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# One for All, Each on Its Own: Analysing the Post-Soviet System of Collective Security

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**Abstract:** The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 allowed independent states, which emerged in its place, to construct their own alignments. The choice of the case for empirical analysis had been made based on several unique characteristics. Orthodox Alliance Theory had almost never properly addressed alignments in the post-Soviet space due to the lack of access to information during the Soviet period – along with the structure of the state: only Soviet alignment policies were taken into consideration, instead of those of its constituent republics as well – and modest interest of alliance theorists in the region. Continued disintegration of the post-Soviet space, which has not stopped with the collapse of the Soviet Union but keeps fragmenting further, creates a unique setting for researching the adequacy of Alliance Theory's classic assumptions as well as developing new approaches. This work traces the development of the post-Soviet system of collective security and its subsequent transformation into a series of bilateral security relations, along with the shortfall of multilateralism.

**Keywords:** Post-Soviet space, alignments, Alliance Theory, CSTO, SCO, NATO

## Introduction

The post-Soviet space embraces two competing alignment systems and a complex web of informal affairs between them. The region is attractive for several reasons. First, it provides ground for coexistence of two alignments – the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO). This very fact devises political tensions.

Second, shared hurdles that subsist since the break-up of the Soviet Union in the areas of Caucasus and Central Asia provide abundant possibilities for cooperation. Yet without formal and direct cooperation between the two sides, their members are pooling together in security links,<sup>1</sup> law enforcement trainings, countering drug trafficking, inter-regional

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1 For example, all the members of the CSTO are part of the bilateral NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) program. Some have an advanced level of cooperation with NATO. For instance, Russia has its very own NATO-Russia Council whereas states such as Kazakhstan are involved in IAP.

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legal reforms and beyond, such as, for instance, participation in the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) and a transit chain to the ISAF mission in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, many CSTO initiatives designed to formalise the relations with NATO on an institutional level, as well as on the ground<sup>2</sup> in Afghanistan, were rejected.<sup>3</sup>

Push by the members, above all Russia, for the recognition of CSTO's role in the post-Soviet regional security complex has been consistent since 2002. Initial significant non-regional acknowledgement came from Asia when in 2007 the Chinese-dominated Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the CSTO.<sup>4</sup> In 2010 the UN extended recognition to the post-Soviet alignment – by signing a cooperation agreement – which has been described as a milestone in the CSTO development.<sup>5</sup>

Although the Cold War has been over for several decades, the 'bloc policy' approach has not been forsaken and has been on an upward trajectory since 2001 in the post-Soviet space, coupled by harsh competition for allies.<sup>6</sup> However, inheriting hard-line traditions, new types of blocs, unlike their Cold War counterparts, tends to alter their strategies in favour of multi-layered and comprehensive approaches to security and development, in order to remain consistent with the rapidly changing environment in international affairs.

This article argues that alignments in the post-Soviet space are formed based on state objectives. Since the ultimate interest of states within the system – survival and prosperity – never changes, it is to be achieved by means of state objectives. Because objectives of a state are heavily dependent on a number of factors such as availability of natural resources, geopolitical location, threat of secession and other, they are reflected in strategies that states deem necessary and that best fulfil their national interests. Objectives take shape of national security and foreign policy strategies of states, which is a design of a state role and behaviour within the system, highlighting issues of critical importance and the best ways to pursue a state's ultimate interest.

Post-Soviet states exhibit enduring interest in security cooperation. However, the construction of an extensive regional security framework in the post-Soviet space is impeded by complex and occasionally troublesome issues between the post-Soviet states. This ar-

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2 CSTO initiative to support Afghanistan with reforms.

3 The secretariat of the CSTO attempted to formalise relations with NATO on several occasions.

4 This move was seen as a delineation of spheres of influence between Russia and China in the region of Central Asia.

5 The deal was seen as part of continuous efforts of the UN to promote cooperation with regional organisations and boost its activity in the region of Central Asia. A joint declaration on cooperation was signed by the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and CSTO Secretary General Nikolai Bordyuzha in Moscow. Socor, Vladimir. 2010. "The UN Accepts CSTO as a Regional Security Organization." *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, March 19. Accessed 27 December 2016. <https://jamestown.org/program/the-un-accepts-csto-as-a-regional-security-organization/#sthash.Ww95gdri.dpuf>.

6 SCO is dominated by China, CSTO is dominated by Russia, while NATO is dominated by the US.

title addresses the type of security framework that has been shaping in the post-Soviet space, and the role of increased obligations that new types of alignments require from its members. The post-Soviet system of collective security is scrutinised with an emphasis on the causal relationship between increasingly different security threats and the effect that such dissimilarity brings to the members' objectives. Particularly, this article uses the case of CSTO to analyse the above-mentioned tendencies under the conditions when Orthodox Alliance Theory rules apply loosely.

## **Origins of CSTO**

A security system for the post-Soviet space which would prevent conflicts and stabilise the volatile security environment in the region had been required by states in the area since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Multilateral efforts were considered a prerogative. The first framework logically suitable for such a task was the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which by the end of 1993 and the beginning of 1994 comprised twelve countries of the former Soviet Union, with the exception of the Baltic States.<sup>7</sup>

The initial CIS activities in the security sphere were designed to reduce the negative consequences of the fragmentation of integrated Soviet structures, primarily its massive security complex. The idea to act in concert in military and defence areas lingered from the failed attempt to transform the Soviet Union into a loose confederation of sovereign states with integrated military, foreign, and economic policies. Due to the anti-CIS stance, in particular concerning its supranationality in security and defence spheres, of Ukraine<sup>8</sup> – second after Russia and too important for any integrated security framework if it such a framework were to emerge<sup>9</sup> – as well as outbreaks of numerous violent conflicts throughout the post-Soviet space,<sup>10</sup> the role of CIS as a feasible security framework was watered down already by the mid-1990s.

In 1992 the CIS officially launched its security project, the Collective Security Treaty (CST) – a framework envisaging collective military action in case of external attack. The

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7 Baltic States never joined any post-Soviet formal alignments or multilateral integrative frameworks. Following the breakup of the Union they declared the position of immediate return to Europe.

8 Both Boris Yeltsin and Mikhail Gorbachev assumed that any significant institutionalised grouping of former Soviet nations could not exclude Ukraine.

9 After the collapse of the USSR, Russia and Ukraine were left with powerful military-industrial complex enterprises. Natural hopes of Moscow for cooperation with Ukraine did not materialise in full. The two states became competitors on the external defence and weapon-production markets. Cooperation between Moscow and Kiev in this sphere was limited in that Ukraine shipped components for Russian military-industrial complex (for instance engines, for cruise missiles for submarines and strategic bombers). Nevertheless, since 1996 Russia tended to reduce cooperation in this sphere with Ukraine and tried to create its own closed-loop production cycles.

10 Nagorno-Karabakh (1988-94), first South Ossetia war (1991-92), war in Abkhazia (1992-93), Ossetian-Ingush conflict (1992), First Chechen War (1994-1996); in the Western post-Soviet Space, Transdnistria (1990-92), and in Central Asia, Tajik Civil War (1992-97).

Treaty was signed in Tashkent and, with only Russia and Armenia present as original non-Central Asian signatories, set off the prevalence of the Central Asian region in the CST's subsequent activities. Despite the quantitative enlargement by late 1993 to include Belarus, Georgia and Azerbaijan – all with changed domestic regimes – the Treaty remained rather defunct in its direct duty to provide security for its members despite being tasked with very concrete goals.<sup>11</sup>

As an element of the CIS system, the CST was tasked with two essential multilateral functions: (a) to ease the problems of maintenance of ex-Soviet military structures and its integrated elements separated by the emergence of sovereign state borders after 1991, and thus, requiring continued concerted action for their operation; and (b) assist in the development of national armies of its members by establishing the common security space and setting up preferential conditions for the parties concerned. It was a reliable way of keeping security at relatively high levels by sharing the costs of its provision, and a delicate solution to the problem of distribution of former Soviet military assets.

Nevertheless, multilateral character of the CST had fallen victim to the CIS which faced a credibility crisis. Ukraine, in a fear of Russian domination, never formally ratified the CIS Charter and abstained from its multilateral activities. This rendered the CST plans for integrated security systems, like that of Integrated Air Defence, debased from the outset. Other CST members tended to deal with Russia on a bilateral basis. Such bilateral contracts laid the foundation for the CST core when Russian-Belarusian and Russian-Armenian joint groupings were established mainly to jointly guard the borders of Belarus and Armenia.

The CIS internally fragmented in the early 1990s. Originally, the CST founders envisaged that it would evolve into a comprehensive regional collective security system with wide membership. Therefore, the strategy on the early stages of CST development was to include as many post-Soviet states as possible.

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11 “Azerbaijan’s decision was prompted by indirect assurances of the Russian leadership to former President Heydar Aliyev that they would support Azerbaijan’s struggle against the Armenian forces. This policy soon proved to be short-sighted and in early 1999 Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan withdrew from the CST. Azerbaijan mostly criticised CST for not taking a firm stance regarding its territorial dispute with Armenia, another CST member country, and consequently believed that there was no need to prolong membership.” Mehtiyev 2010.

## Conceptual View of a Collective Security System

Collective security is a delicate symbiosis of various factors that have to be present in order for such system to exist. Academic literature on origins of alignments hints that a collective security system should be distinct from regular alignment<sup>12</sup> and that it is defined by a set of special factors.<sup>13</sup>

The modern idea of collective security originated in the interwar period between the First and Second World Wars. Perhaps one of the most controversial and utopian ideas in international relations, this term was not utilised broadly until the 1930s. Although elements of what is commonly known as collective security date back to the leagues of ancient Greek states and the Holy League in Renaissance Italy in 1495, in international relations the concept emerged in 1919 when the constructors of the new world order were convinced that the balance of power system was too outdated and dangerous.<sup>14</sup> Since then the concept has gained prominence and has been applied to virtually any multilateral effort to maintain peace and order.<sup>15</sup>

Collective security organisation aims to preserve particular peace and is built on the notion of indivisibility of peace for every state that signs a treaty on collective security. This translates into a pattern of state behaviour which implies that any power or state that offends against peace must be deterred or defeated by any means, including those of military nature. The key to such policy is that it unconditionally requires acknowledging that any act targeted against a particular peace or any aggression aimed against other members of the organisation should be directly acknowledged as an attack against the interest of all signatory states, even if they are not attacked directly.<sup>16</sup>

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12 For a definition of the concept of alliance – which is contested and not universally accepted and may differ significantly from one study to the next – see Walt, Stephen M. 1990. *The Origins of Alliances (Cornell Studies in Security Affairs)*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Snyder, Glenn Herald. 2007. *Alliance Politics (Cornell Studies in Security Affairs)*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Holsti, Ole R. 1973. *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances: Comparative Studies*. New York: Wiley.

13 For details see Fedder 1965.

14 See Woodrow Wilson's address to the US Congress on 8 January 1918.

15 MacCoubrey 2000.

16 *Ibid.*; For an excellent in depth account on the distinction between the concepts of collective security and defence from historical, international law, and international relations perspectives see: Snyder 2008. *Contemporary Security and Strategy: Second Edition*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan; Shaw, Malcolm. 2008. *International Law*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Kelsen, Hans. 2001. *Collective Security under International Law (International Law Studies, V. 49)*. Cambridge: Lawbook Exchange Ltd.; 2004. *Collective Security beyond the Cold War (Pew Studies in Economics and Security)*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press; Weiss, Thomas George. 1992. *Collective security in a changing world: Report on a World Peace Foundation Project (A World Peace Foundation report)*. United States: World Peace Foundation.

Such pattern connotes that belligerency – that is not connected with the preservation of peace and is evoked due to individual interests of a member of a collective security system – against any third state that is not a member of this organisation should be equally deterred by other members. In a collective security framework states seek to multilaterally defend peace.<sup>17</sup>

Such framework operates in accordance with the principle of the ‘musketeer’ oath – ‘One for all and all for one’.<sup>18</sup> That is, members will assist each other in case of an attack. This chain of commitments and collaborative action increases defensive strength and, thus, enhances security of individual members of the organisation and group as whole.

The failure of the League of Nations led to World War II. In the aftermath of that war the United Nations was established to collectively protect peace. The UN Security Council was assigned the main task – to take action against peace breaches.<sup>19</sup> The original idea of Woodrow Wilson, which is frequently referred to as the ideal collective security, was far from what has come to be proven functional in practice.<sup>20</sup> In line with the original proposition, the ideal system of collective security may exist only on the systemic level.

Regional arrangements are part of this larger global system. The idea to protect peace collectively was vital after two devastating world wars. Taking into account that the collective security system under the UN auspices is distorted, the fact that since 1945 there was no new world war may serve as proof that the system is functional, though it is far from manifesting the original idea.<sup>21</sup>

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17 Advocates of collective security base their arguments on three general assumptions: a) a collective security system is a much more effective security guarantor for states as it does not distinguish between smaller and bigger powers, nor does it allow interfering into domestic affairs; b) collective approach to security is economically beneficial as it does not force a state into the arms race and does not produce a security dilemma; c) collective security promotes cooperation between its members by excluding security competition and anticipation of conflict, as is the case with balance of power system where a state is forced to constantly struggle for survival. Opponents see this type of system negatively mainly because: a) collective security is a utopian concept as there cannot exist such conditions where all states can be allied (in a collective security arrangement); b) collective security arrangement may escalate small scale-violence or MID into large-scale wars by forcing other states to defend peace; c) states must universally agree in case of conflict eruption on who is the aggressor, which is not always possible.

18 Dumas 2000, 13.

19 See Article 24, Chapter V of the UN Charter.

20 “The danger of aggressive warfare is to be met by... moral, diplomatic, economic and military means – to frustrate attack upon any state. To provide security for *all* states, *by* the action of all states, *against* all states that might challenge the existing order.” Quoted in MacCoubrey 2000, 3.

21 For an excellent account on the characteristics of an ideal collective security system and prerequisites for successful operation of this system. See: Claude 1971; Naidu 1975.

ollective security aims to defend an unknown victim from an unspecified aggressor.<sup>22</sup> Collective security is a restrictive system that does not allow misusing power either for an attack or for defence. A collective security arrangement does not necessarily require commitment of members to support their allies, like classic alliance does; they are required instead to resist aggression against peace.

Classic alliance serves to deter an act of aggression. In doing so it indicates, in as precise terms as possible, that combined power will resist aggression, whereas a collective security arrangement seeks to guarantee security for all and against all. For instance, in the 1950s US signed mutual defence treaties with South Korea and Taiwan to deter attacks on them and prevent them from attacking the Communist mainland.<sup>23</sup> Collective security can never consist of two states only, whereas an alliance can. In collective security at least three parties must be present to have a system in operation.

Lastly, in order to grasp the legal basis for the operation of such systems it is important to scrutinise the collective security system of the UN. Alignments operate under Article 51 of the UN Charter.<sup>24</sup> It is directed against an external threat and justifies action of individual or collective self-defence.<sup>25</sup> Chapter VIII on regional arrangements has to do with internal peacekeeping between alignment members.<sup>26</sup>

Though alignments are not regarded as contributing to peace, operating in compliance with the UN Charter they should be part of the global collective security system.<sup>27</sup> The legal aspect of the UN collective security system is by no means straightforward. The UN Security Council is mandated to maintain international peace and security by Article 24 of the UN Charter.<sup>28</sup> Article 25 provides that the decisions made by the UN Security Council are binding on all member states.<sup>29</sup> Actions adopted by the Security Council in pursuance of Chapter VI<sup>30</sup> of the UN Charter are of recommendatory nature. Cases dealing with acts of aggression and the breaches of peace are under Chapter VII, which gives decision-making powers to the Security Council. This places emphasis on the authority given to the Security Council to achieve its ultimate aim – to preserve peace. Article 103

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22 Snyder 2008, 107.

23 *Ibid.*, 106.

24 See Article 51, UN Charter.

25 All major Cold War alignments were employing this particular Article of the UN Charter for their operations rationale. NATO, Warsaw Pact, CENTO and SEATO are good examples of how this Article operates in practice.

26 OAS and AU are good examples of it.

27 Naidu 1975.

28 See Article 24, UN Charter.

29 See Article 25, UN Charter.

30 See UN Charter.

wraps up the system of collective security by implying that state obligations under the UN Charter take priority over the obligations under other international agreements.<sup>31</sup>

### Reasons for CSTO Transformation

The CSTO's evolution is formidable. There were several reasons for signing the CST in 1992. Beyond those already mentioned – the absence of established national armies and command structures, feasible national security doctrines – defining threats and orchestrating the states' response in pursuit of national interests was difficult. Furthermore, there was another incentive – links of traditional arms supply were to be maintained with Russia by signing the Treaty.

The civil war in Tajikistan had been a fault line for Central Asian security. Since no single state in the region, or Russia alone, could deal with this problem on its own, coordination of efforts had been vital for regional stability. Violent conflicts in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, nuclear weapons in Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Belarus, and events unfolding in Afghanistan in the early 1990s contributed to chaos that had threatened to transform not-so-peaceful Soviet disintegration into the Balkan-scenario mayhem. Thus, maintaining cooperation in security affairs between former Soviet states was essential.

Originally the CST manifested the characteristics of a regional collective security organisation. The Treaty itself prompted this.<sup>32</sup> Another factor was membership reach. By 1993 only three states of the former Soviet Union were left outside the framework: Ukraine, Moldova, and Turkmenistan.<sup>33</sup> This however was not much of a surprise as Turkmenistan and Moldova had declared their neutrality and Ukraine had emphasised its non-aligned status. Ukraine was the biggest loss for the CIS in general and for CST in particular. It is not only that Ukraine, as one of the key states in regards to its military-industrial complex and its strategic geographic location, refused to ratify the CIS Charter – it never joined the CST.<sup>34</sup> Instead, it later formed its own alignment – GUAM<sup>35</sup> – which has significantly affected CST by attracting its members to join it and give up their CST membership in 1999.

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31 Shaw 2008, 1119.

32 See Collective Security Treaty of the CIS.

33 Another part of the Former Soviet Union, the Baltic States, abstained from any participation in the post-Soviet regional formations and declared immediate course of European integration.

34 After he won the Ukrainian Presidential elections in 2010, Viktor Yanukovich refused to join CSTO and pulled the issue of Ukraine's bid for NATO membership off the table.

35 GUAM stands for Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova. The organisation was established to support security on the basis of the principle of respect for territorial integrity. All member states have territorial issues. The membership criteria are rather simple. The organisation is open to new members who subscribe to its main values of respect for territorial integrity, development of transport and logistics infrastructure, and facilitation of socioeconomic links between the members.



However, halfway through the 1990s, it had become obvious that the CST was not properly fulfilling its functions. Instead, the collective security capacity was subverted by the increasingly bilateral nature of relations between the signatories. The entire concept of CIS – of which the CST was part until 2002 – as the collective security organisation stalled. Several key factors are responsible for that.

First, the CST membership had not been as widespread as it was believed. Second, the post-Soviet ‘frozen conflicts’ were not resolved but rather conserved with the status-quo in place. This explicitly frustrated the Caucasian states, members of the CST that sought to resolve those conflicts by participating in the organisation. The fact that the CIS peace-keeping forces failed to remain neutral in the conflicts has motivated Georgia and Azerbaijan to co-sponsor the new group. GUAM, formed of the states dissatisfied with the CIS performance and fearful of Russian hegemony in the post-Soviet space, triggered the biggest single defection from the CST in 1999.

That defection, in fact, set off the process of CST stagnation and subsequent transformation. Not only had Georgia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan left the CST that year, but more importantly, Uzbekistan joined GUAM on the side-lines of the NATO summit in Washington – a bitter symbolism of CST’s failure as an operational security framework.

Third, failure of the CST to carry out its direct functions as a security-providing organisation – that is, its inability to construct a multilateral mechanism and, thus, react collectively to solve the status-quo conflicts in the Caucasus or prevent and jointly resist Islamist incursions into Central Asia – was never more evident than in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Tashkent in 1999 and the consequent incursion of radical Islamists into Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in 2000-2001. The CST was not prepared to cope with asymmetrical threats.

The original idea of a collective security framework which would have covered the entire post-Soviet space, providing important stability and regional security by integrating states into a security sphere and increasing their confidence, was never realised in practice. This led to a crisis within the organisation that exposed the CST to criticism and resulted in mass defection in 1999.<sup>36</sup> It coincided with the stagnation of the CIS of which the CST was a part. Paralysis of the CST in dealing with growing asymmetrical and new type of threats, including terrorism and extremism, was one of the reasons for the successful rise of the Shanghai Five, transformed in 2001 into Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

By the time of its disintegration the Soviet military complex was in a state of deep stagnation and far behind its counterparts in the West in regards to research, innovation and

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36 Out of eight members in 1998, three left the CST in 1999. Support for Northern Alliance embedded more unofficial multilateralism in it than the cooperation within formally institutionalised CST.

development.<sup>37</sup> It was tuned by the very nature of its command and infrastructure to resist aggression from the West, including nuclear threats. Consequently, new full-scale intra-state ethnic conflicts – like that in Nagorno-Karabakh, active since 1988 – were not properly dealt with.<sup>38</sup>

Difficulties in adapting to the rapidly changing situation of the post-Cold War order rendered CST ineffective in response to such threats as Islamic radicalism. Despite the successful formation of national armed forces within the framework of the CST, lack of modernisation prompted the newly independent states to join the recently established NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme.

‘Soft threats’ such as drug trafficking and organised crime were not to appear systematically on the agenda of the CST until at least 1997, despite the sweeping increase of such threats’ influence on the regional politics.

Deficiency of the CST in serving as a collective security organisation for the post-Soviet space triggered inevitable transformation. The reason for the failure of collective security was twofold. First, the CST did not embrace the interests of all of its members, spoiling some at the expense of others. The ‘frozen conflicts’ were not resolved, but retained in a permanent status quo status that turned them into a creeping threat to the states with such problems. Thus, the participation in the CST amplified security challenges for members like Azerbaijan and Georgia instead of curbing those threats. Second, short interest in membership was an issue since states outside of the framework, like Ukraine, questioned the credibility of the CST.<sup>39</sup> The lack of regional and international recognition contributed to the failure of the first security idea in the region.

Yet, excessively resolute to deter external attacks, in 1995 the CST members adopted the Concept of Collective Security of the CST members that laid out the principles of the framework. Signatories pledged to deter threats to peace, enhance collective defence measures and defend sovereignty of its members. The aim of the Concept was to outline the common areas of cooperation and coordination in military and security spheres after the common vision was shattered by the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

The Concept assured that members of CST were united by their common military-political interests and the military and technical infrastructures inherited from the USSR. It declared that the global face-off between the West and the East was over and urged to place emphasis on the development of a new approach to security of the newly independent states. Despite the fact that the Concept acknowledged the shift to threats of regional,

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37 For details see Webber, Mark. 1996. *The International Politics of Russia and the Successor States*, Manchester University Press.

38 Despite the fact that ethnic clashes were curbed elsewhere in the Soviet Union, for instance Kyrgyz-Uzbek clash in the Fergana Valley in 1990.

39 Kuzio 2009.

inter- and intra-state conflicts, it largely accentuated the Cold War-type security menaces rather than the new type of threats that were emerging at that time. Thus, use and proliferation of nuclear weapons and delivery systems, violation of agreements on conventional arms reduction, increase of NATO capabilities and international military interventions were listed among the main threats to the members' security. However, neither separatism nor religious extremism or internal instability received mention in the document.<sup>40</sup>

The Concept laid down a three-step road-map for the planned collective security system development. The first step was cooperation in the establishment of members' national military forces and capabilities. In reality, this meant the distribution of Soviet military property, maintaining units that required concerted action, where available, and adapting them to the new conditions and development of the legal status of CST. The second step should have been aimed at creating standing forces, integrated air defence shield and even an integrated military of the CST members. The third and final step should have transformed the CST into a functioning system of collective security for the post-Soviet space.<sup>41</sup>

While the first step was successfully accomplished, the second was related to the stagnation of the framework and the inability of members to agree on the status and form of the standing forces. The biggest shortcoming of this plan was an attempt to launch a military integration of very different states with different interests, types of threats, and located in very different parts of the post-Soviet space.<sup>42</sup>

Since the ideological fabric that united the Soviet bloc was gone, to successfully integrate diverse states' interests the CST had to acknowledge them first. For instance, since it did not address separatism and religious extremism as threats in the initial stage of multilateral development, it lacked mechanisms and strategies to assist members collectively in curtailing those threats. Thus, cost-efficient security provision was reduced to individual border patrolling and extension of the Russian nuclear umbrella to the rest of the CST members. This resulted in a refusal of several members to sign the protocol on CST Ex-

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40 It pledged the creation of confidence-building measures in military sphere, creation of a pan-European and Asian system of collective security, and restriction on Navy activity. Importantly, some of the priorities were: building the member states' national militaries, raising the standards, guarding the borders, and the use of military elements of member states and their space. The main mechanism of response in case of a crisis situation was envisaged to be cooperative consultation at the level of the Collective Security Council, the highest body of the CST framework.

41 *Concept of Collective Security of the CST Members*, 10 February 1995, adopted by the decision of the Collective Security Council in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

42 For instance, NATO lost its *raison d'être* after the collapse of WTO in 1991. Nevertheless it has been able to secure itself from disintegration by finding a different reason to exist - the expansion of its peacekeeping activities (Balkans), and then radically switched to counter-terror activities (Afghanistan after 2001). Hence, constant change and expansion secured the bloc's existence. CST(O) was slow to adapt. It was slowly reacting to the changes rather than pre-empting them.

tension and Plan of Measures of the Second Step of CST Development (up to 2001) on 2 April 1999.<sup>43</sup>

## From CST to CSTO

Nearly a year after the CST membership was reduced to only six post-Soviet republics it was de-facto acknowledged on 24 May 2000 that the CST record of response to new threats was poor and out of sync with the changing geopolitical situation. It was the first meeting of the Collective Security Council (CSC) – the highest body of CST(O) – held in Minsk, Belarus, where Vladimir Putin took part as the new Russian Head of State. Importantly, this development in the CST coincided with the publishing of the new Russian National Security Concept that, inter alia, strongly emphasised the threats of terrorism, information security and cross-border organised crime. NATO enlargement, CIS destabilisation, foreign military bases in the post-Soviet space and conflicts in the proximity of the external borders<sup>44</sup> of CIS members and hindered national interests in the post-Soviet space were all identified as fundamental threats to Russian security. Cooperation with the CST members in military and security spheres was pronounced strategic.<sup>45</sup>

The Memorandum 2000 that followed was vital in tracing the timeline of the CST(O) evolution.<sup>46</sup> It provided a handful of important propositions with regards to the organisation's development and state of affairs in the security of the post-Soviet region.

First, as already discussed above, it formally acknowledged that CST began as a transitional entity. Second, it affirmed that the CST was not sufficiently effective in addressing the so-called 'new threats'. Thus, it urged members to facilitate a set-up of integrated command and control structures, start concrete steps in the implementation of security building, and improve the mechanism of reduced prices of weapons supplied from Russia to allied states.<sup>47</sup> Third, it envisaged the establishment of rapid reaction forces (RRF) with peacekeeping capabilities, for the first time mentioned in the Memorandum 2000, to curb border and intra-state conflicts. Finally, it suggested that information on possible cooper-

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43 Georgia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan.

44 'External borders of CIS member states' is a reference to borders of the former Soviet Union with its neighbouring states.

45 "One of the vital strategic directions in providing for the Russian Federation's military security is effective collaboration and cooperation with members of the Commonwealth of Independent States." *National Security Concept of the Russian Federation*, 2000.

46 See CST Memorandum 2000.

47 Preferred pricing for weapons delivery was first enacted in 2004. "States Arms Trade Discounts Begin for CIS Security Treaty States." 2004. *Interfax-AVN Military News Agency*. Moscow. July 7. <http://www.armeniandiaspora.com/showthread.php?6230-Arms-Trade-Discounts-Begin-for-CIS-Security-Treaty->

ation with third parties in security and military spheres should be shared with other CST members. This particular clause was not present in the original Treaty signed in 1992.<sup>48</sup>

Perhaps the implementation would have been very slow, as in many other areas, and CST would never have detached from the CIS if it were not for the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the US.<sup>49</sup> The attacks triggered harsh US response aimed at ousting al Qaeda members that found safe refuge in Afghanistan. The US military established a large logistical and combat support presence in Central Asia. From that point on the CST members like Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan were involved, along with other states, in the supply chains to support US anti-terrorist efforts in Afghanistan.

Sudden and massive change of geopolitical reality in the region furnished CST reform. NATO's use of military outside of the territory of its member states and its ability to conduct out of area operations was another reason to worry - specifically to Russia, which considers NATO a threat. In 2001 anti-terrorist efforts turned global as a result of the attack on the US, and CST required a deep reform to comply with the modern security challenges and boost security cooperation among its members.

In his op-ed for the Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (Independent Newspaper) in June 2000, then-Secretary General of the Collective Security Council of the CST Valeri Nikolayenko argued that alliances of the old type were not effective in addressing the 'new threats' (asymmetrical threats) like terrorism, drug trafficking, cross-border criminal activity, weapons smuggling, aggressive nationalism, separatism, ethnic and religion-based extremism.<sup>50</sup> He contended that "new threats require non-traditional solutions... and collective efforts."<sup>51</sup> He also argued that the CST was a purely political bloc and was not to be converted into a military organisation.

Nikolayenko asserted that the Memorandum 2000 was the most important document ever signed. Its main emphasis was on the struggle against terrorism.<sup>52</sup> One of the most important points in his article was the idea that NATO bombing of former Yugoslavia was alarming (for the post-Soviet space). He mentioned that the CST would become an

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48 Original CST signed in 1992 contained a provision which required members not to join third alignments and coalitions. See Article 1 of the CST.

49 In October 2001 the new plan for the next step of collective defence –CST was de facto no more a collective security organisation after the adoption of the Memorandum 2000 and loss of several members – was planned for the period 2001-2005.

50 *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. 27 September 2000. Full text is available at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation [http://www.mid.ru/integracionnye-struktury-prostranstva-sng/-/asset\\_publisher/r17Fzr0mbE6x/content/id/602512](http://www.mid.ru/integracionnye-struktury-prostranstva-sng/-/asset_publisher/r17Fzr0mbE6x/content/id/602512). Accessed on 7 January 2017.

51 *Ibid.*

52 *Ibid.*

important element of the “new fair world order,” though, omitting any explanation of what ‘fair’ meant in this context.<sup>53</sup>

### **Response to Asymmetric Threats and CSTO Cohesion**

To revive the CST it was essential to first separate it from the watered down post-Soviet forum of the CIS. As the following part of this work will explain, modern alignments cannot focus on military security only. Traditional hard security threats like aggression of one state against another are less common nowadays. With the globalisation of literally every field of human activity, terrorist and extremist threats have also embarked on a process of globalisation. In fact, terrorist and extremist movements such as alQaeda exist and operate in a globalised and deterritorialised space. This transnational form of extremism seeks to attack the system and believes in propaganda through action. Their deterritorialisation and deculturation perfectly adapt them to transnational activities that explain their success.<sup>54</sup>

That is the primary reason why states cannot fight such groups on their own. “States have to look beyond borders to protect their sovereignty.”<sup>55</sup> Under the conditions of globalisation, states become more vulnerable in the face of a trans-boundary threat. Police and military cannot legitimately cross the border of a sovereign neighbouring state to place escaped criminals in custody; however, trans-border intelligence sharing and law enforcement cooperation can.<sup>56</sup> Thus, states opting for the increase of their absolute security at the expense of globalisation – a process they cannot stop by only enforcing national borders – by fortifying their borders without extensive security cooperation on the regional level, render themselves even more vulnerable.

Since threats like organised crime, insurgency, smuggling of migrants, cyber crime, piracy and money-laundering benefit from globalisation, national response should be part of a larger regional solution. In regions, security cooperation is vital for stability. That is why states have to cooperate in a sphere of soft security threats, which include exchange of intelligence, cross border operations and transnational mandate for alignments.

Prompted by these changing demands, CST was transformed into CSTO in 2002.<sup>57</sup> This move signalled a separation from CIS and the onset of full-fledged institutionalisation.

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53 *Ibid.*

54 Roy, Olivier. 2009. “Who is the Enemy? Where is the Enemy?” In *The Politics of Chaos in the Middle East*. Columbia: Columbia University Press. 54.

55 UNODC. 2010. *The Globalisation of Crime: A Transnational Organised Crime Threat Assessment*, June 17. iii.

56 UNODC. 2010. *The Globalisation of Crime: A Transnational Organised Crime Threat Assessment*, June 17.

57 See documents from the Moscow meeting of the Collective Security Council of CSTO, 14 May 2002.

Traditionally orthodox Alliance Theory sees alignments as fulfilling three main functions: augmentative – where A forms an alignment with B to add B's power to its own (in relation to a given enemy); pre-emptive – A forms an alignment with B to prevent B's power from being added to A's enemy; and strategic – A forms an alignment with B to get access to B's territory for its strategic purposes.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, scholars and practitioners tend to see military alignments as mainly organisations against something rather than for something.<sup>59</sup> Scholars normally refer to alignments in connection with balance of power, equilibrium theories or balance of threat.<sup>60</sup>

Cohesion in alignments is a function of the intensity and duration of threat, since alignments are formed, according to orthodox Alliance Theory, in response to a perceived common threat. If one is to examine a threat in a simple way, then capabilities and intentions of a threatening actor/factor are important. However, alignments in the post-Cold War period must include much wider functions than just enhancement of the members' capacity to deter an external attack – a traditional alignment function.

Socioeconomic and military-diplomatic matters are no longer sufficient to maintain a plausible level of regional stability. Asymmetric threats are increasingly shifting to the spotlight of alignment politics. Such threats can barely be assessed by the calculation of their capabilities and intentions, as those types of threats are located beyond the traditional scope of a state-centric system where borders play a vital role.

If capabilities of a state can be assessed by analysing tangible military factors, and states usually provide their outlook of the system in their foreign policy and security doctrines, such assessment is difficult in case of organised crime, dispersed insurgencies and drug threats. As examples show, such threats have the potential to produce state failure.<sup>61</sup> Thus, the focus should exceed the traditional domain for combating threats, especially those threats that emanate from non-state actors, and include its pre-emption and secure results by establishing long-term stability. This requires long-standing multilateral cooperation if the stability is to last for a long period of time.

Consider drug trafficking, which has become an issue of national security<sup>62</sup> for states like Russia which has 1.5 million<sup>63</sup> heroin users. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union heroin consumption has been rapidly growing in Russia, reaching 21 percent of the global heroin consumption in 2008 and accounting for a USD 13 billion market in total.<sup>64</sup> The biggest

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58 Fedder 1965.

59 See Liska 1962.

60 See Liska 1962; Walt 1990.

61 Afghanistan, Mexico.

62 See National Security Doctrine of the Russian Federation.

63 UNODC. 2010. *The Globalisation of Crime: A Transnational Organised Crime Threat Assessment*, June 17, 7.

64 *Ibid.*

share of that money goes to organised crime groups along the transit route in Central Asia whereas some profit also goes back to Afghanistan to fund insurgency.<sup>65</sup>

The main heroin supply line to Russia comes from Afghanistan, transiting the Central Asian states. The area of opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan steadily grew from 41,300 hectares in 1990 to reach its peak of 193,000 hectares in 2007. Global opium poppy cultivation rose by 17 percent in 2007 alone, with Afghanistan's share of the global cultivation being 82 percent.<sup>66</sup>

Opium production in Afghanistan consistently grew from 1,070 metric tonnes in 1988 to 6,900 in 1999, with a dramatic decrease from 3,276 metric tonnes in 2000 to only 85 in 2001.<sup>67</sup> The return to the previous level of 3,400 metric tonnes in 2002 was no less dramatic.<sup>68</sup> Heroin/morphine production in Afghanistan reaches 380 tonnes annually.

Roughly five tonnes are consumed and seized within Afghanistan itself, but the remaining 375 tonnes are exported to the world market. Out of this total number, Central Asian states are responsible for 25 percent of drug trafficking; in other words, 95 tonnes of heroin are trafficked through Central Asia. Another 40 percent, or 150 tonnes, is trafficked through Pakistan, and 28 percent or 105 tonnes through Iran.<sup>69</sup>

The land route from Afghanistan to Russia is the easiest, quickest and most reliable for the illegal trafficking. First, all CSTO members have visa-free travel to Russia where the national of any of the Central Asian member states can move about freely, with the minimum amount of documents and checks.

Second, the proximity of an enormous market such as Russia makes it attractive for illegal activity.<sup>70</sup> With the annual heroin consumption of 70 tonnes in Russia – the single largest national heroin consumer in the world<sup>71</sup> – and five tonnes in Central Asia,<sup>72</sup> it is not sur-

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65 *Ibid.*

66 Among the reasons were the weather conditions which were ideal for opium poppy cultivation and contributed to the lack of plant disease which would have otherwise impeded crop production; regional disparities contributed to the record high production in the unstable south and low production in the more stable north. UNODC. 2010. *Opium Production in Afghanistan*, Report.

67 The Taliban banned production of drugs in 2001. That year was also marked by a drought which resulted in a reduction of crops.

68 See UNODC. 2010. *Opium Production in Afghanistan*, Report.

69 UNODC. 2010. "Addiction, Crime and Insurgency. The Transnational Threat of Afghan Opium." Report.

70 On average 200 kg of heroin is smuggled into Russia each day. UNODC. 2010. *The Globalisation of Crime: A Transnational Organised Crime Threat Assessment*, June 17. 114.

71 UNODC. 2010. *The Globalisation of Crime: A Transnational Organised Crime Threat Assessment*, June 17. 7.

72 UNODC. 2010. "Addiction, Crime and Insurgency. The transnational threat of Afghan opium." Report.



prising that Russia sees itself as the main target of what has been termed ‘drug aggression.’ For the purpose of comparison, heroin trafficked from Russia to Europe accounts for 4 tonnes annually, whereas heroin trafficked from Central Asia to Caucasus and China is 3 tonnes annually.<sup>73</sup>

Drug abuse in Central Asian states has also increased from 2003 to 2009. There were 91,600 drug users registered in dispensaries in 2009, with the highest number of them in Kazakhstan (54,000) and Uzbekistan (19,700), whereas the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates suggest that the number of people in the region who had used opiates at least once in the past year is 340,000.<sup>74</sup>

The scope of the problem is clearly of a regional nature and it does not allow effective national response without being to a certain extent part of a regional collective reaction. Indeed, such action is increasingly taking place. Since the early 2000s the number of multilateral projects dealing with asymmetrical threats in the Central Asian region grew continuously.<sup>75</sup> There are several factors that provide incentives for cooperation in Central Asia.

The region has a significant amount of natural resources available for extraction. This requires a stable and secure environment.<sup>76</sup> The region has a notable transportation potential. It is encircled by both regional and great powers such as China, Russia, India, Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan – all have interests there. In addition, the US and European states have vested interest in the region due to their security and energy projects.

CST(O) has become a part of this tendency but its response was rather limited. CST did not have any plausible anti-drug measures. As the CST was formed in 1992 with the different aims in mind, as discussed previously, “[u]nder-resourced and struggling to find their feet, addressing trans-shipments of heroin was not an early priority” for the states of the post-Soviet space.<sup>77</sup> This led to the dramatic increase of the drug-associated challenge to political stability.

The initial response from individual members of the CST that were most affected by the instability created by the drug smuggling was the establishment of national anti-drug administrations in the 1990s. In 2002, along with transformation and institutionalisation CSTO (adding ‘O’ for Organisation), acknowledging the ineffectiveness of its predecessor

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73 *Ibid.*

74 *Ibid.*

75 UN, CSTO, SCO, CARICS, CACI, EAEC.

76 EAEC and CSTO signed the Memorandum of Understanding to protect investments and pipelines.

77 UNODC. 2010. *The Globalisation of Crime: A Transnational Organised Crime Threat Assessment*, June 17. 114.

– the CST – declared the importance of resisting the new challenges and introduced the first initiatives.

On 28 April 2003, during the CSC meeting in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, the document on co-ordination of CSTO member states' activities to combat external drug threat was signed.<sup>78</sup> This laid the foundation for carrying out one of the main instruments of CSTO in fighting the drug threat – the annual joint law-enforcement operation 'Channel.'<sup>79</sup> The two main directions are Afghanistan and Europe (mainly in respect to synthetic drugs).<sup>80</sup> This is a complex operation that involves coordination from national anti-drug administrations, police, border units, customs, national security, and financial intelligence services. Another part of these measures includes the Coordination Council of heads of national anti-drug bodies created in 2005, which is an auxiliary body of the CSTO aimed at permanent consultative cooperation.<sup>81</sup>

### **CSTO Members Strategic Objectives**

Since state objectives are the backbone of any alignment, they not only motivate alignment formation if a state sees that its objectives are going to be best served if it pools with another state, but can also affect the grouping's reliability.<sup>82</sup> Normally consisting of states with sometimes very diverse objectives, alignments tend to be a bargaining mechanism. CSTO is a good example of how state objectives can bring states into an alignment and, at the same time, how impeding a bloc's actions, arising from different interests, affects its reliability.<sup>83</sup>

Incorporating states of different regional and various religious, strategic, economic, cultural and geopolitical characteristics, the CSTO is destined to exhibit very different,

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78 At the CSC meeting in Dushanbe held on 28 April 2003, along with the signed document Integrated Staff was established for the purpose of coordination of activities of members to combat external drug threat.

79 For the period from 2003 to 2009, 13 segments of the operation were conducted. In addition to CSTO members' law enforcement agencies there were also observers from Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Venezuela, Germany, Iran, Spain, China, Columbia, Latvia, Lithuania, Mongolia, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Syria, USA, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Finland, Estonia. OSCE and Interpol representatives participated as observers. More than 222 tonnes of drugs were confiscated and destroyed during the period.

80 The main aim of the operation is defined as discovering and blocking trade routes for drugs that originated from Afghanistan; blocking international and regional routes for delivery of synthetic drugs that originated from Europe; blocking secret illegal laboratories; blocking precursor leaks; and undermining the economic foundations of drug trade.

81 The Coordination Council, which consists of heads of national anti-drug bodies, was created at the Moscow CSC meeting held on 23 June 2005.

82 For a discussion on alliance reliability see Holsti, Ole, Terrence Hopmann, John Sullivan. 1984. *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances*. University Press of America.

83 In this sense, it is institutionalised alignments like NATO.

sometimes evidently conflicting, attributes in its activity. The issue that comes to the forefront is, thus, maintenance of cohesion among different members to produce concerted action in certain areas. Understanding the objectives of the CSTO members exposes the reasons why states act as they do in a multilateral framework, which CSTO is designed to be, and highlights arduous areas of cooperation, explaining why certain sectors of the CSTO's activities are more successful than others.

There are three general links that unite states under the CSTO umbrella. First, there are the bilateral contracts with Russia on security provision (i.e. assistance in border control, joint forces). Within the framework of the CSTO there are states that are security providers: Russia, Kazakhstan; there are also states that are security recipients: Armenia, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Belarus is an exception that can be attributed to both camps. Second are the preferential conditions on arms supplies and staff training available to members of the CSTO. The third, and perhaps the most important, is the opportunity to influence regional security relations via institutionalised framework.

True multilateralism can function only when the major players' objectives are taken into account and respected. The CSTO is not the only framework in the region and it is not yet able to utterly respect all the members' objectives, largely privileging those of Russia, and those of remaining members that are compatible in the sphere of geopolitics. That is one of the reasons why the CSTO has been consistently seeking NATO, and above all US, recognition in order to enhance its credibility and extend cohesion by involving the US (and NATO) to deal with the regional issues through the framework of the CSTO.

A closer look at security interests of the members of the CSTO is needed to better understand the lack of common underpinning as regards multilateralism. Alignment, by default, cannot represent a supranational body but rather a consensus-based mechanism. Having unattached foreign and security policy imperatives, members of the CSTO have little in common when participating in a security alignment. Even the most widely accepted concept of terrorism, as a threat to regional security, is questionable. Not all states of the region view terrorism as a direct threat to their statehood. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan are directly challenged by these forces, while Tajikistan has a problem of a different origin. Since the end of the civil war, it has rather struggled to balance radicals and moderates within the domestic political environment (and maintain strategic parity between them in order to maintain stability) as well as retain stable relations vis-à-vis other regional powers. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan never faced a large-scale terrorist threat comparable to that of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

In order for an alignment to keep different states together in a cooperative environment it must maintain the balance of objectives. Hence, it must respond simultaneously on a multi-level basis and not only deal with defence from foreign aggression. To understand the differences in CSTO members' approach to security, it is important to first compare the strategic objectives of the states.

“From the onset of independence, President Nazarbayev sought international support to secure a place for Kazakhstan in the world community, playing the role of a bridge between East and West, between Europe and Asia.”<sup>84</sup> Unlike any other state in Central Asia, upon its independence Kazakhstan had the status of a nuclear power, which at early stages of its independence elevated its importance to the West, immersed in the problem of the future of the Soviet strategic nuclear arsenals. “Nazarbayev became a signatory to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) and its so-called Lisbon Protocol by which Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine pledged to eliminate nuclear weapons in the 1990s.”<sup>85</sup> Along with Ukraine and Belarus, Kazakhstan thus obtained a strategic priority position in dealing with the West. This fact fostered its regional leadership in the initial stages of its independence. More importantly, vast energy resources, strategic geographic position, access to Caspian Sea and borders with Russia and China proved its status of buffer for the whole Central Asia and at the same time made it a key link for any viable cooperation between Moscow and Central Asian capitals.

Without Kazakhstan there may not be any projection of Russian power into Central Asia. Geography, on the other hand, insulated Kazakhstan from direct contact with the ‘arc of instability’ – Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran – and provided natural protection from infiltration of insurgents from Afghanistan. This, together with other factors, made it one of the only two states capable of dominating Central Asia.

Most of Kazakhstan’s foreign and security policies are focused on the post-Soviet space. Since the times when Gorbachev proposed a modified continuation of the Soviet Union in the late 1991, Kazakhstan, under Nazarbayev’s leadership, proved to be a firm supporter of integration projects with Russia as its main ally in Central Asia. Kazakhstan supported the development of CIS, although it always advocated a more coherent approach which would include only states interested in cooperation. Its role in separating the CST from the CIS was vital.

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84 Glenn E. Curtis 1996.

85 *Ibid.*

Kazakhstan's role as the champion of integration in the post-Soviet space was supported not only by continuous proposals to set up the Eurasian Union and general support for Eurasianist ideology, but also by its initiated projects such as Central Asian Union which grew into Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC) with the help of Russia. Kazakhstan's position in the post-Soviet space is that of a mediator<sup>86</sup> and advocate for economic development with military security complimenting stable economic growth.

Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy is defined by two main imperatives. First, the country is too small and poor to be economically viable and secure without considerable external assistance. It has neither arable lands nor any other valuable resources. Its only powerful lever in dealing with the neighbours is its control of the water flows, in the region where water is a scarce resource. Second, it borders much more powerful states, in a highly volatile region.<sup>87</sup> These circumstances affect its alignment choices. This is specifically well illustrated by the situation around Manas air base.<sup>88</sup>

Unlike its overpowering post-Soviet neighbours – Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, two regional powers struggling for leadership – Kyrgyzstan is not self-sufficient in terms of provision for security. Uzbekistan is important to southern Kyrgyzstan both economically and politically, due to a large Uzbek population and economic and geographic conditions.<sup>89</sup> Kazakhstan is important to the North. The north-western city of Talas receives nearly all of its services through the city of Dzhambul, across the border in Kazakhstan.<sup>90</sup>

Bordering one of China's most troubled regions – Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, one of Chinese buffer areas with active substantial separatist forces– and Tajikistan, whose territory was used by refugees and extremists on their way to Kyrgyzstan on several

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86 Although unsuccessfully, Kazakhstan tried to broker a peace deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 1992 and contributed, along with Uzbekistan and Russia, to the end of the civil war in Tajikistan.

87 Curtis 1996.

88 US-Russia competition.

89 *Ibid.*

90 *Ibid.*

occasions, Bishkek's alignment choices regarding CSTO reflects its reliance on, and deep dependence of, receiving provision of security.<sup>91, 92</sup>

Uzbekistan is the strongest Central Asian state, outnumbering its neighbours in both population and military. Uzbekistan's security imperatives have been largely unaltered since 1990s. They are based on assumptions of maintaining regional leadership, which is in turn based on its advantageous geographical position in the heart of Central Asia, quantitatively prevailing and ethnically homogenous population – unlike that of its neighbours, as well as armed forces and possession of strategic resources.<sup>93</sup>

Importantly, Uzbekistan is the only state that borders all four remaining Central Asian post-Soviet states, as well as Afghanistan, but has no border with Russia (which is an advantage taking into account Russian incursions in immediately proximate Georgia and Ukraine). It controls the heartland of Fergana valley – the core of Central Asia. However, despite all efforts to build a defensive power, Uzbekistan cannot deal with regional threats alone. Tashkent's security imperative that has been based on preventing any single power from dominating the region affects its alignment choices.

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91 “In the early days of independence, Kyrgyzstan's authorities spoke of doing without an army entirely. That idea has since been replaced by plans to create a standing conscripted army of about 5,000 troops, with reserves of two to three times that number. The question of who would command these troops has been very troublesome. Russian officers continued leaving Kyrgyzstan through 1993 because of low pay and poor living conditions, and in 1994 Moscow was officially encouraging this exodus. To stem the out-migration, agreements signed in 1994 by Bishkek and Moscow obligate Kyrgyzstan to pay housing and relocation costs for Russian officers who agree to serve in the Kyrgyzstani army until 1999. In 1994 Kyrgyzstan agreed to permit border troops of the Russian Army to assume the task of guarding Kyrgyzstan's border with China. This agreement followed Russia's complaints that continuing desertions by Kyrgyzstani border troops were leaving the former Soviet border - which Russia continues to argue is its proper border - essentially unguarded. Akayev has periodically pushed for even more Russian military presence in the republic, hinting broadly that if Russia is not interested in resuming control of the Soviet airbases in the republic, perhaps other powers, such as the United States or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, might be; however, the fact that Kyrgyzstan in early 1995 gave the last remnants of its Soviet-era air fleet to Uzbekistan in a debt swap suggests that neither Moscow, nor Tashkent has taken such offers seriously. It is not entirely clear what weapons Kyrgyzstan's army will possess. The republic lost twelve IL-39 jets in March 1992, when they were “repatriated” to Russia from a training field near the capital, and the 1995 swap with Uzbekistan lost an unknown number of MiG-21 fighters and L-39C close-support aircraft. Available information suggests strongly that Kyrgyzstan, as the least militarized of the Central Asian republics, is incapable of defending itself against a military threat from any quarter.” Kyrgyzstan Army. 2010. *Global Security*. Accessed on 4 January 2017. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/centralasia/kyrgyz-army.htm>.

92 Bishkek tried to broker an agreement between internal Tajik forces in 1992. That partially explains Bishkek active role in the alignment, and its status of the only one in Central Asia hosting the CSTO military base in the city of Kant.

93 One-fourth of Tajikistan's population is ethnically Uzbek. Significant Uzbek populations are living in southern Kyrgyzstan and southern Kazakhstan.

Tajikistan remains a state the most exposed to instability. Out of all post-Soviet states it has the longest border with Afghanistan. It is the primary entry point for drug trafficking going from Afghanistan and extremists that infiltrate into post-Soviet Central Asia. Besides the historical and ethnic ties of Tajikistan and Afghanistan, the Soviet policies are also responsible for this. The Soviet Union tried to explore those links to influence domestic affairs of Afghanistan, and training, exchanges and cultural and political links were promoted. Tajikistan was one of the few Soviet republics that had its own foreign ministry when it was part of the Union.

Tajikistan maintains strained relations with Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and largely relies on Russia, both economically and for its security provision.<sup>94</sup> It is the second state in Central Asia when it comes to the number of foreign military bases located on its soil.

### **Kyrgyz Crisis of 2010 and Dysfunction of CSTO**

The dysfunction of post-Soviet multilateral alignment has been demonstrated during the crisis that unfolded in Kyrgyzstan in 2010. On 10 June 2010 violent clashes between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities broke out in the southern city of Osh in Kyrgyzstan. As a result of the overthrow of the Government of Kurmanbek Bakiev, local clashes soon turned into a violent inter-ethnic confrontation. Since the overthrow of the Bakiev administration, Kyrgyzstan remained governed by the provisional government.

The crisis revealed the weaknesses of the CSTO. The next day, on 11 June, Uzbekistan announced that it would not intervene to protect ethnic Uzbeks, since it was an internal matter for Kyrgyzstan. Another two regional powers capable of resolving the conflict in the early stages, Kazakhstan and Russia, issued rather confined statements.<sup>95</sup>

Kazakhstan was in the position of Chair of the OSCE, whereas Russia presided over the CSC of the CSTO as the events in Kyrgyzstan unfolded. Two issues were striking in the CSTO reactions. First, since the events in Kyrgyzstan began before the weekend, the official CSTO reaction appeared no earlier than on Monday 14 June. Second, the level of reaction did not match the extraordinary situation. Having one of the CSTO members on the brink of the civil war, with an interim government unable to deter the violence and

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94 In the 1980s, a dispute over two scarce resources in Central Asia, water and arable land, soured the relations between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In June 1989 the situation burst into spontaneous, grassroots violence over competing claims to a small parcel of land. That conflict led to mutual re-cremations that continued until a settlement was reached in 1993. Tensions were heightened in 1992 by Kyrgyzstan's fear that the Tajikistani civil war would spill over the border, which had never been defined by a bilateral treaty.

95 Pan, Philip. 2010. "Russia won't intervene in Kyrgyzstan; unrest spreads." *The Washington Post*. Accessed on 29 December 2016.  
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/12/AR2010061200750.html>.

formally urging for help, it was not the CSC – the highest body of the organisation – that convened, but the secretaries of the national security councils of the CSTO members.

In the regional institutional overlaps the CSTO had formally emerged as a primary security framework for Central Asia, with China silent on the level of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the Chinese foreign ministry issuing a statement expressing “understanding” regarding the CSTO measures taken to restore law and order in Kyrgyzstan no earlier than on 15 June.<sup>96, 97</sup>

The benefit of overlapping formats of multilateral regional cooperation in the post-Soviet space is that leaders of states can meet and discuss any issue in various frameworks. Leaders met in Tashkent under the auspices of the SCO summit on 11 June and were able to discuss the events unfolding in Kyrgyzstan. Presumably, the main decisions were taken there, making the meeting of the CSTO secretaries scheduled for 14 June a formality to work out the technical measures.

Then-Russian president Medvedev warned that the CSTO may call an extraordinary summit of the heads of states (CSC) on 14 June. On 15 June the leader of the interim government of Kyrgyzstan, Rosa Otunbayeva, urged Medvedev to send Russian troops to Kyrgyzstan to stabilise the situation. On 16 June, former Kyrgyz president Askar Akayev also advocated for the use of CSTO forces.<sup>98</sup> To be sure, Kurmanbek Bakiev urged the deployment of CSTO units back in April the same year.

Meanwhile, the inter-ethnic slaughter continued forcing more than 100,000 people to flee to neighbouring Uzbekistan, leaving more than 2000 (296 officially confirmed) dead and triggering international relief efforts.<sup>99, 100</sup>

On 17 June Nikolai Borduzha, then-Secretary General of CSTO, announced the CSTO stabilisation plan.<sup>101</sup> It provided for sending a law enforcement expert team and technical

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96 “Statement of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in Connection with Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan.” 2010. *AKIpress News Agency*. June 22. Accessed on 7 January 2017. <http://akipress.com/en/news:192291>

97 Blagov, Sergei. 2010. “Russia, CSTO, SCO Struggle to Settle Kyrgyz Unrest.” *The Jamestown Foundation*. June 30. Accessed on 3 January 2017. [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=36539&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=381&cHash=9a190fa911](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=36539&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=381&cHash=9a190fa911).

98 Blagov, Sergei. 2010. “Russia, CSTO, SCO Struggle to Settle Kyrgyz Unrest.” *The Jamestown Foundation*. June 30. Accessed on 3 January 2017. [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=36539&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=381&cHash=9a190fa911](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=36539&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=381&cHash=9a190fa911).

99 Reported by interim Government.

100 By the UN and WFP.

101 It appeared no earlier than on 17 June, due to the delay connected with presidential approvals.



supplies to assist the interim government.<sup>102</sup> The very next day, 18 June, the Russian Ministry of Defence confirmed that it had received a third Kyrgyz request to deploy Russian troops to protect strategic facilities. No decision followed.<sup>103</sup>

The crisis was resolved by behind-the-scenes negotiations led by Kazakhstan and cautious pragmatic policies of involved states. Perhaps the main outcome for CSTO was that the framework that declared as its main task avoiding cases similar to the 2010 Kyrgyz crisis and managing them in case of an outbreak was barely utilised, offering no effective mechanism to dealing with such situations.

## Conclusion

The 2010 crisis highlighted the important areas of CSTO dysfunction. First, it was a declarative type of organisation that lacked an effective coordination mechanism which would be developed and tested. In the crisis situation members found it more effective to act outside of CSTO's framework which was designed to address exactly these types of crisis situations. Second, CSTO remained state-centric in terms of its security provision. Humanitarian aspects of ethnic confrontation were largely left outside of the organisation's attention.

Third, multilateralism remains perhaps the biggest problem. Institutionalisation of CST and its transformation into an independent organisation, CSTO, did not lead to any significant increase in multilateral activities. Striking is the absence of any concrete developed mechanism of collective security. The consultation mechanism supported by Articles 12 and 13 of the CSTO Charter is the only available practical tool that is slow and at times highly politicised. To practically resolve the serious crisis in Central Asia, the CSC would have to delegate powers to Russia and allow Russian control of any joint troops acting on behalf of CSTO. In fact, limited practical military integration and joint command, as well as absence of legally defined conditions for cases of intervention, leave the response to any aggression or security threat subject to immediate political decision.

Fourth, the CSTO budget is relatively small compared to those of similar organisations, and Russia is its main contributor. Russian contribution to the CSTO budget in 2010 was USD 2.02 million (in comparison with the contribution of USD 2.64 million to EAEC and

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102 "Kyrgyzstan: The CSTO's Stabilization Plan." 2010. *Stratfor*. Accessed on 7 January 2017. <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/kyrgyzstan-cstos-stabilization-plan>.

103 "Russian media outlets alleged that Moscow's pledges of aid to Kyrgyzstan were conditional. The New Times claimed that Russia urged Bishkek to annul the constitutional referendum on June 27 and sustain presidential rule in Kyrgyzstan in exchange for deploying troops. When Kyrgyzstan's interim authorities allegedly declined, Moscow again refused to send troops" Blagov, Sergei. 2010. "Russia, CSTO, SCO Struggle to Settle Kyrgyz Unrest." *The Jamestown Foundation*. June 30. Accessed on 3 January 2017. [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=36539&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=381&cHash=9a190fa911](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=36539&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=381&cHash=9a190fa911).

USD 11.62 million to CIS).<sup>104</sup> Russian contribution to the CSTO budget was USD 2.97 million in 2009 and 2.37 in 2008. The total budget of CSTO amounts to USD 4.74 (2008) million on average, half of which is traditionally contributed by Russia.<sup>105</sup> In 2009, Russia extended to the CSTO secretariat (located in Moscow) the same privileges as those granted to the federal government bodies of Russian Federation with regards to rent, rights and statuses, claiming that this step would optimise the organisation's budget spending.<sup>106</sup>

In numerous documents, declarations and memoranda signed since 1992, there is a clear lack of concrete measures and practical mechanisms. As two crises – in Georgia in 2008 and in Kyrgyzstan in 2010 – have demonstrated, it took a tremendously long time to coordinate members' foreign policy positions on certain issues, not to mention the fact that practical threat-response was dramatically impeded. Unless mechanisms of joint military and security integration are developed there is a great risk for the CSTO to follow the path of the CST and become nothing more than a talk-shop. In fact, there are only three fields that receive significant attention: weapons supply at a discounted price, military staff training and exchange of intelligence. The rest is left to political ad hoc decision-making that hardly adds credibility to CSTO.

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104 *RBC Newsfeed*. 2010. Accessed on 4 January 2017. <http://www.rbc.ru/rbc-freenews/20100513121331.shtml>.

105 *Polit.Ru*, 2009. Accessed on 4 January 2017. <http://www.polit.ru/news/2009/02/05/desant.html>.

106 *The News Kazakhstan Newsfeed*. 2009. Accessed on 4 January 2017. <http://thenews.kz/2009/09/22/134213.html>.

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