

## 6-Dec-16 World View — China and Russia in military competition in Tajikistan

### Description

This morning's key headlines from [GenerationalDynamics.com](http://GenerationalDynamics.com)

- China and Russia in military competition in Tajikistan
- Russia promises Tajikistan a 'large quantity' of military aircraft

### China and Rus



*Joint China and Tajikistan military exercises in October (Asia-Plus)*

In a major change in policy, China is becoming more militarily active in the Central Asian republic of Tajikistan. Tajikistan, which was one of the republics of the Soviet Union, is usually thought to be in Russia's exclusive sphere of influence.

As we've [reported in the past](#), China has been economically very aggressive in Tajikistan. It's thought that there are now 150,000 Chinese working in Tajikistan, and China has been buying up industries and huge amounts of farmland. In 2011, Tajikistan agreed to hand over around 1% of its territory to China in exchange for having some of its debts forgiven.

Unexpectedly, China's military activity in Tajikistan has also expanded substantially. In September 2016, Beijing offered to build 11 new border checkpoints and a new military facility along the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border, which raised [1]some concerns in Russia. On October 20–24, a combined 10,000 military personnel from the National Army of Tajikistan and China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) were conducted five days of counterterrorism exercises in a region bordering Afghanistan.

China's military activity in Tajikistan serves multiple objectives — protecting its economic interests, defending Central Asia and itself from jihadist terrorism, and containing Russia's influence. Russian officials have not commented on this change so far, but it's certain to raise tensions in Central Asia.

[Jamestown](#)

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and [The Diplomat](#) and [EurasiaNet \(24-Oct\)](#)

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## Russia promises Tajikistan a 'large quantity' of military aircraft

On Monday, defense ministers of Russia and Tajikistan, meeting in Moscow, signed a military aid agreement specifying that Russia would provide a "large quantity" of military aircraft to Tajikistan over the next year. Russia's defense minister Sergey Shoigu said after the meeting:

"Next year the key phase of our military-technical cooperation will begin, the delivery of weaponry and military equipment. In particular, this is a large quantity of aviation equipment, airplanes and helicopters. I think this will be implemented according to plan and on schedule. And, of course, it will contribute to stability in the region."

According to a Tajik source, the deal will include combat aircraft, armored vehicles and communications.

This agreement shows that China will not easily be able to displace Russia in Tajikistan. Russia had a special unit of border guards at the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border between 1992 and 2005 and repeatedly repelled attacks by Taliban forces. Russia has had a military base in Tajikistan for 70 years, and the lease of the military base was extended for another 30 years in a 2012 agreement. The agreement to deliver military aircraft may be an attempt to counter China's growing influence.

According to Russian analyst Andrey Serenko, Russia's military adventures in the Mideast and Ukraine may have left few resources to keep China from expanding its influence:

"There is a danger in this new alliance, along with Pakistan and Afghanistan China is including Tajikistan, which Russia has until recently considered part of its zone of influence. Russia's involvement in Ukraine and the Middle East has resulted in us losing our position in Central Asia. It appears that in this 'Central Asian NATO' under the Chinese umbrella, Russia may be the odd one out."

Tajikistan also shares a long border with Afghanistan. Increasing jihadist activity from the Taliban, the so-called Islamic State (IS or ISIS or ISIL or Daesh), the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), and Uighur separatists has raised fears of terrorist activity in Tajikistan, and both China and Russia are concerned.

Furthermore, the jihadist threat from Afghanistan provides a convenient justification for Russia and China to convince Tajikistan to allow their troops on Tajikistan's soil. [EurasiaNet](#) and [Asia-Plus \(Tajikistan\)](#)

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**KEYS:** Generational Dynamics, Tajikistan, China, Russia, Afghanistan, Sergey Shoigu, Andrey Serenko, Taliban, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, IMU, Islamic State / of Iraq and Syria/Sham/the Levant, IS, ISIS, ISIL, Daesh

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