

REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEXITY IN POST-SOVIET EURASIA: CSTO DILEMMA*

Sovyet-Sonrası Avrasya'da Bölgesel Güvenlik Karmaşası: KGAÖ İkilemi

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Abstract

This article aims to analyse CSTO, a regional security organization, according to two regional security theories and to explain CSTO's challenges. It uses institutional design theory to follow the reasons behind having common values different than West's and regional security complexes theory to understand the relationship of CSTO with its neighbours. As it aims to find organization's positions in the challenges members face, CSTO's reactions to Osh protests of 2010 and Armenian April Revolution of 2018 are analysed. It argues CSTO to be an organization that achieves its goals and is successful if not analysed from Western perspective.

Keywords: CSTO, Eurasia, Institutional Design, Regional Security, Russia.

Öz

Çalışma, bölgesel güvenlik örgütü, Kolektif Güvenlik Anlaşması Örgütü (KGAÖ/CSTO)'nü iki bölgesel güvenlik teorisi çerçevesinde analiz etmek ve örgütün çözümlenemeyen sorunlarını açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Örgütün ortak değerlerinin Batı'daki benzerlerinden farklı olmasının arkasında yatan nedenleri takip edebilmek için kurumsal tasarım teorisi kullanılırken; CSTO'nun kendi politikalarından etkilenen komşuları ile olan ilişkilerinin anlaşılması için de bölgesel güvenlik kompleksleri teorisi kullanılmıştır. Buna bağlı olarak, üyelerinin karşılaştığı sorunlarda, örgütün aldığı pozisyonun bulunması amaçlanmıştır. Bu amaçla, 2010 Oşî protestoları ve 2018 Ermenistan Nisan devrimi örneklerinden yola çıkılarak CSTO'nun tepkileri incelenmiştir. Çalışma, CSTO'yu kendi amaçlarını başarabilen ve Batılı bakış açısından ele alınmadığı takdirde başarılı olan bir örgüt olarak değerlendirmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Avrasya, Bölgesel Güvenlik, CSTO, Kurumsal Tasarım, Rusya.

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INTRODUCTION

Post-Soviet states have come together in different organizations to manage their future relationship amongst each other and to preserve their integrity within their sphere. The first, Commonwealth of Independent States, was founded in 1991 right after the collapse of the USSR. It includes Russia, Belorussia, Moldova, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Georgia and Azerbaijan though these are also members of different organizations. Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova are members of Organization for Democracy and Economic Development (GUUAM). Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, being the members of Baltic Union, are the one and only group of states who successfully differed from others in peaceful way. The Baltics are the ones who had a different path in economic, social and political terms and became a part of the West, through admission to EU and NATO. Four formerly autonomous oblasts of USSR, Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria, South Ossetia and Abkhazia established the Community for the Democracy and Rights of Nations. As they declared their independence but did not enjoy international recognition as independent states, they have support each other's recognition, except for the latter two recognized by Russia.

In order to preserve the security in the region, in 1992, Russia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Armenia and Kazakhstan had signed a treaty, the Collective Security Treaty (CST). It took ten years for this treaty to evolve as an organization which could have a significant impact on the region's security. In 1994, just before the treaty came into force in 1995, three new signatories joined to the CST: Azerbaijan, Georgia and Belorussia.¹ The reason d'être of CST was to build a collective defence system against

¹ Katharina Hoffmann, "The Collective Security Treaty Organization", Stephen Aris-Andreas Wenger, eds., *Regional Organisations and Security: Conceptions and Practices*, Routledge, London 2014, p. 164.

possible external threat and the first step was to become a regional security organization. However, the treaty lost a degree of credibility when Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan withdrew their signatures² in 1999 at the time of re-signature process. Notwithstanding, in May 2002, remaining members managed to transform the Treaty into the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), as in the Western example of CSCE to become OSCE. The organization's Charter, accordingly, was put into signature 5 months later. In 2 years, CSTO received official recognition amongst the Western-type organizations after receiving the observer status in UN Security Council (UNSC).³

Main aims of the organization were introduced as protecting security of members' sovereignty and territorial integrity; and having common defence and cooperation against transnational threats. In order to achieve these aims, the strategies of common aerial defence, joint border defence and military-technical cooperation were created. After 2000s, organizations definition of threats included international terrorism and radical movements, smuggling and organised crime.⁴ Despite the requests of Central Asian members, 'secessionism' and 'support to secessionists' were only rhetorically accepted as threats under the coverage of unconstitutional activities of extremists, rather than formal inclusion.⁵

The Charter of CSTO prioritises, in Article 5, the 'strict respect of independence, voluntariness of participation, equal rights and duties, non-

2 Although the main reasons behind their withdrawal were the domination of Russia, ineffectiveness of the organization against the internal threats of the states and the existence of bi-or uni-lateral alternative organizations; for Uzbekistan, it was the failure of the organization in struggle against the Islamic Movement in Fergana Valley. Hoffmann, *op. cit.*, p. 165; "Charter of the CSTO", CSTO, http://www.odkb-csto.org/documents/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=1896, (Date of Accession: 10.10.2019).

3 "Observers", *United Nations*, <http://www.un.org/en/sections/member-states/intergovernmental-organizations/index.html>, (Date of Accession: 11.05.2020).

4 "Charter of the...", *loc. cit.*

5 Roy Allison, "Virtual Regionalism, Regional Structures and Regime Security in Central Asia", *Central Asian Survey*, 27(2), June 2008, p. 190.

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interference into affairs in national jurisdiction'. It also enhances joint measures in 'in response to crisis situations menacing to safety, stability, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Member States' according to Article 8,⁶ mirroring NATO's Article 5.⁷ The participation to organization's joint exercises depends on the principle of voluntariness and on the one hand, it enhances enthusiasm to stay in the CSTO. On the other hand, the chance of opting out when it is required for national interests, reflects the loose quality of integration and lowers the eagerness to deepen the organization. This looseness, indeed, was pre-screened with the Azeri, Georgian and Uzbek withdrawal in 1999.⁸

In the security part, the aim is to preserve the territorial integrity and non-interference into one's affairs. In this sense, CSTO created four military cooperation strategy; border protection, creation of collective security system, construction of military and air-bases and joint military exercises.⁹ In order to create joint military capacity, military personnel are trained and practiced without costs; and since 2003, Kazakh and Tajik soldiers are trained in Russia. In addition, since 2005, member states are able to buy military equipment from Russia at Russia's internal market price. The security-oriented CSTO, by this way, can show its economic cooperation incorporated to the military-political cooperation.¹⁰ These strategies are expected to create more solidarity and bind the members together, regardless any underlying reason to be economic, political or military.¹¹ Border protection, on the other hand, has been handling

6 "Charter of the...", *loc. cit.*

7 "The North Atlantic Treaty", NATO, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm, (Date of Accession: 12.12.2018).

8 Yuliya Nikitina, "The Collective Security Treaty Organization Through the Looking Glass", *Problems of Post-Communism*, 59(3), May 2012, p. 42.

9 "Charter of the...", *loc. cit.*

10 Yuliya Nikitina, "Regional Security Cooperation in the Post-Soviet Space", *Security Index: A Russian Journal on International Security*, 17(4), 2011, p. 47.

11 Hoffmann, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

bilaterally between one member state and Russia in spite of Russia's desire to create multilateral border protection.¹²

In this regard, CSTO as an organization should be analysed in terms of its own challenges. In order to observe the challenges, it is important to understand how the gains of Central Asian members – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan – and Eurasian member – Armenia – differs. The emphasize of Central Asian states is mostly CSTO's 'protective integration' where the leaders support their counterparts in other member states and under the CSTO roof, create a political solidarity, or Holy Alliance like European monarchies did in 19th century,¹³ which returns to be a 'joint protection' prevailing their own benefits rather than mainly following Russia's interests and ambitions. In the meantime, the Eurasian member refers CSTO as 'survival integration' – which Libman defined as a means to 'survive economic shocks of disintegration'¹⁴ – in order to keep its economy alive mostly by depending on Russia's financial support, including opening its market with domestic prices via the organization's framework. The way how one member state sees the organization becomes an important factor in analysing its effectiveness because it reveals the defects and strength at the same time.

The aim of this study is to reveal the position of CSTO as a regional security organization. For this aim, it examines CSTO, from the perspectives of two regional security theories, through looking at

12 Armenia-Turkey border is protected by Russian-Armenian cooperation and Tajikistan-Afghanistan border is protected by Tajik-Russian cooperation with bilateral agreements. Fyodor Lukyanov, "CSTO Must Evolve into Military Alliance" *Foreign Policy Research Foundation, Russia in Global Affairs*, <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/redcol/CSTO-must-evolve-into-military-alliance-15196>; Republic of Armenia, "National Security Strategy 2007", *National Security Council*, <http://www.mfa.am/en/security/>, (Date of Accession: 13.07.2019). Apart from border protection, most of other security or security-related economic relations are governed according to bilateral agreements. If the members start to think the bilateral agreements with Russia could no longer suit sufficiently for their interests, then multilateral actions would be useful via CSTO. Allison, *op. cit.*, p. 188; Hoffmann, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

13 Alexander Libman, "Regionalisation and Regionalism in the Post-Soviet Space: Current Status and Implications for Institutional Development", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 59(3), May 2007, p. 416.

14 *Ibid.*

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its internal challenges as the study starts from the assumption that internal challenges are the main factors to shape CSTO's position and its organizational structure. The secondary assumption fits in the study is that main internal challenges are the controversies over Charter's application, differences of member states' priorities and the problem of use of ex-Soviet bases. Based on these assumptions, the study addresses the questions of how the controversies over Charter's application affect CSTO's organizational structure and how member states' expectations are affected by the bias towards Russia. In this regard, the study starts with the accounts of three internal challenges with the examples of Oshi and Erivan protests of 2010 and 2018. It is followed by the explanations of basic assumptions of Amitav Acharya's institutional design and Barry Buzan's regional security complexes theory, in order to make an overall assessment on where CSTO stands as a regional security organization from theoretical perspective. Finally, it discusses that CSTO proved to be successful in its own Eastern type institutional design having the most important aspect of shared goals and in its own regional security complex including Azerbaijan geographically though not institutionally.

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CSTO'S CHALLENGES

In CSTO, as in all proper organizations, the framework of actions is the Charter. The articles of the Charter are to be applied in all circumstances despite the arbitrary needs or desires of member states. However, as it is not always possible to meet on common grounds about the needs or interests of all members, there can be conflicts between the applications what Charter say. These conflicts, on this regard, may create deficiencies for organization's prestige and more importantly it's functioning. In order to understand the degree of defects, it is highly important to understand the colliding examples.

CONTROVERSIES OVER THE CHARTER'S APPLICATION

First challenge is the different understandings of members on the application of Charter. Some members argue that Charter is not applied while others fear the full application of it, in the same context. As non-interference into internal affairs is a prioritised principle in the Charter, the 2010 Oshi protests in Kyrgyzstan created an application dilemma inside the organization. It was discussed whether the Charter was to be applied and CSTO was only to monitor the events; or to act against the principle and help the Kyrgyz government. During the protests, despite the request of Kyrgyz authorities, CSTO did not react directly to the protestors. When the protests started, organization only declared its official support to president of Kyrgyzstan. On May 8, 2010, CSTO leaders came together in an informal meeting¹⁵ and published a joint declaration. Although the declaration created resentments in Kyrgyzstan because it referred the situation as 'unconstitutional change of government' – a clause proposed by Belorussia –, the new interim government who asked CSTO to send peacekeepers welcomed it. CSTO could have intervened to the domestic situation in accordance with the Charter due to the existence of official Kyrgyz request if there had not been the lack of consensus in the meeting which resulted CSTO to settle with the promise of sending technical and humanitarian assistance.¹⁶

The legal reason of CSTO's passivity was declared as the fact that CSTO's main objective was to be an organization for collective defence but against external threats, not internal resentments. In 2006, after Russia's proposal for a mutual assistance mechanism to prevent regime change, in case of a request from the regime, then Secretary General

15 This mechanism was introduced in 2008 to create a platform for consultation and discussion without a signed official document. Nikitina, 2011, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

16 Nikitina, 2011, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

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Nikholai Borduzyha had stated that any kind of joint military intervention to one member state could only be possible “for prevention of armed conflict, bloodshed and mass unrest on the part of warring political groups striving for power”.¹⁷ The legal grounds, however, were still different than the declaration as the Charter still did not put any responsibility on CSTO to react in the conflicts resulted from the internal matters. Borduzyha had explained the reason of non-reaction in 2010 as the lack of consensus for intervention and this was seen as an alternative way to say the lack of political will to react.¹⁸

Besides Kyrgyz officials, the non-reaction was also criticised by both CSTO members – the leaders who were in favour of reaction – and the international society. Having this criticism inside the organization showed the lack of will and ability to become a regional organization. From a different perspective, having controversial opinions inside one organization is also an independent variable on examining the effectiveness of organization. This case has been over and over repeating for the UN, as Russia or China deadlock the UNSC decisions on military interventions by using their right to veto. This is naturally a problem for UN which is a strong and functional organization to overcome although it raises the voices for reforming the Charter. For CSTO, on the other hand, this non-reaction created resentments and led to a backlash for CSTO-solidarity. As a result, CSTO lacked one important step in its way to become a functional regional organization.

DIFFERENCES IN MEMBERSHIP PRIORITIES

The second challenge started after Oshi events, when Moscow offered a new ‘crisis response strategy’ to ensure the stability through ‘providing

17 Allison, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

18 Amitav Acharya-Alastair Iain Johnston, *Crafting Cooperation: Regional International Institutions in Comparative Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007, p. 318; Hoffmann, *op. cit.*, p. 173; Nikitina, 2011, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

disaster relief'. The offer created misunderstandings as if disaster equalled to coup d'état or colour revolution. Moreover, providing relief frightened members as if it meant intervention into state's internal affairs. Afterwards, in December 2011 Council meeting, member states ratified an agreement on expansion on armament of Collective Rapid Reaction Force/CRRF. This was immediately speculated as an authorization of using CRRF in situations which a member state could not handle itself. This agreement was seen as making CRRF an instrument for Russia to intervene into domestic jurisdictions, legally, through CSTO.¹⁹ However, the reality was not in accordance with the speculations. CSTO, in fact, was not authorized to use any joint forces concerning internal situations. Additionally, according to Borduzhya, if there was an attempt to regime change, CSTO must not be involved but only support the position of governments.²⁰

Nevertheless, this misunderstanding left member states in different positions occasionally. Leaders in Central Asian members, on the one hand, are in favour of political stability and therefore, largely seek Russian support against secessionist or revolutionist movements while on the other hand, they feel threatened by Russia's intervention possibility.²¹ Together with not having the official proof for CSTO's right to interfere in internal affairs, it creates a dilemma for Central Asian states. On the one hand, they stay alarmed against a Russian intervention and while at

19 Naima Badalyan, "The CSTO Member Countries Signed an Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Information Security and Opposed Color Revolutions," *Arminfo*, http://www.arminfo.info/full_news.php?id=28461&lang=3, (Date of Accession: 14.09.2020); "Beginning of CSTO Collective Security Council Meeting in Expanded Format", *Kremlin Events*, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/14068>, (Date of Accession: 15.09.2020); "Lukashenko Tries to Rescue the National Currency and Himself", *Sputnik News*, <https://sputniknews.com/analysis/20110831166335520/>, (Date of Accession: 15.09.2020); Alexey Malashenko, *The Fight for Influence: Russia in Central Asia*, Brookings Institution Press, Massachusetts 2013, p. 60.

20 Nikolai Bordyuzha, "Militants and Terrorists Must Not Be Allowed to Build a Social Base inside the CSTO Countries", *Security Index: A Russian Journal on International Security*, 20(2), 2014, p. 21.

21 Allison, *op. cit.*, p. 186; Johan Norberg, *High Ambitions, Harsh Realities: Gradually Building the CSTO's Capacity for Military Intervention in Crises*, Försvarsanalys, Totalförsvarets Forskningsinstitut (FOI), Stockholm 2013, p. 28.

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the same time, due to prioritizing regime security, they expect Russian support whenever they cannot deal with their internal affairs, meaning only in their terms.

Another member state who is known to see CSTO as a means for its survival-with the mandatory military support of Russia under CSTO framework-Armenia, was alarmed by the agreement as well.²² Armenia joined the camp who thinks that via CSTO, Russia could be able to intervene in case of state emergencies. This fear followed by a fraction of those who was alarmed against this possibility even if there was to be some members who would not approve. However, as there was no obligation for a decision to be approved by all members, the legality of this possibility was still there to frighten Armenians.²³ This understanding in Armenia, however, it can be said, came to an end after 2018, the April Revolution. The unrest started as a civil disobedience against the continuation of long standing ex-president Serzh Sarkisyan's rule by being elected prime minister.²⁴ The protests resulted in a victory of protestors with Sarkisyan's resignation on 23rd April, followed by the election of protest leader Nikol Pashinyan who declared the protests as "Armenian velvet revolution" as prime minister after two runs of election in the Parliament. On the one hand, the protest was not violent although there were injuries of protestors

22 Norberg, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

23 Naira Hayrumyan, "Will Army Interfere in Internal Affairs?", *Lragir*, <http://www.lragir.am/index/eng/0/country/65148/25115>, (Date of Accession: 08.12.2019); S. Frederick Starr-Svante E. Cornell, eds., *Putin's Grand Strategy: The Eurasian Union and Its Discontents*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute&Silk Road Studies Program, Washington D.C. 2014, p. 100.

24 Before his term as president ended, Serzh Sarkisyan has the Constitution changed from Semi-Presidential System into a Parliamentary System in 2015. This became official with the referendum held in December 2015 with 'yes' vote of 63% following Parliament's positive decision. This constitutional amendment was criticized by opponents because it was to give more powers to the Prime Minister and the reason of this change was to maintain Sarkisyan rule by electing him Prime Minister which would practically mean Sarkisyan's third term in rule. Armen Grigoryan, "Armenia's Constitutional Referendum", *CACI Analyst*, <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13317-armenias-constitutional-referendum.html>, (Date of Accession: 18.03.2020); Srbuhy Martirosyan-Nikolay Torosyan, "Armenia's Changing Political System: A Parliamentary Republic or the President's Third Term?", *Euronews*, <http://www.euronews.com/2018/04/12/armenia-s-changing-political-system-a-parliamentary-republic-or-the-president-s-third-term>, (Date of Accession: 18.03.2020).

and the fact that soldiers sided with the protestors instead of clashing them.²⁵ On the other hand, it was expected that Russia would militarily back Armenian government, especially after doing the same in Georgia's Rose and Ukraine's Orange Revolutions in 2003 and 2004.²⁶ However, in Armenia's case, although Sarkisyan is pro-Russian and specifically an ally of Russian President Putin, Russia preferred to monitor the protests and stay tuned until Armenia calmed down in its own as the reasons of protests were said to be domestic critics. Unexpectedly, this showed the possibility of Russia to leave member states on their own to handle their domestic protests in which Armenian case led the government change even though it meant to lose a long standing partner in government. As Armenia does and will stay dependent on Russia both economically and militarily, Russia does not require to be take side when there are clashing groups in domestic politics. As this dependency applies to all members, with different reasons, Russia does not seem to interfere into domestic affairs as anticipated.

USE OF EX-SOVIET BASES

Another problematic issue for CSTO is to use the ex-Soviet military bases as a requirement for creating collective security system because there are bases in non-CSTO-members. Therefore, collective security is provided

25 "Armenia Soldiers Join Anti-Government Protests in Yerevan", *Aljazeera Europe News*, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/04/armenia-soldiers-join-anti-government-protests-yerevan-180423103106657.html>, (Date of Accession: 18.06.2020); "Police, Anti-Govt Protesters Injured in Clashes Near Armenian Parliament", *RT International*, <https://www.rt.com/news/424320-armenia-clashes-police-sargsyan/>, (Date of Accession: 18.06.2020).

26 Allison, *op. cit.*, p. 186; Oliver Carroll, "Russia Appears to Back Fallen Armenian Regime amid Protests", *The Independent*, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/armenia-protests-serzh-sargsyan-russia-vladimir-putin-a8327266.html>, (Date of Accession: 14.04.2020); Rayhan Demytrie, "'Velvet Revolution' That Won without a Bullet Fired", *BBC News*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-43948181>, (Date of Accession: 12.05.2020); Pietro A. Shakarian, "The Significance of Armenia's 'April Revolution'", *The Nation*, <https://www.thenation.com/article/the-significance-of-armenias-april-revolution/>, (Date of Accession: 14.04.2020); "Thousands Protest Sarksyn's PM Bid in Armenia, Several Hurt in Scuffles", *Reuters*, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-armenia-politics-protests/thousands-protest-sarksyns-pm-bid-in-armenia-several-hurt-in-scuffles-idUSKBN1HN1YS>, (Date of Accession: 14.04.2020).

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via bilateral agreements with Russia under CSTO framework. In addition, Russia pushed for a protocol to forbid any military activity and forbid any non-member to build bases in CSTO territory or to decide unanimously as a precondition for letting this. Russia's main purpose was to prevent the rapprochement of NATO with CSTO members, especially as a result of the Kyrgyz-NATO military exercises and existence of NATO military base in Kyrgyzstan since 2002.²⁷ In 2011 Security Council meeting, Russia officially guaranteed the procedure of unanimous approval by all member states for third countries to place any 'groups of armies (forces), objects of military infrastructure' in Article 7 of the CSTO Charter.²⁸

At the same time, military bases problem also provides gains to Russia with regards to bilateral agreements. Theoretically, governments pursue their motivation to keen on Russian leadership for security and economic cooperation and most importantly Russia's support for staying in the office. Physically, as result of this dependency, Russia acquired an air base in Kant, Kyrgyzstan, another military base in Gyumri, Armenia with 5.000 personnel and some other military bases in Tajikistan.²⁹

Russia's efforts to prevent use of third parties – creating approval protocol for non-member use of bases and keeping its own bases – also

27 Although the military bases started to be used by NATO allies after 9/11 attacks to fight against Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and with the consent of Russia, in 2011 the Russian-supported president Almazbek Atambayev declared that the base would be shut right after he got elected with the Russian support for his candidacy. Leszek Buszynski, "Russia's New Role in Central Asia", *Asian Survey*, 45(4), August 2005, p. 554; Olga Dzyubenko, "U.S. Vacates Base in Central Asia as Russia's Clout Rises", *Reuters*, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kyrgyzstan-usa-manas/u-s-vacates-base-in-central-asia-as-russias-clout-rises-idUSKBN0EE1LH20140603>, (Date of Accession: 14.09.2019); Akhilesh Pillalamarri, "The United States Just Closed Its Last Base in Central Asia", *The Diplomat*, <https://thediplomat.com/2014/06/the-united-states-just-closed-its-last-base-in-central-asia/>, (Date of Accession: 12.09.2019); Hoffmann, *op. cit.*, p. 170; Mårlene Laruelle, *Russia's Central Asia Policy and the Role of Russian Nationalism*, Silk Road Studies Program, Institute for Security and Development Policy, Stockholm 2008, p. 18.

28 "CSTO Tightens Rules on Foreign Bases in the Territory of Member Nations", *Tajikistan News*, <http://www.news.tj/en/news/csto-tightens-rules-foreign-bases-territory-member-nations>, (Date of Accession: 09.06.2019); Albert Hayrapetyan, "Why the Collective Security Treaty Organization Is a Pale Replica of NATO", *Russia Direct*, <http://www.russia-direct.org/opinion/why-collective-security-treaty-organization-just-pale-replica-nato>, (Date of Accession: 09.06.2019); Malashenko, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

29 Buszynski, *op. cit.*, p. 554; Hoffmann, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

put economic burdens on Russia. Russia had to write off \$500 million debt of Kyrgyzstan at the expense of leasing the Kyrgyz bases or similarly, give Tajikistan economic aid and further economic advantages including oil products to renew rent-free lease deal of base for further 49 years.³⁰ The latter was because departure of NATO troops from Afghanistan could make Tajikistan vulnerable to external threats which automatically threaten CSTO borders according to the article 8 of the Charter.³¹

There is another problematic issue only perceived by some CSTO members. With the creation of Collective Operational Reaction Force (CORF) based in Kant, Kyrgyzstan, 20.000 military personnel were recruited half of which was Russian and the other half were respectively Kazakh, Armenian, Kyrgyz, Tajik and Belorussians. However, Kazakhstan, the second biggest provider of personnel after Russia, and Tajikistan integrates to CORF activities slower, as a result of acting precautious against any possibility for Russia to interfere using the collective procedure and this signals their distrust on Russia. Uzbekistan, an ex-member who left the organization after its failure to assist her against the activities of Islamist movement in Fergana Valley, had not even taken part in CORF even though being a member that time.³²

30 On February 2016, the number of Russian troops, 7.000 then, was declared to reduce in order to increase the mobility but because the decision was taken by Russia, right after the Finnish inspection in Tajik bases in accordance with the Vienna Document 2011 of OSCE, the reason of the reduction was seen suspicious. This suspicion was not eliminated later with the decision to re-increase the numbers only after 6 months. "Strength of Russian Military Base in Tajikistan Expected to Be Reduced", *Asia Plus*, <http://news.tj/en/news/strength-russian-military-base-tajikistan-expected-be-reduced>, (Date of Accession: 09.06.2019); Franz-Stefan Gady, "Russia Reinforces Tajikistan Base with 100 New Armored Vehicles", *The Diplomat*, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/06/russia-reinforces-tajikistan-base-with-100-new-armored-vehicles/>, (Date of Accession: 09.06.2019); Catherine Putz, "Why Is Russia Cutting Troops in Tajikistan?", *The Diplomat*, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/02/why-is-russia-cutting-troops-in-tajikistan/>, (Date of Accession: 09.06.2019); "Russia to Cut Troop Levels in Tajikistan amid Questions about Its Influence", *Reuters*, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-tajikistan-military/russia-to-cut-troop-levels-in-tajikistan-amid-questions-about-its-influence-idUSKCN0VD1YE>, (Date of Accession: 09.06.2019).

31 Dzyubenko, *loc. cit.*; Roman Kozheznikov, "Afghan Neighbor Tajikistan Ratifies Base Deal with Russia", *Reuters*, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-tajikistan-russia/afghan-neighbor-tajikistan-ratifies-base-deal-with-russia-idUSBRE9900CZ20131001>, (Date of Accession: 09.06.2019); Pillalamarri, *loc. cit.*

32 Hoffmann, *op. cit.*, p. 165-171; Nikitina, 2012, *op. cit.*, p. 42-43.

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REGIONAL SECURITY THEORIES

Regional security theories, first and foremost, depended on a definition of what region consists of. As there is still no clear definition of region and consequently of regional organization, this discussion also has an important place to consider CSTO in a non-Eurocentric perspective. It is started with the definition of 'nation' by Benedict Anderson, being imagined communities; and 'regions', accordingly, are accepted as political and imagined constructs which are shaped by some countries' identity, connections and as a return, even from the point of views of others.³³ As a result of this perspective, it is understood that regions are defined in accordance with who defines it, in addition to its geographical location. It is, in this sense, mostly defined with a start of its geographical location, being a continent or surrounding seas, (e.g. Africa, or the Baltics) with still holding a political identity or interest, e.g. calling the group of countries in the East of Europe or Balkans, the Western Balkans by the EU. Having various definitions indicates itself in the regions like Far East or South Caucasus. It is lightly understood that the region where China, Japan etc. locates is Far East because it is far to Europe. South Caucasus, on the other hand, is called because it is in south of the Caucasus Mountains geographically, but more importantly in the south of Russia, politically. In the end, this results in holding a name with both the location geographically and the position to a great power whose influence in the region could be called, time to time, dominance.

Regional security, as a consequence, depends on different variables for each organization. It could be a follow up of a previous alliance or in contrast, a solution to previous enmities where belligerents accept 'never again' motto for war – e.g. EU, if accepted as regional security organization,

33 Alyson J. K. Bailes-Andrew Cottey, "Regional Security Cooperation in the Early 21st Century", *Armaments, Disarmament and International Security-SIPRI Yearbook 2007*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007, p. 198-199.

collected previous enemies, France and Germany, under the organization umbrella. It could consist of members with strong cultural resemblances and lack of problematic relations with each other, e.g. Nordic countries; or diversity between cultures which creates the necessity to prevent a potential conflict beforehand via constructing cooperation. In this regard, it is for the benefit of founding a regional cooperation unit to have cultural compatibility, but at the same time, it does not necessarily pose risks due to cultural, ethnical or political diversity as long as the interests fit.³⁴

INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN

Generally, in the East and specifically in the post-Soviet sphere, regionalisation for security directed in a different way than it did in the West. In this regard, scholars place more emphasis on non-Western regionalisation theories in order to understand the structure and functionality of them before the comparison with West. Amitav Acharya, in 2007 with Alaistar Iain Johnston, in the book 'Crafting Cooperation – Regional International Institutions in Comparative Perspective' and in 2010, with Barry Buzan in 'Non-Western International Relations Theory' examined the fact that Eastern type regionalisation was different than Western type, through looking at some samples of the kinds.

Acharya pointed out that the distinctive characteristic of non-Western regional organizations is its 'institutional design'.³⁵ The term was defined originally in 'The Rational Design of International Institutions' of Koremenos, Lipson and Snidal (2001, 2004) and accepted as an important factor which matters, as well as a creation by states, interest groups etc, which led it to be a dependent variable for the regionalisation. In this regard, according to RDII, the design of institutions as membership rules, scope of issues, centralisation of tasks, rules for controlling the institutions and flexibility of

34 Bailes-Cottey, *op. cit.*, p. 220-222.

35 Acharya-Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 6-10; Nikitina, 2011, *op. cit.*, p. 48; Nikitina, 2012, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

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arrangements are shaped by actors for a determined purpose.³⁶ However, RDII lacks place of norms in the creation of institutional design and focuses only on rationality and on which design could make institutions efficient and useful.³⁷ By this, RDII cannot understand core material in the creation of non-Western regional institutions, ‘norms’ which shaped the very common ground for members to gather around. In this regard, Acharya and Johnston’s definition of institutional design as “formal and informal rules and organizational features that constitute the institution and that function as either the constraints on actor choice or the bare bones of the social environment within which agents interact, or both”³⁸ can understand these organizations’ nature better.

Regionalization and organizational structure in Western type regionalization depends on the rational institutional design and functionality, whereas in Eastern type, structure is seen as institutionalization and organization shaped by interests and necessities of member states. In this type of regionalization which is essentially against Eurocentrism, common interests and values are shared by all members. Moreover, in these organizations, ideologies of member states are generally similar and develop in accordance with their identities.³⁹ As a result of the resemblance between member states, the success of non-Western regionalisation is measured according to its compatibility with the interests and needs of members, not to its functionality.⁴⁰

Another institutional understanding that Acharya puts forward, besides common values and interests, is about a regionalization that would shape the ideology and identity of regional organization itself. In the Eastern

36 Acharya-Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 12-13; Barbara Koremenos et al., “The Rational Design of International Institutions,” *International Organization*, 55(4), 2001, p. 1-23.

37 Acharya-Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 13; Koremenos et al., *op. cit.*, p. 23.

38 Acharya-Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

39 Acharya-Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 256-258.

40 Nikitina, 2011, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

type regionalization which indeed mirrors the Western-type as having pan-continental ideology, the ideology in formation usually started between pan-ideologies and secular claim of state sovereignty. Regionalization mostly starts with pan-ideologies and then transforms into prioritizing state sovereignty, especially for members from post-colonial states. In this respect, regionalization makes the ideology of regional institutions to keen on with non-intervention rather than democracy promotion. With having the same purpose, the diversity of regimes e.g. military dictatorships or communist governments or parliamentary democracies, are proved to form an organization together and there is no need to have same type of regimes.⁴¹

CSTO, in this sense, has been an organization where the actors created formal and informal rules and shared values that members could agree upon. As one of the main aims is protecting the state sovereignty and territorial integrity, they prioritize one key principle of all state-centric organizations. This shows no difference than other same kinds. However, the members do not build the organization's strategies on any other principles such as democracy or human rights; but they lean on their own principles. Their organizational environment leaves them enough space to create a regional solidarity because member states are allowed to keep the right to preserve their own identity. They do not depend on the similarity with other members, but their kind of cultural match of the values and norms of the organization. In CSTO, the common interests and shared values of 'non-intervention into internal affairs, preservation of sovereignty and territorial integrity, regime survival, non-transfer of sovereignty to a supra-authority' are more important than the functional purposes as, e.g. 'joint fight against external threats'.⁴² Although member states seem to be united together, Osh and Erivan protests showed their

41 Acharya-Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 255-256.

42 Nikitina, 2011, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

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expectation to see the solidarity in the sense of internal sovereignty protection. These examples showed that CSTO itself is not built upon the aim of obtaining or strengthening democracy and it is obvious for the organizational structure that sovereignty is not to be pooled and shared but preserved.⁴³

REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEXES

There is a grand theory of regional security complexes (RSCT) in which Barry Buzan and Ole Waever focuses on the necessity to look deeply into how cultural, economic or historical sources of a region affect the current relations in order to understand the security dynamics within it. They start the theory by imagining a map of any kind of security object which Waever, in 1995⁴⁴ called 'securitisation' and later, in 1998 with Buzan and de Wilde,⁴⁵ developed systematically. This map of securitisation shows connections with relevant actors, linkages, causes and degrees of affection. By this way, it is pointed out that some zones are connectable while others could only stay on security concerns. As a result, Buzan and Waever presume the security complexes as mainly territorially based while acknowledging non-territorial cases, e.g. international terrorism, as well.⁴⁶

Buzan first defined security complex, in 1983, as "group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot reasonably be considered apart from one another". There are more than one security complex and different security complexes are tied by geographical, strategic, political, historical,

43 Nikitina, 2011, *op. cit.*, p. 49; Allison, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

44 Ole Waever, "Securitization and Desecuritization", ed., Ronnie Lipschutz, *On Security*, Columbia University Press, New York 1995, p. 46-86.

45 Barry Buzan et al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, CO 1998.

46 Barry Buzan-Ole Waever, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2003, p. 43-44.

economic and cultural links.⁴⁷ Later in 1998, with Waever and de Wilde, they reformulated the RCS in order to include possible other actors and security sectors, refraining to be state- and military-centric. This new definition states RCS as: “a set of units whose major processes of securitisation, desecuritisation, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another”. The main focus remains to be security considerations depending on regionality of actors and levels of intensity. The historical enmities and alliances are also important factors because anarchic international system requires balance of power and relies on the consequences of geographical proximity. They underline that the strongest variable for RSC is the geographical proximity which is also the most obvious factor in military, political, societal and environmental sectors. The more distant locations posit the actors, the more interdependency in security gain the actors.⁴⁸

From RCS perspective, it is seen that CSTO is located in a geographically complex security environment which is indeed not spared apart from each other. Members are well aware of the fact that some external threats can only be resolved within the organization and more importantly, not by the help of outsiders. This creates togetherness, as it was expected from the beginning, the main reasons to found this organization. As there is not only CSTO, but more organizations were found in the post-Soviet sphere, it is unarguable that the historical, political and cultural ties are set to create a bond. However CSTO used to have this bond which seemed to be broken now after important members namely Uzbekistan, Georgia and Azerbaijan withdrew from CST. Nevertheless, even without all of Caucasian and Central Asian old allies, CSTO member states can still manage to protect their identity and values.

47 Barry Buzan, *People, States, and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*, University of North Carolina Press, NC 1983, p. 106.

48 Buzan-Waever, *op. cit.*, p. 43-45.

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CONCLUSION

The nature of CSTO, in the light of these, seems to be promising in a sense that it includes all the necessary components its members need. It is acknowledged that the purpose of founding the organization was solidarity promotion for external security threats excluding the dependency of leaders against internal threats or protests. It is proved to be one of the main problems that members have tendency to approach cautiously against any military intervention by Russia although at the same time they also depend on Russia against any internal problem. This dilemma of leaders has shown itself in both Kyrgyz and Armenian cases. Between these cases, however, as discussed before, there had been developments and agreements which led misinterpretations and created fear in member states. In addition to then SG Nikolai Borduzya's 2006 declaration, Russia's accepted offer of 'crisis response strategy', too, had formed a wave of frustrations in the members. Meanwhile, these speculated efforts of Russia to intervene in member states politics had never come true, at least in the sense of using CSTO as a means.

These dilemmas actually showed the possibility of a change in the expectations of member states. As it is accepted in Buzan's theory, the success of CSTO is proved to be the transformation of CSTO which happened concurrent with the interests of members. Despite the fact that two leaders internally needed Russian help under CSTO cover and their interest was not provided, these states have continued to show solidarity with the organization. The reason of this lies on organization's institutional designs and respect for shared values and norms, as well as the bilateral expectations from Russia. The reason is different than mainly political, economic or even strategic dependency. It is mainly resulted from the mixed understanding of what threat is and the feeling to be bound by shared values. As this shared values and identities are different than the

West, it is acknowledged that there will not be any interventions under promoting democracy or any attempts to pool the sovereignty.

Organization's geographical complex security environment is proved the dependency to each other in economic, political and military terms. This dependency adds the necessity to build reciprocity of trust for Russia, as well as for the members. However, it is also incontestable that Russia has an advantage in this scenario with its capability to react independently, not in accordance with its allies because of their economic dependency.

This dilemma indeed showed the main difference between the organization designs of West and East. In Western types, Charter always prevails and even if the actions are not according to Charter, they are always covered rhetorically by proclaiming the necessity arisen from the values or norms in Charter, e.g. democracy promotion. However in Eastern types, as it is seen, the one fundamental norm of preserving state sovereignty is shared by all members and in spite of the doubts over Charter's allowance for intervention in cases of state's invitation, the principle is always protected. It has turned out that CSTO and its shared norms do not leave an open room for Russia to save the leaders in domestic crisis by interventions or political support. Although Kyrgyz case showed the contrary, Armenian case reapproved that Russia could use different ways to act if it wants, rather than to use CSTO and violate its shared norms.

Along with this, CSTO's challenge about the ex-Soviet bases have resolved in creating an organizational action which includes common decision for third country usage and this is a collective gain for all members. This creation has its foundations in their shared values and norms which are different from the West. The underlying reason of this decision happened to be the purpose of ending USA's right of usage

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CSTO territory for bases and potential of a rapprochement between West and CSTO members. This new institutional design has a positive impact on mostly Central Asian members' economy in the sense that Russia had to write off Kyrgyzstan's debt and substitute economic aid to Tajikistan. By this way, organization's practical intensity has developed. From the perspective of Tajikistan, since her main security concern was Afghanistan, the cease of USA's existence in the bases created more dependency CSTO's security complex. In this means, the organization's security complex remained solid with a more dependent security relationship. Another contribution to the level of intensity inside the organization is the ability of members to buy military equipment from Russia with Russia's domestic market prices while having their soldiers trained in Russia.

In the light of these, it is apparent that the three challenges CSTO has faced have unsettling effects on CSTO's organization structure. With the controversies over the compliance or non-compliance with Charter, member states started to feel resentments against the organization which led to a decrease in loyalty. When this loyalty combines with the lack of solidarity, there were hesitations of member states towards Russia in terms of arbitrary interventions. Although their expectations from CSTO differ, the bias towards Russia was in common and this creates a dilemma for them in the cases when the political leaders keen on Russia's support. However, the dependency of member states on Russia and their conflicting position creates economic responsibilities for Russia, despite other gains, which in return shows the necessity to develop the organizational structure more around the shared values. The fragility of loyalty for CSTO results from these challenges which disable further developments and strengthening in CSTO. Nevertheless, the dependency amongst the member states and their common understanding about the privileged values, in addition to external threats in the same regional security environment make CSTO's institutional design functional in terms of the member states' expectations, applicable in their own terms.

In conclusion, despite the challenges and pros and cons of their results for CSTO and its Central Asian members and Eurasian member, CSTO is still able to operate. It has also the potential to embrace all necessities of member states in terms of security within the framework of their shared values and norms. Its unusual institutional design does not provide a strong feature for CSTO to understand the internal challenges unless the interlinked security concerns are acknowledged. Moreover, the security complex cannot afford solving the crisis between Eurasian member Armenia and ex-member Azerbaijan without Azerbaijan joining to the institutional design of organization. However, CSTO promises success in its own Eastern type institutional design because of its different style to overcome the challenges due to its own goals and values shared by members and their satisfaction of its creation of norms.

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