



# **HOSTAGES TO MOSCOW, CLIENTS OF BEIJING**

## SECURITY IN CENTRAL ASIA AS THE ROLE OF THE WEST DIMINISHES

Maciej Falkowski, Józef Lang

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## KEY POINTS

1. The events currently taking place in Central Asia, as well as those in the entirety of the post-Soviet area, show that 2014 will be a turning point in region's most recent history, as was 1991 (the fragmentation of the USSR, the establishment of five independent states) and 2001 (the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan). The ISAF mission in Afghanistan and the Western military presence in Central Asia related to it were the cause of global interest in the region during the last thirteen years and the cessation of this activity will be the most important change. No less important will be the repercussions of the Ukrainian crisis, including the influence it bears on Russia's policy towards Central Asia, for example in the dimension of Russian pressure on the reintegration of the post-Soviet area. The above events will significantly influence the geopolitical situation in the region, including one of its most important elements – the sphere of security.
2. The balance of thirteen years of a Western military and political presence – first of all this means the US, with a secondary role played by the EU and selected Western European states – in Central Asia can be judged as moderately positive. The West did accomplish its immediate tactical goal of securing a logistical base for its mission in Afghanistan, but it was unable to generate a geopolitical change which would enable a lasting independence of the region's states from Russia, their democratisation and increased cooperation in the energy sphere with Central Asia. From the point of view of the states of Central Asia the most significant effect of the Western presence in the region was the temporary overcoming of their peripheral status and almost full dependence on Russia, and it also confirmed the regional order shaped during Soviet times (the existence of five states with their current borders). Intensive cooperation with the West had a positive impact on the empowerment of these states on the international arena, on strengthening the state structures, and it also improved their sense of security. It did not contribute to solving chronic internal problems, though, including those in the area of security. Western involvement also indirectly led to a strengthening of China's position in Central Asia, which was made possible by breaking down the Russian monopoly on influence in the region, initiating cooperation between the Central Asian states and partners other than Russia, and finally by Moscow viewing Beijing as a tactical ally in the struggle against the Western presence in Central Asia.

3. Despite oft-voiced concerns, the cessation of the mission in Afghanistan and the Western military presence in the region is rather unlikely to lead to an increased risk of destabilisation stemming from the Afghan direction, since the internal problems of Central Asia have a much greater potential for destabilisation. The most severe of these include: the weakness and corruption of state structures, the authoritarian political system present in most of the countries, unresolved issues of the succession of power (which can generate political severe turmoil), huge socio-economic problems (unemployment, poverty, the collapse of public health and education, dynamic demographic growth); rising ethnic conflicts (for example conflict between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks); Islamic radicalism; conflicts between the regional states, including conflicts for diminishing water supplies (especially between Uzbekistan and upstream Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan); unresolved border disputes etc. The multitude and complexity of problems means that Central Asia is a time bomb.
4. The end of the Western military presence in Central Asia will mean the West's influence on the security sphere in the region will be marginalised and it will also actually withdraw from the geopolitical rivalry. It is mainly a result of a lack of political will in West itself, including the USA. With regard to the architecture of security, a more active stance from China should not be expected – despite the great importance that Central Asia's stability has for the security of Chinese interests, Beijing is unwilling to confront Russia; is aware of its own limitations in this sphere and views the United States as its main global rival. In a timeframe of the next few years, Russia's policy will be the decisive factor influencing the security system in Central Asia. One of Russia's goals will be a drive to strengthen its military presence and to widen cooperation within the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) in order to bring the region under an institutional security umbrella.
5. Although it is likely that Russia will dominate the dimension of Central Asia's security architecture, this will not be synonymous with Russia taking over actual responsibility for security and certainly not with it undertaking efforts to solve regional problems. It is a result of Russia's perception of the region and Russia's capability there. Contrary to official Russian rhetoric, the threats to the security of Central Asia do not constitute threats for Russia itself, and it views security in the region in geopolitical terms. To date Moscow has not undertaken any significant measures aimed at countering threats to regional security. Furthermore, the effectiveness of

instruments which Russia can utilise should a serious threat to security occur is doubtful. The security system dominated by Russia will not be a system guaranteeing security, but rather a mechanism of Russian control over Central Asia.

6. The balance of power in the security dimension will significantly influence the geopolitical rivalry in the region, but it will not determine it since Russian potential in other spheres is limited. The most important factor shaping the situation in Central Asia will be Russian-Chinese competition, not confrontation, which would be too costly for both the sides. In the security dimension Central Asia remains a permanently unstable region, troubled by chronic problems and cyclical shocks. The risk of them developing into a crisis capable of destroying the post-Soviet regional order does not seem high, but it cannot be entirely ruled out. Simultaneously, Central Asia, which remains a *de facto* Russian-Chinese condominium, will most probably again turn into a peripheral region from a global power balance point of view, with stagnation in the political and social dimensions.

# INTRODUCTION

The goal of this publication is to attempt to assess the thirteen years (2001-2014) of the West's military presence in the countries of post-Soviet Central Asia, closely associated with the ISAF and OEF-A (Operation Enduring Freedom - Afghanistan) missions in Afghanistan. There will also be an analysis of the actual challenges for the region's stability after 2014. The current and future security architecture in Central Asia will also be looked at closely, as will the actual capabilities to counteract the most serious threats within its framework. The need to separately handle the security system in Central Asia and security as such is dictated by the particularities of political situation in the region, the key mechanism of which is geopolitics understood as global superpower rivalry for influence with a secondary or even instrumental role of the five regional states, while ignoring their internal problems. Such an approach is especially present in Russia's perception of Central Asia, as it views security issues in geopolitical categories. Because of this, security analysis in the Central Asian region requires a broader geopolitical context, which was taken into account in this publication.

The first part investigates the impact of the Western (primarily US) military and political presence on the region's geopolitical architecture between 2001 and 2014. The second chapter is an attempt to take an objective look at the real challenges to regional security after the withdrawal of the coalition forces from Afghanistan, while the third chapter is dedicated to analysing the probable course of events in the security dimension following 2014.

The accuracy of predictions time-wise included in the below publication does not exceed three to five years due to the dynamic developments in Central Asia and its immediate vicinity (the former Soviet Union, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran), and because of the large degree of unpredictability of policies of one of the key regional actors - Russia (both in the terms of its activity on the international arena, and its internal developments).

## I. CLOSING BALANCE: THIRTEEN YEARS OF A WESTERN MILITARY PRESENCE IN CENTRAL ASIA

The launch of military-political cooperation between the West and the states of Central Asia which took place after the September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 attacks, combined with appearance of a Western military presence, was a turning point for the region. Initially it created an array of opportunities both for the West and for the Central Asian countries. However, during a later period this cooperation became more problematic for the West.

The end of the ISAF<sup>1</sup> mission in Afghanistan planned for December 2014 also spells the end of the thirteen years of the Western military presence in Central Asia<sup>2</sup>. During this period Central Asia held an important, if not key, place in the West's strategy towards Afghanistan, while the West's goals in the region were subject to change, which mainly consisted of a gradual limitation of their scope.

In the strategic dimension the West did not succeed in accomplishing its original ambitious goals, yet the Western military presence in the region did impact the geopolitical situation in Central Asia and widened the field of political manoeuvre for the states of the region. The West's tactical objectives, related to the support of operations in Afghanistan and securing the minimum regional stability, were to the most extent accomplished.

In the security dimension the Western presence did not directly contribute to a neutralisation of internal threats for the region but indirectly, through strengthening the region's states, it did enhance their capability to deal with such challenges. Furthermore, the West neutralised the main external threat to the region, as the Taliban regime in Afghanistan had been viewed in the late 1990s. The expected limited American presence in Afghanistan after 2014 (10,000 troops for the next two years) will constitute further protection for what at present is an unlikely threat from that direction.

<sup>1</sup> ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) – a stabilising mission under NATO's command, operating since 2002.

<sup>2</sup> The French base in Dushanbe (Tajikistan) was closed in 2013, American base in Manas (Kyrgyzstan) in June of 2014, while the future of the German base in Termez (Uzbekistan) is uncertain.

## 1. The goals of the West: evolution and evaluation

The goals of the Western military presence in Central Asia evolved during its duration. The factors which influenced this change include: a concept change in US foreign policy (for example the neoconservative vision of George Bush's administration versus Obama's reset in relations with Russia), problematic cooperation with the states of the region, as well as a deterioration in the situation in Afghanistan. The objectives set by the West for Central Asia were both tactical and strategic, and can also be divided into two stages – the initial (2001–2005), characterised by ambitious strategic plans towards the region, and the later one (2007–2014) – with less advanced actions and focused directly on the situation in Afghanistan.

During the initial stage the West's tactical objectives were to secure the military infrastructure necessary to conduct operations in Afghanistan, and to prevent the occurrence of terrorism hotspots in Central Asia. These goals were achieved – four military bases were established in the region – US bases in Manas (Kyrgyzstan) and Qarshi (Uzbekistan), a French base in Dushanbe (Tajikistan) and a German one in Termez (Uzbekistan)<sup>3</sup>. American assistance (including military aid<sup>4</sup>) also contributed to strengthening the potential of Central Asian states, while the largest terrorist organisation in the region – the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan – lost its safe haven in northern Afghanistan, suffered heavy casualties in America's Operation Enduring Freedom<sup>5</sup> and was forced to flee to Pakistan's tribal territories.

In the broader strategic dimension the removal of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the appearance of the Western military presence on the territory of the Central Asian post-Soviet republics ten years after the fall of the Soviet Union fuelled Western (especially US) hopes regarding lasting geopolitical change in the region. Such change was to include strengthening the Central Asian states, democratising and transforming them, and eventually also prising them from Moscow's sphere of influence, with the West gaining significant influence in the region.

<sup>3</sup> See further in Annexe 2.

<sup>4</sup> The rise of the level of assistance from US\$ 158 million in fiscal year 2001 to US\$ 420 million in 2002, however only US\$ 170 million already in 2004. See further in Annexe 1.

<sup>5</sup> Operation Enduring Freedom – an American operation aimed against Al Qaeda and the Taliban supporting it, ongoing since 2001.

A strengthening of hopes regarding the realisation of earlier proposed projects of building export routes for Central Asian carbohydrates was also seen. These would be an alternative to export via Russia, especially the TAPI gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan and India via Afghanistan.

The above goal, in its most ambitious form, was abandoned already during the presidency of George Bush<sup>6</sup>: due to US involvement in Iraq and Washington's subsequent diminishing interest in Afghanistan and Central Asia, and also due to problems in cooperating with the region's countries, which viewed the West's prodemocracy actions unfavourably<sup>7</sup>. Simultaneously the West's presence facilitated the introduction of a new player to the region – China, who later became Moscow's chief rival. It is therefore possible to conclude that the goal of enabling the independence of the region's states from Russia was partially achieved, yet it was not combined with a lasting and universal strengthening of the West's influence in Central Asia.

During the latter stages the deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan forced the West to change its goals towards the region. Western activity in Central Asia was aimed at facilitating operations in Afghanistan in the tactical dimension, while in the strategic dimension it was aimed at stabilising Afghanistan. This time the emphasis was put not on direct military presence, but on logistics projects, such as the Northern Distribution Network (NDN)<sup>8</sup>, which was caused by an increase in the number of troops stationed in Afghanistan (beginning from 2008) and problems with the security of supply lines through Pakistan. These projects, besides their temporary military value for the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, were meant to facilitate the establishment of new transport infrastructure and economic links between Central Asia and Afghanistan – therefore serving the stabilisation of the country in the long run. Despite the limited usage of the NDN in the withdrawal of ISAF from Afghanistan, this goal has been reached. Central Asia did play the role of a logistical

<sup>6</sup> For example Washington's firm reaction to quelling rebellion in the Uzbek city of Andijan in 2005. On a tactical scale the result was the US losing its base in Qarshi. On a strategic scale the US lost its main ally in the region – Uzbekistan.

<sup>7</sup> Perceiving them as a threat to the regimes present in the region's states.

<sup>8</sup> Northern Distribution Network (NDN) – a commercial system of transportation of non-lethal supplies to Afghanistan, operational since 2009. Its route goes from Baltic seaports via Russia as well as from Black Sea ports via the Caucasus to Central Asia and Afghanistan. The commercial character of the NDN means that it is not the above states, but logistic companies which perform the transportation of supplies. This route was more expensive than transport through Pakistan, and therefore was utilised as a back-up, not a main route.

base (for example virtually all US personnel in Afghanistan was transferred there through the Manas base near Bishkek), while the NDN was a functioning alternative for a cheaper, yet instable route through Pakistan, utilised during problems with the latter, occasionally taking on the main supply load. Cooperation between the states of Central Asia and Afghanistan is ongoing without further direct support from the West. An example of this can be seen in the plans to build a railroad connection between Turkmenistan and Tajikistan via Afghanistan<sup>9</sup>.

Stabilising the situation in Afghanistan will remain a priority of US policy towards the region after 2014, and relations with Central Asian states will be subordinated to it. One can expect further American support for infrastructural projects connecting Central Asia with Afghanistan and Pakistan, based on the American concept of the New Silk Road – a strategy of stabilising Afghanistan through facilitating economic contacts with Central Asia. From among these projects the most important ones are CASA-1000 (building infrastructure to export electric energy from Central Asia to Afghanistan and Pakistan) and railroad development in Afghanistan. Despite the crisis in US-Russia relations caused by the conflict in Ukraine, it is unlikely that the US will take active measures aimed at weakening Russia's position in Central Asia. This does not mean a lack of American activity in the region – the US will continue to deliver limited support to Central Asian states (above all Uzbekistan and Tajikistan<sup>10</sup>), yet it will not have an impact on security architecture.

## **2. Impact of the Western presence on Central Asia**

The Western military presence in Central Asia, associated with the mission in Afghanistan, contributed to change in the region. Its impact can be examined both from the perspective of the states of the region and the geopolitical power balance in Central Asia.

The states of the region are beneficiaries of the Western military presence in Central Asia and engagement in Afghanistan. It contributed indirectly to improving their security and stability: despite the fact that Western soldiers did

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.avesta.tj/business/26006-tadzhikistan-poluchit-100-mln-dlya-stroitelstva-uchastka-regionalnogo-zh-d-proekta.html>

<sup>10</sup> States which border Afghanistan and thus have the biggest impact on stabilising the country's north. Despite that, American assistance to these states is limited mainly to small direct aid and training (especially of border troops and services countering drug smuggling).

not directly participate in solving crises in Central Asia, the cooperation with the West significantly strengthened regional states on the international arena and gave them the opportunity to bolster themselves.

On the eve of the launch of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2001, Central Asia remained in Russia's exclusive zone of influence<sup>11</sup>, while countries in the region battled such problems as the weakness of state structures, the threat from terrorism<sup>12</sup>, or the threat of a spill over of the civil war in Afghanistan to Central Asia. The fall of Taliban regime in Afghanistan liquidated this threat, while the Western military presence gave further security guarantees<sup>13</sup>, which resulted in the region's states taking a favourable stance towards the West. It did not, however, lead to democratisation and transformation of the region's states, which mostly remained authoritarian (Kyrgyzstan is an exception, yet even there it cannot be directly linked to Western activity). Partly as a result of the change of the West's priorities and Russia's activities, later cooperation between the region's states and the West had a problematic course, examples of which can be found in Uzbekistan's sudden turn after the events in Andijan in 2005<sup>14</sup> (the closure of the American base in Qarshi, readmission into the CSTO) or Kyrgyz attempts to close the Manas base in 2009<sup>15</sup>.

The states of Central Asia had also achieved significant financial gains due to the West's engagement in Afghanistan. The region's countries (except for Turkmenistan) received a total of US\$ 500 million annually for allowing the

<sup>11</sup> An exception to that was Uzbekistan, which in 1999 began orienting towards cooperation with the West, especially the United States. In this year Uzbekistan withdrew from the Collective Security Treaty Organisation and joined the Organisation for Democracy and Economic Development (GUAM), which included Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova.

<sup>12</sup> For example the Batken crises in 1999 and 2000 as well as the civil war in Tajikistan (1992-1997). The consequences of the latter were palpable for several years after its end - not all of the warlords recognised the peace treaty and continued the fight.

<sup>13</sup> The latter was especially important to the region's states - for example Uzbekistan gave permission for US forces to use Qarshi-Khanabad (K2) base (the first American base in the region) free of charge in exchange for security guarantees against threats stemming from Afghanistan as well as combating Taliban and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan guerrillas in northern Afghanistan. Congressional Research Service Report RS22295, available at: <http://wlstorage.net/file/crs/RS22295.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Rebellion in the Uzbek city of Andijan in May of 2005, brutally pacified by President Islam Karimov's regime.

<sup>15</sup> Kyrgyzstan's president Kurmanbek Bakiyev in 2009 attempted to close down the Manas base (the only American base in the region), after receiving promises from Russia to provide Bishkek with a US\$ 2 billion loan. Eventually the base remained, after a significant raise of fees and a change of its name to Transit Centre Manas.

transfer of supplies through the NDN<sup>16</sup>. Furthermore, starting from 2008 the US has begun purchasing some of the supplies (primarily gasoline and construction supplies) for the mission in Afghanistan in Central Asian states. The cost of American purchases made during the ISAF mission can be estimated at US\$ 4.9 billion<sup>17</sup>. In total, over thirteen years Western expenses in Central Asia related to its presence in Afghanistan came to almost US\$ 20 billion<sup>18</sup>, which is a significant figure, yet only a minute part of total expenses related to operations in Afghanistan, which may even to as much as US\$ 6 trillion<sup>19</sup>.

In the geopolitical dimension the thirteen years of the Western military presence in Central Asia bore influence on the balance of power in the region. In 2001 Russia supported the West's operations in Afghanistan, including a temporary military presence in Central Asia, as it eliminated the threats to Russian interests in the region which stemmed from Afghanistan. The subsequent presence of Western (especially American) forces in Central Asia after the toppling of the Taliban, did however provoke fear among the neighbouring powers: Russia perceived it as a threat to its domination in the region, and China saw American bases on its western flank as a new, dangerous quality – due to the Manas base, Chinese nuclear installations in Lop-nur fell in range of American strike aircraft and listening posts. Both of these countries opposed this presence and attempted to end the American military presence by putting pressure on the region's states. Nonetheless, it was the rise of statehood in the Central Asian states related to the Western engagement that allowed China to gain significant influence in the region which had previously been an area of exclusive Russian influence.

Both from the perspective of the region's states, as well as China and Russia, a further limited Western presence in Afghanistan (President Obama's announcement that 10,000 troops will remain until 2016, NATO's advisory and training mission) is beneficial. For Central Asia it means further containment of potential threats stemming from Afghanistan and the possibility to derive

<sup>16</sup> Based on: <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/OPS-No-8-20121019.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Purchases of Defence Logistics Agency and General Supply Agency – further in Annexe 1.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/study-iraq-afghan-war-costs-to-top-4-trillion/2013/03/28/b82a5dce-97ed-11e2-814b-063623d80a60\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/study-iraq-afghan-war-costs-to-top-4-trillion/2013/03/28/b82a5dce-97ed-11e2-814b-063623d80a60_story.html)

short term gains from cooperation with the West<sup>20</sup>. It is a scenario beneficial also for Russia and China, who are partially interested in Afghanistan's stability and fear the negative consequences of instability in this country for their interests in Central Asia. Above all, though, they perceive the situation where it is the West and the USA who are the guarantors of Afghanistan's stability as being as very convenient for them.

<sup>20</sup> Smaller than those previously gained - for example the reduction of American military assistance, also the previously planned transfer of some of the military equipment left over from the mission in Afghanistan does not now seem probable (but is not impossible).

## II. CHALLENGES FOR THE SECURITY OF CENTRAL ASIA

The withdrawal of ISAF forces from Afghanistan and the end of the Western military presence in Central Asia raised a number of fears regarding the security of the region following 2014. The issue most often raised is the possibility of the negative impact that the unstable situation in Afghanistan may have on Central Asia's security. This scenario does not seem very likely, which does not, however, mean that Central Asia will be a stable region from 2014 onwards. The most serious and real threats for the security of Central Asia will, though, be the unresolved regional tensions and internal problems in the individual countries of the region.

### 1. The myth of the Afghan threat

The issue of threat for Central Asia flowing from Afghanistan is often raised at the political level, both by the region's states, and also by Russia. This threat is associated with risk of the states of Central Asia being infiltrated by the Taliban or other Islamic terrorist organisations (the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Islamic Jihad Union) in order to destabilise the region and optimally initiate Islamic revolution or topple the current governments. According to the most widespread forecasts (first of all in Russian political and analytical narration) such a sequence of events could occur directly after the withdrawal of ISAF forces from Afghanistan<sup>21</sup>.

In reality the probability of this scenario is slight, while bringing it up is being used instrumentally for political purposes. Russia has made use of the Afghan threat in order to force regional states into deeper military integration within the CSTO, to strengthen the importance of this organisation towards the West, and to justify the increase of its military presence in the region. Central Asian countries use the Afghan scare in order to coerce Russia and the West to provide them with more military aid. The situation in Afghanistan does generate problems for Central Asia (such as drug smuggling, trans-border crime etc.) yet most often they constitute local problems in the border areas, not existential threats for the region's states.

It does not mean that the situation in Afghanistan cannot become destabilised or that the ongoing civil war between the authorities in Kabul and the Taliban

<sup>21</sup> For example: [http://russiancouncil.ru/projects/project/?PROJECT\\_ID\\_4=4#top](http://russiancouncil.ru/projects/project/?PROJECT_ID_4=4#top)

will not escalate, which could indirectly have a negative impact on Central Asia. Afghanistan, despite the peaceful settlement of the presidential election process and securing of the key issue of signing the Bilateral Security Agreement with the USA, which allows for a further limited American presence in Afghanistan, remains unstable. The perspective of a peace agreement with the Taliban, which would allow for a political settlement of the conflict, also seems to be distant. It creates a danger that the government in Kabul will lose control over the country and that the civil war will take on similar scale as in the 1990s.

Nevertheless, the scenario in which Afghanistan would serve as a platform for an armed attack on Central Asia seems unrealistic due to several factors. Terrorist organisations affiliating the Islamic radicals from Central Asia (the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Islamic Jihad Union) which were believed to constitute a threat to Central Asia are currently engaged in Pakistan and Afghanistan and show little interest in armed struggle in the region<sup>22</sup>. Furthermore, the attention of the Muslim worlds and groups engaged in or supporting the global Jihad is, as a result of war in Syria and Iraq, concentrated on the Middle East<sup>23</sup>. Also the states of the region are significantly stronger than they were fifteen years ago when the region was troubled by raids of Islamic terrorists from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan on the Kyrgyz Batken province<sup>24</sup>.

Secondly, the Taliban, as a strictly Pashtun movement, are not interested in spreading their influence north of Afghanistan. This could be seen between 1998 and 2001, when the Taliban controlled Afghanistan's border with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, yet did not organise attacks on Central Asian countries. Furthermore, even should Afghanistan's north fall to the Taliban, it may be expected that the Central Asian states will have the same policy towards the Taliban as in the 1990s. For Turkmenistan this would mean retaining neutrality and de facto establishing pragmatic relations with the Taliban. Uzbekistan would most likely close its border and support the Uzbek minority, while Tajikistan would probably cooperate with the Afghan Tajiks, who

<sup>22</sup> Further in: Józef Lang, *The Radical Islamic Militants of Central Asia*, *OSW Report*, 2013, [http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/report\\_the-radical-islamic-militants.pdf](http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/report_the-radical-islamic-militants.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> This trend will probably intensify further due to the establishment of a caliphate by the Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham (ISIS) in the conquered territories in Iraq, which resulted in a wide response throughout the Muslim world.

<sup>24</sup> Conducted in 1999 and 2000 from the territory of Tajikistan. In 2000 fighting also took place in Uzbekistan.

constitute a significant portion of the population, especially in the country's north. The appearance of Taliban on the borders of the Central Asian states would be associated with additional costs and the risk of instability yet even in the worst case scenario of how events could develop in Afghanistan (the escalation of civil war, the collapse of the state structures), the region's states will not be directly threatened.

## **2. The Central Asian time bomb**

The absence of serious threats stemming from Afghanistan does not mean that Central Asia is a stable region. Its instability has a chronic character and manifests itself in cyclically reoccurring crises, local conflicts and tensions. In May of 2014 alone there were: incidents of unrest in Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan, demonstrations in Kyrgyzstan, as well as border incidents on the outskirts of the Fergana Valley. In the past the region regularly witnessed severe crises, such as civil war in Tajikistan (1992–1997), raids by Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan guerrillas on Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan (1999 and 2000), rebellion in Uzbekistan's Andijan (2005), two revolutions (2005 and 2010) and the bloody Uzbek-Kyrgyz ethnic conflict (2010) in Kyrgyzstan, skirmishes with informal local armed groups in Tajikistan (2009 and 2012); terrorist attacks (2011/2012) and a brutal quelling of oil workers' protests (2011) in Kazakhstan, as well as armed border incidents (for example on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border in 2014). The danger of similar events occurring in the future is high, and it is also possible that they will escalate and spread to other countries. It cannot be ruled out that similar crises will result in the collapse of the state structures of one of the region's countries and the consequences of this would be catastrophic. Nevertheless, it is difficult to assess the likelihood of this scenario playing out.

There are a number of chronic threats which constitute a challenge to the security of all the Central Asian countries. Primarily these are tensions between the region's states (for example between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, conflicts over diminishing water supplies in the Fergana Valley) as well as internal social, political and economic conflicts in particular countries. Ethnic tension (above all in southern Kyrgyzstan) and the activity of criminal, primarily drug smuggling, groups linked to government can be included in the lengthy catalogue of security challenges in Central Asia.

Despite the region's states strengthening over recent years, the economic successes of some of them (Kazakhstan) or the effective apparatus of repression (Uzbekistan), the weakness and ineffectiveness of state structures as well as

the political immaturity of societies and elites remain a serious problem. Tensions and conflicts are intensified by the authoritarian political system present in most of the states of the region. This system impedes or even eliminates the possibility of a peaceful and democratic settlement of political and social tension, while the lack of mechanisms stabilising the potential unrest, combined with the inefficiency of state apparatuses, causes there to be a significant risk of escalation should a severe crisis occur (for example the ethnic conflict in southern Kyrgyzstan took place directly after the revolution in 2010). In some cases authoritarian power itself through its actions generates security threats. Example of this can be seen in the problem of the Islamic terrorism threat: Central Asia is witnessing a rise of interest in Islam and the practice of this religion, including its fundamental currents (for example Salafism), which is treated as a threat by the post-Soviet authorities of the region's states. The persecution of Salafists as perceived/potential terrorists, or at times even random individuals not associated with fundamentalists, causes people and milieus previously not prone to terrorist activity to become radicalised and create a social base for terrorism<sup>25</sup>.

Besides the above problems, each of the region's countries is troubled by challenges to security and stability characteristic to itself.

The two Central Asian states most vulnerable to instability and volatility are Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In both of these states the last five years have seen serious unrest, examples of which may be revolution and ethnic conflict in Kyrgyzstan in 2010<sup>26</sup>, or fighting between Tajik forces and informal regional militant groups in the Rasht valley in 2009 and in Gorno-Badakhshan in 2012<sup>27</sup>. There are a number of unresolved problems in Kyrgyzstan, and even an insignificant incident could lead to these morphing into open conflict. These include:

<sup>25</sup> The problem is present in all states of the region, yet most Islamic radicals from Central Asia chose to migrate to countries where Islamic terrorist organisations are active (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria). In the ranks of both Central Asian terrorist organisations and the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and in Syria volunteers are present from all the Central Asian states.

<sup>26</sup> Ethnic conflict between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in the south of the country (mainly in Osh) in June 2010, during which 470 people died (predominantly Uzbeks) and over 400,000 became refugees. [http://www.cmi.fi/images/stories/activities/blacksea/kic/kic\\_report\\_english\\_final.pdf](http://www.cmi.fi/images/stories/activities/blacksea/kic/kic_report_english_final.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> In Tajikistan after the end of civil war, conflicts between central government and local informal groups (often with a declared Islamic character) took place every few years. These groups were in de facto control of the situation in parts of the country difficult to access, and in most cases were led by former opposition warlords.

socio-political antagonism between the north and south of the country, ethnic tensions between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, the weakness of state structures or regular incidents on the borders with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, related to unregulated borders, especially in the vicinity of the numerous enclaves<sup>28</sup>. In Tajikistan the biggest threats to stability are security are social problems (high unemployment, the pauperisation of the population) currently neutralised by mass labour migration to Russia, as well regional tensions, potential conflict within the ruling elite caused by increasingly authoritarian course taken by President Emomali Rahmon, and finally tense relations between neighbours (Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan). Fresh incidents of unrest in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are very likely, while the occurrence of a severe crisis threatening the destabilisation of the whole region is possible.

On the scale of region as a whole the instability of two largest countries of the region – Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan – is more dangerous, though less probable.

In Kazakhstan, the most stable and wealthiest country of the region, the most serious challenge to security is the unresolved issue of the succession of power after the 74 year old President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who has ruled the country since 1989. The president is the key element of the system of power balancing in the elite. If the problem of succession is not efficiently solved by Nazarbayev himself, there will be a risk of conflict within the elite over the division of his legacy. When this is combined with the danger of the occurrence of social unrest or Russia's attempts to exploit this situation, there is the risk of a destabilisation of the country.

Despite a significant improvement in the economic situation in Kazakhstan, there are economic based social tensions present in the country, which could be seen, for example, in strikes in the mining industry. Combined with ethnic and clan divisions in society, they create a base for mass social unrest which could threaten the government. These threats were visible in 2011 and 2012, when Kazakhstan witnessed a brutally quelled worker strike in Zhanaozen (western Kazakhstan) and also terrorist attacks took place for the first time. From this time the government undertook a number of measures aimed at neutralising the above threats, including issues regarding the succession of President Nazarbayev. However, the only decisive test for Kazakhstan's stability will be its

<sup>28</sup> See further in: Józef Lang, Increase in tensions in the Fergana Valley, *OSW Analyses*, 2014.01.15, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2014-01-15/increase-tensions-fergana-valley>

successful execution<sup>29</sup>. The problem of extremism and Islamic terrorism which has thus far been limited is nevertheless also a security challenge for Kazakhstan<sup>30</sup>. Furthermore, Russia's actions can also potentially be a destabilising factor, as Moscow can actively play out or even create tensions in the country and region (for example using the significant Russian minority in country's north) to secure the realisation of its political goals<sup>31</sup>.

In Uzbekistan, the most populous and repressive state in Central Asia, the main challenge to stability is also the issue of the succession of power after the 76 year old President Islam Karimov who has ruled the country since 1991. The situation in Uzbekistan is more complicated in this regard than that in Kazakhstan. Karimov created an extremely authoritarian and repressive system of power based on himself and the secret services subordinate to him which, with the assistance of repressive methods and total control over society, prevent tensions in the elite from escalating and social discontent to taking place.

The most likely scenario of succession seems to be a quick takeover of power by a successor strong enough to neutralise their rivals and by a continuation of the repression and the secure internal stability. At present the most powerful actor seems to be the National Security Service (SNB) under the leadership of Rustam Inoyatov, who could either take power himself, or appoint a *protégé*. However, another scenario is also possible: if infighting within the elite over Karimov's legacy results in a loosening of control over the society, or appeals to regionalisms are made, a significant threat exists that the unrest which has for years been suppressed could break out and, subsequently, this could lead to civil war and the break up of the country. A situation of this kind could be exploited by radical Islamic organisations (currently operating outside Uzbekistan). The likelihood of this scenario is supported by the existence in Uzbekistan of influential people, groups and milieus, who may be tempted to assume the office of president. During the last year behind the scenes fighting in the elite – including in the president's family – has intensified (for example the liquidation of

<sup>29</sup> See further in: Aleksandra Jarosiewicz, Kazakhstan's attitude towards integration with Russia: less love, more fear, *OSW Commentary*, 26.05.2014, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2014-05-26/kazakhstan-attitude-towards-integration-russia-less-love-more>

<sup>30</sup> In 2011 and 2012 Kazakhstan witnessed unprecedented wave of attacks conducted by local grass-root Salafists acting in an atomised manner. See further: The Radical Islamic Militants of Central Asia.

<sup>31</sup> See chapter III part 1, Security architecture: China-approved Russian domination.

the business empire of Karimov's daughter Gulnara Karimova and her house arrest or the imprisonment of the leaders of the so-called "Fergana clan"<sup>32</sup>).

The issue of succession is a key challenge to Uzbekistan's security but not the sole one: the country is struggling under an inefficient autarchic economy<sup>33</sup> and is troubled by tensions between regional groups. Currently they are neutralised by repressions, mass migration and the lack of a real alternative for the ruling elite. However it cannot be ruled out that they will be a source of unrest even during Karimov's lifetime (or in the case of a peaceful succession, their occurrence will merely be postponed).

Turkmenistan strongly differs from the region in this aspect - in the short and medium term perspective it does not seem vulnerable to social unrest or conflict within the elite. This is on one hand due to a large turnover within the elite (frequent reshuffles and changes at key posts conducted by the president), the key role of the president and his family as well as the domination of the Tekke tribe, which hinders the occurrence of rivalling cliques. On the other hand, the population is passive, indoctrinated and intimidated, which results in a total lack of the self-organisation necessary for the occurrence of social unrest. In the long term perspective, large social inequalities, strong tribal divisions and instability in the neighbouring Uzbekistan may be potential sources of threats for Turkmenistan's stability.

The catalogue of challenges for the security of Central Asia has barely changed for a decade, yet the region's states have not undertaken any serious attempts to mitigate the sources of these threats (an exception is Kazakhstan), and are only improving their capabilities of reaction once such a crisis occurs<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> See further in: Maciej Falkowski, Political crisis in Uzbekistan, *OSW Analyses*, 06.11.2013, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2013-11-06/political-crisis-uzbekistan>

<sup>33</sup> Pauperisation of society, economic-based social tensions caused by such factors as significant unemployment and labour migration to Russia; lack in supply of gasoline, natural gas or electricity. Uzbekistan's financial situation is also negative, which is related to its economic backwardness: despite large production of natural gas, most of the commodity goes to internal consumption, and not for sale (<http://www.eia.gov/countries/country-data.cfm?fips=UZ&trk=m>).

<sup>34</sup> An example of that can be the CSTO manoeuvres, on which complex reactions to social unrest (called "orange revolutions") are regularly trained. Not only the armed forces participate in such training, but also other state agencies (police, internal troops, intelligence services) and even analytical centres; [http://www.odkb-csto.org/training/detail.php?ELEMENT\\_ID=2825&SECTION\\_ID=188](http://www.odkb-csto.org/training/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=2825&SECTION_ID=188) and [http://www.odkb-csto.org/association/news/detail.php?ELEMENT\\_ID=3134](http://www.odkb-csto.org/association/news/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=3134)

The reason for that is the perception of internal security through the lens of regime security. From this point of view a limited crisis is not only less dangerous than political, economic or social reform (which can career out of control), but can even be used to strengthen the leadership. This results in a large immunity of the region's states to minor occurrences of instability, but puts them at risk of the occurrence of a serious crisis in the future (civil war, fragmentation, collapse of state structures). A crisis of this severity may be such that the region's states will not be able to overcome it, while external actors (the West, Russia, China) will not be prone to undertake measures aimed at stabilising the situation.

### III. OPENING BALANCE: THE SECURITY OF CENTRAL ASIA AFTER 2014

The end of the ISAF operation in Afghanistan and the dismantling of the auxiliary military infrastructure in Central Asia create a symbolic turning point in the latest history of Central Asia's states. This closes the thirteen year chapter in the history of region, which was characterised by intense cooperation with the West, as well as world's increased interest in the peripheral (due to its geopolitical settings) Central Asian region associated with it.

There are not many signals pointing to a continuation of the Western engagement in Central Asia on the current level. This is related not only to the end of the Afghan mission, but first of all to a self-limiting of global ambitions and capabilities in US and EU policy, as well as a minimisation of the chances for the export of energy commodities from the region to the Western markets and the lack of perspective for the democratisation and modernisation of Central Asian states. Despite the fact that the issues of security in the region are of indirect interest to European Union (mainly in the context of stability in its vicinity), it does not intend to engage in this sphere in a substantial manner. Also Washington lacks not only political will, but also efficient instruments for the realisation of such plans. The US will continue to deliver limited military aid to the states of Central Asia. It cannot be ruled out that, due to the need to secure logistics for the small military contingent that will remain in Afghanistan after 2014, the US will continue to cooperate with some of the region's states (first of all Uzbekistan), but nothing indicates that it will go beyond strictly technical issues (the use of airspace, lay over landings etc.).

For the security architecture Russia's actions will be key. This state is determined to regain its influence in Central Asia, and it has many means at its disposal as to how it can pressure most of the region's states into accepting its notions<sup>35</sup>. Russia's main geopolitical rival in Central Asia – China – does not constitute a real alternative in this dimension, since not only does it realistically estimate its capability in this sphere – it furthermore has no similar objectives. Russia's goal is to strengthen its dominant position in the security sphere and hence gain an important instrument allowing it to retain its

<sup>35</sup> Further on Russian instruments of influence and Russian policy in Central Asia in: Wojciech Górecki, Ever further from Moscow. Russia's stance on Central Asia, *OSW Studies*, March 2014, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-studies/2014-03-17/ever-further-moscow-russias-stance-central-asia>

control of the region while simultaneously blocking the actions of its rivals in this dimension. Beijing's priority is real stability in the region. This translates into the security of Xinjiang and Chinese economic expansion in the region<sup>36</sup>.

Analysing Central Asia's security after 2014 it is necessary to clearly separate the security *sensu stricto* and security architecture. In the European security system based on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation both of these dimensions are correlated (also with democratic political systems). In Central Asian conditions, though, such unity is not obvious. It has a great importance in Russian strategy, in which the security system is viewed in geopolitical categories and is therefore not so much an instrument guaranteeing stability, as a tool facilitating control over the region. The answer to questions regarding the security architecture of Central Asia after 2014 cannot therefore be the same as to those regarding stability and capacity within the current system to counteract against actual security threats.

## 1. Security architecture: China-approved Russian domination

Russia's actions are of substantial importance for the future security architecture of Central Asia. Moscow's strategy towards Central Asia fits into its overall policy towards the post-Soviet area, based on its imperial ambitions. The most compelling examples of this are the Georgian (2008) and Ukrainian (2014) crises<sup>37</sup>. Russian policy, despite its assertiveness, aggressiveness and unpredictability, is defensive and can be characterised as defence through attack. It is grounded on one hand in the conviction of necessity of the defence of "canonical territory", as Russia views the states of the former USSR, from Western influence (and in Central Asia also Chinese), and on the other hand in acknowledgement of having limited means at its disposal. Moscow's large-scale activity in the security sphere in Central Asia results from a realistic judgement of its own capabilities – it is a sphere in which Russia has the largest room for action (especially when compared with the small capabilities of influence in the economic dimension).

<sup>36</sup> Further on Chinese policy on influences in Central Asia in: Aleksandra Jarosiewicz, Krzysztof Strachota, China vs. Central Asia. The achievements of the past two decades, *OSW Studies*, 2013.

<sup>37</sup> Further on Russian foreign policy doctrine: Marek Menkiszak, The Putin doctrine: The formation of a conceptual framework for Russian dominance in the post-Soviet area, *OSW Commentary*, 27.03.2014, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2014-03-27/putin-doctrine-formation-a-conceptual-framework-russian>

Moscow's strategic objective in Central Asia is to regain its influence, to minimise those of the US and China, and to achieve the maximum subordination of the local states. The current tactical priority is to strengthen the CSTO structures<sup>38</sup>, combined with a further development and upgrade of the Russian military infrastructure in the region, and to force the region's states into joining Russian integration schemes (Customs Union, Eurasian Economic Union)<sup>39</sup>. As the end of the West's military presence in Central Asia draws nearer, Moscow has clearly intensified its actions in this area. The new situation created an opportunity for Russia to fill in the geopolitical gap, simultaneously providing an impulse and pretext for more decisive measures. The Kremlin's policy towards Central Asia is focused on Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – states where Moscow's position is strongest. The minimisation of activity towards Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan seems to be dictated on the one hand by the necessity to concentrate efforts on one sector and on the other by strong resistance from the elites of the above states to tightening relations with Russia. Furthermore, Moscow has significantly smaller capability to pressure Tashkent and Ashgabat than it has with regard to the other countries. The perspective of the transformation into Russian satellites is perceived by the region's states as a threat to their sovereignty in spite of the strong civilizational, economic and personal ties with Russia, the generally positive image of Russia and Russians found in Central Asian societies, and – as is case of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (the region's poorest states) – the conviction about the need to cooperate closely with Russia due to economic reasons. The region's elite fear losing not only independence on the international arena, but also the possibility to engage in unrestrained business activity (something they have grown accustomed to during the last 25 years of independence). Contrary to the significant part of the pauperised societies (especially in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan) which view Russia positively, Central Asia's elites perceive it as an economically and technologically backward country, troubled by a number of internal problems (including xenophobia and nationalism), which cannot provide them with a model of a contemporary, modernising and economically growing state. Despite oft-repeated promises made by Russian politicians, Moscow is also in-

<sup>38</sup> Amongst the Central Asian states the CSTO members are: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The organisation's remaining members are Russia, Belarus and Armenia.

<sup>39</sup> Kazakhstan is a member of the Customs Union (since 2010), Kyrgyzstan has applied for admission, while Tajikistan only voices its interest in the organisation. On 29<sup>th</sup> of May 2014 Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan signed a treaty establishing the Eurasian Economic Union, which is to enter into force on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015. On 9<sup>th</sup> of October the accession treaty was also signed by Armenia. In the immediate future Kyrgyzstan too is set to become member of the Eurasian Economic Union.

capable of offering large scale investments or loans to the region's states, and is far behind Beijing in this field. For example. Russia for years has voiced unfulfilled promises of gigantic investments in the Kyrgyz and Tajik hydroelectric sector (power plants in Kyrgyzstan's Kambar-Ata and Tajikistan's Sangtuda-1). It has also so far not delivered on its promises regarding the modernisation of the Kyrgyz gas sector, which it took upon itself in 2013 when Russia's Gazprom bought Kyrgyzgaz – the monopoly on the Kyrgyz gas market – for the symbolic price of one dollar. The economic results of participation in integration projects are also doubtful, as Kazakhstan has painfully experienced after the establishment of the Customs Union<sup>40</sup>. The governments also cannot ignore the rising nationalist attitudes, which are clearly more and more anti-Russian (for example in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan)<sup>41</sup>.

The above described challenges that the states of Central Asia have to face (succession problems, ethnic conflicts, Islamic radicalism, social problems etc.) provide Russia with a wide array of possibilities to exert pressure on them should they resist Russian plans for the region<sup>42</sup>. Russia is also capable of efficiently exploiting the hypothetical Afghan threat and very strong anti-Chinese phobias, and to a limited extent has already been doing so for years. The level of threat that Moscow's assertive actions create for the post-Soviet area was already demonstrated by the military intervention in Georgia (2008) which ended with Russia recognising the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

It was, however, only the Ukrainian crisis which made a more vivid impression on Central Asia's elites. Russia's stance was unanimously treated as

<sup>40</sup> Frequent exceptions and limitation in free trade between Customs Union countries, which allow Russia to benefit at the cost of Kazakhstan and Belarus. Solutions based on the Russian legal code, what de facto promotes Russian economic entities. See further in: Agata Wierzbowska-Miazga, The Customs Union summit: crisis instead of success, *OSW Analyses*, 30.10.2014, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2013-10-30/customs-union-summit-crisis-instead-success>

<sup>41</sup> For example: Nick Megoran, Averting Violence in Kyrgyzstan, Chatham House, <http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Russia%20and%20Eurasia/1212ppmegoran.pdf>; Kyrgyz rioters chant anti-Russian slogans, <http://voiceofrussia.com/2010/04/19/6613022/>; Nacyonalisti opasayutsa vtorzheniya Rossii v Kazakhstan, [http://total.kz/society/2014/03/03/nacionalisty\\_opasayutsa\\_vtorzhe](http://total.kz/society/2014/03/03/nacionalisty_opasayutsa_vtorzhe); Kakogo nacyonalizma nuzhno boyatsa russkim v Kazakhstanie, <http://3-sector.org/?p=2006>

<sup>42</sup> Internal problems of various post-Soviet states (as well as conflicts between them) were repeatedly employed by Russia to secure its imperial interests. This was the for example the case of ethnic-based conflicts in Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia) or Moldova (Transnistria, Gagauzia), the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the current crisis in Ukraine.

a demonstration of power, determination and capability, addressed not only to the post-Soviet states, but also (or even above all) to the West. The reaction of the elites was fear of Russia, while that of a significant part of the societies – admiration of President Vladimir Putin. A similarly vivid impression was caused by the West’s weakness and lack of determination and unity in the face of Russia’s aggressive actions.

An especially alarming element of the Ukrainian crisis was Russia’s open questioning of the fundamentals of the international order on the post-Soviet area: Ukrainian sovereignty, bilateral international agreements and finally borders recognised by Russia itself. Russian actions towards Ukraine have shown that, for the sake of implementing its imperial ambitions, Moscow can break all the current norms, exploiting historical, ethnic or any other justification. In the perception of the post-Soviet states this constitutes an existential threat.

In exploiting the issue of the protection of the ethnic Russian (or Russian-speaking) minority residing in Crimea and eastern Ukraine, and coupling it with the civilizational/political concept of the “Russian world” (*russkiy mir*)<sup>43</sup>, Russia has caused serious concern amongst the Central Asian states (especially Kazakhstan). Despite a systematic exodus of ethnic Russians from the states of Central Asia, the Russian minority still constitutes a considerable proportion of the population of those countries<sup>44</sup>, while its rights are actually, to a some degree, infringed (for example in Turkmenistan). The most grave fears are those of Kazakhstan, whose northern regions border Russia (mainly Kostanay, Akmola, North Kazakhstan and East Kazakhstan regions) and are compactly inhabited by the Russian population. The above fears were additionally compounded by provocative statements made by Russian politicians calling for a revision of the Russia-Kazakhstan border<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> Under the term “Russian world” a special spiritual and civilisational community of Russian speaking people is understood. They identify themselves with Eastern Orthodox culture and religion and sharing common values, regardless of their citizenship and ethnic background. Further in: Marek Menkiszak, *op. cit.*

<sup>44</sup> The percentage of Russians (along with other Slavic ethnic groups) in Central Asian states is as follows: Kazakhstan – 23.3% (approx. 4.1 million), Kyrgyzstan – about 6.4% (approx. 350,000), Uzbekistan – about 4-5% (about 800,000; lack of accurate data), Turkmenistan – about 4% (approx. 100,000-150,000; lack of accurate data), Tajikistan – 1.1% (approx. 80,000).

<sup>45</sup> The statements that received most coverage in Kazakhstan were that of vice speaker of the Russian Duma Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, who called for the creation of a Central Asian Federal District with its capital in the city of Verniy (old Russian name for Almaty) and one by the nationalist writer and politician Eduard Limonov, who demanded the annexation of Northern Kazakhstan into Russia. Also the speaker of parliament of Khakassia (Russian autono-

Due to Russia-China rivalry and China's growing position in Central Asia, one question is worth asking: To what degree can China be a potential barrier for the implementation of Russia's aspirations in the sphere of security in the region? China's influence in Central Asia is constantly rising – in the economic sphere one can go as far as talking about Chinese economic domination. Beijing is carrying out enormous investments, building pipelines and transportation routes (for example the strategic project of the New Silk Route, connecting China with Europe and involving Central Asia), and is intensifying cooperation in the cultural sphere, breaking the Russian monopoly. China is also increasingly cooperating with the region's states in the security sphere. Amongst the actions undertaken are: cooperation within the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) framework, small weapons sales, limited military assistance for the region's states (financial and technical, including weapons)<sup>46</sup>, signing agreements on cooperation in the spheres of security and combating terrorism<sup>47</sup>; training soldiers and officers of the region's national armies (first of all Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan)<sup>48</sup>. The implementation of economic interests and friendly relations with its Central Asian neighbours are not the only goals of China's policy. Beijing's deliberate activity (providing loans, developing economic ties, supporting state structures, combined with a principle rule of not interfering in the internal matters of the particular states) is contributing to strengthening the statehood of Central Asia's countries. According to the Chinese concept, it will contribute to regional stability, which is key to maintaining stability in China's problematic Xinjiang province bordering Central Asia (Uyghur separatism and terrorist activity of certain Islamic Uyghur groups). Even the intensification of economic relations with the Central Asian states is first of all intended to serve the purpose of the economic development of this westernmost province<sup>49</sup>.

mous republic located in Siberia) talked about the historical affiliation of the north-eastern part of Kazakhstan to the Russian state.

<sup>46</sup> For example providing the Kyrgyz army with US\$ 6.5 million of rear equipment in January of 2014 <http://www.kabar.kg/rus/politics/full/70251>, or providing Turkmenistan with small arms and uniforms in 2007 – Sebastien Peyrouse, *Military Cooperation between China and Central Asia: Breakthrough, Limits, and Prospects*. Jamestown Foundation 2010, available at: [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=36123&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=25&cHash=42beea809e#.U2oOwvl\\_tfc](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=36123&tx_ttnews[backPid]=25&cHash=42beea809e#.U2oOwvl_tfc)

<sup>47</sup> For example the memorandum on cooperation between China's public security ministry and the Tajik ministry of internal affairs; <http://www.avesta.tj/security/24486-mvd-rt-i-ministerstvo-obschestvennoy-bezopasnosti-krn-podpisali-memorandum-o-sotrudnichestve.html>

<sup>48</sup> Conducted in China – at most twenty people from each state yearly.

<sup>49</sup> Further in: Aleksandra Jarosiewicz, Krzysztof Strachota, *op. cit.*

Beijing is becoming increasingly engaged in the security sphere and it is securing its most crucial interests (Central Asia has not become a base for Uyghur separatism or Islamic extremism radiating to Xinjiang). Nonetheless, China cannot compete with Russia in the area of creating a security system in Central Asia, and does not at present seem to have any interest in doing so. There are a number of reasons for that, amongst which key are the following:

- The intensification of the American-Chinese rivalry in the global dimension, and Beijing's conviction, that the West is China's main rival, while Russia can play the role of China's tactical ally.
- China's conviction that Russia is weak politically, economically and in terms of civilization weak and is increasingly dependent on China (for example in the energy sphere). Beijing still acknowledges the Russian sphere of influence in Central Asia, but is also convinced that in the long term Russia (perceived as a declining power) will cease to play a substantial role in the region.
- The lack of tradition and experience (especially in comparison with Russia and the USA) of engagement in the hard security sphere abroad (bases, military interventions).
- An unwillingness to provoke Russia in the region; China fears that Russia could destabilise Central Asia (or one of its states) without detriment to its own security, if one of its vital interests is threatened by China.
- The acknowledgement of its own civilizational and cultural limitations, Russia's advantage in this field as well as very strong fears of Chinese expansionism present in all of the region's states. The Central Asian elites (to a smaller degree in societies) dislike and fear Russia, its imperialism, nationalism and xenophobia, yet Russia is a world they know and are accustomed to. The inhabitants of Central Asia are similar in thinking that Russian domination does not constitute a threat for their nations and identity. The Chinese threat, the fear of Chinese expansionism, regardless of the rationality of these phenomena, are both existential fears. What caused them is the situation in the "brotherly" Xinjiang (the mass influx of the Chinese population, which has become dominant over the Turkic, Muslim Uyghurs).

The states of Central Asia are limited in their capacity to oppose Russia (in most cases this consists in nothing more than attempts to balance Russian influence with a Western or Chinese one). This and the specifics of the Chinese approach and the absence of signals forecasting a stronger Western (above all American) engagement in the region seem to indicate that Russian domination in the system of regional security is the most probable scenario. Most probably there will be several vectors of Russian activity:

- An institutional strengthening of the CSTO and an intensification of the organisation's activity (military training, possible creation of new military units and bases under the auspices of the CSTO etc.), and creating the organisation's image as the main guarantor of security in the region.
- The development of military bases in the region (mainly in Kyrgyzstan's Kant and in Tajikistan). It cannot be ruled out that Moscow will attempt to establish new bases or to take over military objects, including those previously held by the Western militaries; Moscow has for years strived for the approval of the Tajik government for Russians to use the Ayni military airport near Dushanbe, previously reconstructed by India. There is also no reason to rule out that Russia will attempt to take control over the Manas airport near Bishkek, where the American Manas Transit Centre which ceased operations in June 2014.
- A continuation of arming the CSTO member states<sup>50</sup>, a monopolisation of weapons deliveries to the region by utilising legal mechanisms or introduced by the Customs Union and the Eurasian Economic Union.
- Moves to block or limit military cooperation of the region's states with the outside world, above all with NATO and the USA, including not allowing the establishment of third party military bases. It is noteworthy that in this field Russia has already achieved a certain level of success. A ban on installing military bases (without providing a definition of what constitutes one) of third countries in a CSTO member state without other members allowing it, was agreed upon in August of 2011 during the CSTO summit in Astana. A similar solution was preliminarily agreed upon to be included in

<sup>50</sup> In 2012 Russia promised to deliver military assistance (mainly weapons) to Kyrgyzstan worth US\$ 1.1 billion and US\$ 200 million's worth to Tajikistan. The first deliveries of Russian weapons were transferred in 2014, but no information is available regarding the value of the current assistance and the terms of the next deliveries.

the future framework agreement on the legal status of the Caspian Sea, by the foreign minister of the Caspian Sea states (Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Iran) in April of 2014 in Moscow.

- Probable attempts to introduce Russian border troops on the outside borders of the Central Asian states (first of all the Tajik-Afghan border)<sup>51</sup>.
- Actions aimed at persuading Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to join the CSTO, or at least to launch or (as with Tashkent) intensify bilateral military cooperation with Russia.
- An ostentatious, yet only symbolic drawing of China into cooperation in the security field under the SCO framework (for example as a countermeasure to the Afghan threat).
- A rise in temperature of the external threat to Central Asia's states (drugs and the export of radical Islam from Afghanistan) in the propaganda/media sphere.
- The correlation of activity in the security dimension with the integration projects in the post-Soviet area (Customs Union, Eurasian Union).

Furthermore, should events in the region develop (the attempts of Central Asian states to develop cooperation with the West, resistance to closer relations with Russia, etc.) in a direction undesirable for Moscow, it cannot be excluded that Russia's actions will be aimed at putting pressure in individual states; an example of this is the use of internal problems, real or fabricated external security threats (for example instability on the borders with Afghanistan) or even deliberate destabilisation.

## **2. System of control or responsibility for security?**

The real perspective of Russian domination in the field of security architecture in Central Asia leads one to inquire about the effectiveness of

<sup>51</sup> Launching actions on the border of between Afghanistan and the Central Asian states in order to prevent the spill over of alleged instability northward was announced by, amongst others, Russia's minister of defence Sergey Shoygu on the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation meeting held in Khujand, Tajikistan in March of 2014. He also suggested China's involvement in cooperation for stabilising the Afghan border, which could be read as a gesture of courtesy towards Beijing.

mechanisms and instruments which Russia possesses to combat the most severe threats to the region's stability, as well as the will to make use of them for this precise purpose.

The Russian military infrastructure already in existence in the region is highly developed. Its two pillars are, firstly, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), whose members in the region include Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and, secondly, the Russian military facilities in the region.

### **Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO)**

The CSTO was established in 2005, based on the Tashkent Collective Security Treaty of 1992. The organisation's members include: Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Between 2006 and 2012 Uzbekistan was also a CSTO member state. The organisation is formally a military alliance, whose members are obliged to provide immediate assistance in case of external aggression on any member state (article 4 of the treaty). Within the CSTO framework a Collective Rapid Reaction Force (KSOR) was established in 2009, and consists of units available at short notice (the Russian 98<sup>th</sup> Guards Airborne division and the 31<sup>st</sup> Guards Air Assault brigade, Kazakhstan's 37<sup>th</sup> Air Assault brigade, Belarus's 103<sup>rd</sup> Mobile brigade and battalion-sized units from Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan). Another CSTO instrument is the Collective Rapid Deployment Force for Central Asia (KSBR) established in 2001, comprised of Russian units stationed at the Russian airbase in Kant in Kyrgyzstan and the 201<sup>st</sup> land forces base in Tajikistan, as well as other units from Central Asian states. According to the statute both of these can be used to counter military aggression and participate in operations against terrorism, extremism and organised crime as well as in relief operations connected to natural disasters. Based on agreements signed at the Moscow summit in 2010, the KSBR forces can also be used in crisis situations on the territory of member states (at their own request). During the December 2011 summit, the CSTO states agreed that opening military bases of third countries on their territories will only be possible after receiving permission from all the members of the alliance. In the CSTO framework there are in theory also peacekeeping forces which are comprised of contingents from member states. In reality these forces are not a common operational unit, but rather consist of ascribed units from particular countries.

The organisation's practical activity consists of organising of regular meetings and informal summits with the participation of the leaders of member states. During these summits joint political declarations are often adopted regarding the current international situation, the activity of the organisation's office led by Russian general Nikolay Bordyuzha (most often this means in particular Bordyuzha's visits to other member states), joint military exercises (including those of KSOR and KSBR), Russia's military assistance to other states (mainly the transfer of Russian weaponry free of charge, or selling it at internal Russian prices) and the training of officers from these states in Russia, and cooperation in combating drug trafficking.

The most important Russian military objects include: an airbase in the Kyrgyz city of Kant (formally its status is that of a CSTO Collective Rapid Response Force base; about 1,500 troops are stationed there), the 201st land forces base in Tajikistan (about 7,000 troops), a number of military installations in Kazakhstan (for example the Baikonur complex, several training grounds, an air force regiment in Kostanay), in Kyrgyzstan (for example a torpedo testing area on the Issyk Kul lake) and in Tajikistan (for example the space surveillance complex "Okno"). It is also necessary to mention the joint air defence system of the Commonwealth of Independent States, which groups together all the region's states excluding Turkmenistan (Uzbekistan is cooperating with Russia in a bilateral format)<sup>52</sup>. Russia's actions during the Georgian and Ukrainian crises also further indicate that it possesses a much wider set of instruments. It is possible include in this both Russian army units and other armed services (Ministry of Interior, FSB etc.) stationed in Russia itself, as well as various paramilitary and volunteer armed formations with a status difficult to define (Cossack formations, ethnic based units comprised of Caucasus inhabitants etc.). Even a partial realisation of Russia's aims in the security sphere (detailed in the previous subchapter) will also additionally strengthen its position in the region. An important factor which carves out the role of regional security guarantor for Russia is also the perception of Moscow's role by the outside world (i.e. the West and China) and, finally, declarations made by Russia itself.

In order to realistically judge whether Russia will play the role of Central Asia's security guarantor after 2014, answer must be found to questions regarding Russia's actual intentions and the real capability to counter threats.

<sup>52</sup> Full catalogue of Russian military installations in Central Asia is included in Annexe 2.

An analysis of the Russian approach towards security in the region, the perception of the security system created by it (the CSTO, its military presence), as well as of Russia's actions (or the lack of them) in this dimension during previous years, leads to following conclusions:

- a. Threats to the security of Central Asia do not constitute a threat for Russia itself

Despite the fact that it goes against the official Russian rhetoric of describing the region as “Russia's soft underbelly”, it is difficult to put forward facts showing the how instability in Central Asia, or even Afghanistan, could have a negative impact on the external and internal security of the Russian Federation. Even the threat of radical Islam is relative, since it is Russia's Northern Caucasus which is the biggest disseminator of radicalism in the post-Soviet area, and the Central Asian radical Islamic militants are not interested in targeting Russia. The only serious threat to Russia stemming from Central Asia is the influx of Afghan drugs, but this is a soft security threat. Besides which, it is difficult to ascertain which is the biggest threat: the one created by the huge social problems in Russia itself (including the corruption of the Russian state structures and their involvement in the drugs trade), or the one caused by the influx of drugs. Furthermore, Russian policy in eastern Ukraine aimed at destabilising the situation shows that first of all Russia is not afraid of a zone of instability in its vicinity, and secondly that it is ready to create such zones itself in order to secure its interests.

- b. Security in the region is perceived by Russia above all in geopolitical categories

Russia perceives foreign policy (both its own, and that of other states, especially those from the former USSR) in the category of XIX century geopolitical rivalry over spheres of influence. To Russian eyes, Central Asia is a classic example of a sphere of influence – where all activity, including in the security dimension, is perceived in the category of rivalry. Examples illustrating this perception of the region are provided by Russia's emphasis on the alleged external threats for the stability of Central Asia (with the “threat” from the West portrayed as being almost as severe as that from Afghanistan) in the official security discourse, while simultaneously ignoring the internal challenges; or the consequent drive to liquidate the Western military presence in the region despite the fact that, according to Russian rhetoric, this withdrawal will result in an increase of the

Afghan threat to Central Asia and Russia itself. Furthermore, Russia does not treat the CSTO as an alliance and instrument guaranteeing stability in the region, but rather as a tool for securing its interests and an element to strengthen its position in the relations with the West; this in spite of the fact that it is a key element in the regional security system which Russia endorses<sup>53</sup>. The CSTO's failure to react to the ethnic conflict in the Fergana Valley in 2010 (with the simultaneous propagation of the ban on military bases of third countries in the member states without the approval of all allies) may serve as an example of Russia's attitude towards the organisation. An example from outside the region can be found in Moscow's policy towards Azerbaijan and Armenia (the latter being a CSTO member state): the organisation's failed to react to armed incidents on the border of these countries, while Russia is supplying weapons to Azerbaijan, which could be used against Armenia in the Karabakh conflict.

- c. Russia has so far not undertaken any significant measures aimed at countering the most serious security threats in the region

The last, and de facto only, measure which Russia undertook in order to stabilise the situation in Central Asia was its contribution to end the civil war in Tajikistan (the Moscow Agreement of 1997). The other crises which took place in the region over the last several years were not met with a decisive Russian reaction, and often failed even to rouse Russian interest. Amongst the most important of these are: raids made by Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan guerrillas on Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in 1999 and 2000 (the so-called "Batken-crises")<sup>54</sup>, recurring border conflicts between the region's states (for example tensions on the border of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, both of which are CSTO members), Uzbekistan's tensions with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan regarding the construction of hydroelectric power plants in the latter two states (the last conflict has even been stoked by Moscow in order to counterbalance the region's states against each other and thus keep them dependent). The most vivid

<sup>53</sup> Russia tries to portrait the CSTO as a sort of equivalent to NATO in the post-Soviet area and a counterpart to NATO. According to a concept promoted by Moscow, the CSTO should be responsible for the security of the post-Soviet area (excluding the Baltic states). Before the Ukrainian crisis it went hand in hand with the US Department of State's post-Afghan concepts for Central Asia, which envisioned a main role for Russia and the CSTO, as well as increased cooperation with them in securing the stability of Central Asia.

<sup>54</sup> Russia did provide limited technical assistance in realisation of an agreement with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, which was negotiated largely by Dushanbe. Further in: Józef Lang, *op. cit.*

example illustrating Russia's reluctance to engage in a settlement of Central Asian problems was when it declined to take measures aimed at stopping the Uzbek-Kyrgyz bloodshed in 2010, despite appeals to Moscow from the Kyrgyz authorities to deploy assistance under the CSTO framework in order to stabilise the situation.

Russia does play a certain role in stabilising the region, yet it is hard to say it does so intentionally. One can first of all point to the millions of Central Asian immigrants working in Russia who at one and the same time ease the socio-economic problems and are also used by Moscow as a destabilising tool (in the past Russia has repeatedly both deported groups of immigrants and introduced a temporary limitation on their arrival in order to exert pressure on particular states, most often Tajikistan). The need to consider Moscow's stance also serves as restraint for possible action from opposition groups or clans against the ruling authorities of the region's states (this however is also a factor conserving the authoritarian political systems).

- d. The states of the region also perceive Russian security infrastructure in Central Asia as an instrument of geopolitical influence

This perception of Russian policy is especially strong in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, which do not see potential help from Russia in the fight against internal or external threats as being much of a security guarantee since it is a tool for strengthening of Russian influence or at best the lesser of two evils (for example, Dushanbe viewed the Russian border troops stationed at the Tajik-Afghan border until 2005 in this way, as did Uzbekistan regarding the potential Russian military intervention in defence of the Uzbek minority in Kyrgyzstan during the 2010 ethnic conflict). The region's states therefore de facto fear a situation in which Russia would support them militarily. They are also unequivocal in not viewing the CSTO not as a classical military alliance, but as a political instrument of Russian influence in the region which further limits their possibilities of military cooperation with third countries (for example the ban adopted in 2011 following pressure from Moscow on hosting third country bases on the territory of member states without the acceptance of the remaining CSTO members).

Russia's real capabilities to counter the security threats with the instruments at its disposal should also be viewed sceptically; and any permanent settling of region's problems that generate them – all more so. The CSTO's main task as an organisation is to protect member states from external threats, yet these are not the most

important threats to regional security. It is also important to note that the CSTO is an organisation devoid of vitality, which was never utilised according its purpose, either at the political or the military level (not only in Central Asia).

Furthermore, this organisation was not established to react to internal crises or to settle disputes between its members. In 2011 the legal possibility was introduced to undertake action for the protection of the stability of member states should they be unable to cope with an internal crisis. The formal possibility also exists to use CSTO forces in peacekeeping missions, however both KSOR and the CSTO's peacekeeping forces can only be used on the request of the country affected and so far this option has not been used. Furthermore, as pointed out above, most of the region's states treat any hypothetical Russian intervention as a last resort and the lesser of two evils<sup>55</sup>. The CSTO's limited potential effectiveness in combating threats to security is also caused by the fact that Uzbekistan remains outside of its framework. This is significant due the scale of Uzbekistan's internal problems and conflict potential, which make it a country key to the region's stability.

Furthermore, it does not seem that the Russian forces stationed in the region (mainly regular army units) are adapted to dealing with threats they could potentially manage in the region (ethnic conflicts, the actions of Islamic guerillas, conflict between the region's states etc.)<sup>56</sup>. Possible civilian casualties could also turn society against the Russian forces (for example in Kyrgyzstan anti-Russian sentiments are high amongst some communities) and this could lead to further escalation. Due to issues connected with Russia's internal and international image, it seems that the only situation in which Russia would be forced to firmly react would be pogroms of the Russian minority in the region (hypothetically, they could take place, for example in Kyrgyzstan or Kazakhstan).

<sup>55</sup> Negative examples of the utilisation of Russian units in peacekeeping missions can be found in the Abkhazian, South Ossetian or Transnistrian conflicts. In all cases Russian peacekeeping forces very quickly became instruments of Russian policy. The stance of Armenia and Azerbaijan also serve as a warning for the Central Asian states; these two countries were in conflict with each other but at all costs attempted to block the deployment of Russian peacekeeping forces in Nagorno-Karabakh.

<sup>56</sup> The strategic reform of the Russian army conducted over the last several years, shows that Russia is preparing first of all to wage offensive conventional war, not to deal with complicated regional or local conflicts. Further about Russian army reforms: Andrzej Wilk, Russian army justifies its reforms, *OSW Commentary*, June 2013, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2013-06-26/russian-army-justifies-its-reforms>

The security architecture created by Russia, as well as its instruments, such as the CSTO or military bases, are not so much factors guaranteeing stability and security to the region, but more tools aimed at strengthening Russian influence, facilitating Moscow's retention of control over Central Asia and thus improving its position in its geopolitical rivalry with China. The security system, which will most probably be established after 2014, will not therefore translate into real security, while threats for regional stability will *de facto* remain unanswered.

### **3. Central Asia after 2014, permanent instability and the Russian-Chinese condominium**

In the perspective of next few years, Russian-Chinese relations, along with the pressing internal problems, will be the most important factor bearing impact on the situation in Central Asia. The probable Russian domination in the security sphere will not solely determine the entirety of the regional geopolitical puzzle since Moscow has to take Beijing's interest and growing influence in the region into account, especially in the economic sphere. Furthermore, several factors indicate that it seems to be in Russia's interests to be in cooperation with China in Central Asia, rather than in confrontation: due to Russia's limited resources and economic capabilities, as well as the benefits stemming from economic cooperation with China (including Russia's export of energy commodities there), and the common perception of the West as the main rival in the global dimension. Nor does conflict with Russia lie in China's interest – Beijing is convinced of Russia's unavoidable decline as a global power and is reluctant to provoke Moscow, as this may result in the region's destabilisation. One also has to take into account that for both of these states (above all China) their Central Asian policy is only a segment of their global strategies which, due to perception of the West as the main adversary, are becoming increasingly congruent. The above alleviates the potential Russian-Chinese rivalry in Central Asia and leads to the conclusion that both sides will avoid the confrontational scenario since the political risks of this are too high. Therefore, it will not be influence in region, but rather rules of cohabitation, that will be the object of competition.

For Moscow the ideal scenario would be for it (as a stronger player) to ration the Chinese presence in the region – providing Beijing with an exclusive licence on cooperation with the states of the region, which are not consulted in the matter. The optimal variation would see a transformation of selected aspects of this cooperation (for example in the energy sector) into genuine Russian-Chinese

cooperation<sup>57</sup>. From such a perspective, the fundamental test of Russian capabilities will be the success or failure of Russian integration projects in the region (with success not merely indicating that they have been implemented but also that they are functioning effectively). On the other hand China, while formally acknowledging Russian domination in the region in the security sphere and its political and economic interests, will attempt to develop its direct relations with the region's states as far as is possible, strengthening their independence from Russia. In this scenario, the most probable outcome for the next few years will be a *de facto* Russian-Chinese condominium in Central Asia, acceptable to both these states.

In a Central Asia dominated by Russia and China there will be no space for the West to play a meaningful role. This will be a result of not only Moscow's and Beijing's successful blocking of the Western influence in the region, but first of all of the West's lack of political will to engage more deeply into Central Asia. For both the European Union and the USA (which latter is increasingly concentrated on the Pacific region and reluctant to intervene in the unstable region of the Greater Middle East) Central Asia will remain a peripheral region. The chances of a return to the 2001 situation and the West's dynamic entry into the geopolitical competition are slight. That does not equate to a full withdrawal from the region by the West: the character of the EU's presence will be predominantly connected to developmental aid<sup>58</sup>, while that of the US will be of significantly reduced military assistance and limited logistic cooperation in the field of supplying and withdrawing the several thousand strong American contingent in Afghanistan which is to remain there until 2016 (America's main partner will probably be Uzbekistan).

In the security dimension, Central Asia will probably remain a permanently unstable region. Nothing indicates that the chronic problems which trouble the region's states and generate security threats will be settled. Therefore unrest will occur cyclically in much the same way as has been the case to date. The probability that this unrest may transform into a severe crisis, which could lead to demolition of the post-Soviet regional order based on the Soviet heritage

<sup>57</sup> The oil sector in Kyrgyzstan may serve as a hypothetical example of such cooperation. China controls an oil refinery in Kara-Balta, while the oil supplies and chain of gas stations is in Russian hands.

<sup>58</sup> In November of 2013 the EU granted one billion euros in development aid for Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan for 2014-2020; [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-1119\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-1119_en.htm)

(i.e. the existence of states in their current borders) or start a long large-scale armed conflict, does not seem high (though the situation in Uzbekistan carries the most risk). However, keeping in mind the weakness of state structures, the relatively new national and state traditions (the current traditions were created by the Soviet system, which severed the link to the previous ones which had lasted for centuries), and also the dynamic of international changes (for example events in Iraq or Ukraine, which can be viewed as attempts to reshape the current order in context of existence of states in their current borders), it cannot be assumed that the state order created by the USSR is firm enough to resist collapse.

Central Asia's permanent instability will probably be correlated with stagnation in the region in the political and socio-economic dimensions since there is no evidence pointing to positive tendencies in the political systems (i.e. a relaxation of authoritarianism in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, or lasting stability in Kyrgyzstan), economic or social developments (an improvement in the standard of living, the creation of civil society) or of diametrical changes in the way states function (modernisation, reforms). Kazakhstan may be an exception to this, yet its current stability and modernisation attempts could be put in jeopardy when President Nazarbayev departs or as a result of closer ties with Russia in the Eurasian integration projects. Moscow and Beijing are not open about their rivalry in Central Asia but accept each other's influence there and so for the next few years the region will be pushed to the margins of the international community's interest.

**MACIEJ FALKOWSKI, JÓZEF LANG**

## ANNEXES

### 1. Western spending in Central Asia 2001–2014

Expenses related to military bases: US\$ 3.633 billion<sup>59</sup>

Western aid to Central Asia: US\$ 4.329 billion<sup>60</sup>

Western military and security assistance: US\$ 302.26 million<sup>61</sup>

Cost of overflight rights in airspace of the Central Asian states: US\$ 732 million<sup>62</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Calculation based on: [http://psm.du.edu/media/documents/congressional\\_comm/house\\_oversight\\_gov\\_reform/us\\_hosue\\_oversight\\_manas.pdf](http://psm.du.edu/media/documents/congressional_comm/house_oversight_gov_reform/us_hosue_oversight_manas.pdf), <http://www.transitcenteratmanas.com/us/important-documents/132.html>, <http://photos.state.gov/libraries/kyrgyzrepublic/19452/pdfs/jet-fuel-procurement.pdf>, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav051809.shtml>, <http://www.avesta.tj/eng/business/601-aircraft-tajik-air-tucked-in-kazakhstan-because-of-the-high-cost-of-jet-fuel-in-dushanbe.html>, [http://www.caan.asia/en/show-situation\\_with\\_jet\\_fuel\\_deficit\\_in\\_tajikistan\\_to\\_be\\_resolved\\_in\\_early\\_december.html](http://www.caan.asia/en/show-situation_with_jet_fuel_deficit_in_tajikistan_to_be_resolved_in_early_december.html), <http://wlstorage.net/file/crs/RS22295.pdf>, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/62622>, <http://www.dw.de/buying-uzbek-help-for-afghanistan-withdrawal/a-16409522>

<sup>60</sup> Calculation based on: <http://www.foreignassistance.gov/> and United States Department of State | Office of the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia | Foreign Operations Assistance Fact Sheet, Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations – <http://www.state.gov/s/d/rm/rls/cbj/>, data from <http://www.offene-entwicklungshilfe.de/> and [http://www.bmz.de/en/what\\_we\\_do/countries\\_regions/laenderkonzentration/tabelle\\_neu.html](http://www.bmz.de/en/what_we_do/countries_regions/laenderkonzentration/tabelle_neu.html), <http://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/countries/KG/>, <http://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/countries/TJ/>, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/67317/SID-2012.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67317/SID-2012.pdf), [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/neighbourhood/regional-cooperation/enpi-east/documents/annual\\_programmes/tacis\\_success\\_story\\_final\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/neighbourhood/regional-cooperation/enpi-east/documents/annual_programmes/tacis_success_story_final_en.pdf), [http://eeas.europa.eu/central\\_asia/rsp/02\\_06\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/central_asia/rsp/02_06_en.pdf), [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/regional-cooperation-central-asia/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/regional-cooperation-central-asia/index_en.htm), [http://www.eeas.europa.eu/central\\_asia/docs/2010\\_ca\\_mtr\\_en.pdf](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/central_asia/docs/2010_ca_mtr_en.pdf), [http://eeas.europa.eu/central\\_asia/rsp/07\\_13\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/central_asia/rsp/07_13_en.pdf), [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-1119\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-1119_en.htm)

<sup>61</sup> Calculation based on: US Department of State and Department of Defence data, available at: <http://www.state.gov/f/releases/iab/>, <http://www.state.gov/s/d/rm/rls/cbj/> and [http://www.dsca.mil/sites/default/files/fiscal\\_year\\_series\\_-\\_30\\_sep\\_2012.pdf](http://www.dsca.mil/sites/default/files/fiscal_year_series_-_30_sep_2012.pdf); [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/regional-cooperation-central-asia/border-management-fight-against-drugs/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/regional-cooperation-central-asia/border-management-fight-against-drugs/index_en.htm), [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/regional-cooperation-central-asia/border-management-fight-against-drugs/bomca\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/regional-cooperation-central-asia/border-management-fight-against-drugs/bomca_en.htm), [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/regional-cooperation-central-asia/border-management-fight-against-drugs/cadap\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/regional-cooperation-central-asia/border-management-fight-against-drugs/cadap_en.htm)

<sup>62</sup> Kyrgyzstan (US\$ 674 million) and Turkmenistan (about US\$ 58 million). Calculations based on: [http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/o8ASHGABAT552\\_a.html](http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/o8ASHGABAT552_a.html), <http://www.wikileaks.org/cable/2009/08/09ASHGABAT992.html>, [http://psm.du.edu/media/documents/congressional\\_comm/house\\_oversight\\_gov\\_reform/us\\_hosue\\_oversight\\_manas.pdf](http://psm.du.edu/media/documents/congressional_comm/house_oversight_gov_reform/us_hosue_oversight_manas.pdf), <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/169758.pdf>, <http://www.defense.gov/news/jun2002/d20020607contributions.pdf>

Supply purchases for the mission in Afghanistan: US\$ 4.913 billion<sup>63</sup>

The cost of the operation of the NDN in Central Asia: US\$ 4.62 billion<sup>64</sup>

**Total for Central Asia during 2001–2014: US\$ 18.529 billion**

<sup>63</sup> Calculations based on: <http://www.acq.osd.mil/dpap/policy/policyvault/USA004209-12-DPAP.pdf>, [http://www.gsa.gov/portal/mediaId/146311/fileName/Central\\_Asia\\_Catalog\\_9\\_25\\_12\\_508C](http://www.gsa.gov/portal/mediaId/146311/fileName/Central_Asia_Catalog_9_25_12_508C), <http://csis.org/event/procurement-and-development-case-study-central-asia>, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/66248>, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/66118>, <http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/alerts/2013-01-30-alert-sp-13-2.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> Calculations based on: <http://csis.org/program/northern-distribution-network-ndn>, [http://csis.org/files/publication/091229\\_Kuchins\\_NDNandAfghan\\_Web.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/091229_Kuchins_NDNandAfghan_Web.pdf), <http://www.army.mil/standto/archive/issue.php?issue=2012-06-28>, <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/OPS-No-8-20121019.pdf>, <http://www.army.mil/standto/archive/issue.php?issue=2012-06-28>

## US (non-military) assistance (in US\$ millions)

Country*/ year**	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Kazakhstan</b>	50.2	49.294	55.117	48.396	38.117	34.224	31.251	26.798	21.101	22.422	22.722	120.502	114.106	14.9	12.229
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	22.292	27.454	124.198	44.337	38.442	37.805	17.820	15.528	9.497	8.555	12.040	24.858	41.812	12.595	11.592
<b>Turkmenistan</b>	8.182	8.02	19.679	8.96	7.898	8.62	5.938	10.874	7.2	8.851	16.512	13.272	9.119	6.725	6.455
<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>	31.648	34.507	73.652	42.416	39.544	34.448	34.714	34.262	29.964	58.932	53.608	55.245	73.890	46.725	51.819
<b>Tajikistan</b>	9.976	29.366	90.358	36.536	32.111	43.108	40.403	36.360	31.255	35.765	57.972	51.551	69.374	37.405	36.400
<b>Total</b>	122.298	148.641	363.004	180.645	156.112	158.205	130.126	123.822	99.017	75.593	162.854	265.428	308.301	118.35	118.495

\* <http://www.foreignassistance.gov/> and United States Department of State | Office of the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia | Foreign Operations Assistance Fact Sheet, Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations – <http://www.state.gov/s/d/rm/rls/cbj/>

\*\* US fiscal year.

## US military assistance (in US\$ millions)

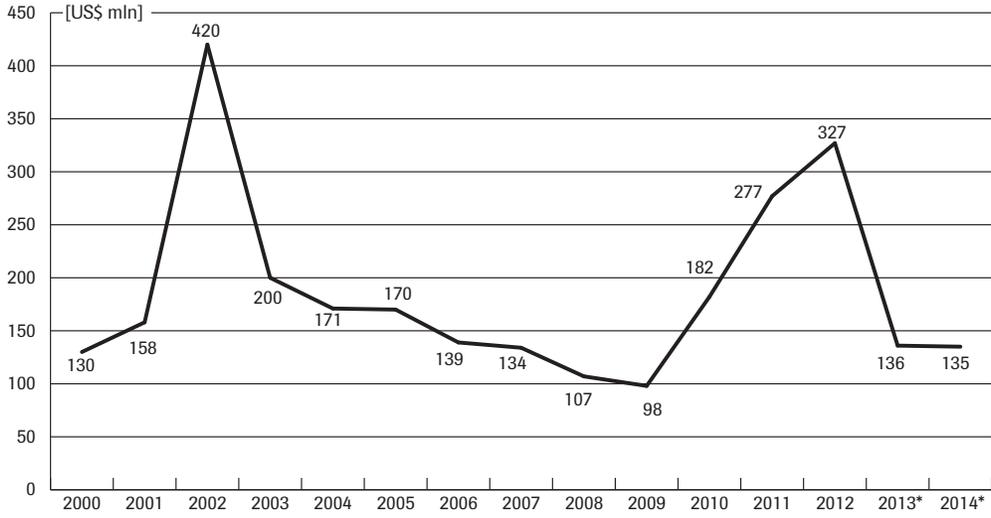
Country*/ year**	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013*	2014***
<b>Kazakhstan</b>	2.069	2.533	5.207	3.767	4.478	6.469	4.47	5.55	3.601	8.783	9.373	4.505	3.912	3.91	3.61
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	2.562	3.255	36.859	9.844	1.907	0.475	0.061	0.016	0	0.283	0.274	0.189	3.034	1.8	1.8
<b>Turkmenistan</b>	0.946	1.214	0.054	0.851	0.593	1.046	0.773	0.696	0.45	0.391	2.502	1.121	1.326	1.385	1.385.
<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>	1.808	2.426	11.281	4.747	5.169	3.255	3.075	3.2	2.525	2.205	5.258	3.315	5.734	5.7	5.7
<b>Tajikistan</b>	0.423	0.384	3.897	0.526	2.693	0.953	0.858	0.645	1.055	1.416	2.182	2.2	4.721	5.3	5.3
<b>Total</b>	7.808	9.812	57.298	19.735	14.84	12.198	9.237	10.107	7.631	13.078	19.589	11.33	18.727	18.095	16.41

\* Total military assistance – FMF, FMT, IMET, CTFP, Section 1004, FMS financing, GPOI. Based on data: DoD, DoS| <http://www.state.gov/f/releases/iab/> | Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations – <http://www.state.gov/s/d/rm/rls/cbj/> | Defence Security Cooperation Agency [http://www.dscamilitary.com/sites/default/files/fiscal\\_year\\_series\\_-\\_30\\_sep\\_2012.pdf](http://www.dscamilitary.com/sites/default/files/fiscal_year_series_-_30_sep_2012.pdf)

\*\* US fiscal year.

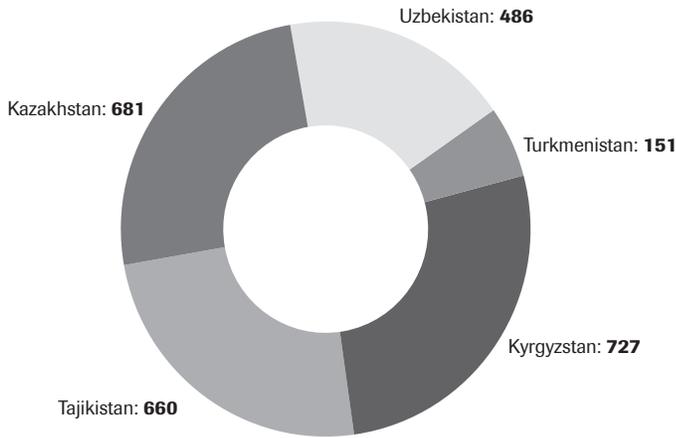
\*\*\* budget estimates

### Total US assistance to Central Asia (in US\$ millions)



\* budget estimates

### Total American aid to particular states of the region 2001-2014 (in US\$ millions)



## 2. Third countries' bases and military installations in Central Asia

### Russian military presence in Central Asia<sup>65</sup>

	Name of the object	Location	Specification
1*	Baikonur Complex	Kazakhstan, Kyzylorda Region	Complex consists of space launch pad and city of Baikonur (under Russian administration); Kazakhstan has currently leased the complex until 2050; rockets which deliver orbital complexes are launched from the pad.
2	Independent radar node of the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Missile-Space Defence Army of the Russian Aerospace Defence Forces – Balkhash 9	Kazakhstan, Priozersk	Specialist radar, part of joint rocket-attack warning system.
3	10 <sup>th</sup> State Testing Range of the Russian Ministry of Defence – Sary-Shagan	Kazakhstan, north-west of the coast of lake Balkhash	Testing ground. Military airport also present.
4	929 <sup>th</sup> Chkalov State Flight-Test Centre of the Russian Ministry of Defence	North-western Kazakhstan	Headquarters located in Russia, with three testing grounds in Kazakhstan.
5	Independent Air Transport Regiment of the Russian Air Force	Kazakhstan, Kostanay	Air regiment provides transportation for the need of other Russian military installations in Kazakhstan.
6	Kant Air Base no. 999, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Command of Air and Air Defence Forces of the Central Military District of Russian Federation**	Kyrgyzstan, Kant near Bishkek	Troops stationed there are formally part of the CSTO's KFOR force. About 1,500 soldiers stationed there. Lease agreement is valid until 2058.

\* Object's reference number on map on page 50.

\*\* Based on a 2012 Russian-Kyrgyz agreement, all Russian military installations are to be unified into a single Russian military base by 2017. Besides the above facilities, several dozen advisers from Russia's FSB's border troops. Furthermore, Osh also hosts the office of the Russian Federal Drug Control Service.

<sup>65</sup> Based on: Wojciech Górecki, *op. cit.*

	<b>Name of the object</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Specification</b>
7	338 <sup>th</sup> long-haul communication centre of the Russian Navy	Kyrgyzstan, Chaldovar near Kara-Balta (north Kyrgyzstan)	The centre provides communication with submarines using long wavelength transmissions from the General Staff of the Russian Navy.
8	954 <sup>th</sup> anti-submarine weapon testing	Kyrgyzstan, in the vicinity of Karakol, east of the country	Testing range on lake Issyk Kul, where torpedoes are being developed and tested.
9	1 <sup>st</sup> Automated Seismic Station of the Seismic Service of the Russian Ministry of Defence	South-Western Kyrgyzstan, Mailuu-suu (Jalalabad Province)	Seismic activity and worldwide nuclear blasts detection control station.
10	17 <sup>th</sup> Radio-seismic Laboratory of the Seismic Service of the Russian Ministry of Defence	North-Western Kyrgyzstan, lake Issyk Kul	Same as above.
11	201 <sup>st</sup> Land Forces Military Base	Tajikistan, regiments in Dushanbe, Kulob and Kurgonteppa	Russia's largest military base abroad; about 7,000 soldiers; leased until 2042.
12	"Okno" Space Surveillance Complex of the Russian Space Forces***	Tajikistan, Nurak, southern part of the country	Complex serves purposes of localising and identifying space objects

\*\*\* Besides the above mentioned military facilities in Tajikistan, in 2008 Russia signed an agreement with the Tajik government regarding usage of Ayni air base near Dushanbe. The base has so far been operated solely by the Tajik side, which is a cause of disputes in bilateral relations.

## American military presence in Central Asia

	Name of the object	Location	Specification
13	Manas Air Base (until 2009)/ Manas Transit Centre	Manas airport near Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	Air base operating from December 2001 to June 2014*. Size of about one and a half thousand troops. The base served predominantly logistic purposes –the 376th Air Expeditionary Wing was stationed there, performing tasks of transportation of personnel to and from Afghanistan and inflight refuelling in Afghanistan. During the earlier period Manas also hosted combat planes – fighters and close support aircraft (including the air force of other coalition countries: Australia, Denmark, France, the Netherlands and Norway)** . Total cost of operating the base (mainly fuel purchases) was US\$ 3.183 billion***.
14	K2 Air Base	Qarshi, Uzbekistan	Airbase operating from October 2001 to November 2005. About thousand soldiers strong. The first American base in Central Asia. Similar to Manas, it mainly served for logistical tasks, performed by the 416 <sup>th</sup> Air Expeditionary Group stationed there. The base was leased free of charge based on a 2001 agreement on the stationing of American forces****.
15	USAF Gas and Go Team	Ashgabat, Turkmenistan	Small (under 20 people strong) US Air Force technical team (from the 45 <sup>th</sup> Air Expeditionary Wing)****, formally a part of the American embassy*****. Team’s tasks included refuelling American military planes flying to Afghanistan with a layover in Ashgabat*****.

\* <http://bishkek.usembassy.gov/topic-of-interest.html>

\*\* *Ibid.*

\*\*\* Based on: [http://psm.du.edu/media/documents/congressional\\_comm/house\\_oversight\\_gov\\_reform/us\\_hosue\\_oversight\\_manas.pdf](http://psm.du.edu/media/documents/congressional_comm/house_oversight_gov_reform/us_hosue_oversight_manas.pdf), <http://www.transitcenteratmanas.com/us/important-documents/132.html> and <http://photos.state.gov/libraries/kyrgyzrepulic/19452/pdfs/jet-fuel-procurement.pdf>.

\*\*\*\* Based on: <http://wlstorage.net/file/crs/RS22295.pdf>

\*\*\*\*\* <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eavo70809.shtml>

\*\*\*\*\* <http://oig.state.gov/documents/organization/145765.pdf>

\*\*\*\*\* [http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/o8ASHGABAT552\\_a.html](http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/o8ASHGABAT552_a.html)

## European military presence in Central Asia

	Name of the object	Location	Specification
16	Lufttransportstutzpunkt 3	Termez, Uzbekistan	Small German Air Base located in Termez airport, operating since 2002. Up to 300 soldiers strong, with 7 C-160 cargo planes and 5 CH-53 helicopters* (from the 61st, 62nd and 63rd Air Transport Wings**). It performs logistic tasks for the ISAF mission in Afghanistan (not only the German contingent). Germany pays about 30 million euros annually for use of the base (total cost of operating the base so-far has reached 223 million euros)***.
17	French Air Force Detachment in Dushanbe	Dushanbe, Tajikistan	Small French Air Base in Dushanbe airport operating from 2002 to 2013. Up to 230 soldiers strong, with 2 C-160 cargo planes, and prior to 2007, 6 Mirage-2000D fighters****. Base operated free of charge according to the 2002 agreement which bound the French side to participate in airport reconstruction in return for usage of the base****.

\* <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eavo90705.shtml>

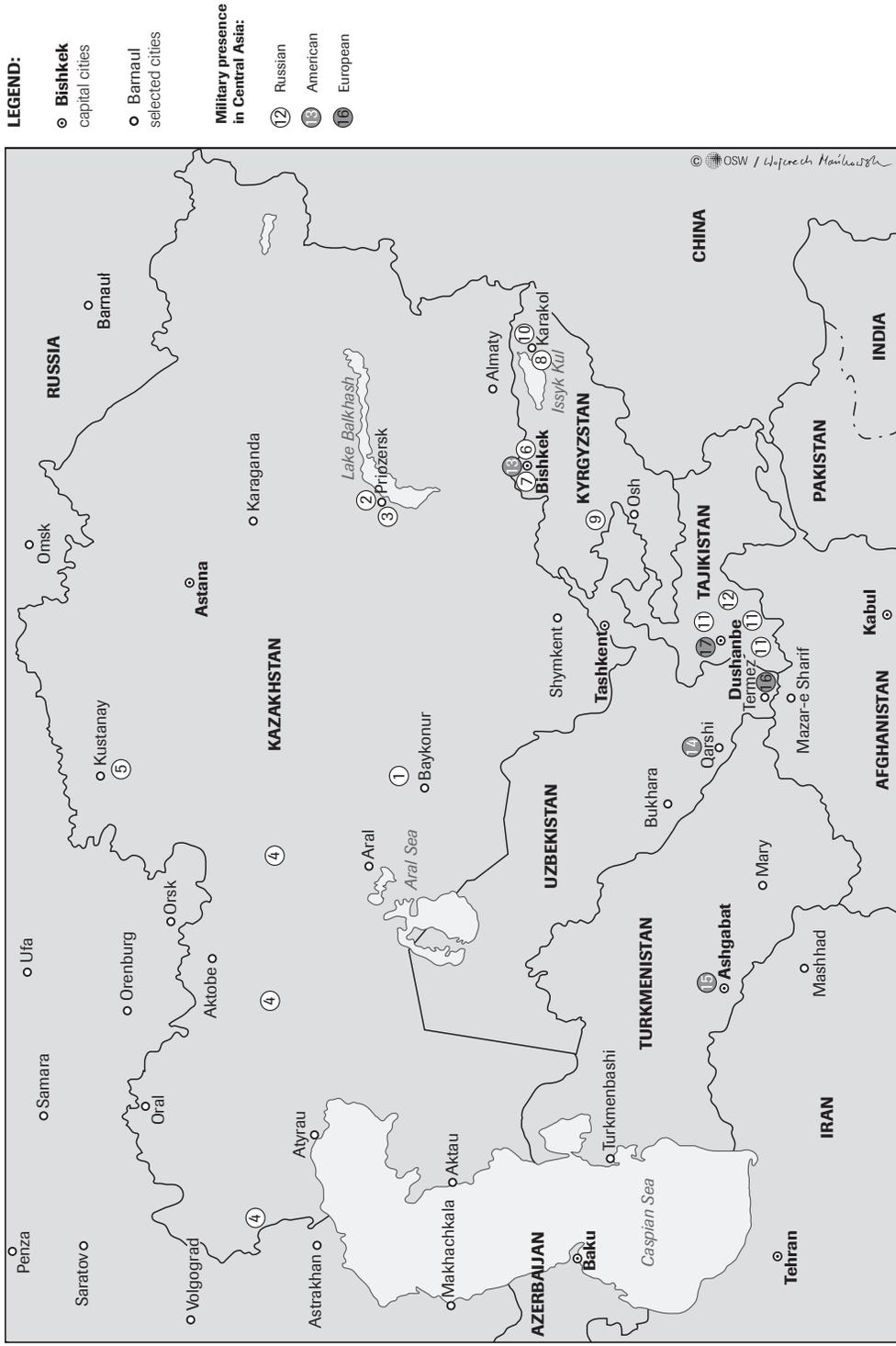
\*\* <http://eatc-mil.com/67/Air-Transport-Wing-63>

\*\*\* Calculations based on: <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/62622>, <http://www.dw.de/buying-uzbek-help-for-afghanistan-withdrawal/a-16409522> and <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/63999>

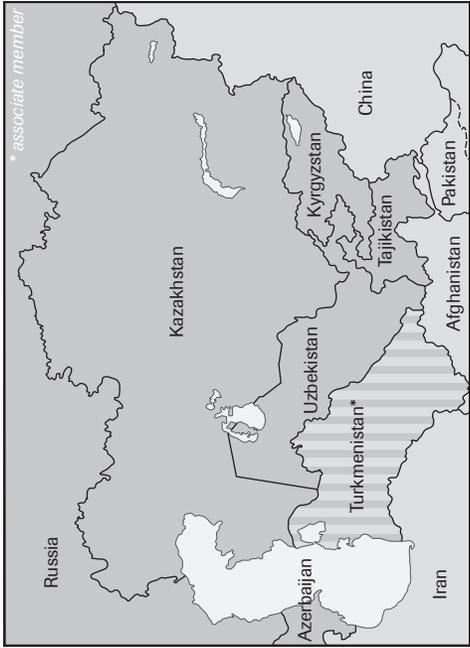
\*\*\*\* <http://www.centcom.mil/en/about-centcom-en/coalition-countries-en/france-en>

\*\*\*\*\* <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/66925>

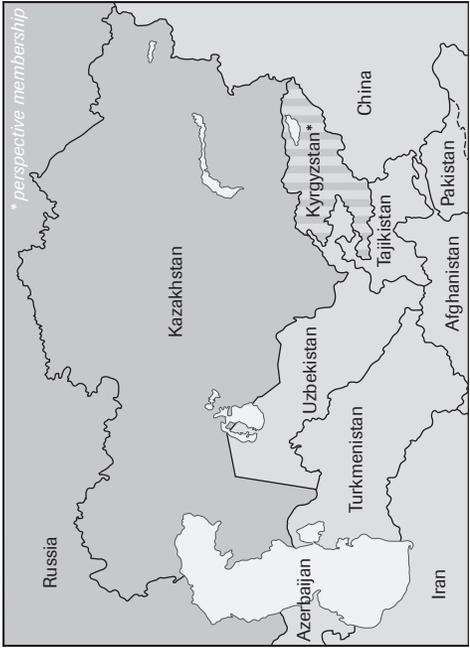
# Map. Foreign military presence in Central Asia



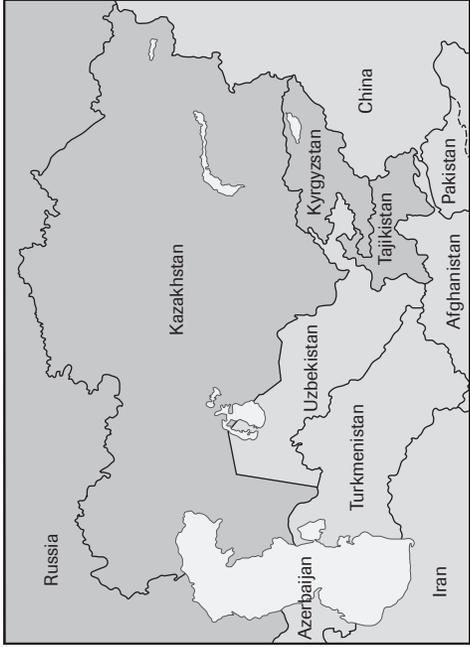
### 3. Membership of the region's states in selected international organisations



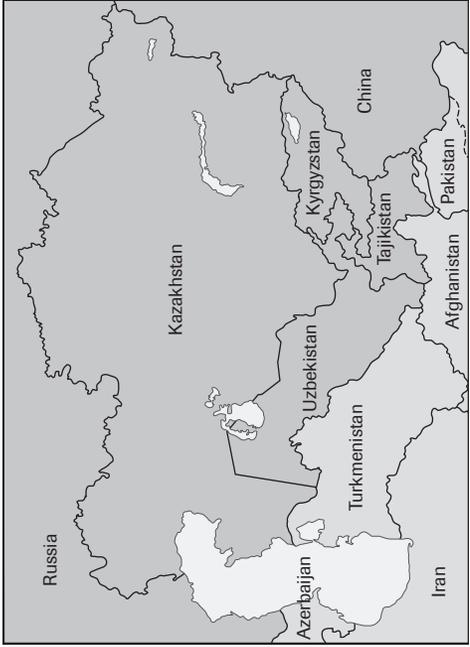
Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)



Customs Union (CU) / Eurasian Economic Union (EEU; starting from 1st of January 2015)



Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO)



Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)