

Kazakhstan's 2011 Military Doctrine: Reassessing Regional and International Security

BY ROGER N. MCDERMOTT

*Senior International Fellow,
Foreign Military Studies Office*

United Kingdom

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Roger N. McDermott is a graduate of the University of Oxford specializing in defense and security issues in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). He is a Senior Fellow in Eurasian Military Studies, Jamestown Foundation, Washington DC. McDermott is on the editorial board of Central Asia and the Caucasus and the scientific board of the Journal of Power Institutions in Post-Soviet Societies. His articles appear in scholarly journals including the Journal of Slavic Military Studies, and his weekly assessments of security developments in Central Asia, Eurasia Daily Monitor (Jamestown Foundation), are read by policy planners. He is also the co-editor of the book, Russian Military Reform 1992-2002 (Frank Cass: London/Portland, 2003). McDermott is also conducting extensive policy oriented research into Russian defense reform, and will publish a book on the 'new look' Russian armed forces, as well as a chapter in a forthcoming Routledge book based on an FOI conference in Sweden on Russian military development (October 4-5, 2010), in which he examines Russian perspectives on network-centric warfare (Roger McDermott, Bertil Nygren and Carolina Vendil-Pallin (editors), The Russian Armed Forces in Transition: Economic, Geopolitical and Institutional Uncertainties, (Routledge: London), 2011).

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PHOTO: A Kazakh NCO points to the mission objective in front of Kazakhstan's mountainous terrain during an information exchange field exercise. Photo by Spc. Alex Licea Source: Third U.S. Army PAO via www.dvidshub.net/image/1674/kazakhstan



Kazakhstan's 2011 Military Doctrine runs to 4,720 words in Russian and is divided into four parts: introduction,

analysis of the country's military security situation, basic tenets and conclusion. The doctrine is a "system of views on ensuring military security, preventing wars and armed conflicts (hereafter called military conflicts), developing the military organization, and using the Armed Forces and other troops and military formations." Equally, it "defines the objectives, fundamental principles and forms of pursuing the Republic of Kazakhstan's military security policy." It is less proscriptive than its previous version in 2007, offering little vision for a stage-by-stage transformation of the Armed Forces, consequently implying that the state is satisfied that such deep-scale reforms no longer required.¹

The doctrine must be assessed in the wider context of the country's security documents, including earlier versions of the Military Doctrine as well as paying close reference to the laws on defense and other relevant state legislation.² According to the conclusion of the 2011 Military Doctrine its provisions and clauses may be further elaborated or adjusted as required during the annual national address by President Nursultan Nazarbayev.³ However, it is necessary to define its scope and limits, sketching its planning and development prior to presidential approval and explain why a new version of the security document was required.

Military Doctrine in any modern state functions as a guidance document for the structuring, use and role of the military as well as describing the security environment within which it may operate, drawing upon domestic experience, foreign and security

policy, military theory and a range of factors relating to threat assessment. In the non-NATO former Soviet countries such security documents commonly contain elements that cause even the country's foremost defense specialists to raise legitimate questions; this is the case with both the 2010 Russian and Kazakhstan's 2011 Military Doctrines.⁴ Critics in both countries argue that these security documents shed insufficient light on the real security priorities of the state, and one common anomaly is the references in each doctrine to mobilization, despite widespread recognition that neither country will face a large-scale military conflict demanding either mass or partial mobilization.

At a bureaucratic level the planning and development of Military Doctrine in Kazakhstan follows a similar pattern to such processes in Russia. Indeed the approach to how the document is drafted, edited and revised is steeped in the military and defense planning legacy of the Soviet era.⁵ The starting point in the drafting and revision process is rooted in earlier versions of the doctrine, including consideration of the clauses requiring rewording or the need for new entries, and the removal of obsolete elements. Kazakhstan introduced its first Military Doctrine in 1993 within only a few months of forming its independent Armed Forces on May 7, 1992, although some domestic critics suggested this it was never fully implemented, before revising the document in 2000 and issuing a third doctrine in 2007. Many Western and Russian defense experts regarded the first two doctrines in 1993 and 2000 as strongly influenced by the Soviet legacy and this was confirmed by the nuances between the successive defense ministers in the country during the 1990s, each in turn advocating variations of Soviet approaches to defense and security.⁶

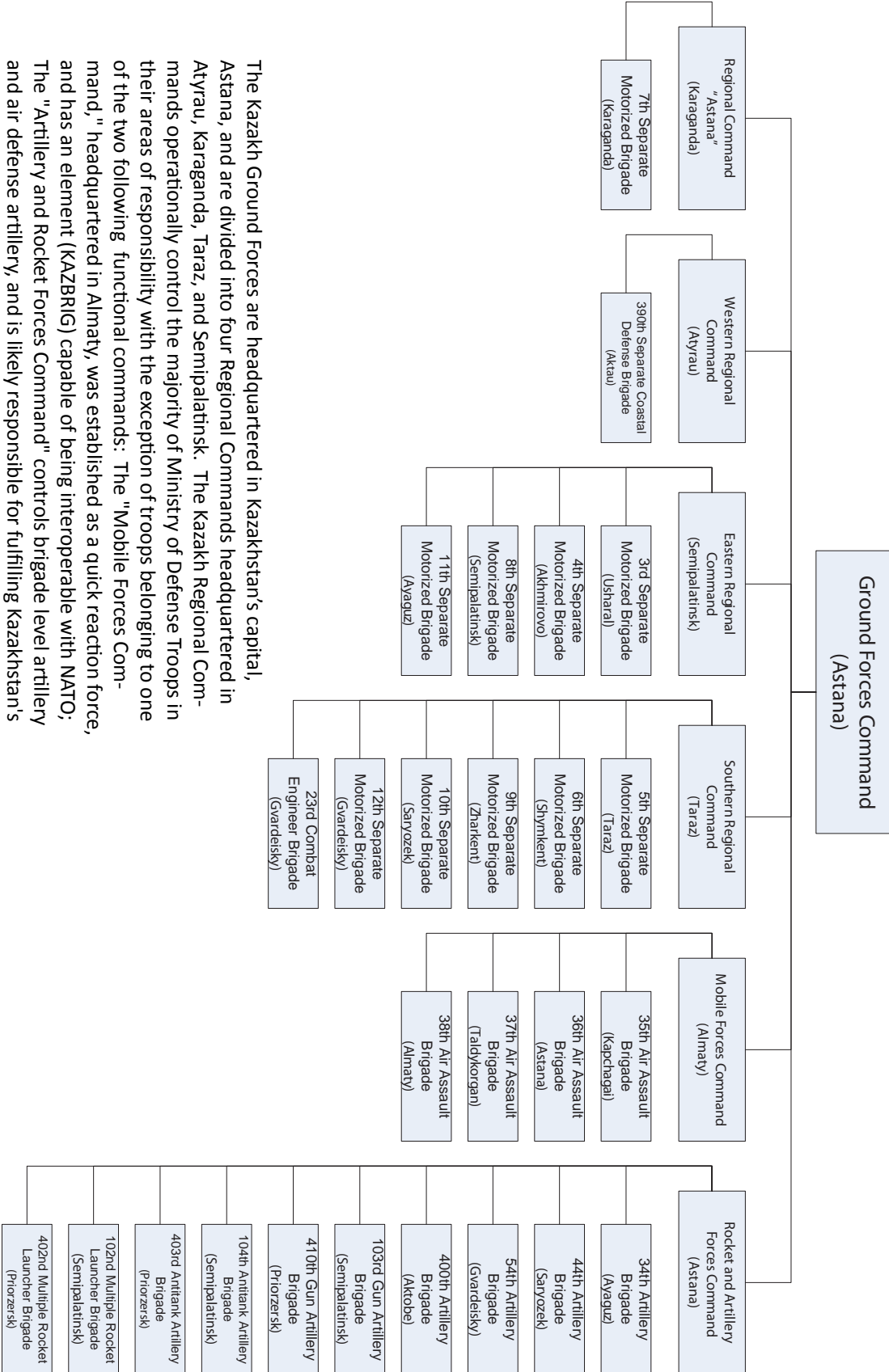


The president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev by Robert D. Ward [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

Indeed, the 2000 Military Doctrine also quickly became outdated due to its references to the Collective Security Treaty, which by 2002 had been transformed into the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and in 2001 the Shanghai Five emerged as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Shifts also occurred in the regional and international threat environment *inter alia* militant activities in the Batken region of Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and 2000, or the threat from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Al Qaeda's meta terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on September 11, 2001 (9/11), the US-led intervention in Afghanistan and a Western military presence in Central Asia were among several issues that left the 2000 Military Doctrine largely redundant shortly after it was signed by President Nazarbayev.⁷

By 2003, this was reinforced by structural changes in Kazakhstan's Armed Forces which moved to a three tier structure (Air and Air Defense Forces, the Navy and the Ground Forces which include the Airmobile Forces, missile and artillery troops) and this was only finally reflected in the 2007 version of the doctrine. The defense ministry had also abolished the existing military district system, replacing it with regional commands

Kazakhstan's Ground Forces Command Structure



The Kazakh Ground Forces are headquartered in Kazakhstan's capital, Astana, and are divided into four Regional Commands headquartered in Atyrau, Karaganda, Taraz, and Semipalatinsk. The Kazakh Regional Commands operationally control the majority of Ministry of Defense Troops in their areas of responsibility with the exception of troops belonging to one of the two following functional commands: The "Mobile Forces Command," headquartered in Almaty, was established as a quick reaction force, and has an element (KAZBRIG) capable of being interoperable with NATO; The "Artillery and Rocket Forces Command" controls brigade level artillery and air defense artillery, and is likely responsible for fulfilling Kazakhstan's joint air defense obligations with the Russian Federation.

Kazakhstan's Ground Forces Command

The map displays the administrative boundaries and military command areas of the Kazakh Ground Forces. Major HQs and Regional Command AORs are color-coded: Astana (tan), West (orange), East (yellow), and South (brown). Ground Forces Command AORs are labeled with their respective units and abbreviations: Rocket (36 AAB), Astana (7 MRB), East (102 MLB, 103 GAB, 104 ATB, 4 MRB), South (37 AAB, 9 MRB, 35 AAB, 44 ATB), West (10 MRB, 4 MRB), and South (38 AAB). The map also shows the locations of major cities and the boundaries of the four Ground Forces Commands.

Major HQs & Regional Command AORs

- Ground Forces Command HQ
- Regional Command HQ
- Functional Command HQ
- Brigade HQ

Major HQs & Regional Command AORs

- Astana
- West
- East
- South

| Unit | Abbreviation |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Astana Regional Command | Astana |
| Western Regional Command | West |
| Eastern Regional Command | East |
| Southern Regional Command | South |
| Mobile Forces Command | Mobile |
| Rocket and Artillery Forces Command | Rocket |
| Separate Motorized Brigade | MRB |
| Separate Engineer Brigade | CEB |
| Separate Coastal Defense Brigade | CDB |
| Artillery Brigade | ARB |
| Gun Artillery Brigade | GAB |
| Antitank Artillery Brigade | ATB |
| Multiple Rocket Launcher Brigade | MLB |
| Air Assault Brigade | AAB |

| Unit | Abbreviation |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Astana Regional Command | Astana |
| Western Regional Command | West |
| Eastern Regional Command | East |
| Southern Regional Command | South |
| Mobile Forces Command | Mobile |
| Rocket and Artillery Forces Command | Rocket |
| Separate Motorized Brigade | MRB |
| Combat Engineer Brigade | CEB |
| Separate Coastal Defense Brigade | CDB |
| Artillery Brigade | ARB |
| Gun Artillery Brigade | GAB |
| Antitank Artillery Brigade | ATB |
| Multiple Rocket Launcher Brigade | MLB |
| Air Assault Brigade | AAB |

(Regional Command West, East, South and Astana). During the evolution of the country's Military Doctrine since the early 1990s, the doctrines steadily shed the main features of the Soviet legacy and emerged as more distinctively Kazakh. To assert that Kazakhstan's Military Doctrine either simply copies or emulates Russia's Military Doctrine is therefore fundamentally flawed.⁸

Part of the drafting processes prior to the 2000 and 2007 Military Doctrines related to the role played by foreign experts. In each case, Kazakhstan's defense ministry met with experts from western countries as well as from Russia, although these meetings and discussions apparently played little meaningful role in the final text of the doctrine sent for presidential approval. In the 2000 doctrine all foreign advice was ultimately ignored in the finalized document and this was largely repeated in constructing the successor doctrine. In the process culminating in the 2011 Military Doctrine no Russian Federation expertise was used by Kazakhstan's defense ministry. Although the country's network of genuinely independent think tanks is underdeveloped, limiting the potential role played by civilians in forming the Military Doctrine, one key structure involved as a part of the process in 2011 was the Military Strategic Studies Center (*Tsentr Voyenno Strategicheskikh Issledovaniy* –TsVSI) in Astana; which is staffed by retired officers and civilian analysts. Nonetheless, it seems that the use of foreign expertise by the defense ministry during the drafting stage was mainly a public relations exercise.⁹

The responsibility for coordinating and producing the doctrine lies with the Security Council, while the defense ministry liaises with other power ministries. The structure and role of the Security Council is less clear than in the Russian governmental system, though it shares one critical similarity in that the issue of personality plays a significant role; which means that the individual holding the post of chairman may prove to be influential. During the drafting of the 2011 Military Doctrine the Chairman of the Security Council was Marat Tazhin, the former Foreign Minister, though his precise input is not publicly known. Kazakhstan's president initiates and ultimately approves the final version of the Military Doctrine. What emerges as a result of this inter-governmental drafting coordinated by the Security Council essentially represents a compromise framework document.¹⁰ However, since the Military Doctrine must fit into the overall national security architecture it is important to emphasize that the National Security Strategy (NSS) plays an overarching role in formulating state security policy. However, unlike in neighboring Russia, Kazakhstan's NSS is a classified document. Kazakhstan's Central Asian neighbor Uzbekistan classifies all security documents including the country's defense doctrine. In 2009 Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan published their Military Doctrines, while such documents remain closed in neutral Turkmenistan.

Kazakhstan's Military Doctrine naturally reflects the political and economic aspirations of the ruling elite. The ambition and determination of the political elite in Kazakhstan to raise the country's international profile has long been known, encapsulated in its achievement in 2010 by becoming the first CIS member to chair the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In his annual presidential address on January

29, 2010, President Nazarbayev reinforced this sense of high ambition for the state by outlining Astana's policy objectives to 2020. In relation to defense and security Nazarbayev set high priority on the task of strengthening "interethnic harmony, national security" and further developing the country's international relations. "Harmony and stability in the society" and "state security" were defined as the main aims of domestic and national security policy to 2020. He added that "We will pursue an active, pragmatic and balanced foreign policy aimed at ensuring national interests, increasing the international prestige of our country and strengthening national, regional and global security." These priorities, tied to the future economic and social development of the country determined the need for a revised NSS, likely containing these features, and demonstrate the difficult balancing act in pursuing a defense and security policy closely mirroring the so-called "multi-vector" foreign policy.¹¹



Kazakhstan's Minister of Defense Adilbek R. Dzhaksybekov, via <http://en.government.kz/structure/government>

In an interview to mark the twentieth anniversary of the country's Armed Forces in *Krasnaya Zvezda* in May 2012, Kazakhstan's Defense Minister Adilbek Dzhaksybekov confirmed that by the time the second Military Doctrine was passed in 2000 its conceptual basis was rooted in the NSS.¹² Given the traditionally short gestation period from the presidential order for a new Military Doctrine to its completion, it is highly likely that the 2011 version was ordered sometime between Nazarbayev's annual address in January 2010 and the decision to initiate a revised law on national security, finally signed on January 6, 2012. In this sense, the search for changes in the threat assessment or regional security environment compelling a new Military Doctrine is forlorn; this explanation can be found in the NSS, which remains a closed document. Shortly after the new doctrine was passed in October 2011, Nazarbayev publicly referred to a draft 2012-2016 NSS, which may have been used as the guiding basis for the 2011 Military Doctrine. However, the 2011 Military Doctrine must be understood in close relation to the 2012 law on national security; especially in comparing the threat assessments.¹³ The 2012 law on national security for example, bans foreign military bases on Kazakhstan's territory or the transit of lethal military equipment through the country (although there are exceptions for the latter such as the transit of such materials in connection with the country's treaty obligations).

While the 2012-2016 NSS most likely forms part of the bureaucratic justification for the 2011 Military Doctrine, some clues as to why President Nazarbayev ordered a new Military Doctrine can be found within the document itself and events in Central Asia in addition to published expert forecasts related to the country's security environment. Two factors stimulating the process of writing and agreeing the 2011 Military Doctrine were concerns about Afghanistan-linked security issues and the sense of shock in Astana in the aftermath of the security crisis in southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010. The former resulted from the policy shift in Washington marked by the Obama Administration's decision to

pursue a gradual drawdown of deployed military forces Afghanistan. Concern about the future security of Central Asia following the completion of the NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan by 2014 is in evidence in the 2011 Military Doctrine specifically mentioning Afghanistan once in its text, while the 2007 doctrine only referred to the country obliquely. In June 2010, the outbreak of ethnic violence between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in southern Kyrgyzstan overwhelmed the interim government and quickly resulted in a request from President Rosa Otunbayeva to Moscow for direct intervention; some observers believe this was considered at the level of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), despite the Collective Security Charter making no provision at that point for action in response to a domestic crisis within a member state.¹⁴

Contrasting and comparing the 2011 and 2007 Military Doctrines reveals rewording or reordering of clauses or its new insertions and allows a number of important trends in Kazakhstan's defense and security policies to be explored. The following analysis will assess subtle shifts and trends in Astana's approaches to political-military security, including regional and domestic security, force structure and further efforts to improve inter-agency operational cohesion and the future priorities in international military cooperation. The new doctrine recognizes changes in the geopolitical situation in Central Asia and the need for further strengthening of Kazakhstan's defense capability. Although the final work on the doctrine coincided with the crisis on the country's Caspian coast in the fall of 2011, there is no strong link between the two. A supporting role is assigned to defense ministry forces to deal with internal crises, but the main role remains in the hands of the Interior Troops. This analysis also argues against reading into the doctrine any over-reaction on the part of the country's leadership or consequent change in how the defense ministry forces may be used domestically linked to the events in Zhanaozen in December 2011. Finally, there is no discernible link between any element of the 2011 Military Doctrine and an alleged impact of the Arab Spring on Kazakh security policy.¹⁵

Political-Military Security and Threat Assessment

Prior to detailing the threat assessment and overview of the political-military situation facing the country the 2011 Military Doctrine makes careful reference to the importance of non-defense ministry forces, and further improvements in border security and emergency response:

Ministry of the Interior Troops are being steadily built and developed according to plan, facilitating the formation of mobile, professionally trained forces on standby to ensure the security of the individual, society and country and protect the rights and freedoms of individuals and citizens from criminal and other illegal infringements. The National Security Committee's Border Service has been improving border security. Five regional commands have been set up: South, North, East, West, and Coast Guard. Steps are being taken to strengthen border security for the benefit of the Customs Union. There is ongoing improvement and upgrading of the national warning and emergency response system, including better infrastructure for natural and other disaster and emergency preparedness

and better risk management, and ongoing outfitting of emergency response forces with requisite rescue hardware and equipment, and an efficient monitoring and forecast system is being set up.¹⁶

The Ministry of the Interior (MVD) plays a leading role in response to any domestic crisis, and these forces are estimated at around 20,000. Border security is subordinated to Kazakhstan's National Security Committee (KNB) which is the main domestic intelligence agency. The KNB's limitation to domestic security occurred in February 2009 after President Nazarbayev abolished its Barlau department responsible for foreign intelligence; the Syrbar Foreign Intelligence Service was formed at that point in order to divide domestic and external intelligence duties.¹⁷ The KNB Border Service is estimated at around 9,000 personnel; the doctrine makes a clear commitment to further strengthening these forces.¹⁸ It notes that the regional command system for the KNB Border Service has been created and then makes reference to boosting border security "for the benefit of the Customs Union" (Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia). But the doctrine also acknowledges that improvements are needed in the domestic warning and emergency response system, as well as risk management and re-equipping emergency response forces from the Emergencies Ministry (MchS).¹⁹

Perhaps the area most obviously under developed in the first Military Doctrine in 1993 was the lack of defining the parameters of political-military security, or explaining the nature of the potential or more urgent threats facing the newly independent Kazakhstan.²⁰ Domestic critics of this first doctrine suggested there was too little focus on the nature of the types of conflict for which the country may need to train and equip its Armed Forces; equally the pre-occupation with large-scale warfare did not fit the threat environment. By 2000, the replacement doctrine examined both the external and internal threats to the state. The 2000 Military Doctrine outlined four external threats to Kazakhstan's security and six internal threats, which prompted western analysts such as Henry Plater-Zyberk in Conflict Studies Research Center in Sandhurst, UK, to observe that the main security challenges facing the country were internal.²¹

The 2000 Military Doctrine elaborated the external threats as ongoing and potential sources of conflict in proximity to the country's borders; possible infiltration of its territory by armed gangs, extremists or terrorists; regional destabilization as a consequence of excessive military buildup by some states; the expansion Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in Asia and the risk of terrorists acquiring WMD capabilities. Internal threats stemmed from the decline in readiness and the capacity of the Armed Forces to conduct rapid mobilization; insufficient military-industrial potential leaving the Armed Forces dependent upon military-technical procurement from other states; attacks by armed gangs or terrorists on civil or military targets; illegal transfer of arms, munitions and explosives; the formation of armed gangs aiming at committing sabotage or terrorist acts within the country; and the promotion of extremism or separatism.²²

By 2007, after undertaking a number of measures to increase readiness levels in the Armed Forces and lessen dependence on military-technical cooperation with foreign

countries, including forming a fledgling domestic defense industry, the first two of the earlier internal threats were removed.²³ To understand the nature of the threat assessment contained in the 2011 Military Doctrine, it is important to note that the “nature of the threats to military security” has changed significantly; the potential cross over between external and internal threats has complicated the threat assessment.

Comparing the 2011 Military Doctrine to the 2007 version it is clear that the external threats to Kazakhstan’s security have decreased from eight to six and internal threats have declined from four to three. This shrinkage in the number of identified threats is offset by the potentially destabilizing nexus between external and domestic threats, combined with a rapidly changing and increasingly unpredictable security environment. According to the 2011 Military Doctrine the external threats to Kazakhstan’s security stem from:

- Socio-political instability in the region and the likelihood of armed provocations;
- Military conflict flashpoints close to Kazakhstan’s borders;
- Use by foreign nations or organizations of military-political pressure and advanced information-psychological warfare technologies to interfere in Kazakhstan’s internal affairs to further their own interests;
- Increasing influence of military-political organizations and unions to the detriment of Kazakhstan’s military security;
- The activity of international terrorist and radical organizations and groups, including cyber terrorism and growing religious extremism in neighboring countries;
- Production by some countries of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles, and illegal proliferation of the technologies, equipment and components used to manufacture them, as well as of dual purpose technologies.²⁴

The 2011 Military Doctrine streamlines internal threats to recalibrate these as:

- Extremist, nationalist and separatist movements, organizations and structures seeking to destabilize the domestic situation and change the constitutional order through armed methods;
- Illegal armed groups;
- Illegal proliferation of weapons, munitions, explosives and other devices that could be used for sabotage, terrorist acts or other illegal actions.²⁵

Examining the outline of threats contained in the political-military analysis of Kazakhstan’s security environment, which stressed the defensive nature of the doctrine and that no state is considered as a potential enemy, it is clear the 2011 Military Doctrine places no special emphasis on either external or domestic threats; it contradicts arguments that the Kazakh government now prioritizes building defense capabilities to respond to domestic security crises. Nevertheless, the doctrine places “Priority importance in

the medium-term development of the Armed Forces, and of other troops and military formations constituting the foundation of the state's military organization, will be given to the maintenance of their readiness to guarantee inner political stability, and to fulfil tasks in low- and medium-intensity military conflicts."²⁶ For some observers ensuring "inner stability" however, implies that the threat assessment has shifted towards meeting domestic threats.

In terms of threat assessment the 2011 and 2007 doctrines are broadly similar, the latest version simply rewords and recalibrates their order of importance. Kazakhstan's defense and intelligence agencies appear to regard the potential for military conflict in Central Asia to have increased since 2007, although there is now less priority assigned to international terrorism as a potential threat.²⁷ Information and networking technologies harnessed against the state suggests more specific thought has been devoted to the ambiguous wording in part of the previous doctrine, which simply referred to sensitivity over possible interference in the country's internal affairs. The domestic threat environment is not given undue stress, nor does the 2011 Military Doctrine suggest that supporting role of the Armed Forces during a national security crisis has been subject to revision.²⁸

The President of the TsVSI, Colonel (retired) Georgy Dubovtsev published an article in *Central Asia and the Caucasus* in early 2011, during the period in which the new doctrine was being prepared. The co-written article with Erlan Galymzhanuly, assessed the likely trends in Kazakhstan's political-military environment.²⁹ It examined global security and the Asia-Pacific Region, before turning more specifically to Central Asia. The authors concluded:

A direct military threat in the short- and mid-term perspective looks highly improbable; however the Central Asian Region is plagued by many other problems: terrorism, religious extremism, separatism, the flow of drugs from Afghanistan, etc. The illegitimate (unconstitutional) regime change in Kyrgyzstan is another negative factor. Our analysis has revealed the main trends of military-political developments in the Central Asian Region:

Conflict potential will increase because of the following factors:

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

2. The key world powers will step up their geopolitical involvement in the region

to gain control over energy resources and transportation routes; to be able to station their military bases in the region; and to impose ad hoc foreign policies on the local states, etc.

3. The Central Asian countries will not abandon the isolationist policy caused by personal disagreements among their leaders, as well as by the already depleted economic potential of interstate cooperation previously rooted in the Soviet past.³⁰

Since the work of such experts and the TsVSI contributed to the process of producing the 2011 Military Doctrine, it is hardly surprising to find the doctrinal emphasis on external threats. Nevertheless, such analysis reflects a realistic assessment of the failure of the governments of Central Asia to construct a regional security system 20 years after gaining their independence; the lack of any recognizable regional approach to security is acknowledged in terms of the likelihood that each state will continue to pursue isolationist policies. The potential for increased pressure on Central Asian states by foreign actors, or competition among them over energy or transportation routes, are among the geopolitical factors further complicating the assessment of the security environment.³¹

Military conflict in Central Asia, according to Dubovtsev and Galymzhanuly will become more likely depending on the impact of the security situation in Afghanistan, the growth of Islamic extremism exploiting inadequate economic and social development in Central Asia, the susceptibility of the local economies to fluctuations in the global market, inter-state tensions over water or energy issues as well as weaknesses or conflict among the ruling elites in these countries. This expert assessment considers the two revolutions in Kyrgyzstan in 2005 and 2010 as entirely negative developments, which renders an assessment of the region subject to the political vagaries of a potentially dysfunctional neighboring government.³²

On national security threat assessment, the 2012 law on national security offers a much more detailed picture of the potential threats to Kazakhstan's security, although many of these fall beyond the remit of the Military Doctrine:

1. Decreasing level of law and order, including growth of crime, merging of state agencies with criminal organizations, terrorist or extremist organizations, the protection from the part of officials of the illicit capital, corruption, illicit trafficking of arms and drugs that reduce the degree of protection of national interests;
2. Deterioration of the demographic situation and population health, including a sharp decline in fertility, increased mortality;
3. The uncontrolled migration;
4. Reduction in the level and quality of health care, education, and intellectual potential of the country;
5. The loss of cultural and spiritual heritage of the people of the Republic of Kazakhstan;
6. Exacerbation of social and political situation, reflected in the ethnic and religious

conflicts, mass riots;

7. Activities aimed at changing the constitutional order, including acts infringing on the unitarity of the Republic of Kazakhstan, integrity, inviolability, inalienability of its territory, the security of protected persons;
8. Terrorism, extremism and separatism in all its forms and manifestations;
9. Reconnaissance and subversive activities of foreign special services, as well as organizations and individuals, to the detriment of national security;
10. Disruption of public authorities, the violation of their smooth operation, reducing the degree of control in the country;
11. Damage to the economic security of the state, including the use of strategic resources against the interests of the country, hindering development and growth of innovative investment activity, the uncontrolled export of capital and goods outside the country, the growth of the shadow economy;
12. Decrease in the stability of the financial system;
13. Reduced production, lower quality, competitiveness, export, transit potential and availability of products and goods, reducing the supply of products from other countries and goods that are not produced in the Republic of Kazakhstan;
14. Reducing the country's defense capabilities, the threat to the integrity of the state border and the use of force against the Republic of Kazakhstan, the aggression against it;
15. The establishment of paramilitary forces that is not allowed by the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan;
16. Reduction in the level of protection of information space of the country, as well as national information resources from unauthorized access;
17. Informational impact on social and individual consciousness, associated with the deliberate distortion and spread of false information to the detriment of national security;
18. A sharp deterioration in environmental conditions, including water quality, natural disasters and other emergencies of natural and man-made disasters, epidemics and epizootics;
19. Damage to national interests at the international level, political credit and economic rating of Kazakhstan.³³

The main threat to national security in the 2012 law stems from organized crime and its possible nexus with state agencies, terrorism, extremism, corruption and arms and drug trafficking. Some of the potential threats linked to demographic developments including “uncontrolled migration” or the quality of healthcare clearly fall outside the scope of the defense ministry's responsibilities. But the law attempts in its threat assessment to describe any potential threat to the country and so it also includes reference to the “loss of cultural and spiritual heritage” among the population as a possible threat. Nonetheless, it includes

an acknowledgement of ethnic or religious tensions, which may contribute to mass riots and destabilize the social and political situation in the country. The law also points to foreign intelligence agencies, or groups or individuals conducting “reconnaissance or subversive activities” without being specific. Corruption linked to a possible growth in the shadow economy is highlighted as a risk, as well as any decrease in the stability of the financial system. “Reducing the country’s defense capabilities, the threat to the integrity of the state border and the use of force against the Republic of Kazakhstan, the aggression against it,” raises the possibility that state or sub-state actors may violate the integrity of the country, though again there is no specificity involved. Information security features in points sixteen and seventeen, and this reflects the interest in information security contained in the 2011 Military Doctrine and the development of Information Warfare (IW) capabilities.³⁴

More broadly, the 2011 Military Doctrine characterizes the global military-political environment as highly dynamic and unpredictable, with an increase in competition between leading actors and organizations, a growth of separatism and ethnic and religious extremism, as well as the destabilizing impact on the security environment caused by some states bypassing legal norms in their policy making. Unresolved disputes and the risk of inter-state conflict persists in Central Asia, as do the dangers of dual use technologies and WMD materials expanding the scope for international terrorist groups to foment instability if they acquired such capabilities. In addition to the conventional means of military conflict, the doctrine notes asymmetric destructive power by harnessing information and networking technologies in the pursuit of military-political objectives. These factors are compounded by the uneven distribution of resources, the impact of globalization and other factors that could result in inter-state conflict, while in Central Asia military conflict may arise due to instability in Afghanistan, or through border, territorial or water-linked disputes. Economic, religious or other types of conflict may erupt in the region, while conflict resolution mechanisms fail to address these issues peacefully. Disputed oil fields or the unresolved legal status of the Caspian Sea may also contribute to an outbreak of future conflict.³⁵

Structure and Priorities for Kazakhstan’s Armed Forces

The defensive nature of Kazakhstan’s Military Doctrine was first encapsulated in the 1993 version, and this has been followed in subsequent doctrines.³⁶ However, the marked transformation in the structure of the Armed Forces since independence can be traced through the doctrines between 2000 and 2007; very little changed in terms of force structure in the 2011 Military Doctrine. The 2000 version defined the main priorities for the development of the force structure linked to a military-territorial structure, improving the system of military education and training cadres. In the 2007 doctrine, the autonomy of the regional commands was guaranteed, after the abolition of the system of military districts in 2003, and the creation of force groupings capable of independent action in their areas of responsibility was set as a key target. By 2007, the overall structure of the Armed Forces had settled on three branches of service, although the Navy was making only slow

progress in its organizational development.³⁷

Kazakhstan's Armed Forces are estimated to possess a total of 45,000 personnel. The Regional Command System divides the country into four commands; Astana, East, West and South. The Ground Forces have an estimated strength of 30,000, with ten Motorized Rifle Brigades, Airmobile Forces consisting of four Air Assault Brigades, a peacekeeping brigade and combat support supplied by seven artillery brigades, two multiple rocket launcher brigades, two anti-tank brigades, three combat engineering brigades, one SSM brigade and one coastal defense brigade. The Air Force consists of 12,000 personnel and the fledgling Navy and coastal defense forces have only 3,000.³⁸

The 2011 Military Doctrine makes several references to the country's defense cooperation with Russia and multilateral security cooperation through the CSTO and the SCO. However, the central pillars of Kazakhstan's security policy are located in reliance upon its state structures. In other words, after twenty years of independence in all but the most extreme circumstances Astana would look first to its own non-defense ministry and defense ministry forces in order to respond to any security crisis. Only in the case of a "high-intensity conflict" threat to national security would the country's leadership look for outside assistance:

A high-intensity conflict could be unleashed against the Republic of Kazakhstan with radical political objectives: change political power in the country, disrupt the administration of government and military command and control, seize a large area of the country, or completely destroy the nation's defense capability. In the event of a high-intensity conflict, the government shall endeavor to use *coalition resources* and the *collective military security systems* in which Kazakhstan participates.³⁹

This part of the doctrine states quite clearly that in such circumstances, where the survivability of the state is at stake, Astana would use "coalition resources" and "collective military security systems" in order to ensure that the response would be adequate.⁴⁰ The reference to accessing coalition resources may well imply intelligence reliance upon Moscow with the greater human and technical intelligence capacity of the Russian state brought to bear on the nature and scale of the threat, as well as possible deployment by Russian Armed Forces to deal with such a high-intensity threat. The same holds true in considering the oblique reference to collective security, since only the CSTO would fit this description with the collective defense mechanism enshrined in the Collective Security Treaty, but again in practical terms given the fact that Russia is the leading military power in this organization the likely response would ultimately involve relying on the Russian military.⁴¹

To deal with potential threats to Kazakhstan's national security, the structural organization of the Armed Forces was fixed in previous doctrines, and the 2011 version offered nothing that marked any fundamental break with these statements. The changes were more subtle, such as the plan to integrate the Committee of the Joint Chiefs of Staff into the General Staff, to help improve planning and the coordination of inter-agency

forces during combat operations. The Committee of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was a leading planning body tasked with the planning of military exercises and combat training based upon an analysis of modern military conflicts and the military-political situation in the region and internationally. These functions will now be absorbed into a more powerful General Staff.⁴²

The 2011 Military Doctrine outlines future force development as concentrating on the following:

- Reorganize the Ministry of Defense Joint Chiefs of Staff into the Armed Forces General Staff and increase its role in joint planning and inter-agency coordination and cooperation;
- Optimize and rationalize the structure of the Armed Forces and other troops and military formations and strengthen their fighting component;
- Set up in strategic areas multiservice self-sufficient force groupings capable of ensuring military security in their zone of responsibility and adequately responding to potential military security threats;
- Improve command and control through automation and telecommunication, and expand the network of stationary and mobile command points of the Armed Forces and other troops and military formations;
- Standardize and align the weapons and materiel of the Armed Forces and other troops and military formations, especially the means of communication and command and control;
- Establish an effective information warfare system;
- Upgrade the country's air and missile defense;
- Enhance combat capability by equipping the military with modern weapons and materiel, including precision weapons, and incorporating modern simulators and information and technology tools into combat training;
- Set up integrated structures regionally to provision the Armed Forces and other troops and military formations in accordance with deployment and engagement plans;
- Centralize government purchases of weapons, materiel, special equipment and other material supplies for the Armed Forces and other troops and military formations, and optimize defense spending;
- Modernize military education and personnel training, and develop military science based on advanced international experience;
- Upgrade military and other infrastructure in the Caspian region.⁴³

Among these military-technical priorities it is worth emphasizing points 4-6, 8 and 10. Improving C2 is now inseparable from adopting and introducing automated C2

systems. Although mentioned in 2007 doctrine, the usage is now more precise and links its achievement to expanding the network of fixed and mobile command, control and communications (C3) centers, which will also extend to non-defense ministry forces. Although it is regarded as important in terms of fostering greater inter-agency coordination during any future operations, which will necessitate standardizing weapons and equipment, the main development area is now considered to be C3.⁴⁴

Astana also wants to create an effective system of information warfare (IW), though there is little publicly available insight into how this may be developed and for what purposes. There is also recognition that by introducing modern precision-guided weapons the system of combat training will also need to support such innovation. Finally, the procurement system now seems placed in the sights of imminent reform, aimed at improving and rationalizing the whole process of arms and equipment and supply purchases for the Armed Forces and non-defense ministry forces coupled with cost effective budgeting.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, although there is no fundamental overhaul of the existing structure of the Armed Forces there are surprising changes that will force Astana to spend more on defense, invest in the country's evolving domestic defense industry and seek to deepen partnerships and joint ventures with foreign defense companies. The most surprising element of these more subtle shifts in Kazakh doctrine relates to the expression of interest in creating some type of network-centric warfare capability. Defense Minister Dzhaksybekov explained that on the basis of taking into account a comparative analysis of the country's potential the basic principles of planning the use of the Armed Forces were reviewed. The result of this review was to make a decision in favour of pursuing network-centric capabilities in the Armed Forces. Dzhaksybekov stated that a transition was made from "line tactics" to pursuing "pinpoint operations" and attaining "high-speed" C2 and information support by the technical re-equipping of the military to the best world standards.⁴⁶

Although it is unlikely that the Kazakh defense ministry fully understands the sheer scale of the challenges involved in pursuing the adoption of network-centric warfare capabilities, arguably such aspiration mirror similar sentiments in Russian defense reform, the 2011 Military Doctrine places greater emphasis on high-technology assets. If this switch away from "line tactics" to something even remotely resembling network-centric approaches to combat operations proves successful at any level it will mark the introduction of capabilities currently lacking in the Armed Forces.⁴⁷ Such planning also raises questions about the "defensive" nature of the doctrine, if network-centric or even a more high-technology emphasis emerges in the future as these capabilities are consistent with power projection and intervention. However, this may be explained by reference to Kazakhstan's close defense relations with Russia and the need to retain a higher level of force interoperability as well as the assessment of the regional threat environment making it more likely that Kazakh forces will engage in combat operations in defense of the country or its allies.

Nonetheless, it is too early to tell how successful these efforts will prove to be, but one

fundamental driving force in such initiatives is the need to retain and strengthen interoperability with elements of the Russian Armed Forces, which will demand the introduction of automated C2 systems. Theoretical military publications in both Russia and Kazakhstan have long argued in favor of automated C2, yet only more recently has such thinking began to influence procurement and training priorities. Kazakh officers have first-hand knowledge of the continued experiment in the Russian Armed Forces with embryonic automated C2 systems, while similar developments in the Russian Airborne Forces elements assigned to the CSTO Collective Rapid Reaction Forces (*Kollektivnye Sil Operativnogo Reagirovaniya* –KSOR) are much more meaningful for Astana since Kazakhstan also participates in this joint force structure. Moreover, although the domestic defense industry in Kazakhstan is not yet able to meet such high-technology demands, the country has sought to fill these gaps by making foreign purchases such as the French Thales communications systems, or entering joint ventures with Turkey to manufacture modern communications equipment.⁴⁸

In this sense, having identified the interest in high-technology systems contained in the 2011 Military Doctrine, it makes more sense to observe this pattern in Astana's foreign procurement patterns. Its interest in receiving US C-130 transport aircraft has evidently waned. In 2010 Kazakhstan became the first Central Asian country to hold an international military exhibition and KADEX 2012 in Astana on May 3-6, 2012, demonstrated continued political commitment to boost the domestic defense industry by seeking additional foreign defense industry partners. KADEX 2012 was a much larger military exhibition than its first foray into the international arms market two years earlier, involving 250 companies from more than twenty countries worldwide. During the exhibition



Military equipment on display at KADEX 2012 via <http://kadex.kz>

Astana signed a \$150 million deal with Kyiv to jointly produce Ukrainian BTR-4 armoured personnel carriers.⁴⁹

The weapons and equipment on display during KADEX 2012 included US, Turkish and other NATO member countries' support for Kazakhstan's Armed Forces in recent years. However, the level of ambition implied by hosting such events is not currently matched by the capacity of the defense industry to meet these challenges. The 2011 Military Doctrine combined with the pattern of foreign procurement which has increased since 2007 remains largely aspirational in its nature. The road ahead for the domestic defense industry will be challenging for some time to come, leaving the country dependent upon foreign support, but the state has declared its intention to reduce such dependence.⁵⁰

Astana has contracted to purchase two C-295 Airbus transport aircraft by 2013 and six

more by 2018 for use by defense ministry forces; this will facilitate the rapid movement of troops during a future crisis. KADEX 2012 was also marked by Astana further expanding its joint venture with Eurocopter, ordering an additional eight EC145s bringing the total to 45 helicopters. Six EC145s will be used by the MchS and two will be used by the Ministry of Defense for search and rescue operations. Astana also intends to purchase a further 20 EC725s, for defense ministry forces across the full range of missions. The EC725 platform is a member of Eurocopter's 11-metric-ton Cougar military helicopter family, by procuring the multirole EC725, Kazakhstan will acquire a high-technology platform capable of conducting tactical transport, search and rescue, special operations and naval operations. These developments were completed by reaching a whole range of deals with Moscow to expand military-technical cooperation, which will include Russian maintenance centers being established in Kazakhstan to repair and modernize military hardware.⁵¹

The structure of the Armed Forces therefore, according to the 2011 Military Doctrine, will not witness any systemic changes in the near future. Instead, planning has now turned to how the economic and defense industry support basis may be transformed to meet the challenges of technical re-equipment. In outlining the military-technical support basis, the 2001 Military Doctrine refers to capping defense spending at 1 percent of GDP; this has featured in previous doctrines since 2000, and may give way to increased pressure to modernize the Armed Forces. These priorities are delineated in section 3.7 with specific comment on the need for innovation and foreign partners:

- the implementation of mutually advantageous international military-technical cooperation in bilateral and multilateral formats;
- the expansion of cooperation of domestic and foreign enterprises in the design, manufacture and repair of aircraft, armored vehicles, motor vehicles, missile and artillery weapons, communications, and automated control systems, ammunition and other types of military and special equipment;
- to attract investment, strengthen the innovation activities to upgrade the quality of scientific, technical and industrial and technological base of defense industry conducting research and development works;
- development of export potential of domestic military industrial companies and businesses by expanding market sales, increase the range and volume of exports of military products;
- Improvement of public acceptance of the order of production, produced for defense purposes.⁵²

The doctrine states that the implementation of such measures is essential for the effective functioning of the Armed Forces in peacetime as well as their capability to act in during medium-intensity military conflicts. It commits Astana to seeking "mutually advantageous" military-technical cooperation at bilateral and multilateral levels, though the latter most likely refers to preferential terms for purchases within the CSTO. Moreover, it also declares the need to expand domestic and foreign defense industry cooperation

with an emphasis design, repair and manufacture of high-technology weapons and equipment including automated C2. In order to facilitate these processes, the government will attempt to attract investment and build the research and design and technological basis of the domestic defense industry. The commitment to boosting the domestic capacity to meet growing technological demands for equipping the Armed Forces also extends to seeking markets to export Kazakh produced weapons and equipment. Finally, the doctrine suggests that the government will offer public information on why such procurement policies may be required to strengthen state security. The scale of the task involved is considerable, but the level of ambition is also far outstripping the existing level of combat capability and combat readiness.⁵³

Dzhaksybekov's description of the current mixed-manning principle in the Armed Forces, using conscripts and contract personnel, recognized the growing importance of the latter.⁵⁴ Seen in light of the procurement trends, which focuses on improving military transportation options and technical re-equipping, Astana appears to be actively preparing to support future military operations at home and abroad, though most likely on a small-scale. Moving towards achieving these ambitious goals necessarily entails strengthening and diversifying international military cooperation, which is also a crucial element in Astana's defense planning.

International Military Cooperation

The 2011 Military Doctrine first explains that in the area of the country's international military cooperation, such policies are calculated based on "foreign policy," "economic expediency" and aims at resulting in a "balanced military security." The doctrine then lists the priority areas for international military cooperation:

1. Strengthen confidence-building measures and military transparency in the region;
2. Make every effort to strengthen international regimes for nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, abide by the international standards of trade in arms, materiel, and military and dual purpose technologies, and pertinent international treaties;
3. Complete the regulatory legal base for military and military-technological cooperation with members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization based on the need to pool efforts to create a single defense space and ensure collective military security, as well as further develop CSTO assets and resources;
4. Extend the strategic partnership within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization based on common military-political interests;
5. Expand military and military-technological cooperation with the United States of America and the European Union;
6. Develop the national peacekeeping capability, take part in joint exercises and share experience in planning, conducting and providing comprehensive logistical

support for peacekeeping operations;

7. Use the NATO method and standards to train peacekeeping units so as to ensure operational compatibility;
8. Cooperate on a mutually beneficial basis with foreign companies to supply arms and materiel, and set up co-production in Kazakhstan.⁵⁵

Discerning shifts in Astana's approach to military cooperation must first place the doctrine in the context of the country's "multi-vector" foreign policy and make careful reference to the previous versions of the doctrine. Kazakhstan's "multi-vector" foreign policy has never quite matched its defense and security policies, since it does clearly assign a central place to its defense relations with Russia.⁵⁶ Astana's preference for Moscow as a close security partner is also attested to by the level of openness and trust that exists between the power structures of both states. Historically, this closeness grew out of the shared heritage of weapons, equipment and similar approaches to military structures, training and doctrine inherited from the Soviet era, and the need to rely closely on cooperation with Moscow for military-technical support and to access Russian military training and education; this close relationship also extends into intelligence sharing.

It is therefore no coincidence to find that there is a carefully calibrated order in which the priorities of Kazakhstan's foreign military cooperation reflect its main defense and security relationships and interests. In pole position, following the aspirations of "strengthening confidence building measures" and promoting "transparency," and reducing the risk of WMD proliferation is the CSTO. Astana's close defense relationship with Russia is further strengthened within the legally binding CSTO, and the doctrine commits the country to developing the legal framework of the organization and gradually moving towards realizing a "single defense space."⁵⁷ A similar but terse statement is made in relation to the SCO, before the first bilateral international military cooperation partnerships are noted as the US and the EU. However, it is not only important to notice that NATO has slipped to seventh position in this list, but that the cooperation is now more narrowly restricted to raising standards in Kazakhstan's peacekeeping units to NATO standards and interoperability.⁵⁸

While the 2007 Military Doctrine made numerous references to the Alliance, the new version pares this back to the bone.⁵⁹ This may also explain the largely negative comments by President Nazarbayev on April 26, 2012, when he referred to the Alliance's role in the post-Cold War period as "obscure," and essentially questioned what purpose NATO serves. Nazarbayev's cutting critique concerning NATO may be linked to a wider concern about security in Central Asia post-2014 Afghanistan, with many questioning its achievements, yet there is deeper dissatisfaction in Astana about the partnership with NATO. Some government-linked experts consider that NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) has exhausted itself, possibly coming to be regarded too closely with the perception that PfP presages deeper arrangements geared towards membership. Kazakhstan's cooperation with NATO reached its pinnacle in 2006 with the signing of the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP).⁶⁰ Whatever the precise reasons are the fact that Astana is no longer as

interested in deepening its partnership with NATO was confirmed by the experience of the NATO IPAP team visiting Astana in the fall of 2011; the overall impression was given that Kazakhstan wants to avoid discussing certain sensitive issues with NATO such as naval development and is actively limiting its cooperation activities.⁶¹

Nevertheless, although there is clearly a diminution of the role assigned to cooperating with NATO, there is hope for member states elsewhere in the doctrine to pursue workarounds. Not only will the Kazakh defense industry require several years of continued support to boost its output level, but the country is highly likely to make additional foreign military purchases. The doctrine commits Astana to “cooperate on a mutually beneficial basis with foreign companies to supply arms and materiel, and set up co-production in Kazakhstan,” which means that NATO member states will have ample opportunity to enter such arrangements and foster this type of defense cooperation. Indeed, elsewhere in the doctrine importance is attached to bilateral cooperation with Russia, the United States and China, implying that as Astana pursues international military cooperation its emphasis will be strongly on the bilateral route.⁶²

While shy on the level of cooperation with NATO, the doctrine specifies the ways in which Kazakhstan’s commitment and cooperation within the CSTO will continue to grow “aimed at ensuring joint security and collective defense in the event of military aggression.” The phrase “joint security” placed alongside the collective aspect of the CSTO also signals a shift away from the organization existing only to respond to external threats, allowing joint action in a much wider range of mission types and in response to domestic instability within member states. These priorities are set out as follows:

1. Update the regulatory legal base for coalition military capability development;
2. Make the joint planning of use of coalition forces more efficient;
3. Train troop contingents to carry out mission-specific tasks to ensure joint security and collective defense in accordance with coordinated programs and plans;
4. Streamline the interaction of collective security assets and resources, and the forms and methods of joint operations;
5. Create a unified air defense for the CSTO and its regional components;
6. Step up joint efforts against international terrorism, religious extremism, separatism and drug trafficking;
7. Participate in the nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction;
8. Set up joint ventures to repair weapons and materiel, carry out joint research and design to upgrade them;
9. Train military personnel and develop military science.⁶³

The most sensitive and controversial element of the commitment to the CSTO contained in the doctrine is the statement concerning the creation of CSTO-wide joint air defense which is simply way beyond the capabilities of the smaller members. However, Kazakh-Russian joint air defense is clearly a priority according to the doctrine, and partly explains



Lieutenant General Aleksandr Sorokin, via <http://mod.gov.kz>

why the only ethnic Russian officer left in the top ranks of the Kazakh officer corps is Lieutenant-General Aleksandr Sorokin, the commander of the Air Defense Forces.⁶⁴ But the doctrine commits Kazakhstan to strengthen and develop the existing framework of the CSTO and cooperate at a level simply unimaginable for its cooperative arrangements with NATO. In fact, prior to signing the new Military Doctrine Astana together with other CSTO members were actively engaged in transforming the organization into a more effective crisis management body, capable of agreeing to act on the basis of a majority vote among its members and deploy the KSOR across a range of mission types, from counter-terrorism to natural and man-made disasters and emergency relief, as well as domestic instability. Amendments to the Collective Security Charter, permitting the necessary legal

basis for this shift in policy were agreed by all members except Uzbekistan at the CSTO Moscow summit in December 2010.⁶⁵

A significant component in Astana's approach to international military cooperation is to raise the country's profile through the development and possible use of its peacekeeping capabilities. The 2011 Military Doctrine sets out important principles that appear designed to allow the country's leadership to exercise greater caution in the future over any effort by its international partners to persuade Astana to contribute forces to a joint peacekeeping operation. However, untangling this complex policy knot demands some conceptual observations as well as acknowledgement of Kazakhstan's achievements in forming and strengthening its peacekeeping capabilities.⁶⁶

Strictly in the formation of doctrine, references to "peacekeeping" as a priority are strongly present in the 2007 and 2011 versions of the Military Doctrines.⁶⁷ Yet, in order to understand the declaratory nature of this peacekeeping section in the 2011 Military Doctrine the historical development of these forces and the problems and challenges facing them in the future must be noted as a starting point. In the late 1990s the US-led efforts to encourage the Central Asian states to form regional peacekeeping forces finally ground to a halt. The emergence of a Central Asian peacekeeping battalion (CENTRASBAT) collapsed due to differences within the region and each country was consequently left to develop their own peacekeeping capabilities if and when such a political decision was taken. In June 2000 President Nazarbayev ordered the formation of such a force structure within Kazakhstan's Armed Forces, and subsequently Kazakhstan's peacekeeping battalion (KAZBAT) received training and support from the US, UK and other NATO members, as well as initiating the annual trilateral military exercise Steppe Eagle to further test and strengthen interoperability levels.⁶⁸

KAZBAT received a further boost by Astana's decision in 2003 to send a small team of military engineers to Iraq to participate in demining operations, and the 27-man

contribution rotated every six months until late 2008. During this formative period, in addition to gaining important experience in supporting such operations, the country arguably benefitted from international publicity surrounding its small contribution. NATO and Kazakhstan agreed to include the development of peacekeeping capabilities in the IPAP, while setting the goal of expanding KAZBAT into a fully NATO interoperable peacekeeping brigade (KAZBRIG).⁶⁹

During Steppe Eagle 2008, a NATO assessment team assessed KAZBAT as having attained a level of NATO interoperability, not to be confused by declaring full interoperability, which appeared to presage deeper cooperation towards the expansion of the battalion into KAZBRIG.⁷⁰ In so doing, Kazakhstan became the first country in Central Asia to achieve a level of NATO interoperability in any of its Armed Forces' units. However, since 2007, both Washington and London increased political pressure on Astana to agree to operationally deploy at least a company drawn from KAZBAT with the highest priority theater being Afghanistan.⁷¹ Between 2007 until the new doctrine was finalized in October 2011, Astana prevaricated on a decision to deploy any peacekeeping forces to Afghanistan, and the promise by President Nazarbayev during the NATO Summit in Lisbon in 2010 to send peacekeepers to Afghanistan was in fact only limited to sending a small number of officers to ISAF HQ in Kabul; there was no agreement to dispatch KAZBAT to Afghanistan to engage in combat.⁷²

By June 2011, Nazarbayev's commitment to send officers to Kabul had stalled in the Kazakh Senate.⁷³ In the period since 2007, in order to expand KAZBAT into KAZBRIG the formation of two additional battalions was required. According to members of the US and British Army training teams 2nd Battalion KAZBRIG was partially formed, while the 3rd battalion existed only on paper. Moreover, the presence of too many twelve month serving conscripts in the 1st Battalion KAZBAT/KAZBRIG left many of these trainers disillusioned, describing the unit as a "revolving door" in which large numbers of conscripts would come and go, without any real progress towards full contract manning in the battalion.⁷⁴

An additional complicating factor in this process relates to terminology and conceptual approaches: "peacekeeping" and "peace support operations (PSO)" are very different. PSO involves much greater complexity aiming at units relating with host civilian population in a "hearts and minds" approach to the operation, and this necessarily involves greater professionalism and levels of training.⁷⁵ The approaches are very different, and the emergence of a peacekeeping dimension within the CSTO means that Kazakhstan's Armed Forces has to straddle both concepts. Another factor in NATO's cooperation initiatives to support KAZBRIG was the fact that if successful additional peacekeeping brigades could be formed. Since KAZBAT is drawn from the airmobile forces, the potential to form additional brigades essentially collapsed in June 2009 when Astana assigned the 37th Air Assault Brigade (AAB) in Taldykurgan to the new CSTO rapid reaction force (KSOR). With less than 50 percent of the manpower in KAZBAT serving as contract personnel, compared to 80 percent contract service in the 37th AAB there are clear grounds to question the "balanced military security," presented as a goal in the doctrine.⁷⁶

Thus, the 2011 Military Doctrine defines “peacekeeping” as a key component in Kazakhstan’s “collective and national security policy.” It promises to actively participate in UN-mandated peacekeeping operations and then defines the “basic principles” of the country participating in such operations as “impartiality” and “complete neutrality” avoiding any special relations to one of the conflicting parties, and ensuring that the interests of other parties are not infringed. Moreover, the 2011 doctrine adds: “Central to Kazakhstan’s peacekeeping activity is its fundamental position of pooling collective efforts in keeping with UN Security Council decisions and universally recognized international law to ensure regional and international security.”⁷⁷

The 2011 doctrine seems to restrict the circumstances in which Astana might send units from KAZBRIG to participate in international PSO. It reasserts the role of parliament in agreeing to send troops abroad in accordance with the constitution, while offering to “enhance” both a “regional peacekeeping center” and the “peacekeeping capability” that remains under development. In order to achieve these goals, the peacekeeping “contingent shall be manned with volunteer personnel,” but it does not commit to full contract service in KAZBAT/KAZBRIG.⁷⁸ In fact, the 2007 Military Doctrine made a similar commitment to raising the numbers of contract personnel serving in the Armed Forces which was contradicted the following year by increasing the numbers of conscripts required for service in the military.

Doctrinal Assessment

Assessing the Military Doctrine of any country demands placing it within the framework of the state’s security documents to establish the parameters of its security policy and Kazakhstan’s 2011 Military Doctrine requires similar careful handling. There are a number of points both implicit and explicit in the latest doctrine worth highlighting. First, there is an underlying sense of confidence in the new doctrine that was absent previously. There is no doubt that its timing was intended to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of the country’s independence and the formation of independent Armed Forces.⁷⁹

Tracing the evolution of the doctrine since its first incarnation in 1993 to the 2011 Military Doctrine, the emergence of a much higher level of independence in defense and security policy is discernible.⁸⁰ It is highly unlikely that there is any political desire in Astana to undermine the close defense and security ties with Moscow, but over-dependence on the Russian defense industry has been placed on notice: Kazakhstan intends to develop a viable domestic industry to procure weapons and equipment for its national military forces, and possibly enter the international arms export market. This will undoubtedly prove to be a major challenge to the state. Equally, the interest in defense industry joint ventures and plugging the gaps where deemed necessary is supported by concrete action in areas such as strategic airlift or communications. In this sense, although there is a step back in the doctrine from deepening cooperation with NATO, there is no risk to the country’s political-military relationship with Russia from buying weapons and hardware manufactured by Alliance members since Moscow is already doing the same.

It is unclear to what extent Kazakhstan's defense ministry planning staffs are guided by such security documents, however, the 2011 Military Doctrine leaves plenty of wiggle room for negotiating teams bargaining with foreign counterparts and seeking the best deals for the country.⁸¹ Moreover, depending on how Brussels pursues closer defense ties with Kazakhstan in light of its exit from Afghanistan, there is also room for the Alliance to convince Astana that there may be value in recalibrating the cooperation to genuinely benefit the country; especially in the area of defense planning capacity and national security threat assessment.

For those turning to read Kazakhstan's 2011 Military Doctrine in the hope of finding evidence that Astana is forming contingency plans in relation to the Arab Spring, or changing its defense policy in light of the security crisis on the Caspian coast in December 2011 or its recent experience of suicide bombings in the country, there is only disappointment. There is also no sense of panic in terms of the NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan. The doctrine is largely silent on these themes.⁸²

A much more detailed and wider threat assessment is contained in the 2012 law on national security, which raises social and political issues ranging from the denigration of the healthcare system to corruption within the state agencies and acknowledges the potential for ethnic or religious violence to erupt in the country. What is vitally important to grasp is how different the security environment in Central Asia appears when viewed from a local perspective. In the assessment of the potential threats facing the country contained in the 2011 Military Doctrine, despite the isolated attacks in 2011 which had unclear origins, the threat from international terrorism now seems to be regarded as receding. Astana is mostly concerned about potential conflicts in neighboring states, or any nexus between external and internal threats that leads to a sudden and unexpected domestic crisis or triggers crises close to its borders. The state will need to support and actively foster the strengthening of its defense and security capabilities in order to match the numerous high aspirations contained in the new doctrine.⁸³ Constant assessment and monitoring of these threats and developing the security infrastructure to meet emerging threats will consequently be an essential underlying element in ensuring the country's safe and secure socio-economic development.

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

2 Law "On National Awards," December 1995; Law "On Mobilization Training and Mobilization," July 1997; Decree "On Authorization of Rules of Usage of Arms and Armaments," September 2002; Decree "On Authorization of a List of Classified Military Towns Armed with Defense Technologies," July 2004; Decree "On Some Issues of Permission of Activities in Development, Production and Supply of Military Technologies," July 2004; Law "On Military Police Structures," February 2005; Law "On Military Duty and Military Service," June 2005; Decree "On Authorization of Rules of Military Transport Responsibilities in the RK," July 2005; Law "On Defense and Armed Forces of the RK,"

- December 2005; Decree “On Authorization of Rules and Provision by State Structures of Preparation of Civilian Population for Military Service,” May 2006; Decree “On Authorization or Rules of Military Duty Registration,” May 2006; Decree “On Authorization of Organizational Rules of Conscription of Civilians into Military Service,” June 2006; Strategy of RK’s Development until 2030; National Security Strategy 1999; Law “On Border Service of the National Security Committee,” January 1993; President’s decree “On Republican Guard,” December 1995; Law “On Civil Defense,” June 1997; Law “On State Secrets,” March 1999; Law “On National Defense Order,” January 2001; Law “On State of Military,” March 2003; Decree “On Issues of Protection of the National Border,” July 2005; Law “On Preventing Extremism,” February 2006, www.zakon.kz, last accessed June 20, 2012.
- 3 Military Doctrine of the Republic of Kazakhstan, October 11, 2011, <http://mod.gov.kz/mod-en/index.php/2009-06-26-02-25-27>.
 - 4 Author research interviews, Almaty, April 16, May 8, 12, 2012; *Voyennaya Doktrina Rossiyskoy Federatsii* (Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation), February 5, 2010, [http:// www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/33.html](http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/33.html); Mikhail Tsypkin, “What’s New in Russia’s New Military Doctrine?” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, February 27, 2010; Aleksei Nikolskiy, “New Words for Old Threats. New Version of Military Doctrine Does Not Differ Fundamentally From 2000 Document —Something That Elicited Negative Response From NATO,” *Vedomosti*, 15, 2010; Interview with Army-General Gareev, *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, December 12, 2008; “Russian Defense Minister, General Staff at Odds Over Reform, Doctrine,” *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, February 15, 2007; “Partial Text of Army-General Gareev’s Report on New Russian Military Doctrine,” *Voyenno Promyshlennyy Kuryer*, January 24, 2007.
 - 5 Author research interviews, Almaty, April 16, May 8, 12, 2012.
 - 6 Presidential Decree No. 299, Military Doctrine of the Republic of Kazakhstan, March 21, 2007, *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, April 7, 2007; Presidential Decree No. 334, Military Doctrine of the Republic of Kazakhstan, February 10, 2000, http://ru.government.kz/docs/u000334_20000210.htm ; Presidential Decree No. 1094, Military Doctrine of the Republic of Kazakhstan, February 11, 1993.
 - 7 Military Doctrine of the Republic of Kazakhstan, February 10, 2000, http://ru.government.kz/docs/u000334_20000210.htm.
 - 8 Author research interviews, Almaty, April 16, May 8, 12, 2012.
 - 9 There are expert working groups operating under the Security council which could in theory serve to stimulate discussion about Military Doctrine. However, there is a severe shortage of civilian defense specialists in Kazakhstan, suggesting the role of such working groups was tangential in forming the 2011 Military Doctrine. Author research interviews, Almaty, May 11, 2012; Aleksey Ikonnikov, “*Komunizhny politologi Kazakstana*,” *Tsentr Asii*, January-February 2012, No 1-4, pp. 59-62.
 - 10 Author research interviews, Almaty, May 16, 2012.
 - 11 “A New Decade, a New Economic Growth, and New Opportunities for Kazakhstan Address of President of the Republic of Kazakhstan,” Nursultan Abishuly Nazarbayev to the People of Kazakhstan, January 29, 2010, US Embassy website, Washington DC, accessed May 29, 2012.
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