

THE SYSTEM OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN THE MILITARY SPHERE AND ITS THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Independent Researcher of the Public Security University
of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Ilkhom Kulliev

Abstract: This article analyzes the scientific-legal foundations of the concept of international cooperation, its history and stages of evolution. The author scientifically examines the types and forms of international cooperation, including the distinctive aspects of military cooperation. The paper reveals the formation of the category of cooperation in international law theory and its role in the activities of the UN Charter and regional security organizations. In addition, contemporary trends in military international cooperation, its legal and regulatory framework, and its strategic importance are substantiated with examples. In particular, the institutional development directions of military cooperation are analyzed using the example of the Uzbekistan National Guard's activities. The research results show that in the system of international relations the role of military cooperation in building trust between states, ensuring security and stability is steadily increasing.

Keywords: international cooperation, military cooperation, international law, security system, National Guard, interoperability, peacekeeping, institutionalization.

In the current process of globalization, relations between states are deepening, and ensuring security and stability has become a priority task for the international community. Today, global problems such as terrorism, extremism, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, cyber-security threats, regional armed conflicts and transnational crime compel states to act not unilaterally but on the basis of multilateral cooperation. Therefore, international cooperation in the military sphere is emerging as one of the most important directions in the modern system of international relations.

By its nature, the concept of military cooperation denotes a complex of joint actions by states aimed at ensuring security, maintaining peace and combating common threats. Its evolution has been expressed at various historical stages — from traditional military alliances to modern multilateral peacekeeping operations and military-technical cooperation systems.

The relevance of the topic lies in the fact that global and regional security problems indicate the need for states to rely not only on their national defense systems but also on international and regional cooperation mechanisms. This underscores the urgent need for a deep theoretical analysis of international military cooperation and for its effective practical implementation.

Reforms in our country's foreign policy serve not only to strengthen peace and stability in the region but also to enhance national security and defense capabilities. Currently, the international standing of the Republic of Uzbekistan is rising, and cooperation with foreign states in military and military-technical spheres is expanding. This cooperation is being implemented through joint exercises, training of military personnel, exchange of experience and joint security initiatives.

At the initiative of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, developing military cooperation with neighboring states in Central Asia and ensuring border security have been designated as priority directions of our foreign policy. At the same time, open and pragmatic cooperation with leading world countries — participation in joint peacekeeping operations, exchange of experience in modern weapons and technologies, and establishment of military-strategic dialogue — is of particular importance.

Indeed, in the conditions of globalization a state's security and defense capacity largely depends on the level of its military cooperation with foreign countries and international organizations. Therefore, it is a contemporary strategic necessity for Uzbekistan to comprehensively and consistently develop its military cooperation relations internationally. For example, Abroad and in international organizations, Uzbekistan has 59 diplomatic and consular missions. Uzbekistan is a member of over 100 international organizations [1].

Today the Republic of Uzbekistan has established diplomatic relations with 142 countries. In Tashkent there are 46 foreign embassies, 3 consulate-generals, 13 honorary consuls, 24 international organization representations, 26 foreign intergovernmental and government organization representations, and 1 trade mission operating [2]. In 2022 alone, nearly 1,000 bilateral and multilateral meetings at high and top levels aimed at developing multifaceted cooperation were held under the continuity of Uzbekistan's open, pragmatic and active foreign policy [3].

It should be emphasized that the current foreign policy pursued by the Republic of Uzbekistan, its priority aims and main principles are enshrined in the relevant normative acts.

In particular, the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan sets out that our country conducts foreign policy and specifies the principles on which foreign policy is implemented.

The Concept of the Republic of Uzbekistan's Foreign Political Activity is an important programmatic-legal document that determines the main directions for shaping and implementing our country's foreign policy. In addition, paragraphs 93–100 of the Republic of Uzbekistan's Development Strategy for 2022–2026 define priority tasks aimed at further expanding and strengthening the state's international relations.

Today Uzbekistan, as a modern democratic state with growing authority and a rightful place, pursues an active foreign policy as an equal and independent international subject.

The existing National Security Concept also indicates that complex processes and rapidly changing trends in international relations necessitate the active participation of our country on the international stage.

Accordingly, the effective organization of Uzbekistan's foreign policy and the development of international cooperation, including reciprocal relations in the military sphere, are among the factors that directly affect our national interests and security.

From this perspective, a scientific-theoretical analysis of the concept of international cooperation in the military sphere and the study of its evolution — particularly the relatively understudied concept of “international military cooperation” — is of pressing importance for revealing its role in the development of global and regional security systems.

The term “international cooperation” is widely used in the scientific literature, national legislation and various international documents. However, an analysis of available sources shows that many authors do not pay sufficient theoretical attention to clarifying the content and nature of this concept. Therefore, issues of international cooperation have generally been investigated within the research field of international relations theory.

From this viewpoint, a scientific-theoretical analysis of the concept of international military cooperation and the study of its evolution to reveal its role in the development of global and regional security systems is of vital importance. Indeed, in international relations the concept of military cooperation has manifested differently at various evolutionary stages.

In particular, the first stage — the traditional period (19th – early 20th centuries) — is characterized by military cooperation mainly in the form of military-political alliances. For example, organizations such as the Entente and the Triple Alliance were established by states to provide mutual defense and protect geopolitical interests [4].

The second stage — the period of World War II and its aftermath — created the need to organize international cooperation on an institutional basis. As a result, mechanisms such as the UN and its peacekeeping operations emerged. This process contributed to the creation of legal and organizational foundations for international cooperation [5].

The third stage — the Cold War era — saw military cooperation take on an asymmetric character: NATO on one side and the Warsaw Pact on the other. Military cooperation became a primary instrument of geopolitical rivalry.

The fourth stage — the post-Cold War era — saw changes in security threats that made military cooperation multi-faceted and multipolar. NATO's expansion, the European Union's common defense considerations, and the formation of regional security systems such as the SCO and CSTO were important milestones in this direction [6].

The fifth stage — the contemporary period (21st century) — places main emphasis on combating terrorism and extremism, ensuring cyber security, joint peacekeeping operations and humanitarian missions. At the same time, military cooperation has become an integral part of multilateral diplomacy and the security architecture [7].

From the above analysis, issues of military international cooperation can be interpreted differently from the vantage points of international relations theories:

first, realism interprets states' participation in military cooperation as a tool to ensure national interests and security;

second, liberalism views military cooperation as a mechanism for achieving peace and stability through international organizations and joint institutions;

third, constructivism holds that military cooperation arises through the formation of trust, shared values and common interests among states and peoples.

Thus, the concept of military cooperation has manifested in different forms across historical evolutionary stages in line with changes in the geopolitical situation and the system of international relations. Today, it is an indispensable component of international and regional security systems.

In addition, a tendency towards "specialization in international cooperation" is observed: researchers often focus on specific sectors of international cooperation while bypassing broader theoretical questions. At the same time, there are efforts to develop the theoretical-methodological foundations of international cooperation and its categorical apparatus.

Issues of international cooperation, including military cooperation, have been comprehensively studied within various scientific schools and approaches. Western scholars

have primarily advocated theoretical and institutional approaches, Russian scholars have focused on geopolitical analysis and military-strategic issues, and Uzbek and Central Asian scholars have researched the topic from the perspective of national interests and regional security.

For example, K. Waltz in his work *Theory of International Politics* (1979) addressed state security, military alliances and international stability from the perspective of neorealism [8]. G. Morgenthau in *Politics Among Nations* interpreted military cooperation as a process directly linked to national interests [9]. Representatives of liberal and institutionalist schools, R. Keohane and J. Nye [10], substantiated the effectiveness of military cooperation within international institutions such as NATO and the UN. A. Wendt [11], in constructivist theory, associated military cooperation with social and cultural processes.

Russian and CIS scholars have also conducted significant research in this area. For instance, S.A. Karaganov [12] and A.V. Torkunov [13] analyzed the political-legal nature of international security and military alliances. A.A. Kokoshin [14] studied Russia's military strategy and priority directions in military cooperation.

Uzbek and Central Asian scholars have approached the topic from the standpoint of national interests and regional security. For example, S.S. Safayev [15] has academically examined our country's foreign policy and security issues. R.A. Alimov [16] analyzed military cooperation and security mechanisms within the SCO. A.Kh. Saidov [17] carried out fundamental research in international law and security issues. A.A. Qurbanov [18] reflected on regional security theory and Uzbekistan's leading role in Central Asia, while A. Ahmadaliev [19] addressed regional stability through cooperation with Afghanistan.

Analysis of the theoretical approaches of the above scholars shows that different scientific schools and researchers present varied perspectives when studying military international cooperation. Western scholars such as K. Waltz and G. Morgenthau explain military cooperation through realism and neorealism, linking it with state security and national interests. This underscores the primacy of balance of power and geopolitical interests in international relations. Proponents of liberalism and constructivism — R. Keohane, J. Nye, A. Wendt — offer broader approaches by highlighting institutional, social and cultural dimensions of military cooperation.

Russian and CIS scholars (S.A. Karaganov, A.V. Torkunov, A.A. Kokoshin) analyze military cooperation largely from geopolitical and national security strategy perspectives,

which in turn highlights the role of the military sphere in regional power balance and global competition.

Uzbek and Central Asian scholars (S.S. Safayev, R.A. Alimov, A.Kh. Saidov, A.A. Qurbanov, A. Ahmadaliev) offer ideas of particular importance from the viewpoint of national interest and regional security. Their research reveals the pragmatic and constructive foundations of our foreign policy and Uzbekistan's role in ensuring peace and stability in the region.

To fully comprehend military international cooperation, it is appropriate to harmoniously apply different theoretical schools and scholars' viewpoints. When the theoretical models of Western scholars, the strategic analyses of Russian researchers, and the practical directions developed by our national scholars are analyzed together, it becomes possible to draw deep and comprehensive conclusions in this field.

Thus, the studies by various schools and authors demonstrate that military international cooperation is a complex and multi-faceted process. Studying this process has important scientific significance for forming national security and foreign political strategy on a scientific basis.

According to the above research, Uzbekistan's foreign policy is guided by pragmatic and constructive approaches. Particularly, new forms of cooperation with neighboring states based on public interest have been formed. It should be noted that since 2016 profound and principled reforms in the country's foreign political activity have been implemented.

S. Safayev [20] notes that in recent years "a foreign policy truly advancing national interests has emerged. Its basis lies in objective interstate contradictions and clashes of natural interests, readiness for dialogue on existing problems, and a propensity for reasonable compromise while decisively defending national interests."

This viewpoint is notable from the perspective of international relations theory. From the realist school's perspective, prioritizing national interests in foreign policy is natural. However, Uzbekistan's foreign policy is not based solely on a realist approach; it also embodies elements of compromise and cooperation characteristic of liberalism. Thus, our foreign policy has become hybrid: protecting national interests while promoting international dialogue and integration.

The notion of national interest is not constant but varies depending on global processes, regional events and internal development factors. Therefore, delineating its limits is complex and should be considered in harmony with international legal norms and universal principles.

S. Safayev's views indicate that Uzbekistan's foreign policy is grounded in national interests while relying on a pragmatic and compromise-oriented approach internationally. This provides an important theoretical and practical foundation for ensuring the country's security and stable development.

G. Yuldasheva [21], analyzing the distinctive features of New Uzbekistan's foreign policy, emphasizes that active foreign policy is not an end in itself for the incumbent government but a means of responding promptly to the country's internal development needs and global events. The humanitarian direction — studied in science as “soft power” — has become significantly more active.

Viewing foreign policy solely as a tool poses risks because pursuing national interests is itself a strategic objective. If foreign policy is treated exclusively as an instrument, its independent value may be underappreciated.

G. Yuldasheva's observation that the activation of “soft power” is correct, raises a polemical question: is “soft power” sufficient as a mechanism for national security and internal stability, or is it merely a means of improving external image and international standing? Scientifically, “soft power” is an important element of foreign policy, but its effectiveness often manifests in combination with economic stability and political reforms.

The above scholar's views incline toward the liberalist approach, stressing humanitarian, cooperative and soft-power functions of foreign policy. However, from a realist paradigm, foreign policy is not merely an instrument but a strategic tool to ensure state power and influence. Thus, a clear scientific debate between the two schools emerges.

Practically, New Uzbekistan's foreign policy does employ soft power more actively, but it is not the sole means for stable development; it is applied in combination with hard power and economic diplomacy. There is therefore a limitation in viewing foreign policy solely as an instrument: foreign policy is both a means of internal development and an independent strategic objective aimed at ensuring national security.

G. Yuldasheva's views are important for illuminating the pragmatic and practical nature of New Uzbekistan's foreign policy. However, scientifically interpreting foreign policy only as a tool limits its independent strategic significance. Therefore, New Uzbekistan's foreign policy uses soft power to enhance international standing while simultaneously protecting national interests and strengthening state capacity.

According to S. Saidolimov [22], “internal policy conducted on new approaches and methods is reflected in foreign policy as its logical continuation. Strengthening close friendship

and cooperation relations with neighboring states has been defined as one of the priority principles of foreign policy.”

This approach reflects the pragmatic and constructive character of Uzbekistan’s foreign policy and serves as a primary means of consolidating friendship and cooperation in Central Asia.

According to Richard Weitz [23], Director of the Center for Political-Military Analysis at the Hudson Institute (USA), Uzbekistan’s foreign policy is undergoing major changes for the first time in decades. The new President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, has played a decisive role in this transformation through his new political initiatives aimed at strengthening foreign economic cooperation, resolving disputes with neighboring countries, easing border and travel restrictions, and promoting greater regional unity among the Central Asian states.

In the view of Catherine Poujol [24], Regional Director of the French Institute for Central Asian Studies (IFEAC), profound transformations are also taking place both within the regional framework and at the international level in Uzbekistan’s contemporary foreign policy. It is becoming increasingly evident that Uzbekistan is steadily consolidating its multi-vector and openness-oriented policy, strengthening its reputation as a constructive and pragmatic actor in the global arena.

Drawing from local and foreign scholars’ viewpoints, it can be said that New Uzbekistan now operates in an entirely new format in foreign policy. Therefore, it is important to deeply analyze relations of international military cooperation, identify trends and develop scientifically grounded proposals for their prospects. Consequently, scientific research must consistently study the theoretical-legal content and structural elements of the concept of “international cooperation.”

From a terminological standpoint, although a separate dictionary definition for “cooperation” may not exist, the verb “to cooperate” expresses it. In the 2008 Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language, edited by A. Madvaliev [25], “hamkorlik” (cooperation) is defined as participation together in work or activity, executed on the basis of equality; mutual involvement in a certain field, working together.

From this perspective, “cooperation” can be interpreted as the joint actions of interested subjects aimed at achieving a particular goal. At the international level, such cooperation is carried out among subjects of international law.

A.V. Krysanov [26] proposes considering “international cooperation” in two directions: as a general principle of international law and as the direct practical activity of interested subjects.

Krysanov’s two-sided interpretation fully encompasses the concept of “international cooperation.” However, some scholars raise the question of priority between the two directions: while cooperation as a principle provides theoretical stability, the effectiveness of practical activity depends on full implementation.

Thus, the two approaches complement and harmonize each other in defining the theoretical and practical foundations of international cooperation.

Legal scholar A. Saidov [27] rightly notes that the principle of international cooperation consolidated in the twentieth century and reached universal recognition in its present form.

Saidov’s view is accurate and scientifically grounded because although the principle of international cooperation existed long before, its legal consolidation and universal recognition occurred in the twentieth century after the adoption of the UN Charter and various declarations. Thus, one may assert that international cooperation in its current form has crystallized as a universal legal and political value.

The principal document regulating international relations is the United Nations Charter [28]. Regardless of differences in political, economic and social systems, the Charter is based on the idea of comprehensive cooperation. According to the Charter, states must cooperate to solve international problems in economic, social, cultural and humanitarian spheres and to maintain international peace and security, taking effective collective measures.

Subsequently, the principle of international cooperation acquired clearer content. For instance, the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States (1970), adopted pursuant to the UN Charter, called on states to: cooperate in ensuring international peace and security; respect and observe human rights and fundamental freedoms for all; eradicate all forms of racial discrimination and religious intolerance; conduct relations in economic, social, cultural, technical and commercial fields on principles of sovereign equality and non-intervention; and implement joint and individual measures envisaged by the Charter [29].

Indeed, the 1970 Declaration clarified the Charter’s principles and elevated them to the level of widely recognized customary law. It consolidated sovereign equality, non-use of force, non-interference in internal affairs, peaceful settlement of disputes, respect for human rights, and the obligation to cooperate — forming a coherent normative package that imposes binding

obligations on states and clarifies the legal basis for collective and individual measures under the UN framework. Practically, these principles require regional cooperation while demanding strict adherence to sovereign equality and non-intervention.

The principle of international cooperation is also widely applied at the regional level. For instance, the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) calls on participating states to develop equal cooperation, strengthen mutual trust and understanding, and ensure international peace, security and justice through friendly and good-neighborly relations. Similar principles are reflected in the charters of the CIS, SCO, ASEAN and other regional organizations [30].

The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan proclaims our country's full capacity as a subject of international relations and its commitment to a peaceful foreign policy aimed at developing bilateral and multilateral relations in all respects [31].

Thus, the principle of international cooperation in international law forms a fundamental basis for the activities of international law subjects and acquires binding force through international normative acts.

If we consider "international cooperation" in the second sense — as the direct joint activity of subjects of international law — Uzbek scholars R.A. Tuzmukhamedov and R.T. Khakimov [32] interpret it as coordinated activities of subjects of international law to pursue joint goals, harmonize positions, resolve common problems and adopt mutually acceptable decisions.

These interpretations reveal "international cooperation" not as rhetorical principle but as an operational process: aligning positions, coordinating joint actions and adopting mutually acceptable decisions. The strength of this approach is that the effectiveness of cooperation can be measured through concrete mechanisms such as treaties, institutions (UN bodies, regional organizations), joint working groups and information exchange protocols. Efficiency indicators include convergence of common interests, institutional density, reciprocity, monitoring and implementation, and dispute settlement procedures. At the same time, constraints such as power asymmetry, sensitivity of sovereignty, transaction costs and the risk of "symbolic cooperation" exist. Thus, this interpretation supplements the "principle" view by explaining the practical architecture of cooperation based on legal norms.

According to M.A. Muntyan [33], "international cooperation" reflects a process of mutual interaction among two or more participants in which the use of armed force is excluded and seeking opportunities to realize common interests together is prioritized. Unlike the general

concept, cooperation does not mean the absence of conflicts, but rather their avoidance of extreme, crisis forms.

In our view, this approach reveals the practical-operational nature of cooperation in international relations: it serves to maximize mutual benefit through instruments such as alignment of positions, planning and coordination, information exchange, joint working groups, as well as monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Practical efficiency criteria include the convergence of interests, reduction of escalation risks, adherence to adopted decisions, and the formation of a stable normative-institutional foundation for future joint actions. At the same time, factors such as power asymmetry, sensitivity to sovereignty, and transactional costs determine the real limits of cooperation, which requires its continuous adaptive management.

It should also be noted that within the theory of international relations, there are attempts to interpret the concept of international cooperation through the prism of diplomacy. In particular, as the European researcher Beta Surmacz emphasizes [34], just like the term “international cooperation,” the concept of “diplomacy” is often understood intuitively by most people; however, when subjected to conceptual analysis, its complexity becomes evident. Therefore, in scholarly research, diplomacy should not be confined to its intuitive meaning but rather examined in terms of its goal–means, actor–environment, and process–outcome interrelations.

According to another European scholar, Andrzej Gałganek [35], diplomacy constitutes an essential component of international cooperation and generally represents a system of methods and instruments used by states to establish relations with other countries based on their national interests.

The scientific conclusion that harmonizes these two approaches is that diplomacy is simultaneously a principle-based institutional practice and a pragmatic tool oriented toward interests. Hence, its empirical analysis requires consideration of negotiation, mediation, public and multi-track diplomacy (Track 1.5 / Track 2) formats, along with coherence and efficiency indicators.

According to the British scholar Peter Marshall, the concept of diplomacy can be used in at least several main senses:

1. As a synonym for foreign policy, or as the instrumental method of conducting it;
2. As the process of regulating international relations through negotiations or other peaceful measures;
3. As the body of professionals working in foreign services;

4. And finally, as a term used to denote the skills or competence of professional diplomats [36].

As is evident, scholars employ diverse approaches to the scientific study of international cooperation. Some regard it as a means of ensuring peace and stability, others as an instrument for preventing or mitigating conflicts with minimal damage, while a third group focuses on national interests as the primary determinant, emphasizing the dynamic and evolving nature of this process.

Based on the above considerations, we believe that “international cooperation” can be understood as the joint activity of subjects of international law, carried out in accordance with the norms and principles of international law and aimed at achieving common goals and objectives.

The content and essence of international cooperation may vary significantly depending on the specific sphere in which it is implemented, as these spheres are highly diverse. Typically, the principal directions and priority tasks of cooperation in a given sector are explicitly defined in the corresponding international legal instruments.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, national legislation regulating issues of international cooperation stipulates that such activities must be carried out on the basis of the obligations arising from international treaties to which the Republic is a party (through ratification), as well as in accordance with domestic legal norms.

It should be emphasized that interstate cooperation does not emerge spontaneously in the absence of certain conditions. According to P. A. Tsygankov [37], international cooperation presupposes the existence of three essential elements:

1. the presence of common goals among the partner states;
2. the expectation of mutual benefits from cooperation; and
3. the principle of reciprocity of interests.

The first element provides strategic orientation to cooperation, the second ensures rational motivation, and the third supports trust and continuity in iterative interactions. At the same time, the model has practical limitations: in conditions of power asymmetry, consistent reciprocity becomes difficult to maintain; the “free-rider” problem may arise with regard to public goods; and the category of “common goals” may prove dynamic or ambiguous, reducing the level of genuine consensus to a merely formal one.

When translating this definition into practical (operational) terms, the following indicators become important: the existence of joint declarations and memoranda, working

groups, and compliance–monitoring mechanisms; the volume of trade and investment; the number of joint projects and exercises; the level of coordination in the peaceful settlement of disputes; and the presence of both immediate and delayed forms of reciprocity.

From a theoretical perspective, liberal institutionalism interprets this triad as a mechanism for reducing transaction costs and enhancing mutual trust through institutions, whereas neorealism considers reciprocity insufficient due to the relative gains and security dilemma. Therefore, although Tsygankov's model provides a conceptual “map” of cooperation, its transformation into sustainable practice requires institutional design solutions such as transparency, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, incentive/sanction systems, consideration of domestic political factors, and effective risk management (including escalation prevention and deterrence).

Among these aspects, the principle of mutual interest plays a primary role in ensuring the durability and stability of international cooperative relations.

Overall, international cooperation is a constantly evolving concept, and its theoretical and legal examination is of particular relevance today, as it enables the formulation of scientifically grounded and practically applicable solutions to the pressing problems of contemporary world politics.

When studying the concept of “international military cooperation,” it is appropriate to separately analyze the component parts of the phrase — “international cooperation” and “military.”

A deeper analysis of “international cooperation” shows that it should be understood not merely as relations among states or international organizations but as a coordinated, purposeful process carried out by all types of international law subjects. Such cooperation is based on norms of international law and widely accepted principles and is oriented toward achieving common goals and tasks such as global or regional security, sustainable development, economic and social progress, and protection of human rights and freedoms.

As for the term “military,” in the 2008 Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language edited by A. Madvaliev [38], “harb” means “war, battle,” while “harbiy” (military) is defined as: (1) related to war; connected with war and military operations; (2) pertaining to the army or military service; (3) a person in the army, a serviceman; (4) military service, army.

Lexical analysis of the term shows that “military” simultaneously expresses an institution, activity and person. Thus, its usage bears significant scientific-practical importance not only linguistically but also in fields of law, public administration and security.

In legal literature, “military” is often used in connection with institutions such as military service, military discipline, military preparedness, military obligations and military equipment. In this sense, the dictionary definition enables a deeper revelation of the legal and institutional content of the term.

Today there are various definitions and approaches to the concept of “international military cooperation.” For example, the UN Charter [39] envisages cooperation among member states “to maintain international peace and security and, for this purpose, to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace and for the suppression of acts of aggression and other breaches of the peace.” This establishes the basis for cooperation in peacekeeping and collective security.

From a military science perspective, “international military cooperation” can be described as the coordinated activities of armed forces and military structures of various states based on international law norms and generally recognized security principles. Several scientific approaches highlight different facets of its essence: strategic, institutional, functional, theoretical and practice-oriented approaches.

We analyze these five main approaches with reference to scholars and sources. From a strategic perspective, C. Clausewitz in his famous work *Vom Kriege* [40] interpreted war as “the continuation of politics by other means,” viewing military cooperation as a means for states to achieve strategic objectives. According to him, international military alliances and cooperation systems play an important role in ensuring state security.

From Clausewitz’s views, one can conclude that military actions are never carried out separate from political interests. Therefore, international military cooperation is considered a logical continuation of states’ foreign policy. Indeed, when a single state’s internal forces are insufficient to ensure security, military alliances and regional and global cooperation systems become important means for strategic advantage and stability. For example, formation of systems like NATO or CSTO can be seen as practical manifestations of Clausewitzian theory.

Thus, his doctrine remains relevant in contemporary politico-military relations. In the 21st century, global threats (terrorism, extremism, cybercrime and geopolitical competition) have strengthened the necessity for collective action to ensure national security.

Among proponents of the institutional approach, K. Walicki and J. Glenn in their *Security Studies* [41] emphasize that international military cooperation occurs not only among states but through institutional structures such as NATO, UN peacekeeping forces, CSTO and SCO. They

evaluate the role of international organizations in military cooperation as the “foundation of collective security.”

From the military science perspective, the institutional approach matters because it coordinates joint military activities, implements common standards and ensures interoperability of different states’ armed forces. For example, NATO’s single military standards (STANAGs) ensure that member armies can operate together in many types of operations.

The authors’ emphasis on institutional foundations shows that international organizations not only bring military forces together but also serve to build trust, political stability and a strategic environment — making institutional models central to military theory and practice in an era of globalization and transnational threats.

The functional approach, represented by scholars like S. Huntington in *The Soldier and the State* [42], examines the wide range of tasks of military cooperation. He argues that military cooperation among states covers not only alliances for war, but also counter-terrorism, border security, military preparedness and intelligence exchange in peacetime.

Huntington’s views reflect the transnational nature of modern security: threats in the 21st century transcend national borders and appear on a global scale. Therefore, military cooperation’s purpose is not limited to alliance management or joint war operations but aims to form institutional, strategic and tactical cohesion among states to ensure comprehensive security.

This perspective is particularly relevant for Central Asia’s security policy. Military cooperation in the region — border security, combating drug trafficking and transnational crime, joint exercises and information exchange — strengthens regional stability.

Thus, Huntington’s theory expands the theoretical and practical scope of international military cooperation, presenting it as a universal mechanism for ensuring security in peacetime.

The fourth approach — the theoretical approach — includes J. Mearsheimer [43], who in *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* contends that international military cooperation is a joint action undertaken by states to strengthen their security in conditions of geopolitical competition. He theoretically grounds the concept of “collective security” as the theoretical basis of military cooperation.

We believe that the concept of collective security proposed by the author serves as the theoretical foundation of military cooperation. According to this approach, a threat to one is a threat to all, and therefore responses to security threats are collective by nature. The theory is reflected in the formation and activities of structures such as NATO, CSTO and SCO.

From the military science standpoint, this doctrine forms an important theoretical basis for preserving balance and stability in contemporary international relations: in conditions of geopolitical rivalry, individual states' unilateral actions are often insufficient, and collective measures are required to effectively address threats.

Thus, Mearsheimer's views reveal the strategic significance of international military cooperation, showing that it is crucial not only for strengthening national security but also for achieving global stability.

The next approach — practice-oriented — is reflected in NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization [44], which in Part III emphasizes the importance of "interoperability" — the ability of armed forces of different states to act together in operations.

From the reviewed scientific approaches one can see that the concept of "international military cooperation" is interpreted strategically, institutionally, functionally, theoretically and practically. However, a common unifying feature is the aim to ensure states' security and strengthen stability on the basis of international law norms.

The CIS Concept on military cooperation of member states [45] indicates that military cooperation is intended to support good-neighborly relations, deepen confidence-building measures, develop national armed forces, and, through broad cooperation, ensure joint and national security of CIS member states.

The Concept on military cooperation of CIS member states thus reflects a collective security-based approach: it relies on sovereign equality but requires joint measures and institutional mechanisms because security threats are common. The document defines strategic directions in CIS military cooperation, serving both to modernize national armies and to ensure regional stability.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) founding treaty [46] states that member states agree to consolidate their efforts to protect the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, to strengthen stability and prosperity in the North Atlantic area, and to create collective defense and maintain peace and security.

Establishing cooperation in international security and defense is one of the most important directions both theoretically and practically. Due to globalization, transnational threats, rising terrorism and extremism, cybercrime and regional conflicts, each state's security increasingly depends on a common, joint security system.

According to R. Alimov, after the collapse of the Soviet Union Central Asian states faced a strategic task: to develop new relations in the international relations system, taking into account national and regional security problems, while avoiding falling into the trap of the “security dilemma.” [47]

From the military science perspective, this process evolved in two directions: on one hand, states focused on shaping national security strategies, building national armies and strengthening defense potential; on the other hand, common threats (terrorism, extremism, border disputes, water-energy issues) compelled states toward regional and international cooperation.

The author stresses that the principle of the “security dilemma” indicates that if states sharply increase means of force to ensure their security, neighboring states may perceive this as a threat, thereby increasing instability. Therefore, Central Asian states must apply confidence-building measures, diplomatic balancing and military cooperation mechanisms as primary tools to resolve security problems.

Accordingly, R. Alimov [48] concludes that long-term regional security in Central Asia can be achieved not by unilateral military force but through trust and cooperation based on international legal norms and institutional mechanisms.

Long-term strategies for ensuring security in Central Asia should be based on international relations that include long-term technical and financial assistance in areas such as border security, banking systems, training of qualified personnel and improving the effectiveness of state institutions.

Sh. Arifkhanov [49] interprets Central Asian security in terms of B. Buzan’s “security complex” concept, emphasizing that the security of no single state in the region can be provided completely independently of the security of other states.

Uzbek scholars U. Khasanov, S. Safayev, I. Boboqulov, O. Mannapova and others have proposed views that outline Uzbekistan’s foreign policy vis-à-vis regional processes.

Uzbek scholar F. Tolipov [50] links the organization of Uzbekistan’s international cooperation to the creation of a “grand strategy” and argues that a state’s foreign policy strategy should be based on vital national interests — physical, cultural and political survival. To protect these strategic national interests, a state must continuously enhance military power and mobilization potential and choose compatible foreign policy partners. Tolipov states that strategic partnership with foreign states should be (1) comprehensive, (2) long-term, (3) mutually beneficial, and (4) based on similar or close approaches to international relations.

In the modern geopolitical environment military cooperation should not be limited to short-term aid or tactical agreements but should rely on systemic mechanisms that can ensure long-term security. The first criterion is comprehensiveness: military cooperation should cover not only military exercises or arms trade but also intelligence sharing, border security and combating terrorism and cybercrime. The second criterion is longevity: strategic partnerships require long-term planning and sustainable development. The third criterion is mutual interest: if one party's interests dominate and the other is marginalized, such cooperation will not be durable. Thus, equality of rights is crucial in strategic partnerships. The fourth criterion is coherence of approaches: military cooperation succeeds when participating states share similar views on international politics and security. Tolipov's views therefore reveal the strategic meaning of international cooperation: it is a necessary condition for long-term stability and collective security.

Morton Kaplan [51] emphasizes that the study of the international relations system must consider factors that cause its emergence and change (relations among system participants, rules of change, classification rules for participants, classification rules for participants' capabilities and information classification rules) and proposes six types of international systems: (1) balance-of-power system; (2) adaptive bipolar system; (3) rigid bipolar system; (4) universal system; (5) hierarchical system; and (6) single-veto system.

Kaplan's methodological approach is of great importance for military science because the international security environment is formed through such systemic transformations.

Kaplan's six types of international relations systems can be assessed in military-political analysis as follows: the balance-of-power system — war and peace processes are often dependent on the distribution of military power among states (as in 19th century Europe); adaptive bipolar system — competition between two leading states is balanced through regional cooperation mechanisms (as in the Cold War); rigid bipolar system — two poles characterize intense competition and military blocs; a universal system — all participants share common goals and confront threats collectively (analogous to UN peacekeeping); hierarchical system — one or several leading states act as governing powers (hegemonic models); single-veto system — a state has the capacity to block decisions in the entire international system (e.g., veto power in the UN Security Council).

From a military-scientific perspective, Kaplan's theory does not always manifest fully in reality; various elements may coexist. Today's global security environment includes aspects of

balance of power (US–China rivalry), universal elements (UN peace missions), and hierarchical tendencies (regional leadership by certain states).

In military analysis Kaplan's systems are tightly linked to the "security dilemma": as states increase their capabilities, neighbors feel insecurity and competition escalates. Therefore, international military cooperation mechanisms (NATO, CSTO, SCO) are designed to mitigate such tensions and stabilize the security environment.

Another American scholar, Peter Katzenstein, in studying international cooperation, departs from neorealism and neoliberalism by proposing a distinctive theory grounded in sociological research and emphasizing cultural, ethnic and national factors.

Katzenstein argues that neorealism and neoliberalism, which reason primarily based on a state's physical capabilities and political institutions, provide limited explanations and need to be supplemented by approaches that account for cultural and identity factors [52].

James Holzgref [53] - the founder of liberal institutionalism emphasizes morality as central in forming a stable international relations system: principles not grounded in ethics will ultimately lead to decline.

Postmodernist theorists (e.g., Rob Walker) note that the expansionary effect of globalization and the spread of political, economic and cultural processes beyond traditional state borders means that viewing individuals primarily as citizens of a state is giving way to assessing them as separate individuals; hence peace and stability in modern international relations can be achieved through attention to individuals and transnational actors [54].

From a military perspective, this approach aligns with modern peacekeeping operations and human rights protection mechanisms.

Russian scholar Vladimir Kulagin [55] argues against a unipolar world, advocating a multipolar foundation for international relations where inter-state relations form the basis for international security and stability.

From the above theoretical approaches, it is clear that explanations of international military cooperation based solely on realism or state-power models are insufficient. Contemporary military science must analyze cultural, ethical, political and geostrategic factors together. This integrated approach is one of the main prerequisites for achieving stability and security in international relations.

Another Russian scholar, Pavel Tsygankov [56], compares hypotheses of a "democratic world" and a "socialist world," proposing to consider these worlds as homogeneous systems — political regimes, economies, ideological views and cultures that are similar.

In the military sphere international cooperation is also understood as “military diplomacy” or “defense diplomacy.” V. Vinokurov [57] interprets military diplomacy as an organizational military-political instrument of implementing a state's foreign policy — a set of techniques and methods for achieving military-political objectives, including exchange of military attachés, naval and air attachés, and corresponding relations at the level of armed forces. According to him, military diplomats perform three functions: (1) advisory — military attachés provide suggestions to ambassadors on military-political matters; (2) representative — military attachés present their state's armed forces and command abroad; (3) information-analytical — military attachés collect, analyze and prepare proposals regarding the foreign country based on their state's interests.

Another scholar, F. Frolov [58], suggests that military diplomacy is intended to perform two main tasks: develop military cooperation with the host state and provide informational support (intelligence). If the first task is not implemented, emphasis is placed on the second.

Germany's former Foreign Minister Berndt von Staden defines military diplomacy as activities related to military missions and the participation of military representatives in disarmament and arms control negotiations. In general, the concept of military diplomacy covers not only the activities of military attachés and other authorized military representatives but also peacekeeping missions, international military cooperation processes and related tasks.

According to the UK Ministry of Defence, military diplomacy mainly encompasses the responsibilities and roles of military attachés. In recent years Western countries have increasingly used the term “defence diplomacy” instead of “military diplomacy.”

Polish scholar Lech Drab argues that “defence diplomacy” emerged from the need to explain new functions and international roles assigned to armed forces after World War II. He believes the term should not be treated as a direct synonym of “military diplomacy” because it has broader content beyond a mechanical combination of the concepts “military” and “diplomacy.”

After the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, from the 1990s combat roles of armed forces in achieving political objectives significantly decreased. International measures aimed at preventing conflicts became more widespread. In this context, particularly in Western practice, the term “defence diplomacy” entered usage as a category expressing a new content of defense policy.

However, so far there is no single universal definition of this concept because each state interprets it according to its national security strategy and needs.

The main objective of defence diplomacy is to form and implement a state's security policy without the use of force; its task is to create long-term and stable international relations in the defense area [59].

The term “defence diplomacy” was first noted in the UK Ministry of Defence’s 1998 Strategic Defence Review. Unlike “military diplomacy,” which contemplates the threat or use of force for achieving goals, “defence diplomacy” excludes military operations and focuses on: minimizing hostility and tensions and strengthening confidence among states; creating a transparent, stable and long-term international environment for defense cooperation using peaceful military engagement; supporting national objectives and influencing partners’ positions; promoting legal regulation of broad security issues; and supporting dialogue and cooperation aimed at strengthening mutual trust and harmony in the defense sphere.

Since the 1998 Strategic Defence Review, the term “defence diplomacy” has been forming as an independent category in international relations theory and military policy. Unlike “military diplomacy,” it is not based on the threat or use of force; rather, it is oriented towards confidence-building measures, reducing hostility, promoting transparency in defense matters and creating a stable environment for cooperation.

From a military-scientific perspective, defence diplomacy is important as a modern tool for strengthening international security without the use of force, legally resolving broad security issues and effectively using military resources for peaceful objectives.

To achieve the above aims, defence diplomacy uses forms of cooperation such as high-level visits by military officials; bilateral meetings and dialogues among specialists; training and practical exercises; defence forums for regional security; provision of military assistance; confidence-building measures; and non-proliferation initiatives regarding nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction [60].

In short, “defence diplomacy” seeks to minimize conflicts and create a common space of security and stability through confidence-building measures.

There is no publicly available evidence of separate, extensive scientific research on military (defence) diplomacy in our country.

Nevertheless, considerable scientific research and studies have been conducted on Uzbekistan’s national defense doctrine, strategic directions for ensuring security and its military-political activities at regional and global levels, as noted at the beginning of this chapter.

Overall, multiple theories and approaches exist in international relations and international security, each supported by strategic evidence, military-political conclusions and operational analyses.

However, it should be emphasized that there is still no single, universally accepted theoretical concept within international relations. The research subject — the balance of military-political forces among states, the power of armed forces, collective security mechanisms and dynamics of military alliances — is constantly changing and developing.

From this standpoint, the absence of a single, universally accepted approach in international relations theory is logically defensible because each state's national security strategy, defense policy and military doctrine are formed based on differing conditions and interests.

Nevertheless, it is appropriate to generalize existing views and approaches in the field of international security and to strengthen conceptually and legally the notions of “international military cooperation” and “defence diplomacy” in military law.

Thus, summarizing existing views and approaches in international security, we consider international military cooperation to be a special form of cooperative activity by subjects of international law (states, international organizations) aimed at achieving common military-political objectives in the field of defense and security in accordance with procedures and rules reflected in jointly developed international normative-legal instruments.

From the above, the following conclusions on the evolution and theoretical analysis of the concepts of international cooperation and military international cooperation may be drawn:

First, military cooperation has developed from traditional alliances to institutional (UN, NATO, CSTO, SCO) and functional (peacekeeping operations, cyber security, border security) formats, becoming an integral part of the modern security architecture.

Second, international cooperation has a twofold nature — universal principles (UN Charter, declarations) and practical-operational actions (coordination, monitoring, implementation). Effectiveness depends on the concurrent operation of both elements.

Third, the core of contemporary cooperation lies in standardization (STANAGs), combined staff exercises, personnel training and intelligence-information exchange that enable joint action.

Fourth, in Central Asia, mitigating the “security dilemma” depends on confidence-building measures and defence diplomacy; unilateral defense is insufficient and collective mechanisms are decisive.

Fifth, New Uzbekistan's foreign policy is pragmatic and multivectoral; priority is given to military and military-technical cooperation, joint exercises, personnel training and strategic partnership criteria (comprehensiveness, long-term perspective, mutual interest, coherence of approaches).

Sixth, fundamental concepts such as "international cooperation" should be defined as "the joint activity of subjects of international law based on international legal norms and principles aimed at achieving common goals and tasks," while "international military cooperation" can be defined as "a specific cooperative activity by subjects of international law (states, international organizations) aimed at achieving common military-political objectives in the field of defense and security in accordance with procedures and rules reflected in jointly developed international normative-legal documents," and "defence diplomacy" as "diplomatic activity based on legal-institutional foundations intended to advance a state's national security and defense policy without the use of force." It is appropriate to consolidate these definitions in military legislation.

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