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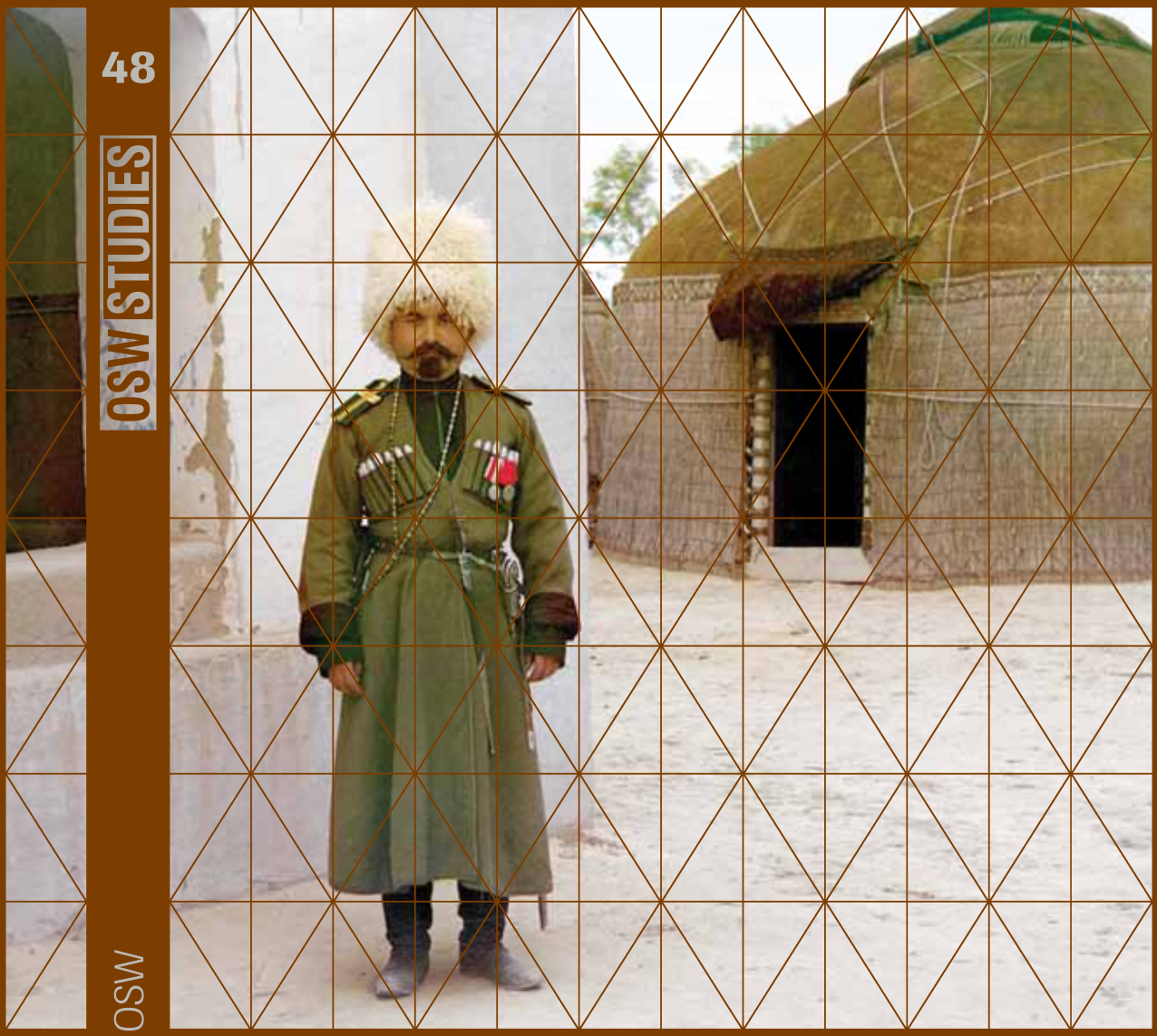

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# EVER FURTHER FROM MOSCOW
## RUSSIA'S STANCE ON CENTRAL ASIA

Wojciech Górecki

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# EVER FURTHER FROM MOSCOW
## RUSSIA'S STANCE ON CENTRAL ASIA

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Contents

## KEY POINTS

- The post-Soviet Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) are of importance for Russia as:

  - a potential source of threats (terrorism, drugs and extremist ideas, flowing both from there and from more distant countries, above all Afghanistan);
  - an area of its relations (rivalry and limited co-operation) with other global players: China, the West and the Islamic world;
  - an area of Russian integration initiatives.

  Thus it is a kind of a buffer in the broader meaning of the term, the existence of which improves the Russian Federation's safety. Central Asia is not a region of economic priority for Moscow, it is merely a major source of raw materials (uranium and hydrocarbons that are re-exported to the West) and of cheap workforce.

- Russia views the continuation of (or expanding in the best-case scenario) its influence in Central Asia as a necessary condition for maintaining its position as a global player. The loss of this region, understood as the dominance of another external player being entrenched there (at present, Russia could only be challenged by China in this area), would also be painful for Russia in symbolic terms, since this would mean the failure of its two centuries-long expansion in this direction, and would seal the process of disintegration of the former Tsarist and then Soviet empire.

- Moscow's current 'possessions' (the instruments and assets it has at its disposal) still ensure it a limited level of control in the region. However, Russia's influence has eroded significantly over the past two decades since the collapse of the USSR. The factors which have contributed to this include:

  - the passiveness of Moscow itself, which only became engaged more seriously as a mediator during the civil war in Tajikistan (1992–1997);
  - the emergence of other players in the region;
  - the ambitions of the Central Asian governments, who have been making efforts to diversify their foreign contacts.

- The consistent actions aimed at integrating the post-Soviet area taken at the beginning of the present decade (this integration has been given top

priority in Russia's foreign policy), together with some external circumstances (the threat that the region could become destabilised following the wind-up of the ISAF operation in Afghanistan scheduled for 2014) have halted the further erosion of Russian influence, although a reversal of this process appears unrealistic now.

- Russia is capable – albeit to a limited extent – of influencing the situation in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and also to a certain degree in Kazakhstan. Russia's engagement in the hydro energy projects in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan also allows it, although to an even lesser extent, to exert influence on Uzbekistan (which relies on water from rivers whose headwaters are located in these two countries). Moscow's influence on Turkmenistan is marginal. The limitations of Russian policy can be illustrated by the example of Kyrgyzstan: it took Moscow some years of efforts to force Bishkek to close the US military air base in Manas (this is expected to take place in July 2014, and the decision was taken in June 2013). In June 2010, in turn, despite a request from the new Kyrgyz government, Russia chose not to intervene in the ethnic clashes that had broken out in the south of the country. Moscow is unable to influence the succession processes taking place in the region's countries, although its informal support may improve a given politician's chances of winning the struggle for power. It also has a 'destabilising potential', which for example it employed in April 2010 by helping to overthrow the then president of Kyrgyzstan, Kurmanbek Bakiyev.

- Russia's most important instruments are the network of old, Soviet connections, including personal contacts between politicians, businessmen and law enforcement officers, as well as the fact that quite many people in the region – albeit a decreasing number – still speak Russian. Over time, the role of these intangible assets will diminish. However, at present, Russia is still not seen as a foreign country. It is the only active external actor in Central Asia which in a sense is at the same time part of the region (due to the language, post-Soviet sentiments, the open labour market, etc.). Another instrument is the military presence: the bases in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and a number of military facilities in Kazakhstan. The political instruments include Russia's dominant position in the structures which the countries from this region are members of: the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC) and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), as well as the presence of several million expatriate workers from this region in Russia (money remittances from expatriate workers account for half of Tajikistan's GDP).

The economic instruments include the Russian monopoly on the transit of Central Asian oil and gas to the West and the tariff policy.

- Moscow partly owes its relatively strong position in the region to the still limited engagement of other players. Russia is the only external actor which is comprehensively active in Central Asia, in the areas of politics, security, economy, social policy (immigrants) and culture. The other players are focused on selected sectors: China on the economy, the West (especially the USA) on security issues, and the global Muslim community (*umma*) on religious and spiritual issues. However, this situation may change as these actors' ambitions grow – especially those of China, which seems to be ready for expansion in the areas of politics and 'hard' security also. This is because the perception of Central Asia has changed: Beijing views this area less and less as Russia's exclusive zone of influence, and more and more as a 'no man's land', where all external players have equal rights and may compete freely with each other.

- Preventing other actors from expanding their influence is just as important for Moscow as maintaining its own influence there. This is because it sees the countries of this region not as partners, but merely as objects of its policy (one exception are its relations with Kazakhstan, which apart from some issues are partnership-based). Another reason for this is the Cold War paradigm, still present in the Russian way of thinking, which defines the world as an arena where superpowers compete for their zones of influence. According to this paradigm, Moscow's policy towards Central Asia is to a great extent an effect of its relations with Beijing and Washington (and also with Ankara, Tehran, Delhi and Islamabad, to name just a few). Therefore, one might have the impression that it is sometimes inconsistent and/or reactive. Moscow has declared that the West is its main rival. However, it seems that it fears China's growth in significance much more in the longer term. Russia has been making efforts to contain Beijing's expansion, especially through the integration of the post-Soviet area under its aegis (for instance the influx of Chinese goods is to be restricted under regulations adopted as part of the Customs Union, whose present members are Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus).

- The integration projects are intended to bind the participating countries to Russia for good, which would allow it to act as the leader of a group of countries. The presence of Central Asian countries among them allows these projects to be seen as intercontinental, truly Eurasian. The Russian

initiatives cover the areas of economy (the Eurasian Economic Community, the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space) and defence (the Collective Security Treaty Organisation). The integration processes are to be crowned with the establishment of the Eurasian Union (EAU), which will combine the two components. Russia wants this integration to cover the largest possible number of countries, although – due to resistance from some former Soviet republics (especially Ukraine), and the change in the balance of forces in Central Asia to Russia's disadvantage – Moscow has been placing more emphasis on the tempo and the deepening of integration over the past few years. This does not mean that it has given up its concept of 'broad' integration. In September 2013 Yerevan unexpectedly announced that it would join the Customs Union, which was hastily created in 2010–2011 and still has only three members (Bishkek was the only one to have declared it would join the Customs Union before this, and Dushanbe has not ruled this out). Contrary to Russian expectations, the countries from this region are not interested in political integration, which would involve the establishment of supranational structures and authorities.

- The greatest challenge to the Russian policy towards Central Asia is the US' declared withdrawal of its major forces from Afghanistan (the wind-up of the ISAF mission). Russia views this as both a threat (a possible uncontrolled destabilisation in the region would drive great numbers of refugees to Russia, and could cause the loss of a 'buffer' outside Russia's southern frontier) and an opportunity (fearing destabilisation, the Central Asian governments could then become more willing to participate in Russian integration projects).

- The tests of success for Moscow's policy will be:

  – in bilateral terms – the implementation of military agreements with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan; the establishment of a second military base in Kyrgyzstan (in the south of the country, close to the border with Uzbekistan) and the possible return of Russian border guards to the Tajik-Afghan border; the successful completion of at least one of the large hydro energy projects; and maintaining its present influence in Kazakhstan, regardless of who the next president will be;
  – in regional terms – the success of the Customs Union (accession of other countries that will benefit in a tangible way from membership), followed by the establishment of the promised Eurasian Union jointly with the member states of the Customs Union, and the launch of efficient (and

not merely superficial) structures and mechanisms already as part of the Eurasian Union; and maintaining its control of the region at least at the present level;

– in global terms – containing the growth of Western and (especially) Chinese influence; maintaining its monopoly in the area of 'hard' security (the CSTO, which formally collaborates with the UN, will remain the only defence alliance which Central Asian countries are members of) and the international community's acceptance of this (any possible US or Chinese military presence may only be manifested upon approval from Russia and on Russian terms).

## INTRODUCTION

The term 'Central Asia' as used in this paper encompasses five countries which are former Soviet republics: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Four of them are governed by more or less authoritarian regimes, where the president has strong power and can hold his office for an unlimited number of terms. The exception is Kyrgyzstan, where the central government has always been relatively weak, and where a parliamentary system was adopted after the coup in 2010.

Many authors emphasise that these countries do not form a region in the political sense, since despite their similarities and geographical situation they have no common (precisely, regional) interests to share with each other[1]. Even when dealing with common threats (drug smuggling, terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism) the individual Central Asian governments are unwilling to take joint action, and instead they prefer co-operation with external players (such as Russia or the USA). This may be due to the fact that the origins of these threats are not only external (Afghanistan or Pakistan) but also domestic. Thus, mutual co-operation would have given some countries from this region insight into the domestic affairs of the others. No regional organisation, with the exception of the ephemeral bodies created in the 1990s, has been established in Central Asia without an external force (Russia or China) being involved. The infrastructure in use on the state borders, which are closed now and then for the movement of people and goods, recalls the Cold War: barbed wire, watchtowers, minefields. This illustrates the state of relations between the neighbours, which are characterised by distrust resulting from the large number of still unresolved problems dating back to the Soviet period (territorial and ethnic disputes, including those over some countries' exclaves located within other countries, conflicts over water, etc.).

All these differences, plus the fact that politics in Central Asia is strongly personalised (the leaders' dominating impact on the stances their countries take) have forced the external players, including Russia, to focus on bilateral contacts and maintain good relations with individual leaders. On the one hand,

[1] For example, Alexey Malashenko has noted that "More than twenty years after the Soviet collapse, Central Asia can be spoken of only as a conglomerate of independent countries, each in the process of forming its own national interests and foreign policy priorities." (Alexey Malashenko, 'The Fight for Influence. Russia in Central Asia', Washington 2013, page 13-14).

this makes it possible to capitalise on disagreements between individuals countries in the region (e.g. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, which are located in the upper reaches of the big rivers and have more water than necessary, vs. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, which have insufficient amounts of water). On the other hand, this requires great flexibility, taking conflicting interests into account and responding to mutually exclusive expectations.

The global powers are interested in the region mainly because of its raw materials (hydrocarbons, uranium etc.), transit transport routes and security issues (with respect to the proximity of Afghanistan). As a consequence of moves made by other players, combined with the relatively inactive and inconsistent policy Moscow adopted in the first years following the collapse of the USSR, and the Central Asian countries' efforts aimed at emancipation, Russia's previous hegemonic position has weakened over time. When Vladimir Putin became president of Russia in 2000 (and especially after the USA and its NATO allies launched the intervention in Afghanistan in autumn 2001), Moscow embarked on a much more active policy there, although has not prevented its influence from eroding further. This process only slowed down, while not reversing the tendency, when Vladimir Putin resumed the presidency in 2012, and when the reintegration of the post-Soviet area was recognised as one of the top priorities in Russian foreign policy. Moscow views Central Asia today as an essential element of its integration projects, and also as a field for rivalry and limited co-operation with the West (especially the USA) and China. It is still a major, and at times dominant, actor in the region, but it must respect the interests of the other external actors.

This analysis is intended at presenting Russian policy towards Central Asia more than twenty years since the collapse of the USSR. Chapter I is an attempt to answer the question of how significant this region was for Moscow in the past, since it was first conquered by Tsarist Russia until the end of the first decade in the post-Soviet period (the years 2000-2001 mark the caesura: Vladimir Putin assumed power in Russia, and the USA and its allies launched the operation in Afghanistan following the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001). Chapter II discusses the goals of the Russian policy, the means employed to implement them, the Russian instruments and in broader terms Russia's 'possessions' in the region. Chapter III focuses on the multilateral policy adopted by Russia – its involvement in regional organisations and integration efforts. This chapter also includes a presentation of the region in the context of the withdrawal of major US forces from Afghanistan scheduled for the end of 2014.

# I. CENTRAL ASIA IN MOSCOW'S POLICY. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

## 1. The Russian conquest of the region

Russia's first contacts with Central Asia date back to the 16th century. The ground for further expansion was prepared by legations sent by Moscow to the local khanates in order to establish trade contacts and collect information on their political systems, economic situations and ethnic relations. The first territories were conquered in the 1730s: then Russia annexed what is now north-western Kazakhstan, which had been controlled by the Junior Juz (one of the three Kazakh hordes) and bordered on Khwarezm (the Khanate of Khiva). In the 1740s, Saint Petersburg extended its protectorate over the Middle Juz, which bordered on the lands of Bukhara, the region's strongest state formation at that time. In the first decades of the 19th century, Russia annexed the lands of the Senior Juz (what is now south-eastern Kazakhstan, and then was a periphery of the Khanate of Kokand).

The permanent conquest of Central Asia began in the mid-19th century. Within decades, Russia annexed a vast area stretching from the Caspian Sea to China and from Siberia to India and Persia. At that time it was referred to as Western Turkestan (to draw a distinction between Eastern Turkestan, which was part of China). Turkic peoples predominated there, as is still the case today. The exceptions are Indo-European Tajiks (and also the Yaghnobi people, and the Pamir peoples), and the Chinese Dungans. The northern part of the region, the steppe, was traditionally a land of nomads, while the southern part, where the deserts and mountains prevailed, had more permanent human settlements, concentrated in oases.

Russia's excuse for the conquest was its 'cultural mission', the need to civilise the 'primitive' peoples in the region and to establish lasting peace among them, guarantee security to trade between Europe and Asia and, last but not least, protect itself from being invaded by nomads. However, the economic (Saint Petersburg was interested in cotton fields and silkworm farms) and geopolitical factors were the most important. The expansion in Central Asia was an element of the Russian-British rivalry known in history as the 'Great Game'. This rivalry lasted for almost the entire 19th century, and also covered the neighbouring regions and countries: the Caucasus, Iran, Afghanistan, India and Tibet. The two empires did not become involved in open clashes, although their armies did fight against the forces of local leaders who were backed or provoked by the

opposite side. An intensive diplomatic and espionage game was also in place. Saint Petersburg's intention was to gain access to the Indian Ocean (via Iran and Afghanistan) and to contain the expansion of the British Empire. London would not allow this, and it also desired to protect the 'jewel in the crown' of its controlled territories, India. The rivalry intensified after Russia's defeat in the Crimean War (1853–1856), which restricted Russian influence in Europe and provided a stimulus for more intense expansion in the eastern and southern directions. The agreement of 1895, under which Russia gained control of the greater part of the Pamirs, marked the final stage of the Great Game. The new Russian territories were separated from the British ones by a buffer formed by the Wakhan Corridor, which was offered to Afghanistan.

The Tsar's administration did not interfere with the life of local communities in Central Asia, and the influx of Slavonic settlers was initially limited. This situation began to change towards the end of the 19th century. By 1897, Russians (along with Ukrainians and Belarusians) already accounted for almost 9% of Turkestan's population[2], while in the early 20th century, as part of the reforms launched by Prime Minister Pyotr Stolypin, Slavs started to settle in Central Asia on a mass scale. The demographic imbalance was one of the causes of an uprising which broke out in 1916 on what is now the frontier of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, expanding rapidly over the whole of Turkestan. This insurgence was brutally suppressed. Some Kyrgyzs and Kazakhs escaped to China, which further influenced the change in the ethnic makeup of this part of the region.

## 2. Central Asia in the Soviet period

In the Soviet Union, as in the Russian Empire, Central Asia played the role of the supplier of raw materials, which were then processed in western Soviet republics. At that time, in addition to cotton and silk, it supplied wheat and mineral resources: oil, natural gas, iron, uranium and non-ferrous metal ores, and sulphur. The local production did not satisfy the local needs. Fuel, petroleum products, various kinds of machinery and equipment, as well as consumer goods needed to be brought from other parts of the Soviet Union. The local budgets generated deficits, and the region strongly relied on subsidies which were used to finance infrastructural and other investments.

[2] Russians alone accounted for 7.6%. My own calculations based on the data from the 1897 census, available at: http://demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus_lan_97.php?reg=117

The Soviet leadership wanted to integrate the residents of this region with the other peoples within the USSR which, according to the ideology of internationalism and Communist propaganda, would lead over time to the development of a uniform Soviet nation. The support for Slavonic settlements and the increasingly widespread knowledge of the Russian language were intended to facilitate the achievement of this goal. These actions were only partly successful. The former nomads, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, who are culturally close, proved to be the most susceptible to Russification. These nations were less Islamised and had come into contact with Russians earlier than their neighbours (this is especially true of the Kazakhs from the Junior and Middle Juz). Furthermore, they had lost the majority of their elites as a consequence of the uprising in 1916. In addition to all this, Slavs were the most willing to settle in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (which were partly desolate after the uprising). In turn, the southern part of the region was Sovietised to only a minimal extent, since Slavs were almost absent (with the exception of cities, where they formed a particular kind of ghetto), and Islam strongly rooted in local traditions survived there.

The administrative division of the region, which took its final form in the mid-1930s, turned out to be the most durable Soviet legacy. Five Soviet republics (which would become independent states after 1991) and one autonomous republic (Karakalpakstan within Uzbekistan) were set up at that time. This accelerated the process of modern nations being formed (especially the six titular nations), but at the same time caused their separation and the disintegration of what used to be their common cultural ground[3]. It was impossible to consistently separate the individual ethnic groups in all parts of the region: when the Fergana Valley was divided among Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, a number of enclaves owned by their neighbours (Uzbeks in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, Tajiks in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, etc.) were additionally delimited. Furthermore, a numerous Tajik minority inhabited Uzbekistan, while Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan were home to significant Uzbek minorities. This

[3] The factors which contributed to the cultural unity of this region (regardless of the existing strong local identities) included ethnic and linguistic affinity, and especially the religion which the peoples who lived there share (Sunni Islam, and Ismailism – a branch of Shia Islam – only among the residents of the Pamirs). The most significant divide was the one between nomads and settled people. This distinction was more important than ethnic differences. For example, Uzbeks and Tajiks living in the cities of what is now Uzbekistan before the Bolshevik Revolution were known by the common name of *Sarts*, since they were perceived as one group. In the opinion of some researchers, the process of the formation of modern nations in the region is still not complete. Hence the great significance of informal groups, who are connected with clan bonds or a common place of origin, in Central Asian political life.

was not really important when these republics were part of the USSR (if one disregards the dissatisfaction of those groups of people who felt they had been disadvantaged, such as the Tajiks from Samarkand, which had been made part of Uzbekistan). However, when the Soviet Union collapsed, this gave rise to serious disputes and conflicts. The borders delimited in the Fergana Valley became an especially strong source of tension: they cross the transport routes (roads and railways) and watercourses, thus adversely affecting the economies and political relations among the countries in the region.

## 3. Moscow vs. Central Asia in the first years since the collapse of the USSR

As Dmitri Trenin, director of the Carnegie Moscow Centre, has noted, the Central Asian republics "did not separate from the USSR: instead, the Union, having collapsed, left them to their fate"[4]. Russia, which along with Ukraine and Belarus disassembled the Soviet state, did not show any major activity in the region until the end of the 1990s[5]. It also seemed not to notice that sovereign entities with their own aspirations began emerging there from the amorphous 'post-Soviet area'. Irina Zvyagelskaya from MGIMO believes that "one of the main reasons why Central Asia was abandoned was the desire among the Russian first-wave democrats to get rid of the political ballast of authoritarian regimes which had grown on the Communist Soviet substratum and, in the opinion of those democrats, were ready to back Communist retaliation"[6]. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was a patron of this approach; he had already appealed in 1990 for relinquishing the Soviet 'borderlands' which had been supported financially by Moscow, and instead strengthening the Russian 'core'[7]. The

4 Дмитрий Тренин, 'Post-Imperium: евразийская история', Москва 2012, page 176.

5 One exception was Moscow's active engagement as a mediator and intermediary between the parties to the civil war in Tajikistan (1992–1997).

6 Ирина Звягельская, 'Становление государств Центральной Азии. Политические процессы', Москва 2009, page 41.

7 In his appeal for separating at least eleven republics (Moldova, the three Baltic, the three Caucasian and the four Asian republics, except for Kazakhstan) from Russia, even against their will, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn especially strongly emphasised the burden generated by Central Asia: "[Russia] will be able to straighten up even more once it has shed the onerous burden of the Central Asian 'underbelly', that equally ill-considered conquest of Alexander II". The writer extended his argumentation to Kazakhstan with certain reservations: "As for Kazakhstan, its present huge territory was stitched together by the communists in a completely haphazard fashion: wherever migrating herds made a yearly passage would be called Kazakhstan. [...] Today the Kazakhs constitute noticeably less than half the population of the entire inflated territory of Kazakhstan. They are concentrated in their long-standing ancestral domains along a large arc of lands in the south, sweeping from the

loosening of the bonds with the region was accompanied by the paternalistic belief that the Central Asian republics had no other choice but to rely on Russia, and therefore Russia did not have to make any effort to remain appealing to them: when Russia had carried through economic reforms, they would come back to it by themselves on Russian terms (i.e. without Moscow subsidising their budgets).

Contrary to this assumption, it did not take long for the new independent states to appreciate the benefits of acting as sovereign entities on the international arena, and thus they had no motivation to go back under the Kremlin's protectorate. **Russia's position in the region eroded deeply in the 1990s. This was an effect of a number of factors, which can be divided into three groups. The first one includes negligence by Moscow itself** – its passiveness, paternalism (Malashenko and Zvyagelskaya have pointed out to the low competences of the diplomats who were delegated to this region, who did not speak the local languages and were unfamiliar with the cultural background) and almost complete lack of interest in the ethnic Russians living there, which local regimes could understand as a declaration of *désintéressement* in the future of Central Asia. **The second group includes actions by other external players, whose activity increased in the region which Russia had 'abandoned'.** Initially, these actors were Turkey and Iran, whose cultures have most in common, and also Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and India. At the same time, China became interested in the region, soon followed by the West, including the USA. These actors at first offered social and cultural co-operation to gradually include economic, political and defence issues in their offer.

Other countries became active in the region in response to the expectations of Central Asian capitals, who were searching for their place in the system of international relations in Eurasia (which was accompanied by the search for a new post-Soviet identity and state ideology) and desired to diversify their foreign contacts. **The processes that took place in the region itself and the actions taken by the regional leaders form the third group of factors which have undermined Russia's position and significance.** In this context, it is essential to mention de-Sovietisation, which locally took the form of de-Russification combined with re-Islamisation (other former Soviet republics

extreme east westward almost to the Caspian Sea, the population here is indeed predominantly Kazakh. And if it should prove to be their wish to separate within such boundaries, I say Godspeed." (Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, 'Rebuilding Russia. Reflections and tentative proposals', translated and annotated by Alexis Klimoff, New York 1991, pages 7-12).

primarily rejected the Soviet socio-economic system, while in Central Asia "the Soviet era's social [collective] values [...] had quickly been organically integrated into local [Muslim] traditions"[8]). In effect, Moscow's hegemonic position has been undermined. Russia has lost its role as the only civilisational 'point of reference', but at the same time it has remained appealing as a place to study or work, and many residents of the region have felt strongly bound to the Russian language and culture. However, at the turn of the century, apart from Russia the region was also oriented towards the West (as an embodiment of welfare and a source of modern technologies), China (as a source of cheap consumer goods and a desirable investor) and to a certain extent towards the Islamic countries (a source of non-material values). To maintain what was left of its influence, Russia was forced to enter the competition with other entities in the area which it saw as its 'own'.

The presence of external players and the competition emerging between them have inclined some researchers to propose the thesis that a 'new Great Game' has begun[9]. Disputable as it may be (at present, the Central Asian countries are, at least formally, independent entities), this analogy appears reasonable to a certain extent.

[8] Alexey Malashenko, 'The Fight for Influence ...', *op. cit.*, page 27.

[9] Igor Zonn and Sergey Zhiltsov have written that the 'Great Game.2' differed from the first one only in the number of the players (which has increased significantly) and the value of the funds allocated for the rivalry, now reaching hundreds of millions of US dollars (Игорь Зонн, Сергей Жильцов, 'Стратегия США в Каспийском регионе', Москва 2003, page 148).

## II. RUSSIA'S GOALS AND ITS MEANS OF ACHIEVING THEM

### 1. The hierarchy of the goals

Relations with individual Central Asian countries (with the exception of Kazakhstan) are not granted high priority in Russian foreign policy, but the region as a whole is a very essential element of it. Central Asia is important for Moscow as an area covered by Russian integration initiatives, a space for relations with the West, China and the Islamic world, and last but not least, as a potential source of threats (originating both from there and from more distant countries, primarily Afghanistan). Thus in any case it is treated as a subject, and is most often viewed as a 'soft underbelly', i.e. a buffer whose presence could improve the impermeability of the Russian borders. At the same time, this is the last part of the Soviet *ecumen*, apart from Belarus and Armenia, where the Kremlin can still feel like a political leader, albeit ever more rarely and with numerous reservations. For this reason, Moscow's presence and influence in Central Asia are essential for its prestige, since its status as a superpower depends on them. **Thus Russia's basic and most important goals are to maintain its influence there (and expand it, in the optimal case)**[10] **and to restrict the influence of other actors, so that it has the decisive say in the region's most important issues, and that this prerogative not be questioned by any of the major players.** This in particular concerns security issues, in the broad meaning of the term. As regards the economy, Moscow seems to be acknowledging China's increasing significance and expected future dominance (especially in the areas of transport and communication), although it has been making attempts to retain its advantage in selected market segments, such as investments in the hydroelectric sector.

Thus Russia desires that Central Asia, which it believes to be its zone of influence, be unquestionably perceived as such by all the parties concerned. All other Russian goals are subordinate to this vision. These can be classified within four, partly overlapping, areas: politics, security (both 'soft' and 'hard'), economy and 'soft power'[11]. The operation of regimes in Central Asia which are

[10] This influence is understood in traditional terms. At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, Chinese experts would often clearly compare the region to a fertile but neglected garden located off the beaten track, guarded by a dangerous dog who was unable to properly cultivate the garden but would not let in anyone from the outside who would wish to take care of this (OSW's conversation with Adil Kaukenov, a political expert and Sinologist, Almaty, 12 December 2011).

[11] Soft power is usually defined as a given country's capability to gain and strengthen its in-

friendly towards Russia and willing to respect its interests is essential to all these areas. In the **political area,** Moscow also wants these countries not to enter into alliances with any other external actors, but to remain within the structures which it controls or co-controls (such as the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation, SCO).

In the **security area,** Russia's primary goal is for the entire region to be covered with a collective security system which it has approved, and in the short term, to minimise the possible negative consequences of the wind-up of NATO's operation in Afghanistan in 2014. This overriding goal includes a number of lower-level goals: expanding Russia's military presence in the region, preventing other countries' (especially US) troops from being deployed there, the return of Russian border guards to the Tajik-Afghan border, and also to serve as 'soft security', by reducing the volumes of drugs smuggled to Russia and restricting illegal immigration levels, among other measures.

In the **area of the economy**, Russia desires to keep Central Asian countries dependent on it in selected areas (investments in the hydro energy sector, supplies of fuels and petroleum products, maintenance of military equipment, etc.). It also wants to maintain its position as a monopoly in the transit of hydrocarbons from Central Asia to the West.

In the **area of soft power**, Moscow would like as a minimum to maintain its previous level of influence: common knowledge of the Russian language across the region, the dominance in the information space of Russian and local Russian-speaking media (especially electronic), and the orientation of part of the cultural and political elites towards Russia.

Contrary to numerous Russian declarations, it appears that it does not intend to stabilise the situation in the region, but it rather wants a state of 'controlled instability' to be maintained there. This allows it to act as an arbiter, and possibly to take advantage of the situation by placing various kinds of pressure on the conflicting parties. One proof of this thesis is that Russia refrained from intervening in southern Kyrgyzstan at the time of the ethnic Kyrgyz-Uzbek clashes in June 2010 (although the then Kyrgyz interim government had asked for such an intervention). Another example is Russia's long-running game concerning the plans to build large hydropower plants in Kyrgyzstan (Kambar Ata I)

fluence owing to the attractiveness of its culture, politics and ideology. Unlike hard power, which involves the use of violence, yielding to soft power is principally voluntary.

and Tajikistan (Rogun), which are opposed by Uzbekistan[12] – Moscow has been avoiding taking a clear stance on this matter, from time to time declared its assistance and even participation in the construction, and then failed to comply with its obligations, thus wielding a constant instrument of pressure over several countries. In turn, the riots which took place in July 2012 in the Gorno-Badakhshan autonomous province of Tajikistan (which have proven that Dushanbe does not have full control over its territory) probably accelerated the process of signing the Tajik-Russian military agreement, which provides for long-term Russian military presence in this country (the Tajik government had been playing for time before that, by setting numerous preconditions)[13].

## 2. The available instruments

Russia has a wide array of instruments it can use to influence the situation in the region. These are of various natures and can be applied to various mutually overlapping orders. For ease of reference, these can be classified as political, military, economic and soft power instruments.

The **political instruments** include dominance of the regional organisations which Central Asian countries belong to (such as the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Eurasian Economic Community and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation). Russia can push through some solutions more easily at these forums than by means of bilateral relations. One example is the December 2011 decision by the CSTO member states under which the deployment of a military base by a country which did not belong to the organisation in any of the CSTO member states would require approval from the other member states[14]. This has in fact enabled Russia to veto such projects.

In countries where Russian influence is the strongest (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan), support offered to a local politician, whether officially or not, may facilitate electoral success or strengthen that politician's position. This instrument was employed in the case of the team who took power in Kyrgyzstan as a consequence of the coup in April 2010 (Moscow was the first to recognise the *de facto* new government; in statements from Moscow, the head of the interim government, Roza Otunbayeva, had been referred to as the prime minister from the

[12] Tashkent even considers the possible construction of the Rogun power plant as a *casus belli*.

[13] For more on this topic, see the section devoted to Russian-Tajik relations.

[14] The present CSTO member states are Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Armenia and Belarus.

very beginning, etc.) and President Almazbek Atambayev (who was received by Russian leaders during his electoral campaign, when he did not formally hold any position in the state administration).

The presence of millions of Central Asian expatriate workers in Russia offers Moscow a very strong political instrument[15]. Facilitations available to them in fact mean support for the regimes in Central Asia. To a great extent, immigrants to Russia lift the burden off the local labour markets. The likelihood of social tension, which is a threat to each government, is thus reduced. Furthermore, expatriate workers send remittances to their families, thus supporting the local budgets in various forms (in the case of Tajikistan, the total value of bank transfers alone, without taking into account cash brought back by individual persons, equals nearly half the country's GDP[16]). The Russian-Tajik agreement struck in autumn 2012, which provides for facilitations to Tajik immigrants, can be seen in this context as a sign of support for President Emomali Rahmon, who was running for another term in office on 6 November 2013. In turn, the announcements that stricter migration laws will be adopted, and the ostentatious deportations of illegal immigrants from Russia, represents a form of threatening pressure on individual governments. For example, Moscow used this tool in autumn 2011, when a group of hundreds of Tajiks were deported, a move which forced Dushanbe to revise the verdict concerning two pilots from a Russian company who had been sentenced to imprisonment. (On the other hand, however, Dushanbe chose at the same time not to sign an agreement concerning a Russian military base, which Moscow had been insisting on; this agreement was signed only a year later, following the aforementioned riots in Badakhshan).

On 18 April 2013, President Vladimir Putin announced that citizens of CIS member states entering the Russian Federation would be required to hold a passport starting from 1 January 2015 (so far, people travelling between Russia

[15] The precise number of immigrants from Central Asia is not known. The estimates covering all expatriate workers (also from other countries, including Ukraine) range between 5 and 15 million. According to data from the Federal Migration Service, as of the end of 2012 (generated on the basis of the so-called migration cards foreigners are required to complete upon entry to Russia), around 2.3 million citizens of Uzbekistan, around 1.1 million citizens of Tajikistan, around 550,000 citizens of Kazakhstan, around 540,000 citizens of Kyrgyzstan and around 26,000 citizens of Turkmenistan were staying in Russia. It must be assumed that the great majority of them are expatriate workers. Алексей Бессуднов, 'Сколько гастарбайтеров в России?', *Slon*, 27 December 2012, http://slon.ru/russia/skolko_gastarbayterov_v_rossii-870263.xhtml

[16] For more information see the section devoted to Russian-Tajik relations.

and Central Asia – with the exception of Turkmenistan – have needed only their domestic identification documents – identity cards). When these changes are adopted, the privilege of entering Russia without a passport will remain with citizens of the countries which belong to the Customs Union: Kazakhstan and Belarus[17]. This decision is intended at encouraging other countries to join the Customs Union.

**The most spectacular instrument is the Russian military presence** in the form of military bases in Kyrgyzstan (Kant air base) and Tajikistan (the 201st ground troop base, the largest outside Russia), where a total of around 8500 – 9000 Russian soldiers serve. In addition to the bases, Russia has several other military facilities in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan (the Kant air base is part of the CSTO Rapid Reaction Force, but it is integrated with the Russian defence system)[18]. These are the only foreign military facilities in the region, except for those linked to NATO's operation in Afghanistan: the US Transit Centre at Manas airport near Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan, the German transit air base in Uzbekistan's Termez, and the small French base at the airport in Dushanbe, Tajikistan[19].

The **economic instruments** include the assets Russia owns in the countries of this region[20], and also its dominant position in the transit of Central Asian oil and gas to global (especially Western) markets. For example, despite the launch of the pipelines running to China, 75% of the oil exported from Kazakhstan (the country with the largest oil deposits in the region) is transported via Russian territory. When the capacity of the Tengiz–Novorossiysk oil pipeline is increased, this share will grow even more.

17 Agata Wierzbowska-Miazga, 'Kreml zwiększy kontrolę nad migracją.' *Tydzień na Wschodzie*, OSW, 24 April 2013, http://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/tydzien-na-wschodzie/2013-04-24/kreml-zwiekszy-kontrole-nad-migracja

18 The Russian military presence in the region will be discussed in detail in the sections devoted to Russia's relations with Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan.

19 Józef Lang, Marek Matusiak, Krzysztof Strachota, 'A new chapter in relations between NATO & the USA and Central Asia', *EastWeek*, OSW, 21 March 2012, http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2012-03-21/a-new-chapter-relations-between-nato-usa-and-central-asia
The base in Dushanbe have been closed completely in 2013. In November 2012, France signed an agreement with Kazakhstan, granting it the right to use Shymkent airport in the south of the country during the withdrawal of its forces from Afghanistan.

20 These will be presented in detail in the sections devoted to Russia's bilateral relations with the Central Asian countries.

Central Asian countries rely on supplies of a number of Russian products, including petroleum products. This provides Moscow with another economic instrument, the tariff policy. The imposition of a 100% export duty on 1 April 2010 on such products sold to Kyrgyzstan (which are then re-exported, for instance, to Afghanistan and Tajikistan) adversely affected Kyrgyzstan's economy. This intensified public dissatisfaction, and as a consequence contributed indirectly to the overthrow of the then President Kurmanbek Bakiyev's administration. In turn, more than a year before, at the time of a severe economic crisis, Russia offered Kyrgyzstan a non-repayable grant, a loan at a low interest rate, and promised to invest US$1.7 billion in the construction of a hydropower plant. In response to this, Bishkek (as Moscow expected) made an initial decision to close the US air base in Manas (and the effective withdrawal from this decision has led to a serious crisis in Kyrgyz-Russian relations)[21].

**A cultural affinity resulting from a sense of shared history is one of Russia's most important soft power instruments**[22]. As a consequence, the Russian state feels like 'home' to a significant proportion of Central Asian residents, who would not define it as a foreign country. For many of them, including almost all the members of the local ruling elites, Russian is still not a foreign language. People whose personality was formed in the USSR still govern the countries in this region; the present leaders entered adulthood between the 1950s and 1970s, were educated in the Russian language, and are still bound by a network of various connections with Russia (economic, cultural, interpersonal, etc.), which affect their sympathies and political choices[23]. This situation will continue for at least fifteen to twenty years (the people born at the time of the collapse of the USSR will be in their forties and will start taking important positions in state administrations only around the year 2030).

[21] These issues will be discussed in a more detailed way in the section outlining Russian--Kyrgyz relations. Russia also indirectly contributed to the overthrow of President Bakiyev by resorting to political (ostentatiously receiving representatives of the then Kyrgyz opposition in Moscow) and soft power instruments (broadcasting programmes denouncing the Bakiyev clan on Russian TV, which is very popular in Kyrgyzstan).

[22] This refers to the 'culture code' shared by Russians and many residents of other post-Soviet countries (especially the elder and middle generations) resulting from their being familiar with the same films, books and songs. In Central Asia, this legacy is definitively rejected only by Muslim radicals. For obvious reasons, its role will fall objectively over time.

[23] The term 'Russian parties', which is disputable and imprecise, is sometimes used in publications to refer to the informal groups of Moscow-oriented politicians operating in Central Asian countries, who sometimes act as Russian lobbies (analogously, the terms 'Western parties' and 'Chinese parties' are also in use; but for the time being these play only a minor role).

Russia's intangible assets are enhanced owing to the easy accessibility of Russian (and local Russian-speaking) media, especially electronic (TV and the Internet). The Russian language predominates in Kazakhstan's information space, which is strongly influenced by the Russian media. For example, President Nursultan Nazarbayev publishes his articles in the Russian daily *Izvestia*. The situation in Kyrgyzstan is similar. In Tajikistan, a number of newspapers are published in Russian, Internet portals are as a rule bi- or trilingual (Tajik--Russian-English), and the Tajik language predominates on TV. The Russian language occupies less space in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, but it has not been ousted completely, and still has a great advantage over English. Russian is still the most natural language used by representatives of expert, artistic or business circles from various countries (in the Southern Caucasus, English is already a serious alternative to Russian among people in their thirties and younger). Furthermore, Russian plays an important role in the country's pop culture.

All this offers Russia a great advantage over the other players active in the region: the West, and especially China. However, over time, this advantage will naturally weaken, in particular if Moscow fails to actively promote the Russian language and culture[24]. Following the collapse of the USSR, the range of the Russian language's influence has shrunk significantly: at first in the early 1990s during the mass migrations of ethnic Russians to Russia[25], and then as a consequence of its gradually being superseded by the national languages in offices, education facilities, media and culture. Over two-thirds of schools with Russian as the language of instruction were closed in Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, and half in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, in the 1990s alone. In 2001, all such schools were transformed into bilingual establishments in Turkmenistan[26]. More and more representatives of the new generations of Kazakhs, Kyrgyzs, Tajiks and Uzbeks entering adulthood, especially from the provincial areas, either do not speak Russian at all, or speak it poorly or

[24] The present position of the Russian language in Central Asia is not an effect of Moscow's activity or efforts. Instead, it is part of the legacy of living in one state. Russia has been pursuing a comprehensive soft power policy for just a few years. The *Russkiy Mir* Foundation was established on 21 June 2007, and *Rossotrudnichestvo* – the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Co-operation – on 6 September 2008. In Central Asia, *Russkiy Mir* holds various seminars, conferences and exhibitions.

[25] According to the 1989 census, around 9.5 million Russians lived in Central Asia and accounted for almost 20% of the region's total population. At present, no more than 5.5 million (less than 10%) of them have remained there.

[26] Alexey Malashenko, 'The Fight for Influence …', *op. cit.*, page 29.

understand it at the most. This also applies to expatriate workers employed in Russia[27].

Moscow has not capitalised on the presence of the still significant Russian minority in Central Asia, especially in Kazakhstan[28]. The website of the Russian Embassy in Astana lists dozens of Russian minority organisations, stating their contact data (these include also cultural centres for other ethnic groups living in Russia, e.g. Caucasians)[29], and similar data concerning other countries can be found on the websites of *Rossotrudnichestvo* offices[30]. However, the large number of organisations does not always mean that they are active.

**Nevertheless, potential threats are inherent in some of the instruments available to Russia.** The presence of immigrants, including illegals, is one such 'double-edged sword'. One could risk the statement that Russia has become dependent on the cheap workforce from this part of the former USSR – its absence would create a difficult-to-fill gap in the Russian labour market[31]. At the same time, the presence of immigrants generates ethnic tension in Russian cities, and extremist ideas (including radical Islam), increasingly popular among immigrants, are a source of concern. No detailed data allowing an assessment of the scale of this phenomenon are available. However, the fact that the problem is serious (and at least that the fear of it is shared by the government and the Russian public alike) has been proven by police actions taken from time to time against unofficial mosques operating in places where the concentration of immigrants is high, including marketplaces. For

[27] According to estimates of the Russian Migration Service, only half of immigrants are able to complete a simple questionnaire in Russian by themselves, and between 15% and 20% do not know Russian at all. This is due to the fact that almost 25% of the CIS citizens who cross the Russian border were born after 1986. Михаил Фалалеев, 'Гастарбайтеров обяжут говорить по-русски', *Российская Газета*, 14 May 2013, http://www.rg.ru/2013/05/14/migranti-site.html

[28] Probably so as not to worsen relations with the partners from this region. This issue has not been raised at any CIS summits or at any other forums of the Commonwealth, which proves that Moscow has taken a completely different approach to this problem than it has in relations with the Baltic states. It is worth reminding that protecting Russian citizens was also used as a *casus belli* in the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008.

[29] http://www.rfembassy.kz/tm/russian_mission_in_kazakhstan/organizacii_ros_sootechestvenn/

[30] For example see http://kgz.rs.gov.ru/node/16, http://tjk.rs.gov.ru/node/16, http://uzb.rs.gov.ru/node/16

[31] Immigrants partly take jobs which Russians view as low-prestige (caretaker, garbage collector, construction worker, etc.).

example, 271 people were detained in Saint Petersburg during a police raid in February 2013[32].

## 3. Relations with individual countries

By employing the instruments available to it, Russia has been attempting to achieve its goals in Central Asia through:

1. bilateral relations with Central Asian states;

2. rivalry and limited co-operation with external players: the West (the USA, and partly the EU) and China;

3. multilateral diplomacy (integration of the post-Soviet area by building a system of regional organisations where it has assumed the dominant position).

These vectors are inter-related; for example, the issue of the US military presence at Manas airport near Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan has been raised not only in bilateral talks (both Russian-Kyrgyz and Russian-US) but also during multilateral discussions (for example, at the SCO and CSTO forums).

**Moscow is still capable of influencing the current situation in Central Asian countries, albeit not to the same extent everywhere and not always successfully, as has been shown in the examples referred to previously in this text. What it cannot do is create the situation there.** It has maintained most of its influence in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (although it does not have a monopoly position even there), much less in Kazakhstan (President Nazarbayev's openness to co-operation and Russian initiatives has been working to its benefit) and almost none in Uzbekistan, let alone Turkmenistan. The Kremlin may successfully back a candidate for president of Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan (although it is unable to impose its own candidate on these countries), but its impact is much more limited in the case of the succession processes in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan[33]. Most likely, the balance of forces among local

[32] Wojciech Górecki, 'Raid on Muslims in St. Petersburg', *EastWeek*, OSW, 13 February 2013, http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2013-02-13/raid-muslims-st-petersburg

[33] Moscow has taken behind-the-scenes actions to reinforce the position of potential successors whom it sees as useful, and to reduce the chances of those less desirable. Naturally little is known about such moves, and it is difficult to predict how successful they will be.

elites (as was the case in Turkmenistan after Saparmurat Niyazov's death in 2006) will play the decisive role in choosing the successors to Nursultan Nazarbayev and Islam Karimov. The external factor may play a certain role, but the impact will come from several directions, and will depend on the dynamic balance within the China–Russia–USA triangle existing at a given time. The fact that Moscow has been unable to force any of the Central Asian states (and the CIS in general) to recognise Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states since the Russian-Georgian war in 2008 is another proof of Russia's limited influence.

**Russia's advantages include its comprehensive presence in the region, covering the areas of politics, security, economy and soft power, and the great number and diversity of the instruments available to it as a consequence of this. It is therefore able, despite limited means, to pursue a relatively successful policy towards two or three countries in this region, although not towards Central Asia as a whole. In this context, Moscow may only attempt to contain the expansion of other powers in this region.** The Russian stance on the US military presence in the region following the attacks of 11 September 2001 could serve as an example. Russia initially backed the coalition's intervention in Afghanistan, and did not oppose the establishment of the US military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan[34]. However, later, fearing US dominance in the region, it took a number of actions which were aimed on the one hand at restricting Western military presence in the region, and on the other at making Russia the sole decision-maker in this area (Moscow wanted Washington to discuss the presence of US bases with it directly, and not with Bishkek and Tashkent). These efforts were unsuccessful for several years (Bishkek, by using tricks of formalities and procedures, continued renewing its consent for US forces to use the Manas air base). However, the Kyrgyz government finally decided that the US military presence in

Most commentators interpreted the nomination of Timur Kulibayev (President Nursultan Nazarbayev's son-in-law, who is believed to be his most likely successor) as a member of Gazprom's board of directors on 30 June 2011 as Russia's 'investment' in this promising politician. In turn, President Islam Karimov's daughter Gulnara (who until recently had been mentioned as one of his possible successors) has as a rule been presented unfavourably in the Russian media, which may be an element of an intentional campaign aimed at discrediting her. For instance, it was suggested that Karimova was involved in the takeover of Uzbek assets in the Russian company MTS (see the section devoted to Russian-Uzbek relations); then the media spread the rumour that her luxury Moscow apartment, worth US$10 million, had been seized, which later turned out to be untrue.

34 The background for this decision and the Russian manoeuvres linked to the US bases are discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters.

Manas would end in summer 2014 (if this really happens, the evacuation of ISAF forces from Afghanistan may become more difficult, and logistic support for those US units that remain in Afghanistan after the operation has been formally closed will be complicated). At the same time, Russian negotiations with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan ended with the extension of its troop deployments in these countries by over ten years or even a few decades.

Moscow supports the CASA-1000 project which envisages the development of infrastructural electric energy connections between Central Asia (Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan) and Southern Asia (Afghanistan and Pakistan), although it initially opposed the move as the project would lessen the region's dependence on Russia. However, it appears that Moscow primarily sees the project as an element of counterbalance to the US concept of a 'Broader Middle East' or 'Broader Central Asia'[35]. It has even expressed its readiness to invest in the project, on condition that Russia's Inter RAO is granted the role of project operator.

Russia's relations with China have developed in a different way in this region. The launches of the oil pipeline running from Kazakhstan in 2006, and of the gas pipeline from Turkmenistan in 2009, marked the end of Russia's monopoly on hydrocarbons' transit from this region (a short gas pipeline running from Turkmenistan to Iran had been built before; but Russia has maintained its monopoly on transit in the Western direction). In 2010, the value of Central Asia's trade with China exceeded the value of its trade with Russia. The Chinese expansion has been raising serious concern in Moscow, albeit alleviated by the fact that Beijing has been trying not to '*hurt* Russia's imperial feelings', and has not articulated this as expressly as its reservations about Western activity. Many Russian experts claim that there can be no rivalry between Moscow and Beijing in this region[36]. Both countries are members of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO)[37]; this structure, active in the areas of security and economic co-operation, serves as an informal platform for dialogue, and is used to consult the stances taken by Russia and China, as well as to neutralise any tension emerging between them. It is also intended to counterbalance the US military presence in Central Asia.

[35] Malik Muhammad Ashraf, 'TAPI and CASA-1000', *The Nation*, 23 March 2013, http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/columns/23-Mar-2013/tapi-and-casa-1000

[36] Marcin Kaczmarski, 'The bear watches the dragon. The Russian debate on China', *Policy Briefs*, OSW, no. 31, February 2013, page 20.

[37] The other SCO members are Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

**The Kremlin has been pinning great hopes for strengthening its position in Central Asia on multilateral diplomacy. The Eurasian Economic Union/the Eurasian Union (the EEU/EAU), which like the SCO will combine the economic and military components, is expected to be the crowning achievement of the post-Soviet area integration project promoted by Vladimir Putin, and the participation of Central Asian countries is a vital element of this project.** It is planned that the Union will begin to operate in all material aspects in 2015–2016; its fundamental assumption is not only a counterpoise to the activity of the West, but also, as it seems, that of the SCO, which is falling more and more under Chinese influence[38].

In its bilateral relations with Central Asian countries, Moscow is as a rule clearly oriented towards the regimes operating there, and does not keep any official contacts with the opposition, or any other alternative elites such as social movements or non-governmental organisations[39]. It appears that Russia is satisfied with the authoritarian government model that predominates there, since it views this as more stable than the democratic model. As seen from this perspective, its support for local leaders (Moscow does not raise human rights issues, does not criticise violations of international conventions, recognises the results of rigged elections, etc.[40]) may be understood as investments that are expected to yield profits in the form of various concessions and compromises. Following the violent suppression of the Andijan riots in May 2005, when Tashkent's relations with the West were *de facto* frozen, Moscow acted as Uzbekistan's advocate at the international arena. The effects of this rapprochement included signing a treaty of alliance on 14 November 2005, which allowed Russia to establish its military base in Uzbekistan (although it has not succeeded in doing so, since the rapprochement turned out to be temporary).

[38] The recently established regional economic structures where Moscow is the dominant actor are the Eurasian Economic Community, the Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia, and the Common Economic Space. The CSTO is in charge of the military component. The ideological foundation of these structures is 'Neo-Eurasianism', which draws on the Eurasianism concepts born in the 1920s, according to which Russia is not part of the West, but forms a separate civilisation. Supporters of Neo-Eurasianism (including Aleksandr Dugin) appeal for integration with Central Asian countries, claiming that Russia needs to maintain primacy in Eurasia for civilisational and cultural reasons. For more on the international and multilateral aspects of Russian policy in Central Asia, see Chapter III.

[39] Unofficial contacts are kept, and some political emigrants from this region live in Russia.

[40] Beijing understands the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries in a similar way.

In this context, Russia's relations with Kyrgyzstan, where the government has been overthrown twice since 2005, are an exception. In the period which preceded the coup of 2010, the Kyrgyz opposition activists who would later take power visited Moscow on a regular basis. Moscow also maintained official contacts with all the major political forces in Kyrgyzstan after the coup. This seems to prove the thesis that Russia does not rule out the possibility of further government changes there.

When drawing the map of Russian influence in Central Asia, one should start precisely with Kyrgyzstan, where this influence is beyond doubt strongest. Russia also has a strong influence in Tajikistan, while its impact on Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan is clearly weaker. Kazakhstan, whose co-operation with Russia is based on completely different principles than the rest of the region, is incomparable to the other Central Asian countries in this context, and should be discussed separately.

## 3.1. Kyrgyzstan

### 3.1.1. Russia's assets

*The military presence*

Russia has four military facilities in Kyrgyzstan, the most important of which is the Kant air base (located 20 km east of Bishkek)[41], which it leases along with the adjacent railway siding. The other facilities are a naval communications centre in Chaldovar (next to Spartak village close to the city of Kara-Balta)[42], a naval testing site on Lake Issyk-Kul, where torpedoes are tested (the head

[41] Formally, Kant Air Base no. 999 of the Russian Air Force's 5th Air Army. The base was opened on 22 September 2003, but the first soldiers had already been deployed there in 2002. This was the first military base Russia opened outside its territory following the collapse of the USSR, and was Moscow's response to the US opening the Manas Air Base (see 3.1.2. An outline of Russian-Kyrgyz relations). The base lease agreement was entered for a 15-year term (and may be automatically extended for five more years). However, a new agreement was signed on 29 May 2009, setting a 49-year lease term (with an option to be extended by 25 years). It is estimated that around 1500 soldiers are in service at Kant Air Base, which formally is a part of the CSTO Rapid Reaction Force.

[42] The 338th communication centre of the Russian Navy.

office is located in Koysary, near the city of Karakol)[43] and a radio seismic laboratory in Mailuu-Sai (with a branch in Ichke-Suu)[44].

Russia and Kyrgyzstan signed an agreement during President Vladimir Putin's visit to Bishkek on 20 September 2012. Pursuant to this agreement, all four of these facilities will be combined into one base in 2017. The agreed term for the operation of this united base is 15 years (i.e. until 2032), and can be extended for subsequent five-year periods. In early 2013, there was speculation in the Russian press that once this document was ratified by the two parties[45], Russia could again propose the opening of another base in Kyrgyzstan, most likely in the city of Osh in the south of the country[46], but no such proposal has yet been made.

Furthermore, tens of officers from Russian border troops are acting as advisers in Kyrgyzstan (they are probably staying in Osh). Their status is unclear[47]. Representatives of the Russian Federal Drug Control Service (FSKN) are also stationed in Osh.

*The economic presence*

Russian economic assets were until recently much more modest than its military ones, although Kyrgyzstan had received a great deal of interest from leading Russian companies operating in the hydro energy, gas & oil, mining, primary and arms sectors (such as RAO UES, RusGidro, Atomredmetzoloto and Gazprom; the latter was engaged in initial exploration of the Kugart and

[43] The 954th anti-submarine weapon testing base. Ozero, a Russian-Kyrgyz joint venture in charge of torpedo testing, is part of this base (which reports to the Russian Navy).

[44] The 1st automated seismic station and the 17th radio-seismic laboratory of the Seismic Service of the Russian Ministry of Defence.

[45] Kyrgyzstan ratified this agreement on 19 December 2012, and Russia on 27 April 2013.

[46] Айданбек Акмат уулу, 'Российская военная база в Оше?', *Азаттык*, 1 March 2013 (http://rus.azattyk.org/content/kyrgyzstan_russia_military_base/24916457.html). No additional base was mentioned in the document of 20 September 2012, but this topic had been discussed at least since 2009 – the then presidents, Dmitri Medvedev and Kurmanbek Bakiyev, even signed a preliminary agreement to this effect on 1 August 2009, which was opposed by Uzbekistan (http://www.altair.com.pl/news/view?news_id=3190).

[47] Кубанычбек Жолдошев, 'Какой статус у пограничников РФ в Кыргызстане?', *Азаттык*, 17 April 2012 (http://rus.azattyk.org/content/kyrgyzstan_russia/24550893.html). Around 5000 Russian border guards were stationed in Kyrgyzstan until 1999 (under an agreement signed in 1992), keeping an eye on the border with China, Bishkek airport and periodically also the Kyrgyz-Tajik border (during the civil war in Tajikistan). It is a proven fact that a group of 40 Russian border guards/advisers based in Kyrgyzstan were sent from the north to the south of the country in spring 2010.

Vostochny Mailuu-Suu IV sites). 26 May 2013 marked a breakthrough: the Kyrgyz government decided to sell Gazprom all its assets in the national gas company, Kyrgyzgaz (for a symbolic price of one dollar in exchange for writing off the company's debts and investments, around US$650 million within a five-year timeframe), which needs to be seen as a Russian success and a reinforcement of Russia's position in both Kyrgyzstan and the entire region[48]. Other investments planned by Russia have not yet been launched for political reasons (see 3.1.2. An outline of Russian-Kyrgyz relations).

In 2005, MTS company spent US$150 million to buy a 51% stake in Tarino Ltd., the owner of the Kyrgyz mobile communication network, Bitel. However, these assets were then taken over by Kyrgyz entities[49].

In 2006, Gazpromneft bought a filling station chain in Bishkek[50]. Gazpromneft-Aero Kyrgyzstan, a Russian-Kyrgyz joint venture, which took over air fuel supplies from the US-leased Manas Transit Centre, was launched in September 2011. The company supplied 147,000 tonnes of fuel worth US$169 million in the first year of its operation[51].

In 2009, Tremadon Ventures Ltd., a Russian firm registered in the Virgin Islands, paid US$16.5 million for a 9.99% share in Highland Gold, a company which owns gold mines in Russia and Kyrgyzstan. Highland Gold was granted the gold mining licences for the Unkurtash and Karatube projects in 2012[52].

[48] 'Kyrgyz Gvt. Approves Agreement on Kyrgyzgas Sale to Gazprom', RIA Novosti, 26 May 2013, http://en.ria.ru/world/20130526/181357205.html
The Russian-Kyrgyz inter-governmental agreement to this effect was signed on 26 July 2013 in Moscow ('«Кыргызгаз» продан «Газпрому» за один доллар', *Fergananews.com*, 29 July 2013, http://www.fergananews.com/news/21020).

[49] Unless otherwise indicated, the information on Russian investments in Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian countries originates in Marek Menkiszak, Ewa Paszyc, Iwona Wiśniewska, 'Aktywność gospodarcza Rosji za granicą w latach 2004–2010' (*OSW Report*). All parts of the report are available in Polish at: http://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/raport-osw/2011-08-17/aktywnosc-gospodarcza-rosji-za-granica-w-latach-2004-2010
For information on the further development of the MTS transaction see Игорь Цуканов, *'МТС ищет киргизские активы на Сейшелах', Ведомости*, 14 March 2013.

[50] The chain consists of 116 stations (http://www.gpnbonus.ru/our_azs/).

[51] '"Газпромнефть Аэро Кыргызстан" поставила топлива на ЦТП "Манас" за год на $169 миллионов', *Aviation Explorer*, 2 October 2012, http://www.aex.ru/news/2012/10/2/98754/
The establishment of this company can be interpreted as meeting Moscow's expectations halfway, since it had wanted to influence the operation of Manas (see Marek Menkiszak, 'Russia's Afghan Problem. The Russian Federation and the Afghanistan problem since 2001', *OSW Studies* no. 38, September 2011, page 104).

[52] http://www.highlandgold.com/investor/releases/2012-07-24.aspx

*Soft power*

The constitution (Article 10(2)) guarantees Russian "official language" status in Kyrgyzstan. However, pursuant to the amendments to the National Language Act of 13 March 2013, all official documents must be issued in the Kyrgyz language only (although the constitutional provision is still in force)[53]. According to estimates made in early 2013, 52.5% residents of Kyrgyzstan speak Russian (76.4% speak Kyrgyz and 1.2% speak English)[54]. Kyrgyz is the language of instruction in 64.2% schools in Kyrgyzstan, Russian in 9.14% schools, and Uzbek in 5.5%, while 21% of the schools use mixed languages of instruction. Most students at higher education facilities are still taught in Russian[55].

An agency of *Rossotrudnichestvo*[56] actively operates in Kyrgyzstan, supporting Russian national minority organisations[57] and co-operating with educational (including the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University[58]) and cultural institutions (the Chinghiz Aitmatov State National Russian Drama Theatre) and the media: local Russian-language (the *Vecherniy Bishkek* newspaper, and the News-Asia Internet portal) as well as Russian media, which have their offices in Kyrgyzstan

53 'Киргизия запретила русский язык в делопроизводстве', *Mail.ru*, 13 March 2012, http://news.mail.ru/politics/12319087/
'В Киргизии государственные документы теперь будут только на киргизском языке', *Mail.ru*, 14 March 2013, http://news.mail.ru/politics/12343155/

54 Kaliya Duishebayeva, 'About 52.6 percent of Kyrgyzstan's population speaks Russian', *24.kg*, 6 March 2013, http://eng.24.kg/community/2013/03/06/26221.html
According to estimates made in 2004, 30% of residents of Kyrgyzstan spoke Russian in everyday life, while less than 8% of them were ethnic Russians; Александр Арефьев, 'Сколько людей говорят и будут говорить по-русски?', *Демоскоп Weekly*, 251/252 (http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2006/0251/s_map.php#1).

55 Kaliya Duishebayeva, 'About 52.6 percent...', *op. cit*. Apart from local higher education facilities, six branches of Russian universities and two Kyrgyz-Russian universities operate there (http://www.russia.edu.ru/obruch/sng/1115/).

56 http://kgz.rs.gov.ru/
This website is frequently updated, and contains a lot of practical information. As in other countries, the Russian Science and Culture Centre operates in Kyrgyzstan under the aegis of *Rossotrudnichestvo*, which hosts various cultural and social events, and has a library of its own.

57 More than 40 such organisations are registered in Kyrgyzstan. 32 of them are members of the Russian Coordination Council in Kyrgyzstan (Координационный совет российских соотечественников в Кыргызстане, http://korsovet.kg/, situation as of 1 June 2012). In turn, the members of the Association of Compatriots' Guilds (Ассоциация Гильдий Соотечественников, http://www.ags.kg/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1) include around 150 firms, whose owners or investors are Russians. These firms are divided into 'guilds', depending on the sector they operate in.

58 http://krsu.edu.kg/index.php?lang=en The number of students is approximately 11,000.

(*Rossiyskaya Gazeta*). No information on the nature of this co-operation is available. However, it can be assumed that in addition to propagating the agency's activity, grants and study visits for journalists, it may also cover the publication of articles that contribute to building a positive image of Russia[59].

Three so-called 'Russian centres' operate in Kyrgyzstan under the aegis of the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation[60]: in Bishkek (at the Bishkek University of Humanities)[61], Kant (at the oblast library)[62] and Osh (at the Osh branch of the Russian State Social University)[63], and in addition to these: the training and consultation centre at Kyzyl-Kiya[64], the centre of Slavonic studies at the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University[65], the Slavonic Culture Centre in Bishkek[66], and the Association of Russian Language and Literature Teachers in Kyrgyzstan[67]. The foundation also declares on its websites that it co-operates with a number of Kyrgyz media[68]. As with *Rossotrudnichestvo*, it is difficult to give any details of this co-operation.

Russian is the predominant language in Kyrgyzstan's information space. It is used by the following media:

59 The newspapers *Vecherniy Bishkek* and *Dla Vas*, the Internet portal News-Asia and the local office of the *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* daily newspaper are specified on the agency's websites in the 'Partners' section (in addition to educational and cultural institutions and official Russian agencies (the embassy, the agency of the Federal Migration Service, and the Russian trade representative office): http://kgz.rs.gov.ru/node/14

60 The *Russkiy Mir* Foundation runs Russian centres in various countries across the globe in co-operation with local education institutions (most often universities). Their form (equipment, activity directions) is the same everywhere, but the specific programmes and projects they implement, including the various kinds of Russian courses, are adjusted to local conditions.

61 http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/catalogue/company_view.html?id=2861

62 http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/catalogue/company_view.html?id=2862

63 http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/catalogue/company_view.html?id=2863

64 http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/catalogue/company_view.html?id=5122&catalog=&country=83&region=&city=

65 http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/catalogue/company_view.html?id=14828&catalog=&country=83&region=&city=

66 http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/catalogue/company_view.html?id=14047&catalog=&country=83&region=&city=

67 http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/catalogue/company_view.html?id=13765&catalog=&country=83&region=&city=

68 These are the radio stations: Almaz, Avto-Radio and Maks, the Internet portals: *Karablar.org*, *StanRadar.com* and *Forum.kg*, and the State Television and Radio Company of Kyrgyzstan: http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/catalogue/catalog.html?country=83&pager.offset=0&pageIndex=1&pageSize=10

1. Russians from Russia,

2. local Russians (local editions of the press issued in Russia) and

3. Kyrgyz using the Russian language.

The first group principally includes Russian TV, which is accessible across the country (broadcast both via terrestrial transmitters and in cable networks)[69], as well as Russian news Internet portals.

The second group includes local branches of the Russian press. These are: *Komsomolskaya Pravda Kyrgyzstan* (with a circulation of 15,000 copies), *Moskovsky Komsomolets Aziya* (7000), *Argumenty i Fakty v Kyrgyzstane* (5000) and *Rossiyskaya Gazeta v Kyrgyzstane* (3500)[70]. A significant section of the Kyrgyz media also use the Russian language. The share of programmes which local TV and radio stations can broadcast in Russian is restricted by law (over fifty percent must be broadcast in the Kyrgyz language[71]). Newspapers published in Russian and Kyrgyz have similar shares in the press market, although the former have clearly higher circulation levels. These include: *Vecherniy Bishkek*, which is published three times a week (daily issue at 14,500 copies, and Friday issue at 40,000 copies), *Delo N* (40,000) and *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* (14,000 with supplements). The newspapers published in the Kyrgyz language include: *Daat* (50,000), *Kyrgyz Tuusu* (20,000), *Agym* (17,000) and *Aalam* (13,000). The *Ay-Danek* newspaper is published in both Russian and Kyrgyz (20,000). The key Kyrgyz news Internet portals (*24kg.org*, *AKIpress.org*, *Azattyk.org*, *Kabar.kg*, *Knews.kg*, *KyrgyzNews.com*, *Vesti.kg*) are published in Russian, although most of them also have Kyrgyz versions (and sporadically also English, Turkish or Uzbek versions).

### 3.1.2. An outline of Russian-Kyrgyz relations

Kyrgyzstan was one of the Central Asian countries which backed the coalition operation in Afghanistan following the terrorist attacks in the USA on 11 September 2001, and to have made their territory available for the purposes of the

[69] Аркадий Дубнов, 'Как живут русские в Киргизии', *StanRadar.com*, 15 June 2013, http://stanradar.com/news/full/3037-kak-zhivut-russkie-v-kirgizii.html

[70] The newspaper circulation volumes in Kyrgyzstan here and further in this text have been taken from Media Center, http://monitoring.kg/?pid=69

[71] Аркадий Дубнов, 'Как живут...', *op. cit.*

operation (although Bishkek had attempted to conduct an independent policy even before, one proof of which is its accession to the WTO in 1998). The US air base started operating at Manas airport in December 2001. Moscow, which itself backed the coalition, did not oppose this. However, at the same time, it commenced consultations aimed at restricting the Western military presence and establishing closer co-operation with Central Asian countries in the area of security[72]. It seems that Moscow was not so concerned about the existence of the base, but rather the fact that it had had no influence on the conditions of its stationing, and did not take part in the decision-making process[73]. Russia and China ensured that an appeal for setting the schedule for the international forces' withdrawal from Afghanistan was included in the joint declaration at the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation's summit in Astana on 5 July 2005[74].

Moscow hoped that following the 'Tulip Revolution' in Kyrgyzstan of March 2005, the administration of the new president Kurmanbek Bakiyev, who defined Russia as "Bishkek's strategic and most important ally," would take Russian interests into account in their policy. Bakiyev hinted that he saw no point in further operation of the air base in Manas, but he took no action to terminate the lease[75].

On 3 February 2009 Bakiyev announced that his government had decided to close the base (and the parliament passed the relevant resolution on 19 February). Beyond any doubt, this decision had been forced by Moscow – it was

[72] Marek Menkiszak, 'Russia's Afghan problem…', *op. cit.*, page 102. Kyrgyzstan and Russia were allies under the Collective Security Treaty signed on 15 May 1992 (the CST; Uzbekistan, where a US base was also established, did not sign the protocol to extend the term of the document in 1999); a foreign military presence was contrary to the spirit of the Tashkent Treaty, yet Moscow assumed that "US bases were better than terrorist bases." Nevertheless, it was decided at a session on 14 May 2002 in Moscow that the CST be transformed into an international organisation (the CSTO), which was supposed to tighten the bonds between Russia and the other signatories, including Central Asian states (at that time Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan; Uzbekistan rejoined the organisation in 2006-2012).

[73] Dmitri Trenin writes, "The Russian leaders would most likely agree to extending the lease [of the Manas base], however provided that Moscow signed an agreement with Washington to this effect, where Bishkek would only act as a subcontractor." (Дмитрий Тренин, 'Post-Imperium…', *op. cit.*, page 178).

[74] For more information on this declaration, see chapter III.

[75] Most likely, Bishkek did not want to lose the lease rent (over US$17 million annually) as well as the lucrative supply contracts, worth many times more, especially those concerning fuel supplies (these were implemented by firms linked to the Bakiyev clan). Wojciech Górecki, 'Russia's position on the events in Kyrgyzstan (April–June 2010), *OSW Commentary*, no. 38, 27 July, http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2010-07-27/russias-position-events-kyrgyzstan-april-june-2010

announced almost simultaneously that Russia would offer assistance to Kyrgyzstan worth US$2.15 billion, including US$150 million as a non-refundable grant, and US$300 million as a loan on preferential conditions (both of these sums, a total of US$450 million, have been made available to Kyrgyzstan). The remaining US$1.7 billion was to be granted as a loan for the construction of the Kambar-Ata 1 hydropower plant[76]. This assistance was commonly seen as Bishkek's 'charge' for closing the Manas air base.

Contrary to his promises, however, on 7 July 2009 Bakiyev signed an agreement which allowed the USA to continue using the Manas site. The following trick was used: the base was renamed as a 'Transit Centre.' The lease rent was also raised, up to over US$60 million annually[77]. Moscow expressed its "disappointment" in connection with the renewal of the lease of Manas, which should be understood as strong dissatisfaction. In response, it took action to deploy its second military base in Kyrgyzstan. At first Bishkek played for time during the talks, suggesting that the base could be located in Batken district (south-western Kyrgyzstan, close to the border with Tajikistan)[78], to announce later that a Kyrgyz military training centre would be located in the same district (in co-operation with the USA, which declared it would allocate US$5.5 million for this project)[79].

[76] *Ibid*. A deal setting up the Russian-Kyrgyz company, Inter RAO/Electric Power Plants of Kyrgyzstan (each party holding a 50% stake), was struck in April 2009. The company was put in charge of building power plants. RAO UES of Russia had already signed a memorandum envisaging the construction of two hydropower plants on the Naryn river: Kambar--Ata 1 and Kambar-Ata 2 with the government in Bishkek in August 2004 (it was assumed that the power plants could supply electricity to Kazakhstan, Russia and China). It is unclear whether Moscow really wanted to become engaged in these projects, or whether it was an attempt to put pressure on Uzbekistan (which fears that the implementation of the hydro energy projects in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan could restrict its access to water).

[77] See Konrad Zasztowt, 'Rywalizacja Rosji i NATO w Azji Środkowej', *Bezpieczeństwo Narodowe*, volume 11/2009, pages. 132–134. Washington also undertook to offer US$117 million as non-returnable assistance to the Kyrgyz government, part of which would be spent on developing the airport's infrastructure and supporting anti-drug police units (the USA allocated a total of US$33 million between the early 1990s and 2009 on equipping military facilities in Kyrgyzstan. See KABAR Press Agency, 23 October 2009).

[78] 'Kyrgyzstan: A Hollow Regime Collapses. International Crisis Group', *Asia Briefing*, no. 102, Bishkek-Brussels, 27 April 2010.

[79] KABAR Press Agency, 23 October 2009. Bishkek was deluding Moscow in a similar way in the area of economy. In February 2009, President Bakiyev undertook negotiations to ensure that the Kyrgyz debt of US$180 million would be cancelled in exchange for handing over a 48% stake in the weapon manufacturer, Dastan, to Russia. However, it later turned out that the Kyrgyz government held only a 37.665% stake, and the rest of the shares were owned by private shareholders. When the deal with Moscow was struck, the president's son, Maksim Bakiyev, started buying up these shares, as a consequence of which their pric-

Moscow has manifested its dissatisfaction with Bakiyev's policy in three ways: by increasing its economic pressure on Kyrgyzstan, by orchestrating an anti-Bakiyev campaign in the Russian media, and by enhancing contacts with the Kyrgyz opposition. The Russian-Kyrgyz three-year economic co-operation plan, signed on 27 February 2010, did not take the loan on the construction of the Kambar-Ata 1 hydropower plant into account[80]. Furthermore, on 1 April, Russia imposed the aforementioned 100% export duty on petroleum products. At the same time, the Russian media started publishing materials aimed at discrediting Bakiyev's regime (where accusations of large-scale corruption were especially frequent) and denouncing the network of his clan and business connections.

Bakiyev lost power on 7 April 2010 as a consequence of another revolution in Kyrgyzstan. There is no proof that the Russian government was directly involved in the coup. However, one could risk the statement that it was a source of inspiration (the accusations brought against the Bakiyev administration on Russian TV, which is popular in Kyrgyzstan, were certainly a factor which fuelled the protests), and was even 'lobbying' for the president's overthrow among the opposition elites. Russia was the first country in the world to recognise the *de facto* new government, but its support for Roza Otunbayeva's team was not unconditional. The Manas issue became the litmus test. Meanwhile, Otunbayeva announced that Bishkek would respect its previous arrangements with the USA. Then the Kyrgyz side started playing for time, using the political transformation of the country as an excuse and thus demonstrating its independence (when the lease term expired in July 2010, it was automatically extended for one year, since the parliament which could have terminated it was to be elected only in October, and the term of the parliament in session at that time was about to end).

The new president, Almazbek Atambayev, who took his office on 1 December 2011, returned to the Manas issue. During talks with a delegation from the US Department of State visiting Kyrgyzstan in February 2012, he announced that "no foreign military contingent should be present at Manas civilian airport by

es rose. Then Bishkek declared that it could hand over its shares and suggested that Moscow could buy the remaining shares at market price. (Wojciech Górecki, 'Russia's position on the events…', *op. cit.*).

[80] 'Kirgistan bez rosyjskich pieniędzy na hydroenergetykę', *Tydzień na Wschodzie*, OSW, 3 March 2010. Since early 2010, Bakiyev's team had been making efforts to ensure that the investment would be financed by China.

summer 2014."[81] He has reiterated this declaration on several more occasions, although no binding decisions to this effect have been taken.

Kyrgyz-Russian relations seriously deteriorated in the first half of 2012. Russia demanded to be given significant assets in the Kyrgyz economy[82], wishing, as it seems, to 'test' the new government's readiness to co-operate. In response, Bishkek pointed to the Russian debt linked to the use of the Kant Air Base (which Moscow immediately repaid). President Vladimir Putin signed a number of agreements in Bishkek on 20 September 2012, including the already mentioned agreement on the united military base (which Moscow desired especially strongly). Russia undertook once again to fund and construct the Kambar Ata 1 hydropower plant, as well as the power plant's cascade in the upper reaches of the Naryn river. It also wrote off part of the Kyrgyz debt (US$189 million out of US$489 million). The economic deals were quite general and failed to include a number of vital details, which may give rise to concern that they would not be implemented, as before.

In May 2013, the Kyrgyz government decided to terminate the USA's lease of Manas, and President Atambayev signed an act to this effect on 26 June[83]. The US military presence in Manas is expected to come to a definite end on 11 July 2014, which the Russian side is satisfied with. However, some experts have recently started stating that Bishkek may be ready to make another volte-face, and the US forces will remain at Manas as part of a new formula after this date as well[84]. Statements from President Atambayev himself seem to place these speculations on pretty firm ground[85].

[81] 'Кыргызстан: Президент А. Атамбаев и представитель госсекретаря США обсудили судьбу базы «Манас»', *Fergananews.com*, 20 February 2012, http://www.fergananews.com/news.php?id=18194

[82] Including a 75% stake in the weapon manufacturer, Dastan (it was agreed in February 2009 that the stake would be 48%) and a 75% stake in the company in charge of building the Kambar-Ata 1 power plant (instead of the 50% stake as agreed in April 2009). 'Россия не выполняет свои обязательства', *Коммерсантъ Власть*, 16 April 2012 [A conversation between Yelena Chernenko & Kabay Karabekov and the prime minister of Kyrgyzstan, Omurbek Babanov].

[83] Józef Lang, 'Kyrgyzstan has terminated the agreement with the US on the Manas air base', *EastWeek*, OSW, 10 July 2013, http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2013-07-10/kyrgyzstan-has-terminated-agreement-us-manas-air-base

[84] *Ibid*.

[85] 'Алмазбек Атамбаев: Не все американские войска будут выведены из Кыргызстана', *Kant.kg*, 21 May 2013, http://kant.kg/2013-05-21/almazbek-atambaev-ne-vse-amerikanskie-voyska-budut-vyivedenyi-iz-kyirgyizstana/

Moscow still has significant influence among politicians in Kyrgyzstan[86]. Another important factor is the generally positive attitude of that country's people towards Russia, which is an effect of both their positive sentiment with regard to the Russian culture and language, and of the Russian government's conscious policy (those wishing to be granted Russian citizenship do not have to relinquish citizenship of Kyrgyzstan, they can travel to Russia and search for work there, etc.). This generally positive evaluation is still unaffected by the fact that anti-Russian sentiments arise from time to time in Kyrgyzstan, most often as the consequence of racial aggression addressed to Kyrgyz living in Russia. It is possible that such sentiments will become aggravated over time. Moscow maintains contacts with all the major political and social forces in the country, and the fact that along with its embassy in Bishkek it also has a consulate general in Osh is helpful in this context.

**Russia – Kyrgyzstan**

Russia is Kyrgyzstan's most important political and economic partner. It accounts for 13% of Kyrgyz exports (third after Switzerland, 32.6% and Kazakhstan, 24.1%) and 33.2% of its import (first before China, 22.5% and Kazakhstan, 9.7%, data for 2012[87]). However, Russian promises to invest, especially in hydro energy, still remain unfulfilled. Now that Bishkek has allowed Gazprom to take over Kyrgyzgaz, the only serious card it can play in talks with Moscow is the possible continuation of the US military presence (after the assumed US withdrawal from Manas) and the fact that it still remains outside the Customs Union structures: for example, in exchange for joining the CU, Kyrgyzstan could insist on the construction of the Kambar-Ata 1 hydropower plant[88]. It has to be admitted that the degree of Kyrgyzstan's dependence on Russia is high.

[86] None of the major political forces in Kyrgyzstan manifests anti-Russian sentiments, and there are no serious anti-Russian politicians in this country. Even the overthrown President Bakiyev, whose actions could be seen by the Kremlin as unfriendly, cannot be classified as a 'pro-Western' politician. He was actually trying to manoeuvre between Washington and Moscow, and to capitalise on their conflicting interests (his moves were motivated not only by the interests of the state, but also by financial benefits for himself and his family).

[87] http://stat.kg/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=135&Itemid=125

[88] Representatives of Kyrgyzstan's government have declared their will to join the Customs Union on numerous occasions; for example, President Atambayev said in an interview for ITAR-TASS agency on 12 April 2013 that Bishkek had taken a "firm decision" regarding this issue (but he also emphasised that "this does not depend on us alone, but also on the CU member states – an appropriate decision must be taken by the three states"). Its formal accession is expected in 2014. Михаил Гусман, 'Киргизия приняла твердое решение

## 3.2. Tajikistan

### 3.2.1. Russia's assets

*The military presence*

Moscow has its 201st ground troop base in Tajikistan (the largest one outside Russia), which consists of a number of facilities grouped in three garrisons: Dushanbe, Kulab (Kulob) and Qurghonteppa (Kurgan-Tyube)[89]. Between 6800 and 7500 soldiers serve there. When President Putin visited Dushanbe on 5 October 2012, an agreement extending the stationing of the base for 30 years was signed (until 2042; the previous deals would have expired in 2014). Moscow has thus guaranteed itself a military presence in Tajikistan on very favourable terms. The document, as reported by the Russian side, does not provide for any lease rent, and partial immunity will be vested in the soldiers on duty at the base (similar to the status which the technical embassy staff have). In exchange Russia has undertaken to participate in the modernisation of the Tajik army and training local officers[90]. The agreement was ratified by Tajikistan as late as the beginning of October 2013[91], which was linked to Dushanbe's strategic manoeuvres (see section 3.2.2. An outline of Russian--Tajik relations).

вступить в Таможенный союз – президент Атамбаев', ITAR-TASS, 12 April 2013, http://www.itar-tass.com/c1/704922.html

89 This base was formally opened on 17 October 2004. However, the troops which form it had already been stationed in Tajikistan since 1989 (they had found themselves there as part of the 201st Motor Rifle Division following their withdrawal from Afghanistan, where they had been part of the Soviet contingent). When the civil war broke out in Tajikistan in 1992, the Russian government decided to make the 201st division part of the Russian army. It performed the functions of peacekeeping (under the aegis of the CIS) and stabilisation, and in fact backed the government side (a force of around 15,000 soldiers). When the war ended in 1997, the division remained in Tajikistan. It was transformed into the base for the Ground Troops of the Russian Federation in 1999 (although the agreement concerning this has not come into force, for formal reasons). The deal of 2004 specified the real estate which belonged to the base and set the limits of the plots of land occupied by it.

90 Wojciech Górecki, 'Russia stronger in Tajikistan', *EastWeek*, OSW, 10 October 2012, http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2012-10-10/russia-stronger-tajikistan

91 'Таджикистан ратифицировал соглашение о статусе и условиях пребывания российской военной базы Узбекистана', *Fergananews.com*, 1 October 2013, http://www.fergananews.com/news.php?id=21271. Russia ratified the agreement on 27 April 2013. President Emomalii Rahmon promised during his meeting with Vladimir Putin on 1 August 2013 that the Tajik parliament would do the same in autumn 2013.

In 2008, Russia and Tajikistan signed an agreement on the joint use of the Ayni air base near Dushanbe. However, Tajikistan is the sole party who can decide on the use of the facilities.

In 2004, Russia gained supervision for 49 years over the Okno space surveillance site[92] located near Nurak in south-western Tajikistan. The site is situated at 2200 m above sea level, and automatically registers any objects emerging in space at an altitude of up to 40,000 km.

Russian border troops were stationed in Tajikistan in 1992–2005[93]. A group of up to one hundred Russian advisers is staying there now (in Dushanbe and on the Tajik-Afghan frontier)[94].

*The economic presence*

Russia's largest investment in Tajikistan is the Sangtuda 1 Hydroelectric Power Plant, which was put into operation in July 2009 on the Vakhsh river. To complete its construction, which had already commenced in the 1980s[95], and to continue its operation, a Russian-Tajik joint venture named Sangtudinskaya GES-1, in which the Russian government and firms (principally RAO UES) acquired 75% minus one share, and the Tajikistan government 25% plus one share. The power plant accounts for around 15% of the electric energy generated in Tajikistan. As of 1 June 2011, the company's shareholding structure was as follows: the Russian state-controlled nuclear energy corporation, Rosatom, held 60.13% of its shares, Inter RAO 14.87%, and the government of Tajikistan 25% plus one share[96].

[92] The 1109th separate optic-electronic tracking station Nurek is part of the Space Defence Troops of the Russian Federation. This complex has been in operation since 2002 (the construction was launched in 1979); http://www.fas.org/spp/military/program/track/okno.pdf

[93] Russian troops have taken over the Soviet border infrastructure. The process of Tajikistan taking control of border protection commenced in 1998 and continued until 2005 (the critical sections of the border with Afghanistan were the last to be handed over). The number of Russian border guard troops in Tajikistan at times reached up to 11,500 soldiers (local Tajik soldiers predominated among the privates).

[94] This group initially consisted of over 300 advisers; their number has been reduced after they were accused of spying in 2011 by Sherali Mirza, the head of the Tajik Border Guard Service. Кубанычбек Жолдошев, 'Какой статус...', *op. cit.*

[95] This power plant is part of the so-called cascade, a complex of nine hydropower plants on the Vakhsh river designed in the 1950s (six of them are in operation, two – including the largest, the Rogun power plant – are under construction, and one is in the phase of initial preparatory work).

[96] http://www.sangtuda.com/shareholder/

Gazprom has been interested in Tajikistan for many years. A strategic co-operation deal signed by Gazprom and the government in Dushanbe in 2003 for a 25-year term granted the company a licence for geological exploration of the Sargazon and Rengan oil & gas fields, and later for the Sarikamysh and Western Shokhambary sites (the project's operator is Gazprom's subsidiary, Zarubezhneftegaz). The latter two projects turned out to be the most promising, and trial production has been launched there[97]. Gazpromneft commenced its activity in Tajikistan in 2007. At present, it has a chain of 25 filling stations in the country[98].

In 2001, MegaFon, a Russian mobile telephone operator, and Tajikistan's state-owned Tojiktelecom established TT Mobile company, in which the Russian side acquired a 75% stake, and the Tajik side a 25% stake. At present, this company is known as MegaFon-Tajikistan.

*Soft power*

As in Kyrgyzstan, an agency of the Russian Federal Migration Service operates in Tajikistan[99]. Russian has the status of "language for inter-ethnic communication" (Article 2 of the constitution). However, the new National Language Act adopted on 7 October 2009 states that Tajik is the only language allowed in any official contacts with the state administration[100]. In March 2010, the Tajik parliament adopted an act lifting the obligation to publish legal acts in Russian[101].

Russian is the language of instruction in 15 out of the 3810 general education schools[102] in Tajikistan. In addition to these, there are 95 Tajik-Russian, 61 Tajik--Uzbek-Russian and 3 Tajik-Kyrgyz-Russian schools, as well as a Russian--Uzbek, a Russian-Kyrgyz and a Russian-English school. Five (public) Russian

97 http://www.gazprom.ru/about/production/projects/deposits/tajikistan/; http://gazprom-international.com/ru/operations/country/tadzhikistan?overlay=true

98 See: http://www.gpnbonus.ru/our_azs/

99 As part of the Russian Embassy in Dushanbe. Russia also has a consulate-general in Khujand.

100 http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/news/common/news4827.html

101 http://inlang.linguanet.ru/Cis/CisRussianLanguage/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=2574&PAGEN_1=2

102 In Tajikistan, as in the other CIS countries, the general education (secondary) school is the most important link of the education system, which provides education at primary, middle and secondary school levels. Education is compulsory in Tajikistan for ten years, and full secondary education, which gives the right to enter higher education schools, is achieved upon the completion of two additional years of education (grades 11 and 12).

schools operate independently of the Tajik education system: four are located where Russian military units are stationed, and one operates as part of the Russian-Tajik Slavonic University[103]. Around 4500 students receive education (in Russian) at this university. Furthermore, a branch of the Moscow State University has been operating in Dushanbe since 2009. Russian is a compulsory subject at all Tajik higher education schools (two semesters, 106 hours of classes)[104].

*Rossotrudnichestvo* is significantly less active here than in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan. This institution's website lists only three Russian minority organisations[105]. Educational institutions predominate among the agency's partner organisations (the Russian-Tajik Slavonic University, the State Russian Drama Theatre of Tajikistan, the Tajik Association for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, etc.[106]) – the absence of media from this group is worth noting.

The *Russkiy Mir* Foundation runs four Russian centres in Tajikistan: all of them operate in Dushanbe as part of various higher education schools[107]. The foundation also co-operates with a number of Tajik cultural and social institutions, Russian minority organisations and Russian-language media (those with national coverage, as well as local and specialist media, such as *Russian*

[103] http://www.rusemb.tj/ru/index/index/pageId/305/, Data for 2010.

[104] *Ibid.*

[105] Understood in the broad meaning of the term as a diaspora of nations forming the indigenous people of the Russian Federation (one of them is an organisation of Tajik Ossetians and another of Tajik Tatars). According to the census of 2000, (ethnic) Russians accounted for approximately 1.1% of Tajikistan's population (68,200 http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2005/0191/analit05.php); in December 2012, the Russian Embassy in Dushanbe estimated that their number was "over 40,000." (http://www.rusemb.tj/ru/index/index/pageId/276/). The Russian Coordination Council of Tajikistan (Совет российских соотечественников Таджикистана), which has been operating since 2004, lists thirteen minority organisations on its websites, including ten from Dushanbe (http://russ.tj/category/obshchestvennye-organizatsii/gdushanbe). At least several other organisations (especially those which are not based in Dushanbe) are missing from this list.

[106] http://tjk.rs.gov.ru/node/14
http://rs.gov.ru/node/1472

[107] http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/catalogue/company_view.html?id=2859&catalog=&country=82&region=&city=, http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/catalogue/company_view.html?id=2160&catalog=&country=82&region=&city=, http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/catalogue/company_view.html?id=2860&catalog=&country=82&region=&city=, http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/catalogue/company_view.html?id=7204&catalog=&country=82&region=&city=

*Language and Literature at Schools of Tajikistan;* some of them are co-financed by the foundation)[108].

The Russian language plays an important, albeit not dominant, role in Tajikistan's information space. Russian TV programmes are not rebroadcast there, unlike in Kyrgyzstan, but they can be watched via cable networks and satellite dishes, which are in common use, especially in the provinces[109]. From time to time the government blocks access to Russian news portals (usually this coincides with a worsening of relations between Dushanbe and Moscow)[110]. As a rule TV stations in Tajikistan broadcast programmes in the Tajik language (separate news blocks are also available in Russian). Russian can be heard a little more often on the radio (the law provides that content in the Tajik language, including music, must fill at least half of the airtime in the electronic media. Some radio stations, like Vatan and especially Oriono, use the following trick: they broadcast local music, while their news and publicist programmes are almost exclusively in Russian)[111].

The Russian-language weeklies *Digest Press* and *Vecherniy Dushanbe*, as well as *Aziya-Plus*, which is published twice a week (this corporation also owns a radio station with the same name, and a press agency which uses the website *News.tj*), are popular among Dushanbe's intelligentsia. These titles have a small reach outside the capital; for example, *Digest Press,* which is a kind of Tajik press anthology, has a circulation of around 10,000 copies (for comparison, *Dzumhuriya*, the official organ of Tajikistan's president and government, which is published in the Tajik language, has a circulation of 24,000 copies).

Tajik Internet news portals usually have several language versions, and a Russian language version is always present. The most popular portals are *Avesta.tj* (Russian and English versions[112]), the aforementioned *News.tj* (English, Russia and Tajik), *Ozodi.org* (Tajik and Russian), *Pressa.tj* (Russian and Tajik), and last but not least *Khowar.tj* (the website of the national press agency, published in Tajik, Russian, English and Arabic).

[108] http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/catalogue/catalog.html?pageSize=40&catalog=&country=82&region=&city=&company=

[109] http://www.echo.msk.ru/programs/linguafranca/1044568-echo/

[110] Аркадий Дубнов, 'Русские в Таджикистане – исчезающая нация', *Pressa.tj*, 29 March 2013, http://pda.pressa.tj/news/russkie-v-tadzhikistane-ischezayushchaya-naciya

[111] *Ibid*.

[112] The language versions are specified in the order of their appearance on a given portal's website.

### 3.2.2. An outline of Russian-Tajik relations

Russia played a major role in ending the civil war in Tajikistan. The government and the United Tajik Opposition signed the final peace agreement in Moscow on 27 June 1997, during the ninth round of the talks between the two parties to the conflict, with the aid of the UN (an initial agreement had also been concluded in Moscow six months previously). The country was very heavily dependent on Russia throughout the entire 1990s, one practical manifestation of which was the currency in use, which was either Russian or closely tied to the Russian currency[113].

After 11 September 2001, Tajikistan, like its neighbours, supported the intervention in Afghanistan, seeing the Western presence in the region as an opportunity to gain a broader field for manoeuvre and diversify its foreign policy. Dushanbe allowed NATO aircraft to use airports and airspace on its territory, and in return benefited from US financial assistance. The withdrawal of Russian border guards from Tajikistan and the collaboration with India covering the renovation of Tajikistan's Ayni air base (also known as Gissar), located on the outskirts of Dushanbe, were signs of the Tajik government's emancipation from Moscow's influence[114].

Russia made repeated attempts to regain its influence during the next decade (and is still doing so). Its main aims were as follows: the regulation of the status of its military presence (negotiating a long term for the stationing of its base), the return of its border guards, the lease of the Ayni air base, and preventing the establishment of foreign military bases in Tajikistan. To achieve these goals, Moscow has been making various kinds of friendly gestures as well as putting pressure on the government (the carrot-and-stick policy), using the same instruments in both cases. Such major instruments include particularly the hydro energy sector (support – or the lack of support – for the construction of hydropower plants), and the Tajik expatriate workers in Russia (making life easier or more difficult for immigrants, including threats of mass deportations;

[113] Tajikistan was the last former Soviet republic to adopt its own currency. This happened only at the end of 2000, when the Tajik somoni was introduced into circulation (it became the sole means of payment on 1 April 2001). The currencies in use before were the Soviet rouble (until January 1994), the Russian rouble (January 1994 – May 1995), and finally the Tajik rouble tied to the Russian currency (May 1995– March 2001).

[114] In 2002–2010, India spent around US$70 million on modernising the base, for instance by extending the runway. Furthermore, Indian Air Forces also occasionally used the Farkhor air base on the Tajik-Afghan border.

for more details, see below in this section). In turn, Tajikistan has been trying to make the most of its co-operation with Russia, while avoiding an increase in dependence and retaining some room for manoeuvre (owing to its co-operation with other global actors).

Moscow's strategy can be tracked using the hydro energy sector as an example. Russia and Tajikistan reached a final agreement on the construction of the Sangtuda 1 power plant in October 2004. This was – to use the comparison popular among commentators – at the same time a 'carrot' for Dushanbe and a 'stick' for Tashkent (Uzbekistan, which has opposed the construction of large hydropower plants in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, was at that time actively engaged in co-operation with the USA, which was using the Karshi-Khanabad air base (see section 3.3.2. An outline of Russian-Uzbek relations). Moscow was implementing this project, while at the same time withholding its participation in another one, the completion of the construction of the Rogun power plant, which is planned to be the largest in the country[115]: at first it did not want its relations with Uzbekistan to deteriorate even further, and then it desired to establish even closer relations with this country (when the West had withdrawn from Uzbekistan after the Andijan massacre, and the opportunity arose to deploy Russian units at the Karshi-Khanabad air base).

Dushanbe made some concessions as a consequence of Moscow's moves: Tajikistan's government relinquished the Okno complex to Russia, agreed to the transformation of the 201st division into a military base, and refused the establishment of a US base in Tajikistan (which was being withdrawn from Uzbekistan). However, Dushanbe was not ready for long-term military agreements with Russia, nor for the return of Russian border guards. At the same time, it avoided any unambiguous declarations, suggesting that it was expecting Russia to become involved in the Rogun project. Tajikistan was also trying to find out whether other investors, for example from China, might be interested in the project. In August 2008, President Dmitri Medvedev declared in Dushanbe that Russia was ready to complete the construction of the Rogun power plant, but he

[115] In 2004, Tajikistan's government signed an agreement envisaging the completion of the Rogun construction with RusAl, but the agreement was discontinued in 2007 (the parties were unable to agree on the height of the dam: Наталья Гриб, Владимир Соловьев, 'Между Россией и Таджикистаном встала плотина', *Коммерсантъ*, 5 September 2007, http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/801523). Dushanbe attempted unsuccessfully to interest RAO UES in this project. At present, it is unclear whether and when the construction will be finished (Tajikistan's government has announced on numerous occasions since 2007 that it will put the power plant into operation at its own expense and effort).

cancelled this declaration in January 2009 during his visit to Tashkent (saying that Moscow would not back those hydropower plants which did not take the interests of all countries in the region into account). This provoked a fierce reaction from Dushanbe; President Emomalii Rahmon cancelled his visit to Russia. It appears that the Kremlin's stance changed as a consequence of the evolution of the situation concerning Uzbekistan: in November 2008, the EU lifted the sanctions imposed on this country; furthermore, Tashkent allowed the USA to use the Termez airport for stopovers. The fact that the Kremlin allowed its relations with Dushanbe (and at the same time with Bishkek) to deteriorate may demonstrate that it had granted higher priority to relations with Tashkent; or possibly that, given the influence it had in Tajikistan (and Kyrgyzstan) anyway, the losses incurred there would be relatively low in comparison to the potential gains in Uzbekistan. The tension was alleviated, but Tajikistan avoided any binding declarations regarding the Russian base for the next two years.

An opportunity to 'discipline' Dushanbe arose on 8 November 2011, when two pilots from Russia's Rolkan Investment Ltd. were sentenced by a court in Tajikistan to several years in prison on charges of violating flight security standards, illegal border crossing and smuggling[116]. The sentence was severely criticised by Russian senior officials: President Dmitri Medvedev announced Russia would respond "symmetrically or asymmetrically", depending on explanations from Tajikistan, and the Russian minister of foreign affairs, Sergey Lavrov, insisted that the sentence be revised. At the same time, raids on illegal Tajik immigrants commenced in Moscow. The Russian government did not rule out imposing a ban on employing Tajik workers, arguing that infectious diseases were allegedly widespread among them. Nationalist movements and organisations joined the action, which was accompanied by a witch-hunt in the media; they held pickets in front of Tajikistan's embassy, among other activities. Dushanbe yielded to the pressure (the pilots were released), but it only resumed the binding talks concerning the Russian base in summer 2012, most probably after coming to the conclusion that a Russian military presence would help it ensure stability, given that the state structures were weak and the government had problems

[116] The pilots, who had transported non-military cargo for ISAF forces in Afghanistan under a contract with the US firm Supreme Food, were arrested in March 2011 following an emergency landing in Qurghonteppa. The matter was very unclear; some clues suggested that the entities involved could have participated in drug trafficking and illegal arms trading. Katarzyna Jarzyńska, Wojciech Górecki, 'Crisis in Russian-Tajik relations. The international and internal dimensions for Russia', *EastWeek*, OSW, 16 November 2011, http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2011-11-16/crisis-russian-tajik-relations-international-and-internal-dimensions

controlling its own territory (as previously manifested by the aforementioned riots in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province)[117].

The agreement of 5 October 2012, under which the presence of the 201st base was extended for 30 years, met one of Russia's key demands. However, Moscow has continued its efforts to ensure its other demands are met: access to Ayni airport and consent to the return of Russian border guards (which is vital for Moscow in the context of the planned wind-up of the ISAF mission). Dushanbe has declared that it can talk about Ayni after Russia has met its obligations under other agreements[118]: in addition to the deal on the military base, a number of other memoranda were signed on 5 October 2012, the most important of which provided for facilitations to Tajik expatriate workers (others concerned the partial lifting of the duties on petroleum products exported from Russia, and energy co-operation: Russia promised to participate in the construction of several additional small- and medium-sized hydropower plants)[119]. For the same reason, Dushanbe postponed the ratification of the agreement concerning the military base until autumn 2013 (just one month before the presidential election[120]). Simultaneously, according to media leaks, Tajikistan is continuing negotiations on Ayni with the USA, as Washington is potentially interested in using the airport when it withdraws its forces from Afghanistan[121].

[117] There was media speculation at the time as to whether the riots could have been inspired by Russia. This was provoked by a statement from General Vladimir Chirkin, commander of the Russian Ground Forces, who said a month before the riots that local armed conflicts were possible in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20120626/685459967.html#ixzz21d6Q7IRt). Even if such speculation was groundless (for example, Moscow might have had intelligence data suggesting that clashes could be expected), Russia capitalised on this situation, threatening that it would withdraw completely if the negotiations failed; this made the government of Tajikistan more flexible, as it feared possible chaos in the country (at some point, Moscow even withheld the financing of its own base). For more information on the riots, see Marek Matusiak, 'Tajikistan: in Badakhshan, the government fights with former field commanders', *EastWeek*, OSW, 25 July 2012, http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2012-07-25/tajikistan-badakhshan-government-fights-former-field-commanders

[118] 'Таджикистан отдаст РФ военный аэродром „Айни" после того, как Москва выполнит обещания', *Rosbalt.ru*, 18 January 2013, http://www.rosbalt.ru/exussr/2013/01/18/1083101.html

[119] The media branded these memoranda as Russia's 'payment' for Tajikistan's consent to the long-term stationing of the 201st base.

[120] Russia and Tajikistan signed a protocol a few days ahead of the election, on 29 October 2013, under which citizens of Tajikistan were allowed to obtain a work permit in Russia for three years, and not one year as before. 'Гражданам Таджикистана увеличили срок работы в России до трех лет', *Fergananews.com,* 29 October 2013, http://www.fergananews.com/news.php?id=21423

[121] http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1363580760

Tajik expatriate workers in Russia are a separate issue. Figuratively speaking, this is the most important sector of the Tajik economy. According to the World Bank's calculations, expatriate workers in 2012 remitted a total of almost US$3.35 billion to their homeland, which accounted for 47% of Tajikistan's GDP, and was the highest ratio on the global scale. (Liberia, where money remittances reached 31% of GDP, was ranked second, Kyrgyzstan (29%) third, Lesotho (27%) fourth and Moldova (23%) fifth[122].) During the first two months of 2013, the value of money remittances reached US$360 million, which was 9% more than at the same time in 2012. It is estimated that 90% of emigrants from Tajikistan (a total of at least 1.1 million) work in Russia. In January and February 2013, over 150,000 people left Tajikistan (24% more than a year before), and more than 100,000 came back[123].

**Russia – Tajikistan**

Russia accounts for 25.4% of imports into Tajikistan (first ahead of Kazakhstan, 16%, and China, 12.9%) and 7.9% of its exports (Tajikistan sends more goods only to Turkey, 36.3%, and Afghanistan, 14.1%: data for 2012)[124]. Since Tajikistan does not border on Russia or Kazakhstan directly, (the latter being a member of the Customs Union), Moscow's pressure on Tajikistan to join the organisation is not as strong as in the case of Kyrgyzstan. However, of all the Central Asian countries Tajikistan could be most affected by any possible destabilisation in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of the US main forces (it has the longest border with Afghanistan). This may make Dushanbe inclined to enhance its co-operation with Moscow in the area of security after 2014.

The border with Afghanistan, which is 1200 km long and a source of numerous threats, could in this case serve as an advantage for Tajikistan, since it will be the country most accessible to a great part of the withdrawing troops. A railway connecting Tajikistan with Turkmenistan is planned to be built in the future. This would provide Tajikistan with an exit to the external world (at present, all major roads and both rail lines run from Tajikistan via Uzbekistan, which allows Tashkent to block the movement of people and goods to and from this country).

122 The publication of 20 November 2012. http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1288990760745/MigrationDevelopmentBrief19.pdf
According to World Bank estimates, the value of the money remittances reached US$4 billion in 2013 (48% of Tajikistan's GDP): http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/10/02/Migrants-from-developing-countries-to-send-home-414-billion-in-earnings-in-2013

123 'Трудовая миграция из Таджикистана усиливается', *Iarex.ru*, 20 March 2013, http://www.iarex.ru/news/34877.html

124 http://stat.tj/ru/img/a6069090cb7edbe5efb67aec241e9816_1359030405.pdf

## 3.3. Uzbekistan

### 3.3.1. Russia's assets

*The (lack of) military presence*

Uzbekistan is the only Central Asian state not to have concluded any agreement with Russia regarding the presence of Russian troops on its territory since the collapse of the USSR. Russian soldiers entered Uzbekistan for the first time in September 2005 as part of a small four-day exercise. In 2006–2012, when Uzbekistan was a member of the CSTO, Russian air forces used the Karshi-Khanabad military air base for stopovers. Moscow paid Tashkent with supplies of weapons, ammunition and spare parts[125].

*The economic presence*

Russia has significant economic assets in Uzbekistan. Leading Russian companies involved in the oil and gas sector in Uzbekistan (and also in Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan) have for years invested relatively little in upstream projects, focusing mainly on the purchase and transit of raw materials. The Russian monopoly on hydrocarbon transport from Uzbekistan was broken in August 2012, when gas began to be exported via the being developed Central Asia–China gas pipeline, running from Turkmenistan via Uzbekistan, and on through Kazakhstan to China[126] (before this, Turkmenistan had started exporting natural gas and Kazakhstan crude oil to China). Russia still has the monopoly on the transport of Central Asian oil and gas to Europe, and it wants to maintain this position, by trying to prevent the emergence of any alternative export routes.

[125] Александр Садчиков, 'Ушла с базы. Россия может лишиться военных объектов за рубежом', *Московские Новости*, 6 July 2012, http://mn.ru/society_army/20120706/32221-6546.html

[126] The supplies commenced under the framework of Uzbek-Chinese contract signed in 2010, which provides for exports of 10 bcm of gas (this level was to have been achieved in 2013). Uzbekistan is the region's largest natural gas producer; its annual output reaches around 63 bcm (2011), of which thus far it has exported only 11–12 bcm (mainly to Russia, which re-exports this gas to EU member states, and also marginal amounts to Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan). Aleksandra Jarosiewicz, 'Uzbekistan starts gas exports to China', *EastWeek*, OSW, 19 September 2012: http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2012-09-19/uzbekistan-starts-gas-exports-to-china

Russia's largest investor is LUKoil, which has invested some US$2.5 billion in Uzbekistan since 2004, and its total investment (taking into account the projects currently under implementation) could exceed US$6 billion. LUKoil is engaged in three projects. The Production Sharing Agreement (PSA) with the national holding, Uzbekneftegaz, concerning the Kandym-Khauzak-Shady sites, was signed in 2004 for a 35-years term. The output of these fields reached 3.8 bcm of natural gas in 2012 (LUKoil had a share of 3.3 bcm) and 19,000 tonnes of gas condensate (16,000 tonnes to LUKoil)[127]. The South-West Gissar project, which encompasses seven oil & gas fields, was launched in 2008 (the PSA was signed a year before, for a 35-year term). Its output in 2012 reached 1.15 bcm of natural gas (LUKoil's share was 1 bcm) and 141,000 tonnes of oil and gas condensate (LUKoil's share was 121,000 tonnes)[128]. The Aral project is at the initial stage of implementation (exploration work, with the seismic tomography technique employed, was conducted in 2007–2009). The shareholders in this project, apart from LUKoil (26.7%) and Uzbekneftegaz (26.7%), include CNPC from China (26.7%) and the Korea National Oil Corporation from Korea (20%). In the medium term (by 2018), LUKoil wants to achieve a total annual output from all the three projects at 18 bcm of natural gas, 0.5 million tonnes of gas condensate and 1 million tonnes of oil[129].

Gas Project Development Central Asia AG (GPD), a firm registered in Switzerland and 50% controlled by Gazprom Germany, formed a consortium with Gazprom Zarubezhneftegaz (each holding a 50% stake). This consortium has operated since 2009 under a PSA concluded for a 15-year term at the Shakhpakhty field; in 2012, its output reached 280 million $m^3$, and the site's estimated reserves are 39.9 bcm. The GPD Group also holds a 25% stake in the Kokdumalak-Gaz joint venture, which in 2012 produced 5.2 bcm of associated petroleum gas (APG), of which 3.1 bcm was exported. In turn, the output of Gissarneftgaz, which is 40% controlled by GPD, reached 1.1 bcm in 2012, of which 0.9 bcm was exported. In addition to this, 113,000 tons of crude oil and 33,000 of condensate were produced. This company also extracts small amounts of oil; its output is processed locally and sold on the domestic market[130]. In 2009, Gazprom Zarubezhneftegaz discovered the Dzhel gas field in Uzbekistan.

[127] http://www.lukoil-overseas.ru/projects/uzbekistan/81.php

[128] http://www.lukoil-overseas.ru/projects/uzbekistan/82.php

[129] http://www.lukoil-overseas.ru/projects/uzbekistan/79.php

[130] http://www.gazprom-germania.de/ru/cfery-biznesa/dobycha-prirodnogo-gaza.html

Over the past few years, Russia has offered Uzbekistan assistance in the construction of a nuclear power plant (it has been supplying nuclear fuel to the Uzbek test reactor under an agreement signed in June 2007).

Currency exchange (the official rate is significantly different from the black-market rate), the transfer of funds abroad and the lack of high face-value banknotes pose serious problems to foreign firms operating in Uzbekistan, especially medium-sized and small ones[131]. Since 2011, the media have reported more and more frequent cases of such firms being taken over by force (including Russian[132]). They must also deal with restrictive legal regulations and judicial practice. For example, in summer 2012, the Uzbek authorities cancelled the licence held by Uzdunrobita mobile telephone network operator (100% controlled by Russia's MTS, Mobil'nye TeleSistemy) for "regular and repeated violations and failure to comply with the supervising body's requirements." Its four managers were detained on tax fraud charges, and the company's entire assets were seized. The company opposed the charges and pointed to some procedural irregularities (for example, its representatives had not been allowed to participate in the court proceedings)[133]. The Uzbek economic court declared Uzdunrobita bankrupt on 22 April 2013. Earlier, in late 2009/early 2010, Russia's leading food manufacturer, Wimm-Bill-Dann, had to wind up its business in Uzbekistan under similar circumstances[134].

*Soft power*

The process of de-Russification, which had been ongoing for two decades (see: 3.3.2. An outline of Russian-Uzbek relations), slowed in around 2010; the Russian language is no longer barred from the public space in Uzbekistan, and members of the elites, including the political, do not conceal that their children and grandchildren attend schools where Russian is the language of instruction.

[131] For these reasons, many airlines have withdrawn or reduced their number of connections with Uzbekistan. For example, Russia's Aeroflot has regularly complained about various kinds of problems; for instance, the airline had over US$50 million in its Uzbek accounts and was unable to dispose of the money in any way in autumn 2011 ('Компания «Аэрофлот» просит правительство России ответить на «недружественные» запретительные меры со стороны Узбекистана', *Fergananews.com,* 21 March 2013, http://www.fergananews.com/news/20382).

[132] There were well-known cases in 2011–2012, when Russian owners moved entire factories (machinery and equipment), along with their crew, from Uzbekistan fearing takeover. This concerned businesses operating outside Tashkent.

[133] http://www.company.mts.ru/comp/press-centre/press_release/2012-08-31-1764524/

[134] Куркмас Бурибоев, 'Зиндан для олигархов', http://www.compromat.ru/page_28923.htm

Even though Russian has no special status in Uzbekistan (it is treated as any other foreign language), registry documents (birth, death, marriage certificates, etc.) can again be completed in Uzbek and Russian as of the end of 2012[135].

848 general education schools with Russian as the language of instruction operate in Uzbekistan. This number is equivalent to 8.6% of all general education schools in this country (8742 schools teach in Uzbek, 417 in Kazakh, 377 in Karakalpak and 256 in Tajik). 8.33% of the total number of pupils attend such schools[136]. Higher education institutions have so-called Russian sectors, where students receive education in Russian. Branches of three Russian universities operate in Tashkent: the Russian University of Economics (since 1995, it has over 500 students[137]), Moscow State University (since 2007, 230 students[138]) and the Russian State University of Oil and Gas (since 2007, around 600 students[139]).

The Russian minority, who used to form a diaspora of over 1.5 million just before the USSR collapsed (more than 8% of the population)[140], has shrunk, depending on the estimate, to between 250,000 and 900,000 people (0.85–3%)[141]. There are few Russian minority organisations, a dozen or so at the most (no precise data are available)[142]. They include the official Uzbekistan-Russia Friendship Association[143] and the Russian Business Centre, which has shown little activity (it has no website of its own).

135 'Узбекским ЗАГСам разрешили использовать русский язык', *Lenta.ru*, 1 November 2012, http://lenta.ru/news/2012/11/01/language/
It appears that the government thus wants to halt the further emigration of the non-Uzbek population (they are being replaced in large cities by a rural Uzbek population).

136 Data for the school year 2012/2013: http://uzedu.uz/rus/info/pokazateli/

137 http://rea.uz/about/history/

138 http://msu.uz/e/4f49c4da1adf57f542000000

139 http://podrobno.uz/cat/obchestvo/kvoti+v+gubkina/

140 According to the census of 1989, 1.65 million people (8.3% of the total population of the Uzbek SSR).

141 http://echo.msk.ru/programs/linguafranca/1120730-echo/ and the OSW's own estimates.

142 These are predominantly cultural, and to a lesser extent social organisations; first of all the Russian Culture Centre (RCC) in Uzbekistan and its affiliated organisations operating across the country under various names, e.g. the 'Russian Culture' Association (in Termez), the Bukhara District 'Harmony and Mercy' Russian Culture Centre, the 'Rus' Centre in Samarkand, etc. (http://uzb.rs.gov.ru/node/16). The RCC operates under the aegis of the Republican International Culture Centre – cultural centres of other nations also operate as part of this structure, including Polish, Armenian, Korean, Tajik, etc. (http://www.icc.uz/rus/cultural_centre/).

143 http://uzru.uz/
This association operates under the aegis of the Council of Friendship Associations, to which a number of similar structures belong (http://djk.uz/?do=friend).

*Rossotrudnichestvo*'s agency in Tashkent co-operates with the Russian Culture Centre and various Uzbek institutions while holding cultural and folklore events. The Russian Science and Culture Centre offers Russian language courses. The *Russkiy Mir* Foundation manages five specialist language 'cabinets' (one each in Chinaz, Fergana and Nukus, and two in Tashkent)[144], and also co-holds cultural events and collaborates with the Russian diaspora[145]. The scope of operation of the two Russian government agencies is clearly smaller than in Tajikistan.

Russian still plays an essential role in Uzbekistan's information space, although unlike in Tajikistan, Russian media are even less accessible. Upon the government's instructions, cable network operators either temporarily or completely exclude some TV channels from their offer (they can be watched by owners with individual satellite aerials), Russian news portals, community network services and some blogs are blocked from time to time[146]. Uzbek TV stations broadcast selected programmes, especially news, in Russian. Local radio stations allocate more of their airtime for programmes in Russian (half of the time must be filled with Uzbek content)[147]. Russian-language newspapers' circulations reach between 5000 and 15,000 copies (the circulations of Uzbek-language newspapers are one and a half to two times larger). *Pravda Vostoka* and *Novosti Uzbekistana* are the most important titles. Some press is published in Russian and Uzbek, like the government-controlled *Narodnoye Slovo* (*Khalq Sozi*) and the specialist magazine *Nalogoviy Tamozhenniy Vestnik*[148]. Russian is an important language in Uzbek news portals, both official and independent: along with those which publish contents only Uzbek, there are also portals where only the Russian language is used (e.g. *Vesti.uz* or *UzMetrnom.com,* which has been blocked in Uzbekistan). Other portals have both Russian and Uzbek versions (such as *Uz24.uz* and *Ozodlik.org,* which is supported by Radio Liberty), and sometimes Russian, Uzbek and English versions (e.g. *Podrobno.uz*). The website of the news agency operating as part of Uzbekistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Jahonnews.uz*) has Russian, Uzbek, English and Arabic

144 http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/rucenter/kabinet_list.html

145 http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/catalogue/catalog.html?pageSize=40&catalog=&country=81&region=&city=&company=

146 For instance, this ban has been imposed on TV Centr, TNT and STS. Not only have Russian internet portals been blocked, but also Western ones. http://echo.msk.ru/programs/linguafranca/1120730-echo/

147 *Ibid*.

148 *Ibid*.

versions, and the website of the UNNA press agency (*Uza.uz*) is published in Uzbek, Russian, English, German, French, Spanish, Arabic and Chinese. The official websites of government institutions and agencies usually have three language versions: Uzbek, Russian and English.

In the opinion of Uzbekistan's journalist circles, those working in Russian (especially ethnic Russians) enjoy a little more freedom than their Uzbek-speaking colleagues, and do not go to prison for their work[149].

### 3.3.2. An outline of Russian-Uzbek relations

Uzbekistan's strategic location (it borders on all the other Central Asian countries and on Afghanistan), demographic potential (almost half of the region's population live there) and natural resources mean that from the very beginning, Tashkent has aspired to assume the role of local leader. Such ambitions have been manifested, for example, by its unwillingness to participate in any structures dominated by the Kremlin. Uzbekistan has been vying for regional leadership with Kazakhstan, however while employing completely different means and instruments. While Astana has joined all the integration initiatives, often as their initiator, Tashkent would usually distance itself from them (albeit not isolating itself, like Turkmenistan). In bilateral relations with its neighbours, it would usually narrow down the field for dialogue without seeking a compromise, but instead highlighting, sometimes assertively, its own national interests and pushing through solutions that are beneficial for itself. This has given rise to numerous conflicts (the most bitter of which are with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan).

Uzbekistan has consistently and ostentatiously resisted the 'post-colonial syndrome' since the early 1990s. The processes of de-Sovietisation and the related de-Russification have been carried out in several stages. The fist stage was marked by the all-embracing change of the Soviet and Russian names (even renaming Pushkin Street in Tashkent), which included the introduction of the Latin writing system to the Uzbek language in 1992 (although the Cyrillic script is still in use). Another stage was focused on removing monuments and other objects reminiscent of the Soviet and previous Russian rule. All monuments commemorating the Great Patriotic War (the eastern campaign of World War II) were removed towards the end of the first decade of

[149] *Ibid.*

this century[150]. For example, the monumental Defender Of The Fatherland complex and a former Christian Orthodox church were demolished during one day in autumn 2009[151]. Tashkent is home to the only museum of Russian occupation in Central Asia[152].

Tashkent's 'sinusoidal' policy (involving longer periods of co-operation with the West, interspersed with periods of closer relations with Moscow) is usually interpreted as an effect of President Islam Karimov's unpredictable decisions. However, when seen from the perspective of the last two decades, the overall aims seem consistent, and its goals, including above all reinforcing Uzbekistan's sovereignty and independence, are inalterable. Following the collapse of the USSR, Uzbekistan became a party to the CST (collective security treaty) in 1992. However, in 1999, it chose not to sign the protocol extending the operation of the treaty. Instead, it joined GUAM, a bloc of southern CIS countries demonstrating a pro-Western approach. After 11 September 2001, it allowed the coalition to use its airspace, and a US airbase was established at the Karshi-Khanabad military airport. Relations between Western countries and Tashkent began to deteriorate, partly as a consequence of the campaign by human rights activists who had criticised their governments for supporting Karimov's dictatorship, and also due to the president's fear of a possible coloured revolution in his country. The West froze its relations with Uzbekistan after the Andijan massacre in May 2005 (when opposition demonstrations were brutally suppressed and at least 187 people were killed, and most likely much more). In effect, the US troops had to leave Karshi-Khanabad[153]. As required by zero-sum logic (where one player wins the other loses, and vice versa), the already hinted Uzbek-Russian rapprochement took place (Uzbekistan left GUAM and joined the CSTO, Tashkent signed an alliance treaty with Moscow and allowed Russian air forces to use the Karshi-Khanabad air base)[154]. When the West started lifting its sanctions (2007–2008), Tashkent resumed its

[150] Most probably to erase the traces of shared Uzbek and Russian history from the collective memory.

[151] In summer 2013, access to the Russian Pravoslavie.ru and Uzbek Pravoslavie.uz websites, and also to the Russian Christian Orthodox television Soyuz, was blocked in Uzbekistan. 'Но и в церкви всё не так...', Uzmetronom, 13 August 2013, http://www.uzmetronom.com/2013/08/13/no_i_v_cerkvi_vsjo_ne_tak.html

[152] Вадим Трухачев, 'Узбекистан включился в „войну с памятниками'', *Pravda.ru*, 23 November 2009, http://www.pravda.ru/world/formerussr/other/23-11-2009/1000713-0/

[153] Meanwhile, German and Danish units were able to use the Termez airport uninterruptedly.

[154] However, the country Islam Karimov first visited following the Andijan massacre was China.

previous policy, allowing the US and its allies to use the Uzbek airspace and airports again[155], and announcing its participation in the Nabucco gas pipeline, which Moscow sees as an anti-Russian project. In October 2008, Uzbekistan left the Eurasian Economic Community (of which it had been a member from March 2006)[156].

Russia made an attempt to keep Uzbekistan within its orbit, offering higher prices for Uzbek gas in addition to withdrawing its support for the construction of large hydropower plants in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan: during President Dmitri Medvedev's visit to Tashkent in January 2009, he confirmed that Moscow would buy Uzbek gas at market prices (according to media speculations, this could mean a price of around US$300 per 1000 $m^3$)[157]. The Russian proposal was made when the construction of the gas pipeline running from Turkmenistan to China was nearly complete. Uzbekistan intended to export part of its output via this pipeline, and so this offer was not as appealing to Tashkent as it would have been a few years before. President Islam Karimov's visit to Moscow in April 2010 did not mark any breakthrough. The summit proved that the two countries had conflicting political and economic interests and different visions for a regional security system in Central Asia[158].

Uzbekistan suspended its CSTO membership on 20 June 2012 (it should be noted that even when it belonged to this organisation, it did not take part in its

[155] Tashkent became more important for NATO when the Northern Distribution Network (NDN), handling supplies for the coalition forces in Afghanistan, was launched in 2009 (although the USA seemed undecided as to whether Uzbekistan's offer should be accepted as a whole). Its short border with Afghanistan (137 km) is easily accessible for land traffic (this is the best-guarded section of the Afghan border). Another benefit is the fact that the city of Termez, which has an operating military airbase, is located immediately on the border, and also has a railway connection with Afghanistan's Mazar-i-Sharif. Even those aircraft which do not continue their flight from Afghanistan via Uzbekistan, but through Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, use Termez airport. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Tashkent twice in 2010–2011. She visited the country for the first time in December 2010 on the occasion of the OSCE summit in Kazakhstan (Ms. Clinton, also visited Bishkek and Astana). She returned there in October 2011 (and also visited Dushanbe).

[156] The present EAEC members are Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. For more details concerning this issue, see chapter III.

[157] Maciej Falkowski, 'Miedwiediew w Uzbekistanie – Rosja wysyła sprzeczne sygnały do Azji Centralnej', *Tydzień na Wschodzie*, OSW, 27 January 2009, http://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/tydzien-na-wschodzie/2009-01-28/miedwiediew-w-uzbekistanie-Russia-wysyla-sprzeczne-sygnaly

[158] 'Rosja–Uzbekistan: szczyt bez przełomu.', *Tydzień na Wschodzie*, OSW, 21 April 2010, http://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/tydzien-na-wschodzie/2010-04-21/Rosja-uzbekistan-szczyt-bez-przelomu

military exercises, it refused to participate in the Collective Operational Reaction Forces which were being formed as part of the organisation, and openly contested its plans; for example, Uzbekistan opposed the siting of a CSTO (*de facto* Russian) military base in southern Kyrgyzstan). Apparently, what Tashkent feared most was Moscow's desire to coordinate the activities of the CSTO member states in foreign and security policy (which in fact would mean greater control by Russia). One of the initiatives Tashkent opposed was the possibility of intervention by CSTO Rapid Reaction Forces in any of the member states in case of an internal threat to their stability[159]. Uzbekistan announced its decision to withdraw from the CSTO only two weeks after Vladimir Putin's visit (this was his third official trip since his resumption of the presidency). This demonstrated even more strongly Uzbekistan's ambition to conduct its independent security and foreign policy, and also undermined the image of both Russia and Putin in the region[160].

**Russia – Uzbekistan**

Since Uzbekistan withdrew from the CSTO, it has been able to co-operate with the USA and NATO, without the need to consult any CSTO member states, above all Russia. Uzbekistan seems to expect that it will receive not only financial gains (for example in the form of transit charges) but also some of the weapons used by the international coalition upon its withdrawal from Afghanistan. It has also been speculated that a permanent US military base could be set up in Uzbekistan after 2014[161]. However, another reversal of the alliances, and a thaw in Tashkent's relations with Moscow (which would certainly be a more tactical than strategic move) cannot be ruled out[162]. It should not be disregarded that even though Uzbekistan is

[159] Marek Matusiak, 'Uzbekistan withdraws from the CSTO once again', *EastWeek*, OSW, 11 July 2012, http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2012-07-11/uzbekistan-withdraws-csto-once-again

[160] Most likely, Vladimir Putin wanted not only to show his appreciation for Uzbekistan, but also to demonstrate to Kazakhstan, Russia's regional ally, that Moscow has broad room for manoeuvre in Central Asia (immediately after Tashkent, he went to Astana).

[161] Peter Leonard, 'US Cozies up to Outcast Uzbekistan for Afghan Role', *Bigstory.ap.org*, 6 July 2012, http://bigstory.ap.org/article/us-cozies-outcast-uzbekistan-afghan-role

[162] It was announced at the time of Islam Karimov's visit to Moscow (15 April 2013) that Uzbekistan would sign an agreement on the CIS free trade zone. This is a success for Moscow, but this does not restrict Tashkent's sovereignty. Wojciech Górecki, 'Uzbekistan's president in Moscow: limited co-operation, no trust', *EastWeek*, OSW, 17 April 2013, http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2013-04-17/uzbekistans-president-moscow-limited-cooperation-no-trust

capable of blocking other countries (especially Tajikistan), it strongly relies on Russia (and Kazakhstan) as regards the transit of its oil and gas exports – it does not border on China (or on Iran or through the Caspian Sea on Azerbaijan as Turkmenistan does). Political relations between Moscow and Tashkent are characterised by total distrust. However, Russia is still a vital trade partner for Uzbekistan, as it is the fourth largest recipient of Uzbek exports (12.8%; after China, 18.5%, Kazakhstan, 14.6%, and Turkey, 13.8%) and the largest importer (20.6%; before China, 16.5%, South Korea, 16.3%, and Kazakhstan, 12.8%; data for 2012)[163].

## 3.4. Turkmenistan

### 3.4.1. Russia's assets

*The military presence*

Turkmenistan was the only Central Asian state not to sign the Tashkent Treaty (the Collective Security Treaty) on 15 May 1992. Nevertheless, Moscow and Ashgabat signed an agreement on the joint protection of Turkmen borders for an indefinite term in 1993. An operational group (consisting of up to 3000 soldiers) was formed in March 1994; Russian border guards were stationed on the borders with Afghanistan and Iran[164]. In 1995, the government of President Saparmurat Niyazov announced that Turkmenistan had adopted the status of a neutral state. As a consequence, the Russian border guards left Turkmenistan (the last unit departed in December 1999)[165].

*The economic presence*

Russia's economic assets in Turkmenistan are quite modest. One Russian firm involved in projects on the oil & gas market is Itera, which continued preparatory work in 2013 on the Block 21 offshore project in Turkmen (the estimated reserves of this site are 219m tonnes of oil and 100 bcm of natural gas). Gazprom participated in geological exploration of Caspian offshore gas fields towards the end of the first decade of this century. Another major Russian player on

[163] https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/uz.html

[164] 'Государственная пограничная служба Туркменистана', *Agentura.ru*, http://www.agentura.ru/press/about/jointprojects/greatgame/pogranturkmen/

[165] 'Туркмения отказывается от услуг российских пограничников', *Scripts.online.ru*, 27 May 1999, http://scripts.online.ru/misc/news/99/05/27_013.htm

the Turkmen market is the mobile network operator MTS (Mobil'nye TeleSistemy). In 2005, this company (operating as MTS-Turkmenistan) bought a total of 100% shares in BCTI, then the country's largest operator, in two transactions. It had 2.4 million customers at the end of 2010 (while the country's population is slightly over 5 million). However, at that time it was forced to suspend its services since the five-year term of the deal with the local Ministry for Communication had expired. The company managed to renew its operation in Turkmenistan in August 2012[166].

*Soft power*

The Turkmenisation of all areas of public life, which has been consistently pursued together with the isolationism policy by the country's two post-independence presidents, Saparmurat Niyazov and Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov, has very strongly reduced Russian influence in the soft power area also[167]. It has shrunk even more as a consequence of the emigration of a great part of the ethnic Russians and other non-Turkmen populations[168]. One school with Russian as the language of instruction currently operates in Ashgabat[169]. Single classes receiving education in Russian exist in some other schools in and outside Ashgabat (the generally shared opinion is that they represent a higher level than classes receiving education in Turkmen)[170]. In around 2000, the Russian language ceased to be used in Turkmenistan's higher education schools – all 'Russian sectors' were liquidated, and it was no longer possible to study in this language. The resulting gap has been partly filled with a network of

[166] 'МТС вернулись на рынок Туркмении после почти двухлетнего перерыва', *Gazeta.ru*, 30 August 2012, http://www.gazeta.ru/business/news/2012/08/30/n_2507237.shtml

[167] For example, the Latin script was formally introduced to the written Turkmen language as early as 1991 (it underwent various modifications over the next few years).

[168] According to the census of 1989, almost 334,000 Russians lived in the Turkmen SSR (nearly 9.5% of the republic's population). It is estimated that around 165,000 Russians live in Turkmenistan at present (3.23% of the country's population).

[169] This is the Turkmen-Russian Pushkin School, which has been operating since 2002. Around 800 pupils receive education at this school. Its graduates have the right to seek admission to higher education schools in Russia. Presidents Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov and Dmitri Medvedev officially opened its new venue at the end of 2009 (http://www.trsosh.edu.tm/about.html). According to media reports, parents who want their child to attend the school, which is seen as prestigious and representing a high level, need to pay a bribe over several thousand dollars ('Туркменистан: Почем бесплатное образование в русской школе?', *Fergananews.com*, 30 December 2009, http://www.fergananews.com/articles/6420).

[170] http://www.echo.msk.ru/programs/linguafranca/1125130-echo/
No reliable data on the number of these classes are available.

Turkish education institutions[171]. At the same time, relatively many people, at least in Ashgabat, speak Russian[172]. The education programme applicable for the school year 2013/2014 specifies 'national language and literature' in the languages block, and 'Russian' and 'foreign languages' separately[173].

*Rossotrudnichestvo*'s agency in Turkmenistan has no separate website: information on its activity, such as cultural events and celebrations held on various occasions, can be found on the website of *Rossotrudnichestvo*'s central office[174]. *Russkiy Mir* has no centres in the country. The foundation on its website makes references to the Association for Cultural, Trade and Economic Contacts with Russia in Turkmenistan (it has six branches all over the country[175]). However, no information is available on this structure's activity.

Access to the Russian media is marginal, and so they have no major influence on the situation of Turkmenistan (those who have individual satellite aerials can watch Russian TV, but – as can be concluded from press reports – Turkish channels are more popular there[176]). Unlike in other Central Asian countries, the Russian printed press even does not reach Turkmenistan[177]. Russian websites are blocked to an even greater extent than in Uzbekistan.

Turkmen TV stations broadcast only short news and entertainment blocks in Russian. One exception is the Turkmenistan channel, which is targeted at

[171] Fourteen Turkmen-Turkish general education schools, a Turkish primary school, an education centre named 'Bashkent' and the International Turkmen-Turkish University were operating in 2009 in Turkmenistan (А. Шустов, 'Русские школы вытесняются турецкими. Состояние русского образования в ЦентрАзии', Baromig.ru, 11 December 2009, http://www.baromig.ru/foreign-expierence/rossiyskaya-diaspora-za-rubezhom/russkie-shkoly-vytesnyayutsya-turetskimi-sostoyanie-russkogo-obrazovaniya-v-tsentrazii.php). Around 1200 students currently receive education at this university. The number of students planned for the academic year 2015/2016 is around 3000.

[172] My own observations as of December 2011. I could communicate in Russian without any problems in taxis, at kiosks, coffee shops, currency exchanges and bazaars.

[173] 'Новой эпохе – новый образовательный потенциал', *Turkmenistan.gov.tm*, 3 March 2013, http://www.turkmenistan.gov.tm/?id=3465

[174] http://rs.gov.ru/node/1473
No activity from the Russian Science and Culture Centre in Ashgabat has been seen.

[175] http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/catalogue/catalog.html?pageSize=40&catalog=&country=80&region=&city=&company=

[176] http://www.echo.msk.ru/programs/linguafranca/1125130-echo/

[177] It can only be subscribed to by selected institutions; single copies can be bought at high prices at marketplaces and bazaars (they are brought as part of the so-called suitcase imports by individual tradesmen).

viewers abroad and broadcasts programmes in seven languages: Turkmen, English, Russian, French, Chinese, Arabic and Persian. Turkmen is the only language spoken on the radio. The most popular newspaper is *Neitralnyi Turkmenistan* published in Russian (a circulation of over 45,000 copies, while *Turkmenistan* published in the Turkmen language has a circulation of 36,500 copies). In addition to this newspaper, several magazines are published in Russian, including *Vozrozhdeniye*. The website of the TDH press agency has Turkmen, Russian and English versions, as do the news portals *Turkmeninform.com* and *Turkmenistan.gov.tm*.

An agency of the Federal Migration Service operates as part of the Russian embassy in Ashgabat (Russia also has a consulate in Turkmenbashi).

### 3.4.2. An outline of Russian-Turkmen relations

Energy issues have always predominated in Russian-Turkmen relations.

When the USSR fell apart, 'Central Asia–Centre', running to Russia via Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, was Turkmenistan's only export gas pipeline. Moscow wanted this situation to remain unchanged, and to maintain its monopoly on gas transit[178]. For this reason it attempted to block the construction of any new connections. It was especially concerned about plans to build the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline, which would connect Azerbaijan with the Baku–Tbilisi–Erzurum route and supply gas to Western recipients, as well as the EU's Nabucco project running along the same route. Russia responded to these projects in 2007 by announcing plans to build competitive routes: the Caspian Coastal Gas Pipeline[179] and South Stream[180]. In turn, Ashgabat wanted a diversified network of gas pipelines, so that it was no longer dependent on one recipient, and gained a much better negotiating position. The 200

[178] Most Turkmen gas, like Uzbek gas, was re-exported to Western Europe.

[179] The Caspian Coastal Gas Pipeline, with a planned capacity of 20 bcm, was to run along the eastern coastline of the Caspian Sea from Turkmenistan via Kazakhstan to Russia, and connect to the 'Central Asia–Centre' main. An initial trilateral agreement (between Russia, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan) concerning its construction was signed in November 2007. Russia withdrew from this project in October 2010.

[180] The South Stream pipeline runs along nearly the same route as that planned for Nabucco (from Russia along the Black Sea bed to Bulgaria, and from there via Serbia and Hungary to Baumgarten in Austria, and in the two-branch version also to Greece and Italy). The inauguration of the construction of the offshore section was celebrated on 7 December 2012. Russia is considering sending gas from Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan using this route.

km-long Korpezhe-Kurt Kui gas pipeline running to Iran came into operation at the end of 1997, with an annual capacity of 8 bcm. At the end of 2009, the Turkmenistan–China gas pipeline was launched (it runs for over 1800 km and has a planned capacity of 40 bcm).

A section of the 'Central Asia–Centre' gas pipeline was damaged on 9 April 2009, and gas supplies from Turkmenistan to Russia were withheld. In Turkmenistan's opinion the damage occurred because of a sudden and significant reduction in the volume of gas received by Gazprom. Although the pipeline was repaired, gas transport was not resumed. Gazprom demanded that the long-term contract be revised and the gas price or supply volumes be reduced (demand for gas and gas prices had fallen significantly in Europe as a consequence of the economic crisis; thus Gazprom, re-exporting Turkmen gas and reducing its own output, was unable to generate the expected profits[181]). The core of the Russian-Turkmen gas conflict was Russia's desire to take control of the planned 'East–West' gas pipeline, which would have connected Turkmenistan's largest gas project, Yolotan, with the Caspian Sea coastline (Moscow was concerned that in the future this pipeline could become part of the Trans-Caspian route promoted by the USA and the EU). Gazprom reduced the volume of Turkmen gas received soon after Ashgabat rejected Gazprom's offer to take part in this project[182].

This conflict inflicted more losses on Turkmenistan, which was deprived of its planned incomes (around US$1 billion per month, according to estimates) and was forced to withhold production at 195 fields, which posed the risk of these fields being destroyed. However, the upcoming inauguration of the gas main running to China and the accompanying Chinese loan made Russian pressure less effective. Finally, supplies to Russia were resumed at the beginning of 2010, although export levels reached only 10.5 bcm (the level before the crisis had been around 40 bcm). An additional short gas pipeline running from Turkmenistan to Iran (Dovletabad–Khangiran, 182 kilometres, with a capacity of up to 12 bcm) was opened more or less at the same time, in early January 2010. The Trans-Caspian gas pipeline could ensure Ashgabat a real diversification of outlets. However, Turkmenistan is likely to become more dependent on the

[181] Furthermore, Gazprom had started paying higher rates for Turkmen gas a few months before.

[182] Aleksandra Jarosiewicz, 'Rosyjsko-turkmeńska wojna gazowa', *Tydzień na Wschodzie*, OSW, 3 June 2009, http://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/tydzien-na-wschodzie/2009-06-03/rosyjsko-turkmenska-wojna-gazowa

Chinese direction in the coming years (the contracts signed thus far provide for supplies at 65 million $m^3$).

Relations between Ashgabat and Moscow were still very tense in 2011 and 2012. The Russian restrictions on Turkmen gas imports were accompanied by a campaign in the Russian media suggesting a "Libyan scenario" in Turkmenistan[183].

The issues which received most attention in bilateral relations in the first half of 2013 were linked to a new citizenship act in Turkmenistan, where dual citizenship was not envisaged as a possible option. This affected over 43,000 Russian citizens who were permanent residents in Turkmenistan. In addition to the need to relinquish one of the citizenships they held, they were concerned they would be unable to travel abroad. Only holders of biometric passports have been allowed to leave the country since 10 July. However, such passports have not been issued to these individuals since their introduction in 2006. Intensive diplomatic consultations led to a compromise, owing to which individuals who had been granted dual citizenship before 10 April 2003 (the presidents of Russia and Turkmenistan signed a protocol terminating the dual citizenship agreement on that day) could apply for new passports. The new passports would later also be made available to those who had gained their status after this date, although not later than the protocol's effective date (Turkmenistan ratified it on 22 April 2003, and Russia was expected to do this in autumn 2013 but till February 2014 it didn't; the protocol will come into force following the exchange of the ratifying documents)[184].

[183] Aleksandra Jarosiewicz, 'Turkmenistan getting closer to China', *EastWeek*, OSW, 30 November 2011, http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2011-12-01/turkmenistan-getting-closer-to-china
For „Libyan scenario" see e.g.: Евгений Минченко, 'Ливийский сценарий для Туркмении', http://www.rbcdaily.ru/politics/opinion/562949982814811

[184] The new citizenship act finally became effective in Turkmenistan on 3 July 2013. Article 5, which was added after consultations with the Russian side, provides that any other citizenship held by a citizen of Turkmenistan "shall not be recognised", and at the same time clarifies that individuals who hold such citizenship shall be treated solely as citizens of Turkmenistan. Thus the existence of such individuals became legally acceptable. By 9 July 2013 (the last day on which the old Turkmen passports were valid) over 6000 individuals holding dual Turkmen and Russian citizenships submitted applications for biometric passports, and over 1000 had already obtained the new document. ИТАР-ТАСС, 9 July 2013. The text of the citizenship act is available at: http://www.chrono-tm.org/2013/07/opublikovan-zakon-o-grazhdanstve-turkmenistana/

**Russia – Turkmenistan**

Moscow is capable of influencing the situation in Turkmenistan to only a minimal extent, since this country has pursued a policy of self-isolation combined with diversification of the recipients of its oil and gas exports. Russia is not an important recipient of Turkmen exports (the first position is held by China, 66%, followed by Ukraine, 7%, and Italy, 4.5%), although a 13% share in imports places it third after China (20.1%) and Turkey (17.5%; data for 2012)[185].

## 4. Russian-Kazakh relations

Kazakhstan is the Central Asian country with which Russia has always had the closest relations[186]. This is the only country from this region to have been mentioned in successive Concepts of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (where it has been referred to in the context of integration projects for the post-Soviet area: Astana has actively participated in all such projects, and has initiated some of them, although its vision of integration differs slightly from that proposed by Moscow). Kazakhstan has the largest oil deposits in the Caspian region (also taking into account Azerbaijan), and significant reserves of natural gas (comparable to Uzbek reserves; only Turkmenistan has larger). It is also the region's only country to border directly on Russia[187]. For this reason Moscow sees it as a natural barrier separating it from threats coming from the south (terrorists, drugs and extremist ideas), and it plays an important role in the area of security. Kazakhstan's southern border is described by some Russian experts as the southern strategic frontier of the Russian Federation[188]. Russia accounts for up to 38.4% of Kazakh exports (first ahead of China, second with 16.8%, and Ukraine, third with 6.6%) and 7.3% of its imports (fourth after China with a 17.9% share, Italy with 16.8% and Holland with 8.1%; data for 2012)[189].

[185] https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tx.html

[186] This country is often treated separately from this region. The term 'Middle Asia and Kazakhstan' was used in the USSR.

[187] The length of the border between the two countries is 6846 km (although the figure of 7512 km is also provided in some sources). The Kazakh government views the country's location and vast area as being to its benefit, offering transit services to its neighbours.

[188] Дмитрий Тренин, 'Post-Imperium…', *op. cit.*, page 180.

[189] http://www.stat.kz/digital/vnesh_torg/Pages/default.aspx

## 4.1. Russia's assets

*The military presence*

A number of military facilities, which are essential for Russia's defence, have remained in Kazakhstan since the collapse of the USSR. At present, the total area of the military facilities leased by Russia in Kazakhstan is 11 million ha.

The Baikonur complex[190] (consisting of a cosmodrome of the same name and the city of Baikonur, formerly known as Leninsk) is located in Kyzylorda province, to the east of the Aral Sea. The first Baikonur lease agreement was signed in 1994 for a 20-year term. In 2004, the lease was extended until 2050, at an annual cost of US$115 million. Russia launches Soyuz and Proton type rockets, carrying orbital complexes. 21 rocket launches were carried out there in 2012, the largest number in the world[191].

**The case of Baikonur**

Russia's Ministry of Defence transferred individual units forming the Baikonur complex to Roskosmos (Russian Federal Space Agency) between 1997 and 2011. At present, the following Russian enterprises operate there: a branch of the Rocket and Space Corporation *Energia* (RSC Energia), a branch of the Progress State Research and Production Rocket and Space Centre (TsSKB Progress), a branch of the Khrunichev State Research and Production Space Centre and the Centre for Operation of Space Ground-Based Infrastructure (TsENKI).

In 2012, Kazakhstan did not allow the planned launch of several satellites, playing for time during arrangements concerning the locations where the launchers would return to earth[192]. Talgat Musabayev, the head of the Kazakh space agency *Kazkosmos*, said in December 2012 that Astana and Moscow were considering a new agreement which would envisage a gradual replacement of leasing the facilities with common use thereof (Russia would

[190] Formally, until recently, the 5th State Testing Ground of the Russian Ministry of Defence.

[191] http://novosti-kosmonavtiki.ru/news/4209/
The US Space Centre on Cape Canaveral in Florida was ranked second, with 10 launches.

[192] Ольга Самофалова, 'На правах хозяина. Казахстан мешает России выполнять запуски с Байконура', *Vz.ru*, 26 May 2012, http://vz.ru/economy/2012/5/26/580679.html

relinquish its jurisdiction over the city of Baikonur to Kazakhstan)[193]. Then the Kazakh government approved the schedule for Proton rocket launches, reducing the planned number of launches from 17 to 12, thus exposing Russia to losses reaching of US$500 million (the cost of withdrawal from the international contracts already concluded). In response, Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs addressed a note to Astana threatening possible withdrawal from a number of joint space projects (including the Baiterek complex project)[194]. The conflict was temporarily resolved: following the first meeting of the newly established Russian-Kazakh intergovernmental commission for Baikonur on 28 March 2013, Russia's deputy prime minister Igor Shuvalov stated that there were no disagreements between the two parties, and the launch plan for 2013 had been finally approved. In turn, Kazakhstan's deputy prime minister, Kairat Kelimbetov, stated that Astana did not intend to revise the lease agreement[195]. It cannot be ruled out that Kazakhstan wanted to induce Russia to increase its financial share in joint space projects in this way, or was possibly testing Moscow's determination to retain Baikonur. The Russian press started speculating that there were plans to lease the cosmodrome to the USA (following the termination of Moscow's lease)[196]. Baikonur will lose its importance for Moscow when the Vostochny Cosmodrome, which is being built in the Amur oblast, is activated in 2015–2018[197].

[193] 'Решение о статусе „Байконура" могут принять после 2050 г, считают в ГД', *Ria.ru*, 10 December 2012, http://ria.ru/science/20121210/914211038.html

[194] Иван Чеберко, 'Россия выдвинула ультиматум Казахстану на $500 млн', *Izvestia.ru*, 24 January 2013, http://izvestia.ru/news/543574
The Baiterek space launch complex is being built at Baikonur, using the cosmodrome's infrastructure. A Kazakh-Russian joint-stock company in charge of its construction, and a further operation was set up in 2005. The complex is expected to come into operation in 2015 (http://www.bayterek.kz/about/).

[195] On 4 July 2013, a group of Kazakh opposition activists and representatives of political parties appealed to the government to ban rocket launches from Baikonur and to close all sites leased by Russia. The opposition activists highlighted the risk of contamination of the natural environment and the threat to local residents.

[196] Tatiana Serwetnyk, 'Kazachstan dalej od Kremla?', *Rzeczpospolita*, 30 February 2013.

[197] 'В 2018 году Россия начнет космические запуски с „Восточного', *Infuture.ru*, http://www.infuture.ru/article/9019
Despite the construction of the new cosmodrome, Moscow intends to use Baikonur until the expiry of its lease term. Елена Объедкова, 'Первую ракету с космодрома „Восточный" запустят в 2015 году', *Rg.ru*, 4 April 2013, http://www.rg.ru/2013/04/04/popovkin-site.html

The other military facilities leased by Russia in Kazakhstan are[198]:

- an independent radar node of the 3rd Missile-Space Defence Army of the Russian Aerospace Defence Forces (a specialist radar, the so-called Balkhash 9 site). It is located in Priozersk by Lake Balkhash north of Almaty. It is part of the united missile defence warning system. It also registers the technical parameters of the combat missile complexes being tested at the Sary-Shagan site[199];

- the 10th State Testing Range of the Russian Ministry of Defence (Sary--Shagan). This site extends over areas located in four provinces of Kazakhstan (600 km from east to west and 250 km from north to south[200]);

- the 929th Chkalov State Flight-Test Centre of the Russian Ministry of Defence. Its headquarters are located in Russia's Astrakhan oblast, but its testing grounds (numbers 85, 171 and 231) are situated in north-western Kazakhstan;

- the 5580th Base for Securing Research Work (former 11th State Testing Range of the Russian Ministry of Defence, at the Emba site). Air defence weapons are researched and tested at this base.

- an Independent Air Transport Regiment of the Russian Air Forces stationed at Kostanay airport. It provides transport services for the needs of the aforementioned military facilities.

The current total annual lease rent for all the sites in Kazakhstan is US$27.5 million.

[198] 'Военные объекты, арендуемые Россией за рубежом', *Ria.ru*, 11 December 2012, http://ria.ru/spravka/20121211/914287081-print.html?ria=vqi2j1k408pcskkmornk3v706mknpmfi

[199] The node is owned by Kazakhstan; the value of the rent paid by Russia for its use is not known. On 29 January 2013, the defence ministers of Russia and Kazakhstan signed an agreement setting up a joint regional air defence system (like the one Russia had previously created with Belarus).

[200] 'Военные базы России за границей. Справка', *Centrasia.ru*, 16 February 2010, http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1266297300

*The economic presence*

Russia's economic presence in Kazakhstan, as in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, is mainly focused on the primary sectors. Russian entities are principally interested in the production and transport of raw materials. Their goal is to help Russia remain the dominant transit country (although no longer a monopoly) while investing relatively small funds. Kazakhstan has been making consistent, albeit small steps in order to diversify its transport routes[201]. An oil pipeline connecting the fields by the Caspian Sea with western China was launched in 2006. A new opportunity to export natural gas via the extended gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to China (running via Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan) is also opening up. In the medium term, Kazakhstan may become Russia's key competitor on the European and Chinese markets, with exports levels reaching 150 million tonnes of oil annually.

**LUKoil in Kazakhstan**

LUKoil is Russia's key player on the oil & gas market; it has been present in Kazakhstan since 1995, and has invested over US$4.7 billion in this country thus far. The company accounts for a tenth of the country's hydrocarbon output, and its assets in Kazakhstan form almost 90% of all its foreign assets. LUKoil participates in seven production projects (as LUKOIL Overseas in six of them), and is a shareholder in the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC), which built, operates and will develop the CPC oil pipeline (Tengiz–-Novorossiysk, via the Lukarco company). These projects are:

– the Kumkol field in Kyzylorda province. The project is operated by Turgai Petroleum (LUKoil and China's CNPC hold a 50% stake each in this company; a joint venture was set up with Kazakhstan's PetroKazakhstan). The field operation contract was signed for a 25-year term in 1996. Its output in

[201] Twelve years ago, President Nazarbayev mentioned this in an interview for the Polish daily newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza:* "Kazakhstan is making efforts so that future pipelines will run in various directions, and not only via Russia, as is the case now. We have backed the Baku–Ceyhan project, and our participation in it will depend on the profitability of this investment, the transit charges, the situation on the Mediterranean oil market, etc. A pipeline running to western China will also be important. However, this is a project for the future; we have not reached the necessary production level as yet. Last but not least, we are not ruling out a route running through Iran." 'Marzę o Unii Eurazjatyckiej [z prezydentem Kazachstanu Nursułtanem Nazarbajevem rozmawiają Marek J. Karp i Wojciech Górecki]', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 23 May 2002.

2012 was 2.14 million tonnes of oil (including LUKoil's share of 1.07 million tonnes) and 222 million m³ of natural gas (LUKoil's share 111 million m³)[202];

– the Karachaganak field in West Kazakhstan province. This project is operated by Karachaganak Petroleum Operating Company, where LUKoil holds a 13.5% stake. The PSA was signed in 1997 for a forty-years' term. Its output in 2012 reached 12.2 million tonnes of oil (including LUKoil's share of 1.4 million tonnes) and 17.5 bcm of natural gas (LUKoil's share being 2.1 bcm)[203];

– the Arman field in Mangystau province. The project is operated by Arman company (LUKoil and China's Sinopec each hold a 50% stake in it). The field operation contract was signed in 1994 for a 30-year term. LUKoil has participated in this project since 2005. Its output in 2012 reached 67,200 tonnes of oil (including LUKoil's share of 39,500 tonnes) and 10 million m³ of natural gas (LUKoil's share 4.6 million m³)[204];

– the Severnye Buzachi field in Mangystau province. The project is operated by JV Buzachi (50% of its shares are held by China's CNPC and 50% by Caspian Investments, in which LUKoil and Sinopec each hold a 50% stake). The field operation contract was signed in 1997 for a 25-year term. LUKoil has participated in this project since 2005. Its output in 2012 reached 2 million tonnes of oil (including LUKoil's share of 0.5 million tonnes) and 94 million m³ of natural gas (LUKoil's share 23.5 million m³)[205];

– the Karakuduk field in Mangystau province. The project is operated by KarakudukMunai (in which LUKoil and Sinopec each hold a 50% stake). The field operation contract was signed in 1995 for a 25-year term. LUKoil has participated in this project since 2005. Its output in 2012 reached 1.13 million tonnes of oil (including LUKoil's share of 0.57 million tonnes) and 110 million m³ of natural gas (LUKoil's share 56 million m³)[206];

– the Alibekmola and Kozhasai fields forming one project in Aktyubinsk province. The project is operated by Kazachoil Aktobe (in which Kazakhstan's KazMunaiGaz holds a 50% stake, and LUKoil and Sinopec each hold

[202] http://lukoil-overseas.ru/projects/kazakhstan/39.php
[203] http://lukoil-overseas.ru/projects/kazakhstan/61.php
[204] http://lukoil-overseas.ru/projects/kazakhstan/63.php
[205] http://lukoil-overseas.ru/projects/kazakhstan/64.php
[206] http://lukoil-overseas.ru/projects/kazakhstan/65.php

a 25% stake). The field operation contract was signed in 1999 for a 25-year term. LUKoil has participated in this project since 2005. Its output in 2012 reached 1.25 million tonnes of oil (including LUKoil's share of 313,000 tonnes) and 63 million $m^3$ of natural gas (LUKoil's share 16 million $m^3$)[207];

– the Tengiz and Korolevskoye fields (Tengiz project) in Atyrau province. The project is operated by Tengizchevroil. LUKoil (via Lukarco, in which it bought the remaining 50% shares from BP in 2009) currently holds a 5% stake in it (the other shareholders are: Chevron – 50%, ExxonMobil – 25% and KazMunaiGaz – 20%). The project operation contract was signed in 1993 for a 40-year term. LUKoil has participated in this project since 1997. The output of this one of Kazakhstan's richest fields in 2012 reached 24.2 million tonnes of oil (including LUKoil's share of 1.2 million tonnes) and 11.7 bcm of natural gas (LUKoil's share of 0.6 bcm)[208];

In addition to these, LUKoil has acquired stakes in several projects covering fields in the Kazakh sector of the Caspian Sea: Atash, Tyub-Karagan, Yuzhny Zhambai & Yuzhnoye Zaburunye and Khvalynskoye[209];

LUKoil also holds shares in the CPC consortium (Lukarco has a 12.5% stake). The other shareholders of CPC are: the Russian government (represented by Transneft, 24% and KTK Company, 7%), a total of 31% shares, the government of Kazakhstan (represented by the state-owned company KazMunaiGaz), 19%, Chevron Caspian Pipeline Consortium Co., 15%, Mobil Caspian Pipeline Co., 7.5%, Rosneft–Shell Caspian Ventures Ltd., 7.5%, Eni International (N.A.) N.V., 2%, Oryx Caspian Pipeline LLC, 1.75%, BG Overseas Holdings Ltd., 2% and Kazakhstan Pipeline Ventures LLC (a joint venture of KazMunaiGaz and BP), 1.75%[210]. In 2012, this pipeline transported around 35 million tonnes of oil[211].

[207] http://lukoil-overseas.ru/projects/kazakhstan/67.php

[208] http://lukoil-overseas.ru/projects/kazakhstan/3988.php

[209] Marek Menkiszak, Ewa Paszyc, Iwona Wiśniewska, 'Aktywność gospodarcza Rosji…', *op. cit*. LUKoil acquired the shares in Kazakhoil Aktobe, Buzachi, KarakudukMunai and Arman companies as well as the right to operate at Yuzhny Zhambai and Yuzhnoye Zaburunye by taking over 100% control of the Bermuda-registered Nelson Resources Group, which had owned these shares, in October 2005 for US$2 billion.

[210] http://www.cpc.ru/RU/about/Pages/shareholders.aspx

[211] http://lukoil-overseas.ru/projects/kazakhstan/3989.php

Rosneft holds shares in two projects in Kazakhstan: the Adai block in Atyrau province (it and Sinopec hold a 50% stake each)[212] and the Kurmangazy field (the Caspian Sea shelf, a 25% stake)[213]. Both projects are at initial phases of implementation.

Gazprom also participates in two projects. The first covers the development of the resources of the Tsentralnaya structure on the Caspian Sea shelf (Gazprom and LUKoil set up a company named CentrKaspNeftegaz, in which each of them holds a 50% stake; in turn this company holds half of the shares in the project, and the other half is controlled by Kazakhstan's KazMunaiGaz). The second project, which is at an initial phase of implementation, covers the Imashevskoye field located on the Kazakh-Russian frontier. Pursuant to an intergovernmental agreement of 2010, work on this project has been entrusted to Gazprom and KazMunaiGaz[214].

Gazpromneft has been present in Kazakhstan since 2007. Currently, it controls a chain of 50 filling stations in this country[215].

Russia is an active player on the Kazakh uranium mining and nuclear energy market[216]. Another company operating there is Canada's Uranium One company, whose main shareholder (51.4% of the shares) is Atomredmetzoloto, a Russian holding controlled by the state-owned corporation Rosatom. Uranium One's assets in Kazakhstan include a 70% stake in Betpak Dala company, which owns the Akdala mine (its output in 2012 reached 1095 tonnes, including Uranium One's share of 766 tonnes) and the Yuzhny Inkai mine (1870 tonnes, including Uranium One's share of 1309 tonnes); a 50% stake in Karatau company, which owns the Karatau mine (2135 tonnes, including Uranium One's share of 1068 tonnes), and a 50% stake in Akbastau company, which owns the Akbastau mine (1203 tonnes, including Uranium One's share of 601 tonnes); a 49.67% stake in Zarechnoye company, which owns the Zarechnoye mine (942 tonnes, including Uranium

[212] http://www.rosneft.ru/Upstream/Exploration/international/aday_kazakhstan/

[213] A 50% stake is held by Kazakhstan's KazMunaiGaz, and the remaining 25% have not been allocated. http://www.rosneft.ru/Upstream/Exploration/international/kurmangazy_kazakhstan/

[214] http://www.gazprom.ru/about/production/projects/deposits/kazakhstan/

[215] See: http://www.gpnbonus.ru/our_azs/

[216] 2872 tonnes of uranium were mined in Russia in 2012, which accounted for less than 5% of global output (6th in the world). Kazakhstan is first, having produced 21,317 tonnes (36.5% of global output). http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/Nuclear-Fuel-Cycle/Mining-of-Uranium/World-Uranium-Mining-Production/#.UdmV7ztFCf9

One's share of 468 tonnes) and a 30% stake in Kyzylkum company, which owns the Kharasan mine (582 tonnes, including Uranium One's share of 175 tonnes)[217]. Russia also buys uranium ore from Kazakh companies.

On 29 March 2011, Kazakhstan and Russia agreed on a comprehensive programme of co-operation in the area of peaceful use of nuclear energy, which envisages the construction of a nuclear power plant near the city of Aktau[218]. A joint Russian-Kazakh project to set up an international uranium enrichment centre in Russia's Angarsk, including a proposal to establish an international centre for the disposal of spent nuclear fuel and an international nuclear fuel bank, was initiated in May 2007[219]. Russia also supplies fuel to Kazakhstan's test reactors. Moscow's activity in this area is an attempt to consolidate the nuclear sector in the post-Soviet area under Russian control. WIth this purpose in mind, Russia has been rebuilding old co-operation contacts and using existing post-Soviet infrastructure. What may prevent Moscow from achieving this goal are the strengthening international competition and fears shared by some states (including Kazakhstan) that they could become dependent on Russia as part of such nuclear co-operation, also applying to the primary sector[220].

Russian corporations hold shares in the companies involved in the production and enrichment of lead-zinc ores at Akzhal mine, and operation of a molybdenum mine[221] and hard coal mines[222].

The key Russian assets in the electric power sector include a 50% stake held by Inter RAO in Ekibastuz State Power Plant 2 (a coal power plant, known as

[217] Data based on: http://www.armz.ru/media/File/facts/2013/armz_annual_report_20120608_encr.pdf
For more information on previous ownership shifts in the uranium production sector, see Marek Menkiszak, Ewa Paszyc, Iwona Wiśniewska, 'Aktywność gospodarcza Rosji…', *op. cit*.

[218] http://www.atomstroyexport.ru/about/projects/perspective/vber_300/

[219] This initiative was put forward by Rosatom's CEO, Sergey Kiriyenko during the IAEA's session in Vienna on 18 September 2007. Rosatom and IAEA struck a deal to this effect on 29 March 2010. Under this deal, a low-enriched uranium storage facility (for one reactor with a capacity of 1000 MW), which purchases can be made at spot prices, was built in Angarsk. Marek Menkiszak, Ewa Paszyc, Iwona Wiśniewska, 'Aktywność gospodarcza Rosji…', *op. cit*.

[220] *Ibid*.

[221] *Ibid*.

[222] RusAl company and the Kazakh holding Samruk established a joint venture known as Bogatyr Komir, which owns the largest bituminous coal deposits in the CIS (Ekibastuz). http://rusal.ru/press-center/files/RUSAL%20Media%20Pack%202011%20RUS.pdf
http://www.bogatyr.kz/ru/about/

EGRES-2) in Pavlodar province, which produces around 12% of Kazakhstan's energy. Two blocks, with a capacity of 500 MW each, are currently in operation. Two more blocks are planned to be launched by 2015, although this timetable is quite unrealistic. Part of the energy produced is exported to Russia via the Ekibastuz–Barnaul power transmission line (it was rebuilt and put into operation thanks to an investment made by Inter RAO UES worth US$1.5 million)[223].

In 2008, Russia's AvtoVAZ (the manufacturer of Lada cars) bought for around US$80 million 25% plus 1 share in Asia Auto, Kazakhstan's largest car manufacturer (Lada, Kia, Skoda and Chevrolet makes)[224].

Russian entities are also present in other sectors of Kazakhstan's economy, such as the mobile telecommunication and banking sectors. Up to 9,201 (28.5%) of the 32,257 registered business entities, branches and agencies with foreign capital represent Russian money[225].

*Soft power*

In accordance with Kazakhstan's constitution (Article 7(2)), Russian has an 'official language' status. The 'trilingualism' programme has been implemented in Kazakhstan since 2007, and envisages that the country's citizens should speak three languages in the future: Kazakh, Russian and English[226]. According to the 2009 census, 84.8% residents of Kazakhstan could write and speak Russian (62% could write and speak Kazakh, and 7.7% English), and up to 94.4% understood Russian (74% Kazakh and 15.4% English)[227]. It was decided in December 2012 that the Cyrillic script would be replaced with the Latin in the written Kazakh language by 2025, a move which is expected to symbolise the country's decreasing dependence on Russia[228].

[223] 70% of energy imported via Russia originates from Kazakhstan. Marek Menkiszak, Ewa Paszyc, Iwona Wiśniewska, 'Aktywność gospodarcza Rosji…', *op. cit*.

[224] *Ibid*.

[225] Data as of 1 January 2013. Turkish capital is represented by 3918 entities, Chinese by 2782 entities and German by 1253 entities (http://www.stat.kz/digital/bizness_registr/Pages/arhiv_12.aspx).

[226] 'В Казахстане на госуровне принят культурный проект Триединство языков', *Centrasia.ru*, 24 July 2007, http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1185221100

[227] http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2010/0443/panorm01.php#7
According to data as of 2005, 66% residents of Kazakhstan spoke Russian in their everyday life.

[228] Раушан Нуршаева, 'Казахстан перейдет с кириллицы на „современную" латиницу', *Ru.Reuters.com*, 14 December 2012, http://ru.reuters.com/article/topNews/idRUMSE8BD02D20121214

Russian is still a popular language of instruction at Kazakhstan's schools. In the school year 2011/2012, of a total of 7706 general education schools operating in the country (including 7596 public schools), 1508 (19.5%) were schools with Russian as the language of instruction. A definite majority of bi- and multi-lingual schools (2163 schools, i.e. 28%) had classes where education was provided in Russian[229]. Russian is the predominant language at higher education schools and in science in Kazakhstan; a definite majority of PhD and postdoctoral theses are written in this language[230]. Seven branches of Russian higher education facilities, including Moscow State University (since 2001[231]) and the Moscow Aviation Institute[232] operate there.

The Russian minority accounts for over twenty percent of the country's population[233]. Numerous Russian organisations[234] are active there, the largest (and oldest) of which include the Semirechye Cossack Community with six branches[235], the Association of the Steppe Cossacks (12 branches)[236], the *Lad* Republican Slavonic Movement (14 branches)[237], the Russian Community of Kazakhstan (14 branches)[238], the Slavonic Culture Centre (7 branches)[239] and the *Rusichi* Russian National Youth Culture Centre [240]. Some organisations publish

[229] The number of schools with Kazakh as the language of instruction was 3843, i.e. almost 50%. 'В Казахстане насчитали 3843 школы с казахским языком обучения и 1508 с русским', *News.nur.kz*, 25 January 2012, http://news.nur.kz/207313.html
For comparison, in the last years of the Soviet era, only two schools where education was provided in Kazakh operated in Alma-Ata, the then capital of the Kazakh SSR.

[230] http://echo.msk.ru/programs/linguafranca/1012040-echo/
In the opinion of Kazakhstan's ambassador to Russia, Galym Obrazbakov, Russian is more widespread than Kazakh in Kazakhstan. Some public servants, often ethnic Kazakhs, do not know the national language (*ibid.*).

[231] http://www.msu.kz/index.php

[232] http://www.mai.ru/info/subfac/voshod

[233] In 2009, ethnic Kazakhs formed around 63%, and Russians less than 24% of Kazakhstan's population.

[234] Data on 38 organisations is available on the websites of the Russian embassy in Astana (see footnote 29).

[235] Семиреченская казачья община, http://kazak-center.ru/index/0-64

[236] http://kazak-center.ru/news/roo_sojuz_kazakov_stepnogo_kraja_itogi_i_perspektivy/2010-04-18-516

[237] The organisation states on the website http://www.arvedi.kz/lad.html that it has 24 branches (although only 14 are specified) and 50,000 members.

[238] This organisation states that it formally has 60,000 members (however only 3000-4000 of them are active), http://www.msrs.ru/organisations/kazakhstan/176/

[239] This organisation has 5000 members, http://www.slavcentr.kz/

[240] http://vserusskie.ru/org/?id=7216fc785998497187aaec87825c6b50

their own newsletters and regularly update their websites[241], while others do not publicise their activity so much. The Association of Russian, Slavonic and Cossack Organisations of Kazakhstan, established in 1999, consists of over 40 organisations, and publishes the *Russkiy Vestnik* weekly, with a circulation of 5000 copies[242].

Two agencies of *Rossotrudnichestvo* are active in Kazakhstan (in Astana and Almaty). They co-operate with leading scientific and cultural institutions in this country[243]. The *Russkiy Mir* Foundation runs three Russian centres, in Astana, Aktyubinsk and Ust-Kamenogorsk[244], and also supports teachers of Russian and keeps contacts with a wide range of Kazakh media and Russian national minority organisations.

Russian predominates in Kazakhstan's information space to an even greater extent than in Kyrgyzstan. As there, the Russian language is used in media originating from Russia (which is generally accessible) and local Russian media (including *Argumenty i Fakty v Kazakhstane*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda Kazakhstan*) and Kazakh Russian-speaking media (including TV stations, which allocate a significant portion of their airtime to programmes and broadcasts in Russian). Russian is also the most popular language among news and analytical internet portals (for example, *Zonakz.net*, *Risk.kz* and *Newskaz.ru*; the latter also has a Kazakh version). Press agency reports are usually made available in Kazakh, Russian and English (*Interfax.kz*) or in other language versions (Kazinform also has an Arabic version on its website, *Inform.kz*)[245].

In addition to the embassy in Astana, Russia also has consulates-general in Almaty, Uralsk and Ust-Kamenogorsk. Furthermore, Bashkortostan, Dagestan

[241] Other examples of ethnic Russian websites in Kazakhstan are: http://www.arvedi.kz/ and http://www.rusazia.net/

[242] http://www.msrs.ru/organisations/kazakhstan/174/

[243] http://kaz.rs.gov.ru/
This website is frequently updated and publishes extensive information on all kinds of events organised and co-organised by *Rossotrudnichestvo*'s agencies.

[244] http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/catalogue/company_view.html?id=4325&catalog=&country=79&region=&city=, http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/catalogue/company_view.html?id=3522&catalog=&country=79&region=&city=, http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/catalogue/company_view.html?id=4324&catalog=&country=79&region=&city=

[245] An extensive catalogue of websites of Kazakh media (including local) can be found at http://www.nomad.su/?z=1

and Tatarstan have separate agencies. The Russian Trade Agency and an agency of the Federal Customs Service also operate in this country.

### 4.2. An outline of Russian-Kazakh relations[246]

Ethnic Kazakhs did not form an absolute majority in Kazakhstan in the period immediately preceding the collapse of the USSR. According to the 1989 census, they accounted for 39.7% of the republic's population (Russians were 37.8%). This unfavourable situation for the titular nation, along with the country's vast area and low population density, were among the reasons why President Nursultan Nazarbayev decided to move the capital city from Alma-Ata (now known as Almaty) in the southern part of the country to Akmola (formerly known as Tselinograd, and now as Astana), which is located further north, and significantly closer to the Russian border, where the share of ethnic Kazakhs was the lowest. By moving the central administration there, ethnic Kazakhs have reinforced their position in this part of the country (in the early 1990s, Russian nationalists, including Vladimir Zhirinovsky, insisted on many occasions that northern Kazakhstan should become part of Russia).

Furthermore, Nazarbayev concluded that to ensure stability and security for his country, the most beneficial solution would be to make it part of a network of various kinds of integration projects. Kazakhstan has actively participated in all such projects, and has initiated some of them. The enlarged Commonwealth of Independent States (before that, its members were only the Slavonic republics of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine) was formed at the Alma-Ata summit on 21 December 1991. Furthermore, the Eurasian Economic Community was established on 10 October 2000 in Astana. Kazakhstan's president had already put forward the idea of creating the Eurasian Union in 1994. On the one hand this policy was the result of fear of Chinese domination and a wish to outbalance Chinese influence (Astana was engaged in close co-operation with Beijing as part of the SCO and in the format of bilateral relations), while on the other it was a consequence of the country's desire to build its image as a promoter of stability and international co-operation, and as a distinctive, independent entity with some global ambitions. The vision of Kazakhstan as a multi-national

[246] Given the intensity of Russian-Kazakh contacts (the presidents meet several times a year, and contacts at lower levels, including between the heads of the frontier regions, are equally frequent), this outline is as a natural consequence more general than those on Russia's relations with other countries in this region, and is focused on key trends and tendencies. The preceding outlines were more detailed since it was necessary to present concrete case studies, such as the one concerning Russia's playing on the hydropower plant issues.

and multi-cultural state, fostered by Nazarbayev, contributed to that. He did not allow Kazakh nationalism to develop, thus preventing ethnic conflicts and tension[247].

These integrationist ideas have bring Kazakhstan closer to Russia. However, the two countries have different visions for the integration of the post-Soviet area. Nazarbayev set the boundaries for this process (from Astana's point of view) on 18 January 2013 at a meeting with the heads of foreign missions accredited in Kazakhstan, when he stated that Astana opposed the transformation of economic projects into a platform for political integration with Russia as the leader and representative of the member states (the President has said that "there is no return to the USSR"). Furthermore, unlike Moscow, Astana does not want supranational bodies to be created. Kazakhstan's decision to start using the Latin script is a symbolic gesture in this context. Moreover, proofs of Kazakhstan's assertiveness and determinedness in defending its interests have included periodical intensifications of tension between the two countries, caused for example by the aforementioned controversies over the Baikonur cosmodrome[248].

All this taken into account, Russian-Kazakh relations can nevertheless (with some reservations) be determined as partnership-based, which cannot be said about Russia's relations with Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan[249]. At the same time, Moscow and Astana have conflicting eco-

[247] In the opinion of some experts (for example, as given in OSW's conversation with Nikolai Kuzmin, a journalist from *Expert* weekly in Almaty, on 12 December 2011), Nazarbayev also views this integration as a means of resolving the country's domestic problems; for example, he has sometimes attempted to shift economic issues to the level of the Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC) and security issues to the forum of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), and at other times to dialogue with NATO. Astana has also drawn on 'Eurasian' ideas on such occasions, presenting them as an explanation for the special characteristics of the country, which like Russia is situated on two continents (see footnote 38). More information on integration projects will be provided in the next chapter.

[248] Aleksandra Jarosiewicz, 'Kazakhstan distances itself from Moscow's integration projects', *EastWeek*, OSW, 23 January 2013, http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2013-01-23/kazakhstan-distances-itself-moscows-integration-projects
Before that, at the Kazakh-Turkish business forum in Istanbul on 12 October 2012, Nazarbayev said: "When the last Kazakh Khan was killed in 1861, we became a colony of the Russian Empire and then of the Soviet Union. Kazakhs have nearly lost their national traditions, customs, language and religion over the past 150 years. We proclaimed our independence in 1991 with the help of the Almighty." http://inform.kz/rus/article/2502148

[249] Dmitri Trenin has noted that "for Moscow, Astana is not part of the problem [security in Central Asia, added by WG] but a key element of the solution to all problems of this region." (Дмитрий Тренин, Post-Imperium..., *op. cit.*, page 177).

nomic interests, and it has been impossible to remove the existing differences over the past twenty years. As has already been mentioned, Moscow wants to maintain its dominant position in the transport of Central Asian oil and gas to global (above all, European) markets. In turn, Kazakhstan has been making efforts to undermine this position and reduce its dependence on the transport routes running through Russia. In the medium term, Russia will maintain and even strengthen its position (following the planned increase in the transport capacity of the Tengiz–Novorossiysk oil pipeline[250]. This situation may change towards the end of the decade, when production at the Kashagan field starts and the planned large exports of oil via the Caspian Sea commence[251].

Nevertheless, such disagreements are unlikely to affect the close co-operation of the two countries, and the emerging tension will most probably be soothed (like before). In addition to the factors mentioned above, this will be influenced by their shared fear of destabilisation in the entire region following the wind-up of the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, and in the context of a possible succession crisis in Uzbekistan[252].

[250] The Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC), which is the pipeline's owner and operator, finally decided on 15 December 2010 to increase the route's annual capacity from the present 28 million to 67 million tonnes of oil. Currently, around 75% of Kazakhstan's exported oil is transferred via Russia (the pipeline running to Novorossiysk carries around 40% of Kazakh oil exports). Kazakhstan also exports oil via the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus (around 15%) and directly to China (around 10%). The greater part of Kazakh oil (around 75%) is sent to the Black Sea basin, from where it is directed to international (including European) markets.

[251] Aleksandra Jarosiewicz, 'Russia as the main corridor for oil export from Kazakhstan', *East-Week*, OSW, 29 December 2010, http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2010-12-29/russia-main-corridor-oil-export-kazakhstan

[252] A succession crisis is also possible in Kazakhstan itself. It is currently difficult to predict how power will be transferred and to what extent the next leader will continue Nazarbayev's policies (for example, concerning the degree of participation in integration projects, and with regard to ethnic minorities).

# III. THE MULTILATERAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

## 1. Central Asia in Moscow's integration initiatives

The integration of the post-Soviet area is a top priority issue in Russian foreign policy. The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation adopted on 12 February 2013 provides that Moscow will "actively support the Eurasian economic integration process, working together with Belarus and Kazakhstan towards the transformation of the Eurasian Economic Community and the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union, contribute to engagement of other EAEC Member States in this process, take steps to further develop and improve mechanisms and the legal and regulatory framework of the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space, help strengthen the Eurasian Economic Commission as a common standing regulatory body of the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space." The Eurasian Economic Union, also referred to as the Eurasian Union (EAU), which is planned to be the crowning achievement of the initiated integration projects – a structure similar to the European Union, albeit with some modifications – is expected "not only to make the best use of mutually beneficial economic ties in the CIS space but also to become a model of association open to other states, a model that would determine the future of the Commonwealth states. The new union that is being formed on the basis of universal integration principles is designed to serve as an effective link between Europe and the Asia-Pacific region"[253].

It can be concluded that Moscow wants to cover the entire CIS by this kind of deeper integration. However, as proven by the experiences of the last two decades, this goal appears quite unrealistic. In effect, the 'broad' integration, covering a larger number of countries will not guarantee the establishment of closer relations between them, while, apart from Russia, only two or three countries at most are interested in the 'deep' integration. Moscow does not conceal that it would most of all like to see Ukraine in the structures it has been creating. However, at present, the only partners Russia can rely on are Kazakhstan and Belarus, which have taken part in all its initiatives[254]. The other two members of the economic projects are currently Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

[253] http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D

[254] Alexey Malashenko has noted that the announced EAU is currently "a union between Russia and Kazakhstan with weak and economically helpless Belarus tacked on because its government hopes to use it as a means for building more advantageous relations with Russia" ('The Fight for Influence …', *op. cit.*, page 49).

(they have already joined some of the structures, and are expecting accession to others; furthermore, it was reported on 3 September 2013 that Armenia had decided to join the Customs Union[255]). If not for the Central Asian states, Russia's only constant partner would have been Belarus. Therefore, Moscow needs this region in the context of its integration projects.

Due to problems with reconciling the 'broad' and the 'deep' integration, the Russian government has, without having declared so, in practice chosen the latter version at the beginning of second decade of this century. One proof of this was Moscow's determination and haste in setting up the Customs Union[256], which was officially established on 1 July 2010 but still has only three member states: Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus. On 18 November 2011, the presidents of these three states signed a declaration of economic integration based on WTO rules and standards (which envisages the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union[257] by the beginning of 2015) and an agreement establishing the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) as the standing regulatory authority of the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space. The commission became the first supranational decision-making body in the post-Soviet area (whose competences cover the current operation of the CU and the CES)[258].

[255] Szymon Ananicz, 'Armenia turns away from the EU', *EastWeek*, OSW, 4 September 2013, http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2013-09-04/armenia-turns-away-eu

[256] The first economic organisation of former Soviet republics was the CIS, as part of which a number of structures were already established in the mid-1990s aiming at the integration of the consenting parties (the agreement envisaging the establishment of an economic union of 1993, the 1994 agreement on the free trade zone and the 1995 agreement between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan setting up a customs union). These structures were not put into operation. On 10 October 2000, Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan set up the Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC or EurAsEC, in Russian Евразийское экономическое сообщество, ЕврАзЭС), which is still formed by the same members (Uzbekistan belonged to the EAEC in 2006–2008). Its goals have included establishing a common market in its member states by developing a single policy for tariffs, prices, customs, etc. The next stage of integration was marked by the establishment on 1 July 2010 of the Customs Union (CU, in Russian Таможенный союз, ТС), which covered the EAEC's 'hard core' of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus. Internal customs controls in the CU area were lifted one year later. On 9 December 2010, the presidents of the three CU member states signed a declaration establishing the Common Economic Space (CES, in Russian Единое экономическое пространство, ЕЭП) aimed at a comprehensive economic integration of these countries. The CES was launched on 1 January 2012. No new members have joined the CU or the CES as yet (these projects are mutually connected; the Common Economic Space is a format available to the member states of the Customs Union). For more on Russian integration projects, see Iwona Wiśniewska, 'Eurasian Integration. Russia's attempt at the economic unification of the Post-Soviet area', *OSW Studies*, no. 44, July 2013.

[257] EAEU: in Russian Евразийский экономический союз, ЕЭС.

[258] Furthermore, a month before, on 18 October 2011, an agreement setting up the Free Trade

While focusing on deepening relations with its several closest partners, Moscow has not given up the idea of 'broad' integration, which remains its strategic goal. One proof of this was the campaign launched in midsummer 2013 to induce Ukraine, Moldova and Armenia to join Russia's integration projects.

The integration projects are important for Moscow in two aspects: the economic and the geopolitical. In economic terms, they are expected to be a response primarily to China's economic expansion. As regards geopolitics, they are supposed to prove that Russia is a major power and offer it a specific kind of capital, and advantage in relations with other global players[259]. If all the projects were implemented, Russia could gain the hegemony it desires in the CIS area. However, more post-Soviet countries would have to participate in this, especially Ukraine, and in Central Asia at least Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, as mentioned by Vladimir Putin[260]. This is why Moscow, having achieved the temporary success which the beginnings of the Customs Union's operation should be seen as, has not given up the idea of 'broad', integration and is continuing its efforts to attract these countries to the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space[261] – which has given rise to suspicions that it wants to rebuild its empire[262]. These attempts (as shown by various statements and declarations

Area (FTA, in Russian Зона свободной торговли, ЗСТ) for CIS countries was signed. The countries which joined the FTA were Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine, as well as Uzbekistan in spring 2013.

259 Aleksandra Jarosiewicz, Kamil Kłysiński, Iwona Wiśniewska, 'Common Economic Space: another step towards integration focused on Russia', *EastWeek*, OSW, 15 December 2010: "By strengthening and solidifying its neighbours' interdependency, Russia may act as the representative of the entire bloc of countries (Kazakhstan and Belarus) in its relations with the EU, which will strengthen Moscow's position towards Brussels. For this reason Russia is also now especially concerned with making its model for integrating the region's other countries appear convincing, especially to Ukraine (which is currently uninterested in this project). This would significantly increase the potential of the CES, hence its importance. By moving towards the creation of the CES, Moscow is working to present it as an attractive plan for integration in this region.", http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2010-12-15/common-economic-space-another-step-towards-integration-focused-russia

260 In an article published on 3 October 2011 in *Izvestia* newspaper, following the announcement of his decision that he would run for the presidency again: http://izvestia.ru/news/502761

261 This is important for Moscow, even though these are small economies and unattractive outlets, and despite the fact that neither Bishkek nor Dushanbe is capable of implementing the required regulations or effectively combating smuggling on the CU borders, and regardless of the fact that the free movement of workers is likely to increase the number of Kyrgyz and Tajik expatriate workers in Russia, which could give rise to new social tensions there (see e.g. Arkady Moshes, 'Will Ukraine Join (and Save) the Eurasian Custom Union?', *PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo* 247, IV 2013).

262 For example, the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton spoke of the "move to re-Sovietise the area" (reconstruct the former USSR) during lecture in Dublin on 6 December 2012. Uzbek-

containing references to the aforementioned foreign policy concept) have become more intense since the end of 2012[263].

Whatever the forecasts for the future operation of the CU, the CES and the EAEU, there are also opinions that Moscow's integration efforts could completely ruin its influence in Central Asia and even throughout the CIS[264]; its partners in these structures are strongly concerned about the asymmetry of relations resulting from the disproportion in the potentials of Russia and the other member states (for example, Kazakhstan's GDP is over 11 times smaller than Russia's). Kazakhstan, as mentioned before, also fears that Moscow could insist on political integration (President Nazarbayev has emphasised on numerous occasions that his country is participating solely in the creation of an economic union), while the candidates to join these structures, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, are afraid of being dominated by Russia and Kazakhstan (Bishkek seems more ready for integration at present, while Dushanbe is using the excuse that it has no common border with the Customs Union member states[265]; experts from these two countries have warned that their accession to the CU will entail a radical increase in prices, partly resulting from the requirement to reduce trade with China)[266]. The accession of the two smallest Central Asian countries to the Eurasian structures would show Moscow's real integration potential but also its limitations; Russia is no longer capable of attracting Uzbekistan or Turkmenistan, while Kazakhstan's participation in the projects is to a great extent a result of Astana's policy of balancing the Chinese influence.

istan's President Islam Karimov fiercely opposed the integration processes (as leading to the reconstruction of the empire) a year before: 'Президент Узбекистана Ислам Каримов выступил против интеграционного процесса, инициированного Россией', *Fergananews.com*, 14 December 2011, http://www.fergananews.com/news.php?id=17790&mode=snews

263 At present, Kyrgyzstan is the most likely to join this structure, followed by Tajikistan and Armenia. Moscow still views Ukraine's participation as vital: a memorandum on enhancing co-operation between Ukraine and the Eurasian Economic Commission was signed on 31 May 2013 (Tadeusz Iwański, Szymon Kardaś, 'Ukraine closer to the Customs Union?', *EastWeek*, OSW, 5 June 2013, http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2013-06-05/ukraine-closer-to-customs-union ).

264 Alexey Malashenko, 'The Fight for Influence …', *op. cit.*, page 53.

265 Tajikistan, which joined the WTO on 2 March 2013, is of the opinion that its quick accession to the CU would not offer it any tangible benefits, given this situation.

266 Iwona Wiśniewska, 'Eurasian Integration…', *op. cit.* Since the Customs Union was established and the customs duty rates were raised to the level applicable in Russia, many goods, including food and cars, have also become more expensive in Kazakhstan to the dissatisfaction of the public. (Aleksandra Jarosiewicz, 'Kazakhstan distances…', *op. cit.*).

## 2. The CSTO as a means of military and political integration

The *raison d'être* of the Eurasian Economic Community and all the entities which have emerged from it is economic integration (regardless of Moscow's geopolitical goals). In turn, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (known in 1992–2002 as the union of countries-parties to the Collective Security Treaty) was forged as a political and defence alliance. At the peak of its popularity, its members included up to nine of the former Soviet republics, among them four from Central Asia (all but Turkmenistan), which made it the second largest structure in the post-Soviet area after the CIS. In the 1990s, the CSTO guaranteed Russia, which was the dominant power, that it would maintain its influence in the member states while being forced to reduce its financial outlays. This influence was manifested especially through the military presence (bases) and also the partners' dependence on Russian weapons (which were supplied to them at attractive prices). For their part, the other members shared the belief, which has weakened over time, that in exchange for their loyalty Moscow is ready to guarantee them security. They have also benefited from supplies of weapons and uniforms, training at Russian military academies, etc.

Russia's position was reinforced when the union of states was transformed in 2002 into a full-scale international organisation. Only then could it talk to the USA, which led the coalition operation in Afghanistan, as an equal partner and the leader of a group of states; the reorganisation of the CSTO and the consolidation of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation were respectively the responses from Russia and from Russia & China to the emergence of the West, and especially the United States, as a new major player in this region. The Collective Operational Reaction Forces (CORF)[267], consisting of around 4000 soldiers, were established in 2009 as part of the CSTO. These forces have taken part in a number of large-scale exercises. Meanwhile, the number of the CSTO member states was reduced to six (periodically seven[268]), three (or four) of which represented Central Asia. Russia was still aiming to monopolise the collective security system in Central Asia, and to receive the strongest possible mandate for its actions. For example, the declaration of co-operation between the CSTO and the UN signed on 18 March 2010 served this purposes, as it meant an acknowledgement of the CSTO's ability to contribute to security at a global level.

[267] Collective Rapid Reaction Forces previously existed as part of the CSTO. In late 2007/early 2008 they consisted of 10 battalions: 5 Russian, 2 Kazakh, 2 Tajik and 1 Kyrgyz.

[268] Uzbekistan rejoined the organisation between 2006 and 2012.

The passive stance taken by the CSTO (and Russia itself) on the Uzbek-Kyrgyz ethnic clashes which broke out on 10 June 2010 in southern Kyrgyzstan has undermined the organisation's reliability. On 12 June, Kyrgyzstan's acting president, Roza Otunbayeva, asked Russia to bring its peacekeeping forces into the conflict area. However, Moscow ruled out getting involved, restricting its moves to sending more personnel to the Kant air base. In turn, the secretaries of the security counsels of the CSTO member states, who had gathered at an emergency meeting in Moscow, promised only military-technical (excluding weapon supplies) and logistic assistance to Bishkek. Russia's decision not to send its military contingent could have been caused by resistance from its partners (especially Uzbekistan, but also possibly Kazakhstan). Nevertheless, the most likely reason seems to be Moscow's insufficient determination, resulting from a fear of becoming involved in a long-lasting and violent ethnic conflict, which would have entailed high financial costs and risked a loss of face[269].

The official reason for not taking any action at all was the fact that the CSTO's statute did not provide for an intervention in case of an internal crisis in a member state; intervention was reserved only for external threats, a pretext Moscow used to reinforce this formula. The crisis reaction strategy adopted at the end of 2010 already envisaged joint actions to protect stability of the member states, and the 'Stance on the principles of emergency response from the member states of the CSTO', adopted one year later, provided for the possibility of using the Collective Operational Reaction Forces in situations where a given country is unable to overcome the crisis by itself[270]. Thus Russia gained an instrument which allowed it to legally launch an intervention in any partner state. It seems that this instrument was prepared in case the 'Arab Spring', or another wave of public protests and revolts following the so-called 'coloured revolutions' that Moscow feared, spilled onto the post-Soviet area. Since these fears were shared by the leaders of other CTSO member states, especially those from Central Asia, no one opposed the adoption of the 'Stance'.

[269] Wojciech Górecki, 'Russia's position on …', *op. cit.*

[270] 'События в Кыргызстане подвигли ОДКБ к принятию нового Положения о порядке реагирования на кризисную ситуацию', *Kyrtag.kg*, 10 December 2010, http://www.kyrtag.kg/?q=ru/news/2734
'В Москве прошла очередная сессия Совета коллективной безопасности ОДКБ', *Regnum.ru*, 20 December 2011, http://www.regnum.ru/news/1481734.html

Pursuant to the CSTO's statute, its member states consult and coordinate their positions on foreign policy issues and regional security problems[271]. In December 2011, the leaders of the organisation's member states agreed that third-party military bases could only be deployed on their territories following consultations with the other partners[272]. This was a success for Russia, since the United States could not entrench its military presence in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan after the Afghan mission ended (this did not concern Uzbekistan, which left the CSTO half a year later), unless Moscow agreed to it. Meanwhile Russia, without having consulted anyone, opened a transit base in Ulyanovsk for the needs of NATO in September 2012[273]. Regardless of the assurances that NATO would only be allowed to use the civilian facilities there, this proves that Moscow treats the CSTO and its commitments to its allies as it sees convenient.

As with economic integration, Russia's military and political co-operation projects are to a great extent based on Central Asia. Three out of the six CSTO member states are from this region. The ISAF withdrawal from Afghanistan will be a test of their loyalty to Moscow. It cannot be ruled out that they could resort to formal and legal tricks to legalise some form of Western military presence on their territories after 2014 in exchange for financial and material benefits (such as weapons left by the withdrawing armies, which are more attractive than Russian arms).

The economic and military components may also become part of the Eurasian Economic Union/Eurasian Union currently being formed. However, it is quite unlikely that the CSTO will be disbanded after the union has been formally set up. In turn, the existence of the Eurasian Economic Community, and probably also of the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space, may become pointless.

[271] http://www.dkb.gov.ru/b/azg.htm

[272] http://www.odkb.gov.ru/session_fortnight/a.htm

[273] http://politykawschodnia.pl/index.php/2012/09/25/natowski-tranzyt-przez-rosje-juz-mozliwy/
See the section discussing the prospects of winding up the ISAF mission below in this chapter.

## 3. Moscow vs. the region in the context of the SCO

The Shanghai Co-operation Organisation was established in 2001 as a consequence of the transformation of the 'Shanghai Five' (formed by China and the former Soviet republics which bordered on it: Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan[274]), which Uzbekistan joined as well. The organisation's makeup has not changed since then, but five other countries have been granted observer status (Mongolia, India, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan), and three more 'partner in dialogue' status (Belarus, Sri Lanka and Turkey).

The tasks of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation include promoting stability in the member states (especially in Central Asia) and good neighbourly relations between them; jointly combating the 'three evils' (separatism, terrorism and extremism); fostering effective regional co-operation in all areas (including politics, trade and economy, defence, science and technology, culture, etc.); establishing and maintaining relations with other countries and international organisations. On the one hand, the very broad spectrum of the SCO's goals makes this organisation amorphous, and on the other allows a great variety of initiatives to be implemented as part of it (security, economy, transport, protection of the natural environment, and many others).

The Shanghai Co-operation Organisation aspires to be Eurasia's leading organisation (the areas of all its member states taken together form 60% of Eurasia's territory) and to counterbalance the global dominance of the USA (and especially the US military presence in the region)[275]. The ambivalent attitude towards the coalition of powers present in Afghanistan (in practice – towards the United States), as represented by China and Russia, which predominate in this organisation, has been manifested in the above-mentioned declaration adopted on 5 July 2005 at the SCO summit in Astana, which stated:

Given the fact that the active war phase of the anti-terrorist operation has been closed, the member states of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation believe that it is necessary for relevant participants of the anti-terrorist coalition to determine the final timeframe of their temporary use of the aforementioned

[274] The aim of the 'Five' was to settle border issues between China and its neighbours.

[275] Krzysztof Strachota, 'The Summit of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation', *EastWeek*, OSW, 13 June 2012, http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2012-06-13/summit-shanghai-cooperation-organisation

infrastructure facilities and presence of their military contingents in the SCO member states.

However it was also stated that "We support and will continue supporting the efforts of the international coalition engaged in the anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan."[276]

A number of specialist agendas and co-operation programmes exist as part of the organisation. The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (SCO RATS)[277] formed on 7 June 2002 is in charge of coordinating the member states' fight against terrorism and extremism (for example, a common database has been created and draft international legal solutions in this area have been prepared). Anti-terrorist military exercises (since 2003) and annual exercises codenamed 'Peacekeeping Missions', in which primarily Chinese and Russian units participate, have been held since 2005 as part of the SCO[278].

In September 2003, the government heads of the SCO member states signed a 'Programme of Multilateral Economic and Trade Co-operation' to last twenty years. It envisaged boosting trade, as well as co-operation in such areas as energy, transport, agriculture and telecommunications, etc, and in the longer term, establishing a free trade area within the framework of the organisation. However, these provisions have remained mere declarations. The Business Council consisting of representatives of the SCO member states' financial circles was formed in June 2006. A proposal to set up an SCO Energy Club was made in December 2012. Many more such initiatives have been put forward.

China and Russia view the SCO as a convenient forum for striking deals and neutralising tension in Central Asia. Beijing has been making efforts to strengthen the instruments available to the SCO in the areas of economic co-operation and security (the Economic Development Fund was established upon its initiative). Meanwhile, Moscow is opposed to this, as it fears that China's potential and vigour could thwart its own integration projects. To avoid competition between the SCO and the EAEC/CES, which are made up of a similar set of members (where Russia and its imitated structures would certainly be

[276] http://www.akorda.kz/ru/page/deklaratsiya-glav-gosudarstv-chlenov-shankhaiskoi-organizatsii-sotrudnichestva_1341805545

[277] http://www.ecrats.com/ru/rats_history/1805

[278] 'Максим Семенов, Российско-китайские учения „Мирная миссия-2013" завершились на Урале', *Vz.ru*, 15 August 2013, http://vz.ru/news/2013/8/15/645837.html

less appealing than the Chinese offer), Moscow supports co-operation between these two formats[279], which in turn is contrary to China's interests. For this reason, Beijing prefers to focus on bilateral economic relations, while not giving up its attempts to take the initiative at the SCO, which is also an essential matter of prestige for China. Russia sees the political component of the organisation as more important, as balancing China's influence and, jointly with China, US influence in the region. As regards the military component, Moscow definitely prefers co-operation with the Central Asian countries as part of the CSTO, which is under its control (preserving the monopoly on 'hard' security in the region is vital for it). The conflict between the two visions of the SCO has adversely affected the organisation's effectiveness. However, participation in it has contributed – at least thus far – to the prevention of open conflicts, especially between Russia and China[280].

## 4. The perspective of winding up the ISAF mission in Afghanistan

The ability to respond to continuing instability in Central Asia, and to the development of the situation in Afghanistan in the context of the withdrawal of the ISAF mission from Afghanistan and of the US presence from the region after 2014, will be a test for both the SCO itself and for the influence of Russia and China in this organisation. This will also be a test for other regional organisations and, last but not least, for the governments of all the Central Asian countries individually. The possibility that selected US units will remain in Afghanistan (including at the Bagram base) has met with an (officially) negative reaction from Russia and a reserved response from China, while the Central Asian countries have adopted an ambiguous stance. It seems that Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and probably also Tajikistan would be ready to accept the presence of US military facilities on their territories firstly for security reasons (fear of the Taliban and the threats spreading from Afghanistan: radical Islam, terrorism and drugs), and secondly for financial reasons (leasing fees, and possibly

[279] Marcin Kaczmarski, 'The bear…', *op. cit.*, page 30-31.

[280] As Alexey Malashenko has noted, "The Central Asian countries would be faced with the dilemma of deciding whether the SCO or the Eurasian Union would offer them the greater benefits, in essence having to tacitly choose between China and Russia." Alexey Malashenko, 'The Fight for Influence …', *op. cit.*, pages 64. In another section, he writes: "The dynamic of China's utilization of the SCO has been straightforward and consistent: at the first stage was the "Shanghai Five" to settle border disputes; the second stage was its transformation into the SCO to provide a basis for economic cooperation; and the third stage has been to gradually acquire a political dimension. China's role has grown at each stage, as evidenced by the way that the emerging outline of the SCO's cooperation with the United States has begun to appear closer to a kind of U.S.-Chinese cooperation." (*Ibid.*, page 70).

military equipment, training, etc.)[281]. At the same time, since the latter two countries belong to the CSTO, they must obtain Moscow's consent to this.

Regardless of Moscow's resistance to the continuation of the US forces' presence in Afghanistan after 2014, a likelihood expressed on numerous occasions, this scenario is seen as beneficial by Russia, since otherwise Russian troops (and those of Russia's allies from the CSTO) will find themselves on the front lines (assuming that Afghanistan becomes a hotbed of aggressive, expansive extremism). This is directly stated in the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation of 12 February 2013:

The ongoing crisis in Afghanistan and the forthcoming withdrawal of international military contingents from the country pose a great security threat to Russia and other CIS members. The Russian Federation together with Afghanistan and concerned countries, the United Nations, the CIS, the CSTO, the SCO and other multilateral institutions including Russia-NATO projects, will make consistent efforts to find a just and lasting political solution to the problems faced by this country with due respect for the rights and interests of all its ethnic groups and achieve a post-conflict recovery of Afghanistan as a peace-loving sovereign neutral state with stable economy. Comprehensive measures to reduce terrorist threat from Afghanistan and eliminate or reduce illicit drug production and traffic in a significant and measurable manner will be an integral part of those efforts. Russia is committed to further intensifying international efforts under the auspices of the UN aimed at helping Afghanistan and its neighbouring states to meet these challenge.[282]

As already mentioned, Russia made the transit base in Ulyanovsk available to NATO in September 2012; this fits with Moscow's ambivalent stance on its co-operation with Washington, which can be summed up as "ideological confrontation and pragmatic co-operation"[283]. This co-operation covers the Afghan

[281] Some hints of this have also been made by Kazakhstan. On 26 April 2013, at a conference of foreign ministers of the so-called Istanbul Process regarding Afghanistan, President Nazarbayev suggested that the Caspian port of Aktau could be used by NATO member states as an ISAF mission transit port. *Wiadomości*, OSW, 29 April 2013, http://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/wiadomosci/2013-04-29

[282] http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D

[283] Witold Rodkiewicz, 'Ideological confrontation and pragmatic co-operation – Moscow's recipe for its relations with Washington', *EastWeek*, OSW, 6 March 2013, http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2013-03-06/ideological-confrontation-and-pragmatic-co-operation-moscows-recipe

issue among others. When stating the reasons for opening the base, at a meeting with soldiers from airborne units stationed in Ulyanovsk, President Putin said that assistance had to be offered to NATO forces fighting in Afghanistan so that it would not be necessary to send Russian troops there. However, he also expressed his regret that the states engaged in the operation were mainly concerned about how they would withdraw from there: "They have assumed some responsibilities, so why would they not bring the issue to a conclusion?"[284]. Furthermore, Moscow also made its territory available for the transit needs of the ISAF operation for financial reasons (transit charges), and because it wanted to restrict transit via the Central Asian countries[285].

Russia is taking various scenarios into account, and is preparing itself for various possibilities, one proof of which is its active engagement in a broad variety of Afghanistan-related initiatives, as observed since the end of the previous decade, such as its successful attempt to get Afghanistan granted observer status at the SCO (this took place at the beginning of June 2012). It appears that Moscow thus wanted to create another platform for dialogue with Afghanistan, and also to have another means of influence on this country (especially if US forces remain there). Another format set up in 2009 is the annual meetings of the presidents of Russia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan, during which first of all issues linked to stabilising Afghanistan in the regional context are discussed, including drug production and trafficking issues (this format is especially valued by Moscow since neither the USA nor China participate in it).

At this moment (February 2014), nobody still knows how the situation in the region will develop following the withdrawal of the ISAF mission, and especially whether and to what extent the security conditions (in the broad meaning of the term) will deteriorate. Intensive diplomatic consultations to this effect are underway, in which representatives of global powers and Central Asian countries are involved. The 'year 2014 problem' (when ISAF is withdrawn) has been

[284] 'Putin: Trzeba pomóc NATO w Afganistanie', *Rp.pl*, 1 August 2012, http://www.rp.pl/artykul/921231.html

[285] In practice, the Ulyanovsk base is not used by NATO precisely foe to the very high transit costs; only one test cargo transit has been transported using this base until mid-August 2013 (*Forbes.ru*, 15 August 2013, http://www.forbes.ru/news/243493-tranzit-gruzov-iz-afganistana-cherez-ulyanovsk-ostalsya-nevostrebovannym). US troops decided they would not use the base in October 2013 ('США не будут использовать транспортный узел в Ульяновске', *Gazeta.ru*, 28 October 2013, http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/news/2013/10/28/n_3284597.shtml).

given a great amount of attention in the media and in expert discussions in this region[286]. According to the more pessimistic scenarios, the region will be destabilised, extremist circles will gain influence and the flow of drugs from there will increase. The Central Asian countries also fear an influx of refugees[287]. Discussing such scenarios may turn out beneficial for Russia's position in Central Asia, since this will strengthen the belief (which is still shared by part of the elites) that in the case of real threat Russia will remain the only guarantor of security[288]. On the other hand, a quite different scenario also seems likely, where the reduction of US military presence and even a return to power for the Taliban in Afghanistan will not initially affect the region's security in any essential way, since Afghanistan's major political forces will be focused on the internal situation. However, it cannot be ruled out that in the case of a long-term conflict (and especially of a civil war in Afghanistan), ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks will migrate on a mass scale from Afghanistan to Central Asia, which may lead to various kinds of tension and destabilise the situation there.

[286] Numerous conferences, seminars and round table discussions devoted to this issue have been held. One of the many examples wasthe international conference hosted by the Bishkek Liberal Club and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation under the title 'Страны Центральной Азии: влияние глобальных игроков и перспективы развития' (Central Asian countries: the influence of global players and development prospects, Bishkek 29–30 March 2013).

[287] On 22–26 April 2013, representatives of the UNHCR mission in Kyrgyzstan and of the Kyrgyz ministry for emergency situations developed a preliminary plan in case a large wave of refugees from Afghanistan comes to the region. ('Кыргызстан подготовил план на случай потенциального притока в страну беженцев', *Fergananews.com*, 29 April 2013, http://www.fergananews.com/news/20592).

[288] The existence of this belief, which is very difficult to notice and cannot be quantified, was observed by the author of this paper during conversations with numerous representatives of expert, academic and journalist circles on his trips to Central Asian countries in 2010–2013. In the author's subjective opinion, this belief is strongest in Kyrgyzstan and less strong in Tajikistan, and is also sometimes present in Kazakhstan.

## CONCLUSIONS

Moscow's influence in Central Asia has strongly eroded during the period of over two decades since the collapse of the USSR. This process has slowed down as a consequence of President Vladimir Putin's active policy, and due to fear of a destabilisation of the situation in Afghanistan, in the face of which local leaders would prefer their relations with Russia not to deteriorate. However, it cannot be said that the trend has been reversed. One symbolic example is the network of air connections formed over the past few years. The most convenient flight transfers from the region to the West are offered by Istanbul, Frankfurt, Vienna and Riga, while at the beginning of this century Moscow was practically the only air hub available in the post-Soviet area (with the exception of the Baltic states)[289].

Another proof of Moscow's dissipating attractiveness to Central Asian countries (and in broader terms, to the CIS) is the number of member states in the organisations it has established and supported over the past two decades. Twelve countries joined the Commonwealth of Independent States (established in 1991), nine joined the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (1992), five joined the Eurasian Economic Community (2000), and three joined the Customs Union (2010). In Central Asia, Russia's influence is the strongest in Kyrgyzstan, strong in Tajikistan and significant in Kazakhstan (albeit skilfully balanced by Astana with Beijing's and Washington's influences). It cannot be successfully challenged in the short term, although China's increasing presence and Kazakhstan's consistent emancipation may change this even in the medium term. It seems quite unlikely that Moscow will be able to regain its influence in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, and even less likely that the entire region will again find itself within the Russian zone of influence. Being aware of this, Moscow will attempt at least to contain the expansion of other actors (especially in the area of security).

All this considered, Russia is still an important and at times even key player in the region. Its being 'Eurasian', which has been used as an ideological basis for its integration projects, is in fact one of its advantages. This is the only power

[289] The significance of Turkish airlines and of Istanbul as a transfer airport has been growing year on year. At present, Istanbul is the best transfer airport for flight for example from Ashgabat to Dushanbe, and the visa-free regime between Turkmenistan and Turkey additionally contributes to this (the small number of direct connections in Central Asia is in turn further proof of the poor bilateral relations within the region).

which is perceived in Central Asia not as foreign but as part of the region (*sensu largo*). Unlike other actors, Moscow has been involved in the region in a comprehensive way, while China has focused on economic co-operation (although Beijing has also hinted at taking an interest in the security area), the USA on security issues and to a lesser extent on political co-operation, and Islamic states on spiritual values of their religion. The aforementioned three centres of influence (China, the USA, and more generally the West and the Islamic *umma*) and their activity pose a challenge, and at the same time set a point of reference for Moscow. With the exception of the integration projects (which are primarily targeted at Ukraine and Central Asia), Russian policy towards this region has been shaped by relations with these three centres, and it may thus give the impression of being inconsistent and reactive. It can be assumed that Russia could have achieved more in this region if it had treated the Central Asian governments more like partners (although its support for the local authoritarian regimes without raising human rights and democratisation issues is undoubtedly very important for them).

Russia has lost its monopoly on exports of Central Asian hydrocarbons to global markets (pipelines running from the region to China and Iran have been built), but it has maintained this monopoly in its exports to Europe. Therefore, it will most likely consistently continue blocking all attempts at building trans-Caspian routes (in its official statements Moscow does not present its relations with China in terms of rivalry, unlike with the West, although it does in fact see them as such).

The most important regional problem for Russia is the upcoming withdrawal of the ISAF mission from Afghanistan. Moscow seems to be less concerned about the possible 'hard' threats (it is separated from the Afghan border by Kazakhstan and one or two other states) but more about 'soft' threats, especially drug smuggling. This is the reason why it attaches so much importance to its military presence in Central Asian countries (the bases in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and the desired return of Russian border guards to the Tajik-Afghan border) and preventing the continued military presence of any other player whom it does not approved of.

Another consequence of the withdrawal of the greater part of US troops from Afghanistan may be an increase in tension in Russian-Chinese relations. Both Moscow and Beijing have consistently opposed the US military presence in the region; US bases have been the constant point of reference and catalyst for co-operation between the two countries, especially at the SCO forum. After 2014,

when this factor no longer plays such a great role, the room for co-operation between Russia and China will be reduced, while disagreements between them will probably intensify (the conflict between Russian integration projects and the co-operation offered to Central Asian countries by China may play a major role. It is also possible that conlicts will arise concerning access to and exports from energy deposits, and so their rivalry may become more bitter.

Russia will most likely protect its possessions in the region with determination and great engagement. Apart from Belarus and Armenia, Central Asia is the last strip of the former Russian and Soviet empire where Moscow can still feel like a political leader. Its presence and influence in this region are important for it from both the geopolitical and symbolic points of view, as its position as a major power depends on this.

**WOJCIECH GÓRECKI**

*The text was closed in January 2014*

**Map.** Post-Soviet Central Asia