

MILITARY STRATEGY OF RUSSIA: WHY IS RUSSIA REASSERTING ITS MILITARY PRESENCE IN CENTRAL ASIA?

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Abstract:

This capstone project seeks to study Russia's military presence in Central Asia, focusing on examining recent military strategy, updated policies, and reforms of Russia's foreign policy toward the military field in Central Asia. The research is basic and primarily approached through analyzing available secondary data using a mixed qualitative-quantitative approach. To answer the research question, the study examines the antagonistic factors that have influenced the revitalization of Russia's military aims in the region within the defense departments of Russia. To analytically study conceptual frameworks, the research deeply examines the historical background of Russia's military vision toward Central Asia since the collapse of the Soviet Union in the military sector and how it has changed over the years, as well as the exact factors that influenced recent decisions. In this project, I analyze particular documents, policies, and statistics in the Russian language and integrate them into the primary data.

Key words: Military strategy, regional security, military alliance, modernization, security dynamics.

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Sincerely,

Diana Talantbekova

List of abbreviations:

CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
NATO	The North Atlantic Treaty Organization
C5+1	Diplomatic Summit

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Introduction

i.1 Introduction

As many have already claimed that Russia's military revenues especially tripled in 2023, and it intends to spend 160 billion dollars on the military, which is 40% of the total state budget (Grozovski 2023). If in 2019-2020, the state allocated only 14-16% of the budget, this year these figures have more than doubled, which indicates Russia's active involvement and focus on the military sector (Grozovski 2023). It is also claimed that post-Soviet Russia has not allocated so much of its financial budget to military spending in its entire history. It is also worth noting that Russia is mostly increasing its military army and strengthening its infrastructure not only on its own territory but also in neighboring countries, including some Central Asian states. But even before the war in Ukraine, Russia had secretly started to make the post-Soviet Central Asian countries become dependent on Russia as a result, which gives Russia more support and confidence in defense. On February 24, 2022, when Russia invaded Ukraine in a series of violations of international laws and treaties, none of the countries in the region left alliances like the CIS and CSTO (Poita 2020, 3). The military and strategic dependence of these countries is proven by the open speeches of the heads of state, including the President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, who confirmed the continuation of a close strategic partnership for several more years with Russia Poita 2020, 4). In addition, all planned summits within the CSTO were held in 2022 and continue to be held at their old pace. Three countries already host Russian military bases and one ailing Federal Security Service (FSB) in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, and the planned construction of a military facility, creating a close link between Central Asian security forces and Russia (Poita 2020).

It is very important to note that even before the war in Ukraine began, in June 2020, the Kyrgyz Parliament signed a treaty that allowed the Russian Federation to deploy military infrastructure, more specifically Orlan 10 unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) at a local overseas military base in Kant, Kyrgyzstan (Szalkai 2020). Moreover, Russia has ordered the strengthening and modernization of the air and missile defense system in Kant (Kyrgyzstan) by sending upgraded Mi-8MTV5-1 helicopters (Szalkai 2020). Regarding Tajikistan, the military infrastructure is already being actively and gradually modernized, especially for the Russian troops which have been gradually conducted. Russia has not always viewed Russia as one of its strategic targets in military terms; this interest only increased in 2010-2013, when Russia began to see the region's “privilege”. For this reason, Russia has become actively involved in the military improvements of these states, ranging from military exercises, infrastructure modernization, and the purchase of military weapons. But why Russian interest in Central Asia began to grow and new military initiatives emerged between countries will be analytically explored from different angles in this capstone project.

i.2 Aim, Research Question & Hypothesis

This study, based on an analytical literature review, aims to examine the importance and relevance of Russia's military presence in Central Asia and to identify the factors that have led to an increase in Russia's military-strategic interest in the region. The research question of the capstone project is **why is Russia reasserting its military presence in the Central Asian region?** Russia has become active in Central Asia from different aspects, including military activities, cooperating with all states, opening new military bases and signing new military treaties that are mentioned in the data collection part. Regarding the reasons for the interest in Central Asia, many

local and Western scholars say that active strategic initiatives come from the increasing power of China, the U.S., the start of the war in Ukraine and natural resources interests in Central Asia. But this capstone project **hypothesizes that Russia is actively reasserting its military presence in Central Asia, specifically in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan states, due to two core factors, primarily driven by escalating external threats as extremist non-state actors and the imperative to modernize its military doctrine and objectives in changing its security dynamics.** Therefore, Russia aims to develop military power not only on its own territory, but also in partnering states through military alliances such as the CSTO and bilateral military initiatives. But whether the states will be able to respond positively to Russia against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine, most likely not and the old commonwealth and cooperation will not be the same!

Chapter One - Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

1.1. Literature Review

Against the backdrop of political crises and regional conflicts, a country's national security in vulnerable areas should be the government's priority to avoid unforeseen circumstances. Consequently, the defense and military components of a country play an important role in diplomatically solving a problem or retaliating against the enemy. The military component of the Russian Federation with each generation has evolved in different degrees encompassing military strategy, military arsenal and military objectives to strengthen the defense because of its historical and geopolitical components. As once Jeff Hawn emphasized, “Three decades ago, the Cold War ended with the red flag being lowered over the Kremlin. The USSR was dead, and Russia was reborn, but history did not end,” in fact, history did not end there and on the contrary was reborn in a new face (Shabanian, Shamiev 2024). Although the Cold War has ended, Russia has remained as a steadfast challenger of the United States. Although the Soviet Union collapsed as early as 1991, the strategic dominance of the Russian Federation in post-Soviet countries, including the neighboring countries of Central Asia, remains unchanged. Firstly, after the collapse of the Union, Russia continued to forge military-strategic ties with post-Soviet countries through the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), an intergovernmental military alliance that was signed in 1992 and consists of six post-Soviet countries, including Kazakhstan, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan (Kommersant 2017). Through this military alliance that Russia has built its military bases in three Central Asian countries. In addition to the bases, Russia has military

facilities in Central Asia that include the 338th Communications Node and Radio Seismic Laboratory 17 in Kyrgyzstan, a unit of the 201st Military Base and the 1109th Separate Optical and Electronic Node Nurek in Tajikistan and the Balkhash 9 Radio Technical Node, the Baikonur Cosmodrome, the Sary Shagan Proving Ground and the 954th Anti-Submarine Weapons Test Base (Kommersant 2017). These important military facilities in Tajikistan were transformed after the Great Patriotic War and used during the Afghan War (1979-1989) (Kommersant 2017). After the Tajik army failed to fully control the military facility, after which an agreement was signed between Dushanbe and Moscow that until the end of the civil war in Tajikistan until 1997, the Russian military participated in battles against extremist groups. The 201st VB was officially established in 2004, and in 2012 its lease was extended until 2042 (Kommersant 2017). Formally, Moscow does not pay Dushanbe for the lease of the base, but in fact, in exchange for its presence in the country, Moscow participates in the modernization of the Tajik army. In addition, Tajikistan hosts the Nurek optical and electronic node, which is part of the space control system and is a strategically important facility for the defense capabilities of Central Asia and Russia (Kommersant 2017). In addition, back in 1941, the city of Kant (Kyrgyzstan) hosted the Odessa military aviation school of pilots, on which Russian air bases were built, the term of the contract goes up to 2060. In addition to the main base in Kant, Russia also uses land for which Russia pays 4.5\$ mln annually to the authorities. Unlike the two countries mentioned above, Russia cooperates closely with Kazakhstan and pays more than \$140 million annually for the use of the Baikonur Cosmodrome and the Sary Shagan test site on Lake Balkhash, where flight tests of missile systems, air defense systems, aircraft weapons and other military equipment are conducted (Kommersant 2017). These military facilities, according to the agreement, are to serve the Russian authorities until 2050-2060.

But according to sources, Russia's close military relations with Central Asian countries have been subjected to a great deal of discussion, which has created a new player in the region. In addition to the US military bases established in Central Asia during the US military mission in Afghanistan, there is also a big conversation around China's influence in defense sectors in the region. During the last decade, under the Belt Road Initiative (BRI), China has made a number of investments also in the military sector through state-run companies on resources, showing its importance in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAO) of Tajikistan (Hoagland, Repass, Wolkov 2021, 6–10). In addition, China has made a significant contribution to the defense sector in Kyrgyzstan by donating \$16mln (Hoagland, Repass, Wolkov 2021, 6–10). Since Tajikistan is part of both CSTO and SCO, has good diplomatic treaties with both China and Russia, but it is important to remember that in recent years Chinese state-run companies have invested heavily in natural resources that are important in developing military infrastructure. Some scholars also argue that Russia has significantly increased its focus on the military sector in the region after a number of military initiatives such as building air bases and transit centers that served as bases for U.S. logistics and equipment providers during its military mission in Afghanistan.

[Figure 1](#) - Russian military installations in Central Asia

Российские военные объекты в Центральной Азии



(Translation: Ground Forces Bases, CCS bases, Optoelectronic node, Seismic laboratories, Anti-submarine warfare test base, Spaceport, firing range and Communications nodes.)

Figure 2 - Literature Review Table

Growing Interest of the United States in the region	Matthew Stein, 2023 Munduzbek Kalykov, 2023
Active Presence of China in Central Asia	Richard Hoagland & Michael Repass, Nicole Wolkov 2021
Regional Security Protection	Fiona Hill, Pavel Baev 2017.
Strategic Historical Ties between Russia and Central Asia	Yurii, Poita, 2020. Szalkai, Kinga, 2020

Other scholars, including Matthew Stein and Dimitri Simes Jr., conversely believe that the main reason for Russia's involvement in Central Asian militaries through strategic-military alliances is to prevent the U.S. from building strong military relations with Central Asian countries as this could lead to geopolitical crises for Russia (Stein 2023). During the 20 years of U.S. military operations that were launched by former U.S. President Barack Obama, Russia somehow

“allowed” the launch of U.S. bases in Central Asia, since large U.S. bases were established in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in 2001 (Stein 20223). But over time, Russia influenced these bases to be removed from the territories by agreement of the Central Asian heads of state.

Unlike others, the third camp of political scientists, including Dimitri Simes, Fiona Hill and Pavel Baev, argue that the territory was originally significant for maintaining Russia's security and stabilization, as it was important for the country to control regional security through its military policies and agreements (Hill 2002). Central Asia is considered as one of the important geopolitical centers, as through its territory crosses the borders of Southeast Asia, including Afghanistan and Pakistan, where dangerous terrorist groups have resurged, also to China, one of the economic giants and finally to the Middle East, which is also vital for the strategic goals of Russia.

Based on a literature review focused on revising scholarly articles on Russia's military presence in Central Asia, the study finds that the existing literature has sufficiently covered the reasons for military involvement, such as the rise of China, historical and geopolitical components, and the strengthening of regional security. However, these factors have followed Russia not recently, but since the early 2000s and even before, for this reason it is vital to identify the root cause of Russia's military engagement in Central Asia. The literature review lacks information on other important causes of involvement that have occurred against the backdrop of current wars and interstate border conflicts.

1.2 Conceptual Framework

In this section, research is focused on explaining the terms of military strategy and geopolitical dynamics that are used in the data collection and discussion parts of this project. In the first paragraph, the research gives a clear explanation of Russia and Central Asia in military domains. Furthermore, in the literature review part, research focuses on four main parts or camps of scholars

who have different arguments regarding the main research question. According to RAND, **Military Doctrine** is the “fundamental set of principles that guides military forces as they pursue national security objectives” based on which state identifies its main objectives and foreign policies toward its allies (Decker, Shostak, 2022). Based on the update of military doctrine, the state changes its direction in national security domains. In addition to the military doctrine concept, I also analyze the reasons for Russia's military presence in Central Asia through the prism of the “**National security**” concept. According to the United Nations, national security is the ability of any state to protect and defend its citizens from any threats (Osisanya 2024).

Chapter Two - Research Methods, Methodology, Main Findings and Analysis

2.1 Research Methods and Methodology

To research the central question “Why is Russia reasserting its military presence in Central Asia?”, the capstone project collected only secondary data. The data is collected through a mixed qualitative-quantitative approach focusing on a case-study strategy of research regarding Russia's military strategy and accommodating Central Asian countries. The capstone is based on a case study research design that involves a collection of data about Russia's military/strategic objectives on post-soviet Central Asian states. In addition, the research of this capstone involves data on military policies and strategies of Russia and NATO.

Internship integration: Throughout the literature review and data collection parts, I researched scholarly articles, policies and reports of Russia, Central Asian and Western institutes in both Russian and English languages. That is, one of the unique cases in data collection is the research of first source documents in Russian of Russian reports and experts from Central Asia. In addition, I integrated the experience and knowledge I gained from my internship at the Foreign Policy Association, especially through the publications Great Decisions on Russia and Military, which helped to be a starting point for further research. Moreover, through discussion panels and book talks on Russia's military actions and the war in Ukraine. One of which is The evolution of warfare from 1945 to Ukraine book with gen. David H. Petraeus where I got an expert opinion on military crises and strategies not only of the USA but also of Russia in the present time against the background of regional conflicts.

Through the literature review, this methodology helped a researcher to build a conceptual framework, including a detailed explanation of military strategy, geopolitics and regional security. Based on the qualitative approach, a researcher analyzed both state's government publications in military affairs and western and Central Asian scholars' articles on military warfare. Selected secondary data includes Independent French Institute of International Relations Report (2015) in Russian language on a topic of Russian Politics in Central Asia, Central Asian Analytical Network (CAAN) (2020) on a topic of Strategy of Russia in Central Asia , Carnegie Endowment on International Peace on a topic of China's and Russia's presence in Central Asia (2024), and NATO Agreement Report on a topic of Relations between NATO and Central Asia (2014), scholarly research of the Institute of Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan about Military and Political Strategy in Central Asia (2005). Within the quantitative part, time-series data and cross-sectional data collection methods are used. Time-series data enabled a

researcher to examine the military spending/defense budget of the Russian Federation emphasizing the Central Asian region between particular periods. Moreover, the cross-sectional data mostly focused on the analysis of military expenditures under the military-strategic agreements between Russia and Central Asia.

The collected data is analyzed based on textual and thematic analysis methods, where main concepts and subthemes are determined and explored deeply. The textual data analysis method helped me to determine particular themes and concepts about military affairs between states in the defense sector within the collected qualitative data. Textual Data Analysis Method produced the main contents based on secondary data. It includes subtopics such as regional security, CSTO agreements, NATO military plans towards Central Asian states, and modernization and transformation/expansion of military objectives. Within a textual analysis method, the research examines the conceptual part of a capstone project.

2.2 Main Findings and Analysis

Before

In fact, Central Asia has never been Russia's priority in the post-Soviet period, despite the related historical and political ties after the collapse of the union. Naturally, Russia has not cut its ties with the states, but their strategic relationship has never been strong and lacked purpose. In the geopolitical landscape of the 1990s, Boris Yeltsin's approach towards Central Asia was characterized by a conspicuous disregard, not merely confined to the military dimension, but extending to encompass the economic and political realms, driven by a perception that these territories did not offer substantial strategic advantages worthy of concerted attention (Bobo Lo

2015, 7-8). Independent Central Asian states faced significant challenges including high inflation, economic crises in the early 2000s, and ongoing instability, as a result of which these countries required external assistance. Meanwhile, Russia, led by Vladimir Putin, focused more on building relationships with other post-Soviet nations like Belarus, Ukraine, and Armenia, which it viewed as sharing cultural and historical ties, while Central Asia received comparatively less attention from Russia (Bobo Lo 2015, 4).

Although the region has not been in Russia's interest since the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has become a special target of geographically distant countries that have a geopolitical interest in Central Asia. Strange as it may sound, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO strengthened its cooperation with post-Soviet countries, including the four Central Asian states. The short-lived strengthening began in the region in 1994, when Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan became members of the North Atlantic Alliance Partnership for Peace (PfP), which aims to develop external relations with strategically important regions whose security and stability are closely linked to overall Euro-Atlantic security (Shaimergenov 2005, 7). This cooperation with each of the countries was spread in different scenarios, among which Kazakhstan took the most active part in 2006 by developing an Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with NATO, eventually completing three IPAPs in a row (Shaimergenov 2005, 7). As part of the cooperation, Kazakhstan provided partial support to Poland in missions to clear dangerous mines in Iraq. In addition, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan participated in the cooperation, thus showing neutral interest in IPAP initiatives within several years. Cooperation with Uzbekistan developed significantly in the early years of the partnership. However, progress slowed considerably after disagreements over the events in Andijan in May 2005 ((Shaimergenov 2005). NATO has also tried to introduce defense and security reforms, in which the PfP Planning and Analysis Process (PARP), which aims

to help identify, develop and assess capabilities that can be allocated to NATO-led peacekeeping operations, has become an essential tool(Shaimergenov 2005).

As already mentioned, the region was in the interest of geopolitical players because of its location, but also because of the presence of huge mineral reserves, including gas, oil and gold, which are in the interest of some parties. In addition to this, at the dawn of the 2000s there was a huge terrorist attack in September in the US which itself prioritized US foreign policy and changed the course of political events in the international arena. For these obvious reasons, the White House paid special attention to the military component of Central Asia with the establishment of military bases in four of these countries.

Three countries - Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan - provided their military bases for the implementation of the military operation “Operation Enduring Freedom” (OEF) by the U.S. government as part of a large-scale Global War on Terrorism. It is worth noting that Washington's Gansi military base in Kyrgyzstan, located at Manas Airport, played a significant functional and operational role in the White House military operation in Afghanistan (Shaimergenov 2005, 13). This military base had military transport aviation, military equipment and necessary machinery and more than 1000 servicemen of the U.S. government. In total, this military base Gansi cost the White House 14 million dollars bringing Bishkek (the capital of Kyrgyzstan) 45 million dollars every year (NATO International 2014). Consequently, during these periods, geographically distant regions were interested in military presence in the Central Asian region, while the interest of the Russian Federation faded and was not motivated at all.

New Start

According to international analysts and even Russian Defense Ministers themselves, in recent years Russia has made major changes to its armed forces measured between 2023 and 2026. The Defense Minister of the Russian Federation claims that in addition to administrative military reforms, this ministry is carefully working on strengthening military infrastructure, more specifically offense and combat capabilities in aerospace, naval and missile forces (Reuters 2023). The well-known Sergei Shoigu, defense minister of the Russian Federation, also emphasized the expansion of the Armed Forces saying that “Only by strengthening the key structural components of the Armed Forces is it possible to guarantee the military security of the state and protect new entities and critical facilities of the Russian Federation” (Reuters 2023). Already according to the numerical results it was posted that military personnel has increased reaching 1.5 million, which is currently a good indicator for Russia's military operation on the territory of Ukraine (Reuters 2023). Central Asian experts also agreed that Russia has been changing its military approaches toward Central Asian countries over the past 10 years. Russia has invested significantly financially over the past ten years and has maintained bilateral relations through established regional institutions such as the CSTO. Consequently, Russia has not missed opportunities to strengthen bilateral cooperation, for example, in 2016 Shavkat Mirziyoyev was elected president of Uzbekistan changing his foreign policy and Russia has strengthened its strategic ties with this country (CAA Network 2020).

Russia has intensified its approach to cooperation with the five Central Asian countries, while significantly changing its approach and strategic activities. Whereas previously Russia considered only bilateral relations with each of the Central Asian countries, this strategic approach is now directed toward the Central Asian whole. Some believe that this strategic approach was copied

from the U.S. in the form of C5+1 in the person of Moscow, and the first negotiations “On strategic directions of cooperation” with six ministers of all Central Asian republics was held in the video format of 2020 (Kaktus Media 2020). Central Asian countries use this kind of approach in relation to the U.S., Japan and some European countries. But the most important distinguishing factor of this approach is the absence of the notion of democracy, as the official document does not include such words as “democracy”, “human rights” and “freedom” (Kaktus Media 2020).

. Central Asia is said to be the axis of the Eurasian continent through which the Great Silk Road passed and through which the One Belt One Road passes. Halford Mackinder once emphasized that “he who governs Central Asia governs Heartland.” Of course the countries of Central Asia are sovereign states that gained independence in 1991, so no country can politicize it (IFRI 2015). But no one can cancel the fact that most of the countries in the region are militarily weak and therefore are involved in military alliances in which Russia plays a huge role. In addition, the heads of state began to believe more in the power of the CSTO and even began to get involved in military projects, as less than two months before February 24, 2022, the Russian army under the flags of the CSTO helped the president of Kazakhstan Kasym-Jomart Tokayev to stay in power by keeping the stabilization in the capital. And it proved, as many believe, that it is the Russian Federation, not China, that is the external guarantor of security in the region (Umarov 2024).

Discussion

External threats

This piece focuses mostly on one of the possible reasons for Russia to reestablish its military presence in Central Asia and to let all external geopolitical powers know that Russia has weight in

the region. Many people already know that every year the different branches of Islamist religious groups among the muslim majority in the region are increasing, which also increases the number of extremist non-state actors, which is a red flag for Russia's security. If earlier American troops were stationed in some Central Asian countries and the military operation was still active in Afghanistan, then after the withdrawal of American troops and the Taliban's rise to power even more led to dangerous security calls for Russia. In addition, Central Asia is one of the locations where dozens of large terrorist groups are based and overlap. According to the International Terrorism report, in Central Asia are based such groups as East Turkistan Islamic Party (ETIP), Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Hizb ut-Tahrir, Tochikistoni Ozod and many others, which directly affect security and stabilization in the region and in the neighboring country, Russia (GW Libraries 2024). Moreover, the number of terrorist attacks increases every year, the latest high profile one was in Moscow at Crocus City Hall, which was organized by citizens of Tajikistan and the Islamic State of Khorasan (ISKK), a terrorist group based in Afghanistan, which in 2021 blew up the Abbey Gate at Kabul airport (Brown 2024). Russian scholars have themselves investigated cases of terrorist attacks involving Central Asians, one of which was the 2018 assassination of Americans on the Tajikistan border by terrorist group leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who was closely linked to ISIS (Kasenova 2020). Also in 2017, Central Asians were implicated in a series of terrorist attacks in Stockholm, New York and St. Petersburg, which shows an increasing number of external threats in the region that could significantly affect Russia (Kasenova 2020). Therefore, Vladimir Putin is trying to keep control of security in the region as there could be significant attacks due to Russia's strong focus on the war in Ukraine. For these reasons, this study argues that one of the major reasons for reasserting attempts in military domains of Russia in the Central Asian region is possible security threats from external enemies.

Security Objectives Changing – military doctrine

The Ministry of Defense and the government of the Russian Federation have not often published their military and security budgets for public scrutiny, but in recent years such reporting has become central because of current conflicts. But Western media and political scientists continue to actively research Russia's defense industry and arms control shift, which show that Russia's national security concepts have been changing over time and in recent years have largely shifted in a different direction. According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) experts' podcast deeply explores the most recent state of Russia's defense industry (Snegovaya, Bergmann 2024). Due to the active development of its military industry, the MOD has been deeply working on boosting domestic arms production, and modernizing its military infrastructure in Central Asian based military bases through buying modernized helicopters and missiles from Turkey. As it was analyzed earlier, this year Russia has allocated the largest defense industry budget in a long time and has also actively started working on weapons production. boosting domestic arms production. According to Rostec, in 2023 it increased overall production of tanks 7 times, light armored vehicles 4.5 times, and artillery and multiple launch rocket systems 2.5 (Snegovaya, Bergmann 2024) . In addition to arms production, Russia's military strategy during the war is to use its army, i.e. living defenders, and the president has announced the mobilization of citizens, as well as migrant workers from Central Asia who were on Russian territory. This fact describes the fact that Russia actually needs troops to supplement its army, for this reason it began to be active with the Central Asian states, conducting regular military exercises within the CSTO alliance. Defense Minister of Russia, Sergei Shoigu announced that Russia had a "huge mobilization reserve" and planned to mobilize several hundred more men who were fit to serve

their homeland (Cancian 2022). In the analytical report, it was clearly stated that "Russia has moved away from tailored high-end military components toward dual-use or even purely civilian technologies," which also proves that Russia benefits from having troops to use artillery (Snegovaya, Bergmann 2024).

The shift in Russia's security dynamics is also characterized by President Vladimir Putin's official decree of January 10, which outlines Russia's national interests under conditions of "dynamic transformation of the system of international relations." Consequently, the newly introduced concept was an edited version of the draft approved by the Russian Security Council on October 5 of that year and replaced the concept adopted in December 1997, which resulted in a new military doctrine (Military Doctrine RF 2023). The new military doctrine specifies that with the growth of external and internal military threats, some terms should be tightened. One of which was updated military policy as the activity of the state to organize and implement defense and ensure the security of the Russian Federation, as well as the interests of its allies. In other words, the Russian Federation has also directed its focus on cultivating its military presence in neighboring allied countries and including Central Asian states. It is also clearly stated, "Russia's national interests in the military sphere lie in protection of its independence, sovereignty and state and territorial integrity, in the prevention of military aggression against Russia and its allies." (Spencer 2023). Regarding these military ties of Russia and Central Asia, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has come under increased scrutiny, not because NATO troops are involved in the conflict, but because of its role in relations between Russia and its neighbors (FPA 2024). For these reasons, the second main reason for renewing its military presence in Central Asia is to update its military doctrine and security dynamics that have touched Russia's allies, including Central Asian states.

Conclusion:

The Russian government has significantly increased its defense budget for 2023, focusing on strengthening bilateral and alliance cooperation, including the CSTO, which includes almost all Central Asian states. In addition, the Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation, Sergei Shoigu, clearly mentioned that Russia is paying significant attention to growing the armed forces, upgrading military infrastructure and developing new treaties with its allies. This active military engagement on the part of Russia has not always been the case, as after the collapse of the Soviet Union and even in the heyday of the 2000s, despite its strategic and historical allied ties, the country was not as much interested in military engagement in Central Asia. Consequently, some scholars argue that Russia's motives are economic interests, the recent rise in power of the United States and China, and also rival geopolitical goals. But this research found that in fact Russia's active efforts to resume its military strategy in the Central Asian states are driven by two main driving forces that were motivated not only against the backdrop of the Ukrainian war, but also before that. Hence, one is the confrontation with external threats against the backdrop of growing cases of terrorist attacks that directly affect Russia's national security. In addition, the second is the renewal of security initiatives, including the updated Russian military doctrine which also touched upon Central Asia. The above reasons and including opposing views of political scientists are discussed and analyzed in the data collection and analysis parts.

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