



## TAJIKISTAN AND NATO: ASSISTANCE-BASED PARTNERSHIP

Unlike other Central Asian states, Tajikistan was quite late in starting practical cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), mostly due to the civil war that raged in the country in the first half of 1990s. It became a member of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council, which was later renamed the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), in 1992, along with other former Soviet republics, but joined the alliance's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program only in February 2002. The bilateral political dialogue is maintained within the framework of the EAPC and through regular visits of the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia to Tajikistan as well as visits of Tajik high-ranking officials to the NATO headquarters in Brussels. The interaction between the parties is based on Tajikistan's individual partnership and cooperation program, which is updated every two years, and covers a number of security related areas, such as counter-terrorism, border security, crisis management, and civil emergency planning.

Cooperation between Tajikistan and NATO intensified after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and the beginning of the NATO-led anti-terrorism campaign in Afghanistan. To provide support to military operations of NATO's International Security Assistance Force in the neighboring country, Tajikistan allowed the French Air Force to be stationed at the Dushanbe airport in December 2001. In addition, in October 2004, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer and Tajik Foreign Minister Talbak Nazarov signed a host nation support and transit agreement, with Tajikistan becoming the first Central Asian country to sign such an agreement with NATO. Consequently, Tajikistan also signed agreements with individual NATO member countries to regulate the transit of cargos through the territory of the country in relation to the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan. Until their eventual departure in October 2014, the number of French troops deployed at the Dushanbe airport to perform repair and maintenance of NATO military aircraft on route to or from Afghanistan ranged from 150 to 300. The French Air Force used the airport to accomplish almost 11,000 air missions that account for 60% of all French missions during the Afghan war. Moreover, 89,000 NATO servicemen and 14,500 tons of cargo transited the Dushanbe airport during the campaign. In appreciation of the Tajik side's support, France funded the reconstruction of the Dushanbe airport's infrastructure, upgrading its runway, taxiways and parking areas, constructed a new international passenger terminal and in March 2018 began building a new control tower.

As NATO's partner country, Tajikistan makes use of the alliance's assistance mechanisms, such as the PfP Trust Funds. These funds are established jointly by individual NATO member states and partners requesting specific assistance in the areas of demilitarization, defense transformation or capacity building. The funds collect voluntary financial or in-kind contributions, such as equipment or expertise, and then provide resources to help partner countries implement practical projects, frequently with the involvement of other international organizations. In 2004, Tajikistan participated in the PfP Trust Fund project, the first in Central Asia, for safe destruction of 1,261 anti-personnel landmines, which was implemented by the Tajik Ministry of Defense and the United Nations Development Program with funding from Canada and the Netherlands. By destroying this stockpile, Tajikistan met its obligations under the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. In addition, in 2009, Tajikistan requested NATO assistance in improving the physical security and stockpile management of weapons and ammunition storage sites, with a particular focus on identifying abandoned and hidden caches of munitions located close to its southern border with Afghanistan, which were the legacy of the Tajik civil war. After the Japan-funded feasibility study and the NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency's in-country visit, the parties signed an implementing agreement and established the corresponding trust fund in January 2012. This United Kingdom-led project that aimed to help prevent illegal cross-border trade in munitions began once sufficient funding was secured and was successfully completed in 2015. Weapons and ammunition that were still usable were secured and transferred to properly guarded storage facilities, while obsolete stocks were safely disposed of. The project team also conducted a survey of ammunition depots in southern Tajikistan and recommended ways to improve their safety and security.

While being late in joining the PfP, Tajikistan has been actively engaging with the NATO Science for Peace and Security (SPS) program since 1996. Starting in 2003, together with other Central Asian and Southern Caucasus states, Tajikistan participated in a flagship project aimed at promoting Internet availability and connectivity of academic and research communities, known as the "Virtual Silk Highway". The project involved installing state-of-the-art satellite-based networks that provided reliable Internet access to Tajik scientists and researchers at about 35 academic and higher education institutions enabling them to exchange information and expertise

with their counterparts around the world, as well as access international scientific and educational resources. Other primary areas for scientific collaboration between Tajikistan and the alliance are environmental security and disaster management, in particular, projects related to radioactive waste and toxic pollutants and transboundary water pollution in Central Asia for the prevention of health risks and environmental damage.

Tajikistan also cooperates with NATO in reforming its defense and security sector, but is still to join the PfP Planning and Review Process mechanism. As strengthening border security, countering terrorism and preventing cross-border crime, especially drug trafficking, are of strategic importance for both Tajikistan and NATO, representatives of relevant Tajik government agencies regularly attend border management, counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics training courses organized and sponsored by NATO. While Tajikistan participates in NATO/PfP exercises, it is also interested in taking part in peacekeeping operations alongside NATO forces and has listed a number of units as available for such operations. The parties also cooperate in improving Tajikistan's military education by jointly developing curricula and courses, including language training, with Dushanbe considering the possible introduction of NATO's standards in the country's military education programs. In the field of disaster relief, NATO assists Tajikistan in developing its national capabilities in the form of an early warning system for natural disasters, a disaster-relief operation center and a NATO-compatible response unit. NATO supports educational activities relevant to security and defense issues in Tajikistan, and since 2005 NATO's Public Diplomacy Division has sponsored an annual summer academy which brings together Tajik and international students to learn about and discuss regional and global security issues.

It is understandable that being a close ally of Russia and a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization Dushanbe will continue to rely on Moscow as its main security provider. However, as security will remain one of the primary concerns of the Tajik government, especially given the permanently unstable situation in Afghanistan, Tajikistan will keep cooperating with other outside players, including NATO, in the foreseeable future. In its turn, the alliance facing tough financial conditions does not have resources to significantly expand its cooperation with Tajikistan but will keep its engagement with the country in several key areas of partnership, such as stability of Afghanistan, border security, the fight against terrorism and other transnational threats.

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## Politics, Foreign Affairs and Security

- The Justice and Development Party of Turkey officially nominated incumbent President Recep Tayyip Erdogan as its candidate to run in the presidential election set for June 24. It was also announced that Erdogan would stand as the candidate on behalf of the alliance with other political parties including the right-wing Nationalist Movement Party.
- The National Assembly of Armenia voted against Nikol Pashinian, the leader of the mass protest movement, as the country's next prime minister. He received 45 votes out of 53 needed to secure a majority in the 105-seat parliament. The ruling Republican Party of Armenia, which controls a majority of 58 seats, did not support Pashinyan. Armenia's parliamentarians will hold another vote for the prime ministerial post on May 8.
- During his official visit to Tashkent, Chairman of the Committee on Northern Economic Cooperation of Korea Song Young-gil met with President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev to discuss the prospects for further deepening mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries in the trade, economic, investment, and humanitarian areas.
- According to the Defense Ministry of Belarus, the Kazakh-Belarusian joint command and staff exercise for missile and artillery forces were conducted in the Sary-Shagan testing ground in Kazakhstan. Up to 100 vehicles and over 200 personnel were deployed for the exercise. It was noted that the participants of the exercise managed combat actions of missile units, carrying out singular and multiple-launch missile strikes.
- During his official visit to Ashgabat, Deputy Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Yerzhan Ashikbayev met with Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan Rashid Meredov to discuss issues of cooperation in the Caspian Sea. The sides also considered current developments related to water issues in Central Asia, including joint activities in addressing the Aral Sea problem.
- During his official visit to Sochi, Foreign Minister of Jordan Ayman Safadi met with Foreign Minister of Russia Sergey Lavrov to exchange

views on a wide range of pressing international and regional issues, including Syria, and discuss the current state and prospects of the Russian-Jordanian cooperation.

## Economy, Finance and Energy

- According to the State Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan, the growth of prices and tariffs in the consumer market of Uzbekistan averaged 0.9% in April 2018. During the reporting period, the prices of goods increased by 0.4%, while the prices of services increased by 2.7%.
- According to the Russian state-owned energy company Gazprom, the construction of a deep-water part of the Turkish Stream gas pipeline's first leg was completed near Turkey's Black Sea coast. The average speed of the construction in the deep-water area reached 4.3 kilometers per day.
- According to the Azerbaijani state-owned energy company Azerenergy, the company's power plants generated 7.66 billion kilowatt hours of electricity in January-April 2018 as compared to over 7.77 billion kilowatt hours in the same period of 2017. It was noted that the power plants generated more than 1.66 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity in April 2018 compared to 1.74 billion kilowatt-hours generated in April 2017.
- According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the growth of non-oil GDP in Azerbaijan is expected to reach 4% in 2018 and 3.2% in 2019. The country's GDP is expected to amount to \$45.5 billion in 2018 with a further growth to \$47.9 billion in 2019. Furthermore, it is forecasted that Azerbaijan's exports in 2018 and 2019 will total \$22.4 and \$23.6 billion, respectively.
- President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov visited an opening ceremony of the international seaport held in the city of Turkmenbashi. The cost of the Turkmenbashi seaport project, implemented since 2014 by the Turkish Gap Insaat Company, exceeded \$1.5 billion. The new port covers an area of about 152 hectares and includes the ferry, passenger and cargo terminals. The total length of berths, which can simultaneously serve 17 ships, is more than 1,800 meters. The total

capacity of the new port is 17 million tons of cargo, excluding oil products.

- According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB), ADB Country Director for Tajikistan Pradeep Srivastava and Minister of Finance of Tajikistan Faiziddin Qahhorzoda signed a \$90 million grant agreement for the rehabilitation of a 40-kilometer section of the Dushanbe-Bokhtar road to improve connectivity between the country's two major cities and economic hubs.

## Society and Culture

- The Government of Kyrgyzstan and the UN World Food Program signed a cooperation agreement to improve food security and nutrition in the country. It was noted that about \$60 million would be allocated within five years to achieve this goal. The main priorities under the five-year plan are to improve the situation with food security and upgrade the quality of life of rural people through the growth of labor productivity in agriculture.
- According to the Culture and Tourism Ministry of Turkey, in March 2018, 161,068 citizens of the Central Asian countries, namely, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, visited Turkey. The figure is 58,402 people more than in March 2017. It was also noted that in the first quarter of 2018 7.263 million tourists visited Turkey.
- According to head of the National Tourism Administration of Georgia Georgy Chogovadze, in April 2018, the number of Azerbaijani tourists visiting Georgia increased by 10.4% compared to the same period of 2017 and reached 596,700 people. It was also noted that the total number of foreigners, who visited Georgia in January-April 2018, reached 2.06 million people, including 937,300 tourists.
- According to the Aerial Forest Protection Service of Russia, almost 70 forest fires covering the total area of about 74,000 hectares were registered in Russia in early May 2018. It is noted that forest firefighters have already extinguished 143 forest fires on the area of 40,327 hectares. The largest blazes are raging in the Amur Region, with more than 54,400 hectares engulfed in fire.