

The Status of Russian-Uzbek Security Cooperation

By Matthew Stein
OE Watch Commentary

When Shavkat Mirziyoyev became President of Uzbekistan following the death of Islam Karimov in 2016, the Russian government believed it had an opportunity to establish a better partnership with Uzbekistan after years of poor relations. Russian officials appear to have had some success in improving relations, including increasing the level of security cooperation, and the accompanying excerpted articles provide a look at how this continues to play out.

An article from *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, a semi-independent news website in Russia, reports on the overall state of Uzbek-Russian relations. It notes how Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister, Abdulaziz Kamilov, discussed preparations with Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov for the upcoming state visit of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to Russia and how "more than 30 documents are planning to be signed, including a declaration on a comprehensive and strategic partnership between Russian and Uzbekistan." Uzbek forces have carried out a few joint military exercises with Russia after Mirziyoyev became president, but these were bilateral and not with multiple participants like Center-2019, which Uzbek military personnel merely observed. The Uzbek government, under Karimov and Mirziyoyev, has more often participated in bilateral security cooperation instead of organizations like the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization.

“The Ministry of Defense of Russia views Uzbekistan as a strategic partner in Central Asia”

An article from *Kun.uz*, a news website in Uzbekistan, reports on a recent meeting between the Chiefs of the General Staff of Uzbekistan



Vladimir Putin had talks with President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev in Tashkent.

Source: Kremlin.ru, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:State_visit_to_Uzbekistan_14.jpg, Attribution: CC BY YA 4.0

and Russia, Shukhrat Khalmukhamedov and Valery Gerasimov. The article mentions that the Russian Defense Ministry "views Uzbekistan as a strategic partner in Central Asia" and that Gerasimov "summed up the results of bilateral cooperation and proposed to outline prospects for further cooperation," though the article did not provide any more information on what that cooperation would or might include.

An article from the *Fergana Agency*, an independent news website reporting on Central Asia, and the second article from *Kun.uz*, report on a recent joint military exercise carried out by Uzbek forces with Turkey and another one with India. Both exercises worked out various tactical situations as part of ongoing bilateral security cooperation, similar to the exercises Uzbek units carried out with Russia. Overall, it appears that Russian officials have established a better security cooperation partnership with Uzbekistan over the past few years, but that for now it is not any different than Uzbekistan's other partnerships.

Source: Victoria Panfilova, "Москва укрепляет позиции в Центральной Азии (Moscow is strengthening its position in Central Asia)," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (a semi-independent news website in Russia), 2 March 2021. https://www.ng.ru/cis/2021-03-02/5_8093_uzbekistan.html

The Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, Abdulaziz Kamilov, discussed preparations with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov for the upcoming state visit of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to Russia. More than 30 documents are planning to be signed, including a declaration on a comprehensive and strategic partnership between Russian and Uzbekistan...

Uzbek military personnel were observers at operational-tactical exercises like Center-2019...

Source: "Новый начальник генштаба Узбекистана провел первую зарубежную встречу после назначения (The new Chief of the General Staff of Uzbekistan held the first foreign meeting after being appointed)," *Kun.uz* (a news website in Uzbekistan), 30 March 2021. <https://kun.uz/ru/news/2021/03/30/novyuy-nachalnik-genshtaba-uzbekistana-provel-pervuyu-zarubejnyuyu-vstrechu-posle-naznacheniya>

A meeting between the Chiefs of the General Staff of Uzbekistan and Russia, Shukhrat Khalmukhamedov and Valery Gerasimov, took place yesterday in Moscow. They discussed prospects for Russian-Uzbek military cooperation...

The Ministry of Defense of Russia views Uzbekistan as a strategic partner in Central Asia...During the meeting (Gerasimov) summed up the results of bilateral cooperation and proposed to outline prospects for further cooperation...

Continued: The Status of Russian-Uzbek Security Cooperation

Source: “Ўзбекско-турецкие военные учения стартовали на полигоне «Термез», близ афганской границы (The Uzbek-Turkish military exercise has started at the “Termez” base near the Afghan border), *Fergana Agency* (an independent news website reporting on Central Asia), 23 March 2021. <https://fergana.agency/news/121830/>

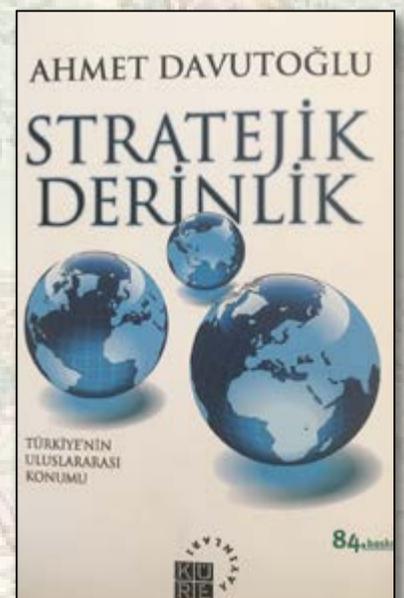
In Uzbekistan, at the Termez base near the border with Afghanistan, a military exercise with the special forces of Uzbekistan and Turkey has started... The exercise will continue until March 27, the soldiers will work out aspects of close combat, overcome a 15 kilometer complex, tactical course, conduct a live-fire and demonstrate survival in extreme conditions. The joint exercise is held based on the agreement of military cooperation signed between Uzbekistan and Turkey during the visit of Hulusi Akar in October of last year...

Source: “Ўзбекистан и Индия провели совместные военные учения (Uzbekistan and India carried out a joint exercise),” *Kun.uz* (a news website in Uzbekistan), 16 March 2021. <https://kun.uz/ru/news/2021/03/16/uzbekistan-i-indiya-proveli-sovmestnyye-voyennyie-ucheniya>

The Uzbek-Indian military exercise “Friendship-II” was held at the Chaubatiya training center, Ranikhet, India, the Ministry of Defense of Uzbekistan reports...Units in mixed formations, made of personnel from Uzbekistan and India, conducted practical exercises at the shooting range of the “Chaubatiya” training center and jungle areas...They performed a practical exercise to destroy the enemy in close quarters...

Book Review: A Look Back and Forward at Turkey’s “Strategic Depth” Foreign Policy Doctrine Karen Kaya February 2020

“Strategic Depth (Stratejik Derinlik)” is a Turkish book published in 2001. This was a time when international relations theorists were describing new frameworks of world order and security modalities following the end of the Cold War and bi-polar world. Works such as Francis Fukuyama’s “End of History” and Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” were icons of this intellectual period. It was in this context of a changing international system that Turkish International Relations Professor Ahmet Davutoğlu (who later served as Foreign Minister between 2009-2014 and Prime Minister between 2014-2016) attempted to define Turkey’s position in his book “Strategic Depth.” From around 2002 to 2012, the foreign policy that Davutoğlu outlined in his book was considered the doctrine and roadmap for Turkish foreign policy.



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