High Ambitions, Harsh Realities

Gradually Building the CSTO's Capacity for Military Intervention in Crises

Johan Norberg

FOI-R--3668--SE

MAY 2013

FOI

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Title	High Ambitions, Harsh Realities
Titel	Höga ambitioner, hårda realiteter
Rapportnr/Report no	FOI-R--3668--SE
Månad/Month	Maj/May
Utgivningsår/Year	2013
Antal sidor/Pages	60 p
ISSN	1650-1942
Kund/Customer	Försvarsdepartementet / Ministry of Defence
Projektnr/Project no	A11301
Godkänd av/Approved by	Maria Lignell Jakobsson
Ansvarig avdelning	Försvarsanalys / Defence Analysis

Preface

This report has been commissioned by the Swedish Ministry of Defence and produced by the FOI Russia Studies Programme. It is a part of a wider research effort at FOI in 2012–13 to describe and analyse the implications of the withdrawal of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) from Afghanistan in 2014, not only for Afghanistan but for the wider Central Asian region. Previous FOI reports have dealt with the issue of likely implications of Western forces leaving Afghanistan. "Afghanistan after 2014. Five Scenarios." (FOI-R--3424--SE) outlined possible developments in Afghanistan and "Insurgency in Balochistan. And Why It Is of Strategic Importance" (FOI-R--3110--SE) highlighted a strategic link to Pakistan. Thematic issues have also been addressed, as in the report "Suicide Bombers and Society. A Study on Suicide Bombers in Afghanistan and Pakistan" (FOI-R--3058--SE).

North of Afghanistan, Russia is the key actor in addressing security issues, especially those related to military intervention. This report draws on experience generated in the work on FOI's regular assessments of Russia's military capability in a ten-year perspective, the latest published in early 2012. In February 2013 a short FOI paper, "The CSTO Framing of Security – A Constructivist Perspective Analysis" (FOI-D--0502--SE) by Fredrik Westerlund analysed how the notion of security has been framed and used within the CSTO. He concluded that it has evolved over time from including mainly military issues to encompass political and environmental issues as well. This present report, "High Ambitions, Harsh Realities: Gradually Building the CSTO's Capacity for Military Intervention in Crises", adds an empirical dimension and focuses on the organization's collective capability for military crisis intervention.

The author is deeply grateful to Per Wikström for drawing the map and to Fredrik Westerlund and Roger McDermott for very valuable comments on earlier drafts of the report. Any mistakes, however, are the responsibility of the author.

Johan Norberg

Stockholm, May 2013

Sammanfattning

Denna rapport syftar till att analysera förmågan hos Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) för multilaterala militära insatser i snabbt uppblossande lokala konflikter på eller nära medlemsstaternas territorier. CSTO bildades 2002 och består idag av Armenien, Vitryssland, Kazakstan, Kirgizistan, Ryssland och Tadzjikistan. CSTO har successivt utvecklats från en mer renodlad militärallians till en mer multifunktionell säkerhetsorganisation som behandlar många olika säkerhetsfrågor. Ryssland är den största medlemmen och dominerar organisationens utveckling och bidrar med mest resurser, men behöver samarbetet från de mindre medlemsstaterna för att öka organisationens legitimitet. CSTO är förmodligen det mest omfattande försöket att bygga både kapacitet och legitimitet för ett eventuellt multilateralt militärt ingripande för att åtgärda säkerhetsproblem i Centralasien i ljuset av att den internationella militära insatsen i Afghanistan reduceras. I början av april 2013 hade dock CSTO ännu inte genomfört någon skarp insats.

CSTO har två typer av insatsstyrkor. Den första typen är regionala insatsstyrkor som under det senaste decenniet har det utvecklats och övats regelbundet. De finns i Östeuropa (västra Ryssland och Vitryssland), i Sydkaukasien (Armenien) och i Centralasien (ryska förband samt förband från Kazakstan, Kirgizistan och Tadzjikistan). Den andra typen är rörliga kollektiva insatsstyrkor avsedda för insatser i hela CSTO-området. CSTO planerar att kunna sätta in cirka 20 000 soldater inom ramen för de s k Kollektiva Operativa Insatsstyrkorna (CORF – Collective Operational Reaction Forces, även kända genom sin ryska förkortning KSOR). Dessa består huvudsakligen av högrörliga förband, främst ur de ryska luftlandsättningstrupperna. En mindre mobil styrka är den planerade 4 000 man starka Fredsbevarande Styrkan (Peace Keeping Force - PKF), som också avses kunna användas i FN-insatser. Båda styrkorna finns och har övat, men med avsevärt färre soldater än som anges ovan. Ryssland verkar dominera ledningssystemen i dessa multilaterala styrkor. En utmaning när man bygger dessa multinationella styrkor är de stora olikheterna mellan förbanden från de olika medlemsländerna, avseende till exempel moderniseringsgrad och utbildningsnivå samt olika utrustning och uppträdande.

CORF-styrkan kan troligen sättas in snabbt och vara effektiv i en kortvarig konflikt, men dess uthållighet är begränsad. Om konflikten blir långvarig eller om flera konflikter uppstår parallellt behövs troligen ytterligare förband. CSTOs förmåga att sätta in ytterligare förband utgörs främst av ryska markstridskraftsförband och bedöms vara upp till en infanteribrigad med stödenheter i upp till sex månader utan större omprioriteringar mellan de ryska militärdistrikten. Andra CSTO-länder kommer sannolikt att leverera mindre enheter.

Byggandet av CSTO:s politiska och militära strukturer för politiskt beslutsfattande och ledning av gemensamma multilaterala insatser är ett pågående arbete. Bortsett från de praktiska problemen med att bygga

gemensamma styrkor, finns det också konceptuella utmaningar (värderingar) och politiska utmaningar (Rysslands dominans, verklig eller upplevd, eller det låga ömsesidiga förtroende bland många av de andra medlemsländerna). Summan av kardemumman är att CSTO:s politiska vilja och militära kapacitet i huvudsak är Rysslands.

Om det internationella samfundet vill bidra till att hantera de potentiellt sett enorma säkerhetsproblem i Centralasien efter 2014 (t.ex. konflikter om gränser och/eller resurser, etniska spänningar, successionsstrider, militant islamism) finns det i slutändan få alternativ till att selektivt interagera med CSTO, trots farhågor om dess grundläggande värderingar, Rysslands dominans eller risken att legitimera ryska intressesfärer.

Nyckelord:

CSTO, Kollektiva säkerhetsavtalsorganisationen, CST, Ryssland, Centralasien, Sydkaukasien, Vitryssland, Armenien, Kazakstan, Tadzjikistan, Kirgizistan, Uzbekistan, militär förmåga, militär intervention, Afghanistan, 2014, militär-politiskt beslutsfattande, KSOR, CORF, kollektiva styrkor, Luftlandsättnings-trupperna, VDV

Summary

This report aims to analyse the capability of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) for collective military intervention in quickly emerging localized conflicts on or near the member states' territories. The CSTO, formed in 2002, today consists of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. It is gradually evolving from a military alliance to a more multifunctional organization addressing many security issues. Russia, by far the biggest member, dominates the organization's development and contributes most resources, but needs the cooperation of the smaller states to enhance its legitimacy. The CSTO is probably the main effort to build both capacity and legitimacy for possible military intervention to address security concerns in Central Asia as the international military effort in Afghanistan is being reduced. As of early April 2013, however, the CSTO remains untested in reality.

The CSTO has two types of forces. First, in the past decade it has developed and regularly exercised regional force structures in Eastern Europe (Western Russia and Belarus), in the South Caucasus (Armenia) and in Central Asia (Russian forces and the forces from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan). Second, there are mobile forces for deployments in all CSTO-countries. The CSTO plans to be able to field some 20 000 soldiers in a Collective Operational Reaction Force (CORF, also known by its Russian acronym KSOR), mainly consisting of highly mobile elite airborne units (primarily Russian). A smaller mobile force is the planned 4 000-men strong Peace Keeping Force (PKF), which can also be used in UN operations. Both forces exist and have exercised, but in far smaller numbers. Command and control systems in these multilateral forces seem to be dominated by Russia. The building of these multinational forces has been challenged by the asymmetry of the forces from the different member states, for example in levels of modernization and training and different equipment and procedures.

The CORF is likely to be able to respond quickly and be adequate for one short conflict, but the endurance of this force is questionable. If a conflict is drawn out or if several conflicts occur simultaneously follow-on forces are needed. CSTO's ability to field additional forces essentially consists of Russian ground forces, up to one infantry brigade with supporting units for up to six months without major re-prioritizations between Russia's military districts. Other CSTO countries are likely to supply smaller units.

Building the CSTO's political and military structures for joint political decision making and command of joint multilateral operations is also a work in progress. Apart from the practical problems in building joint forces, there are also conceptual challenges (basic values) and political challenges (Russia's dominance, real or perceived, or the low degree of mutual trust among many of the other members). The bottom line is that the CSTO's political will and military capacity are essentially Russia's.

If the international community wants to contribute to addressing the potentially huge security challenges in Central Asia after 2014 (such as conflicts about borders and/or resources, ethnic tensions, succession struggles and Islamic militancy) there are few alternatives to interacting selectively with the CSTO, despite misgivings about its basic values, Russia's dominance or the risk of legitimizing Russian spheres of influence.

Keywords:

CSTO, Collective Security Treaty Organization, CST, Russia, Central Asia, South Caucasus, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, military capability, military intervention, Afghanistan, 2014, military-political decision making, KSOR, CORF, Collective Forces, Russian Airborne Forces, VDV

Acronyms and abbreviations

AAB	Air Assault Brigade
AB	Airborne
AOO	area of operations
AR	Armenia
Aslt	assault
B/Bde	Brigade
BDiv	Airborne Division
Bn	Battalion
BY	Belarus
CORF	Collective Operational Reaction Forces
CRDF-CA	Collective Rapid Deployment Forces for Central Asia
CRDF-CAR	Collective Reactive Deployment Forces – Central Asian Region
CSC	Collective Security Council (Soviet Kollektivnoi Bezopasnosti)
CSSNS	Committee for State Secretaries for National Security
CST	Collective Security Treaty (1992)
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
Div	Division
DMC	Defence Ministers' Council (Soviet Ministrov Oborony)
EU	European Union
FHQ	Force Headquarters
FMC	Foreign Ministers' Council (Soviet Ministrov Inostrannykh Del)
GE	Georgia
GoF	Group of [regional] Forces
GOF-CR	Group of Forces in the Caucasus Region
GOF-EER	Group of Forces in the Eastern European Region
JHQ	Joint Headquarters
KSOR	Kollektivnye Sily Operativnogo Reagirovaniia (see CORF)
KY	Kyrgyzstan

KZ	Kazakhstan
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MFA	Ministry for Foreign Affairs
MS	Mirotvorcheskie Sily (see PKF)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OHQ	Operations Headquarters
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PA	Parliamentary Assembly
PC	Permanent Council (Postoiannyi Soviet pri ODKB)
PKF	Peacekeeping Forces (Mirotvorcheskie Sily)
RF	Russian Federation
RU	Russia
Secr	Secretariat
Secr Gen	Secretary General
SF	Special Forces
TJ	Tajikistan
TM	Turkmenistan
UZ	Uzbekistan
VDV	Vozdushno-Desantnye Voiska (Russia’s Airborne Forces)

Contents

1. Introduction

Russia and then newly independent former Soviet republics and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) members Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan signed the Collective Security Treaty (CST) in 1992. Georgia, Azerbaijan and Belarus joined in 1993. In 1999, Georgia and Azerbaijan withdrew from the treaty. In 2002 the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) was founded as a more concrete framework for collective security. After years of prevarication and suspending its membership in June 2012, Uzbekistan left the CSTO altogether in December 2012.

The organization's development is dominated, but not totally controlled, by Russia, by all measures the biggest member state. The drawdown of NATO-led forces in Afghanistan in 2014 is not only likely to reduce the United States' interest in Central Asia,[1] but ensuing developments in Afghanistan are also likely to affect neighbouring Central Asia. The CSTO is a key element for Russia's ambition to ensure security in Eurasia[2] and a part of President Vladimir Putin's drive for Eurasian integration. The organization is a way to generate both resources and legitimacy in order to try to handle the security implications of this Eurasian ambition.

The CSTO is important since it is the main, if not the only, multilateral security frameworks that is preparing to address the security issues that could require military intervention in Central Asia. The organization is also interesting since it is so far untested as far as military intervention is concerned, which has led some analysts to question its usefulness.[3] The last few years have seen the beginning of a transformation of both CSTO's force structures and decision making.

This report aims to analyse the CSTO's capability for collective military intervention in quickly emerging localized conflicts on or near its member states' territories, such as that in Kyrgyzstan in 2010. The potential of the CSTO for mutual military support for collective defence in a bigger conflict, either a regional war or an external more existentially threatening aggression (mutual defence guarantees), is outside the scope of this report. A recent FOI study about how the CSTO has framed the concept of security concluded that the CSTO in its first decade has evolved from a collective security alliance to include a more multifunctional approach to security issues.[4] This leaves room for this report to take a more empirically-oriented approach. The overall research questions are: what military resources do the member states assign to CSTO forces? What are the challenges involved in creating a capacity for collective military intervention out of these resources?

Several assumptions are made throughout the analysis. One is that the capability for collective military intervention consists of the member states' military assets and their collective ability to make political decisions, plan, assemble, launch and

sustain adequate forces in a joint multilateral military operation. When analysing the challenges to building such a capability it is also assumed that such a process is complex since it includes issues ranging from harmonizing national legislation and equipment standards to the capacity and willingness to make political decisions. It is also assumed that a high level of mutual trust between the members of an alliance will facilitate identifying the purpose and core values of the alliance, creating joint military forces and deciding how they should be used in actual operations.

The CSTO's potential for military intervention in former Soviet republics is described and assessed in this report bearing in mind its three geographic areas of operations. The first, Central Asia, will be in focus and the other two, the South Caucasus and Eastern Europe, will be discussed more briefly. The CSTO unofficially but quite clearly has two sets of forces. First, in each of the geographic area there are Russian forces earmarked for that region and for the countries concerned. Second, the CSTO has mobile forces that can be used in all member states.

The report starts with an outline of the member states' conventional military establishments followed by an overview of the CSTO's resources for military intervention in Central Asia. A brief description is then given of the CSTO's structures for military-political decision making[5] for interventions. This is accompanied by some background on the potential problems affecting such decision making. The discussion will not tackle mutual defence guarantees, which are assumed to be less controversial. The final section concludes that the CSTO is still an untested, ambitious project in the making and that its intervention capacity, both militarily and politically, essentially consists of Russia's military capacity and political will. Whatever one thinks of this, there is reason for the outside world to engage carefully with the CSTO to increase its chances to contribute to the design and use of a future military crisis management capability to address the security challenges that may arise in Central Asia.

The CSTO portrays itself as an ambitious, comprehensive security project encompassing multilateral cooperation in military-technical cooperation, military-industrial cooperation, higher military training, border security, combating trafficking in drugs and people, and cybercrime.[6] There are ideas that the CSTO in the future should have a joint missile and air defence system.[7] The focus here is on the forces from the respective CSTO members' ministries of defence since they make up the bulk of the CSTO's military intervention capacity. Forces from other ministries, such as ministries of the interior, emergency situations and security services, are at times bigger than the regular army in their countries, indicating where, for example, the government of Belarus[8] sees the main threats as lying. In the CSTO context, however, non-

defence ministry forces are a smaller part of the intervention capacity and they are therefore not discussed here.

The research is based on open sources such as *The Military Balance*, analysis and news reports from the internet combined with interviews at the CSTO headquarters (HQ) in Moscow and with experts in Russia and Central Asia in 2012.

The CSTO has a foreign policy dimension. It cooperates with the United Nations (UN) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) on drug trafficking, fighting organized crime and counterterrorism. Russia wants the CSTO to be regarded as an equal of NATO and has repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, approached NATO suggesting cooperation on combating drugs and counterterrorism. There are worries in NATO that this could bolster and imply acknowledgement of Russia's claims to the former Soviet Union as a "privileged sphere of interest".[9] Furthermore, there is an ambition to coordinate the members' foreign policy positions.[10] Russia's attempts to get the CSTO recognized as a formal partner of NATO[11] or at cooperation with international organizations such as the UN, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the OSCE[12] and with third countries such as Iran[13] will be addressed in this report only if they are relevant to the CSTO's military intervention capability.

2. CSTO member states' assets

This section outlines the military assets of the CSTO member states from which the CSTO in turn can create a capability for collective military intervention. This is followed by a brief discussion about structural factors that either facilitate or impede developing such a capability.

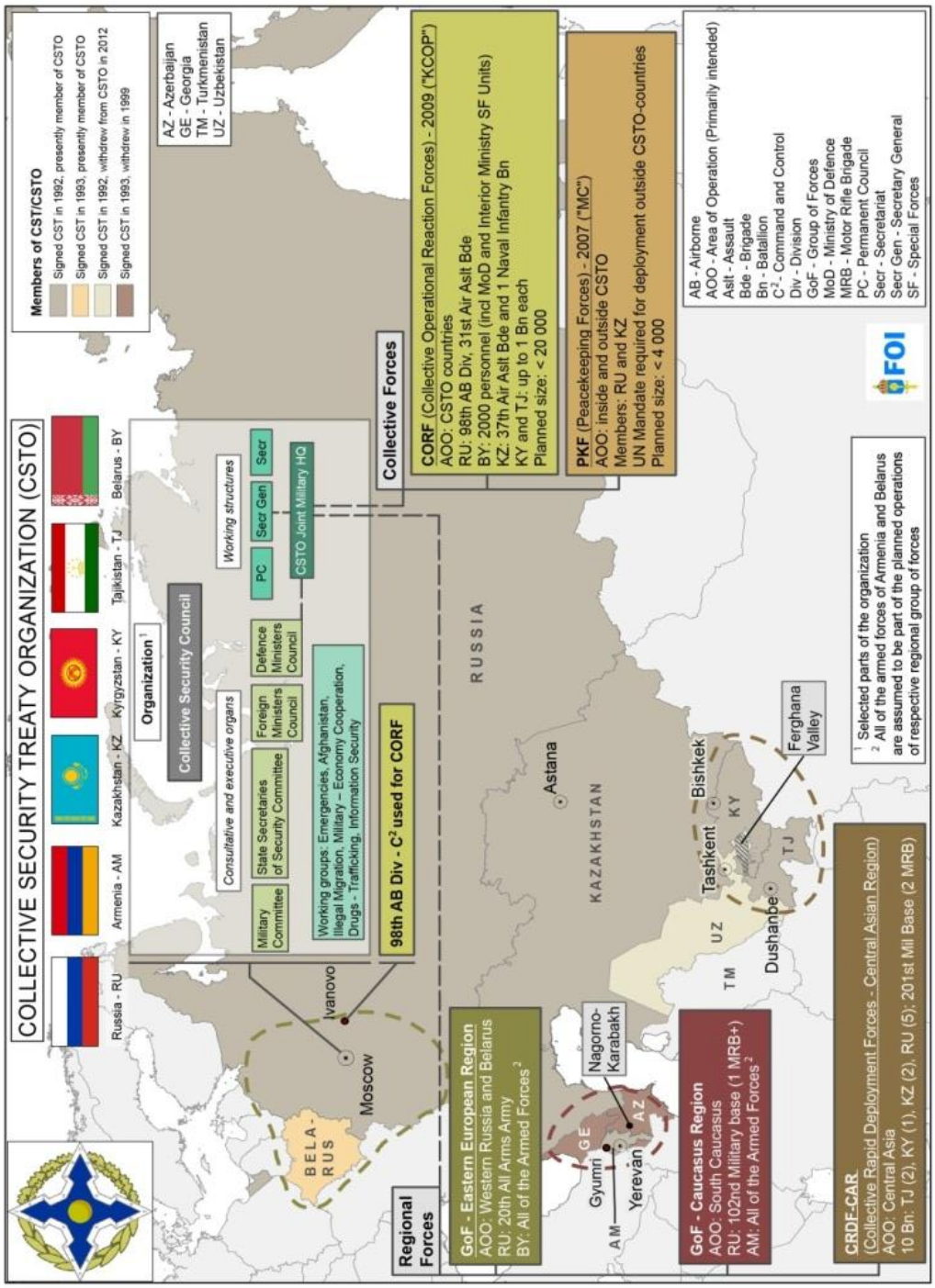
Table 1 illustrates that Russia is in every sense the major power in the CSTO. Since Uzbekistan left the CSTO in 2012, only Kazakhstan and Belarus have military resources of any significance. The above gross figures say little about qualitative aspects such as the status of the equipment or training levels. There are plenty of articles about the poor state of the mostly Soviet-era equipment of Russia's Armed Forces, and there is little reason to believe that the armed forces in poorer Belarus, Armenia and the Central Asian states can keep their equipment in better shape. The analyst Eugene Kogan concluded in 2009 that the armed forces of the Central Asian states would have great difficulty in defending themselves from external military aggression.[14] There is little to suggest that this has changed significantly since then, perhaps because Russia's Central Asian allies are confident of Russian military support in such a situation. Furthermore, Russia's Armed Forces have been in a reform process since 2009. As far-reaching organizational changes are implemented, overall capability decreases. In a ten-year perspective, however, the reform efforts may create the conditions for building more capable forces.[15] This study will not assess to what extent the armed forces of other CSTO countries are going through similarly ambitious changes or, if they are, how far these changes are being coordinated with Russia's efforts. Calls for mutually compatible equipment and training for forces from different member states assigned to joint CSTO forces indicate that they are not.[16]

There are factors both facilitating and impeding military-to-military cooperation between the armed forces of the CSTO member states. Facilitating factors include the fact that all countries have almost only Soviet-era or Russian-made equipment, have Soviet or Russian military training and can work with Russian as the language of command and control in an operation (although not always down to lower unit levels, where the national languages are likely to be used). Impeding factors are differences in levels of training, modernization of the forces and different national approaches to planning and carrying out operations and command and control. A collective and coordinated transformation of forces with mainly Soviet-era capabilities into forces that are geared to modern-day warfare will be both costly and complex.[17] It is unlikely that the other CSTO countries can make the same relative increases in their defence budgets as Russia has done recently, from almost 3 to nearly 4 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP).[18]

Table 1: Military establishments and defence budgets of the CSTO member states[19]

Country	**Defence budget (US$) (2011)**	**Armed Forces personnel**		**Tanks**	**Artillery pieces**	**Helicopters** (attack & transport)	**APCs & AIFVs[20]**	**Fighter aircraft**	**Fighter - ground attack / attack aircraft**	**Period of conscription** (months)
Russia	52.7 Bn	**Total**	**956 000**[21]	2 800	5 436	929	17 060	786	612	12 (180 000 contracted soldiers/ NCO's in 2011)
		Army	270 000							
		Navy	154 000							
		AF	167 000							
Kazakhstan	1.74 Bn	**Total**	**49 000**[22]	980	1 502	116	1 930	97	53	12
		Army	30 000							
		Navy	3 000							
		AF	12 000							
Tajikistan	72 M	**Total**	**8 800**	37	23	16	46	-	-	24
		Army	7 300							
		AF	1 500							
Kyrgyzstan	33 M	**Total**	**10 900**	150	246	10	355	-	29	18
		Army	8 500							
		AF	2 400							
Belarus	470 M	**Total**	**72 940**	515	1 003	218	1 375	38	90	9-12
		Army	29 600							
		Joint	25 170							
		AF	18 170							
Armenia	395 M	**Total**	**48 834**	110	239	8	240	1	15	24
		Army	45 846							
		AF / AD	2 988							

AF = Air Force. AD = Air Defence. M = million. Bn = billion. APC = armoured personnel carrier. AIFV = armoured infantry fighting vehicle.


COLLECTIVE SECURITY TREATY ORGANIZATION (CSTO)
Russia - RU
Armenia - AM
Kazakhstan - KZ
Kyrgyzstan - KY
Tajikistan - TJ
Belarus - BY
Organization [1]
Collective Security Council
Consultative and executive organs
Military Committee
State Secretaries of Security Committee
Foreign Ministers Council
Defence Ministers Council
Working structures
PC
Secr Gen
Secr
CSTO Joint Military HQ
Working groups: Emergencies, Afghanistan, Illegal Migration, Military – Economy Cooperation, Drugs - Trafficking, Information Security
98th AB Div - C² used for CORF
Collective Forces
CORF (Collective Operational Reaction Forces) - 2009 ("KCOP")
AOO: CSTO countries
RU: 98th AB Div, 31st Air Aslt Bde
BY: 2000 personnel (incl MoD and Interior Ministry SF Units)
KZ: 37th Air Aslt Bde and 1 Naval Infantry Bn
KY and TJ: up to 1 Bn each
Planned size: < 20 000
PKF (Peacekeeping Forces) - 2007 ("MC")
AOO: inside and outside CSTO
Members: RU and KZ
UN Mandate required for deployment outside CSTO-countries
Planned size: < 4 000
Members of CST/CSTO
Signed CST in 1992, presently member of CSTO
Signed CST in 1993, presently member of CSTO
Signed CST in 1992, withdrew from CSTO in 2012
Signed CST in 1993, withdrew in 1999
AZ - Azerbaijan
GE - Georgia
TM - Turkmenistan
UZ - Uzbekistan
AB - Airborne
AOO - Area of Operation (Primarily intended)
Aslt - Assault
Bde - Brigade
Bn - Batallion
C² - Command and Control
Div - Division
GoF - Group of Forces
MoD - Ministry of Defence
MRB - Motor Rifle Brigade
PC - Permanent Council
Secr - Secretariat
Secr Gen - Secretary General
SF - Special Forces
Regional Forces
GoF - Eastern European Region
AOO: Western Russia and Belarus
RU: 20th All Arms Army
BY: All of the Armed Forces [2]
GoF - Caucasus Region
AOO: South Caucasus
RU: 102nd Military base (1 MRB+)
AM: All of the Armed Forces [2]
CRDF-CAR
(Collective Rapid Deployment Forces - Central Asian Region)
AOO: Central Asia
10 Bn: TJ (2), KY (1), KZ (2), RU (5); 201st Mil Base (2 MRB)
[1] Selected parts of the organization
[2] All of the armed forces of Armenia and Belarus are assumed to be part of the planned operations of respective regional group of forces
FOI
RUSSIA
KAZAKHSTAN
BELA-RUS
UZ
TM
KY
TJ
AM
GE
AZ
Ivanovo
Moscow
Astana
Bishkek
Tashkent
Dushanbe
Ferghana Valley
Nagorno-Karabakh
Gyumri
Yerevan

3 Joint CSTO capability for military intervention

It is assumed here that the CSTO's capability for military intervention consists of the member states' participation in the common CSTO decision-making structures and their contribution of forces from their national military establishments to the different joint forces of the CSTO. The CSTO decision-making structures and command and control mechanisms are outlined here on two levels. The political-military level encompasses political decision-making bodies with representatives from all member states, including the CSTO Joint HQ (JHQ, in Russian Obedinennyi Shtab) in Moscow. The structure is probably aimed to be permanent. New bodies added in late 2012 and the plans to enhance the command and control of the JHQ announced in early 2013 indicate that the structure is still being developed.

The operational level is the (mainly military) command structures needed to command an operation over time. The focus is on the intervention forces, the Collective Operational Reaction Forces (CORF, often referred to as KSOR, the Russian abbreviation for Kollektivnye Sily Operativnogo Reagirovaniia) and the Peace Keeping Forces (PKF – Russian abbreviation MS, Mirotvorcheskie Sily). The CSTO regional groups of forces are briefly discussed as they may be used in parallel to the intervention forces.

3.1 Overview of structures for political–military decision making

At the political–military level[23] the CSTO heads of state meet formally at least once a year in the Collective Security Council (CSC; in Russian Soviet Kollektivnoi Bezopasnosti) to deal with the principal issues and set the general aims for the organization, and it coordinates the common activities to achieve these aims. The CSC takes the final decision about launching CSTO operations. In addition, informal CSC meetings are held regularly and two member states can demand extraordinary CSC sessions. The CSC sessions are prepared by biannual meetings in the defence and foreign ministers' councils.[24] Between the formal CSC sessions, day-to-day political coordination is handled by the CSTO's Permanent Council (PC, Postoiannyi Soviet pri ODKB) with seconded representatives from the member states. Daily coordination and running of the organization are supervised by the Secretary-General with the support of the CSTO Secretariat.

The member states' foreign ministers can consult each other and make certain decisions in the Foreign Ministers' Council (FMC, in Russian Soviet Ministrov

Inostrannykh Del), which includes a working group on Afghanistan. For the defence ministers, the Defence Ministers' Council (DMC, Soviet Ministrov Oborony) is the equivalent body. The Committee for State Secretaries for National Security (CSSNS) is a consultative and decision-making organ for matters concerning national security and it coordinates work with other supportive functions in the CSTO for issues such as military-economic cooperation, illegal migration, combating drugs smuggling and handling emergency situations. The Parliamentary Assembly (PA) of the CSTO is somewhat aloof on the CSTO website's organizational chart, but is said to follow the development and work of the organization and, interestingly, it coordinates the CSTO member states' positions in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. The exact relations and workings between all these bodies are not detailed on the CSTO website. As for the ability to make decisions to launch joint military operations to address threats to security, it is impossible to say from the structure as outlined how well it would work.

The CSTO JHQ in Moscow supports the organization, especially the DMC, by making proposals and by carrying out political decisions related to its military part. Between DMC sessions, the CSTO JHQ reports to the Secretary-General.[25] In early February 2013, Russian newspapers quoted the CSTO Secretary-General Nikolai Bordyuzha saying that there were plans to augment the size of the CSTO JHQ and to add command functions for joint forces, air operations and special operations. There would also be an intelligence function for analysis and forecasting with a link (yet to be clarified) to a CSTO Academy to be established in Yerevan. Russian experts noted that the ambition is fine, but added sceptically that the real capability of the new CSTO JHQ and its subordinated forces must be financed properly. It was unclear if the slightly higher budget for the CSTO for 2013 would be adequate. The plans could be realized if the CSTO's main financier, Russia, would let part of its increased defence spending go to strengthening the CSTO.[26] In December 2012, the CSC appointed the Russian Lieutenant General Alexander Studenikin as Chief of the CSTO JHQ for a three-year term, and Putin underlined that this would now be a full-time job, not a position held in parallel to another job.[27] If these functions are not yet developed, the ability of the CSTO JHQ will be relatively limited until they are. The plans announced and the appointment of a full time Chief indicate a realization that the CSTO JHQ must be strengthened. This impression is reinforced by senior Kyrgyzstani officials who noted in March 2012 that the CSTO was primarily a political project and that the ability to plan and launch operations was still some years off.[28] In the judgement of a senior Russian defence journalist in February 2012, the CSTO's collective forces were more nominal than real at that time.[29]

Multilateral peace support operations within the framework of (for example) the European Union (EU) require extensive political and military planning to get contributing states to agree on everything, from the end-state of the operation and the rules of engagement to force structure and how national contributions should

be matched to work towards the stated aim of the operation. It is unclear to what extent the CSTO structure can be compared to Western equivalents. The author has not been able to find any details of the CSTO operational planning process. Therefore, a brief attempt is made here to illustrate how the CSTO system may work to plan, launch and command a multilateral operation with reference to parts of the operational planning process in the EU as a guide to the type of issues that have to be resolved in a multilateral planning process.[30]

The CSTO JHQ presumably performs two main functions for operations. First, in defining the operation's political aim and the initial planning process the role of the CSTO JHQ is likely to be to advise the political levels of the organization by providing military input and to coordinate different national contributions to the operation, a role somewhat akin to those of the EU Military Staff and EU Military Committee in developing a Crisis Management Concept, Military Strategic Options and, finally, an Initiating Military Directive for the operation. The announcement of plans for a CSTO Military Committee in support of the CSTO Defence Ministers' Council[31] can be seen in this light. Second, once an operation gets going, there must be a command level managing the overall coordination of the operation, for example with the contributing member states and interacting with the political level, such as an Operational HQ (OHQ) in EU operations. Day-to-day command of a joint operation in the field is unlikely to take place in the CSTO JHQ or at an OHQ; it is more likely to take place at an equivalent of a Force Headquarters (FHQ). The CSTO seems to have chosen not to have a multilateral staff model for the FHQ, but has chosen to rely on a tested structure – Russia's Airborne Forces (Vozdushno-Desantnye Voiska, VDV).

3.2 CSTO command and control in CORF operations

A 2010 CSTO press release about the CORF says that the forces' command should be designed on a case-by-case basis and tailored to the nature of the operation at hand. It should include command and support functions, staff and "operational groups" (probably liaison functions) from ministries and agencies concerned, and officers from the police and security services. In peacetime there should be an "Operational Centre" for the CORF in the CSTO JHQ.[32] It is unclear how these aims have materialized since 2010. The British analyst Roger McDermott notes that there does not seem to be any agreed CSTO command and control structure below the CSTO JHQ, but that statements and exercises point to a central role for the existing command and control structure of Russia's elite Airborne Forces.[33]

The 98th Guards Airborne Division (98. ABDiv) is the main Russian unit assigned to the CORF, and hence assumed to be the backbone of the force and the basis for the CORF command and control structure.[34] This arrangement raises

a few questions. The VDV HQ and command and control structure are normally subordinated to the Russian General Staff. In a CORF operation, will control over 98. ABDiv HQ then be detached from the VDV HQ command structure and "handed over" to the CSTO JHQ? If it is not, the Commander of 98. ABDiv may have several superiors to answer to for different issues when he takes command of the CORF: the CSTO JHQ for guidance on the actual operation, the Commander of the Russian Airborne Forces for VDV internal issues and the Joint Strategic Command/HQ of the Central Military District in Yekaterinburg concerning other Russian forces assigned to the operation. To have two parallel chains of command (the operational chain and each unit's national chain) is common in multilateral military operations, but having three may be overly complicated and may slow down decision making. There does not seem to be any change to this set-up. In the 2013 Russian annual strategic military exercise, a separate CORF command and control structure will be organized.[35]

The set-up raises some other questions regarding command of multilateral operations. The HQ of a Russian Air Assault Division is presumably primarily designed to command its own national units in high-tempo war fighting airborne operations in an enemy's rear areas. To adjust this structure to a presumably slower, more multifaceted and politicized multilateral CORF operation probably requires adaptations to organization, procedures and equipment, such as seconding staff members from contributing countries and ensuring secure communications with all contributing member states. The author has not been able to find any information about command relations between different national units in the CORF.

If the CSTO JHQ does not perform the role of an OHQ, will the VDV HQ then perform that role? Is the VDV HQ adapted for that? With a Russian VDV-based command and control structure, what happens to the image of a CSTO operation as a multilateral operation, and not just a Russian one? To what extent will the other contributing member states accept such a solution? Exercise evaluations have apparently been interpreted as indicating that the CORF does not need a permanent command and control structure based on the CSTO joint staff model, but that the VDV-based structure is better.[36] Organizing and running multilateral military HQs has never been easy. It might simply be safer for the CSTO to entrust command to a tested structure, even if that reduces the image (and the reality) of the CORF to that of a mainly Russian force rather than a multilateral one. This arrangement also indicates that Russia may be the only CSTO country that can set up a command structure for such operations. In Russia, the VDV may be the most capable structure able to do so. Finally, if the CSTO launches a CORF operation where Russian forces are already in the field (as in Armenia or in Tajikistan), how will the Russian-led CSTO structure and the Russian-led forces already in place be coordinated? In sum, the CORF command and control structure is untested and unclear in many details and may therefore evolve during actual operations – most probably in a Russo-centric way.

3.3 CSTO Collective Forces

The CSTO has five types of collective forces, clearly but unofficially divided into two groups. Three are assigned to geographical areas and two are forces that can be used in all CSTO countries. Two of the forces assigned to geographical areas include Russian military bases abroad (in Tajikistan and Armenia)[37] and can be seen both as preparations to strengthen the credibility of collective defence against external aggression and as a way for Russia to indicate its sphere of influence.

3.3.1 Regional Groups of Forces

The first among the Regional Groups of Forces, i.e. assigned to geographical areas, was the Collective Rapid Deployment Forces for Central Asia (CRDF-CA) set up in 2001. They are clearly earmarked for intervention in Central Asia, probably bearing in mind the experience of the Tajikistan civil war and possible tensions around the Ferghana Valley. The CRDF-CA were originally to be used within the framework of the CST, which probably contributed to the realization that an *organization* was needed to uphold the credibility of any ambitions for collective defence. Accordingly, the CSTO was created the year after.

Half of the CRDF-CA's 10 battalions are from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and the other half are Russian. It is likely that at least some units of Russia's 201st Military Base in Dushanbe in Tajikistan are a part of this force. An informal source lists the 7 000-man-strong[38] 201st Military Base as a unit under the command of Russia's Central Military District.[39] After a surprise inspection exercise testing command and control structures and units of the Southern and Central military districts in February 2013, the Chief of Russia's General Staff, Army General Valeri Gerasimov, noted shortcomings of personnel, procedures and equipment in the 201st and in the 28th Motor Rifle Brigade in Yekaterinburg.[40] The latter also belongs to the Central Military District and is likely to play a role in any military operation in Central Asia.[41] Until these shortcomings are addressed, they will negatively affect Russia's capability for swift military intervention in the region.

The CRDF-CA have conducted seven *Rubezh* (border) exercises since 2004, primarily in Central Asia (also in Armenia in 2008), with varying contributions from participating states. Armenia participated in 2007 and 2008. The exercise has varied in size from 500 to some 4 000 personnel. After 2008, the scope of the exercise was widened to handle more complex anti-terror operations.[42]

Table 2: CSTO Collective Forces (2012)

Name (created year)	**English** (translation)	**Size**	**Primarily intended for**	**CSTO members**	**Notes/Earmarked units**
Collective Forces (for intervention in all CSTO countries)					
KSOR[43] (2009-) Kollektivnye Sily Operativnogo Reagirovaniia	**CORF** (Collective Operational Reaction Forces)	20 000[44]	All CSTO countries	All	RU: 98. ABDiv, 31. Air Aslt Bde[45] KZ: 37. Air Aslt Bde + 1 Naval Infantry Bn[46] AR, KY & TJ: up to 1 Bn each BY: Up to a bde size unit, 2 000 personnel[47] (incl SF units from MoD and Interior Ministry)[48]
MS (2007) *Mirotvorcheskie Sily*	**Peace Keeping Forces** (PKF)	4 000[49] (incl. 500 non-MoD)[50]	Inside and outside CSTO	RU, KZ	UN mandate required for deployment outside CSTO countries[51]
Regional Groups of Forces (geographically assigned)					
KSBR TsAR[52] (2001) (Kollektivnye Sily Bystrogo Razvertyvaniia Tsentralno-Aziatskogo regiona)	**CRDF-CA** (Collective Rapid Deployment For-ces for Central Asia)	~ 4 500 (2007)[53]	Central Asia	RU, KZ, TJ, KY	10 Bn: RU (5), TJ (2), KY (1) KZ (2) [54]
RGVVER (Regionalnaia Gruppirovka Voisk Vostochno-Evropeiskogo Regiona)	**GOF-EER** (Group of Forces in the Eastern European Region)		Western Russia and Belarus	RU BY	RU: 20th All Arms Army BY: All of the Armed Forces[55]
RGVKR (Regionalnaia Gruppirovka Voisk Kavkazskogo Regiona)	**GOF-CR** (Group of Forces in the Caucasus Region)		South Caucasus	RU AR	RU: 102nd Military Base AR: All of the Armed Forces[56]

AR = Armenia; BY = Belarus; KZ = Kazakhstan; KY = Kyrgyzstan; RU = Russia; TJ = Tajikistan;
AB = Airborne; Aslt = Assault; MoD = Ministry of Defence; Div = Division; Bde = Brigade; Bn = Battalion; SF = Special Forces

The second regional force is the Russian-Belarusian CSTO Group of Forces in the Eastern European Region (GOF-EER). From Russia's side, the unit assigned is the 20th All Arms Army, the stronger of the Western Military District's two all-arms armies. It is unclear which forces Belarus has assigned, but much of the country's armed forces are assumed to be part of the GOF-EER since any perceived incursions from the West, however unlikely, would probably affect both Belarus and Western Russia. Russian and Belarusian forces exercise together, as they have done in Russia's annual operational strategic exercises (*Zapad*-2009, *Tsentr*-2011, *Kavkaz*-2012). Defence ties between the two countries are close. This CSTO Group of Forces has relatively favourable conditions for building joint capacity.

The third group is the Russian-Armenian CSTO Group of Forces in the Caucasus Region (GOF-CR) and includes Russia's 5 000-men-strong 102nd Military Base[57] (roughly a reinforced brigade-size unit) in Gyumri in Armenia and (as assumed in the case of Belarus above) most of Armenia's Armed Forces. According to one informal source, this base is subordinated to Russia's Southern Military District.[58] The base was part of the *Rubezh* exercise in Armenia in 2008.[59] The Russian Ministry of Defence (MoD) reportedly claimed that the base's participation in the CORF exercise *Vzaimodeistvie* 2012 (Co-operation/Interaction 2012) exercise was not part of the Russian strategic staff exercise *Kavkaz*-2012 (Caucasus 2012) although both took place simultaneously in the Southern Military District.[60]

From a Russian defence perspective it is also possible to see the Russian components in these three groups of forces as first defensive echelons against any major ground-based aggression against Russia from these directions. The CORF could be seen as a mobile reinforcement. The Russian Ground Forces are to a great extent posted along the country's western and southern borders, forming a second defence echelon.

Russia has in this way established a chain of command for its forces abroad in Tajikistan and Armenia in accordance with the principle that a regional Joint Strategic Command commands all Russian MoD forces in a particular strategic direction. [61] In the event of a decision being taken to send the *de facto* Russian VDV-led CORF into any of these theatres, careful coordination must take place so that two parallel Russian command structures do not affect each other adversely.

3.3.2 Forces for use across all CSTO member states

The most significant are the above-mentioned CORF which have been built up gradually since 2009. They are said to be capable of special operations, combating extremism and helping in recovery after emergency situations, both natural and man-made.[62] An agreement between the CSTO member states that

addresses issues such as how the CORF are to be formed and moved to operational areas, visa exemptions, the status of forces and how they should receive support with housing, energy and water supplies from the receiving nation[63] provides a legal and practical basis for keeping the forces in the field.

The 20 000-men-strong force is said to consist of high-readiness units from CSTO countries,[64] primarily from the regular armed forces, mainly airborne and Special Forces units. There are also components from Interior Ministry forces, and forces from the Ministry of Emergency Situations and from the Security Services. Despite the CSTO Secretary-General repeatedly claiming that the CSTO will not do "policing", with their low level of heavier equipment, such as tanks and artillery, the CORF seem to be more a light force more adapted for peace operations[65] and for dealing with internal conflict than for collective defence against heavily armed external aggression.[66]

Units known to be assigned to the CORF include Russia's 98th Guards Airborne Division from Ivanovo (whose command and control structure is used for the CORF) and 31st Guards Independent Air Assault Brigade (31. AAB) from Ulyanovsk, altogether some 8 500 personnel. The Kazakh contribution is also an air assault brigade (37th AAB) from Taldykurgon and, reportedly, a naval infantry battalion.[67] Belarus contributes a Special Forces brigade.[68] Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia each contribute up to a battalion-size unit.[69] The size and organization of logistics, transport and other support units are unknown at this point. The predominance of light and highly mobile elite forces in the CORF could be designed to facilitate speedy deployment. It could also be that these units are simply the best ones functioning in each country and hence the main alternative for any operation.

The nominally up to 4 000-strong CSTO Peace Keeping Forces (PKF) have been discussed since 2007 and their first exercise took place in 2012 in Kazakhstan.[70] The *Nerushimoe Bratstvo*-2012 (Enduring Brotherhood) exercise involved fewer that 1 000 servicemen from all CSTO countries (more than half from the host nation) and focused on classic peacekeeping themes such as riot control, separation of forces, search and rescue, and protecting humanitarian convoys. Only Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus were able to contribute forces of any size. The small numbers of personnel involved led observers to question the CSTO's ability to deploy peacekeeping forces and sustain them over a longer period of time.[71] The PKF alone are unlikely to be a sustainable follow-on force after an initial CORF deployment in a conflict. Additional forces, probably mainly Russian, are needed for that. But the PKF are a way to tie other CSTO member states into a follow-on force, and a way to open up the CSTO for participation in UN-led operations.

3.3.3 The CORF exercise activities[72]

Interestingly, most CSTO forces seem to exercise regularly. Since they were created, the CORF have exercised annually. The *Vzaimodestvie* (Cooperation/Interaction) exercise has taken place twice, in Russia's Chelyabinsk region in 2010[73] and in Armenia in 2012, both times with some 2 000 participants. All CORF countries participated, with Russia and Kazakhstan contributing up to battalion-size units and the others units up to company size. Belarus sent staff officers in 2010 and a Special Forces unit in 2012.[74] The next *Vzaimodestvie* exercise (in September 2013) is planned to take place in Belarus and Russia's Western Military District and will, as in 2011 and 2012, be a part of the annual strategic exercise of the Russian Armed Forces.[75] Apart from multilateral participation, the exercises have multifaceted scenarios (anti-terrorism, combined arms warfare, peacekeeping, anti-narcotics operations) and include forces from other ministries.[76]

The scenario in Russia's annual strategic exercise *Tsentr*-2011 in Russia's Central Military District, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan and a small-scale staff exercise in Kyrgyzstan offered an indication of what the exercise planners see as potential problems in Central Asia. Deploying Russian airborne troops to Tajikistan indicates that Russia foresees a possibility that it will have to intervene in a rapidly deteriorating domestic situation in a Central Asian state. The counterterrorism element pertains to any post-2014 Afghanistan-related problems such as infiltration of small terror groups. That Russian conventional forces and units from other power ministries practise repelling conventional military aggression makes sense from a joint force development and command and control perspective. But who would be the perceived adversary in a Central Asian perspective? The exercise also included quite extensive, mainly Russian, land, air and sea manoeuvres. The scenario also reportedly referred to chemical weapons. This is excessive force for any perceivable post-2014 Afghanistan-related problems. It rather indicated that the exercise planners were also making a thinly veiled warning to outsiders, such as NATO, China or even Iran, to stay out of Central Asia.[77]

While the scenario in *Tsentr*-2011 indicated an ambition to make maximum use of different forces through coordination and cooperation, practical problems became evident. Communications equipment in units from different Russian ministries was incompatible. Presumably the same applied between different CSTO countries. Differences in planning processes between the CSTO countries' forces delayed decision making. Russian forces operated according to new manuals developed in the process of transforming Russia's Armed Forces, whilst the CSTO partners follow old Soviet procedures.[78] These problems are not insurmountable, but will require time, financial resources and a coherent effort to solve on a CSTO-wide level.

The CSTO-assigned forces exercise regularly, jointly and in the regions where they are likely to be deployed. They seem at least able to start an intervention fairly quickly. Russia has earmarked at least the 98th Air Assault Division (Ivanovo) and the 31st Guards Independent Air Assault Brigade (Ulyanovsk) for the CORF. With 50 per cent of the forces being conscripts and, presumably, the equipment problems endemic to Russia's armed forces, the assessment here is that half of the 98th AAD & 31st AAB can deploy within a week and the rest would take a little longer. The small scale of the exercises, however, makes it hard to tell how much these exercises affect the full intervention capacity (of all of the CRDF-CA or the CORF) or which command, control and coordination problems an operation with all of the CORF could run into. The field exercises are mostly one week long, which indicates that the CSTO is able to start operations, but says little about the ability to sustain long-drawn-out operations which conflict interventions often become. For that, the structural weaknesses of the CSTO members' armed forces will set the limits, especially those of the dominating state – Russia.

Presumably, it takes at least three or four brigades in a peacetime military establishment to sustain one brigade in an operation over time. Thus – with its Armed Forces spread over a vast territory, Moscow's commitments in the CSTO's three directions, its Armed Forces affected by reorganization, with a heavy reliance on one-year conscripts and mainly Soviet-era equipment, personnel shortfalls of up to 50 per cent in certain brigades,[79] and its logistics system in flux – it is hard to see Russia deploying and sustaining more than a motor rifle brigade, with air support, logistics and so on for more than six months. More forces or longer periods would require significant re-prioritization of resources on Russia's part and a lowering of its ambitions in other directions. Handling two such operations in two different CSTO geographical areas would be a tall order indeed, especially since an intervening CORF force is likely to be used once to intervene and then have to be reorganized again, assuming that appropriate follow-on forces come after an initial CORF intervention so that the CORF can leave.

4 Challenges in developing a CSTO intervention capacity

Building multilateral capacity for military intervention is a complex matter. It includes issues ranging from harmonizing national legislation and equipment standards to the capacity and willingness to make political decisions. A high level of mutual trust between the members of an alliance facilitates identifying the purpose and core values of the alliance, creating joint military forces and deciding when and how they should be used. Below, the conceptual and political challenges to the CSTO in developing an intervention capacity will be outlined. Practical challenges were noted in section 3 above.

4.1 Conceptual challenges – what are the core values of the CSTO?

The preamble to NATO's North Atlantic Treaty 1949 identifies the core values of the alliance. The member states are "… determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. They seek to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area".[80] In contrast, similar CSTO documents rarely mention such values, but emphasize notions of national sovereignty, territorial integrity, stability, and protection against external aggression. An electronic search for the word "democracy" and some of its derivatives generated only two hits,[81] and none were found in the fundamental document, the Collective Security Treaty (1992). So what is the CSTO actually built on? What are the values the members can unite around despite differing interests?

Many Russian analysts have addressed the lack of clarity concerning the CSTO's fundamental values, the basic direction of the organization and the ensuing difficulty of assessing its usefulness. Alexei Arbatov notes that the organization's unclear status and aims impede political decision making.[82] Alexander Bartosh, sees a need for a strategic concept to clarify the CSTO's aim and character, its tasks in collective security, the compatibility of its peacekeeping potential and the legal basis for CSTO interventions with the UN, the EU and even NATO.[83] Arkadii Dubnov described an attempt by CSTO Secretary-General Nikolai Bordyuzha to identify an ideology and fundamental values for the CSTO that only generated one such value – stability. The threats to stability in many CSTO countries, especially in Central Asia, however, are not external but internal,[84] and many even see enemies among themselves.[85] The Kazakhstani analyst Murat Laumulin also underlines the need for an "ideology" for the CSTO such as "stability".[86] Igor Yurgens goes a little further and notes that *socio-political*

stability is the aim and base for the CSTO member states.[87] Arbatov concludes that in an alliance the members share an idea that their own survival is dependent on the alliance. In the CSTO only Armenia is in that situation. The other members see the CSTO more as a way to extract resources from Moscow. It is hard to envisage how the others could help Russia in any meaningful way.[88] In Yurgens' assessment, the CSTO has been built on many different strategies for many different directions rather than one unified strategy and has hence become "too multifunctional". He concludes that the CSTO is not built on a clear basic idea but rather on various functional aspects. It has yet to create viable mechanisms for regulating conflict in the former Soviet Union and it can be one instrument for building security in Eurasia, but not the only one.[89] Aleksey Malashenko points to the CSTO's high ambition to strengthen peace and regional security and enable collective defence of independence and territorial integrity through fighting international terrorism, drugs trafficking, illegal migration and international organized crime. However, he concludes wryly that it is hard to assess the CSTO's usefulness since it has never been tried in a real armed conflict, drugs trafficking is on the increase, problems with illegal migration are worsening, and other organizations are better at dealing with drugs smuggling and illegal immigrants.[90]

In December 2012, the CSC adopted a plan for developing the organization's military cooperation to 2020. However, little detail was offered.[91] It is unclear how such military cooperation would evolve given the asymmetry of aims and ambitions between the CSTO members. It is also unclear how this issue is being addressed in practice, although work on a strategic concept seems to have started.[92]

4.2 Political challenges – the role of Russia and the lack of trust

The political challenges the CSTO faces include the dominating role of Russia. This role is real, but also a matter of perception that to some extent may affect the legitimacy of the organization. Another challenge is an inadequate level of mutual trust among the members that may affect both the creation and the use of capability for collective military intervention in conflicts.

4.2.1 Russia: dominance or "herding cats"?

The Russian National Security Strategy 2020, published in May 2009, sees the CSTO as the main multilateral instrument to counter regional challenges and threats of a military-political and military-strategic character, including the illegal trade in narcotics.[93] Russia's latest Foreign Policy Concept, from February 2013, describes the CSTO as a key element for security on the territory of the

former Soviet Union, expresses a wish to develop it into a fully-fledged international organization, and underlines the need to develop an operational reaction capacity (i.e. the CORF) and peacekeeping capabilities.[94] Alexei Arbatov is not convinced and argues that Russia needs the CSTO mainly as a superpower status symbol, poorly functioning but Russia's own, and that the CSTO follows a tradition of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union wishing to be surrounded by a coalition of friendly nations.[95] Roger McDermott notes that Russia's foreign policy aims are based on an idea of a sphere of privileged interests in the CSTO zones of responsibility and on the hope that others will recognize this.[96] Alexander Bartosh sees the CSTO as a tool for Russian influence in Central Asia.[97]

One distinct advantage for Moscow is that the CSTO military-technical cooperation facilitates sales of Russian weapons to CSTO members. It also helps in ensuring contacts with and influence over subcontractors to the Russian defence industry which remained in former Soviet republics after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. Most officers from other member states know Russian equipment. This mutual benefit may slowly be diminishing since many Russian weapons are old and individual countries, including Russia, are turning to the international market for military procurement. Military-technical cooperation with Russia may thus over time lose its attractiveness to other CSTO states, which will affect the cohesiveness of the CSTO.[98] It has been argued that the CSTO also serves to ensure Russian control over former Soviet military installations[99] and gives Russia an instrument for legitimizing intervention in the internal affairs of its CSTO partners.[100]

But there are limitations to Russia's influence. According to article 9 of the CSTO Charter, member states should coordinate their positions in foreign policy,[101] although this does not give Russia automatic leverage over the other members' decisions. For example, in 2008, the smaller CSTO states did not follow Russia's lead in the (for Moscow) crucial issue of recognizing the independence of Georgia's breakaway regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia.[102] For some observers, this means that the CSTO is not a fully-fledged military-political union.[103] It is not hard to understand if the images of Russian tanks rolling into a former Soviet republic, and former CST signatory – uninvited – made many people in CSTO capitals think twice.

In contrast, one Russian success was the CSC decision in December 2011 that third-country military bases on the territories of CSTO member states should be approved by the other members. Shortly thereafter, Russia made a deal with NATO to use Ulyanovsk as a transit centre for NATO forces leaving Afghanistan. The Kremlin insisted it was not a base but a "transit point".[104] It is unclear whether the CSTO members had any say beforehand. And, if it is not a base, why did the CSTO member states have to agree to it at all, which they (unsurprisingly) did in December 2012?[105] The handling of the issue might have

set a precedent. Reportedly, Kazakhstan may strike a similar deal with NATO.[106] Astana reportedly also plans to participate in a Special Forces exercise with Azerbaijan and NATO member Turkey in 2013.[107] One interpretation of the foreign bases issue is that Moscow is concerned that more American bases in Central Asia would reduce Russia's influence in security matters in the region and may even make Central Asian states question the usefulness of the CSTO.[108]

Is the CSTO dominated by Russia or is it an organization of equals? Arguably, it is both. It is very hard to imagine the CSTO without Russia, which has been, is and will be the main force for developing the CSTO because of its size, resources and political will. Russia clearly dominates the development of the CSTO by default. It seems as if the other member states are wary of this. Armenia appears most dependent on the CSTO and Russia for its national security.[109] Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan essentially seem to get equipment, training and institutional support from Russia. Kazakhstan seems to want to avoid becoming too dependent on the Russia-led CSTO and retains, within its multi-vector foreign policy, both active cooperation with other partners such as Turkey and NATO and a domestic defence industry in parallel to the cooperation within the CSTO.[110]

At the same time, there seem to be several factors hindering Russia's ambitions with the CSTO and Moscow seems to have to work hard to get all the CSTO members into line, in a sense "herding cats". The asymmetry of aims and ambitions indicates that many members have other real priorities. The perception of Russia's dominance and real intentions may cause members to hesitate in crucial decisions and the mutual trust needed to facilitate cooperation and integration seems inadequate.[111] All this undermines the possibilities not only for developing the CSTO but also for its ability to make collective political decisions to use military operations to intervene in conflict.

4.2.2 Adequate trust?

Interestingly for a document about mutual defence guarantees, article 1 of the Collective Security Treaty (1992) has to clarify that the signatories commit themselves to settle disputes *between them* (author's italics) by peaceful means. The CSTO Charter (2002) reaffirms the commitment to the CST principles.[112] In comparison, the preamble of the NATO Charter states that members should solve *any* international dispute by peaceful means.[113] Another illustrative disagreement has concerned intervention in internal conflict. The CSTO has so far not intervened in internal conflicts of member states. The CSTO Charter prescribes non-interference in internal affairs, which is often reiterated by the Secretary-General. Tajikistan did not, however, request the CSTO's help to deal with armed internal opposition in the Tajik autonomous province of Gorno-Badakhshan in July 2012, allegedly due to suspicions about Russia's intentions.[114]

Uzbekistan reportedly vetoed a decision to intervene in the unrest in the city of Osh in southern Kyrgyzstan, where there were ethnic clashes between local Kyrgyz and Uzbek groups in 2010, despite a plea from the acting president of the country. Uzbekistan's concerns have also included the use of consensus in CSTO decision making for intervening in internal conflicts or in conflicts between member states.[115] Worries about Russia's real intentions were reinforced by Russia not consulting Tashkent when planning to open a base in Osh in 2009. Given the 2008 war in Georgia, with Russia intervening militarily in a former Soviet republic, there were also fears in Uzbekistan about the precise rules of engagement of these forces.[116] For Moscow, the obstruction by Tashkent probably strengthened the argument that majority vote should replace consensus, although that would weaken each individual member state.

The reasons for Uzbekistan leaving the CSTO reportedly included concerns about the organization's deeper military and foreign policy coordination and about the CSTO's approach towards Afghanistan, which Tashkent prefers to deal with bilaterally.[117] These issues were obviously more important than whatever benefits there would have been in remaining in the CSTO, indicating Tashkent's low trust in the organization. With Uzbekistan, the main obstructing force in the CSTO, now outside, the need for majority votes, given the current political outlook of the members, may be less of an issue.[118] But the rules have already changed and the smaller states are unlikely to be able to revert to consensus if they ever want to. It is now easier for the CSTO to make political decisions to launch operations.

In Central Asia, Uzbekistan has several areas of friction with its neighbours Tajikistan (concerning border issues, minority enclaves, water resources, land lines of communication) and Kyrgyzstan (minorities, the Ferghana Valley) that may have affected the CSTO's internal coherence. Tashkent's prevarication, however, was reportedly more of an image problem for Moscow, and actually caused little friction in the organization's work.[119] Given tensions between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Tashkent's decision to leave the CSTO may in fact facilitate the CSTO's decision making. Regarding possible CSTO military intervention in Central Asia, Tashkent will remain an important consideration since there may be a risk of Russian forces coming face to face with the Armed Forces of Uzbekistan, the region's major military power. This underlines the continued need for close interaction between Moscow, the CSTO and Uzbekistan. Despite friction between Tashkent and its neighbours and Uzbekistan's long-standing wariness about committing forces to the CSTO, the organization was clearly weakened by the exit of Uzbekistan. The added value of the CSTO for Uzbekistan's security post-2014 was obviously insufficient for Tashkent in comparison to drawbacks such as the Russian dominance of the CSTO.

Furthermore, both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan can today hardly be described as stable and may be unable to participate in CSTO decision making in a crisis for domestic reasons. Kazakhstan is likely to weigh its options carefully before getting involved in operations affecting any of its neighbours. Kazakhstan (and Uzbekistan too) may be affected by future succession struggles after today´s ageing and dominating political figures inevitably leave the scene.

There would also be problems with commitments on the CSTO-wide scale. It would not be easy for isolated Armenia, which is significantly weaker militarily than its rival Azerbaijan, to spare troops to protect Kyrgyzstan's and Tajikistan's borders or territories. Similarly, it is hard to envisage Astana sending Kazakhstani soldiers (nominally Muslim and speaking a Turkic language) to support the nominal CSTO ally Armenia in a fight with Turkic-speaking Azerbaijani soldiers in a conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.[120] Honouring commitments within the CSTO to Armenia in a war over Nagorno-Karabakh would also be difficult and costly for Russia and would affect trade between Russia and Azerbaijan, including advantageous oil contracts, as well as risking friction with Turkey – a NATO member.[121]

There are many conflict risks in the CSTO countries and adjacent regions. In Central Asia, ethnic and border conflicts in the Ferghana Valley and intra-state tension in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan may possibly require military intervention that may have to last for years. Secretary-General Nikolai Bordyuzha often repeats, however, that the CSTO should not be used to intervene in member states' internal disputes or to carry out "police functions".[122] Secretaries of the CSTO member states' various security councils have discussed how possible developments from Afghanistan can affect CSTO member states. Mr Bordyuzha has underlined that the alliance does not plan to intervene inside Afghanistan, but is concerned with possible threats emanating from Afghanistan post-2014.[123] The two main threats to Central Asia from Afghanistan post-2014 are likely to be the drugs trade and the influence of extremist Islamic groups. Both issues seemed to cause surprisingly little concern among the author's interlocutors in Central Asia in 2012.[124][125] Neither of the two threats would concern CSTO military capabilities; they relate rather to the organization's efforts in counter-narcotics and counterterrorism. The CSTO Secretary-General often raises the Afghanistan issue in interviews, which indicates a real concern but also serves to talk up the usefulness of the CSTO. Apart from threats from Afghanistan, including infiltrating jihadist groups using Central Asia as a springboard, officials at the CSTO also noted other challenges such as developments around Iran and following the Arab Spring.[126]

In the Caucasus region, the CSTO's military capacity is either isolated in Armenia (Armenia's Armed Forces and Russia's 102nd Military Base) or potentially tied down elsewhere (Russian forces in Georgia or in the North Caucasus), reducing the possibility of using these military assets for both

collective defence and CSTO intervention forces. Two potential scenarios are often referred to in relation to the CSTO: a conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh or spillover effects from conflict in the wider Middle East, such as the effects of a possible Israeli military action against Iran. Concerns over this have reportedly prompted Moscow to reinforce its base to some 5 000 mainly contract soldiers.[127] Finally, the calmest CSTO area is the Eastern European region where most observers see only a very low risk of military confrontation involving Belarus and Western Russia. Here, CSTO military integration seems to be most developed. Russo-Belarussian commitments in the CSTO are reinforced by their Union State.[128]

5 Conclusions – "No one but us!"

"*Nikto krome nas*!" ("No one but us!"), the proud slogan of Russia's Airborne Forces (VDV), is true in many ways when one considers how the CSTO is building its capacity for collective military intervention in quickly emerging local conflicts, primarily in Central Asia. After more than a decade in Afghanistan, few countries outside the CSTO are contemplating any type of military operation in the wider Central Asia region. Russia is the main contributor to all of the CSTO's forces. The VDV are often described as the best-functioning and most combat-ready part of Russia's Armed Forces. The VDV command structure is used by the CORF and the VDV make up the lion's share of the CORF, the CSTO's main instrument for addressing quickly emerging local conflicts. To talk about the CSTO's collective capability for military intervention in conflicts in the former Soviet Union is essentially to talk about Russia's ability. Without Russia, other CSTO member states are likely to lack both the ability and the will to intervene. Russia's ability is in turn dependent on the readiness of its Armed Forces to intervene, which must be seen against the backdrop of the military reform that started in 2009. The question is whether Russia or the rest of the world wants it to be no one but the VDV.

All in all, the CSTO's military capacity is essentially the same thing as Russia's capacity, both for collective defence and for crisis intervention. In practice this includes the Russian forces assigned to the CSTO, that is the regional forces and primarily the VDV units assigned to the CORF. Apart from that Russia is likely to be able to deploy and sustain not more than a motor rifle brigade, with air support, logistics and so on, for up to six months without significant re-prioritization between its military districts. The collective defence obligations in the three disjointed CSTO sub-regions are entirely dependent on Russia's ability to uphold these commitments. No other member state can. Whilst all CSTO members have assigned forces to the CORF and PKF for crisis intervention, it is currently hard to see any of them deploying significant forces for any length of time outside their respective sub-regions. CSTO command and control appears almost entirely built on Russian systems.

Russia clearly dominates the CSTO; the organization is a part of President Putin's Eurasian integration efforts and Russia pays for it. The main resource flows are from Russia to the other member states; very little goes the other way. At the same time Moscow seems to be keen to strike defence-related deals with CSTO countries on a bilateral basis, indicating that many issues for some reason cannot be dealt with within the CSTO. Although this is practical, a predominance of bilateral relations between Russia and CSTO members may contribute to undermining the role of the CSTO. In short, for interventions, Russia provides the resources, the others provide the legitimacy. A possible consequence of Russia's dominance in providing the resources for collective military

intervention is that the other countries may reduce their efforts in the same field, perhaps feeling that Russia does it for them. That would certainly further increase these regimes' dependence on Russia.

The CSTO is an ambitious project in the making. Much of what is written about it is either normative, saying how things *should* be, or announcements about plans, about needs for this or that, about new projects launched and so on – essentially things that have not yet materialized. Respectfully, one can conclude that international security organizations take time to develop, even when they are bound together by joint values. So far, the CSTO's political ambition appears likely to be greater than its as yet untested military capability, although the latter is evolving based on available resources, mainly through an ambitious exercise scheme. Given the conceptual, political and military structural challenges, it is clear that the ambitions are high, but the reality is much harsher, and likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. This leaves Central Asia very vulnerable if conflicts should emerge.

Until now, the CSTO has not intervened in internal conflicts of its member states or in conflicts between member states. The organization's statutes and repeated statements of its Secretary-General indicate that this will continue. The risk of getting drawn into long-lasting conflicts probably also makes those concerned think twice. But two factors point in another direction. First, with the new decision-making rules about launching CSTO military interventions, whereby a majority vote has replaced the previous requirement for unanimity (which was effectively a veto for each member state), it is easier to launch operations. An authoritarian ruler facing an armed opposition would probably not hesitate to provide the necessary invitation as the legal basis for intervention. Second, the light and mobile nature of the CORF intervention force makes it well suited for quick intervention to address ethnic or political tension, and not only for collective defence tasks. Whether the CORF will be sufficient will be dependent on the nature of the conflict, for example how long it goes on.

The failure to intervene with the CORF or other CSTO forces in Kyrgyzstan in 2010 undoubtedly illustrated the CSTO's shortcomings as an instrument to promote security. It remains to be seen if the changes that have been initiated since are adequate to create new resolve within the CSTO. Any real decisions will depend on political circumstances at the time. One important aspect for coalition operations is mutual trust. That is unlikely to improve significantly within the CSTO in the near future. The CSTO will also remain a Russian instrument to protect Russian interests in the former Soviet republics. In addition, given the nature of its guiding document and the authoritarian nature of many of the participating regimes, it is easy to dismiss the CSTO as a club run by dictators, for dictators.

Concerning security in Central Asia for the foreseeable future, however, such a dismissal misses an important point. No matter what the rest of the world thinks

about the Russian claims to privileged influence in Central Asia, the CSTO, essentially Russia, will be at the centre of handling security challenges in the region. If the rest of the world wants to contribute to solving them, there are few alternatives to interacting with the CSTO. After more than a decade of military intervention in Afghanistan, many countries understandably have limited appetite for similar interventions far from home. Interaction with the CSTO could also be a way to contribute to building security in Central Asia and help develop the organization. This could in the long run also be advantageous for the CSTO, bringing in, for example, recent hard-won experience from Afghanistan.

The potential security challenges combined (such as ethnic tensions in the Ferghana Valley, interstate conflict between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan or Kyrgyzstan, intra-state tensions in all five countries, or challenges from Afghanistan) are so great that it is hard to see Russia and the CSTO being able to handle them, especially long-drawn-out conflicts or if two or more conflicts erupt simultaneously. The CORF and CSTO are like a readily available fire extinguisher for putting out a spark. But if that fails and a bigger fire starts, where would the fire brigade come from? Despite the CSTO's efforts, international resources may be needed. The implications of a scenario with a CSTO operation in parallel to a UN mission, such as the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) working in parallel in Afghanistan, could therefore be exploited. It is hence important to understand how the CSTO evolves. Obvious areas for interaction would be the seminars on peacekeeping, table-top exercises and in the long run exercises. Further study could possibly indicate other areas of interaction. The question is how much Russia is willing to allow outsiders to affect its coveted sphere of influence and how much the rest of the world actually cares to get involved. They might have to, since many factors may ignite conflict in Central Asia. 2014 is approaching much faster than the efforts of the CSTO countries will result in a robust joint capacity to handle jointly several or long-drawn-out conflicts.

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Interviews

The author interviewed some 45 experts and officials during visiting visits to Central Asia and Russia in 2012, including:

Moscow 6–8 February 2012
Defence journalists working for major Russian newspapers

Advisors to at the CSTO HQ

Officials at the Russian Foreign Ministry's CIS Department

Independent experts in academic institutions, think tanks and NGOs

Bishkek 7–10 March 2012
Senior officials at Kyrgyzstan's MoD and MFA

Former National Security Adviser in Kyrgyzstan

Officials at the OSCE and EU delegations

Representatives from the US Embassy

Dushanbe 10–14 March 2012
Officials at Tajikistan's MoD

An official in the administration of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan

Representatives from Russian and US embassies

Officials at the OSCE

Independent experts in academic institutions, think tanks and NGOs

Astana and Almaty 23–28 October 2012

Senior official of the ruling Nor Otan Party

Experts at the Institute for Strategic Research of the Kazakhstan Ministry of Defence

Diplomats in Astana

Senior official in the Emergencies Ministry

Officials from the UN

Experts from Kazakhstan's Institute for Strategic Studies (KISI)

Independent experts and journalists

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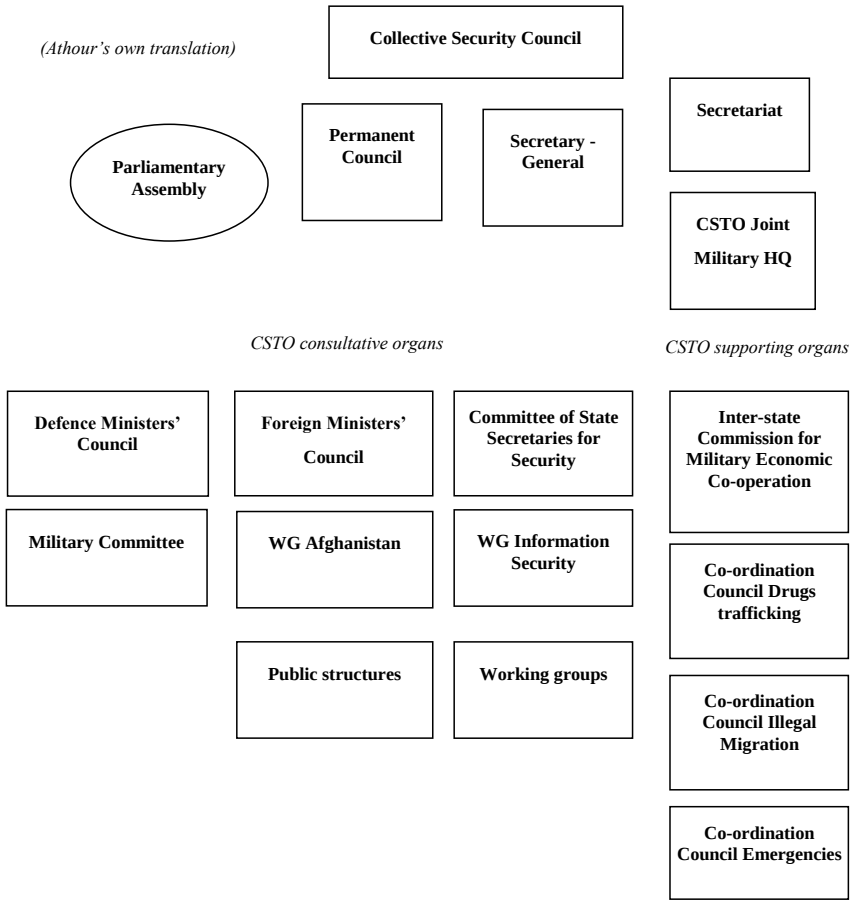
APPENDIX 1

The organization of the political-military decision-making bodies of the CSTO in February 2013

(Sorce: http://www.odkb-csto.org/structure/)


(Athour's own translation)
Collective Security Council
Parliamentary Assembly
Permanent Council
Secretary - General
Secretariat
CSTO Joint Military HQ
CSTO consultative organs
CSTO supporting organs
Defence Ministers' Council
Foreign Ministers' Council
Committee of State Secretaries for Security
Inter-state Commission for Military Economic Co-operation
Military Committee
WG Afghanistan
WG Information Security
Co-ordination Council Drugs trafficking
Public structures
Working groups
Co-ordination Council Illegal Migration
Co-ordination Council Emergencies

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High Ambitions, Harsh Realities

Gradually Building the CSTO's Capacity for Military Intervention in Crises

The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is an alliance between Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. It is slowly being developed to address other security issues besides collective defence. It remains an untested, ambitious security project in the making. The organization's intervention capacity essentially consists of Russia's military capacity and political will.

Whatever one thinks of this, there is reason for the outside world to engage carefully with the CSTO in order to increase their chances to contribute to the design and use of a future military crisis management capability to address security challenges that may arise in Central Asia and the Caucasus region.

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ISSN1650-1942

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