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TECHNICAL SUPPORT POLICY OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the results achieved by the Republic of Uzbekistan in providing its national army with modern military equipment and weaponry over the past thirty years. The study examines the reforms undertaken by Uzbekistan in this field, taking into account the achievements of foreign countries, the economic potential of the republic, its geostrategic position, ongoing regional processes, and other significant factors.

Keywords: armored vehicles, unmanned aerial vehicles, anti-aircraft missile systems, State Committee for Defense Industry, Defense Industry Agency under the Ministry of Defense, "Chirchiq Aviation Repair Plant," "Uztextreyd."

Introduction

Building and strengthening a powerful army is directly linked to its economic and social support. Innovations in the field of technology today have a direct impact on the outcomes of military engagements. This necessitates that each state establish the material and technical base of its armed forces in accordance with contemporary requirements. As the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, has stated: "Whoever does not want to feed their own army will end up feeding someone else's army." Indeed, the material and technical base of the army directly affects the reliability of the national defense system, the capability to achieve high objectives, combat effectiveness, and the physical preparedness of military personnel.

Main Part

The formation of the military-technical foundation of the defense system of the Republic of Uzbekistan began on February 14, 1992, with the transfer of all personnel, weaponry, equipment, material resources, and housing stock of military commissariats located within the republic [2;145]. However, due to the obsolescence of military equipment, frequent maintenance and repair were required. Since Uzbekistan lacked a fully operational mechanism for equipment repair, some aircraft were sent to the 405th Aviation Plant in Almaty for maintenance. In 1995, ten Yak-52 aircraft were repaired at this plant. To extend the operational life of military equipment and improve its performance, cooperation with other republics was intensified. For instance, in 2003, helicopter wings, spare parts, and modernization of outdated flight equipment were carried out at the BUR-4-1 "Kazan Helicopter Plant." In addition, the Ministry of Defense established cooperative relations with helicopter manufacturing plants in Ulan-Ude, Rostov-on-Don, and Zaporizhzhia for the supply of blades, aggregates, engines, and spare parts [2;117].

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On March 7, 2007, the Uzbek-Russian joint venture "O'ZROSAVIA" was established as a limited liability company based on the "Chirchiq Aviation Repair and Mechanical Plant," a subsidiary of the "V.P. Chkalov Tashkent Aviation Production Association State Joint-Stock Company" [2;145]. This enterprise was created through collaboration between Uzbekistan's "V.P. Chkalov Tashkent Aviation Production Association" and "Uzmakhsusimpeks" State Enterprise, along with Russia's "Oboronprom" United Industrial Corporation and "Rosoboronexport" Federal State Unitary Enterprise [3].

On December 3, 2010, a Coordinating Council was established at the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Uzbekistan to oversee the modernization of weaponry and military equipment, as well as the equipping of the armed forces with modern systems. In developing its proposals, the Council prioritized the following areas: (1) air defense, (2) helicopters, (3) armored weapons and equipment, (4) artillery systems, (5) anti-aircraft missile systems, (6) long-range missiles, (7) firearms, and (8) special individual protective equipment and devices for defense against radioactive research, chemical, and biological weapons.

The ongoing reforms in the technical support policy of the Armed Forces of Uzbekistan demonstrate the country’s commitment to enhancing its national defense capabilities in accordance with modern military-technical standards. These developments reflect the nation's strategic efforts to ensure the security and combat readiness of its armed forces in a rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape.

Discussion

Uzbekistan’s Armed Forces, like those of other states, operate within a closed system. Consequently, some military sector indices may not accurately reflect Uzbekistan’s defense strength. For instance, the Global Firepower Index from 2019 to 2023 indicated a decline in Uzbekistan’s military power. Several factors contribute to this perception:

Outdated Data: Military capabilities are typically classified, and states do not fully disclose their defense resources. Since indices are based on publicly available data and expert opinions, Uzbekistan’s closed military policies lead to underestimations.

Defense Industry Reforms: Uzbekistan has launched extensive reforms to develop its defense industry, shifting investments from foreign acquisitions to domestic production. The country has successfully developed national products, including armored vehicles, unmanned aerial vehicles, modern artillery, anti-drone technologies, and military uniforms.

Global Military Developments: Ongoing armed conflicts worldwide have prompted states to reassess their military strategies and expand their armament programs. For instance, Australia and New Zealand recently unified their armed forces [4].

The current international environment demands that every country strengthen its defense industry. In response, Uzbekistan established the State Committee for Defense Industry on November 20, 2017, to advance its national defense sector. These reforms provide Uzbekistan with several advantages:

Technological Independence: Reducing reliance on a single supplier and achieving self-sufficiency in military technology.

Reduced Imports: Lowering dependency on foreign military equipment and weaponry.

Scientific Innovation: Encouraging research and development in military technology while adapting global advancements to Uzbekistan’s geographical and economic conditions.

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Modernization of Military Equipment: Updating the armed forces' technical arsenal to meet contemporary standards.

As a logical continuation of these reforms, the "Law on the Defense Doctrine of the Republic of Uzbekistan" was enacted in January 2018. This law legally reinforced the modernization of the army, the acquisition of modern weapons, and the renewal of the organizational and technical infrastructure of the armed forces.

Further strengthening national security and defense capabilities, Uzbekistan adopted the "New Uzbekistan Development Strategy for 2022-2026," which set new objectives for defense policy. The strategy includes developing a reserve system for military leadership positions, equipping forces with modern weaponry, and upgrading air defense units. Notably, Uzbekistan acquired FD-2000 long-range anti-aircraft missile systems between 2017 and 2019, while C-125M1 "Pechora-2M" systems were modernized. Additionally, cooperation with Turkey introduced Bayraktar drones into Uzbekistan's defense forces, though specific details regarding their quantity and future procurement remain undisclosed [7].

In 2019, the Air Force of Uzbekistan possessed 73 military transport and combat helicopters [8]. By 2022, this number had increased to 89 [9], and according to 2024 data, the number of helicopters reached 99 [7]. These figures confirm the annual growth in the number of military equipment within the defense system.

In 2020, the production of military products and the provision of services at enterprises under the jurisdiction of the State Committee for the Defense Industry doubled.

The "Chirchiq Aviation Repair Plant" mastered the overhaul of Yak-52 and AN-2 aircraft between 2010 and 2012. The process of integrating these aircraft was carried out under the supervision of the Yakovlev Design Bureau (OKB) and the Antonov Design Bureau (DK "Antonov"). As of today, the primary activities of the plant include the overhaul and modernization of Mi-8/Mi-17 helicopters and their modifications, as well as Su-25, Yak-52, and An-2 aircraft. In the second half of 2019, the plant successfully adopted the system for the overhaul and modernization of Su-25 aircraft. The plant's main workshop, covering an area of over 6,000 m², can simultaneously accommodate up to ten Mi-8 helicopters [10]. Additionally, under contracts signed with neighboring countries, aviation and radio-electronic equipment worth over 150 billion Uzbek soums have been repaired. To continue and expand cooperation in aviation equipment repair services for foreign partners, agreements have been concluded with Russia's "Prada Nova," Bulgaria's "VIO Hran Invest," Hungary's "Milspaced," and Poland's "Max Technoloje" companies [6;410].

In 1998, by decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the production of specialized military products was launched based on the "Vostok" State Scientific and Production Association. Between 2001 and 2003, the "Vostok" Research and Production Enterprise was modernized and re-equipped with machinery and equipment supplied by the French company "CNPE Ingineering Defans." In September 2003, the enterprise was officially launched under the jurisdiction of the Cabinet of Ministers. In accordance with the Presidential Decree of 2017, the enterprise was incorporated into the State Committee for the Defense Industry of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The facility specializes in manufacturing various types of combat and cotton-harvesting ammunition [11]. As a result of implemented reforms, a new ammunition production network was established, localizing the production of propellants for small- and medium-caliber ammunition and launching the production of new ammunition of different sizes, including hunting cartridges. Consequently,

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the cost of finished products manufactured by the enterprise was reduced by 18–20%. Since 2020, agreements have been signed and executed for the export of finished products manufactured at the enterprise.

MS REMTEX LLC, an automotive and special equipment repair plant, was established in 2018. The plant has set up major overhaul operations for URAL-4320, ZIL-130, KAMAZ-4310, and OTAYOL vehicles. As a result, the cost of repairing both armored and regular vehicles has significantly decreased.

The main activity of the “Innovation Technology Center” is to conduct scientific research and technological modernization to accelerate the creation of new consumer-grade products, increase production efficiency, and expand the use of dual-use technologies. This includes the technical re-equipment of enterprises in the military-industrial complex. The center manufactures around 80 different types of products, including:

- "To‘siq-1" and "To‘siq-2" systems,
- Remote-controlled platforms for military and armored transport vehicles,
- Platforms and turrets for heavy machine guns,
- Cartridge belts,
- Ammunition boxes for firearms,
- Smoke and various types of grenades,
- Military training manuals,
- Shock-resistant shields,
- VPU gas masks and protective suits (L-1, OZK),
- A continuous supply system for firearm cartridges [12].

Since its establishment, the State Committee for Defense Industry of the Republic of Uzbekistan has achieved several notable successes. In particular, in collaboration with the "Cranes and Special Equipment" enterprise, a prototype of the "Tarlon" light armored vehicle was developed in 2020, followed by the production of the "Qalqon" light armored vehicle in 2021. Regarding the "Qalqon" vehicle, the Chairman of the State Committee for Defense Industry, Oybek Ismoilov, stated:*"The armored vehicle was inspected and received a positive evaluation. The armored vehicle meets all international standards"* [13]. The "Tarlon" armored vehicle is equipped with protective armor for the crew, as well as armored fuel tanks and battery compartments. The vehicle features a winch for self-recovery, evacuation hatches, and special locking mechanisms for doors from the inside.

Nowadays, artificial intelligence, robots, missiles, drones, and counter-drone systems are widely used in various regional conflicts. Based on this, it is of great importance to establish new military units specializing in drones and counter-drone warfare, cyber infrastructures powered by artificial intelligence, robotic technologies, and air defense.

Azerbaijani military expert Agil Rustamzoda further confirms this information, stating: *"The Uzbek army is the most powerful force in Central Asia. However, global militaries are moving towards a new stage of development. The idea that the fate of wars is determined by tanks and the number of troops has become outdated. Modern wars are based on next-generation technology and are conducted remotely. Central Asia, including Uzbekistan's army, also needs such advancements. It is no secret that the future of the army requires next-generation weaponry,"* said Rustamzoda [14].

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Today, in addition to foreign-made drones, the Uzbek military has been conducting training exercises with domestically produced drones since 2019. By deepening reforms and establishing a new military institute specializing in radio communications, the personnel reserve has been further strengthened. Since 2020, the Chirchiq Aviation Repair Plant in Uzbekistan has launched the production of various unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) under the "Lochin" brand, including surveillance, reconnaissance, kamikaze drones, FPV drones, bomber drones, and hexacopters. Additionally, the Cyber Park Innovation IT private cluster is actively developing X-1 and X-2 kamikaze drones. The first model is designed to target infantry and lightly armored vehicles, carrying a 400-gram warhead. The second model is intended for use against heavily armored vehicles and carries a 2-kilogram warhead.

As the threat of drones increases, countermeasures such as anti-drone weapons and electronic warfare systems are also becoming more significant and diverse. In Uzbekistan, both state-owned and private enterprises are actively engaged in this field. Founded in 2022, Electronic Autonomous Solutions has begun producing portable anti-drone weapons such as Airfender and Fowler. These systems are designed for easy portability, weighing between 3 to 6.5 kg, and function by jamming communication signals between small drones and their operators. Additionally, stationary systems such as Air Shield and Air Wall can be deployed to protect strategic sites and military bases. There are also modified versions of these systems that can be mounted on pickup trucks and military vessels for mobile defense.

The number of enterprises involved in Uzbekistan's military-industrial sector is steadily increasing, including private companies. The government is pursuing a policy of broader private sector involvement in defense production, recognizing that private enterprises generally operate with more efficient management mechanisms and can meet high standards to secure contracts. Drawing from the experiences of leading defense firms worldwide – such as Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, General Dynamics, BAE Systems, and Baykar Makina, which are structured as joint-stock companies—Uzbekistan is seeing similar developments. The production of armored vehicles like Arslon, Tarlon, and Qalqon, as well as electronic warfare systems such as Airfender, Fowler, and Air Shield, by private companies is a clear example of this trend.To further this goal, the Uzbek Armed Forces have established bilateral military cooperation with over 20 countries and have achieved high performance in more than 400 joint exercises [15].

In recent years, the scope of military cooperation has expanded, leading to the acquisition of new types of weaponry. The Uzbek military is being equipped with modern and highly effective arms, including Spain-manufactured C-295M military transport aircraft, U.S.-made MRAP (Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected) vehicles such as M-ATV, RG-33, and RG-Recovery, as well as Russia's Typhoon armored vehicles and Turkey's Ejder light armored vehicles [16;7].

According to Presidential Decree PF-16, issued on January 31, 2023, the Defense Industry Agency was established under the Ministry of Defense of Uzbekistan, based on the former State Committee for the Defense Industry. Additionally, the Oztextreid state unitary enterprise was created under the Ministry of Investments, Industry, and Trade [17]. At the IDEX 2025 international exhibition in Abu Dhabi, the agency showcased products from Uzbekistan's defense industry complex. Compared to 2023, the product catalog had doubled, featuring over 100 items. Some of the notable products included NATO-standard armored vehicles, such as the Arslon 8×8 and Arslon 6×6 armored transport vehicles, as well as the

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To‘fon self-propelled howitzer, based on a truck chassis. The development of these new technologies prioritized personnel safety over ease of production and operation [18].

According to the SavunmaSanayiST portal, Uzbekistan signed a contract in 2025 to purchase ANKA drones from Turkey’s TUSAS company. These drones are designed for aerial surveillance and reconnaissance missions [19].

A report published in South Korea’s Diplomacy Journal highlighted significant advancements in Uzbekistan’s military sector in recent years. The country’s scientific potential in defense has increased from 4% to 56.7%, while the percentage of troops equipped with modern weaponry has reached 45% [20].

In recent years, Uzbekistan has been diversifying its air defense system, which was previously based on Soviet-era weaponry. In 2025, China’s KS-1C surface-to-air missile system was brought to Uzbekistan. This system is designed to counter aerial threats, including missiles, aircraft, helicopters, and drones, to protect industrial sites, warehouses, and military units. It remains unclear whether the KS-1C was acquired through purchase or for testing purposes, as no official procurement contract has been confirmed. Additionally, Uzbekistan is considering the use of Turkey’s Aselsan LGK laser-guided module, a military weapon capable of striking targets with 10-meter accuracy from a distance of 12 kilometers [21].

Conclusion

In summary, since gaining independence, Uzbekistan initially relied heavily on imported military equipment to supply its Armed Forces. This dependency not only impacted the timely provision of military and special equipment, weaponry, and other essential resources for the national army but also created strategic vulnerabilities by increasing reliance on foreign countries for national defense. To address this challenge, a modern defense industry was established, aligning with contemporary demands. Today, domestically produced military equipment meets NATO standards, and Uzbekistan has actively engaged in international cooperation in the field of military technology. As a result of these reforms, the share of modern weaponry in the armed forces has increased to 45–48%. This progress underscores the need for further rapid advancements in the sector to ensure sustained development and military self-sufficiency.

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