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## **Russia and Central Asia: Multilateral Security Cooperation**

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## **Key Points**

\* Russia has gradually become more aware of the importance of Central Asia to its own interests, and now has an interest not only in preserving the buffer status of the region but also in not allowing other states to strengthen their position there. To achieve these strategic objectives it has been necessary to push for cooperation in security matters through bilateral and multilateral arrangements.

\* Multilateral cooperation is seen primarily within the framework of such organisations as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). The most important of these institutions in the context of Central Asian security appear to be the CSTO and the SCO.

\* Central Asian states had hoped for a great deal more from cooperation with the West, particularly the USA. Disappointed that from that quarter the pursuit of deeper political reforms has been linked with criticism, most Central Asian countries now hope that Russia will help them to establish an effective system of regional security.

\* The main value of the CSTO for Russia and the post-Soviet countries is that for now it is the only institution which has a specifically military dimension. The steps being taken by Russia to strengthen the CSTO and to convert it into a military and political block are consistent with the Kremlin's policy for the post-Soviet space, the main aim of which is to increase Russia's influence.

\* Also evident are Russia's efforts to add a military-political dimension to the SCO. It would be to Russia's advantage to strengthen its security position in Central Asia further by involving the military resources of China and the other members and observer countries of this organisation.

\* It can be assumed that Russia will continue to push for cooperation within the framework of these two organisations. The SCO is seen by Russia as the most convenient vehicle for establishing a security partnership which involves Beijing but not Washington.

\* It must be said, however, that multilateral cooperation has not yet borne much fruit, and that the prospects for future cooperation are

far from clear. This is mainly due to conflicts of interests between the individual countries concerned. It is essential for the interests of both Russia and Central Asia to build up mutual trust.

\* The accent at present on political grandstanding and short-term cooperation projects, such as demonstration exercises, reflects the fact that it is easier to state lofty aims than to cooperate in practice. Multilateral cooperation has so far amounted to a relatively cheap and effective means for Russia to project its geopolitical influence. The development of full, genuine economic links is highly problematical for Russia.

\* From today's perspective the most promising way ahead seems to be to develop bilateral security cooperation between Russia and each of its Central Asian opposite numbers, giving both sides more room for manoeuvre in protecting their national interests. The fact that parochial interests will probably continue to dominate over the development of genuine common interests is a legacy of the parlous situation which these states found themselves in after the collapse of the USSR.

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# Russia And Central Asia: Multilateral Security Cooperation

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## **Introduction**

Central Asia has always been of particular importance to Russia by virtue of its strategic geographical location and its wealth of natural resources. Only when Moscow had stable positions in the region was she able to exert much influence in the development of a favourable balance of forces and interests in Eurasia.

It is apparent that the achievement of these strategic objectives is directly linked to a push for multilateral cooperation between Russia and the countries of Central Asia in the security sphere. The main aim of this cooperation would be the formation of an effective security system in the post-Soviet space and its Central Asian sector. Strengthening regional security with the active participation of Moscow is also vitally important for all the countries of Central Asia.

Firstly, none of the states in the region feel fully secure, being neighbours as they are to Afghanistan, one of the most unstable places on the planet. A weak government in Afghanistan, a shattered economy, widespread corruption and the presence of armed bands not under Kabul's authority are the main reasons why there continues to be chaos in that country which could spill over into neighbouring countries at any time.

In these conditions the Taliban movement and its allies in other radical groups form focal points for extremism, while there is inexorable growth in the production of drugs and in the volume of drugs trafficked from Afghanistan to its neighbours. Experts have pointed out, with justification, that "in a number of Central Asian countries there is a real and growing threat that their regional elites and corrupt representatives of the forces of law and order will be transformed into mere protectors of the drugs business and the powerful drugs syndicates".<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, in conditions where there are unresolved social and economic problems, which in the Central Asian countries are a legacy of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, there is a strong trend towards the growth in influence of various religious extremist organisations,<sup>2</sup> in spite of a package of measures being taken to detect them and counter their activities.

Thirdly, there are so many questions over borders, territory and natural resources between the countries of Central Asia that disagreements are likely to continue, with the potential to lead to international confrontations.

Overall it can be said that in terms of regional security the Central Asian states had hoped for a great deal more from cooperation with the West, particularly the USA, especially after the appearance of military bases of the US-led international anti-terrorist coalition in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Disappointed that from that

quarter the pursuit of deeper political reforms has been linked with harsh criticism, most Central Asian countries now hope that Russia will help them to establish an effective system of regional security.

Multilateral cooperation between Russia and the states of Central Asia takes place within the framework of organisations like the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and a number of groupings within these organisations.

Multilateral cooperation takes the following forms:

- elaboration of common concepts and strategic approaches to national and international security (e.g. by signing inter-governmental treaties and agreements, by multilateral high-level discussions and by the creation and financing of international executive organs);
- carrying out multilateral training exercises by units of the armed forces to establish practical procedures to be adopted in case of the emergence of a real threat to national or regional security;
- multilateral cooperation by the countries' security structures in existing international anti-terrorist organisations to counter international terrorism and extremism, drug trafficking, and other trans-national threats;
- taking the first steps towards multilateral cooperation in preserving and expanding the links between industrial organisations involved in the manufacture of military hardware.

### **The Commonwealth of Independent States**

Security cooperation between Russia and most post-Soviet states, including the countries of Central Asia, started within the format of the CIS. A declaration "on the non-employment of force or the threat of force in the relationships between CIS member states" was signed in Kiev (Ukraine) on 20 March 1992. The heads of state decided to create a CIS "Council of Ministers of Defence", and in 1992 a CIS united armed forces military command structure was set up.

In May 1992 a "Collective Security" treaty was signed in Tashkent (Uzbekistan) by six of the CIS countries: Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. This agreement provided for mutual security support in the event of threats from outside the area. Belarus, Azerbaijan and Georgia assented to the treaty later. This treaty was not signed by Ukraine, Moldova and Turkmenistan.

CIS "Collective Peacekeeping Forces" were deployed in Tajikistan during the civil war there in 1992-1996, representing the first attempt to set up regional security mechanisms specifically for Central Asia. In accordance with the decision of the council of heads of state of the CIS countries, the troops deployed there were Russia's 201st Motor Rifle Division and a battalion each from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. According to Central Asia's leading security specialists, "the collective peacekeeping forces played an important role in stabilising the situation and preventing the conflict from spreading into neighbouring Central Asian countries".<sup>3</sup>

The protection of state borders also posed an urgent requirement for multilateral cooperation between the countries of the CIS. The destruction of the once centralised USSR border security system led to an increase in trans-border criminal activities at the external borders of the CIS, especially those parts bordering on Afghanistan.

This led to the formation in 1992 of an integrated coordinating body, the CIS "Council of Border Troops Commanders". "Thanks to joint efforts and to the leading role of Russia, the former Soviet republics were able to maintain a stable border defence system. Russia, within the CIS, took on most of the responsibility for setting up border protection structures for Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan."<sup>4</sup>

Another practical realisation of multilateral security cooperation was the creation in 1995 of the CIS Joint Air Defence System,<sup>5</sup> the main functions of which were to coordinate the airspace defence of the region and to coordinate the actions of CIS countries, by agreement, to repel an airborne attack. There was an annual exercise "Comradeship-in-arms" involving the air defence organisations of the national armed forces of the CIS countries.

Furthermore, within the framework of the CIS, attempts were made to organise multilateral cooperation to maintain the links between the industrial enterprises of the former Soviet military-industrial complex. To do this a CIS "Inter-state Commission for Military and Economic Cooperation" was created in 1993 as a working group of the council of heads of government of the CIS. This organisation was tasked with resolving problems of specialisation and cooperation in the development and manufacture of military hardware, cooperation in the creation of joint integrated structures, storage of mobilisation equipment, and questions of transfer of technology from the military to the civilian sector of the economy. This branch of multilateral cooperation was not developed further, however, mainly because only six states participated in it: Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.<sup>6</sup>

A major cause of the Kremlin's loss of interest in multilateral cooperation with the countries of Central Asia was Yeltsin's policy of shedding the burden of their security concerns.

Cooperation in the CIS framework increasingly became a mere formality, consisting mostly of official meetings and declarations of intent. In this situation the commander-in-chief of the united forces of the CIS began to be regarded as an unnecessary supranational arm of military control in many CIS states, let alone someone who could "call the shots with the Council of Heads of Government".<sup>7</sup> In time this post was replaced by the CIS "Military Cooperation Coordination Headquarters" which had considerably fewer powers and capabilities.<sup>8</sup>

After a period of cooled relations between Russia and the countries of Central Asia during most of the 1990s, an attempt to consolidate the efforts of the CIS states in the security area was the signature in 1999 by the CIS Council of Heads of State of a treaty on "Cooperation by the member states of the CIS in the fight against terrorism". Although this document was the legal basis for cooperation by the security organisations of the CIS countries in detection and prevention of terrorist actions, it also acted as a substantial stimulus for the development of more widespread cooperation.

***The CIS Anti-terrorist Centre***

The agreements made between the CIS states in 1999 to combine their efforts in the fight against international terrorism came to fruition in 2000, when the CIS Anti-terrorist Centre (ATC) was set up. The main roles of this organisation were to be:

- to develop plans for cooperation in the struggle against international terrorism;
- to coordinate cooperation of special security forces and police forces;
- to participate in the preparation and conduct of anti-terrorist exercises;
- cooperation in carrying out search operations;
- creation of a specialised database.

The ATC began its work using the capabilities of the special anti-terrorist units of the law enforcement structures and security organs of the CIS nations.<sup>9</sup> In view of the situation developing in the Central Asian region and the detection of tendencies of the leaders of the "terrorist international" to direct their attentions there, the Central Asian region was a primary area of interest for the ATC. A Central Asian branch of the ATC was therefore set up in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) in August 2001. This organisation is still working today, manned by personnel from the security services of Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. This organisation, together with the security forces of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Russia, keeps an eye on the security situation in the Central Asian region with a view to countering international terrorism.

The CIS ATC takes an active part in the annual "South - Anti-terror" exercise in a country in Central Asia. The main aims of these exercises are to increase the preparedness of the security organs, special forces and other security structures of the CIS member states for rapid and adequate response to terrorist threats, and practical exercising of procedures in cooperation between the participants in joint anti-terrorist actions.

Its activities take place under the auspices of the CIS Council of Heads of Security and Special Services of the CIS States and in close cooperation with the Councils of Defence Ministers, Ministers of the Interior, commanders of border troops and the prosecutor-generals' coordinating council. Decisions on matters of principle are made only by the CIS Council of Heads of State.<sup>10</sup>

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In general it seems that in spite of the favourable image given by numerous official conferences and the high-sounding declarations made at them, the CIS executive organs have not made progress in establishing an active security system. The main reasons for this are that they have not yet succeeded in overcoming the legacy of the Yeltsin "policy" and that the various CIS states have differing views on the potential threats to national and regional security.

It can therefore be confidently predicted that it is only a matter of time until many CIS organisations like the CIS Council of Ministers of Defence wither away. The only exception is probably the Central Asian branch of the ATC which in general has acted positively and now acquired useful experience. But overall, in matters of developing multilateral cooperation, the main focus of attention will probably



continue to be the supranational regional organisations, i.e. the Collective Security Treaty Organisation and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

### **The Collective Security Treaty Organisation**

A "Collective Security Treaty" (CSTO), involving Russia and the countries of Central Asia, was in force in the 1990s and proceeded, like most things in the CIS format, mainly on the basis of declarations which were never translated into practical actions. It therefore became unpopular with some of its members, and in fact Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Georgia withdrew from it in 1999.

Russia took the initiative to revive this treaty. It was decided at the meeting in Moscow on 14 May 2002 to convert it into a full-blown international organisation, the "Collective Security Treaty Organisation" (abbreviated to CSTO). The member states (Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) ratified the statutes of the treaty and the agreement on its legal status on 2 September 2003, and on 2 December 2004 the organisation was granted observer status at the United Nations General Assembly. Uzbekistan joined the organisation in August 2006, thus considerably strengthening its Central Asian component.

The highest organ of the organisation is the Collective Security Council, comprising the heads of state of the CSTO countries. Between sessions of the full council, a Standing Council concerns itself with questions of coordination and execution of decisions taken by the full council. The Standing Council is composed of representatives nominated by the member states.

The other main organs of the CSTO are:

- the Council of Foreign Ministers: a consultative and executive body concerned with cooperation between member states on foreign policy matters;
- the Council of Defence Ministers: a consultative and executive body concerned with cooperation between member states on defence matters, including manufacture of equipment and cooperation in military technology;
- the Committee of Secretaries of Security Councils: a consultative and executive body concerned with cooperation between member states on practical security matters;
- the CSTO Joint Staff: a permanent body of the CSTO and the Council of Defence Ministers, responsible for planning and executing CSTO decisions on military matters.<sup>11</sup>

Back in the days of the Collective Security Treaty, the Collective Security Council took the decision to set up a Collective Rapid Deployment Force for Central Asia, involving contingents from Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The force was to be up to 1500 strong, supported by the Russian Air Force.<sup>12</sup>

In 2003 a detachment of the Russian Air Force, acting as a component of the CIS Rapid Deployment Force, was stationed at the Kant air base in Kyrgyzstan. In 2004, on Moscow's recommendation, the Council of Defence Ministers decided to increase the size of the Collective Rapid Deployment Force to 4000 men. The main

emphasis at the moment is on developing the areas of joint control, communications and reconnaissance.

Since 2004 the CSTO has carried out an annual exercise, called "Rubezh" (Frontier), in a Central Asian country, aimed at providing a counter to regional security threats. The first exercise, "Rubezh-2004", took place in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan with the participation not only of contingents from the Collective Rapid Deployment Force but also operational units from the Russian Interior Ministry and Border Troops. The next exercise, "Rubezh-2005", was held in Tajikistan, followed by "Rubezh-2006" in Kazakhstan,<sup>13</sup> and "Rubezh-2007" in Tajikistan.<sup>14</sup>

Since 2003, special forces and border troops of the CSTO nations have also participated in regular anti-narcotics operations (operation "Kanal"). In the period 2003-2006 as much as 48 tonnes of narcotics, including both psychotropic and hard drugs,<sup>15</sup> and about 540 tonnes of drug precursor materials were confiscated during these operations.<sup>16</sup>

In 2004 Russia, with a view to strengthening cooperation between CSTO member states, called for the abolition of the CIS intergovernmental committee for military and economic cooperation (the "ICMEC"), proposing that the work of this body should be organised under the auspices of the CSTO. Russia claimed that this change to the format of the ICMEC's activity would enable it to make more effective use of its experience of privileged-partner cooperation and create more favourable conditions for improving military and economic cooperation. This initiative was supported by all the other states, and on 15 September 2004 the CIS council of heads of government abolished the ICMEC as a CIS organisation.

On 23 April 2005 the presidents of the Treaty member states (Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) signed a decree creating the CSTO intergovernmental committee for military and economic cooperation (still referred to as the "ICMEC"). The aim of this committee was to unite and coordinate the efforts of member states of the organisation to deepen and improve cooperation, to integrate more closely and to tackle problems of military and economic cooperation and cooperation in military technology in a more systematic way.

To make the ICMEC effective, its CSTO national working groups were chaired by government ministers, deputy ministers or other leaders of branches of the defence industry, and the members of the groups were drawn from senior staff in the ministries and departments concerned with the military-industrial complexes of the CSTO member states.

The ICMEC considers and works on the basis of recommendations aimed at resolving the following problems:

- maintenance of special expertise and cooperation in the manufacture of weapons, military vehicles, support equipment and spare parts;
- development and execution of long-term programmes for military and economic cooperation, and of general rules for cooperation in resolving problems of improving manufacturing quality and the standardisation of military hardware;
- agreement on customs regimes and procedures for supplying or transporting military and dual-use equipment;

- making proposals for the conduct of joint development and evaluation trials for the development and updating of military hardware;
- development of integrated principles and integrated running of joint enterprises for the development, production, modernisation and disposal of weapons and military hardware.<sup>17</sup>

Important decisions for the future development of cooperation between CSTO members were taken at the CSTO heads of government summit meeting in Dushanbe (Tajikistan) on 6 October 2007. Two sets of documents, tabled by Russia, were signed. These documents set out the organisation and principles of peacekeeping activities within the CSTO framework and improvements in the regulatory and legal activities of the ICMEC.

The first set of documents comprised an "agreement on peacekeeping activities", a provision on "collective peacekeeping activity", a provision on "an operational working group for preparing peacekeeping activities" and a provision on "the head of a CSTO peacekeeping mission". In particular, the agreement on peacekeeping forces meant that peacekeeping brigades with international status could be formed. The idea of forming collective peacekeeping forces under the auspices of the CSTO had been put forward by the Russian leadership as long ago as 2003, but it met with instant opposition from Moscow's partners. In December 2005, Vladimir Putin, the president of Russia, was obliged to call the foreign ministers and ministers of defence of all the CSTO member states to the Kremlin, to "clarify" the position to them in person. The package of documents tabled by Russia at the Minsk summit in June 2006 was not signed, however.<sup>18</sup>

The second set of documents included a protocol concerning "mechanisms for provision of military assistance to CSTO member states in the event of aggressive action or the threat of aggression" and a plan for the re-equipment of the Central Asian collective rapid deployment forces with modern weapons and equipment, which would be provided at internal Russian prices.

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It is clear that the main value of the CSTO for the post-Soviet space is that it is the one specialised regional security institution with a military dimension and with the organisational and political muscle to stand up to present threats and challenges, and at the same time is "not encumbered with additional concerns (such as political or cultural matters)".<sup>19</sup> This organisation makes sense and is attractive to its members, including Russia which sees it as a vehicle for strengthening its position in Central Asia. In spite of having already demonstrated its worth, however, the CSTO faces a number of problems, including those mentioned below.

Firstly, as rightly noted by some of the leading experts in the area, "if the CSTO wants to play a part in the organisation of collective security, it cannot avoid paying attention to issues such as the development of political components, dealing with conflicts on the territory of its member states, carrying out pre-conflict monitoring activities, developing conflict-preventing techniques and sanctions and organising negotiations and post-conflict settlements. So far, judging by the passivity of the CSTO during the events in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in 2005, it has got some way to go".<sup>20</sup>

Secondly, the only fully-trained military units in the collective rapid reaction forces are the Russian ones. The deterrence value of the forces of the other states is

psychological rather than military.<sup>21</sup> The collective peacekeeping forces resolution passed in October 2007 has so far not been given practical effect. In November 2007, however, there were discussions in the CSTO Joint Headquarters on subjects such as manning and structure of the collective peacekeeping forces and the priorities for re-equipping them with modern weapons and equipment, comprehensive logistic support, and the training of military and civilian personnel. To update themselves on training methods, a number of experts visited № 53 special training department for peacekeepers in the "Vystrel" Defence Academy of the Russian Federation.<sup>22</sup>

### **The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation**

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is an international organisation which includes Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The SCO was founded on the basis of agreements on strengthening trust in the military sphere and on mutual reductions of armed forces in border areas, signed in 1996 and 1997 by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Russia and Tajikistan (the so-called "Shanghai Five"). The creation of the SCO was formally announced in Shanghai (China) on 15 June 2001 at a meeting of the heads of six governments. At a summit meeting in St Petersburg (Russia) the SCO Charter was adopted. This charter is the basic founding document which defines the roles, aims and principles of the organisation, its structure and main areas of activity. Since December 2004 the SCO has had the status of an observer at the United Nations General Assembly. In 2004 and 2005 Mongolia, India, Pakistan and Iran became observers at the SCO.

The SCO is a wide-ranging cooperation organisation, covering questions such as regional security and countering trans-national threats. This activity is coordinated, in accordance with the decision of the Tashkent SCO summit in 2004, by means of regular meetings of the secretaries of the national security councils of the member states of the organisation and meetings of the heads of security departments.

To coordinate the activities of security forces in countering international terrorism, a Regional SCO Anti-terrorist Organisation was set up in 2004 with its headquarters in Tashkent (Uzbekistan). This headquarters is manned by representatives from the security departments of Russia, the Central Asian countries and China. The Council of this organisation meets twice a year to take decisions of a mandatory type concerning all aspects of its activity.

Practical cooperation between the defence departments of the SCO member states takes the form of various joint activities involving the troops of the nations' armed forces. In August 2003 the first joint anti-terrorist exercise, "Cooperation-2003", was conducted in the border regions of Kazakhstan and China.<sup>23</sup> In July 2004 and November 2005 there were seminars in China for the defence departments of the SCO member states.<sup>24</sup> In August 2007, straight after the SCO summit in Bishkek, there was a military demonstration and exercise (codenamed "Peace Mission 2007) on the Chebarkul' test range in the Chelyabinsk oblast', involving about 7500 military personnel and more than 1200 vehicles, the largest exercise yet.<sup>25</sup>

It is also significant that after this exercise, which was attended by the heads of state of all the SCO countries, President Vladimir Putin spoke of the possibility of carrying out similar large-scale exercise on a regular basis. Studies are under way in SCO departments on draft agreements on the organisation and execution of future anti-terrorist exercises and on personnel training for the SCO national

contingents. It is also being proposed that the observer states, India, Iran, Pakistan and Mongolia, should cooperate within the SCO framework.

So it is clear to see that Russia has an interest in developing the military and political arms of the SCO, seeing this as a method of strengthening its own position in Central Asia and bolstering security in the region by involving the military potential of China and other countries. The future development of relations between Russia and the Central Asian countries belonging to the SCO is however still clouded by a number of important issues.

Firstly, the reaction by the Central Asian members of the SCO to Russia's initiatives to strengthen the military component of the organisation has not been unambiguous. At the Dushanbe SCO summit in October 2007, none of the delegations responded positively to the Russian proposals on the military concept of the organisation made as long ago as 2005. Furthermore, membership of the SCO has not stopped the states of the region from developing military ties with the USA and NATO. This position seems to be driven by the desire of the Central Asian members of the SCO, balanced as they are between Russia, China and the West, to give themselves more diplomatic room for manoeuvre in the pursuit of their national interests.

Secondly, all the Central Asian member states of the SCO are at the same time members of the CSTO, so there is some duplication of the mechanisms for military cooperation with Russia. It also seems that the CSTO set-up, which excludes China and is therefore more focussed on the local "post-Soviet" problems and where there is a certain level of trust between Russia and the Central Asian countries, may be a more favourable forum than the SCO for the resolution of specific problems.

Thirdly, it is clear that the leading position in the SCO is held by China rather than Russia, and Beijing is not about to relinquish this leadership to Moscow. Furthermore, China sees the role of the organisation as being primarily in the trade and economic spheres and is resistant to the idea of forming a military alliance based on the organisation, especially as at the moment there is no strategic concept for the military role of such an alliance. Against whom would it be directed?

- against the USA and NATO? It is clear that this is impossible in view of Russia's generally westward-looking foreign policy (although the SCO is often quoted both in Russia and in the West for propaganda purposes) and the close economic interdependency between China and the West;
- against trans-national threats (international terrorism, extremism, the drugs business, etc.)? To counter these, the SCO needs cooperation with the West, the USA and NATO. Neither side has made specific efforts in this direction.

Obviously the SCO as a recently-formed organisation has yet to undergo the test of time. Much will depend on its ability to strengthen its analytical capabilities, as distinct from its political and propaganda capabilities. For the SCO, as indeed for Russia, it is vital to develop new non-standard solutions, such as asymmetric solutions, to the present security threats, as it is becoming more and more difficult to counter them by traditional military means, and in some cases it is impossible to do so.

## Conclusions

This analysis of the steps being taken by Russia to develop multilateral security cooperation with the states of Central Asia leads to the following conclusions:

- 1.** Notwithstanding criticisms that Russia's behaviour towards Central Asia in the early and mid 1990s, and even at the end of them, was inconsistent, the reduced military presence maintained by Russia there has contributed a good deal to the prevention of upsurges of tension in the region.
- 2.** The arrival of Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin has seen Russia adopting a more active role in the Central Asian region. As it has come to realise more and more that Central Asia is vital for its own interests, Moscow has been interested in preserving the buffer status of Central Asia and preventing other states, primarily the USA, from strengthening their own positions there. Russia seems to have adopted an intelligent tactic towards the Central Asian countries in encouraging military cooperation with them, including the exploitation of multilateral formats, and this policy has been very successful. This policy is well adapted to the political and economic capabilities of Russia.
- 3.** The most important mechanisms for participation by Russia in the formation of a regional security system in Central Asia have been the CSTO and the SCO. Russia will continue to stimulate interaction with Central Asia under the auspices of these two organisations. Furthermore the SCO is seen by Moscow as the most useful vehicle, along with Beijing but excluding Washington, for the creation of a regional security system.
- 4.** Although the results of multilateral cooperation between Russia and the countries of Central Asia directly under the auspices of the CSTO and the SCO have only been limited, the prospects for their development in the future are far from clear. This is due firstly to differences between member states of these organisations. Years may be necessary to eliminate these differences, and this process can only be accelerated if there is strong political will on the part of all the member states of the CSTO and the SCO. No less important is the need for these two organisations to attract and employ substantial intellectual resources.
- 5.** The accent at present on political grandstanding and short-term cooperation projects, such as demonstration exercises, reflects the fact that it is easier to state lofty aims than to cooperate in practice. In reality, Moscow sees multilateral military cooperation merely as a cheap and reasonably effective way of increasing its own geopolitical influence. This form of cooperation does not cost as much as developing full-blooded economic links. But Russia has problems precisely in this area.

From today's perspective the most promising way ahead seems to be to develop a bilateral format of cooperation between Russia and each of its Central Asian opposite numbers, giving both sides more room for manoeuvre in protecting their national interests. The fact that parochial interests dominate and will probably continue to dominate over the development of genuine common interests is a legacy of the parlous situation which these states found themselves in after the collapse of the USSR, which was an era of crisis and struggle for survival in during a turbulent time in the development of a new world order.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Z Dadabaeva, 'National priorities of international cooperation for achievement of stability in Central Asia', *Security Of Central Asia: New Challenges, Threats And Risks*, Moscow: Centre for Strategic and Political Research, 2006, p.52.

<sup>2</sup> Such as "Hizb-ut-Tahrir", the "Islamic Movement of Turkmenistan" and others.

<sup>3</sup> A M Bondarets, 'Military and political aspects of integration in Central Eurasia', *Cooperation And Integration Projects For Central Asia: Comparative Analysis, Possibilities And Prospects*, Bishkek: Aleksandr Knyazev Foundation (Kyrgyzstan) and Central Asia and Caucasus Institute (Russia), 2007, p.92.

<sup>4</sup> V Yu Letov, 'The historic role of the border troops of Russia in ensuring the security of the southern borders of the CIS', *Cooperation And Integration Projects For Central Asia: Comparative Analysis, Possibilities And Prospects*, Bishkek, op.cit., p.105.

<sup>5</sup> Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine were the founder members of the CIS Joint Air Defence System when it was set up in 1995. Since 2000, Georgia and Turkmenistan have played very little part in the system. Since that date also, Ukraine and Uzbekistan have stopped taking part in joint training exercises. At present operational information on the air picture is exchanged between the central command posts of Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The forces of Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan contribute to the routine manning and military preparedness of the CIS Joint Air Defence System. ('The sky above the CIS. The post-Soviet states exchange cooperation with Russia for partnership with NATO countries' *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (Russia), 28 February 2002).

<sup>6</sup> 'Allies in the defence industry: an interview with V Semerikov, deputy general secretary of the CSTO', *Voyenno-promyshlennyi kurier* (Russia) 8 May 2007, [http://www.vpk-news.ru/article.asp?pr\\_sign=archive.2007.182.articles.names\\_01](http://www.vpk-news.ru/article.asp?pr_sign=archive.2007.182.articles.names_01)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> From 1 January 2006, by decision of the CIS Council of Defence Ministers, the CIS Military Cooperation Coordination Headquarters ceased to exist. Kazakhstan had proposed this as long ago as 2004.

<sup>9</sup> S I Reva, 'The CIS Anti-terrorist Centre in the international security system', *Cooperation And Integration Projects For Central Asia: Comparative Analysis, Possibilities And Prospects*, Bishkek: op.cit., pp. 100-104.

<sup>10</sup> Uzbekistan occupies a special position in relation to the CIS ATC. Although Uzbekistan takes part periodically as an observer in the "South - Anti-terror" exercises run by the ATC, it does not take part in the work of the operational group of the centre in Bishkek and does not contribute to its running costs.

<sup>11</sup> CSTO website, <http://www.odkb.org>

<sup>12</sup> The decision to set up the Collective Rapid Reaction Force for Central Asia was taken at the session of the Collective Security Council of the CSTO at Yerevan (Armenia) in May 2001. It was decided that the force would comprise a battalion each from Russia (to be drawn from the 201st Division, based in Tajikistan), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, plus reinforcements. The total size of the force would be about 1500 military personnel. Coalition forces would be deployed to the territory of any member state of the CSTO in the event of a threat to its security.

<sup>13</sup> The theme of "Rubezh-2006" was joint planning and collective security operations in the coastal area of Kazakhstan, so Russian naval infantry units and ships of the Russian Caspian Sea Flotilla took part in it as well as the Collective Rapid Deployment Force. The exercise involved about 2500 military personnel, more than 60 armoured vehicles, about 50 artillery pieces and mortars, more than 35 aircraft, including helicopters, and 14 warships and naval supply ships ("Rubezh" in the Caspian Sea area', *Independent Military Review* (Russia), 25 August 2006)

<sup>14</sup> The active phase of exercise "Rubezh-2007" was conducted on the Liaur test range, 20 km north of Dushanbe, on 6 April 2007. More than 500 military personnel from Russia, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan were involved, with about 50 armoured vehicles, a flight of Su-25 aircraft and a flight of Mi-24 helicopters. An operational group from the Armed Forces of Uzbekistan took part for the first time ('Counter-attack from "Rubezh-2007"', *Voyenno-*

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*promyshlennyy kurier* (Russia), № 13, 4-10 April 2007, [http://www.vpk-news.ru/article.asp?pr\\_sign=archive.2007.179.articles.army\\_02](http://www.vpk-news.ru/article.asp?pr_sign=archive.2007.179.articles.army_02)).

<sup>15</sup> In 2003 - 1974 kg, in 2004 - 10702 kg, in 2005 - 11251 kg, in 2006 - 23993 kg.

<sup>16</sup> 'No NATO reaction to our proposals: interview with Nikolai Bordyuzha, CSTO General Secretary', *Voyenno-promyshlennyy kurier* (Russia), № 3, 24-30 January 2007, [http://www.vpk-news.ru/article.asp?pr\\_sign=archive.2007.169.articles.names\\_01](http://www.vpk-news.ru/article.asp?pr_sign=archive.2007.169.articles.names_01).

<sup>17</sup> 'The post-Soviet defence industry: interview with V Semeryukov, CSTO General Secretary', *Voyenno-promyshlennyy kurier* (Russia), № 16, 25 April - 8 May 2007, [http://www.vpk-news.ru/article.asp?pr\\_sign=archive.2007.182.articles.names\\_01](http://www.vpk-news.ru/article.asp?pr_sign=archive.2007.182.articles.names_01).

<sup>18</sup> 'The CIS presented with a pact. Russia unites the post-Soviet space', *Kommersant* newspaper, Russia, 8 October 2007.

<sup>19</sup> K L Syroezhkin, 'Cooperation between CSTO and SCO', *Documents For The 4th Annual Conference On "Concepts And Approaches To Regional Security: "Cooperation In Central Asia - Experience, Problems And Prospects", 7 June 2006. 2006*, Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies (KISI) under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Almaty, 2006.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> 'The CSTO puts on "blue helmets"', *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kurier* (Russia), № 46, 28 November - 4 December 2007,

[http://vpk-news.ru/article.asp?pr\\_sign=archive.2007.212.articles.chronicle\\_01](http://vpk-news.ru/article.asp?pr_sign=archive.2007.212.articles.chronicle_01).

<sup>23</sup> This exercise involved more than 1000 military personnel from Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, supported by military vehicles and aircraft.

<sup>24</sup> V A Shchipkov, 'The Shanghai Organisation: a new structure for the world to live in harmony, justice and peace', *Bezopasnost'*: Foundation for National and International Security (Russia), Moscow, 2006, p.12.

<sup>25</sup> Participating in "Peace Mission 2007" were 4700 Russian troops, drawn from the 76th Airborne Division, the 34th Motor Rifle Division from the Volga-Ural Military District, aircraft from the 5th Air Army of the Russian Air and Air Defence Forces, units of MVD troops, the Chief Directorate for Punitive Operations, FSB border forces and other Russian security departments. China contributed more than 1700 troops from the Chinese National Liberation Army. The Central Asian countries were represented by 100-strong units of assault troops from Kazakhstan and Tajikistan and by a "Skorpion" special forces unit of 30 men from Kyrgyzstan. Uzbekistan only sent observers to the exercise ('The spirit of Shanghai' in the fight against terrorism. Heads of SCO governments pleased by actions of troops in exercise "Peace Mission 2007"', *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kurier* (Russia), № 32, 22-28 August 2007),

[http://vpk-news.ru/article.asp?pr\\_sign=archive.2007.198.articles.army\\_01](http://vpk-news.ru/article.asp?pr_sign=archive.2007.198.articles.army_01)



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Translated by Mervyn Brown.

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<http://www.defac.ac.uk/colleges/csrc/document-listings/ca/>

Dr Marcel de Haas, *The 'Peace Mission 2007' Exercises: The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Advances*, Central Asian Series 07/28, Advanced Research and Assessment Group September 2007,  
<http://www.defac.ac.uk/colleges/csrc/document-listings/ca/>

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