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*Russia*

**A QUARTER OF THE CENTURY IS ON THE GUARD  
OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY AGAINST THE ASYMMETRIC  
CONFLICTS AND HYBRID WARS  
(TO THE 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE COLLECTIVE SECURITY  
TREATY AND THE 15<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE CSTO)**

**Abstract:**

*In 2017 was the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Collective Security Treaty and the 15 years of the establishment of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). This organization stands on guard for the regional security of Central Asian countries. In addition, countries in the region actively involved in the work of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which also builds its policy on the position of maintaining security in the Central Asian region. Only the coalition efforts of all interested States can provide an effective counteraction to threats of terrorism, Islamic extremism, separatism, drug trafficking. The organizational-institutional framework the CSTO and the SCO allow to the countries of the region to combat threats of the asymmetric conflicts and hybrid wars. The paper is devoted to the institutional forms, and future prospects, the capabilities and problem points of cooperation in the field of security in the framework of these international organizations.*

**Keywords:**

*CSTO, collective security, Russian Federation*

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## Introduction

In 2017, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) celebrated its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the quarter-century anniversary of the signing of the Collective Security Treaty. The CSTO plays a significant role in ensuring peace and security, in countering the threats of terrorism, extremism and separatism, in the fight against illegal drug production and trafficking in the post-Soviet States, primarily in Central Asia. Let me remind that Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan are members of CSTO. The observer nations in the CSTO are Afghanistan and Serbia.

In addition to participation in the CSTO, the countries of the region are actively involved in the work of the Shanghai cooperation organization (SCO), which also focuses on maintaining security in Central Eurasia. China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan are full members of the SCO. The observer states in the SCO are Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, Mongolia, Sri Lanka. The dialogue partners of the SCO are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Turkey, Sri Lanka. Turkmenistan remains a neutral state, non-aligned to any blocks. But Turkmenistan had participation as a guest in the SCO summit.

### The main asymmetric threats to the regional security

The main threats to regional security in the Central Eurasian region are:

- extremist organizations aimed at destabilizing the political situation in the countries of the region;
- the activities of illegal armed groups;
- the distribution and transportation of drugs, as well as the growing influence of drug traffickers;
- the trafficking of arms, ammunition, explosives, etc.;
- socio-political instability in the countries of the region;
- the proximity to hotbeds of military conflicts;
- the spread of the influence of international terrorist organizations, strengthened by and strengthening the allure of religious extremism<sup>2</sup>.

The answers to these threats are looking for through the national security structures, and within the framework of the CSTO collective security and defense policy coordination.

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<sup>2</sup> I. A. Seleznev, *A Quarter of the Century Is on the Guard of Collective Security*, "Proktivodeystvie terrorizmu. Problemy XXI veka. Counter-Terrorism", Moscow 2018, No. 2.

## **CSTO and SCO are the regional security providers**

The Organization of Collective Security Treaty (CSTO) is the military-political bloc that functionally responsible for collective security and the coordination of defense policy of some post-Soviet States. Since 2001, by the decision of the heads of the four Treaty member States - Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – there are the Collective Rapid Deployment Forces of Central Asian region. The military component of the CSTO was strengthened in 2009. It was created the Collective Rapid Reaction Force.

The last CSTO summit (The Collective Security Council) was held in Minsk on November 30, 2017. The jubilee session of the Council has approved the implementation plan of the Strategy of Collective Security for the period until 2025 and adopted the decision "On the legal design of the institution of partnership within the CSTO". Taking into account the urgency of the problem, it was decided to "improve measures to combat illegal migration", which provides for giving operation "Illegal" status of a permanent regional program of the CSTO. The discussion of aspects of collective security until 2025 was the main task of the meeting. In particular, was a list of ongoing threats to the countries of the CSTO<sup>3</sup>.

At the previous session of the Council in 2016 in Yerevan, a list of threats to the CSTO member States was defined. That treats are the recruitment to the ranks of terrorist organizations, international terrorism, the inter-religious and inter-ethnic strife, the unresolved territorial disputes with neighbouring States, unconstitutional change of the state system.

To address these challenges, the leaders agreed to improve the defense of the CSTO countries, to expand military-technical cooperation, strengthen cooperation in combating terrorism to improve cooperation in border security. It was also decided to create a united list of terrorist organizations recognized in the countries of the CSTO. Also the Collective Security Council established the Crisis Response Centre of the CSTO, which will interact with the national security structures of the CSTO countries<sup>4</sup>.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) a.k.a. Shanghai Pact Organization is not a military-political bloc. But on the basis of its statutory goals,

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<sup>3</sup> *Deklaraciya glav gosudarstv-chlenov ODKB v svyazi s 25-letiem Dogovora o kollektivnoy bezopasnosti i 15-letiem ODKB*, <[http://odkbcsto.org/documents/detail.php?ELEMENT\\_ID=12030](http://odkbcsto.org/documents/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=12030)> (30.06.2018).

<sup>4</sup> *Strany ODKB usilyat borbu s terrorizmom*, "Izvestiya", 14.10.2016, <<http://izvestia.ru/news/638495>> (30.06.2018).

its agenda periodically turns to the “joint provision and maintenance of peace, security and stability in the region”<sup>5</sup>. According to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, the SCO was created for the purpose of strikes against three forces – terrorism, separatism and extremism, which are the main threat to peace and stability in the region. In the framework of the SCO even established a coordinating body on regional security issues – the permanent Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Now India and Pakistan have stepped in the circle of full members of the SCO. But both China and Russia have got a wish to involve the Islamic Republic of Iran in that organization.

### **CSTO and CSO in a struggle against the Jihadist extremism**

The regional specificity is the neighbourhood of Afghanistan. It's the country that leads in the world in terrorist activity (up to 30% of all terrorist attacks committed in the world)<sup>6</sup>.

Terrorist activity is the main asymmetric military strategy of the Islamic extremist organizations in the Central Eurasian region. The strongest armed extremist formation that operates in the region is the "Islamic Party (Movement) of Turkestan" (IPT, in 1996-2002 it was known as the "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan"). It is not surprising that in the pursuit of additional funding for new IPT leader Usman Ghazi declared accession of his organization to the ISIS/Daesh.

So, back in March 2015, a video appeared on the Internet, where the representatives of IPT swear Saeed Khan, representative of Daesh. In this regard, the ISIS represents the serious threat to the States of the Caspian and the Wider Black Sea regions.

There is a large number of immigrants from these countries in the ranks of ISIS. For example, the treason of Lieutenant Colonel Gulmurod Khalimov, the commander of the OMON troops of the Tajik Ministry of Internal Affairs. He fled to the territory of the ISIS, and since September of 2016 he became the military minister of the ISIS. The former military minister of ISIS was deceased Abu Omar al-Shishani. But his real name was Tarkhan Batirashvili, a native of the Republic of Georgia.

Uzbekistan is showing "multi-vector" foreign policy now. Uzbekistan was one of the founding members of the CSTO, but left him (the last time Uzbeki-

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<sup>5</sup> *O Shanhayskoy organizacii sotrudnichestva*, <[http://rus.sectSCO.org/about\\_sco/](http://rus.sectSCO.org/about_sco/)> (30.06.2018).

<sup>6</sup> L. Y. Gusev, *Borba s terrorizmom i ehkstremizmom v stranah Centralnoj Azii i Afganistane. Rol ODKB*, „Rossiya i novye gosudarstva Evrazii”, No. 1(38)/2018, pp. 126-133.

stan announced the suspension of participation in the CSTO in 2012). Now the state is in the Non-Alignment Movement. Nevertheless, the country retains membership in the SCO and continuing cooperation with the security departments within the structure.

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have got the similar situation of risk. There are active recruiters of extremist organizations. Moreover, the factor of Afghanistan influences Tajikistan. However, it can be noted that in resistance to the terrorist threat, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan hopes for the help of the allies in the CSTO and the SCO. In particular, the Russian military bases on the territory of these countries are acting as a security factor. But some time ago there were problems with determining the legal status of these bases. But, according to the results of interstate negotiations, the term of the bases' stay was extended to 2042.

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning the fruitful experience of the interaction of the special security structures in the fight against extremism. Previously, experts have warned of the danger of spreading radical Islamism among the immigrants from Central Asia who have a significant presence in the regional labor markets. This manifests as a social bases and cover for radical Islamist organizations among the immigrant communities<sup>7</sup>.

The problem was officially voiced after the terrorist attack in the subway of St. Petersburg in April 2017. Gen. Alexander Bortnikov, the director of FSB agency of Russia has recognised that the main backbone of the terrorist groups is the citizens of Community of Independent States (CIS) that arriving in Russia in the labour immigration flows. Mr Bortnikov has urged to take measures on increase of responsibility of officials in overseeing compliance with immigration laws, and businesses that use migrant labour<sup>8</sup>. Previously, there had been reports about the exposure and arrest of a group of extremists from Central Asia in autumn 2016 by the FSB and the Russian Police. The extremists were connected with ISIS/Daesh and were preparing terrorist attacks in St. Petersburg. The operation took place with the active participation of officers of the security services of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan<sup>9</sup>. This practice of the coor-

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<sup>7</sup> A. B. Dikov, *Problema islamizma v kontekste migracionnoy politiki Rossii*, „Protivodeystvie terrorizmu. Problemy XXI veka. Counter-Terrorism”, No. 3/2016.

<sup>8</sup> *Glava FSB nazval trudovyh migrantov iz SNG kostyakom grupp terroristov*, <<http://www.rbc.ru/politics/11/04/2017/58ec92ea9a79477def3267f1>> (30.06.2018).

<sup>9</sup> *Zaderzhannye FSB boeviki gotovili vzryvy v torgovyh centrakh Peterburga*, <<http://www.tvc.ru/news/show/id/104500>> (30.06.2018).

dination of law enforcement cooperation is an important component of the security framework of the relevant structures of the CSTO and the SCO.

Kazakhstan has got the most stable political and social system in Central Asia. And at the same time Kazakhstan has got a sufficiently strong army and special services to resist the extremist threat. Nevertheless, it too is registering an increase of the extremist influence. Also, it should be taken into account that, in addition to the activity of the Jihadist Salafi underground, the activities of Uyghur separatist organizations represent a worrying new development. Many of them are linked with international terrorist groups<sup>10</sup>.

An important component of the security cooperation and integration process is the Russian-Kazakhstani military-technical cooperation. The military departments of Russia and Kazakhstan, in the framework of the existing agreements, hold regular joint military exercises on the territory of the two States, alternating between one and the other. Kazakhstan is also actively involved in the work of the CSTO, particularly in the activity of the Collective Rapid Reaction Force.

Also, Kazakhstan is participating in strengthening the anti-terrorist potential of the SCO, including through participation in joint counter-terrorism exercises. The active participation in the Eurasian integration structures is also mentioned in the Military Doctrine of the Republic of Kazakhstan<sup>11</sup>.

The important point is the military cooperation of Kazakhstan with NATO. The Military Doctrine of Kazakhstan is among the priorities of international military cooperation - along with the "creation of a single defense space", "ensuring collective military security" and "deepening strategic partnership" within the CSTO and SCO - also calls "expansion of cooperation in the military and military-technical areas" with the United States and the European Union. We can agree with the point of view that in such a situation, Russia and Kazakhstan need a transition from a "strategic partnership" to a real strategic alliance, which will be based on the fight against international terrorism, transnational organized crime, illicit trafficking in drugs and weapons, and combating all forms of asymmetric conflicts and hybrid wars.

The involvement of neutral Turkmenistan in the orbit of the SCO would be promising both from the point of view of Russia and China. Moreover, Russia and China are mentioned as the main strategic partners of Turkmenistan by President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> L. Y. Gusev, *op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> *Voennaya doktrina Respubliki Kazahstan*, <[http://military-kz.ucoz.org/index/voennaja\\_doktrina\\_kazahstana/0-47](http://military-kz.ucoz.org/index/voennaja_doktrina_kazahstana/0-47)> (30.06.2018).

<sup>12</sup> *Berdymuhamedov nazval Rossiyu pervoy iz strategicheskikh partnerov Turkmenii*, <<https://ria.ru/world/20170219/1488314702.html>> (30.06.2018).

Terrorist attacks and armed clashes with terrorists have occurred in Ashgabat, for the first time, in 2008. There is also the danger of the infiltration of Turkmenistan by armed detachments from Northern Afghanistan, amounting to an invasion. Therefore, in the context of rising tensions in 2015, 70% of the Turkmen army were transferred to the Afghan border. For reasons of neutrality, however, the government of Turkmenistan officially denied the threat on the Afghan border<sup>13</sup>. This creates difficulties in the organization of international assistance to Turkmenistan. However, the Government of Turkmenistan maintains cooperation in military-technical issues with Russia and with other partner countries.

### **The peacekeeping potential of SCO and CSTO**

Also, it appears to be promising a deeper involvement of Azerbaijan and Armenia into the orbit of the SCO. We see periodically escalating the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. But in this case, the OSCE Minsk group is unable to cope with the tasks of de-escalation and resolution of this conflict. resolution to the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh. Therefore, the conflict would be possible to prevent and resolve using all the resources, possibilities and prestige of the SCO. However, in Russia there is a realization that other countries-participants of the SCO can prevent the adoption of these countries, recalling paragraph of the Charter of the SCO, which rejects the country in a state of conflict. Consequently, there is a path of gradual steps to involve these countries into the orbit of the SCO and the consolidation of the SCO in the South Caucasus. Because a recent precedent with the adoption of India and Pakistan as full members of the SCO shows possible ways for Armenia and Azerbaijan. And the mechanisms and instruments of the SCO to resolve the conflict between these countries.

### **Conclusion**

Eurasian integration structures are an effective tool to prevent threats and risks and to provide collective security. And the CSTO and the SCO become most important actors in security maintaining against asymmetric conflicts and hybrid wars in the Central Eurasian Region.

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<sup>13</sup> Y. E. Arshino., A. A. Kazancev, M. V. Lapenko, S. A. Pritchkin, *Kaspiyskiy region 2025: mezhdunarodno-pravovoy status, ekonomika i bezopasnost. Analiticheskiy doklad Kazakhstansko-rossiyskiy ekspertniy IQ-klub*, Saratov 2017, pp. 70-73.

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