

No. 1 Political and security relations - Mapping EU-Central Asia relations

Main editor(s): Gussarova, Anna; Andžāns, Māris

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POLICY PAPER

No. 1

Political and security relations Mapping EU-Central Asia relations

September 2018



Main editor(s): A. Gussarova, CAISS (Kazakhstan)¹, M. Andžāns, LIIA (Latvia)

Contributor(s): J. Plottka and S. Meyer, IEP (Germany), M. Andžāns and U.A. Bērziņa-Čerenkova, LIIA (Latvia), A. Gussarova, CAISS (Kazakhstan), E. Innola, FIIA (Finland), N. Mikhelidze, IAI (Italy), S. Heinecke, CIFE (France), A. Legiec, WiseEuropa (Poland)



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Executive Summary

This paper discusses the political and security relations among the countries of Central Asia on the one hand and the European Union (EU) and selected member states on the other. First, the institutional dimension and priorities of the EU as a whole are analysed to uncover the role of Central Asia in the documents and practices of the EU institutions. Then, the current state of play in political relations, as well as in security and military relations is assessed.

Six EU member states – Latvia, Poland, Germany, Finland, France and Italy – that have shown particular interest in the EU-Central Asia relations are analysed as separate cases to demonstrate their underpinning interests and accomplishments in relation with the five Central Asian countries (the selection of these countries provides both geographical and political-economic size balance).

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to outline the political and security relationship between the Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan) and the EU, including selected EU member states (Finland, Italy, France, Germany, Poland and Latvia).

The mapping of this relationship has been undertaken in a variety of categories: the place of these countries in one another's strategy papers; formal bilateral political agreements; high-level meetings and visits; cooperation in international and regional organisations; embassies and visa regimes; common security threats and risks; formal and informal alliances between Central Asian states and the EU member states; disputes and conflicts; military sales and assistance; joint exercises and training; and military bases.

Information collected as part for this paper was found through open sources, largely online. The period examined for this paper is 2007-2017, so as to capture the most recent developments in the region.

This paper tries to identify key components and trends in relations between the EU and the Central Asian countries in the political and security sphere. In addition, the results of this mapping exercise will provide a comprehensive basis for the following analysis of political and security relations as well as policy recommendations for future priorities for European policy making vis-à-vis Central Asia to be elaborated in the course of the H2020 project "SEnECA – Strengthening and Energizing EU-Central Asia Relations".

2. Mapping of political and security relationship

2.1. Institutional dimension and priorities

As decision-making in the area of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is still following an intergovernmental logic², the member states (MS) are the main actors in the Foreign Affairs Council. The Foreign Affairs Council adopts strategies, such as "The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership" (EU Central Asia Strategy)³, appoints the EU Special Representative (EUSR)⁴, adopts decisions on specific geographic or thematic issues, decrees the mandate to negotiate international treaties, like the (Enhanced) Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (EPCA), and has to adopt them, following the European Parliament's consent⁵. Furthermore, together with its co-legislator, the European Parliament, it adopts the annual budget, the Multi Annual Financial Framework (MFF) and the regulations for the funding instruments covering Central Asia.⁶ Its meetings are chaired by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP).⁷ She is also the head of the European External Action Service (EEAS), which assists her to carry out the EU's foreign policy as mandated by the Council. The EEAS organizes the political and other dialogues with Central Asian governments. It has delegations in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan as well as a Liaison Office in Turkmenistan, which represent the EU in

² Karen Smith, *European Union Foreign Policy in a Changing World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014): 8-10.

³ "The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership," General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, accessed May 3, 2018, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/30828/en-strategyasia_int.pdf

⁴ Dominik Tolksdorf, "The role of EU Special Representatives in the post-Lisbon Foreign policy system: A renaissance," *Policy brief by the Institute for European Studies*, no. 2012/02 (June 2012).

⁵ Karen Smith, *European Union Foreign Policy in a Changing World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014): 46-49.

⁶ Jean-Claude Piris, *The Lisbon Treaty. A Legal and Political Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 243-249; 295-300.

⁷ "Consolidated Version of the Treaty of the European Union," *The Official Journal of the European Union*, C 326 (October 2012): 13–390.

the five Central Asian countries.⁸ They are also home to officials from the European Commission working on the implementation of the EU programs in the region.

Finally, the EUSR is responsible for promoting the relations with Central Asia, making the EU more visible in the region, contributing to achieving the Union's aims, addressing upcoming challenges and monitoring the implementation of the EU Central Asia Strategy. The current EUSR, Ambassador Peter Burian was appointed on 15 April 2015⁹ and his mandate has been prolonged until 29 February 2020¹⁰. To this end, he has a team and a budget and is supported by the EEAS as well as the national embassies in the region. Being appointed by the Council, he carries out his mandate under the authority of the HR/VP.¹¹

The high number of four EU institutions and two representatives, who are key actors for the EU's Central Asia policy on the EU level, complemented by the 28 member states' foreign policies towards the region causes a considerable need for coordination within the EU. The risk of duplications and inefficiency is quite high. The mandate for the Commission and the HR/VP to propose a new regional strategy for Central Asia lists this problem as one of the challenges, which is to be addressed by the new strategy.¹²

The basic strategic document for the EU's external relations is the EU Global Strategy adopted in June 2016.¹³ It also defines the broad guidelines and objectives for the EU Central Asia policy. Three principles, which the 2016 strategy added to the EU foreign policy, are of crucial importance for the policy towards this region. These are "principled pragmatism", "resilience" and "connectivity". They need to be broken down to regional strategies, which spell out how they can be applied to the specific conditions in the specific region.¹⁴

The current EU Central Asia Strategy dates back to 2007, when it was adopted under the German Council Presidency. It names security and stability as the EU's strategic interests and covers a broad spectrum of seven priority areas and does not clearly define priorities to focus on. These areas are: human rights, rule of law, good governance and democratization; investing in the future: youth and education; promotion of economic development: trade and investment; strengthening of energy and transport links; environmental sustainability and water; combating common threats; and building bridges: intercultural dialogue.¹⁵ The EU declared its willingness to share expertise in good governance, democratisation, and training, also offering the experience of Central and Eastern Europe in political and economic transformation.¹⁶

In addition to public diplomacy and continuous informal contacts with decision-makers, business interests and civil society organisations (CSO) for which the EU delegations and the EUSR are of crucial importance, the EU possesses three key policy instruments to address the Central Asian

⁸ "Central Asia," European Union External Action, accessed May 3, 2018, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/2068/Central%20Asia

⁹ "Council Decision (CFSP) 2015/598 of 15 April 2015. Appointing the European Union Special Representative for Central Asia," *The Official Journal of the European Union*, L 99 (April 2015): 25-28.

¹⁰ "Council extends the mandates of six EU Special Representatives," European Commission press release 374/18, Foreign affairs & international relations, June 25, 2018, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/06/25/council-extends-the-mandates-of-six-eu-special-representatives/>

¹¹ "Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/298 of 17 February 2017. Extending the mandate of the European Union Special Representative for Central Asia," *The Official Journal of the European Union*, L 43 (February 2017): 209-213.

¹² General Secretariat of the Council, *Council Conclusions on the EU strategy for Central Asia*, no. 10387/17 (June 2017), accessed June 15, 2018, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/23991/st10387en17-conclusions-on-the-eu-strategy-for-central-asia.pdf>

¹³ "Shared Vision, Common Action. A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy," June 2016, accessed May 3, 2018, https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/sites/globalstrategy/files/eugs_review_web.pdf

¹⁴ Michael Reiterer, "Die Globale Strategie der Europäischen Union. Den Visionen Taten folgen lassen," *Integration* no. 1-2017 (2017): 11-30.

¹⁵ "The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership," General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, accessed May 3, 2018, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/30828/en-strategyasia_int.pdf

¹⁶ Ibid.

states. These are instruments for funding projects in the region, bilateral agreements between the EU and its member states (MS) with each of the Central Asian partners, and regular formal dialogues between the EU and Central Asian partners.

Other EU funding instruments relevant for the Central Asian region are the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP)¹⁷, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)¹⁸, and the Instrument for Nuclear Safety Co-operation (INSC)¹⁹. IcSP is an instrument specifically dedicated to crisis responses and preparedness, conflict prevention and peace building. It addresses global and trans-regional threats. It therefore contributes to making countries resilient. The EIDHR supports civil society in order to strengthen democratic reforms, the rule of law, and the respect for human rights. The decision to fund projects under EIDHR is taken by the EU without consent from the third country in which the civil society organization is operating. The INSC is an EU initiative that promotes nuclear safety, particularly the safe disposal of radioactive waste. It is a follow-up initiative to TACIS (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States and Georgia), which mainly oversaw issues such as the dumping of nuclear waste in some of the Former Soviet Union states, but also dealt with the issue on a global scale. It aims to promote better nuclear health and safety standards, including radiation protection and bringing disposal regulations in line with international law.

In addition to the funding instruments, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCA) are the second important pillar of the EU's relations with Central Asia.²⁰ They focus on trade, business, investment and economic cooperation, but also establish the bilateral high-level dialogues on issues of common concern. While the first PCAs exclusively deal with these topics, the later ones also cover the fight against legal activities and immigration. There are PCAs in force with all Central Asian states, except Turkmenistan. With Turkmenistan, there is an interim agreement in force²¹, while the EP vetoes the ratification of the PCA because of human rights concerns. With Kazakhstan an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement has been signed in 2015²², but still awaits ratification in a number of MS before it can enter into force. The PCAs are complemented by protocols, which mostly relate to EU enlargements and extending the PCA applicability to new MS. In addition to the PCAs there are also agreements with Kazakhstan on energy, grains trade, steel products, and textile products, with Kyrgyzstan on air services and energy, with Tajikistan on energy and textile products as well as with Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on energy.

2.2. Current state of political relations

The EU and the five Central Asian states have established a number of dialogue series.²³ On the highest political level, the foreign ministers participate in the EU-Central Asia Ministerial Meeting and

¹⁷ "Regulation (EU) No 230/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014," *The Official Journal of the European Union*, L 77 (March 2014): 1-10.

¹⁸ "Regulation (EU) No 235/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014," *The Official Journal of the European Union*, L 77 (March 2014): 85-94.

¹⁹ "Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation. Multi-annual Indicative Programme 2014-2017," Council of Europe, accessed 3 May, 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/mip-2014-17-insc_en.pdf

²⁰ "Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Kazakhstan, of the other part," *The Official Journal of the European Union*, L 29 (February 2016): 3-150.; "Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Kyrgyz Republic, of the other part," *The Official Journal of the European Communities*, L196 (July 1999): 48-77.; "Partnership and Cooperation Agreement establishing a partnership between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Tajikistan, of the other part," *The Official Journal of the European Union*, L 350 (December 2009): 3-51.; "Partnership and Cooperation Agreement establishing a partnership between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Uzbekistan, of the other part," *The Official Journal of the European Communities*, L229 (August 1999): 3-38.

²¹ "Interim Agreement with Turkmenistan," *The Official Journal of the European Union*, CE184 (April 2009): 215-216

²² "Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Kazakhstan, of the other part," *The Official Journal of the European Union*, no. L 29 (February 2016): 3-150.

²³ Jos Bostra and Michael Emerson, *Into EurAsia. Monitoring the EU's Central Asia Strategy. Report of the EUCAM Project* (Brussels: Center for European Studies and Madrid: Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior, 2010): 65.

the ministers of justice in the EU-Central Asia Rule of Law Ministerial Meeting. They are complemented by the preparatory bodies on lower hierarchical levels. In addition to these multilateral formats, the EU also organizes bilateral meetings with its Central Asian partners on different levels. They are devoted to cooperation in general or deal with specific issues such as the rule of law, energy, trade and investment, environment and climate change. Of special importance are the human rights dialogues, which are in place with all five Central Asian states. These regular meetings are complemented by occasional events, which are conferences or expert meetings, such as the Afghanistan Conference in 2016.²⁴

The EU has opened Representation offices in all five capitals of Central Asian republics, placing Delegations in Astana, Kazakhstan; Ashgabat, Turkmenistan; Dushanbe, Tajikistan; Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic; Tashkent, Uzbekistan.²⁵ The Embassy of Kazakhstan in the Kingdom of Belgium serves as a liaison with the EU. The Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic in Benelux and France, located in Brussels, serves as the Permanent Representative office to the EU.²⁶ The Embassy of Tajikistan in Benelux, located in Brussels, also hosts the mission to the EU, NATO, and UNESCO.²⁷ The Embassy of Turkmenistan in the Kingdom of Belgium serves as a liaison with the EU.²⁸ The Embassy of Uzbekistan in Benelux, located in Brussels, also hosts the mission to the EU.

The EU Strategy for Central Asia was put up for revision and updating in 2017, and a renewed EU Strategy towards the Central Asian region, “synchronized with the adoption of the next 2020-2027 multi-annual development assistance budget for the region”, is expected to be adopted in 2019.²⁹ The 2017 Council of the European Union conclusions on the EU Strategy for Central Asia acknowledge the significance of the partnership achieved since 2007, admitting that “it is time to review and renew our relationship, taking into account new geopolitical realities and the evolving needs and capacities of our Central Asian partners”.³⁰ The document stresses the input of the individual countries in “their commitment to undertake reforms to strengthen democracy, fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary, and to modernise and diversify the economy”, arguably, to account for the result variations from country to country. Corruption, serious challenges to human rights and security concerns, such as violent extremism, are stated among the main issues still to be addressed. Also, the Multi-annual Indicative Programme Regional Central Asia 2014-2020 is in place to promote political and social stability in the region by addressing sensitive areas.³¹ Bilateral Multi-annual Indicative Programmes 2014-2020 have been issued for each respective Central Asian country.

In the Republic of Kazakhstan Foreign Policy Concept for 2014-2020, cooperation with the EU holds an important position. The document states: “Kazakhstan will continue efforts to develop full-scale relations with the European Union – the largest economic, trade and investment partner of Kazakhstan. In addition, Kazakhstan will work towards achieving a new Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA), as well as liberalization of visa regime with the prospect of a gradual transition to a visa-free regime for the citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the European

²⁴ “EU human rights dialogues in Central Asia,” European Union External Action, last modified July 7, 2016, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/4895/eu-human-rights-dialogues-in-central-asia_en

²⁵ “Central Asia,” European Union External Action, accessed June 15, 2018, https://eeas.europa.eu/regions/central-asia/2068/central-asia_en

²⁶ “Home,” Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic in Benelux and France, accessed June 15, 2018, <http://www.kyrgyz-embassy.be/>

²⁷ “Contacts,” Embassy of Tajikistan to Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Mission to the EU and NATO, accessed June 15, 2018, <http://tajikembassy.be/en/contacts/>

²⁸ “Contact us,” The Embassy of Turkmenistan, accessed June 15, 2018, <https://belgium.tmembassy.gov.tm/en/contacts>

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ “Council Conclusions on the EU strategy for Central Asia,” EU Commission, June 19, 2017, https://ambashgabat.esteri.it/ambasciata_ashgabat/resource/doc/2017/06/st10387.en17_conclusions_on_the_eu_strategy_for_central_asia1.pdf

³¹ “Multiannual Indicative Programme – regional Central Asia 2014-2020,” accessed June 15, 2018, <https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/mip-2014-2020-central-asia-regional-20140812-en.pdf>

Union.”³² The goal for the EU-Kazakhstan EPCA was achieved in 2015, a visa-free regime has been introduced for the EU citizens since 2017, however, the goal of visa-free travel to the EU for the citizens of Kazakhstan has not been achieved yet.

The National Sustainable Development Strategy for the Kyrgyz Republic 2013-2017 and the project of the new strategy do not contain a particular emphasis on the cooperation with the EU, as the role of the EU in Kyrgyz international relations is only mentioned along with the United States, the countries of South-East Asia and the Arab region, stating the importance of “the search for new forms of effective economic and political cooperation” with these partners.³³

The EU holds a more central role within the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Republic of Tajikistan, adopted in 2015. It states: “In view of promoting development of the major areas of the national economy, Tajikistan acknowledges the European Union as one of its most important economic partners and will continue to seek expansion and deepening of the long-term sustainable cooperation with this influential interstate association on the basis of the principle of shared benefit. This interaction in general will embrace all European institutions, including the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, the European Investment Bank and other organizations and agencies.”³⁴

Turkmenistan has adopted the Concept of the Foreign Policy Course for 2017-2023 in February 2017. Although the full text is not available, according to the press releases, the neutrality of the country lays at the core of the strategy, also putting great emphasis on international cooperation via the UN. The cooperation with the EU falls into the category of “cooperation on the project basis”.³⁵

The statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan reads that the cooperation with the EU has been one of the foreign policy priorities since the first years of independence of the Republic. “Uzbekistan attaches great importance to the development of mutually beneficial cooperation with the EU and European states. At the same time, special attention will be paid to the promotion of a higher level of bilateral relations with the leading states of Europe, in particular Germany, France, Great Britain, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Latvia and other countries.”³⁶

2.3. Security and military relations

The challenge of terrorism and religious radicalism in Central Asia is a specifically sensitive area. First, knowledge of terrorist activities in the region is insufficient and it is not clear how reliable official information from national authorities is. It seems to be likely that in some cases political opposition is suppressed by using the label “terrorism” or “extremism”. Second, independent research on terrorism and religious radicalization in Central Asia is very poor, due to methodological (terrorists do not answer surveys) and security issues (field work is risky). To address these challenges, it is necessary to better understand the reasons behind radicalization. Are these mostly foreign fighters migrating to Central Asia or is there a genuine Central Asian radicalization process going on? So far, there is no clear evidence that Central Asia is becoming a hub for terrorist radicalization, but there is an emergent trend of radicalization among immigrants from Central Asia in Russia. This is most

³² “Foreign Policy Concept for 2014 – 2020 Republic of Kazakhstan,” The Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Republic of Kazakhstan, accessed June 15, 2018, <http://mfa.gov.kz/en/content-view/kontseptsiya-vneshnoj-politiki-rk-na-2014-2020-gg>

³³ Soglasno Natsional’noy strategii ustoychivogo razvitiya KR na period 2013-2017 gody, Glava 2, p.2.12. <http://www.mfa.gov.kg/contents/view/id/31>

³⁴ “Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Republic of Tajikistan,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, accessed June 15, 2018, <http://mfa.tj/?l=en&art=1072>

³⁵ Utverzhdena Kontseptsiya vneshnepoliticheskogo kursa Turkmenistana na 2017-2023 gody. 18/02/2017, <http://tdh.gov.tm/news/articles.aspx&article5097&cat11>

³⁶ “Foreign Policy,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, accessed June 15, 2018, <https://mfa.uz/en/cooperation/>

likely because terrorist groups tend to target poor and marginalized communities, particularly migrants, for radicalization.^{37, 38, 39}

Organized crime is a security challenge, which is closely related with, but not identical to terrorism. On the one hand, it can be used to fund terrorist activities, as the drug production in Afghanistan shows. Trafficking of foreign fighters and weapons are terrorist activities in themselves. Following the end of the Soviet Union, Central Asia has become a crossroads for trafficking Afghan drug production and thus of concern for the EU drug policy. Closely related to fighting organized crime is also the problem of corruption, especially the facilitation of organized crime operations by corrupt police officers. Anti-corruption measures, a functioning judiciary, and paying officials' salaries that allow a decent standard of living are key tasks for fighting organized crime.

Furthermore, border conflicts and ethnic tensions need to be resolved as they are a potential threat to the stability of the countries in the region. The conflicts between all Central Asian states over access to water resources are an additional threat to the stability in the region.⁴⁰

With regard to resilience, the economic and social situation in the five Central Asian states is of crucial importance. Poverty and a lack of future perspectives make people more vulnerable to religious radicalism, organized crime and even terrorism. Therefore, the EU's support of Central Asian transition to sustainable market economies, especially in the two poorest countries Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and efforts to address social inequalities in all five states, including the area of education, are an important contribution to deal with security challenges.⁴¹

The High Level Political and Security Dialogue between the European Union and Central Asian states has been held regularly since 2013.⁴² The European Union has been providing assistance to Central Asia through the border management programme BOMCA, which targets integrated border management, cross border cooperation and trade facilitation in the region since 2003.⁴³ The EU also supports Central Asian countries to fight drug trafficking through a regional Central Asia Drug Action Program (CADAP) and a trans-regional program EU Action against Drugs and Organized Crime (EU-ACT), managed by FIIAP⁴⁴.

The NATO engagement in Central Asia is part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the NATO commanded operation in Afghanistan. For ISAF, the region of Central Asia was of logistical importance as a supply route for troops deployed in Afghanistan. In addition, the European NATO members had military bases in the region. Being a neighbouring region to Afghanistan, the Central Asian states are a key player in achieving stability and peace in the country. However, the importance of Afghanistan for European and Western policy-makers in general has decreased. Bilateral cooperation between NATO and the five Central Asian states takes place in the framework of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and the Partnership for Peace Program. Key areas addressed are defence, security sector reform, disaster-preparedness and response. In general, NATO is not

³⁷ "Understanding the Factors Contributing to Radicalisation Among Central Asian Labour Migrants in Russia", Mohammed S Elshimi with Raffaello Pantucci, Sarah Lain and Nadine L Salman, *RUSI Occasional Paper*, April 2018, accessed September 2018.

³⁸ Svante Cornell, "Central Asia Is Not a Breeding Ground for Radicalization," *The Diplomat*, November 15, 2017, accessed 3 May, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/11/central-asia-is-not-a-breeding-ground-for-radicalization/>

³⁹ Svante Cornell, "Central Asia Is Not a Breeding Ground for Radicalization," *The Diplomat*, November 15, 2017, accessed 3 May, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/11/central-asia-is-not-a-breeding-ground-for-radicalization/>

⁴⁰ "Water Wars in Central Asia", David Trilling, *Foreign Affairs Journal*, August 2016, accessed September 2018, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/gallerys/2016-08-24/water-wars-central-asia>

⁴¹ "Country Strategy for Development Cooperation The Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan 2018–2021", Ministry of Foreign Affairs Finland, (no date)

⁴² "EU-Central Asia High Level Political and Security Dialogue," European Union External Action, accessed June 15, 2018, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/27795/eu-central-asia-high-level-political-and-security-dialogue_en

⁴³ "Border Management Program in Central Asia," Overview, Facts and figures, accessed June 17, 2018, <https://www.bomca.eu.org/en/programme/overview>

⁴⁴ "Presentation of EU-ACT, action against drug trafficking and organised crime," FIIAP News, July 17, 2017, <http://www.fiiapp.org/en/noticias/se-presenta-ue-act-accion-contra-las-drogas-y-el-crimen-organizado/>

a forum used by MS to pursue their Central Asia policy. The other way round, the importance of the region for NATO in the early 2000s was a driver behind the EU Central Asia Strategy.⁴⁵

Kazakhstan has agreed on three consecutive Individual Partnership Action Plans (IPAPs) with the NATO and renewed its partnership commitment with the NATO in 2014. Kyrgyzstan welcomes the NATO's retraining program for released military personnel, requesting implementation of a NATO/PfP Trust Fund project to enhance storage facilities for small arms, light weapons and ammunition.

From 2013 to 2017, the Office of the NATO Liaison Officer for Central Asia was based in Uzbekistan.⁴⁶ In autumn 2016, for budgetary reasons, the Secretary General cancelled the position of the NATO Liaison Officer for Central Asia.⁴⁷

Under the NATO's Operational Capability Concept – Pool of Forces, the NATO provides standards, training, evaluation, and certification of units. Kazakhstan requested a Defence Education Enhancement Program (DEEP) in 2007. It helped the Kazakh National Defence University (NDU) with a curriculum compatible with those in NATO/Western defence education institutions. Currently, the DEEP focuses on “support for the Ph.D. faculty at the NDU and development of courses for Kazakhstan's Partnership for Peace Training Centre of the Army Institute (KAZCENT). Kazakhstan contributes to Allied and partner capacity building efforts as a member of the Partnership Training and Education Centre (PTEC) Community. Moreover, KAZCENT offers annual courses open to Allies and Partners on military English, NATO staff procedures, and a five-day familiarization course on the history, economy, and culture of Central Asia and Afghanistan”.⁴⁸

In December 2013, the NATO began the implementation of a DEEP with Uzbekistan under the PfP Training Centre. In Tajikistan, a NATO/PfP Trust Fund project, led by the United Kingdom and involving Japan as a lead contributor, disposes of unserviceable munitions and survey weapons and ammunition storage facilities in the border regions.⁴⁹

All five Central Asian states have established diplomatic representation to NATO Headquarters in Brussels. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are represented in the Military Partnership Division at Allied Command Operations, which is based at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium. It facilitates the countries' participation in training and exercises. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan also have military representatives at NATO Headquarters in Brussels.⁵⁰

3. Mapping of EU member states – Central Asia political and security relationship

3.1. Latvia and Central Asia

Cooperation with the Central Asian countries is one of the specializations of the Latvian foreign policy. At the same time, Central Asian countries do not hold a primary place in the strategy papers of Latvia. Nevertheless, they are often mentioned in policy planning documents and reports, related to foreign affairs and other affairs with external dimension like transport and education. For instance,

⁴⁵ “NATO and Afghanistan,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, accessed May 3, 2018, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_8189.htm

⁴⁶ “Office of the NATO Liaison Officer (NLO) in Central Asia (Archived),” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, accessed June 15, 2018, https://www.nato.int/cps/su/natohq/topics_107902.htm

⁴⁷ “NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia,” NATO, May 23, 2017, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50101.htm

⁴⁸ “NATO's Relations with Central Asia,” NATO, accessed June 2, 2018, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_107957.htm

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ “NATO's Partnership for Peace Framework Multilateral Dimension,” accessed June 29, 2018, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_107957.htm

Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are determined among priority countries in the Latvian Development Cooperation Guidelines 2016-2020 (the other priority countries are Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine).⁵¹ The annual reports of the Minister of Foreign Affairs mention Central Asia, e.g. the 2017 report mentions Latvia's interest in development cooperation, as well as the more generic focus on border security of the countries and threats emanating from Afghanistan.⁵²

Latvia has concluded multiple agreements of various types with the Central Asian countries, mostly related to economy, science and technical cooperation. Bilateral intergovernmental commissions have been established with all five Central Asian countries that meet upon necessity both to discuss topical issues and to propose improvements in bilateral contractual relations.

Latvia and Central Asian countries have had an intensive dialogue at the highest political level. The most intense dialogue has been with Uzbekistan, whose president has visited Latvia three times (1995, 2004, 2013), reciprocated by the Latvian counterpart (1996, 2008, 2014). The Latvian president has visited Kazakhstan three times (2004, 2008, 2013; twice also in working visits – 2010 and 2017), while the Kazakh president has visited Latvia once, in 2006. The Latvian president has visited Tajikistan and Turkmenistan twice (2009, 2014 and 2008, 2013 respectively), while the Tajik president has visited Latvia in 2009 and the Turkmen president in 2012. Contacts have been active at the levels of ministers and members of the parliament, especially with Uzbekistan⁵³ and Kazakhstan.^{54, 55}

Latvia and Central Asian countries are not part of the same regional specific organizations. Cooperation in extra-regional organizations such as the United Nations (UN), Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has not been active. However, Latvia has been one of the main advocates in the European Union (EU) for closer interaction with Central Asia. Hence, during Latvia's Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2015, the region regained momentum in the external action agenda of the EU⁵⁶ (e.g. the EU strategy for Central Asia was reviewed and the post of the EU Special representative to the region re-established⁵⁷).

Latvia has established two embassies in the region – one in Astana, Kazakhstan (covers also Kyrgyzstan) and the other in Tashkent, Uzbekistan (covers also Tajikistan and Turkmenistan). Meanwhile, only Uzbekistan has an embassy in Latvia, whereas Kazakhstan has a consular office in Riga. Nationals of all Central Asian countries need a visa to enter Latvia. Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have established a visa-free regime for Latvian nationals.⁵⁸

Security situation in Afghanistan, especially international terrorism and smuggling of drugs, as well as radicalization in the wider region are risks of concern to both Latvia and Central Asian countries.

⁵¹ "Development Cooperation Policy Guidelines for 2016-2020," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed June 15, 2018, <https://lik-umi.lv/ta/en/en/id/284775>

⁵² "Annual Report of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the accomplishments and further work with respect to national foreign policy and the European Union (2017)," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, accessed June 15, 2018, <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/news/latest-news/58946-annual-report-of-the-minister-of-foreign-affairs-on-the-accomplishments-and-further-work-with-respect-to-national-foreign-policy-and-the-european-union-2017>

⁵³ "Latvijas Republikas un Uzbekistānas Republikas divpusējās attiecības," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, accessed June 15, 2018, <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/arpolitika/divpusejas-attiecibas/latvijas-un-uzbekistanas-attiecibas>

⁵⁴ "Latvijas Republikas un Kazahstānas Republikas divpusējās attiecības," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, accessed June 15, 2018, <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/arpolitika/divpusejas-attiecibas/latvijas-un-kazahstanas-attiecibas>

⁵⁵ For a complete overview of the bilateral diplomatic relations between Latvia and all Central Asian countries, please see (in Latvian): "Divpusējās attiecības," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, accessed June 15, 2018, <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/arpolitika/divpusejas-attiecibas>

⁵⁶ For a brief overview of the Central Asia's role in Latvian foreign policy please see: Māris Andzāns "Central Asia's role in Latvian Foreign Policy," Latvian Institute of International Affairs, March 26, 2018, <http://www.lai.lv/viedokli/central-asias-role-in-latvian-foreign-policy-683>

⁵⁷ "Results of the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union," Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, https://eu2015.lv/images/news/EU2015LV_results_en.pdf, p. 63-64.

⁵⁸ Specific rules apply in each case, such as the duration of the trip.

These risks are mentioned both generally and region-specifically in the National Security Concept⁵⁹ and the 2017 Annual Report of the Minister of Foreign Affairs accordingly.⁶⁰

There have been no political or security related disputes or conflicts between Latvia and Central Asian countries, no sales of military nature between Latvia and Central Asian countries, and no bilateral exercises between Latvia and Central Asian countries, though indirect interaction during exercises of multilateral formats such as the NATO Partnership for Peace has occurred. Training in home and justice affairs has been one of the main areas of the Latvian engagement in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as a part of Latvia's development cooperation policy. The Latvian institutions are active participants of BOMCA. The 9th phase of the programme is implemented by a consortium that includes State Border Guard, Food and Veterinary Service, State Revenue Service, as well as Riga Technical University.⁶¹

Latvian embassies in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan serve as the NATO Contact Point Embassies. The most notable civil-military engagement was the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) (also called as the Northern Line of Communication) with Afghanistan (with its peak operation from 2010 to 2014). As a part of it, the ISAF mission in Afghanistan was supplied and to a lesser extent redeployed (non-lethal materials) over transport infrastructure of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (to a lesser extent also Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan), whereas the port of Riga served as one of the main sea entry/exit points for inland surface transport. Latvia served as one of the lead NATO nations facilitating the operation of the NDN at large and in Central Asia in particular.⁶² Facilitated by the operation of the NDN in 2012, there was an exchange of visits of the defence ministers with Uzbekistan, including signing of the intent protocol of cooperation in defence.⁶³

3.2. Finland and Central Asia

Finland maintains its relations with Central Asia as a region and with individual Central Asian states both bilaterally and through the EU and other multilateral organizations, like the OSCE and the UN. Bilaterally, Finland is primarily interested in developing cooperation in several sectors, including trade, education, environmental protection and energy efficiency. Finland has an official bilateral agreement with five Central Asian countries for avoiding double-income taxation and tax evasion.⁶⁴

Governmental, parliamentary or other high-level official visits take place occasionally. With Kazakhstan, official visits at some level take place usually on an annual basis. Presidential visits to Astana have taken place in 2013 and in 2017. On ministerial level, the Minister of Foreign Trade and Development is commonly the key person taking part in Central Asian visits.

Overall, the European Union and the UN are the most important multilateral fora through which Central Asian relations are shaped. Apart from these, Finland has engaged with the Central Asian region through the OSCE framework. For example, during the Finnish OSCE chairmanship in 2008, Finland engaged in projects promoting border security in Central Asia. This Finnish-led OSCE effort aimed

⁵⁹ "Par Nacionālās drošības koncepcijas apstiprināšanu," Legal Acts of the Republic of Latvia, accessed June 15, 2018, <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/278107-par-nacionalas-drosibas-koncepcijas-apstiprinasanu>

⁶⁰ "Annual Report of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the accomplishments and further work with respect to national foreign policy and the European Union (2017)," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, accessed June 15, 2018, <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/news/latest-news/58946-annual-report-of-the-minister-of-foreign-affairs-on-the-accomplishments-and-further-work-with-respect-to-national-foreign-policy-and-the-european-union-2017>

⁶¹ BOMCA 9th phase, Newsletter 7, 2017, <https://www.bomca-eu.org/en/news/newsletters>

⁶² For more information, see Maris Andžāns "The Northern Distribution Network and Its Implications for Latvia," in *Northern Distribution Network: Redefining Partnerships within NATO and beyond* ed. A. Sprūds, D. Potjomkina, eds, Northern Distribution Network: Redefining Partnerships within NATO and beyond (Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2013), 9-29. ISBN: 978-9984-583-47-1. http://liia.lv/site/docs/NDN_redefining_partnerships_within_NATO_and_beyond_LIIA_web_1st_part.pdf

⁶³ "Latvijas un Uzbekistānas aizsardzības ministri paraksta nodomu protokolu par sadarbību," Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Latvia, June 05, 2012, accessed June 28, 2018, http://www.mod.gov.lv/lv/Aktualitates/Preses_pazinojumi/2012/06/05-01.aspx

⁶⁴ The agreements are available (in Finnish) at EDILEX, accessed June 15, 2018, <https://www.edilex.fi/valtiosopimukset/asiasanat/Kansainv%C3%A4liset%20suhteet#>

at training Central Asian border guard authorities in issues of cross-border terrorism, drug trafficking and illegal arms trade. Cooperation within the UN commonly takes place in the framework of development policy. As far as (development) projects involving Turkmenistan are concerned, Finland does not engage in bilateral efforts. However, Finland has been involved in the UN's Wider Europe Initiative, where some projects also take place with Turkmenistan. Finland and Central Asian States participate and share negotiation tables in several multilateral organisations as members (e.g. Asian Development Bank (ADB), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), World Trade Organisation (WTO), World Bank, NATO Partnership for Peace Programme, Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council).

In terms of bilateral relations, Kazakhstan is the most important bilateral Central Asian partner for Finland. The relations between Finland and Kazakhstan have developed significantly since 2009, after the opening of the Finnish Embassy in Astana. Before 2009, Finland's official diplomatic representative was the Roving Ambassador to the Central Asian region. Launching an embassy in Astana showed increased interest towards Kazakhstan and the whole region. The main reason for initiating the diplomatic mission was the promotion of trade and facilitating access to the Central Asian markets for Finnish companies. There are two honorary consulates in the region, one in Almaty, Kazakhstan and the other in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. The Astana embassy also handles relations with Kyrgyzstan. Political relations between Finland and Kyrgyzstan can be described as modest but good. The cooperation between the countries revolves around development issues. Otherwise, cultural exchange and trade with Kyrgyzstan is minimal. Finland does not have an embassy in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan. The political and diplomatic relations with these countries are handled through the Helsinki-based Roving Ambassador. The Roving Ambassador does travel in the region frequently, several times annually. Visa to the Schengen area is required from all of the Central Asian states, when travelling to Finland.

Finland has assisted in (UN-led) efforts to mediate conflict situations or disputes in Central Asian region as part of Finland's engagements in the UN or supported capacity building through development policy.

In terms of military affairs, there are no close relations between Finland and any of the Central Asian countries. However, Finland has conducted military sales to Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Especially the latter has raised criticism in Finland, in terms of human right situation in the area and subsequent ethical concerns.⁶⁵

Table 1. Military sales to Central Asian states in 2015⁶⁶

Destination	Value	Product type
Kazakhstan	EUR 1.48 million	Rifles, spare parts.
Uzbekistan	data missing	Rifles, spare parts
Turkmenistan	EUR 1.02 million	Rifles, spare parts

Finland sees Central Asia as a potentially significant region mainly for international trade. In the long term, Finland and the Finnish stakeholders will benefit from a geopolitically stable and modernized Central Asian region. Finland has both political and economic interests in Kazakhstan. Besides trade,

⁶⁵ Aleksu Teivainen, "Government criticised for allowing arms exports to Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan," The Helsinki Times, October 24, 2016, <http://www.helsinkitimes.fi/finland/finland-news/domestic/14305-government-criticised-for-allowing-arms-exports-to-turkmenistan-uzbekistan.html>

⁶⁶ John C. K. Daly, "Finland's Raising Arms Exports Raise Controversy in Parliament," Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 13 Issue: 174, The Jamestown Foundation, October 31, 2016, <https://jamestown.org/program/finlands-rising-arms-exports-raise-controversy-parliament/>

Finland's overall interest in relation to Kazakhstan is directed towards supporting democratic development and rule of law accompanied with increasing economic pursuits. Finland does not currently view establishing relations with Turkmenistan a priority. However, Finland has aimed at increasing prospects for dialogue with Turkmenistan. Finland encourages Turkmenistan to make progress in societal reforms. Finland acknowledges that for the overall security and stability of the region and of Europe more broadly, it is important to prevent Turkmenistan from slipping into escalating political conflicts.

3.3. Italy and Central Asia

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Italy started to develop relations with the newly independent states of Central Asia. These relations were deepened for security and supply reasons during the war in Afghanistan. Since 2007, Italy has been a supporter of the EU Central Asia Strategy as well as EU Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy launched by Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission in 2016. The Italian political establishment have largely shared the assumption of Mogherini's strategy that developing relation with the Central Asia countries 'lies at the heart of the European security order'.

Before the launch of the EU Strategy for Central Asia in 2007, the Italian Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs Gianni Vernetti visited all five states and organized a conference in Rome to develop further multilateral relations. His aim was to widen the dialogue and, rather than limit it to only to energy and security topics, to expand the dialogue on democratization, rule of law, and protection of human rights. However, the initiative remained isolated because of a lack of continuity. The Kazakh President Nazarbayev made four visits to Italy: 1994, 1998, 2003, and 2009. Italian leaders reciprocated with visits by President Scalfaro in 1997, Prime Minister Prodi in 1998 and 2007, and Prime Minister Berlusconi in 2008 (short-term visit) and 2010 (OSCE Summit).⁶⁷ These meetings between high-level representatives accomplished bilateral cooperation and agreements on trade, cultural exchange, and the fight against organized crime and illegal trafficking.

Italian officials have promoted bilateral and multilateral initiatives through international organisations in fields such as energy, trade, culture, society, and the rule of law. However, Italy has remained passive on many topics linked to promote Western values and good governance in the region and has preferred to be more pragmatic and cooperate with the Central Asian countries only in selective sectors. Yet during his 2009 visit to Rome, President Nazarbayev signed a Strategic Partnership Treaty with commitments to cooperate in the promotion of rule of law and democratization. At this time a Kazakh news page described the level of economic and political partnership as "very high" because Italy backed all main foreign policy initiatives of Kazakhstan, including its OSCE presidency of 2010.⁶⁸

In 2013, Kazakhstan and Italy signed a full package of intergovernmental agreements in the criminal and legal spheres. In January 2015, agreements on extradition and legal cooperation were signed, which created a legal framework for mutual legal assistance and the protection of the legitimate rights and interests of their citizens.⁶⁹ At the 2015 EXPO in Milan, President Nazarbayev met with the Kazakh delegation to Italy and held bilateral talks with Prime Minister Renzi. Following this, Ka-

⁶⁷ "Bilateral relations," Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the Italian Republic, May 14, 2018, <http://www.mfa.kz/en/roma/content-view/dvustoronnie-otnosenia>

⁶⁸ "Senate ratified Kazakhstan-Italy strategic partnership agreement", Kazinform, March 3, 2011, accessed May 14, 2018, www.inform.kz/en/senate-ratified-kazakhstan-italy-strategic-partnership-agreement_a2364976

⁶⁹ Zhanar Abdulova, "Kazakhstan, Italy Sign Agreements on Extradition and Legal Cooperation", *The Astana Times*, January, 26, 2015, accessed May 14, 2018, <https://astanatimes.com/2015/01/kazakhstan-italy-sign-agreements-extradition-legal-cooperation/>

zakhstan and Italy signed joint agreements with a value of USD 500 million in the sectors of agriculture, food, textiles, oil and gas, machine building, and construction.⁷⁰ The Strategic Partnership Treaty with Italy was initiated by Kazakhstan within its Path to Europe Program that seeks to establish strategic partnerships between the Central Asian state and the EU members.

However, Italy's diplomatic connections in the region are still limited and for a long time covered only two of the countries of Central Asia: Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. In fact, Italian embassies in these two countries are also responsible for Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In Turkmenistan, an honorary consul with links to the embassy in Moscow was established until an Italian embassy was set up in the capital in 2014. The Turkmen embassy in Rome opened in 2016. Italian citizens require a visa to visit Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. Uzbekistan gave Italy a visa regime with simplified procedure and multiple entries without invitation requirements, while since 2017 Italian citizens can enter Kazakhstan and remain for 30 days and Kyrgyzstan 60 days without a visa. The citizens of all five Central Asian states must apply for a Schengen visa when traveling to Italy.

Concerning security relations between Italy and Central Asia, Italy's interest in the region is mainly related to its involvement in Afghanistan. To secure supplies for its troops in Afghanistan, Italy focused on transit deals with Afghanistan's neighbouring countries. Consequently, Italy established military cooperation with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, and both countries assigned a military attaché to their embassies in Rome. In 2017, Kazakhstan and Italy embarked on a planned military cooperation for the first time. Priority areas included confidence-building measures, transparency in the military sphere in the region and the world, training and cooperation between military universities, joint drills, and enhancing the potential of peacekeeping units (signed in November 2016).⁷¹ Previously in 1999, Uzbekistan and Italy signed an agreement for cooperation on defence issues. Due to lack of financial resources, Italy has no development assistance programmes for Central Asian states.

3.4. Poland and Central Asia

The Central Asian states do not appear directly in the strategic documents on Polish foreign policy. The Strategy of Polish Foreign Policy 2017-2021 does not refer to the Central Asia region, and only indirectly underlines the importance of geographic diversification of Polish economic activity in the world with an emphasis on the development of cooperation among others with Asian countries.⁷² Kazakhstan occupies also a relatively important place among countries inhabited by a Polish minority – “Polonia” (almost 35,000 according to the Kazakh census, around 80,000 according to the Polish estimates).⁷³

Bilateral relations between Poland and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are regulated by the Declarations on the development of friendly relations and cooperation. Meanwhile, relations with Uzbekistan are governed by the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. Poland has only signed an agreement on Defense Cooperation with Kazakhstan. On the other hand, Poland has only signed an agreement on Combating Crime with Tajikistan. The basis for bilateral cooperation with Turkmenistan is defined in the agreement on establishing diplomatic relations. The Polish side is interested in concluding an intergovernmental agreement on cooperation in the field of culture, education and science, which is currently in an advanced stage of negotiations.

⁷⁰ “Kazakhstan introduces free visa regime for another 10 countries”, Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, accessed May 14, 2018, <https://www.kazakhembus.com/content/kazakhstan-introduces-free-visa-regime-another-10-countries>

⁷¹ “Italy to embark on military cooperation”, Kazinform, December 14, 2016, accessed May 14, 2018, http://lenta.inform.kz/en/kazakhstan-italy-to-embark-on-military-cooperation_a2979983

⁷² “Polska polityka wschodnia 1989-2015 Wymiar narodowy i unijny”, Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej, Warszawa, 2017. p.34-52.

⁷³ “Polityka zagraniczna – Polonia”, Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, accessed May 14, 2018, https://www.ms.gov.pl/pl/p/msz_pl/c/MOBILE/polityka_zagraniczna/polonia/

Relations between Poland and the Central Asian countries are characterized by a low intensity. In the last two years the Polish-Kazakh relations in the field of contacts regarding economic cooperation have relatively intensified.

The most important visits in recent years include: A meeting of the Presidents of Poland and Kazakhstan in January 2018 during the debate at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in New York; Meeting at the ministerial level of the Polish-Kazakh transport working group in Astana in December 2017; Political consultations of representatives of Poland and Kazakhstan in the UNSC in October 2017; Visit of the President of Poland in Kazakhstan in September 2017, participation in the EXPO 2017 in Astana (including the Polish Day organized during the exhibition) and meetings with the President of Kazakhstan, chairman of Majilis and participation in the Polish-Kazakh Economic Forum; Visit of the President of Kazakhstan to Poland and participation in the Polish-Kazakh Economic Forum in August 2016; Polish economic mission at the ministerial level and participation in the International Retail Trade Forum in Kazakhstan in April 2016; Polish-Uzbek political consultations at the level of deputy foreign ministers in Warsaw in September 2015; Poland-Turkmenistan business forum at the ministerial level in Ashgabat in March 2015⁷⁴; Visit of the President of Poland in Kazakhstan in March 2007.^{75, 76}

The area of cooperation between Poland and Kazakhstan on the international forum is the joint non-permanent membership of both countries in the UNSC in 2018-2019. Poland expresses interest in cooperation in the field of broadly solving global problems and maintaining international peace and security.

According to the Strategy of Polish Foreign Policy 2017-2021, Poland wants to be active in the forum of international financial institutions, including the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, promoting the participation of Polish business entities in the implementation of investment projects financed by these institutions, which may apply to the Central Asian region.⁷⁷

Poland has two embassies in Central Asia - the Embassy in Astana, accredited in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and the Embassy in Tashkent, accredited in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The Polish Embassy in Baku in Azerbaijan is also accredited in Turkmenistan. Between 2007 and 2012, Poland had an embassy in Ashgabat. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have their embassies in Warsaw. The embassies of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, based in Berlin, are also accredited in Poland.

The visa requirement for Poles has been abolished in Kazakhstan during tourist and business stays, while a visa is still required when coming to Kazakhstan for work or study, carrying out missionary activities and a driver's job in international transport. Polish citizens are exempt from the obligation to have visas for a period of stay not exceeding 60 days from the date of entry into the territory of Kyrgyzstan. Polish citizens are covered by the visa requirement in Uzbekistan, but the President of Uzbekistan signed on September 12, 2017 the resolution "On the simplification of visa procedures for tourists from Poland". Polish citizens traveling to Tajikistan are covered by the visa requirement on usual terms. In Turkmenistan, Polish citizens are covered by the visa and registration-of-stay obligation. Visas are issued on the basis of an invitation, certified by the Migration Office of Turkmenistan.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ "Turkmen-Polish Business Forum", Turkmenistan Today, March 2015, accessed September 2018, <http://tdh.gov.tm/news/en/articles.aspx&article2078&cat29>

⁷⁵ "Polish President visits Kazakhstan", Radio Poland, September 2018, accessed September 2018, <http://www.the-news.pl/1/10/Artykul/324323.Polish-president-visits-Kazakhstan>

⁷⁶ On the basis of official websites of President of Poland, Government of Poland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and archives of Polish Press Agency.

⁷⁷ "Strategy of Polish Foreign Policy 2017-2021", Doksi, accessed May 14, 2018, <https://doksi.hu/get.php?order=Display-Preview&lid=25678/>

⁷⁸ "Polak za granca", Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych RP, accessed May 14, 2018, <https://polakzagranica.msz.gov.pl/>

Poland has many years of experience in activities for the internal stabilization of Tajikistan. Polish policemen took part in the UN's UNMOT mission in Tajikistan in 1998-2000. In addition, since 2010 in Tajikistan, the Polish Center for International Aid focuses on the implementation of projects in the field of counteracting natural disasters, support for local communities, development of rural areas and support for self-employment of women.⁷⁹ Polish development aid is also implemented in Kyrgyzstan (as part of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs development program).

The NATO “Partnership for Peace” program, covering all five countries of Central Asia, is the main form of contacts between Poland and the countries of Central Asia at the forum of international alliances. Poland does not have any conflicts or international disputes with the Central Asian states, does not conduct trade or military support in cooperation with these countries, does not conduct any joint training activities and does not have any military bases in this region.⁸⁰

3.5. Germany and Central Asia

The German relations with the five Central Asian states have to be seen against the backdrop of Germany's role in negotiating the “The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership” (EU Central Asia Strategy) of 2007⁸¹. The strategy was one of the projects of the German Minister of Foreign Affairs', Frank-Walter Steinmeier, new Eastern Policy (“Neue Ostpolitik”)⁸² pursued under the German Council Presidency. Thus, Germany was able to upload its objectives with regard to Central Asia to the EU level⁸³. Therefore, Germany has no Central Asia strategy of its own, since the national policy towards the region is based on the EU's strategy. As a consequence, there are no specific challenges and threats different from those covered in the chapter on the supranational chapter between the EU and Central Asia that Germany deals with.

Within the government, four ministries are important for Germany's relations with Central Asia: the Federal Foreign Office, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. The Federal Chancellery also has its own unit working among other regions on Central Asia (“Referat 212: Bilaterale Beziehungen zu Mittel-, Ost-, Südosteuropa, Zentralasien, Südkaukasus”). However, the units in the Chancellery are rather tasked with coordinating and monitoring the ministries' activities than with developing on policies.

The fact that there is a “Coordinator for Intersocietal Cooperation with Russia, Central Asia and the Eastern Partnership Countries” within the Foreign Office on the political level underlines the importance of the region for the government. Dirk Wiese, MP, has been appointed following the formation of the new German government. The Foreign Office has a central role in dealing with German relations with the region of Central Asia for three reasons. First, the German embassies are part of the Foreign Office. Germany has embassies in all five Central Asian states. Second, the Foreign Office is the most important actor in the German government with regard to the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. Within the political directorate-general (No. 2) of the Foreign Office there is a “Director for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia” and two units working on Central

⁷⁹ “Tadżykistan”, Polskie Centrum Pomocy Międzynarodowej, accessed May 14, 2018, <https://pcpm.org.pl/bezposrednie-wsparcie-operacji-humanitarnych/tadzykistan>

⁸⁰ “Partnership for Peace programme”, NATO, accessed May 14, 2018, https://www.nato.int/cps/ra/natohq/topics_50349.htm

⁸¹ “The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership,” General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, accessed May 3, 2018, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/30828/en-strategyasia_int.pdf

⁸² Iris Kempe, “A New Ostpolitik? Priorities and Realities of Germany's EU Council Presidency,” *CAP Policy Analysis*, no. 2 (August 2007).

⁸³ Roland Sturm, “Leitbilder deutscher Europapolitik,” in *Handbuch zur deutschen Europapolitik*, ed. Katrin Böttger and Mathias Jopp (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2016), 61-62.

Asia.⁸⁴ The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development allocates the German development aid. In Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are recipients. Kazakhstan is not a recipient, but cooperates with the “Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit” (GIZ), which has offices in Almaty, Bishkek, Dushanbe and Tashkent.⁸⁵

The Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy deals with economic relations and trade and decides about military exports of German companies. It also supports business delegations (“Deutsche Außenhandelskammern”) abroad. There are three delegations in the region, including Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.⁸⁶ Their task is to help German companies in finding clients as well as cooperation partners in the region and to facilitate the negotiation of agreements with them.

An additional actor relevant for German-Central Asian relations are the German political foundations, which are affiliated with political parties. The Social Democratic Friedrich Ebert Foundation has five offices in Astana, Almaty, Bishkek, Dushanbe and Tashkent.⁸⁷ The Christian Democratic Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has an office in Astana and Tashkent.⁸⁸ The Hans Seidel Stiftung is represented in Astana, Bishkek and Dushanbe.⁸⁹ Furthermore, the German federal parliament has a friendship group for Central Asia holding contact with the parliaments in the region.⁹⁰ Finally, the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) also funds projects in Central Asia.

Germany was the first and until the early 2000s the only European country having embassies in all five Central Asian states. Bilateral meetings on government level were also a sign for the comparatively close relations between Germany and the countries in the region. Contacts were considerably intensified and the number of meetings increased during the preparations for the German Council Presidency and the work on the EU Central Asia strategy. In 2006, the then German foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier visited all five Central Asian states. Since then, regular bilateral meetings with Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan have taken place. The chancellor also visited Astana (2010) and the Turkmen President came to Berlin in 2016. Bilateral meetings on the government level are less often organised with Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. However, Merkel was the first German head of government who visited Bishkek in 2016. Since the power transition, the meetings between German government officials and the new Uzbek administration have improved considerably. Meetings on the level of ministers have not taken place since then.

Military exports of German companies need approval by the German government. Within the government, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development is responsible for licensing such sales. The data for the five Central Asian states shown in table 1 are quite clear. Kazakhstan is the main trading partner (number of contracts and volume) followed by Turkmenistan (also in

⁸⁴ “Referat 205: Russland, Weißrussland, Moldau, GUS; EU-Beziehungen zu Osteuropa, südl. Kaukasus, Zentralasien einschl. Östliche Partnerschaft und Schwarzmeerkoperation” and “Referat 207: Südlicher Kaukasus und Zentralasien einschließlich GASP-Themen; Zentralasien-Strategie der EU”.

⁸⁵ “Regionale Zusammenarbeit in Asien,” Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, accessed May 7, 2018, <https://www.giz.de/de/weltweit/asien.html>.

⁸⁶ “Delegation der deutschen Wirtschaft für Zentralasien,” AHK. Delegation der deutschen Wirtschaft für Zentralasien, accessed May 7, 2018, <http://zentralasien.ahk.de/ueber-uns/delegation-der-deutschen-wirtschaft-fuer-zentralasien/>.

⁸⁷ “FES Zentralasien,” Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, accessed May 7, 2018, <http://www.fes-centralasia.org/de/fes/fes-zentralasien.html>.

⁸⁸ “Über uns,” Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. Regionalprogramm Zentralasien, accessed May 7, 2018, <http://www.kas.de/zentralasien/de/about/contact/>.

⁸⁹ “Zentralasien,” Hans Seidel Stiftung, accessed May 7, 2018, <https://www.hss.de/weltweit-aktiv/asien/zentralasien/>.

⁹⁰ “Weltweit vernetzt. Die Parlamentariergruppen,” Deutscher Bundestag, accessed May 7, 2018, <https://www.bundestag.de/europa-internationales/parlamentariergruppen?url=L2V1cm9wYV9pbmRlcm5hdGlvbmFs-ZXMvcGFyYGFtZW50YXJpZXJncnVwcGVuL3BhcmxhbWVudGFyaWVvZ3J1cHBi8xOTYzNjI=&mod=mod442312>.

number of contracts and volume). The third place holds Kyrgyzstan with 16 licensed contracts. However, the trade volume is quite small and amounts to just EUR 383,252 in five years. Exports to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan take place only occasionally.⁹¹

Table 2: Military Exports of German Companies to Central Asia⁹²

	2013	2014	2015	2016	1-4/2017
Kazakhstan	49 licenses	55 licenses	62 licenses	24 licenses	12 licenses
	EUR 7.9 million	EUR 3.3 million	EUR 33.1 million	EUR 1.7 million	EUR 0.4 million
Kyrgyzstan	-	2 licenses	10 licenses	2 licenses	2 licenses
		EUR 0.2 million	EUR 0.1 million	EUR 0.01 million	EUR 0.03 million
Tajikistan	4 licenses	-	-	-	-
	EUR 0.5 million				
Turkmenistan	1 license	6 licenses	8 licenses	9 licenses	-
	EUR 1.4 million	EUR 4.2 million	EUR 10.3 million	EUR 6.3 million	
Uzbekistan	-	-	4 licenses	1 license	-
			EUR 0.09 million	EUR 0.001 million	

Between 2002 and 2015, the German air force rented an airbase in Termez (Uzbekistan) to supply its troops in Northern Afghanistan. According to unverified sources, the annual rent was EUR 16 million, which the Uzbek government increased to EUR 35 million in 2014. It is believed that this was one of the reasons for Germany to close the airbase.⁹³ In addition, the German army invested considerably into the Termez airbase and the Uzbek government also received political concessions in return. E.g. the Uzbek Minister for the Interior received medical treatment in Germany in 2005, even though sanctions following the Adjian events did not allow Uzbek members of the government to travel to Europe.⁹⁴

3.6. France and Central Asia

France's engagement in Central Asia has developed modestly after the independence of the five Central Asian republics and witnessed a revitalisation after France joined the international military actions in Afghanistan in 2001. Kazakhstan turned out to be the most important partner in the region. Bilateral relations with the Central Asian states are shaped versatilely and include various domains as culture, economic cooperation and political dialogue. They have a considerable potential of further amplification.

Central Asia does not have an explicit place in the French government's foreign policy related strategy papers. However, after the recognition of the newly independent Central Asian states and the establishment of diplomatic relations, a number of French – Central Asian bilateral treaties and agreements have been signed in the 1990s, mainly on economic and cultural cooperation. Relations with all five Central Asian states were boosted when France joined the military engagement of NATO and the United States in Afghanistan in 2001. As a consequence, military cooperation agreements on transit issues were signed with Kyrgyzstan (2001), Tajikistan (2001), and Kazakhstan (2009 and

⁹¹ "Publikationen. Rüstungsexportkontrolle," Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie, accessed May 7, 2018, <https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/DE/Publikationen/Aussenwirtschaft/ruestungsexport-zwischenbericht-2017.html>

⁹² "Publikationen. Rüstungsexportkontrolle," Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie, accessed May 7, 2018, <https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/DE/Publikationen/Aussenwirtschaft/ruestungsexport-zwischenbericht-2017.html>

⁹³ "Bundeswehr schließt überraschend Stützpunkt Termez," Bundeswehr-Journal, accessed May 7, 2018, <http://www.bundeswehr-journal.de/2015/bundeswehr-schliesst-ueberraschend-stuetzpunkt-termez/>

⁹⁴ "Suit Filed in Germany Against Uzbek Minister Zokirjon Almatov," Human Rights Watch, accessed May 7, 2018, <http://pantheon.hrw.org/legacy/english/docs/2005/12/15/german12280.htm>

2012). With Uzbekistan, the strengthening of the political dialogue since 2001 has only been temporarily interrupted by a short period of slowing down due to the European sanctions after the Andijan event (2005-2009).⁹⁵

Indisputably, Kazakhstan has come to be France's most important political partner in the region with the highest density of agreements headed by a Strategic Partnership Agreement signed in 2008. It is the only country in the region with which France developed a widespread cooperation since the late 2000s.⁹⁶

French presidential visits to the region took place only to Kazakhstan (Sarkozy 2009, Hollande 2014). Except of Uzbekistan, Central Asian heads of state met with the French President several times in the 2000s both during official state visits and during multilateral meetings.⁹⁷ With Kazakhstan, presidential visits are prepared and evaluated by a French-Kazakh Presidential Commission since 2010.

Meanwhile, France maintains a structured political dialogue with Kazakhstan (since 2011), Kyrgyzstan (since 2014), Tajikistan (since 2016), and Turkmenistan (since 2011) with regular bilateral consultations of the Foreign Affairs Ministries. France is in regular political dialogue with Uzbekistan as well. Additionally, a number of mutual visits, meetings and technical working groups on a ministerial, parliamentary, or administrative level connect French and Central Asian policy makers.

France is not member of any Asian regional organization as Central Asian states are (AIIB, ADB). Nevertheless, informal communication and cooperation take place in the framework of common membership in international organizations such as the UN and its sub-organizations,⁹⁸ funds and programmes, WTO,⁹⁹ and the World Bank.¹⁰⁰ Concerning cooperation within the OECD, France is a member state, whereas the Central Asian countries are addressees of the respective regional projects.

France has an embassy in every Central Asian capital and a General Consulate in Almaty that, until 2008, had hosted the Embassy that moved to the new capital Astana. In 2014, after the withdrawal of the French missions from Afghanistan, the staff of the embassy in Dushanbe was reduced and the consular service was ceased. While the embassies in Astana and Tashkent have a consular service, Kyrgyz, Tajik and Turkmen citizens have to apply to other diplomatic representations in their capital, respectively to the French General Consulate in Almaty. All Central Asian nationals need a Schengen visa to visit France, with the exception of holders of a diplomatic passport from Kazakhstan for whom a mutual release of short-visit visa has been agreed upon in 2009. Reciprocally, all five Central Asian countries have opened embassies in Paris with consular service. French citizens need a visa to travel to Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, whereas, together with a number of other Western countries' citizens, French nationals do not need a visa for short-term visits (max 30 days) to Kazakhstan since 1 January 2017.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ "Relations bilatérales", France Diplomatie, accessed March 27, 2018, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/dossiers-pays/ouzbekistan/la-france-et-l-ouzbekistan/>

⁹⁶ Agreements were signed in the fields of tourism (2008), space technology and exploration of outer space (2009), military cooperation (2009), visa facilitations (2009), combat of corruption and crime (2009), civil protection, prevention and elimination of emergency situations (2009), economic development and innovation (2009), aeronautics and in civil nuclear energy use (2011), university cooperation, research and vocational training (2015), the mutual recognition of diplomas, university degrees and study periods (2015), and public governance (2015).

⁹⁷ Visits in France took place by Tajik President E. Rahmon in 2002 and in 2005, by the President of Kazakhstan N. Nazarbaev in 2008 and in 2012, by Turkmen President Berdimuhamedow in 2010, and by Kyrgyz President A. Atambaev in 2015.

⁹⁸ France was admitted to the UN in October 1945, the five Central Asian republics in March 1992.

⁹⁹ With France being a founding member since 1995, the Central Asian republics joined later after their independence (Kyrgyzstan in 1998, Tajikistan in 2013, and Kazakhstan in 2015), while Uzbekistan has only an observer status and Turkmenistan is not affiliated to WTO at all.

¹⁰⁰ France is member since December 1945, the Central Asian republics joined in 1992 and 1993.

¹⁰¹ According to Decree № 838 of the Kazakh Government as of 23 December 2016 and its modifications by Decree № 148 of the Kazakh Government of 21 January 2012.

The core common security threat of France and the Central Asian republics is the insecure situation in Afghanistan, facilitating international terrorism, drug and human trafficking, and other serious security threats.

France engaged in the Afghanistan war since the end of 2001 both in the ISAF operation under NATO command, and in the U.S. commanded operation Enduring Freedom. French combating forces were withdrawn from 2012 until 2014. The French military mission consisted of the securization of its zones of responsibility and the empowerment of the Afghan army by training. For the purpose of easing those operations logistically, France signed agreements with the Kyrgyz and Tajik governments in 2001 that allowed the deployment of aircraft at the Dushanbe and the Bishkek airports. In October 2009, France signed an agreement with the Kazakh government on the railway and air transit of military equipment and personnel through the Kazakh territory. An additional protocol of 2012 gave France at disposal the aerodrome of Shymkent in South Kazakhstan that has mainly been used for the withdrawal from the operations.¹⁰²

France and the Central Asian states are common OSCE members.¹⁰³ Furthermore, all five Central Asian countries joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (later renamed the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council) in 1992 and, later on, NATO's "Partnership for Peace" Program¹⁰⁴ and therefore participate in the common alliance that France belongs to as a founding member.¹⁰⁵

France declared itself "vigilant with regard to totalitarian deviations and the deteriorating human rights situation", in particular in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, these issues have not led to serious bilateral disputes.

Central Asia is not an important recipient of French military exports. Accumulated sales from 2010 until the first half of 2014 to Central Asia represented only 1.5 % of France's military technology and equipment export authorizations (AEMG) granted.¹⁰⁷ Main recipients were Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan that bought French transport and reconnaissance equipment. France has signed an agreement on military cooperation with Kazakhstan in 2009 that entered into force in 2011. Cooperation in the framework of this agreement includes, among others, military reform and training, joint military exercises, armament, and exchange of information and experience.¹⁰⁸ For the implementation of the agreed cooperation, a mixed French-Kazakh Commission on military cooperation has been installed. Apart from France's cooperation with the Central Asian countries related to Afghanistan, France did not have any active military engagement within the Central Asian countries. However, France participated in demining in Tajik regions affected by the civil war.

4. Conclusions

This paper demonstrates the multi-faceted relations between the EU, its member states and the five Central Asian countries. In this regard, several points should be highlighted: First, it has to be reiterated that Central Asian countries, though geographically tied to one region, are as similar as different – so are their relations with the EU and its member states. Second, the relations between the EU

¹⁰² "Relation franco-kazakhstanaise- Présentation," La France au Kazakhstan - Ambassade de France à Astana, accessed March 27, 2018, <https://kz.ambafrance.org/Relation-franco-kazakhstanaise-Presentation>

¹⁰³ Under the roof of the OSCE programmes in Tajikistan, France signed an agreement on cooperation in the field of domestic security.

¹⁰⁴ Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan joined the PfP Program in 1994, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in 1995, and Tajikistan in 2002, see: "Partners," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, accessed March 31, 2018, <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/51288.htm>

¹⁰⁵ France withdrew from the integrated military command between 1966 and 2009, but since then is full member again.

¹⁰⁶ "Central Asia," France Diplomatie, accessed May 11, 2018, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/central-asia/>

¹⁰⁷ Own calculations based on data from the Ministry of Defence, 2016. It is to be considered that export authorizations value is usually higher than the exports actually accomplished. "France and the Control of the Arms Trade 2016," accessed March 31, 2018, <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/content/download/453467/7156832/2016-FranceControlArmTrade.pdf>

¹⁰⁸ "Décret n° 2011-1143 du 20 septembre 2011 portant publication de l'accord de coopération en matière militaire entre le Gouvernement de la République française et le Gouvernement de la République du Kazakhstan, signé à Astana le 6 octobre 2009," Legifrance, accessed April 3, 2018, <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000024583275&categorieLien=id>

and Central Asian countries have focused on a wide array of aspects and the EU's approach has developed from a more monolithic to a more nuanced one vis-à-vis each of the five countries and focusing more on spheres of mutual interest instead of agenda setting. Third, interests of the EU member states towards Central Asia differ significantly, so do the practical results of their engagement – in some cases, the economic interests take the central role, while in others economic interests are secondary.

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