



## Summary of Conference Series

# Prospects for Collaboration between Russia and the West in Responding to the New Security Challenges since September 11

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A synopsis of a series of conferences and workshops held in London, Moscow and Tashkent between May 2004 and late 2005, organised jointly by the Royal Institute for International Affairs (London) and the International Centre for Strategic and Political Studies (Moscow), and supported by the Carnegie Corporation (New York).

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## Conference Summary

A series of conferences and workshops held in London, Moscow and Tashkent between May 2004 and late 2005, organised jointly by Chatham House (London) and the International Centre for Strategic and Political Studies (Moscow), and supported by the Carnegie Corporation (New York), brought together a wide range of international political, military, security and academic experts. Their purpose was to stimulate an exchange of ideas, promote a policy-oriented and lay the foundation for future work aimed at promoting greater coordination and practical cooperation between Russia and the United States and other Western states, as well as Central Asian partners in the struggle against terrorism and new threats emerging in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

The terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001 presaged the deployment of western military forces in support of Operation Enduring Freedom into Central Asia. Western troops gained access to military facilities on the territory of the former Soviet Union and for a time appeared to signal a new strategic understanding emerging between Moscow and Washington in seeking to deal adequately with global terrorism. That atmosphere of hope has since given way to a more complex appreciation of the new security environment, often denoted as the 'post-9/11 security environment.'

Participants explored the broader context of the military and non-military dimensions of transnational terrorism, as well as assessing the relative capacities and contributions of the Central Asian states and US, NATO and Russia for the tasks involved and seeking to develop consensus about optimal and positive-sum approaches to contain and counter terrorism in the region. A particularly crucial focus of the participants in these conferences and workshops was the potential contribution of Russia-Western cooperation in this specific field and an assessment of the strategic partnership in this and related areas such as conflict prevention/resolution and stabilisation. New paradigms for US-Russia bilateral cooperation or co-management in the region, as well as an appraisal of NATO frameworks, alongside other structures were also discussed. The potential to develop synergy between Western and Russian efforts to promote greater security and stability in Central Asia and Afghanistan formed an integral part of the dialogue.

What emerged quite clearly from these meetings was the common conviction that the struggle against terrorism is in its early stages, and its strategies are evolutionary, as various countries and multilateral security bodies attempt to

respond to and cope with the challenges presented by international terrorism. Equally, without genuine Russia-Western cooperation in the field of counter-terrorism, there are no real grounds for optimism. The findings presented here represent only a summary of the key thoughts, directions and tentative ideas on cooperation building schemes, which require further discussion and refinement.

These discussions sought to promote dialogue on the following:

- The phenomena that give rise to the various threats in the region, making distinctions and connections between transnational terrorism, insurgency, drug trafficking and other challenges facing governments within Central Asia.
- Western, Russian and Central Asian military, security and other capabilities (and their deficiencies) in meeting new threats.
- The contributions made by various regional and subregional structures and of new bilateral security assistance agreements to counter terrorist efforts.
- The potential for NATO-Russia cooperation through the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) and options for developing US-Russia bilateral cooperation to meet new security challenges.

## Defining Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

Although contemporary terrorism is elusive in its nature, there was widespread agreement concerning its defining features. Distinct from partisan warfare that targets the military and police structures, terrorism is focussed on the civilian population. Equally, terrorism is not so much a concrete enemy as a tactic used by criminals to achieve particular ends. Consequently the familiar phrase 'war on terror' is a misnomer. It could more helpfully be described as a *lutte* or struggle, which reflects the reality that counter-terrorism is not primarily a military campaign, but a civilian led broad based counter-insurgency directed against criminals.

Islam as such is clearly not the enemy in the current struggle against terrorism, and efforts have been made since the commencement of Operation Enduring Freedom to make clear the distinction between the religion and the complex nexus that exists linking Islamic extremism with international

terrorism. Al-Qaeda as an organisation has itself undergone significant evolution, and now exists in disparate Al-Qaeda like groups. Indeed it may be more accurate to describe it as a movement or ideal that serves to attract and radicalise disaffected members of the Islamic community. They have proven adept at turning the instruments of the modern world to their own ends as well as infiltrating failed states and utilising these as bases for Jihad. At the same time they have successfully forged links with distant theatres.

This is reflected in the multifaceted nature of the threat posed by international terrorism. For some, the most critical danger is the possibility that Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) could fall into the hands of terrorist groups prepared to use them or pass them to third parties. Others stress the close interdependence between the international narcotics trade and terrorism. In Central Asia, drug trafficking is both a primary security threat and the main source for funding terrorist groups.

There has been little consensus on the structural determinants of terrorism, and its growth in recent years. Some have argued that poverty, population growth, technological and educational backwardness have been instrumental in fostering the Islamic extremism that underpins much of today's terrorism. Others, however, consider the influence of such factors to be exaggerated. In noting that Islamic extremism recruits from a very wide social spectrum and flourishes in rich as well as poor countries, they have called for a more nuanced understanding which recognises the vital role played political, psychological and civilizational factors.

Critics of the structuralist approach emphasize instead the role played by ideas, notably the concept of a faith-based revolt against western modernity. The extent of extremist and terrorist opposition to the west remains the subject of debate. Some argue that terrorists are not open to negotiation and have adopted the moral and political absolutism of jihad. Others challenge the view that Islamic extremism and terrorism are motivated principally by the unrealisable goal of destroying western civilization. Instead, a concrete political agenda is pursued, such as establishing an Islamic state(s) or the withdrawal of US military forces from Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

### *Political Causes*

Explanations of the political causes of terrorism reveal significant divergence between western and non-western views. According to the former group, the repression, corruption and instability of some Central Asia states offer fertile

soil for extremism and terrorism. Not only do terrorists thrive in a weak state, but also in some cases the ruling élite is directly implicated in the narco-business that provides the financial base for terrorist activity. In fact, some suggest that these ruling élites are using the 'war on terror' for their own political ends, namely, as a form of legitimisation.

Western analysts suggest that in the long term, the failure of moderate Islam in the Middle East and Central Asia represents both an opportunity and stimulus for Islamic extremism to offer an alternative. As a comparatively recent phenomenon it has not had the opportunity to discredit itself and can therefore tap into popular disillusionment and the yearning for an alternative vision. Islamic extremism appeals to faith rather than reason, which means its key ideas are less readily refuted.

Typically, non-western scholars and policy makers downplay the importance of political factors in terrorism. They point out that terrorists operate within all systems of government from democracies to dictatorships. In this connection, they compare the relative stability of the Central Asian states to the turmoil in other regions of the former Soviet Union, notably the Caucasus.

There is, therefore, a need to understand more fully the long-term strategy and ideology of international terrorists: what mobilises them? (There is some common language, such as over the concept of establishing a Caliphate). There is no detailed analysis of the sources of Islamic extremism, either within Russia or elsewhere.

Russian participants identified international terrorists within Russia actively forming more networks and groups. They pointed to the location of cells of the group responsible for the assassination of Sadat, which have allegedly been found within the North Caucasus.

The international and domestic struggles are clearly interlinked, exemplified by the new post 9/11 domestic security regime created in the US. Terrorism may not be targeted on an immediate target, but on second or third order consequences. This demands a shift away from linear modelling to non-linear complexity based modelling. Global interconnections must be identified in other theatres and areas and detect elements of disaffection, in order to see how truly transnational they are. These represent enormous practical challenges for policymakers.

## Combating Terrorism

There was widespread pessimism about the success of efforts in combating terrorism in its various manifestations. Participants were agreed that the international community is not winning the 'struggle' and that current approaches towards counter terrorism have not proven particularly effective. There have certainly been some successes, such as the arrest of Sheik Mohamed and other top Al Qaeda leaders; cells were also dismantled in several European countries and numerous terrorists brought to trial, including in the UK and Spain. However, there was little agreement over the reasons for this lack of 'success.'

The Central Asian region itself has undergone marked change since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the communist system. States in the region have engaged in nation building aimed at political consolidation and economic reform, whilst developing ties with the international community and slowly joining and hoping to benefit from the process of globalisation. In the last decade these countries have developed security and economic ties with western countries, while retaining close security and economic ties with Russia. The region itself, however, remains beset by significant security challenges—Islamic extremism, terrorism, drug and arms trafficking—as well as concern surrounding efforts to avoid any repetition of the 19th century 'Great Game' and therefore balance relations between Russia, and western countries.

Participants believe these challenges are exacerbated by the highly unstable security situation in Afghanistan. Despite the active efforts of the international community to engage the state building process, Afghanistan still remains a deeply fragmented country. Its government fails to control vast areas of its territory, local warlords remain powerful, and the Taliban remnants present continued security challenges. Moreover, Afghanistan remains awash with small arms and light weapons easily smuggled across the highly porous borders of Central Asia. Afghanistan has also witnessed an increase in poppy cultivation over recent years, which could contribute to the spread of organised crime and fund Islamic radical groups. Participants made reference to the potential support by the Taliban and Al-Qaeda to radical Islamic and separatist movements in Central Asia and the Caucasus—especially to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Chechen rebels, and the Uighur separatist movement—in terms of funding, weaponry and training facilities.

Security officials within Central Asia constantly point to the threat posed by Islamic extremism within the region, though there is little specific information on the nature of that threat, its linkages with international terrorism and/or its

potential sources of funding besides drug trafficking. Reference was made, however, to Hizb-ut-Tahrir and its possible linkages with the IMU. Islamic extremism has grown in popularity in the region, largely as a consequence of the failure of the regimes to come up with a formula to legitimise power after the fall of communism. The ideological vacuum left after the fall of communism, combined with underlying structural problems such as the growing inequality and persistent poverty, has contributed to the growth in the appeal of radical Islam amongst the region's Muslims. Other factors are also at play, including widespread poverty, social instability, corruption among government officials, and broad based discontent among the local populations.

Terrorists and criminals operating in Central Asia can easily cross borders, train militants, corrupt officials, and store ammunition and weapons in some areas throughout the region. Fear exists within the region that it may become a haven for Islamic radicals and this will in turn spread to other parts of the world.

Participants did not focus on the other challenges affecting security within the region, namely border disputes, water distribution, economic growth, energy, poverty reduction and political transformation.

One theme that emerged in common was that international cooperation in counter terrorism would remain ineffectual as long as it fails to address the root of the problem and focuses instead on the executors rather than the organizers of terrorism. Another crucial factor appears to be the lack of a common strategic purpose amongst the various parties. This manifests itself in inadequate interaction at all levels, not only between law enforcement bodies but also at the highest levels of government.

Much of this emanates from ingrained strategic suspicions and prejudices between Russia and the West. In this context, Russia and NATO have discussed questions of interoperability and joint military and strategic doctrine for almost a decade without achieving significant progress. In fact, new strategic anxieties have emerged.

The Russian side constantly reiterate the view that NATO enlargement was a historic mistake, and dashed hopes of a new post-cold war understanding. Geopolitical and even proprietorial views of the former Soviet Union are also in evidence. This understands Central Asia as a sphere of Russian influence and the post 9/11 deployments of US military forces in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan was part of American efforts to project its influence rather than

develop effective joint counter terrorist capabilities. The Russian perspective also criticizes the US.-led invasion of Iraq, Western complacency in Afghanistan, and double standards in relation to Chechnya, where the West is accused of undermining Russian antiterrorist efforts by making a false distinction between 'freedom fighters' and 'terrorists.'

In the aftermath of the Beslan terrorist attack in Russia in September 2004, the Russian authorities formed a working group within the Duma to examine possible legislative initiatives. These were designed to work against terrorist attacks at a very early stage:

1. The Traditional approach: Special Services and law enforcement to work more efficiently.
2. Learn to minimise the consequences of terrorist attacks. A methodology must be devised, though there is a clear need for trust in this.
3. Involve the population in preventing terrorist attacks. This examines various levels, from state of emergency and zone of antiterrorist operations to a new category providing a legal basis to act where previous legislation would restrict action.

Before 9/11 the response to terrorism was that of law enforcement, or of symbolic retribution (Sudan, Afghanistan). Now the use of external capabilities is considered insufficient. At the political level, it will be a protracted struggle, requiring political support and legitimacy in the theatre of operations and respecting international legal norms. Existing UN treaties and Conventions on terrorism provides more than enough in the way of legal norms, and these should be enforced.

Special services, at the forefront of the struggle against terrorism, require clearly defined legal guidelines of how to conduct a counter terrorist campaign. In Russia, for instance, there is no clear guidance on how to combat terrorism within Central Asia were Russia required to act on the invitation of affected countries. Practical problems exist in the use of special services, as they will often attempt to push the issue of terrorism to another special service.

A global response to international terrorism must involve more sustained political effort to overcome Russian-western differences.



### **Conflict Prevention and Promotion of Stability**

The Central Asian states, as well as other countries with a stake in the region, are failing to address adequately the various security challenges facing the region. This can be largely attributed to the absence of sufficient coordination among regional and global powers when combating the various threats as well as issues of capacity and resources, human and financial. Despite great hopes after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 that better coordination and cooperation would emerge, such cooperation has since failed to materialise.

This is also partly the responsibility of the Central Asian states themselves. These states tended to take different approaches and implement divergent policies when addressing the various security threats. In this sense the Central Asian states may be criticised for not realising their potential for regional security cooperation. Indeed, this has been compounded by a lack of adequate resources and properly functioning security structures, as well as an absence of any coordinated response to the challenges confronting the region. Individual countries within the region have tended to focus on their own interests and concerns, and therefore, responses to threats in Central Asia are inclined to be unilateral and uncoordinated.

Differentiating radical or extremist groupings is also crucial, as some are at the core of violence and should be attacked, while others are on the periphery and demand a more subtle approach to neutralise their activities or co-opt them. The Internet in this regard, should be the focus of Information Warfare. Though arguably tracking and/or disabling the satellite phones that terrorists are using is much more important. It is all too easy to reconstruct a site through another server when one is shut down through IW.

Should there be a division of labour for problems? We deal with transnational actors yet currently function as nation states.

#### *US Security Assistance*

At the small unit level, the US programmes in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have been very effective in improving the counter-terrorist capabilities of both the military and security forces. This has generally been a low-cost in-country training programme (conducted by Special Forces A-Teams) that has reaped good rewards and significantly enhanced the operational/combat capabilities of the Kyrgyz forces, for instance, so that they can more effectively confront bands of terrorist/criminals/smugglers that had

been operating with impunity in the tri-border region. These bands have been using Kyrgyzstan as a transit route to and from Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as well as a staging ground for a range of terrorist activity in the region. There have been a number of reasons why this effort has been successful, to include:

- The generally narrow focus and hands-on nature of the training;
- The training teams ability to adapt their efforts to the needs and capabilities of their audience;
- The relatively long-term and repetitive nature of the programme that allowed the teams to build on the previous training session(s);
- The immediacy of the training need;
- The audience was generally the more elite military or security formations that were peppered with more experienced officer and enlisted personnel; and
- The return on investment was more quickly and readily seen, and more easily measured.

This represents the greatest strength in US military assistance programmes to the Central Asian militaries concentrating on small unit training by the Special Forces under the direction of the CENTCOM commander. When the CA AOR was passed to CENTCOM, the commander made a very practical decision and placed the military assistance programme for the region in the hands of his Special Operations Command.

On the broader-scale, however, US programmes have not been as successful in reaching their goals of Westernising the militaries or facilitating regional cooperation, which is so critical in confronting the types of threat that so many of these regimes face. Regional cooperation is a common theme in both the US and Russian military assistance efforts in Central Asia. There are a few similarities, but many more differences in the approaches taken to 'facilitate' this cooperation. There are indeed some lessons to be learned from Russia's efforts here, as well as some opportunities for future cooperation.

Although the US and a few other Western states have been providing a range of training programmes to Central Asia, the operational philosophy of these militaries remains dominated by the Soviet and Russian experience because this is what they know and where they feel comfortable. Although the situation differs from country to country, large numbers of officers (junior and mid-level) are still trained in Russian military academies and the in-country programmes remain heavily influenced by Russian training techniques and content. Common languages, both Russian and Russian military technical jargon, help perpetuate this. Moreover, the easier access these countries have to Russian military training assistance, (although some officers complain that they are not given access to training courses offered to members of the Russian armed forces) which is seen in Moscow as a 'cheap tool' to maintaining influence among these militaries. Equally, training assistance from Moscow comes without most of the 'political strings' (i.e. pressure to democratise) that are attached to US training assistance.

The small numbers of personnel trained in the West are just now beginning to reach positions of potential influence in one or two of these militaries. It is hoped that this will help expand the influence of Western training, but only time will tell. There are some hurdles that Western-trained personnel face, to include:

- They are in the minority and often shunned by the host military;
- Their enthusiasm for change is frequently overcome by their inability to influence the culture, habits and mentalities of officers and NCOs?
- The Western training, especially the Language training, is often picked off by the growing commercial sector, where they see a much greater future and more lucrative rewards;
- Some states seeking to achieve NATO interoperability in high readiness formations, such as Kazakhstan, are hampered by current security legislation restricting the sharing of sensitive information with the Alliance, as well as insufficient defence budgets.

Anti-terrorist capability requirements in Central Asia necessarily focus on the following areas;

- Enhancing the competence of interagency coordination;
- Developing airmobility amongst high readiness formations;
- Re-equipping the indigenous anti-terrorist forces;
- Developing new tactics and doctrine to facilitate effective use of anti-terrorist forces.

All western security assistance programmes, designed to enhance the anti-terrorist capabilities of the Central Asian Republics concentrate on border security forces and Special Forces. What is missing is any coherent attempt to strengthen special services in terms of collection and analysis of information relating to terrorist groups and individuals, and promoting inter-state intelligence cooperation and working better and hand in hand with law enforcement agencies. US security assistance suffers from a lack of a time-phased approach, similar to the Georgia Train and Equip Programme, and a general lack of coordination for the more than 17 different streams of funding going into the various security assistance efforts in the region. NATO PfP programmes are too generic in their nature, aimed at generally improving standards, and lack bite in effecting real change for the better within these structures. Finally, all security assistance efforts in the region face difficulties for the following reasons:

- 1) The failure to foster real cooperation between the Central Asian states, essential in confronting international terrorism.
- 2) The tendency for US/western security assistance to encourage rivalry between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, since each constantly compare the very public disclosures of the levels of spending on each others security assistance.
- 3) The lack of developed understanding within the western planning staffs on the region, which was low-priority until 9/11 raised its importance.
- 4) Moving out of step with Moscow, and failing to properly explore potential areas of cooperation.
- 5) US planners in particular often prefer to supply equipment to these countries, rather than tackle head on the more difficult task of strengthening

and helping to reform key elements of these militaries (leadership, Intelligence, Communications and Planning. The US programme is hampered by an inability to develop and manage a long-term programme. Why? The budgeting cycle, MACOM (CENTCOM) priorities - fighting two wars, and the political strings that are tied to every programme for this region.

6) Another challenge for the US is its inability to do effective long-term planning. The military assistance budget and its associate regional and national programmes are revisited each year at all levels in the process, beginning at the national command level and down to the MACOM commands. To the provider at the Embassy in the field, this means that the priorities for his programmes can either be downgraded or upgraded, which will affect the level of resources he will receive each year. Another problem is the length of the planning and budgeting process, which more often than not means that funding will not be approved long before the second quarter of each year and scrambling at the Embassy level will follow, as the programmed dates on some programmes may come and go before they have the resources to execute. Moreover, the budget lines are tightly framed, which earmarks how the money must be used and what kind of programmes it can be used to execute.

US and Russian programmes for the region appear to be focusing on improving the counter terrorist capabilities of these militaries. For Moscow, the implications of this regional threat have greater urgency, given proximity and the flow of weapons, drugs, terror training and terrorists may be for their volatile border regions. For the US the link is very similar but much more closely tied to Afghanistan and is less urgent and perceptible to the general public and Congress. Thus for the US, marketing support to the region is much more difficult, linked to greater political scrutiny, and looks to not only aid the military but also change the political environment (aid as a political tool).

Post 9/11, the military assistance programmes were much more balanced and were able to focus, at least in part, on the types of assistance and training that these regional states see as their priority. The US has also put millions of dollars into improving the facilities that they are operating from and, in the end, this will benefit the local militaries. It is highly unlikely, however, that the level of US presence and military interest in the region will remain as high as it was in 2002, in fact operations have already been scaled back significantly.

It is clear, therefore, that these militaries will remain tied to Moscow for many years to come for spare parts, technical assistance, and replacements for their equipment holdings, which remain predominantly Russian and there is little chance that this will change. As a result, Moscow will retain a foothold in the region, regardless of what Washington does in the short-term. Consequently, Moscow and Washington and its allies need to work out a reasonable and cooperative approach to military assistance. How can Washington and Moscow cooperate? Given the commonality of the principal goal of this military assistance, it seems possible that NATO and PfP could be used as vehicles to harmonize the programmes.

The security threats facing Central Asia include organised crime, drug trafficking, human trafficking and the possible transfer of illegal technologies, including ones linked to nuclear technologies. These are usually better dealt with through law enforcement, with the military only performing supporting roles as required. In the absence of genuine understanding within Central Asia, there is little hope for cross border cooperation. There are great differences in strategic thinking, threat perception, and threat analysis and threat perception. Each country has its own views, formed by social and political circumstances and local perceptions.

In the view of some participants the West tended to impose or encourage liberal-democratic models of government onto countries in the CIS region without any proper consideration of the local traditions of government and the risks involved. Support for a more evolutionary approach, which would take into account local traditions, was voiced. Others expressed the need to develop political solutions in the fight against Islamic extremism. Emphasis was placed on the need to educate élites and the Central Asian populations on a 'culture of peace' as opposed to a 'culture of violence'. Concerns were also raised by the tendency of some countries, notable the US and Russia, to respond to terrorist attacks with overwhelming force. Such responses can result in an increase in terrorist actions.

Rivalry between countries in Central Asia is unhelpful in fostering counter terrorist cooperation; they each jockey for position and look to the west as sponsors to promote their own ends.

The interests and capabilities of Russia and the US in Central Asia appear asymmetric. Whereas Russia possesses relatively limited military and economic capabilities, given its closer proximity to the region, it has a greater

long-term interest in regional stability. The United States instead, has significant military and economic capabilities but has less of a stake in the long-term future stability of the region. However, the United States' main strategic concern in the region remains the stabilisation of Afghanistan. Increasingly, the focus of US security policy would shift from Central And South Asia to the Middle East, considering the difficulties of the American campaign in Iraq and the situation with regards to Iran's WMD programme. Russia, on the other hand, seems much better disposed to take an active role in Central Asia given the leadership's concern with the spread of terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism on its periphery.

Despite these differences in perspective, western participants agreed that continuing strategic suspicions were undermining counter terrorism cooperation. Old agenda issues need to be resolved in order to facilitate greater progress, including:

- Western concerns about Russia's handling of the Chechen conflict.
- The prevalence of unreconstructed thinking on both sides, particularly down the political and military chain of command
- The geopolitical mindset founded on the concept of spheres of influence.

## Afghanistan

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is one of two military formations operating in Afghanistan. It is a security assistance force, which has been under the command of NATO since August 2003, with contributions from 35 nations. It is separate from Operation Enduring Freedom—the US-led coalition military operation whose primary task is combat. ISAF have some 9,000 servicemen deployed, while the US led coalition number up to 18,500. The initial ISAF mission was to assist the provision of security in Kabul, but this mandate quickly widened to include other areas.

This expanded role is associated with the formation of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). The first PRT was established in Kunduz, and was German-led. These PRTs, generally of around 120 people, operate both as a security force and a reconstruction team; which has provoked controversy among NGOs working in Afghanistan. Initially, NATO offered

area security for Northern Afghanistan and Kabul, seeking to ensure these areas were safe. NATO forces support the Afghanistan National Army (ANA) in patrol duties, as well as providing situational awareness to the Afghan authorities, planning support and the quick reaction capabilities that the Afghans lack.

NATO will continue to assist the ANA and other Afghan security forces to ensure that they develop their own capabilities. It will also continue to work with the G8 nations leading what is termed the 'Security Sector Reform Program' in a number of areas—the training of the ANA, demobilisation, the disarmament and integration of the former militias and irregular forces, as well as providing support to the Afghan authorities and the UN in the counter-narcotics area. However, in reality the reform of the Afghan Defence Ministry has been slow, often turning a blind eye to the activities of the regional power holders—the so-called warlords, and militia groups.

NATO will also maintain engagement with Afghanistan's neighbours, particularly to the north of Afghanistan, which are members of NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) Programme in order to engage them in a regional strategy that will ensure that Afghanistan emerges as a united peaceful country. NATO has used access to bases in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to support its ISAF mission in Afghanistan. In October 2004 NATO signed a host nation support and transit agreement with Tajikistan—the first country in Central Asia to do so. However, the Alliance will need to secure more such agreements with its partners in the region, in order to work around the deterioration in the West's relations with Uzbekistan, since Tashkent decided to ask the US military to leave Uzbekistan, and the authorities distanced themselves from NATO in response to western criticism over the regimes handling of the crisis in Andijan.

### **Counter-Narcotics**

The nexus between illegal drug trafficking from Afghanistan and terrorism is made more complex by the dependency of local people on the drug economy for their survival. NATO itself has been very concerned about the challenge of counter-narcotics, since the production and trafficking of narcotics is a basic threat to the stability of Afghanistan. NATO is therefore trying to provide political support to the Kabul government so it can count on the Alliance in going ahead with its plan to eradicate poppy cultivation. NATO also supports the UK—the lead nation of the G8 in counter-narcotics, in providing planning



support to the ANA in its own operations. But ISAF is not directly linked to these operations.

The scale of the problem is indicated by Russian authorities, pointing to the Russian Federal Border Guard Service seizing over 29 tonnes of drugs, including over 14 tonnes of heroin, on the Tajik-Afghan border since 1992. The annual reports of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODOC) confirm an upward trend in drug production within Afghanistan, and its growth in exporting opium.

In October 2004, Russia proposed a series of specific steps in the UN General Assembly aimed at further alignment with the global war on terrorism. Given the links between terrorism and drug trafficking, one of these was the creation of anti-drug 'security belts.' This has relevance for Afghanistan, which was highlighted by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in December 2004 to participants of a Central Asian memorandum on mutual understanding for regional cooperation in drug control. Lavrov called for the creation of anti-drug belts with the participation of the Afghan government. The major goals would be the location of main routes, identifying and neutralising the entire chain of transnational groups of drug traffickers and organising the exchange of intelligence data both within and beyond Afghanistan. Lavrov also suggested the need to form a regional and coordination information centre in Central Asia, and that NATO and the CSTO could collaborate on these issues.

For some time there appeared to be hope of rapid success in Afghanistan. But after the Taliban was overthrown the world was not made safer and the Taliban have not been localised fully. The drug threat has increased and the forces deployed in Afghanistan cannot curb or even localise it. Pure heroin is crossing the Afghan border and more laboratories are being set up inside Afghanistan.

Since a collapse of Afghanistan into ungovernability is clearly against Russian security interests, Russia has a stake in the success of the NATO support for ISAF—and it is already providing support in the form of logistics and overflight rights. Political dialogue on Afghanistan is high on the NATO-Russia agenda and a serious discussion has already begun making practical progress on cooperation on Afghan narcotics. Afghanistan could open out an active regional dimension to Russia-NATO cooperation, which could spill over into other joint activities.

The campaign in Afghanistan began as an antiterrorist campaign and rapidly became one of insurgency, which depends on logistics. The Declaration on New Strategic Relations signed in May 2002 between the US and Russia offered a glimmer of hope that cooperation may be attainable. The declaration itself expressed the interest of both sides in the stabilisation of Afghanistan, and in the development of stable, sovereign and consolidated states in Central Asia and the South Caucasus. This atmosphere of cooperation soon evaporated and was replaced by a new sense of mistrust between the US and Russia. NATO is playing an ever-growing role in Central Asia, as indicated by its presence in Afghanistan. Future cooperation between NATO and Russia in Central Asia is therefore essential.

In this context, a status of forces agreement is vitally important, since it is required in order to guarantee access for the duration of operations. This is directly linked to the present security situation in Afghanistan, and would contribute positively to a benign future in Afghanistan.

### **Redefining the 'war' on terror and its strategy**

Despite a high level of consensus on general principles, an implicit division emerged between Russian and Western perceptions of the relationship between the rule of law and the conduct of counter terrorist operations. Whereas Russian and CIS participants tended to underplay this dimension, a number of Western participants stressed the importance of managing such operations within the rule of law. To descend to the level of the terrorist, they argued, would be to lose the moral argument. It will be crucial to retain right on the side of the international community in its struggle against terrorism, abiding by the principle of minimum not maximum force, especially given the importance of denying the terrorists more widespread sympathy or popular support.

However, given the magnitude and the nature of the threat posed by international terrorism and the ineffectiveness of current policy responses, there is a need to improve both the extent and quality of counter-terrorist cooperation. This means focussing on the following:

- To assess and critique progress in counter terrorism cooperation.
- To address the sources, content and consequences of international terrorism

- To take a long-term view. The struggle against international terrorism will last for decades. Not only are there no 'quick fixes' but it is doubtful as to whether a powerful 'worldwide insurgency' can ever be defeated.
- To develop a common, global response to the threat of international terrorism. The causes of terrorism may be local, but its networks and consequences are global. It is critical in this regard to involve the whole Euro-Atlantic community, transcending mistrust and differences in strategic culture by focussing instead on areas of agreement.
- To utilise all available resources in the struggle against terrorism—not only military, but also diplomatic, political, economic, ideological and informational means. Force alone will never defeat terrorism; it is vital to win the battle for 'hearts and minds' in order to separate Islamic extremists and terrorists from the people they are attempting mobilize. The international community needs to offer an alternative to the jihadist vision of a conservative utopia, making effective use of the media as a civilising influence.
- To invest greater resources in the struggle against terrorism, matching rhetoric with action, for example, concentrating on the drugs trade. Counter-terrorism capabilities will also have to be modernised, establishing better mechanisms for crisis management, improving inter-agency cooperation, as well as enhancing the collection and analysis of human intelligence.

Specific proposals need to be examined carefully, while endeavouring to build an atmosphere of trust that will gradually promote greater levels of cooperation in the struggle against international terrorism. Realistically, there are barriers in the way of enhancing cooperation between Russia and the West, which will require attitudinal shifts in order to remove. Russian policy makers will need to face the following:

- A greater effort to move on from the past, particularly from resentment stemming from NATO enlargement; Russian policy makers need to make the best of Russia's relationship with NATO, specifically through the NRC.

- A more enlightened attitude towards the American and NATO military presence in Central Asia. This may *inter alia* serve Washington's geopolitical ends, but it still constitutes most effective check on terrorist activity in Afghanistan and through security cooperation with the Central Asian states enhances their capacities.

Equally, Western countries and institutions can do more to improve the quality of cooperation with Russia and CIS member states, namely:

- Respect the strategic concerns of the regional states. Washington needs to work harder at reassuring Moscow that its military presence in Central Asia is primarily aimed at combating international terrorism, and not projecting American strategic influence.
- The West should also refrain from assuming that multilateral organisations, such as the CSTO are merely fronts for Russian strategic interests.
- Avoid unrealistic expectations about a common normative agenda in Central Asia, between Russia, the US and other Western states. Meaningful cooperation, which also engages regional states, will develop on the basis of common security interests rather than on a platform of 'shared values.'
- Involve other parties more closely in security decision-making. While the US rivals Russia as the most important security player in Central Asia, it should look to bring others into the formulation and implementation of policy. Cooperation in counter-terrorism should be seen as a joint endeavour requiring attention to multilateral arrangements beyond NATO, EAPC or PfP activities, alongside bilateral security assistance programmes.
- Invest greater resources in practical cooperation that concentrates on outcomes, rather than assuming that the former will lead to the latter, whether in the NRC or other forums.

## The role of multilateral security structures

There is a clear need to improve the quality of dialogue and cooperation between various regional and international institutions. No single organization or nation is capable of combating terrorism on its own. However, there is little agreement on how to achieve greater understanding and cooperation between these multilateral organizations. Unsurprisingly non-western participants place their trust in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) as the key multilateral mechanism for improved antiterrorist cooperation in the space of the former Soviet Union. Equally predictably, western participants look towards NATO and the NRC as the main organizing framework for future action.

### **CSTO**

Russian participants commended the CSTO for its mission statement and its track record. According to this line of argument, it was established specifically in response to new threats, mainly emanating from terrorism, facing the region and Central Asia in particular. Since its creation, it has accomplished much in counter terrorism and exists, it was claimed, neither in opposition or competition with other multilateral organizations such as NATO, and the CSTO is open to new members. Western percipients, on the other hand, were inclined to be more sceptical of the CSTO, characterising it as a Russian-dominated structure and a vehicle for Russian interests rather than being based on genuine multilateralism. The CSTO, however, may prove to be a useful security partner for NATO, since its six members are already members of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC).

The Collective Rapid Deployment Forces (CRDF) of the CSTO was formed to provide an adequate and swift response to terrorist activity in Central Asia. Their tasks include: repelling external military aggression and prosecuting joint counter-terrorist operations. Structurally, the CRDF consist of the Headquarters and the most highly trained constant readiness units and subdivisions from Russia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan. The CRDF suppress the actions of illegal armed units and terrorists by agreement with states' national armed forces (parties to the treaty). They are tasked with conducting combined and special operations according to a uniform design and plan.

The decision to deploy the CRDF is taken by the Collective Security Council at the request of one or more of the Central Asian members of the CSTO, assuming a consensus is reached. Once a decision is taken to deploy the CRDF, orders on the use of units and ensuring the arrival of the operating

personnel to reinforce the command of the CRDF is carried out by the general staffs of the national armed forces of the CSTO member states.

The participating states ensure several key tasks: a complete and timely fulfilment of decisions taken by the Collective Security Council, the necessary combat and mobilization readiness of national units (contingents), and their deployment in operational areas. National units are transferred under direct subordination to the commander of the Collective forces after crossing the state border of the host state and this ceases on the completion of the operation.

Moreover, the military component of the CSTO has been developed further. The number of Central Asian national units that form part of the CSTO has increased to nine. The CRDF has come to include the Russian air base in Kant (Kyrgyz Republic), which strengthened its air component intended both for ensuring air support for troops in pursuance of their combat tasks, and for transporting subdivisions to operational areas within the CSTO territorial arena.

On questions of combating international terrorism and other manifestations of extremism, the application of military force through the CSTO mechanisms should be conditioned by a number of factors. Military force should be considered, in the view of Russian participants:

1. When all possibilities for political settlement of the situation have been exhausted.
2. Measures undertaken by competent agencies (Interior Ministry, security agencies and special services) have yielded no positive result.
3. The actions of international terrorist are global in character.

Russian security officials regard the CSTO as a stabilising factor in Central Asia. It also focuses on interaction and cooperation with other regional and international organisations, first and foremost the UN, SCO, CIS and NATO. Moscow views the CSTO as a preventative measure aimed at repelling threats to security in Central Asia, while the CRDF plays a key role in stabilising the region.

Western states and other multilateral organisations are sceptical of the CSTO and its unproven capabilities in responding to a terrorist attack, and question whether it can justify its claims to do so in practical terms.

## NATO/NRC

The NATO Istanbul summit in 2004 designated the Caucasus and Central Asia as regions of primary importance for the Alliance. NATO is therefore conducting efforts to enhance dialogue and cooperation with the Central Asian states on issues of common interest in the security field. NATO has also promoted internal reform within Central Asia; interoperability of forces for the conduct of joint peace support operations; and supporting regional security initiatives. The tools of cooperation utilised include the Euro-Atlantic partnership programmes, the Planning and Review Process, the Individual Partnership Action Plan, the NATO trust fund and the NATO-Russia Action Plan on Terrorism. The Action Plan on Terrorism aims to enhance capabilities and act jointly in three crucial areas—preventing terrorism, combating terrorism and terrorist activities as well as managing the consequences of terrorist acts. However, it remains unclear as to how the Alliance can act effectively in the region given the lack of democracy and rule of law.

NATO serves as a multilateral forum for a conversation about the security environment of the 1990s—but the security environment now is much more dynamic; there are a set of global interconnections and its main feature is global conflict. The case for NATO revolves around its capabilities, perceived effectiveness and above all its longer-term potential. The Alliance is uniquely placed to organize military capabilities against terrorism, although it cannot carry out this task on its own since counter terrorism demands a total effort—diplomatic and military—involving many countries and institutions.

At a practical level, NATO's work on counter terrorism is focussed on two areas: intelligence sharing and its presence in Afghanistan. Although in the latter case the Alliance has much to do to fulfil its mission.

The NATO Special Committee (AC/46) acts as a consultative body to the North Atlantic Council (NAC) and the NATO Secretary General on matters relating to espionage, terrorism or related threats, and serves as a mechanism for dialogue and the exchange of intelligence between NATO and NATO partners. This has acted as an important mechanism for stimulating counter terrorist cooperation with Russia. In 2002, the Committee and Russia worked together on two intelligence assessments: 'The Present and Future Threat and Challenges by Al-Qaeda,' and 'Threat to Civilian Aircraft and Threat by Civilian Aircraft to Critical Infrastructure.' In 2003 it formed an Intelligence Liaison Unit (ILU) to enhance cooperation with the security and intelligence services of states belonging to the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC)/Partnership for Peace (PfP) and the Mediterranean Dialogue,

and assisted the NATO Office of Security in the creation of a permanently and NATO-staffed Terrorist Threat Intelligence Unit, which was formed in 2004. This facilitates the exchange of intelligence within NATO, and its partners.

Nonetheless, the large and varied membership of the committee, however, militates against both the quality and quantity of intelligence exchanged. Moreover, the long history of espionage cases against NATO and instances of leaks of classified information means that national intelligence agencies will exercise caution in what is shared at NATO level or with NATO's partners.

There are grounds for considering the future of the NRC as a means of developing greater counter terrorism cooperation. The NRC has generated greater dialogue and practical security cooperation between Russia and NATO. Indeed, practical achievements have included intelligence sharing on terrorism and anti-narcotics. The NRC offers a framework within which NATO's military potential in counter terrorism can be reinforced by Russian capabilities (unlike other forums such as the OSCE). Willingness appears to exist amongst the members of the EAPC to utilise this format to confront common threats. For example, they can all address the issue of consequence management through the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Relief Coordinating Committee.

NATO-Russia cooperation has witnessed marked progress. There has been significant progress, but Istanbul 2004 was a missed opportunity at the summit level. The main areas where progress is most evident are as follows: antiterrorism, crisis management and combating the spread of WMD.

Russia is cooperating with Operation Active Endeavour—maritime cooperation in the Mediterranean Sea—and has offered support for ISAF (in the form of logistic systems, transit and overflight rights for NATO troops and equipment). Russia has acceded to the PfP status of forces agreement, though it still needs to ratify it. This is a prerequisite for real progress in interoperability.

Political dialogue on Afghanistan is high on the agenda of the NRC. NATO-Russia cooperation in countering the flow of illegal narcotics across the Afghan border is possible, as well as broader joint efforts to promote Afghan border security. However, intelligence sharing must improve, though this is a particularly difficult area since governments do not generally like sharing intelligence in multilateral channels.

More cooperation is required on the destruction of stockpiles of munitions and small arms, etc, to keep them out of terrorist hands. Future cooperation



between NATO and the CSTO is possible, but it will be necessary to overcome suspicions and present rivalry. Initiatives to promote such cooperation mostly emanate from Russia and in particular at NRC meetings. Other NATO members must make clear their views on such cooperative ventures. In the long-term NATO has to be convinced that the CSTO is an efficient security body in order to seriously discuss areas of possible cooperation.

Russia-NATO has concluded its first major assessment of the threat in the region. There was broad common understanding—including an assessment of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in its varied forms and possible links to Al-Qaeda. However, a zero-sum approach was still present and this continues to complicate issues. NATO needs to be more open about its projects and initiatives in Central Asia and the Caucasus, especially since its Istanbul summit in 2004 made clear that the alliance now attaches priority to these strategic regions.

Many Russian participants, who reaffirmed a traditional line of argument that the Alliance is anachronistic and has failed to carve out a meaningful role for itself in the post-9/11 security environment, challenged this assessment of NATO's role. Threatened by institutional overreach (based on its eastward expansion) and regarded as ineffectual in the fight against terrorism, NATO and by extension the NRC, they claimed, have been largely bypassed in favour of bilateral mechanisms and forums. NATO officials readily acknowledge the practical obstacles to NRC involvement in Afghanistan, given local antipathy to any possible Russian force presence.

## **OTHER ORGANIZATIONS**

### **SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION (SCO)**

Russian military participants emphasised the potential role to be played by the SCO in fighting terrorism. Its antiterrorist centre in Tashkent seeks to promote cooperation among member states' Special Forces and security structures in the fight against terrorism. It also aims to supply a legal framework for joint counter terrorist operations, exchange of intelligence, and assistance in conducting joint antiterrorist exercises and training. SCO representatives predictably advance the image of the SCO as an organisation already actively preventing criminal activities and terrorist acts in Central Asia.

Proponents of the SCO argued in favour of the organisation playing a greater role in furthering security in Central Asia. It was also suggested that in order

to counterbalance the so-called 'arc of instability' that stretches from Europe to Southeast Asia that the SCO could become an element of a new 'arc of stability' linking the security systems of Europe and the Asia-Pacific region. Nonetheless, the SCO is clearly evolving as a multilateral organisation, and in this context it was suggested that its Regional Antiterrorist Agency in Tashkent requires refining in order to make more effective joint efforts of the member states' special services.

The Antiterrorist Centre could therefore develop greater synergy in these key areas:

- Monitoring and identifying concrete sources of regional threats.
- Establishing informational, political, economic, financial, humanitarian. Military and other measures for the suppression and prevention of terrorism.
- Devising appropriate plans and programmes.
- Organising joint exercises and training sessions.
- Carrying out joint antiterrorist operations.

One clear advantage of the SCO is that it acts as a forum within which the interests of the Central Asian states and Russia and China may be expressed. Russia and China can utilise this forum to pool their efforts and jointly oppose security threats in the region.

Since there is an evident need for the West to coordinate better counter terrorist efforts with Russia, it has to be highlighted that little attention is being given within western planning staffs to the interests of China, or in finding points of common security interests in the region and exploring mechanisms through which these may be co-managed. The SCO presents an invaluable opportunity for the west through multilateral and bilateral dialogue to engage China more fully in the construction of global strategies aimed at advancing the struggle against terrorism.

In contrast, little confidence was expressed in the capacity of other global organizations—the UN, EU, and the OSCE—to contribute practically to

counter terrorism efforts. However, some participants reaffirmed the primacy of the UN (referring to the committee on counter terrorism). Others, as noted above, emphasised the utility of the SCO as a bridge linking security in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region. But suggestions on how this might be translated into practical action were lacking. It was suggested that the SCO has potential in the struggle against nuclear terrorism and drug trafficking, though the organization itself is concerned with broader security issues in the region. The CSTO, for its part, could concentrate more specifically on the problem of terrorism. There was little conviction in the idea of the possible involvement of the EU's rapid reaction force in counter terrorism in Central Asia.

What is clear is that a major role needs to be played by multilateral institutions, by states adjoining Central Asia and Afghanistan, and the international community needs to legitimise military training to this region via a legitimising agency, such as the UN.

## Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

The series of conferences and workshops agreed that the US-Russia dialogue on Central Asia is crucial and will be the foundation of all positive progress in the future. This is based on two factors:

- Russia dominates the terrain of Central Asia and for access remains vital.
- The US brings a wide range of global capabilities, which can be enlisted against the terrorist paramilitary phenomena.

Participants also offered the following general themes in the search for greater synergy between Russia and the West:

### Cooperation should include:

1. **A multilateral dialogue** between Russia and the West aimed at addressing Central Asia's security challenges. The objective of the dialogue should be to exchange views and share information in order to develop common views and joint approaches in the fight against international terrorism. This must range beyond mere rhetoric since there are just not enough decisions and actions resulting from such

dialogue. The dialogue should lead to something more than exchanges of views.

2. **The creation of effective organs of regional cooperation** aimed at addressing the various threats: terrorism, separatism, drug trafficking and organised crime.
3. **Specific areas of joint action** among Central Asian states themselves and between Russia and the US should be explored in order to enhance security in the region. These include countering international terrorism, drug trafficking, organised crime, and the proliferation of WMD; developing democracy and establishing civil society; and promoting social and economic development. For example on WMD: joint action could be to develop a Proliferation Security Initiative across Central Asia; increase the security of nuclear sites against potential terrorist strikes by hardening the infrastructure, installing cameras, exchanging intelligence on Iran's WMD programmes, etc.,

More specific contours for promoting future cooperation and meeting the new challenges facing Central Asia and Afghanistan, according to participants, include:

- Better sharing of intelligence and specialist expertise on WMD—an area that has already witnessed progress within the framework of the NRC.
- Promoting scientific contact between Russian and Western institutions in areas such as responding to the threat of chemical and biological warfare (CBW).
- A working group could be established to examine practical proposals for joint counter terrorist activities.
- Working groups should also engage the chief actors—an expert group could advise on Central Asia.
- Adopting the model of 'consequence management' as used in responses to major accidents and incidents. NATO emergency preparedness programmes, which are extensive, already covers this adequately, but could be extended to PfP states as a model for future joint action.

- Expanding military cooperation between Russia and the West through joint military exercises (such as Vostok 2003), the establishment of airborne early warning systems, early and advance threat detection.
- Greater use of Special Forces in counter terrorism operations (though such forces are poorly adapted to responding to terrorism and other non-traditional threats including narcotics and organized crime).
- Models of cooperation could also be utilised, such as the Baltic Peacekeeping Training Centre jointly established with NATO-member and Nordic support in the early 1990s. This centre was specifically established as a training venue for the peacekeeping units from each of the three Baltic countries. Such a facility could either be set-up as a real centre or even a virtual centre, with training conducted at the facility or by joint faculty teams in each of the countries. Such efforts would foster transparency, cooperation and coordination in the training and other military assistance being provided to the Central Asian states.
- Russia has already established a working relationship with NATO and by extension USEUCOM, which is the MACOM for Europe, but it does not have a similar relationship with CENTCOM, which has MACOM planning and programming responsibility for the CA states. Offering Russia a LNO position with CENTCOM or CENTCOM establishing a LNO office in the region and offering Russian participation could develop this relationship.
- The US through CENTCOM could approach Russia about establishing an LNO position with their regional anti-terrorism organisation, as a first step towards establishing broader cooperative arrangements.
- Officers trained abroad are often viewed with suspicion at home when they return. The UN could develop a certificate for training; education and training on that basis would be welcome by all.

- Russian participants called for Caspian Naval assistance programmes to take account of Iran.

Nation-states and multilateral security organisations were thrown into crisis as a result of the events of 11 September 2001. The consequent struggle against terrorism, remains embryonic and evolutionary in its strategies, scope and planning. Cooperation or co-management of new threats within Central Asia and Afghanistan involving the United States and Russia has to overcome political inertia, detachment from Cold-War legacy thinking and move on to reach agreement on practical areas of common interests. Security assistance programmes aimed at enhancing the counter terrorist capabilities of the Central Asian states must take note of Russia and its potential role in joint measures and programmes. Equally, more use ought to be made of multilateral bodies through which dialogue may be promoted. Planning staffs in all the interested states require greater scope for long-term planning, flexibility, openness and a time-phased approach that results in more gradual deep-rooted and systemic improvement of indigenous capabilities in Central Asia. Without a marked shift towards progress in engaging Russia more actively in the struggle against terrorism and other new threats in Central Asia and Afghanistan the prospects for success will stay bleak.