



KAZAKHSTAN AND NATO'S PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE PROGRAM

Kazakhstan has been engaged in bilateral relations with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) since 1992, when the country joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) established by the alliance in December 1991 as a forum to discuss and coordinate security issues with its new partners. Kazakhstan's practical security cooperation with NATO officially started in May 1994, when it signed a framework document of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program launched in January 1994 to allow developing interaction between NATO and non-member states in the Euro-Atlantic area. The Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), which replaced the NACC in 1997, is a main platform for the NATO-Kazakhstan security dialogue providing the overall political framework for cooperation within the PfP program, while at the regional and national levels cooperation is maintained, respectively, via the NATO Liaison Office in Central Asia based in Tashkent and one of the embassies of the NATO member states serving as a contact point.

According to James Appathurai, NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia, Kazakhstan is the alliance's most active partner in the region. A major mechanism for implementing mutual cooperation is the individual partnership action plan (IPAP), which has been jointly developed and agreed on a two-year basis starting in 2006. Through the IPAP, the alliance is able to tailor its assistance to Kazakhstan's specific interests and priority needs focusing on activities that contribute best to the improvement and strengthening of the country's defense and security sector. Since 1995, as part of the PfP, Kazakhstan has participated in a number of the program activities, including defense reform, military-to-military cooperation, civil-military relations, civil emergency planning and disaster response, education, training, and scientific cooperation.

Under the defense and security sector reform, NATO provided considerable expertise that Kazakhstan has used to lay the conceptual framework for the institutional reform process within its Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces, including through the participation in the Partnership Action Plan on Defense Institution Building initiative that aids in setting effective judicial oversight and appropriate command arrangements for relevant institutions. Since 2002, Kazakhstan has participated in the PfP Planning and Review Process (PARP) to attain and improve interoperability between its armed forces and military units of the NATO member states, with a current emphasis on the Air-Mobile Forces. In this regard, the important and advanced direction of cooperation is ongoing joint work with NATO on further developing Kazakhstan's peacekeeping potential, as Astana regards conducting basic peacekeeping and humanitarian operations within a multinational framework as a tool that would help the country's military and security forces to gain practical experience of contemporary warfare under real-life conditions.

The early example of this interaction was the participation of Kazakhstan's national peacekeepers as part of the Central Asian Battalion in a series of U.S. and NATO sponsored annual military exercises conducted under the PfP program from 1997 to 2000. In January 2000, President Nursultan Nazarbayev issued an edict creating a separate Kazakh Peacekeeping Battalion (Kazbat) composed of contracted military servicemen. The Ministry of Defense considered a possibility of deploying the Kazakh peacekeepers in Afghanistan in 2002, but no political decision was eventually made, mainly due to strong domestic opposition. It is worth noting that Kazakhstan still assisted NATO with its operation in Afghanistan by providing over-flight rights and allowing the use of its territory for the transit of troops and supplies. The Kazbat's first peacekeeping experience was the deployment in Iraq as part of the U.S.-led multinational stabilization force from 2003 to 2008. Nine peacekeeping contingents totaling 290 military engineers and medical personnel were rotated over five years, contributing to the post-war reconstruction of Iraq.

In the following years, Kazakhstan continued to develop its national peacekeeping potential, mainly in the framework of PARP, through participation in military exercises and experience sharing in the planning, implementation and maintenance of peacekeeping operations. Starting in 2003, Kazakhstan partnered with the United Kingdom, the United States and other interested countries in conducting Steppe Eagle, an annual joint training exercise aimed to strengthen peacekeeping and peace support capabilities. In October 2007, the 38th Separate Air Assault Brigade was renamed the Kazakh Peacekeeping Brigade (Kazbrig), and the Kazbat became part of the Kazbrig. Currently, the Kazbrig is part of Kazakhstan's Airmobile Forces and consists of three battalions. The Kazbat-1 is designated to participate in UN peacekeeping missions, while the Kazbat-2 is intended to be used in peacekeeping operations under the aegis of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, and the Kazbat-3 is considered the Kazbrig's backup unit. The Kazbat-1, which has 550 servicemen, passed the NATO certification that confirmed the battalion's ability to operate in a multinational peacekeeping environment under a UN Security Council mandate, including in NATO-led peace support operations.

In July 2008, under the Kazakhstan-NATO cooperation plan, the first PfP training center in Central Asia called the Kazakhstan Center (KAZCENT) was opened in the Military Institute of Ground Forces in Almaty, and was accredited by NATO as a Partnership Training and Education Center in December 2010. The center's main objective is to train the relevant military personnel, including from the NATO member and partner states, designated to participate in peacekeeping operations. Its curriculum includes courses on English military terminology in multinational operations, NATO administrative and staff procedures, military-civilian interaction, as well as a course on the

history, economy, and culture of Central Asia and Afghanistan.

One of the cooperative areas of the NATO-Kazakhstan relations is the fight against international terrorism. As part of the Partnership Action Plan on Terrorism, Kazakhstan shares relevant information and analysis with NATO, enhances its national counter-terrorist capabilities, improves inter-agency cooperation and strengthens border security. Civil emergency planning is another key area of PfP cooperation between Kazakhstan and NATO, and the national emergency response and disaster management system has benefitted from participation in advanced training activities organized by the alliance's Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Center. In September 2009, the center partnered with Kazakhstan's Ministry for Emergency Situations to conduct the disaster response field exercise codenamed Zhetysu-2009 in the Almaty region. The civilian and military teams from more than 20 countries took part in the exercise designed to enhance cooperation in emergency situations by practicing disaster response mechanisms and capabilities.

The parties are also involved in scientific collaboration through the NATO's Science for Peace and Security program, under which Kazakhstan has received grant awards for over 20 cooperative research projects. Study topics include radiological risks in Central Asia, integrated water resources management, security of cyber networks, and new technologies for seismic resistant construction. NATO also pays close attention to increasing public awareness of the alliance and benefits of its partnership with Kazakhstan. In particular, in 2007, NATO assisted the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University in Almaty in establishing the Resource and Information Center on NATO, which organizes regular NATO-themed events. In addition, the NATO Depository Library was opened at the Kazakh National Academic Library in Astana in 2008, where NATO sends multimedia materials and publications for use by students, researchers and practitioners. It is noteworthy that in June 2009 the third EAPC Security Forum took place in Astana focusing on the situation in Afghanistan, regional security perspectives in Central Asia and the Caucasus, as well as energy issues.

In conclusion, it is important to note that cooperation under NATO's PfP program helps Kazakhstan to address security threats posed by terrorism, religious extremism, ethnic conflicts, organized crime, drug trafficking, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and other challenges. Kazakhstan does not pursue full membership in the alliance, but the institutionalized interaction with NATO is essential for Kazakhstan as it not only contributes to the strengthening of its military forces but also increases regional stability, enhances security cooperation in Central Asia, and mitigates external pressure from the neighboring major powers.

Written by Dauren Aben,
Eurasian Research Institute, Kazakhstan

Politics, Foreign Affairs and Security

- During his official visit to Sochi, President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan exchanged opinions with President of Russia Vladimir Putin on regional and international issues, focusing on the joint fight against terrorism and the Syrian peace settlement. The parties also discussed prospects of boosting bilateral trade and strengthening cooperation in the energy sector.
- During his official visit to Baku, Deputy Prime Minister of Uzbekistan Alisher Sultanov met with President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev to discuss expanding cooperation between the two countries in a number of areas, including trade, energy, and transport.
- During his official visit to St. Petersburg, President of Kyrgyzstan Almazbek Atambayev met with President of Russia Vladimir Putin to discuss long-standing bilateral cooperation between the two countries. The parties exchanged views on a wide range of issues, including economy, security, and culture.
- During his official visit to Ashgabat, Minister of Road and Urban Development of Iran Abbas Ahmed Akhundi met with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan Rashid Meredov to discuss bilateral cooperation, with special attention paid to transport and logistics. The parties also exchanged views on the issues of establishing an effective partnership in the energy sector.
- During his official visit to Moscow, President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan met with President of Russia Vladimir Putin to discuss issues related to strengthening fruitful bilateral ties, especially in the field of security and humanitarian cooperation. The parties also exchanged views on the issues of further cooperation in the political, economic and financial spheres.

Economy, Finance and Energy

- During the 7th Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan held in Ashgabat, high-ranking officials of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, and Turkmenistan signed an agreement on a major international trade and transport corridor that will connect Afghanistan directly to Europe. The Lapis Lazuli Corridor is to begin in Afghanistan's northern Aqina port in the Faryab province and Torghandi in the western Herat province. The route

will run through Turkmenbashi in Turkmenistan, across the Caspian Sea to Azerbaijan's Baku port, then across Georgia's Black Sea ports of Batumi and Poti or through Turkey to the Mediterranean and Europe.

- According to the Central Bank of Uzbekistan, the license issued to commercial banks to conduct hard currency operations was abolished. All commercial banks of the country have been reissued licenses entitling them to conduct banking operations, and from now on foreign currency operations will be carried out under these general licenses. The decision was adopted in order to implement the decree of the President of Uzbekistan on priority measures for the liberalization of monetary policy signed in September 2017.
- According to the Statistics Agency of Tajikistan, the volume of the country's foreign trade amounted to more than \$3.2 billion over the last 10 months, which is 2%, or \$8 million, less compared to the same period of last year. The country's imports decreased to more than \$2.2 billion, which is 10.5%, or \$266 million, less compared to the same period of 2016, while exports increased by almost 35%, or \$258 million, amounting to more than \$1 billion. Russia remains the main trade partner of Tajikistan. During the reported period, the trade turnover between the countries amounted to \$765 million decreasing by 18% compared to the same period of 2016.
- According to the Finance Ministry of Russia, an intergovernmental protocol on restructuring Venezuela's debt to Russia equaling \$3.15 billion was signed. The protocol stipulates full repayment within a ten-year period and minimal payments in the first six years. The debt relief provided to Venezuela will enable Caracas to allocate released funds on the country's economic development and improve its repayment ability.
- According to the National Bank of Kyrgyzstan, since the beginning of the year, migrant workers have transferred \$1.740 billion, which is a \$274.6 million increase compared to the same period of last year. It was noted that in September 2017 the inflow of remittances to Kyrgyzstan amounted to \$259.4 million, which is a \$2.6 million decrease compared to the previous month. The bulk of the funds, or \$253.4 million, came from Russia. At the same

time, during the reporting period, remittances from Kyrgyzstan to other countries totaled \$44.3 million.

Society and Culture

- According to Rashad Nabiyeu, the head of the state-owned satellite operator of Azerbaijan Azerspace-1, the country's first satellite launched in 2013, amounted to \$80 million. He has also noted that about 80% of resources of Azerspace-1 satellite have already been commercialized, and annual sales of satellite resources are forecasted to grow. Its service area includes the countries of Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia, Middle East and Africa. The launch of Azerspace-2, the second geostationary satellite, is scheduled for 2018.
- During an emergency government meeting held to discuss the critical situation on the country's roads, Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan Sapar Isakov signed two resolutions, one disbanding the Main Patrol Police Directorate and the other establishing the Main Directorate for Road Traffic Safety of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. It was noted that the staff of the new unit would be increased.
- According to the Statistics Committee of the Ministry of National Economy of Kazakhstan, as of October 1, 2017, the population of the country reached 18,096,900 people, which is 231,300 people, or 1.3%, more than as of October 1, 2016. The urban and rural population in Kazakhstan amounted to 10,383,300 (57.4%) and 7,713,600 people (42.6%), respectively.
- The opening ceremony of the Days of the Armenian Culture in Russia was held at the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow. The event was attended by presidents Serzh Sargsyan and Vladimir Putin. The Russian President presented his Armenian counterpart with the painting "Demon and Angel with Tamara's Soul" by Mikhail Vrubel, which was stolen in Yerevan 22 years ago.
- According to President and CEO of Kazakhstan's flag carrier Air Astana Peter Foster, the company plans to add Mumbai as its second destination in India by 2019. He has also noted that the company plans to turn its Delhi-Astana flight, which currently operates three times a week, into a daily service.