strategic concerns of both Russia and China. During its joint military exercises with Russia, Kazakhstan’s armed forces can rehearse a much wider and deeper set of potential operations, even if many observers regard these scenarios as being unrealistic. Combined arms exercises rehearsing the protection of Kazakhstan’s territory from a hypothetical aggressor have included naval elements in Tsentr 2011 using a scenario that seemed to assign the role of aggressor to Iran. This does not imply that either country considers Iran to be a potential adversary, only that in such exercises a hypothetical defence of Kazakhstan’s territory is conducted with reference to the possible emergence of an actual armed adversary in combat.¹⁹⁸

Kazakhstan’s threat assessment downplays but does not ignore the potential threat to national security stemming from international terrorism. Unlike Western views of the areas it needs to prioritise in its defence policy. Astana does not see the need to highlight international terrorism as the most likely source of conflict. Nor is the country overly concerned about the implications of a post-2014 Afghanistan. If Astana in fact regards conflict in Central Asia to be more likely due to socio-economic instability in a neighbouring country, then combined arms operations and rapid reaction capabilities through KSOR actually make sense.

Moreover as both Kazakhstan and Russia survey and outline the international threat environment, in their respective military doctrines they are agreed on two profoundly crucial points: the means and methods of modern conflict have fundamentally changed, moving from industrial-era to information-based and high-tech

¹⁹⁸ See chapter four.

approaches, while conflict may 'arise suddenly', and without the timescale necessary for mobilisation. Despite both states paying lip service to mobilisation for largely historical and military cultural reasons, the reality is that the era of mobilisation has passed into history. Astana and Moscow are consequently adjusting their defence policies and cooperation activities in accordance with the need to respond rapidly to unexpected, unpredictable and potentially escalatory crises.¹⁹⁹

Where does this leave NATO–Kazakhstan defence cooperation? In the long term this cooperation will prove to be largely symbolic and political for Kazakhstan. In military terms, more narrowly measuring the depth of its cooperation with the Alliance through PfP, its IPAP and Planning and Review Process (PARP) activities, the scope is rather limited.²⁰⁰ Astana cannot degrade the combat capabilities or the combat readiness of armed forces by lowering the level and intensity of its defence cooperation with NATO or its members, but the same cannot be said about its military–technical cooperation with Russia. Kazakhstani military officers understand the defence relationship with Russia and the CSTO transformation much more readily and at a deeper level than they do their contacts with NATO. This stems from a sense of commonality across a wider spectrum of defence-related issues. Kazakhstani officers simply have much more in common with their Russian counterparts than with NATO officers.²⁰¹

Nevertheless, while Russia assists in training Kazakhstani officers in highly sensitive and technical areas that contribute to combat capability and combat readiness, Astana is increasingly aware that cooperation with NATO and its members offers certain features that it cannot properly access in its relations with Russia.²⁰² Among these are improving officer and enlisted personnel skills at small unit and tactical level, gaining support for the strengthening and expansion of its peacekeeping capabilities based on NATO experience, training and standards, as well as accessing various training programmes.

¹⁹⁹ Russian Federation 2010 Military Doctrine, Republic of Kazakhstan 2011 Military Doctrine, op. cit.

²⁰⁰ The Planning and Review Process (PARP) is open to PfP states on an optional basis, and utilises NATO's extensive defence planning experience as a tool of engagement with its partners. PARP is a biennial process which includes bilateral and multilateral formats. In the planning cycle, a member of PARP provides information across a number of defence planning issues, among which feature democratic control of the armed forces, and financial and economic planning. NATO Handbook, Chapter 3: The Opening Up of the Alliance: Partnership for Peace: The Partnership for Peace Planning and Review Process (PARP), 8 October 2002.

²⁰¹ Roger D. Kangas, *Battling Misperceptions: Challenges To US Security Cooperation In Central Asia*, *Joint Forces Quarterly*, National Defence University, Issue 50, 2008, pp. 98–104.

²⁰² Timur Shaymergenov, Marat Biekenov, 'Kazakhstan And NATO: Evaluation of Cooperation Prospects', *Central Asia And The Caucasus Journal of Social and Political Studies*, Vol. 11, 1, 2010, p. 46.

NATO planners often build unrealistic expectations into their approaches to cooperation packages with Kazakhstan or the other Central Asian states, or superimpose their own security themes.²⁰³ For example, NATO's aim between 2005–2009 to expand KAZBRIG and use this as the basis to make all the brigades in Kazakhstan's air mobile forces into NATO interoperable formations proved to be unrealistic and had to be abandoned. Astana could not pursue such unrealistic goals, while also developing elements of the forces for use in the CSTO as well as preserving interoperability with the Russian armed forces. NATO planners could not grasp the fact that Kazakhstan cannot afford and would never develop two types of army to co-exist in strategic schizophrenia between NATO and Russia. Equally, NATO officials emphasise the expansion of IPAP to include helping Astana to develop cyber warfare and support for psychological operations (PSYOPS), without any detailed analysis of whether this really is high value in Kazakhstan's security agenda.

Given the similarities and commonality between Kazakhstan's armed forces and Russia's Armed Forces, it is much more likely to make a greater difference to Kazakhstan's national security for NATO to concentrate on capacity building in the area of Astana's defence planning. In particular NATO could open dialogue and help to put in place a system of reliable military statistics, which form the very basis of defence planning.²⁰⁴

NATO planning staff would also harness much stronger cooperation potential with Kazakhstan by recognising the broad similarity between US and Russian approaches to defence cooperation with Kazakhstan and overcoming any sense of competition.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ D. A. Feigenbaum, Deputy Assistant Secretary for South And Central Asian Affairs, US State Department, 'Kazakhstan And The US In a Changed World', Remarks To The Institute of World Economy And Policy, Almaty, 23 August 2006; E. Rumer, 'The US Interests and Role in Central Asia After K2', *Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2006, pp. 141–154; S. F. Starr, 'A Partnership For Central Asia', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 4, July/August 2005, p. 169.

²⁰⁴ The weakness in reliable military statistics renders defence planning blinded, or reduced to a guessing game, and is common in CIS defence ministries as a soviet era legacy, see: Order No. 048 1935 Frunze Academy, 'Soderzhanii, planirovanii, organizatsii i provedenii boevoi podgotovki slushatelei v letnii period 1935/36 uchebnogo goda', signed by Shaposhnikov 9 June 1935. Supplement No. 10, [RGVA. F. 37977. Op. 3. D. 868. L. 500ob-502ob]; Mark Harrison, 'Secrets, Lies And Half Truths: The Decision To Disclose Soviet Defense Outlays, PERSA Paper, University of Warwick, September 2008; Vasily Zatsepin, 'The Economics of Russian Defense Policy: In Search for the Roots of Inefficiency, In Roger N. McDermott, Bertil Nygren and Carolina Vendil Pallin (eds), *The Russian Armed Forces in Transition: Economic, Geopolitical and Institutional Uncertainties*, London: Routledge, 2011, p. 116; Vasily Zatsepin, 'A New Year Gift From The Ministry of Defence', Institute for The Economy in Transition, Moscow, January 2012.

²⁰⁵ Askar Abdrakhmanov, Timur Shaymergenov, 'NATO In The Contemporary World And Its Relations with Kazakhstan (According to an Expert Opinion Poll)', *Central Asia And The Caucasus Journal of Social and Political Studies*, 6, 54, 2008, pp. 43–54.

Brussels must also strive to build realistic defence relations with Kazakhstan based on understanding that it can never actually compete with or act as an alternative to Russia.

Kazakhstan's defence relationship with Russia, therefore, must not be misperceived to be in long-term decline. Rather, in the context of Astana seeking to diversify its international defence cooperation among NATO members and beyond, Astana's defence relationship with Russia is changing. In some areas this relationship is deepening, such as in the creation of ten repair and maintenance centres in Kazakhstan for Russian-manufactured military hardware, or in further collaborating on strengthening the combat capabilities of KSOR, and in other areas it seems to reflect Astana's desire for wider commercial choice such as preferring to purchase Airbus as opposed to a Russian platform.

Kazakhstan is also capable of declaring areas of its defence policy to be off limits to NATO, such as by refusing to discuss its naval development plans with the Alliance, and other areas of sensitivity are complicated by its existing legislation on state secrets. However, the 2011 military doctrine and the activities of Kazakhstan's defence industry make clear that the door is open to NATO members to cooperate in these sensitive areas on a bilateral basis; but this will be on Kazakhstan's terms and for its own national interests.

Twenty years after independence, in late 2011, Kazakhstan issued a military doctrine that avoids placing any other state or multilateral security organisations, including the CSTO, as the central pillars of its national security. Astana is modernising its armed forces precisely because it places its own security structures as the core foundation of its national security, but this does not exclude the need for international military partnerships. In this venture, and as the country seeks to underpin and establish a more self-reliant defence industry, Astana will prove to be selective in forming and using these international partnerships.

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