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**CONTEMPORARY TRENDS IN THE CIS STATES’  
MILITARY COOPERATION**

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Delineation of the post-Soviet states’ military policy happened in conditions of the rapid Union’s centralized political system collapse and simultaneous new power centres emergence. The state elites focused on the need for military-political self-determination of their republics, though they vaguely realized the sequence of necessary actions and their possible results. Meanwhile, the Russian Federation had been reassuming its leadership position – as a result the Commonwealth of Independent States was established.

Over the last two decades, Russia has intensified its aggressive military policy and became a truly belligerent party. After 2008 deployment of its military forces in Georgia, Russia occupied a part of Ukraine’s territory – Crimea in 2014, having launched direct aggression against its neighbour and strategic partner. In 2015, the list of Russian hostilities was supplemented by its direct military engagement in Syria. Hence, a research of the CIS states’ military cooperation with the Russia’s particular role in it is of a special scientific interest, concerning contemporary Russian-Ukrainian confrontation and the developments worldwide.

Although from the very beginning of the CIS existence it turned out to be a politically, militarily and economically inefficient and unstable formation, the so called “Belovezha consensus” or relative balance of powers had remained until the early 2000s. The 2004 enlargement of the EU and NATO became a landmark event for the Russian Federation and the foreign policy orientations of the CIS members. Taking into consideration the fact that the Kremlin has been constantly trying to form a new military-political bloc or a collective security system within the Commonwealth as opposed to the North Atlantic Alliance, the acquisition of NATO membership status by virtually all former Warsaw Pact member countries has greatly enhanced Kremlin’s policy toward the former USSR republics. Concerns and pessimism of the Russian leadership over the future of the CIS particularly increased in early 2005 after the Colour revolutions took place in several former republics, revealing the fact that a number of countries were willing to distance from Russia and Kremlin’s ability to influence those processes was gradually becoming more and more limited.

A new feature of Russia’s CIS-oriented policy after 2004 was an evident expression of its willingness to confront the leading Western powers in the post-Soviet territories through various forms and means, avoiding direct confrontation. The Kremlin again started to enlist the European Union, the United States and NATO into a single hostile group of actors. According to Russia’s top political establishment, all of them aim at undermining Russian sovereignty, and their political approaches, norms, and values directly contradict the Russian ones. In his statements V. Putin repeatedly emphasized the injustice of the international system formed in the aftermath of the Cold War, where Russia was left on the “sidelines” of world politics. The 2008 Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation stated: “Russia retains its negative attitude to the NATO enlargement, particularly, to Ukraine’s and Georgia’s aspirations to join the NATO, and also to bringing the NATO’s military infrastructure closer to Russian borders, as those violate the principle of equal security, lead to new dividing lines in Europe and contradict the objective of collaboration increasing efforts in searching responses to real challenges of the present” [4]. At the same time, the importance of deepening the CIS cooperation was emphasized, in particular further built-up of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a military alliance established in 2002 and comprising six former Soviet republics: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan.

However, the heterogeneity of the CIS participants’ interests only led to the deepening of contradictions between them, to formation of different blocs of countries, and, accordingly, to significant differences in levels of their involvement in various initiatives within the organization. The CIS member-states official stands are especially different regarding the issues of military and military-technical cooperation on the multilateral level. It should be acknowledged that the legal regulation of military cooperation in the CIS format did not establish sufficient preconditions for the complete transformation of its declarative and advisory character into

a concrete one; no common military strategic space was formed within the Commonwealth; there were no effective mechanisms for working out, implementing and controlling the execution of contract documents and collective decisions. Though the elements of a joint military command and military infrastructure of strategic forces were still preserved at the initial stage of the Commonwealth functioning, those aspects of cooperation gradually lost their importance as the national armed forces were developed. Attempts to restore the significance of converging in the format of the CSTO were not so effective (as Azerbaijan, Georgia and later on Uzbekistan withdrew from it). In fact, military cooperation shifted to bilateral level. Originally, the Russian Federation took on the national borders security functions in the outer perimeters of the CIS member-states (with the exception of Ukraine). Yet, with the national frontier troops strengthening this function gradually lost its relevance. Actually, only the Joint CIS Air Defence System (JADS) remains effective nowadays. Even Ukraine had closely coordinated its air defence with Russia within JADS until 2014 [1, p. 70].

Considering the ineffectiveness of the CIS, Russia couldn't stand aside the developments directly relating to its strategic interests. In early 2008, a new round of complications between Russia, the U.S. and NATO was prompted by the NATO's leadership consideration of applications from Ukraine and Georgia on joining the NATO's Membership Action Plan (MAP). At the Bucharest Summit in April 2008, the U.S. officials made significant efforts to convince their NATO allies of Georgia's and Ukraine's liability to join the MAP. Although both states were not formally invited to join the MAP, they were actually made aware that the NATO membership could be a real perspective for them [5]. Accordingly, Russian authorities acknowledged that they would have to resort to "military and other measures" to secure Russia's interests near its national borders" [10].

The Kremlin resorted to open support for puppet separatist regimes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 2008, having used the Kosovo precedent for the similar resolving of frozen conflicts in the CIS member-states. In response to Georgia's military operation to "restore constitutional order" in the rebellious Tskhinvali region, the Russian party launched a counter-operation to "force Georgia into peace" under the pretext of protecting compatriots. Subsequently, having recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Russia violated Georgia's territorial integrity.

On September 5, 2008, the CSTO leaders met at the summit in Moscow, where they adopted a declaration that can be considered as a policy document. The CSTO representatives expressed their deep concern about "Georgia's attempt to resolve the conflict in South Ossetia by force" [8]. It is indicative that six CSTO member countries (Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan) without any objections approved "Russia's active role in promoting peace and cooperation in the region" [8]. The central part of the declaration was devoted to the vision of the world and the role of the CSTO in it. The parties stressed that they "are determined to adhere to close coordination of foreign

policy interaction, aimed at the progressive development of military and military-technical cooperation, improving their common activities on all issues". At the same time, the CSTO area of interest was clearly defined and it was emphasized that the Western states should adhere to the status quo, as "the major conflict potential has been accumulating in the direct vicinity of the CSTO area of responsibility" [8]. Thus, the Russia fully assumed the role of a leader in the CSTO and launched the process of its structure transformation within the CIS into a military bloc, ensuring the collective defence for its members.

On February 4, 2009, at the CSTO Summit in Moscow, the Collective Security Council decided to create the Collective Rapid Reaction Forces (CRRF) aimed at protecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the CSTO countries, and dealing with the large-scale crisis situations. In June 2009, the Presidents of Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan signed an agreement on the establishment of CRRF. Uzbekistan expressed its special position on a number of provisions, and official Minsk joined the agreement on October 20, 2009. The final phase of the CSTO CRRF military training took place on October 16, 2009 at the Matybulak firing range in southern Kazakhstan. The process of reforming the Central Asian Collective Rapid Deployment Forces (CRDF), set up in 2001, began.

Having realized the degree of threat from the CIS leader, the Georgian government made a decision that further participation in this international structure would be inappropriate. On August 18, 2009, Georgia officially withdrew from the CIS. On January 22, 2010, by leaving the CIS Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, the state irrevocably broke off relations with the organization [3]. In its foreign policy Georgia almost completely reoriented to the Western powers.

The CSTO nowadays can be regarded as the most significant multilateral defence organization in the former Soviet Union area. The organization supports arms sales and manufacturing as well as military training and exercises between its members. It also coordinates efforts in fighting the illegal circulation of weapons and has developed law enforcement training for its members in this respect. The organization platform is used to counter cyber warfare, drugs trafficking, transnational crime and terrorism.

Similar to NATO, formally the CSTO ensures the collective defence for all its member-states. However, the organization is still overwhelmingly dominated by Russia as it is strongly reliant on Moscow's military power. Notwithstanding the fact that CSTO nominally provides equal standing to all member states, it is clearly conceived by Russia as a tool for projecting its power regionally.

Moreover, the bloc is considerably wrought with tensions. The relations between the CSTO members are still very much complicated. Thus, probably due to the fear, that the organization forces could be used for resolving internal conflicts [6], Uzbekistan again withdrew from the organization in 2012. The position of Belarus on the CSTO activities remains rather ambiguous. A. Lukashenko in his public addresses has frequently stressed that Minsk

considers the CSTO not as a military bloc, but as “an international regional organization dealing with a wide range of security issues”. Already in 2016, the Belarusian new Military Doctrine envisaged the use of its armed forces exceptionally within its territories [2]. Therefore, the CRRF Agreement fulfilment was called into question. However, in 2017, the Belarusian President stated that his country is interested in further CSTO strengthening and attaches special importance to the organization’s work effectiveness [7], especially in the context of security threats in the region, related to the conflict in Ukraine.

Russia’s illegal occupation and further annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the war provoked by Russia in eastern Ukraine, significantly increased the activities of the CSTO. In particular, it was due to a considerable deterioration of relations between the Western powers and the Kremlin.

Since 2014, the official Kyiv has not participated in the CIS activities. On March 19 2014, Ukraine, which had a status of a founding-country and the CIS participant, ceased its presidency in the organization, withdrew from a number of agreements and continued to cooperate with all the member states, except Russia. On May 19, 2018, P. Poroshenko implemented a decree of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine to terminate the country’s participation in the work of the statutory bodies of the CIS [9]. Along with the national armed forces strengthening, a significant activation of the state’s activities became obvious in direction of a military cooperation with the NATO member states.

The current confrontation between NATO and CSTO took the form of numerous joint military trainings and instruction carried out by both blocs. The NATO military activities in Eastern Europe notably increased. According to the Defence Minister of Russia Sergei Shoigu, the number of NATO military contingents in Romania, Poland and the Baltic States increased by 13 times in 2015 [7]. The CSTO nowadays encloses four types of collective forces: two regional groups (“Russia-Belarus” and “Russia-Armenia”; CRDF for Central Asia; CRRF and a collective peacekeeping force. Joint military exercises are regularly conducted in different CSTO member-states.

Russia’s military cooperation with the CIS member states is aimed at securing its long-term interests in the region and is regarded as one of the main areas of foreign-policy activities. A number of subjective and objective factors, which occur both inside and outside the CIS, have largely affected and continue to affect the scale, substance, nature and content of Russia’s military and military-political cooperation with the CIS countries. Russian dominance of the CSTO not only weakens the organization’s legitimacy globally, it also presents a foreign policy challenge as Russian aims do not always align with other CSTO members’ interests.

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## **ОСОБЕННОСТИ МЕЖДУНАРОДНО-ПРАВОВОГО СТАТУСА ДОНЕЦКОЙ И ЛУГАНСКОЙ НАРОДНЫХ РЕСПУБЛИК В КОНТЕКСТЕ УКРАИНСКОГО КРИЗИСА**

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Вопрос статуса Донецкой (ДНР) и Луганской (ЛНР) народных республик является одной из наиболее актуальных тем в повестке дня международного сообщества с момента эскалации украинского кризиса в 2014 году. Стоит отметить, что данные территории так и не были признаны ни одним государством-членом ООН. По состоянию на 2020 год, только Южная Осетия выступила с признанием независимости ДНР и ЛНР, сама находящаяся в статусе частично признанного государства.

Украина не признает независимость республик и рассматривает данные территории как сепаратистские, находящиеся под управлением марионеточных правительств. Конечно, стоит подчеркнуть, что украинские власти