

COOPERATION BETWEEN KAZAKHSTAN AND RUSSIA WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE COLLECTIVE SECURITY TREATY

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In the new world order that has arisen since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the post-Soviet space has transformed into a new geopolitical and geostrategic field in which the current geopolitical situation is characterized by the major changes that have occurred in the world community since the end of the bloc opposition and the emergence of a new system of international relations. The threat of another world war and the use of nuclear and other types of weapons of mass destruction has been reduced, a multipolar world is continuously evolving, and immense improvements have been achieved in arms control and in strengthening stability and security throughout the world.

At the same time, the global changes are also giving rise to contradictory factors. On the one hand, the international community is taking specific measures to expand cooperation and bring about the peaceful settlement of disputes, as well as put a harness on the arms race and the spread in nuclear weapons, while new risks and threats to security are arising, on the other.

For the CIS countries, the same (or similar) main challenges have developed: international terrorism, religious extremism, and the drug business, which the CIS states are trying to combat jointly in order to ensure regional security. The first attempt to create a mechanism which would embrace the entire post-Soviet space was the Collective Security Treaty (CST), signed on 15 May, 1992 by several CIS states.¹

Pursuant to this document, the parties must coordinate their positions in this area. For example, Art 4 states that members of this structure should view aggression against one of the parties to the Treaty as aggression against all the members of the CST. And Art 1 stipulates that the member states of this organization should not enter any military alliances directed against any other country that is signatory to this document. At the same time, the Treaty permits its members to join collective security systems in Europe and Asia, and Art 10 leaves open the possibility for other states to join the Treaty.²

The CST is originally of a political and open nature and has no intention of forming a military bloc. It became the basis for a qualitatively new solution to the security problems of the member states by largely peaceful means, as well as for joining forces to form an essentially new security system.

The signing of this document is a conscious step by several of the independent sovereign states that have newly arisen in the post-Soviet space aimed at enhancing their national security under the new geopolitical conditions. The Treaty is of special significance today, when the force factor is still very prevalent, only has changed its direction of focus.

The CST guaranteed the fledgling independent states the necessary external conditions for independent nation-building and for conducting democratic and socioeconomic reforms, and helped them to create their national armed forces and strengthen their defensibility.

As T. Mansurov, a well-known Kazakhstan diplomat, notes, "all further developments on the international scene point to the fact that although the danger of widespread regional and particularly global

¹ See: "Dogovor o kolektivnoi bezopasnosti," in: *Sbornik dokumentov po mezhdunarodnomu pravu*, Almaty, 1998.

² *Ibidem*.

conflicts has significantly decreased, there are still hotbeds of tension, including in the regions bordering on the Commonwealth.”³

Participation in this treaty is in harmony with Kazakhstan’s National Security Conception. The Law on National Security adopted on 26 June, 1998 points out that in order to obtain international guarantees of national security, the Republic of Kazakhstan is helping to ensure international security, an integral part of which is Kazakhstan’s national security.

According to the country’s leadership, membership in this organization is very important for our republic, since it is in a very unstable and conflict-prone region. As Kazakh diplomats believe, “there is no direct threat to Kazakhstan. We are taking preventive measures to ensure that our states are not taken unawares.”⁴

On the whole, Kazakhstan has been one of the initiators of the Collective Security Treaty from the very beginning. This was part of the general policy of diversity conducted by the republic’s leadership in the foreign sphere. Signing the CST was supposed to prepare the ground for creating a single defense space in the CIS states. Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbaev said, “The concept of a single defense space was not expressed either in the CST or in the Military Security Conception. Nevertheless, without recognition of a single defense space, it is essentially impossible to plan the building of a strong military system, develop united armed forces, train national armed forces, and form military-strategic regions. It will be impossible to draw up joint operative plans, create strategic reserves, and much more. Therefore, it goes without saying that the idea of creating a single defense space will be an addendum to the Collective Security Treaty...”⁵

By the end of 1999, a situation had developed which required a change in approach to forming the regional security system. This was largely due to the change in the nature of the threats. Whereas before 1999, security in the region was understood exclusively as providing defense against outside aggression (the main danger came from the conflicts in Tajikistan and Afghanistan), at present the threat of terrorism has come to the fore.

Under such conditions, the Treaty member states, especially Russia, are taking steps to retain the CST and enhance it. Of course, in terms of military and political parameters, the Russian Federation is the strongest state today in the post-Soviet space, and the Central Asian states also recognize its definitive role in the region. And so essentially all of them, including Kazakhstan, are closely tied to Russia in the matter of protecting their national interests and ensuring security in the military area by means of bilateral and multilateral treaties and agreements.

Just as in Kazakhstan, the question of ensuring state security is one of the top priorities of the Russian leadership. Russian President Vladimir Putin is focusing much attention on national and military security and the state’s Military Doctrine.⁶ These documents realistically express Russia’s new policy aimed at strengthening and ensuring its security. The Conception defines national security as the security of the state’s multinational people, the bearer of sovereignty and the only source of power in the country.

Since the very beginning of its independence, Kazakhstan has seen Russia as its main ally, but Russia’s current leadership has made perceptible changes to Moscow’s policy in Central Asia. The Russian Federation has become more active and perhaps even tougher, which has prompted most of the states in the region to place top priority on their relations with their northern neighbor. Geopolitical factors served as the basis for bringing Kazakhstan and Russia closer together, and as a reason for developing and intensifying their bilateral cooperation, particularly in the military and political area. The global system taking shape will not be viable if it is not open to national interests and is not built on cooperation between the states.

³ T.A. Mansurov, *Kazakhstansko-rossiiskie otnosheniia v epokhu peremen. 1991-2001*, Moscow, 2001, p. 523.

⁴ Ye.A. Idrisov, “Vneshniaia politika v usloviakh globalizatsii,” in: *Kazakhstan i mirovoie soobshchestvo. Sbornik statei*, Almaty, 2000, pp. 4-17.

⁵ N.A. Nazarbaev, *Strategiia vechnoi druzhby. Kazakhstan-Rossia*, Moscow, 2000, p. 246.

⁶ See: *Kontseptsiia natsional’noi bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii* [<http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/decree/2000/24-1.html>].

An important mechanism of Russia's participation in the Central Asian processes is still the Collective Security Treaty of the CIS states, which in this case, Moscow can also use to reinforce its influence in the region. At the same time, Central Asia is also playing an important role in ensuring the national and military security of the Russian Federation. For a long time, Russia has been closely tied to the countries of the region and considers it a zone of its vitally important interests. First, the Central Asian states border on Russia and it is important for it to maintain friendly relations with them. Second, Russia and the countries of the region have common interests, primarily in the fight against international terrorism, Islamic extremism, the drug mafia, and drug trafficking.⁷ Along with this, it should be noted that the Russian Federation is trying to regain its influence in the Caspian, and is showing an interest in the region and in the territory where Russian-speaking citizens live.

The Conception names the following as the main threats to Moscow: "the possibility of foreign military bases and large military contingents appearing in the direct vicinity of Russia's borders; a weakening of the integration processes in the CIS; the emergence and escalation of conflicts close to the state border of the Russian Federation and external borders of the CIS member states; and claims to Russian territory."⁸ These threats also apply to Astana to a certain extent.

Central Asia is a kind of "buffer" for Russia in protecting its southern borders from the penetration primarily of Islamic religious extremism and terrorism. So the military aspect of Russia's interrelations with the region's states plays a key role. The Central Asian leaders asked Russia to join their defense alliance because these states still depend on Moscow. And its active participation in the collective security of these countries indicates Russia's special interests in the region, including with respect to maintaining security on its southern borders. Moscow is sure that the Central Asian states will still be tied to it in terms of many strategic, political, economic, military, and other parameters for a long time to come, and often also dependent on it.⁹

What is more, "military cooperation with the CIS countries is developing unevenly due to objective circumstances. The idea of creating a collective security system on a CIS scale has still not been realized."¹⁰ The fact that the new entities of international relations must inevitably go through the stage of national and state self-assertion with its inherent "hypertrophy of sovereignty" is also having an effect. This naturally cannot help but interfere with the establishment of multilateral cooperation. The search by the CIS states for their own place in the world has also given rise to discrepancies in the approaches to security issues and to many regional and global problems. Military cooperation between Russia and the Central Asian states largely corresponded to their possibilities and far from always coinciding interests. By the end of the 1990s, a split had essentially occurred in the post-Soviet security space, which had an effect on the Central Asian security space, in which there are structures primarily oriented toward Russia, on the one hand, and associations striving to create conditions for parity interaction with the western security system, on the other.

Assessing the role of the CIS and the CST, Nursultan Nazarbaev wrote that "unfortunately, the CIS has far from fully justified the hopes placed on it. By creating this integration structure, we were unable to build a system responsible for its fate, which adequately takes into account both the real changes in the interests of the member states, and the dynamics of development throughout the entire post-Soviet space. This was the main reason why many of the constructive proposals put forward earlier in the Commonwealth were not implemented."¹¹

All the same, the official stance of the Kazakh side with respect to the CST boils down to the fact that this collective security system, despite all the problems and difficulties, is a real basis for forming a regional security system, and further steps must be taken to raise the efficiency of this association.¹²

⁷ See: "Deiatel'nost sistemy 'Eshelon' narushaet prava grazhdan Rossii." Interview with Russian Federation Security Council Secretary S. Ivanov, *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie*, 9 June, 2000.

⁸ *Kontseptsiia natsional'noi bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii*.

⁹ See: S. Razov, "V novoi Tsentral'noi Azii," *Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn*, No. 3, 1997, p. 37.

¹⁰ Yu.N. Merzliakov, "SNG—opyt 11-letnego sotrudnichestva," *Evropeiskii dialog*, No. 4, 2002.

¹¹ N.A. Nazarbaev, op. cit., p. 282.

¹² See: M.S. Ashimbaev, "K probleme formirovaniia sistemy regional'noi bezopasnosti," *Analytic—Analiticheskoe obozrenie*, No. 1, 2001, p. 8.

It is obvious that the only solid foundation for multilateral cooperation is coinciding interests. At present, when the national state priorities of the post-Soviet countries have been largely defined, the principal areas of their coincidence are taking shape. For example, the documents signed recently within the CST have made it possible to begin creating regional collective security systems in the main strategic areas—the Eastern European, Central Asian, and Caucasian. The decisions adopted by the CST member states in Bishkek (October 2000) and Erevan (May 2001) on the formation and functioning of the Collective Rapid Reaction Forces (CRRF) of the Central Asian Collective Security Region are of immense significance. These forces are primarily intended to be used in antiterrorist operations. The procedure was defined for making joint decisions regarding use of the forces and assets of the collective security system. The necessary legal foundation has been laid for the temporary deployment of the military formations of the Treaty member states on each others' territory.

Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that the Treaty is acquiring new content and all the CST members, without any doubt and exception, are interested in joining forces to fight terrorism and extremism in any form, primarily religious extremism.

Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbaev highly appraised the fact that CRRF have been formed in the region. He noted that the session of the Collective Security Council in Erevan is a breakthrough, since three documents were adopted: on the creation of the forces, on the formation of this structure, and on organizing the command and control of these forces.

One of the main results of the anniversary summit of the CST member states held in May 2002 in Moscow was the decision to reform this structure into the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

Due to their geopolitical position, the CIS states are the advanced post in the fight against international terrorism, extremism, and the drug mafia, which are posing a threat to the entire international community. An aggravation of the military political situation, caused by an increase in the military potential of foreign states around almost the entire perimeter of the CIS, the ongoing armed conflicts in the world, the intensive spread of terrorism, and the increase in drug aggression are making it imperative for the Commonwealth states to establish more active cooperation not only for efficiently ensuring national and collective security by relying on multi- and bilateral agreements, but also for intensifying coordination of their activity on the international arena. This is where the fastest progress in the CSTO format is occurring.

In this way, along with the bilateral measures, a policy aimed at creating prospective regional and interregional security systems should come to the forefront in combating the manifestations in Central Asia of international terrorism, religious extremism, the drug business, illicit arms circulation, and illegal migration. Maintaining peace and stability in the CIS is a necessary prerequisite for the socioeconomic and political development of each state in the Commonwealth.

The events that occurred after 1991 demonstrated that the Central Asian states do not have a strong enough foundation and do not possess the resources necessary for maintaining stability at the regional level. The main lesson of this period has been that the development of multilateral cooperation in the CIS is not preventing the newly independent states from strengthening their sovereignty. It is also obvious that comprehensive multilateral interaction is impossible without relying on the development of cooperation in bilateral formats. Finally, it has been understood how important it is to create efficient mechanisms for putting multilateral cooperation into practice. Foreign policy cooperation within the CSTO must be enhanced with the prospect of turning it into a regional organization of collective security.

Since under the conditions of globalization, maintaining security at a regional level is acquiring increasing significance, the need to strengthen cooperation both among the countries of Central Asia and with the countries around them is growing. Political, military, and, most important, economic stability in the region is maintained by outside factors. Russia, the West, and China have come forward as the main external stabilizers. The global political players are trying to gain a foothold in the region by creating their structures there. For example, whereas the CSTO is a link that ties Central Asia to Russia, the Partnership for Peace program is a link that ties the region to the U.S.

The strongest players in Central Asia, primarily the U.S., are currently trying to realize their strategic interests by means of their “magnetism” using different levers: financial, ideological (democratization and human rights), military-political (joint military programs and exercises), and strictly military (fighting terrorism). Whereas before 2001 a kind of balance formed between the interests of Russia, China, and the U.S., in which the Russian presence in the region was primarily ensured by military-political cooperation,¹³ at present, the military-political presence of the U.S. is intensifying. In this respect, Russia needs to take a fresh look at its military-political cooperation with the Central Asian states. It must draw up an individual approach to each of these countries. In this respect, the strong bilateral military-political cooperation between Russia and Kazakhstan could become the foundation for a new level of bilateral and multilateral relations within the CSTO.

¹³ See: *Analytic—Analiticheskoe obozrenie*, No. 2, 2002, p. 5.