



ARMENIA – RUSSIA RELATIONS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE COLLECTIVE SECURITY TREATY ORGANIZATION

The Collective Security Treaty Organizations (CSTO) is a successor of the Collective Security Treaty (CST), which was signed on the 15th of May, 1992 by newly independent states such as Armenia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. Later in 1993, Belarus, Azerbaijan and Georgia joined the Treaty. As a result of gradual development in the framework of integration process, the CST was transformed into the CSTO in 2002. However, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan withdrew from the Treaty, and the organization was established by the six remaining member-states. In recent days, there are still same six members within the CSTO, but Afghanistan and Serbia joined as observer states.

The CSTO is the only intergovernmental military alliance on the post-Soviet space. All members of the CSTO find the collective security as the necessary tool to ensure peace and stability in the region. The bilateral cooperation with Armenia in the framework of the CSTO introduces Russia's membership as a considerable opportunity to maintain its influence in the South Caucasus. Armenia is the only country in the region which pursues pro-Russian foreign policy, while Georgia's foreign policy turned towards the West as a result of the Rose Revolution 2003 and the Georgia War 2008, and Azerbaijan is pursuing a multi-vector approach between Russia and the western countries.

Therefore, Russia perceives Armenia as a strategically important country in the region. For instance, Russia established its 102nd Military Base at Gyumri in Northern Armenia and 3624th Air Base in Erebuni Airport near Yerevan. Moreover, about 5,000

troops, air and missile defense systems of Russia are stationed in Armenia. On August 20, 2010 Russia's military presence in Armenia was extended till 2044 after signing a deal between the two countries.

Playing a dominant role in the CSTO, in recent days Russia's military cooperation with Armenia is significantly active. In September 2015, the military drills "Aragats 2015" of the Armenian – Russian combined forces were held at Alagyaz range. The aim of the military exercises was to coordinate joint actions and improve interaction between the Armenian and Russian units. Additionally, the exercise involved MiG – 29 aircrafts, Mi 8 helicopters, drones, tanks, air defense forces and rocket systems, artillery and other military equipment. On December 23, 2015, Russia and Armenia signed an agreement to form a Joint Air Defense System. Accordingly, Armenian air defenses will be strengthened and Russia will provide new air defense equipment, radios, radar systems and combat helicopters deployed to its territory. Moreover, in the beginning of 2016, Moscow granted Yerevan a \$200 million loan to purchase Russian weapons including Smerch (Tornado) 300 mm rockets with a firing range of 70-90 kilometers and Igla-S portable air defense missile systems, and modernize its armed forces.

The power asymmetry within the organization with Russia's military dominance represents the CSTO as a Russia-led organization. Therefore, the bilateral relationship between Armenia and Russia in the framework of the CSTO illustrates Russia as the main guarantor of security to Armenia. Indeed, challenging regional problems that stemmed from the conflict with

Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh enclave presents a serious threat to Armenia's security. Taking into account the Article 4 of the CSTO Treaty, which claims that in case of an act of aggression against a member-state, all the others member-states will provide necessary assistance including military one, Armenia relies on Russia's assistance in any possible threat from Azerbaijan.

However, during the latest escalation over Nagorno-Karabakh that took place on April 2, 2016, it can be argued that Russia preferred to use the position of a mediator in the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group rather than a CSTO strategic ally for now. Russia put a certain effort to bring Azerbaijan and Armenia together for discussions. As a result, conflicting sides agreed to enact an immediate ceasefire in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Nevertheless, Armenia was not satisfied by Russia's supply of arms to the conflicting side. For instance, over the past five years, Azerbaijan has bought arms from Russia, which worth about \$4 billion. Following this, arguably Moscow's military assistance to Baku can be seen as the decision based on economic consideration since arms export revenues are one of the main sources for Russia's economy.

To conclude, Armenia – Russia relations in the framework of the CSTO are mutually beneficial, however they pursue different objectives. While Armenia is interested to increase its defense capability, Russia's aim is to maintain its influence in the South Caucasus region. Nevertheless, Armenia considers that Russia's supply of weapons to Azerbaijan undermines the functioning of the CSTO.

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Politics, Foreign Affairs and Security

- During his official visit to Moscow, the President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, and the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, discussed prospects for bilateral cooperation. Following the discussions, five documents were signed, namely, an Agreement on cooperation in exporting military goods to third countries, a Cooperation Program between Russian and Uzbek governments in the cultural and humanitarian area for 2016-2018 and between the Foreign Ministries of two countries' for 2016-2017, a Memorandum on Cooperation in physical education and sports and an Agreement on scientific and academic cooperation.
- During his official visit to Astana, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia, Adel al-Jubeir, and the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, discussed bilateral relations including the economic, trade, financial, investment, petrochemical, cultural and humanitarian spheres. Following the talks, the Foreign Ministers of Saudi Arabia and Kazakhstan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on political consultations.
- During the 5th Moscow Security Conference, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Sergey Lavrov, and the Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Lamberto Zannier, exchanged views on the urgent issues of the current international agenda and discussed in detail the OSCE activities and the work of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, which controls the ceasefire implementation in the country.
- The Chief of Russia's General Staff Main Operations Department, Lieutenant-General Sergei Rudskoi, announced that a new motor rifle division in the Smolensk Region in western Russia, which comprised some 10,000 servicemen, was currently formed.
- During the 6th Session of Azerbaijan – Pakistan Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation, the Minister of Defense Industry of Azerbaijan, Yaver Jamalov, and the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, discussed

opportunities for Baku to import defense products and raw material from Pakistan.

Economy, Finance and Energy

- According to the Statistics Committee of the Ministry of National Economy of Kazakhstan, the price for natural gas which was transported via gas distribution networks in Kazakhstan increased on average by 16.7% or to 15.35 tenge per cubic meter in the period between March 2015-March 2016. However, during the same period, the prices for liquefied gas decreased by 1.6% or to 133.35 tenge per cubic meter.
- During the meeting between the Deputy Director General in the Directorate-General for Energy of the European Commission, Christopher Jones, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, Rashid Meredov, the parties expressed their readiness to further consolidate the efforts for cooperation in the energy sphere.
- During the meeting of the Joint Intergovernmental Working Group on Trade and Economic Cooperation held in Berlin, high-ranking representatives of Turkmenistan and Germany discussed future directions of the two countries' cooperation in the spheres of economy, energy, finance, health, agriculture and environmental protection, infrastructure and tourism.
- Nakamichi Corp Bhd and Aktau Transit LLP (AT) inked a MoU on a proposed collaboration to jointly develop AT onshore oilfields located in the Mangistau province, 90 km to North-West from Aktau. The oilfields have a production capacity of 700 barrels of crude oil per day, with reserves of 25 million barrels of crude oil.
- During the Business Forum organized by the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States in Bishkek, more than 20 leading companies from Azerbaijan, Turkey and Kazakhstan which are working in the spheres of energy, mining, tourism, agriculture, food and light industry discussed the opportunities to improve multilateral cooperation. At the Business Forum Kyrgyz side was represented by 50 domestic enterprises.
- The First Deputy Minister of Investment and Development of Ka-

zakhstan, Zhenis Kasymbek, stated that in 2016 about \$1 billion was allocated for road construction and repair. As of the end of 2015, 84% of national highways and 65% of regional roads are in good or satisfactory condition. It was also noted that the total length of the highways, the regional roads network and local roads network is 96,500 km, 23,700 km and 72,800 km respectively.

- The Minister of Agriculture of Kazakhstan, Assylzhan Mamyrbekov, reported that the production in the agricultural industry has increased by 41% over the past decade as total exports grew by 59% and amounted to more than \$2 billion. During the same period, the volume of export of Kazakhstan to the Eurasian Economic Union countries reached \$379 million. It was also noted that the fixed capital investment in agriculture increased to \$0.5 billion or by 3.4 times in 2015. According to the Agrobusiness-2020 Program, the financial support of the agro-industrial complex is to increase from \$0.2 billion in 2011 to \$0.5 billion in 2016.

Society and Culture

- During the 7th Global Forum of the United Nations (UN) Alliance of Civilizations held in Baku, the participants adopted Baku Declaration, which emphasized the necessity to elaborate mutual understanding between people in the conditions of a polarizing world.
- On the sidelines of the meeting of the General Assembly of the Islamic Organization for Food Security in Astana, the Minister of Agriculture of Kazakhstan, Assylzhan Mamyrbekov and the President of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), Ahmad Mohamed Ali Al Madani, signed an agreement on allocation of \$300 million by the IDB for the implementation of 2 water projects in Kazakhstan.
- According to the Director General of the Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS) Secretariat, Yerzhan Zhalmukhanov, Kazakhstan has allocated a grant of \$749,000 for the initial activities of the IOFS.
- According to the Roscosmos, the Soyuz-2.1a carrier rocket with three space satellites - Lomonosov, Aist-2D, and SamSat-218 was successfully launched from Russia's new Far Eastern spaceport Vostochny. It was the first launch from the Russian new space center.