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Prospects for interaction between the shanghai cooperation organization and the collective security treaty organization

The article evaluates the prospects for interaction between the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Based on a descriptive and explanatory analysis of their common interests and tasks in the field of ensuring security and stability in the region, the authors come to the conclusion that issues of cooperation between the two associations seem to be more of a formal side of the issue, which in practical terms has already been largely resolved through active bilateral contacts and joint military exercises, which only emphasizes the importance of developing this format in the future.

Keywords: Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Collective Security Treaty Organization, Eurasia, regional security, interests, strategic position

Introduction

In the context of growing geopolitical tensions and the escalating potential for conflicts of interest on both a global and regional scale, the need for nations to collaborate against security threats has become increasingly critical in the present day. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the former Soviet states encountered a range of new security challenges. In response to this shared vulnerability, the creation of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) emerged as a logical solution. The majority of these nations recognized the imperative of safeguarding their independence and territorial integrity through collective defense. While the formation of the CSTO wasn't without its challenges, including the departure of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Uzbekistan at different points, its importance and effectiveness cannot be denied. This is particularly evident in the recent events in Kazakhstan, where President Tokayev, during a meeting of the CSTO Collective Security Council in Minsk, Belarus, in November 2023, highlighted the organization's vital role in ensuring regional stability and security. He emphasized that the CSTO is a functioning mechanism, demonstrated by its successful response to the January incident in Kazakhstan.

The statement suggests that the CSTO's commitment to resisting external aggression, as demonstrated by its member states' willingness to stand together, has established the organization as a reliable guarantor of security. This has, in turn, attracted interest from other nations and even international organizations, potentially signifying a "pulling force" towards the CSTO's sphere of influence.



The active collaboration between the CSTO and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is not coincidental. Both organizations are regional integration bodies that prioritize security within their respective spheres of influence. While their activities often overlap in content and approach, the evolving global landscape has necessitated the development of a coordinated strategy and tactics for their joint efforts.

The current security landscape in Eurasia presents a range of threats to both CSTO and SCO member states, including terrorism, extremism, and separatism. Recent events, from the *Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict 2021 year* in the Caucasus to the *“January incident” in Kazakhstan 2022 year* and the *Taliban’s takeover in Afghanistan 2022 year*, have highlighted the urgency for stronger cooperation and a unified approach between the two organizations.

This underscores the need to address the threat of Islamic extremism within Eurasia, along with the potential for “color revolutions” fueled by external forces, particularly during power transitions in Central Asian nations. These concerns further emphasize the relevance and importance of research in this area.

The current challenges to territorial security demand intensified cooperation and interaction between the SCO and CSTO. This necessitates exploring new avenues for deepening cooperation between these international and territorial organizations. It is clear that the SCO and CSTO must play a vital role in ensuring security not only within their member states but also across the entire Eurasian space. However, the question of how best to facilitate this cooperation and realize its potential remains a key area for consideration.

Research methods

This research addressed the question of SCO and CSTO collaboration by employing a range of methodological approaches. Socio-historical and comparative analyses, combined with systematization and event analysis, provided insights into the key factors driving the unification of these organizations. A narrative approach was used to compare their common interests and missions. Forecasting methods were employed to assess the potential and future prospects of the SCO and CSTO as mechanisms of territorial security. The study further relied on an analysis of regulatory documents from both organizations, as well as the perspectives of domestic and foreign scholars. Research data was gathered from government programs, academic articles, and online resources.

Research Results

This research explores the potential for collaboration between the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

Shared Goals. Both organizations share common objectives, such as safeguarding territorial security and stability, combating terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal arms trade, and transnational organized crime.



Distinct Missions: The research likely delves into specific areas where the SCO and CSTO have different focuses or approaches within their security agendas.

Potential for Joint Action: the feasibility and benefits of these two organizations working together to enhance security in their respective regions.

In essence, the research seeks to understand how the SCO and CSTO can leverage their shared interests and complementary strengths to address security challenges effectively.

The common interests of the SCO and CSTO are clearly outlined in their respective charters. The SCO Charter emphasizes the importance of “multilateral cooperation to preserve and strengthen peace, security and stability in the region,” as well as combating terrorism, separatism, extremism, drug trafficking, and organized transnational crime.

Similarly, the CSTO Charter aims to “strengthen peace, international and territorial security and stability, and protect the independence and territorial integrity of member states on a collective basis.” These shared objectives, as articulated in their foundational documents, demonstrate a clear alignment of purpose between the two organizations.

As an example of the shared interests of the two organizations, consider the "Peace Mission 2010" exercises conducted by the SCO at the Matybulak training ground in Kazakhstan in September 2010, and the exercises held by the CSTO at the Chebarkul training ground in Russia a month later. The concepts and content of these exercises were very similar, with only slight differences in participant composition (Armenia in the CSTO exercises and China in the SCO exercises). The CSTO's initiative to merge the Peace Mission exercises with the Indestructible Brotherhood exercises is logical, demonstrating common ground between the two entities, particularly in areas like combating terrorism, drug and arms trafficking, and transnational crime.

To ensure security and stability in the region, it is imperative to conduct joint counter-terrorism exercises involving member states of both the SCO and the CSTO. These joint exercises represent the primary mechanism of cooperation between the two organizations.

However, this situation highlights inherent limitations in their interaction, defined by the distinct missions of each association. For instance, the CSTO functions as a "military bloc" of former USSR countries, established not only due to their shared historical background but also in response to common threats, necessitating the protection of territorial stability and independence on a collective basis.

The SCO, on the other hand, does not fall into this category (as per the principles outlined in the SCO Declaration and Charter, the organization is not a military alliance) and primarily focuses on trade-economic and cultural-humanitarian tasks. Beijing views these areas as fundamental to security. Conversely, Moscow advocates for addressing security issues through cooperation with the CSTO, aiming to enhance security in the region by fostering collaboration between the two organizations. This perspective is supported by President Vladimir Putin's assertion that "... it is necessary to increase measures of



interaction with partners in the SCO and the CIS" [6]. Additionally, Russian scholars conclude that the compatibility between the SCO and the CSTO establishes an institutional foundation for ensuring both security and economic development in Central Asian countries.

Such dual perspectives can be attributed to concerns from the PRC and other SCO members about the risk of being perceived as adversaries of the West, potentially exacerbating the already tense geopolitical situation and leading to accusations of a military-political conspiracy with Russia. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that the SCO has significantly evolved from a territorial structure into a vast and broad integration platform encompassing not only Central and South Asia but also the Middle East. This expansion indicates a broader scope of the SCO's responsibilities and, concurrently, an increased potential for internal conflicts within the organization. Consequently, this dynamic poses certain challenges to fostering effective interaction between the SCO and the CSTO.

According to Western experts, despite over 20 years of ongoing contacts between the SCO and the CSTO, facilitated through official meetings of representatives from both organizations, the level of integration between these entities remains insufficient for joint resolution of security issues. In practice, their collaboration is largely confined to information sharing, analytical cooperation, and coordination (for instance, the memorandum of understanding between the secretariats of the SCO and the CSTO signed in 2007) [8]. Consequently, there is skepticism about the likelihood of a significant breakthrough in their cooperative efforts in the near future.

Beijing, on the other hand, views the SCO as a vehicle for advancing its geo-economic ambitions within the framework of the "One Belt, One Road" initiative, introduced by Xi Jinping upon his ascension to power. Indeed, the SCO Economic Development Strategy until 2030 outlines this approach as a guiding principle for the organization's future activities and cooperation efforts. Concurrently, it is evident that these measures, aimed at establishing a threat prevention system within the SCO region, will positively influence the management of security issues. This is achieved by formulating responses to threats through economic incentives.

Chinese President Xi Jinping underscored the importance of "preserving territorial security and stability," "common development and prosperity," and "supporting and expanding cooperation as a driving force" during the 2014 SCO summit) [9]. This emphasis was reiterated at the June 2018 meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of State in Qingdao, where the Chinese leadership advocated for robust programs to achieve common development and prosperity. Additionally, the joint communique from the 20th meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government in 2021 proposed the adoption of the SCO Economic Development Strategy until 2030 and approved a joint plan to address the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the 2022 SCO Council of Heads of State meeting in Samarkand, Xi Jinping reaffirmed these ideas and initiatives, integrating them into China's foreign policy through bilateral and multilateral agreements. Overall, these



measures significantly contribute to the security of the SCO region by preventing and countering external threats.

Conclusion

Inevitably, targeted collaboration between the SCO and the CSTO is imperative, particularly given the pressing need to unite the efforts of regional countries to thwart the implementation of destructive agendas by Islamic extremists emanating from Afghanistan in Central Asia. This necessity was underscored by the inclusion of SCO representatives in anti-terrorist exercises during the inaugural joint summit of SCO and CSTO member states held in Dushanbe in September 2021.

Overall, the resolution of cooperative endeavors between the two associations primarily occurs through official channels, often facilitated by bilateral engagements and joint military drills. This underscores the significance of further advancing this collaborative format.

Hence, while the CSTO operates as a relatively compact military alliance focused on ensuring collective security at the territorial level, the SCO encompasses a broader spectrum of domains including economic, cultural, humanitarian, and military aspects. As such, it represents an alliance of cooperation between global and territorial powers across various spheres. Despite disparities in their missions and objectives, the potential for interaction between these organizations cannot be discounted, as both share common interests in maintaining security and stability within the region. Nonetheless, the consolidation of the two entities presents a multifaceted and intricate challenge. Given the diversity of member countries, their respective perspectives, and the necessity for mutual agreement, achieving unity between the CSTO and the SCO demands extensive, long-term, and intricate organizational efforts.

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Шанхай ынтымақтастық ұйымы мен ұжымдық қауіпсіздік шарты ұйымының өзара әрекеттесу перспективасы

Мақалада Шанхай ынтымақтастық ұйымы мен Ұжымдық қауіпсіздік шарты ұйымы арасындағы өзара іс-қимыл перспективалары бағаланады. Аймақтағы қауіпсіздік пен тұрақтылықты қамтамасыз ету саласындағы олардың ортақ мүдделері мен міндеттеріне сипаттамалық және түсіндірмелік талдау жасай отырып, авторлар екі бірлестіктің бүгінгі күндегі ынтымақтастығы аталған мәселенің формальды жағы ғана, яғни бұл мәселе іс жүзінде екіжақты белсенді байланыстар мен бірлескен әскери жаттығулар арқылы ғана шешілуде, сонымен қатар бұл болашақта осы форматты дамытудың маңыздылығын ғана айқындауда деген қорытындыға келеді.

Кілт сөздер: Шанхай ынтымақтастық ұйымы, Ұжымдық қауіпсіздік шарты ұйымы, Еуразия, аумақтық қауіпсіздік, мүдделер, стратегиялық көзқарастар.

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Перспективы взаимодействия шанхайской организации сотрудничества и организации договора о коллективной безопасности

В статье оцениваются перспективы взаимодействия Шанхайской организации сотрудничества и Организации Договора о коллективной безопасности. На основе описательного и пояснительного анализа их общих интересов и задача в сфере обеспечения безопасности и стабильности в регионе авторы приходят к выводу, что вопросы сотрудничества между двух объединений представляются больше формальной стороной вопроса, который в практической плоскости во многом уже решается через активные двусторонние контакты и совместные военные учения, что только подчеркивает важность развития этого формата и в перспективе.

Ключевые слова: Шанхайская организация сотрудничества, Организация Договора о коллективной безопасности, Евразия, региональная безопасность, интересы, стратегические позиции

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