

**THE MULTILATERAL STRUCTURES AND
LEGAL FOUNDATIONS OF
RUSSIA'S SECURITY POLICY
IN CENTRAL ASIA**

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**How Russia Built
Up Its Foreign Policy Strategy Across
the Post-Soviet Expanse**

In 1991, when the Soviet Union ceased to exist and when Russia lost the larger part of its economic, political, and military potential, it had to build up its foreign policy under the new conditions from scratch. In the next 15 years, its policy went through several development stages, each of

them marked by revised foreign policy trends and approaches.¹ At the first stage, Moscow concentrated on broader relations with the West and, for that reason, temporarily moved away from the former Union republics. However, as soon as the West and the countries of the region increased their pressure on the post-Soviet expanse, the Kremlin promptly revised its foreign policy ideas to turn the limelight on the CIS. In 1993, the then RF Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev elaborated a new foreign policy conception for the Russian Federation that, together with continued relations with the U.S. and Western Europe, spoke about developing cooperation within the CIS and protecting Russia's interests and the rights of the Russian-speaking minorities, as well as conflict settling across the post-Soviet expanse, which was described as a sphere of Moscow's special responsibility.² Russia's military doctrine likewise dwelt on the key military-strategic aspects of Russia's policies in the Near Abroad. Meanwhile, the socioeconomic situation in the post-Soviet expanse was rapidly worsening; the area was swept by destabilization caused by separatism and ethnic strife. This, in turn, ignited armed conflicts. Having assumed responsibility for conflict settlement and stronger security and peace in the region, Moscow envisaged the possibility of using force in its new military doctrine. In view of NATO's eastward movement and stronger Western and regional pressure, the Russian leaders had to take urgent measures to limit this influence and keep foreign forces at bay in the post-Soviet expanse. While defending its interests, Moscow renounced its pledge not to be the first to use nuclear weapons to protect its territory as well as that of its allies against external enemies. It was obviously an effort to "tie" the militarily and economically weak CIS members to it by strengthening joint security. The outside world interpreted Russia's new foreign policy course in the CIS as Moscow's neo-imperialist ambitions and its desire to preserve its military presence and political influence in the region.³

The armed conflicts in Moldavia, Georgia, and Tajikistan called for urgent peacekeeping interference to avoid vast bloodshed. This led to bilateral agreements involving Russia's units stationed there since Soviet times; later they acquired the status of peacekeeping forces within the CIS.⁴ Art 11 of the CIS Charter adopted on 22 January, 1993 says: "Member states ... shall support security in the Commonwealth, including with the assistance of groups of military observers and collective forces for maintaining peace." Art 12 of the same document envisages "peacekeeping operations and the use, where necessary, of the Armed Forces in accordance with the procedure for exercising the right to individual or collective defenses according to Art 51 of the U.N. Charter."

In 1992, in Tashkent, the CIS countries signed the Collective Security Treaty to achieve closer cooperation in reaching these aims and deepening cooperation in the sphere of joint security; the treaty was enacted in April 1994. In this way, the CIS set up in 1991, which failed to achieve genuine integration and cooperation, became a real regional structure; it served as a legal basis for peacekeeping operations in post-Soviet territory.

In 1996-1999, when Evgeni Primakov was RF Foreign Minister, the Russian Federation successfully developed its foreign policy in the Southeast. An Oriental scholar, the minister never tired of saying that Russia's special position in Eurasia does not permit it to be called a purely European state. This accounted for the absence of the traditions of democracy and liberalism in their European interpretation. For this reason, argued the foreign minister, and due to its historical experience and geographic location, Russia should implement a multi-vector policy and develop relations with the

¹ For more detail, see: L. Selezneva, "Post-Soviet Russian Foreign Policy: Between Doctrine and Pragmatism," *European Security*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 2004, pp. 10-27.

² See: A.Z. Rubinstein, "The Transformation of Russian Foreign Policy," in: *The International Dimension of Post-Communist Transitions in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. by Karen Dawisha, New York, 1997, p.43.

³ See: M. Çaşın, *Rus İmparatorluk Stratejisi*. ASAM, Ankara, 2002.

⁴ For more detail, see: K. Kurova, *Rol' Rossii i SNG v uregulirovani voennykh konfliktov v Zakavkazie*, Institute of International Relations at Warsaw University, available at [<http://www.mpa.ru/files/sb1/3.doc>].

West as well as with the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.⁵ In the Near Abroad, in Central Asia and the Caucasus in particular, Russia should pursue a policy of mutually advantageous partnership with the regional countries (Turkey, Iran, China, etc.).

At that time, Russia was demonstrating its growing distrust of the West fed by NATO's continued enlargement, the U.S.'s withdrawal from the ABM treaty, mounting nationalist sentiments inside the country, and dissatisfaction with what the West was doing in Yugoslavia. In 1999, the Cold War was reenacted when America and its NATO allies used force to settle the Kosovo conflict. Simultaneously, the anti-terrorist operation in Chechnia that began in 1999 and Vladimir Putin's coming to power opened a new period of Russia's foreign policy both in the Near and Far Abroad.

Russia's New Foreign Policy Strategy of Security in Central Asia

The National Security Conception of the Russian Federation adopted in 2000 reflected the external conditions in which the state was operating at that time as well as its domestic and foreign policy priorities.⁶ In the international sphere, Russia will concentrate on securing its sovereignty and reinforcing its position as a great power, one of the influential centers of the multipolar world. It will develop equal and mutually advantageous relations with all countries and integration associations (with the CIS members and Russia's traditional partners in particular) related to the observance of human rights and freedoms everywhere and the inadmissibility of double standards in this sphere.

The following were described as major threats to Russia's national security on the international level: the desire of individual countries and inter-state alliances to downplay the role of the existing mechanisms designed to ensure international security (the U.N. and OSCE in particular); the strengthening of military-political blocs and alliances, NATO's eastward movement in particular; the possible deployment of foreign military bases and large military contingents in direct proximity to Russia's state borders, as well as attempts by certain countries to interfere with Russia's stronger position as one of the centers of influence in the multipolar world. The document described the weaker integration processes in the CIS as a threat to Russia's national security, together with the escalation of conflicts in the RF, CIS and neighboring areas and the threat of terrorism. The conception described more active foreign policy efforts designed to develop relationships with the CIS countries in full accordance with the principles of international law with a view to adding vigor to integration within the CIS, which meets Russia's interests. This included peacekeeping activities under the aegis of the U.N. and other international organizations; and development of international cooperation in fighting transnational crime and terrorism. The document, which presented a new military doctrine, said that Russia's military security was the state's most important task. It described in greater detail the key military-strategic aspects and the conditions under which Russia was prepared to use its military forces.⁷

⁵ See: L. Selezneva, op. cit., p. 16.

⁶ See: *Kontseptsiia natsional'noy bezopasnosti Rossiiskoy Federatsii*, endorsed by the Decree of the RF President of 10 January, 2000, No. 24, available at [<http://www.armscontrol.ru/start/rus/docs/sncon00.htm>].

⁷ See: *Voennaia doktrina Rossiiskoy Federatsii*, endorsed by the Decree of the RF President of 21.04.2000, No. 706, available at [<http://www.mil.ru/articles/article3929.shtml>].

Since 1999, the Russian leadership has been working toward closer ties within the CIS, in the collective security sphere in particular, to neutralize the ever-growing Western influence in the region. Moscow's new policy was prompted, among other things, by the withdrawal of Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan from the Collective Security Treaty (CST), which described it as not effective enough.⁸ Further developments in Central Asia, however, such as the terrorist acts in Uzbekistan and southern Kyrgyzstan, as well as the continued threat that radical extremism would spread from Afghanistan and Tajikistan to their neighbors, stimulated much closer cooperation between Russia and the CST members. This opened a new stage in the collective security policy in Central Asia.

Moscow's policies in the Southern Caucasus failed when Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Uzbekistan moved away from Russia and betrayed their intention to integrate with the West. For this reason the Russian Federation had to develop more constructive policies in Central Asia: it left Turkmenistan to its own devices and is developing moderate economic relations with this country, while moving closer to Astana through the use of Kazakhstan's geopolitical situation and the large Russian diaspora in the republic for this purpose. Uzbekistan's obvious desire to pursue an independent foreign policy course forced Moscow to strengthen relations with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, its two other strategic partners in the region. Having supported the legal government during the Civil War in Tajikistan, Moscow became the main guarantor of the peace agreement signed in 1997 and the country's further stabilization. On the strength of the 1999 agreement on allied relations, Russia's 201st motorized infantry division, which remained in the republic as part of the CIS peacekeeping forces during the Civil War, extended its presence for another ten years. It was agreed that after that period it would be transformed into a Russian military base.⁹ In connection with the Batken events of summer 1999 and 2000, Russia increased its military aid to Bishkek to \$1 million to strengthen the Kyrgyz army; it also stepped up bilateral antiterrorist efforts. Strategic relations between Moscow and Tashkent, which were suspended when Uzbekistan left the CST, were given a fresh boost in the joint antiterrorist struggle.

Moscow's bilateral contacts in Central Asia were also strengthened by closer multilateral cooperation within the CST, in which three republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan) are actively involved, as well as within the Shanghai Five, which has united four regional states, Russia, and China since 2000.¹⁰

The CIS Collective Security Treaty

The Collective Security Treaty enacted in 1994 unites six CIS members: Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan (until 1999 there were nine members). It was set up to create a collective security system in the post-Soviet European and Asian expanse realized through consultations on all key international security issues that might damage their interests. The mechanism of consultations helped coordinate their actions and liquidate threats to their security, as well

⁸ See: S. Minasian, "CIS: Building a Collective Security System," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 1 (19), 2003, p. 133.

⁹ See: S. Shermatova, "Tajikistan-Rossia: torg vokrug voennoy bazy," available at [<http://news.ferghana.ru/detail.php?id=400883255809.64,1267,17428674>].

¹⁰ Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan were full-fledged members of this organization from the very beginning; in 2000, Uzbekistan was given the status of observer and joined it as a member a year later. Since 2001, the organization has been functioning as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

as to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of one or several members or to international security (Art 2).¹¹ Under the Treaty, the member states set up the Collective Security Council (CSC) made up of heads of state and the commander-in-chief of the CIS United Armed Forces. Aggression against one of the members or group of members would be regarded as aggression against all the member states. In this event, all the members will extend every necessary assistance to the victim of aggression up to and including military assistance, as well as support it with all the means at their disposal in full conformity with the right to collective defenses and Art 51 of the U.N. Charter (Art 4). This suggests that collective security is not the Treaty's only purpose: it intends to set up a military-political bloc. Indeed, Art 1 says that the member states shall not join military alliances or groups of states and shall refrain from taking part in actions against any other member state. Its inefficiency (in particular in the conflict settlement in the Caucasus and the failure to set up an efficient security system) cost the Treaty several of its members in the first five years of its existence. This showed Russia and other members that the structure should be more effective: in May 2000, the Minsk CSC meeting supported the idea of three regions of CST cooperation: European, Caucasian, and Central Asian. Some time later, in October 2000, the Bishkek CSC meeting passed a decision on setting up a collective security force system; in May 2001, in Erevan, it was decided to create Collective Rapid Deployment Forces (CRDF) for Central Asia made up of Russian, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Tajik battalions.¹² Later it was decided to attach air forces to the CRDF as well as set up similar groups in the Caucasus (Russia-Armenia) and European (Russia-Belarus) sectors.

The terrorist acts of 9/11 stirred up a wave of indignation across the world and drew many states together into the Washington-led counterterrorist coalition. Moscow's support of the United States in its struggle against international terrorism opened a new stage in the relations between the two countries and instigated regional cooperation and rivalry in Central Asia. The counterterrorist operation in Afghanistan brought allied air bases to the region's countries. America's military presence in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan strengthened Russia's cooperation with the local countries in the collective security sphere; it also promoted further integration within the CST.

The jubilee CST summit held in May 2002 satisfied the desire of the Central Asian countries to enhance their cooperation with Russia in the form of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Set up officially on 18 September, 2003, this structure was registered with the U.N. in December of the same year; a year later it was given the status of observer at the U.N. General Assembly.¹³ Art 3 of its Charter said: "The purposes of the Organization are to strengthen peace and regional security and stability and to ensure the collective defense of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the member States, in the attainment of which the member States shall give priority to political measures." Art. 7 of the same document states: "In order to attain the purpose of the Organization, the member States shall take joint measures to organize within its framework an effective collective security system, to establish coalition (regional) groupings of forces and the corresponding administrative bodies and create a military infrastructure to train military staff and specialists for the armed forces, and to furnish the latter with the necessary arms and military technology." The member states see coordination and pooling of efforts to fight international terrorism and extremism, illegal trade in drugs and weapons, as well as other manifestations of transnational or-

¹¹ For the text of the treaty see: A. Kniazev, *Afganskiy konflikt i radikal'nyi islam v Tsentral'noy Azii. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, Bishkek, 2001, pp. 25-28.

¹² See: J.H. Saat, "Collective Security Treaty Organization," Conflict Studies Research Center, Published by Defense Academy of the United Kingdom, February 2005, p. 4, available at [<http://www.da.mod.uk/csre>].

¹³ See: Organizatsia Dogovora o kollektivnoy bezopasnosti poluchila status nabludatelia v General'noy Assamblee, available at [<http://www.un.org/russian/news/fullstorynews.asp?newsID=2960>], 06. 12. 2004.

ganized crime as an important sphere of their cooperation. They are also coordinating their foreign policies in the sphere of international and regional security and taking measures to develop a legal basis in defense and security.

The process of accelerated cooperation within the CST framework gave rise to a wide range of opinions about the new military bloc that appeared in the post-Soviet expanse. Some authors compared it to the Warsaw Treaty Organization and described it as a factor designed to stem NATO's eastward movement.¹⁴ For this reason, President Putin, speaking at the 2002 CST Summit, said that the CSTO would work toward cooperation with other organizations in the sphere of security in the world, and with the U.N. and the U.N. Security Council in particular. He added that the countries that signed the Collective Security Treaty were not uniting against anyone, but against the threats confronting them.¹⁵ The situation, however, speaks of Moscow-Washington rivalry in Central Asia in the security sphere and for influence in this area. Moscow responded to America's temporary military presence in Central Asia with its intention to set up permanent CSTO bases. When Tashkent shifted its foreign policy preferences toward the United States, the Kremlin boosted its efforts to fortify its position in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Under the Agreement between the Republic of Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation on Cooperation in the Security Sphere signed in December 2002 and Art 7 of the Collective Security Treaty signed in September 2003, the Russian Federation set up its air base in Kant (Kyrgyzstan) as part of the CRDF in Central Asia.¹⁶ Moscow's military presence in Tajikistan (2005) was confirmed by the official status of the 201st Russian military base with the right of air support.¹⁷

Russia is promoting integration in the collective security sphere by many means ranging from the right granted to the CSTO members to buy Russian weapons for Russia's domestic prices to training military staff and specialists in Russian military educational establishments. Moscow has also shouldered the main CSTO budget burden—nearly half of its total size.¹⁸

In this way, since 1999 cooperation in the collective security sphere assumed practical outlines of cooperation among the CST members supported by real initiatives and joint efforts. The same can be said about the CIS air defenses set up in 1995. According to CSTO General Secretary Nikolai Bordiuzha, air defenses set up with the active participation of the CST members would be developed within the Organization on the basis of the regional air defense systems according to the principles of pooling forces and assets in the united air space, under a single command, with a single infrastructure, and according to a single plan.¹⁹

Central Asia is living under the constant threat of spreading international terrorism and extremism as well as illegal trade in drugs and weapons—hence the need to ensure the region's collective security. For this reason, the conference of the Council of the CIS Heads of State that met in June 2000 set up the CIS Antiterrorist Center (ATC) with its headquarters in Moscow as a permanent specialized body of the CIS designed to coordinate the efforts of the competent authorities of the countries involved in fighting international terrorism and other manifestations of extremism. From the very first day, the center concentrated on improving cooperation during joint operations designed not only to

¹⁴ See: J.H. Saat, op. cit., p. 8.

¹⁵ "Kollektivnaia oborona podnimaetsia na novyi uroven'," available at [<http://www.navi.kz/articles/445>], 17. 05. 2002.

¹⁶ See: [http://www.ln.mid.ru/va_sob.nsf/0/43256be30031180b43256c87004c5af2?OpenDocument]. Art 7 of the CST says that deployment and functioning of the objects of the collective security system on the territories of member states is regulated by special agreements (see: A. Kniazev, op. cit., p. 26).

¹⁷ See: S. Lavrov, "Rossia-Tajikistan: novyi etap vzaimovygodnogo sotrudnichestva," *Parlamentskaia gazeta* [http://www.ln.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/b7bb356d1cab7d0ac32570c40026956a?OpenDocument].

¹⁸ See: Iu. Semenov, "Inteviu radio Maiak s General'nym sekretarem ODKB Nikolaem Bordiuzhey," available at [<http://www.radiomayak.ru/archive/text?stream=schedules/1&item=9780>].

¹⁹ Interview General'nogo sekretaria ODKB Nikolaia Bordiuzhi gazete *Izvestia*, 21 June, 2005.

stem terrorism and other manifestations of extremism, but also other types of crime that threaten public security.²⁰ The Bishkek Branch set up in August 2001 is engaged in coordinating the CIS antiterrorist activities in Central Asia.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) set up with China's active involvement is another key structure of Russia's multilateral cooperation with the Central Asian countries. It gained weight as the result of many years of cooperation of the Central Asian countries (the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Kyrgyz Republic) with the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China within the Shanghai Forum (the Shanghai Five). It was founded in April 1996 when an Agreement on Strengthening Confidence in the Military Sphere in the Border Area were signed in Shanghai (China), which served as the starting point for peaceful settlement of the border issues between Soviet successor states and China.²¹ An Agreement on Mutual Reduction of Armed Forces in the Border Area was signed in April 1997 in Moscow. It formed the cornerstone of the Shanghai Five and opened a new stage in annual meetings of the heads of state mentioned above. The Organization has been developing since 1998; today each of the countries upholds its own viewpoint at the talks, while cooperation has developed much further to embrace regional security and economic issues, which further enhanced cooperation among the members.²² In 2000, Uzbekistan was given the status of observer, which demonstrated that the Shanghai Forum had become an inalienable part of regional cooperation. Aware of the urgent need for structural changes, the heads of the member states and Uzbekistan officially founded the Shanghai Cooperation Organization at their meeting in Shanghai on 15 June, 2001. The Declaration on Establishment of the SCO described the new organization's priority aims as follows: stronger mutual confidence, friendship, and good-neighborly relations among the member states; encouragement of efficient cooperation among them in the political, trade, economic, scientific and technological, cultural, educational, energy, transport, environmental, and other spheres; and joint efforts to maintain peace, security, and stability in the region and to build a new democratic, fair, and rationally organized political and economic international order. The SCO concentrates on regional security and is doing its best to ensure it. The member states will be working hard to carry out the propositions of the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism, in particular by setting up a Regional Antiterrorist Structure with its headquarters in Bishkek. The members will elaborate all the relevant multilateral documents on cooperation to effectively combat illegal trade in arms and drugs, illegal migration, and other types of crime.²³ The summit signed a Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism, which set forth the SCO's priorities. For the purposes of the Convention, the document supplied interpretations of the conceptions of terrorism, extremism and separatism and outlined in detail the sides' means and methods of cooper-

²⁰ See: A. Tikhonov, "Tsentral'naia Antiterrornaia," *Krasnaia zvezda*, available at [http://www.redstar.ru/2005/06/21_06/1_01.html], 21 August 2005.

²¹ The border disputes with China along the Russian stretch were mainly settled under Mikhail Gorbachev. In post-Soviet times, border issues remained unsettled mainly along the Central Asian stretch of the former Soviet-Chinese border. Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan acted together at the negotiations with China.

²² For more detail, see: Zh. Huasheng, *Kitai, Tsentral'naia Azia i Shankhaiskaia organizatsia sotrudnichestva*, Moscow Carnegie Center, Moscow, 2005, pp. 5-6.

²³ See: The Declaration on the Establishment of the SCO, available at [<http://www.cvi.kz/old/text/SHOS/Shanhai.html>].

ation designed to uproot these three evils. The terrorist acts and armed clashes with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan militants in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in the summer of 1999 and 2000 showed that the threat of spreading terrorism and extremism was very real indeed for the Central Asian countries and China (the Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region), as well as Russia. This made regional security and an antiterrorist structure designed to combat terrorism, extremism, and separatism two major priorities on which the cooperating countries pinned their hopes.

The events of 9/11 and the counterterrorist operation of the United States in Afghanistan that brought America's military presence to the region and its closer relations with the local states in the security sphere questioned the expediency of integration within the SCO. In June 2002, at the St. Petersburg summit, after a short period of indecision the SCO members signed another basic document—the SCO Charter—as well as an agreement between the SCO members on the Regional Antiterrorist Structure (RATS). This confirmed that the members intended to cooperate and interact within the SCO.²⁴ The Executive Committee, which began operating in 2003 in Shanghai, and the opening of the RATS center in Tashkent in 2004 completed the period of structural changes, thus demonstrating that the Organization had not lost its importance.

There is the opinion that the SCO with two strong leaders (Russia and China) was spearheaded against America's spreading hegemony and was prompted by Washington's stronger influence in Central Asia, part of the Heartland described by Mackinder in his geopolitical theory.²⁵ This is not quite true: other members have either fairly good or even strategic relations with the United States. The Declaration on the Establishment of the SCO and the SCO Charter as its basic document say: "The SCO adheres to the principle of non-alignment, is not targeted at any other country or region, and is open to the outside world. It is ready to develop various forms of dialog, exchanges, and cooperation with other countries and international and regional organizations."

We should admit, however, that the creation of the Shanghai Five and its later transformation into the SCO coincided with a time of cooling in the relations between Russia and China, on the one side, and the West, the U.S. in particular, on the other.²⁶ Recently, the SCO has been openly criticizing Washington: the 2003 summit (without Uzbekistan) adopted a Statement of the Heads of State condemning the American invasion of Iraq. In July 2005, in Astana, the heads of six member states issued a statement that insisted on the exact date by which the NATO military contingents should be withdrawn from Central Asia.²⁷

An analysis of the states' real intentions within the SOC should dwell on the policies Russia and China are pursuing toward the region's countries. The Beijing leadership, for example, is fully aware that cooperation with the Central Asian countries within the SCO creates favorable economic and trade conditions supported by the region's economic potential; the same can be said of their cooperation in the security sphere, which contributes to stemming extremism, separatism, and terrorism in Eastern Turkestan (the Xinjiang Province). By creating increasingly favorable conditions for broader cooperation with the Central Asian states, China is building up its influence in the region. Russia is relying on bilateral relations with the Central Asian countries and other integration structures (the CIS and CSTO) to develop closer relations with the local countries. The SCO, therefore, is not regarded as the starting point of its influence in the region: it merely creates additional conditions and possibilities for

²⁴ See: "Podpisana Khartia ShOS," available at [<http://www.dni.ru/news/russia/2002/6/7/10556.html>], 7 June 2002.

²⁵ When deliberating on Mackinder's geopolitical theory, Zbigniew Brzezinski pointed out that Washington should exercise stronger control in the Heartland or even increase its influence in it to preserve its world domination. This served as the theoretical starting point of the new American policies (see: D. Gordon, "The Hegemonic Imperative: on The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives by Zbigniew Brzezinski," *The Mises Review*, Winter 1998, available at [http://www.mises.org/misesreview_detail.asp?control=115]).

²⁶ For more detail, see: Zh. Huasheng, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

²⁷ See: "Strany ShOS staviat vopros o date vyvoda voennykh baz Antiterroristicheskoy koalitsii iz Tsentral'noy Azii," available at [<http://www.akipress.org/>], 06. 07. 2005.

multilateral cooperation, stronger security with China's help, and coordination of the member states' foreign policies. The Russia-China strategic partnership is one of the SCO's driving forces, but the strategic partners are also seen as rivals. Thus, the SCO helps Russia to control China and limit its activities in Central Asia.²⁸

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By way of summing up Russia's policies in Central Asia, we can say that Moscow has scored several points in developing its strategic partnership with the local states and gained a stronger position than its main rivals. This was achieved thanks to the Russian leaders' new, more constructive approach to the regional security issue based on bilateral and multilateral ties, as well as a more cautious policy than that pursued in the Southern Caucasus. In fact, the pressure tactics Moscow employed in the Southern Caucasus cost it its relations with Baku and Tbilisi and its military strategic presence in Georgia.

The lessons have been learned: since 1999, the Russian leaders have been moving toward a collective security system in Central Asia, while underpinning Russia's bilateral relations with a legal basis of multilateral cooperation within the CIS and CSTO and promoting the SCO as another regional cooperation structure. The events of 9/11 and the deployment of NATO military bases in Central Asia forced Russia to invigorate its security policies in the region and speed up integration within the CSTO and SCO. Russia's foreign policy aimed at strengthening and developing its mutually advantageous cooperation with the Central Asian countries proved successful despite the alternatives the West and the United States offered to the local countries. This is largely explained by the tolerance Moscow displayed toward the ruling Central Asian regimes, as well as by its non-interference in the local countries' domestic affairs. Moscow has revised its foreign policy principles within the CIS and opted for "friendly and stable neighbors." In December 2004, at the height of the "velvet revolutions," President Putin made public the new foreign policy principles applied to the CIS: "We shall accept the choice of any nation in the post-Soviet expanse as absolutely adequate and shall cooperate with any elected leader."²⁹ Moscow confirmed this during the events of March 2005 in Kyrgyzstan when the Russian leadership preferred to keep away from helping Akaev's regime, limited itself to granting him political asylum, and started working with the country's new leaders.³⁰ In May 2005, when the cruel suppression of the Andijan revolt by the Uzbekistan leaders stirred up a lot of criticism in the West, the United States in particular, Russia supported President Karimov by presenting the revolt as an aborted extremist coup staged by Islamic radical forces. Despite Tashkent's previous attempts to move away from Russia, the Russian leaders demonstrated that they were prepared to support and develop good-neighborly relations and strategic partnership between the two countries as a matter of principle.

²⁸ See: Zh. Huasheng, op. cit., p. 15.

²⁹ B. Rashidov, "Russia in Central Asia: A Shift to Positive Foreign Policies," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (32), 2005, p. 113.

³⁰ Some Russian political circles were convinced that Moscow should have interfered to stop the Tulip Revolution, but were not supported by the RF government (see: "Rossiiskie politiki komentiruiut situatsiiu v Kirgizii," available at [<http://www.akipress.org/>], 24 March 2005).