

REGIONAL INSTITUTIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE INTELLIGENCE FIELD

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Abstract: *Faced with new challenges of the 21st century, multi-disciplinary scientific research will carry on focusing on issues regarding security, since we are witnessing the development of an interdependent world which calls for a certain pattern of approaching and developing the security paradigm within a strict co-ordination with the present and future processes and phenomena at international level. Our attention is focused on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, an outstanding pattern in the multilateral regional co-operation, in the intelligence field, as well, whose states members have thoroughly proven a political will and an active involvement in building up a stable and flexible security environment within the Euro-Asian area.*

Key words: regional institutional co-operation, intelligence

The current article will briefly tackle the concrete way in which the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), in the context of different threats to the address of regional stability and security, has imposed a normative frame in the field of fighting against terrorism, separatism and extremism (SCO Convention, 2001) and has made operational the decision [1] of chiefs of law enforcing forces and of intelligence agencies from all the Organization's member states, by creating the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure. At the same time, we view as a success the fact, that since 2009, the SCO has managed to extend regional co-operation in the field of intelligence by signing three documents with the Islamic Republic of Afganistan, that refer to common actions in counteracting terrorism, illegal narcotics traffic and organized crime.

1. THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION: GENERAL PRESENTATION

In the context of an international environment of security that is dynamic and fluid, the mutations and tendencies that are beginning to shape at the start of the XXI century almost come as no surprise at all. The interactions and/or power oppositions between actors of the international stage generate great geopolitical changes, thus determining diverse evolutions and political-strategic polarities in the new world order. Along these lines we can talk about the inception and evolution of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, international intergovernmental organization that is made up of states that are different one from the other by unequal profile concerning policy, economy, military, social and religious, the regime in power being more or less democratic and also by their involvement in the competition for hegemony. Member states such as Iran, Mongolia, India and Pakistan and dialogue members such as Sri Lanka and Belarus have joined them.

One of the main goals in creating the SCO is to handle the threats that member states of the organization are facing, including terrorism, extremism and separatism, but also ensuring the stability and regional security in Asia and not aggression against a certain state, alliance of coalition. Without under or overestimating the dimension of security that is characteristic to this type of multilateral regional cooperation, the creation of the Organization in 2001 is in favor of settling the new system of international security.

The institutionalizing of this organization seems to be still fragile, where as the structures, the institutions, functioning procedures and the decision making process are forming as they go, especially due to internal policy that promotes the lack of transparency, determining some analysts to characterize it as an obscure group. This description is not backed-up by arguments, considering that we are talking about a space in which we find a fair share of the world's resources and depict a substantial growth in the interests of its strong states. Evermore, in a short time frame, we are witnessing a multiplying of cooperation sectors within the SCO, unseen in other security groups until now, although there are sufficient premises of appearance and settling of various instability

sources in the region, such as regime changes, poor governing, weak legislation etc.

2. DIMENSIONS OF SCO CO-OPERATION IN REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PLAN

According to SCO documents issued during 2001-2009 we may identify [2] five types of regional and international cooperation, with the Organization as the leading actor and initiator of openness to discussion:

- **Bilateral cooperation among SCO member states.** Both Russia and China, as axial states of the Organization, develop bilateral relations with each of the states that make up SCO, in various fields (from economy to health);
- **Cooperation between SCO and observer states** (Iran, Mongolia, India and Pakistan) and between SCO and **dialogue partners** [3]. Following the consequences of the global financial crisis, the organization decided a greater economic and investment involvement of observer states and of dialogue partners (Republic of Belarus and the Socialist Democratic Republic of Sri Lanka [4]);
- **International cooperation with other non-state actors** [5], such as United Nations Organization (UNO), Community of Independent States (CIS), Eurasian Economic Community (EURASEC), Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Tehran Organization for Economic Cooperation [6] (TOEC), United Nation Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UN ESCAP), but also with other international and regional organizations with the purpose of creating a solid network for partnership. Actually, for Russia, the development of bilateral and multilateral cooperation relations with the CIS member states is a priority in its foreign policy. Russia will try to develop the potential for integration and sub-regional and regional coordination in the SCI member countries, as well as within CSTO and EEC, that tend to balance the situation in the regions neighboring SCI member states.
- **SCO – Afghanistan cooperation** [7]. The Contact Group SCO-Afghanistan created in November 2005 focuses on the problems in Afghanistan, since it is from here that the main threat to regional stability starts, respectively drug trafficking which in its turn finances other types of organized crime and international terrorism. In this respect, at the end of March 2009, SCO and Collective Security Cooperation Treaty Organization (CSTO) propose an anti-drug, antiterrorist and financial security belt in the region.
- **Russia – US cooperation**, supported by the SCO states in counter nuclear terrorism efforts. The two countries signed the Treaty on Establishing a Nuclear Free Zone in Central Asia) [8]. Moreover, SCO member states supported the beginning of negotiations on signing the Treaty on the Reduction of Offensive Strategic Arms [9]. We need to bear in mind the following aspect: although they courted the Organization in 2006, the same moment when Iran was becoming SCO observer, the United States was refused access to SCO.

3. THE SHANGHAI CONVENTION ON COMBATING TERRORISM, SEPARATISM AND EXTREMISM (2001)

On 15 June 2001, the presidents of Kazakhstan, China, Kirgizstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan also signed The Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism, document which highlighted in its 21 articles the principles that represent the basis of the SCO even more than the Declaration of creation of this international organism. The document also stated concrete actions and measures – judicial, technical and operational – that were taken for the purpose of fighting back the three real threats for peace and international security, the basic human rights and freedoms, the territorial integrity and political and social stability.

An interesting detail is the fact that the Convention, as well as the Declaration of creation of the SCO, were designed at the other end of the world and three months before the disaster of September 11 at New York and Washington, somehow grimly foretelling and marking the passing to another level of perception on new asymmetrical threats concerning the international security environment. Cynically said, while the Orient theorized, the West was facing the hard situation of having to deal with the practical application. However, it must be said that the youthful organization publicly condemned, three days after these “barbaric events” [10], and was joining the American people, who was heavily tested by the deaths of thousands of innocent victims. The document clearly defined the three terms – terrorism, extremism and separatism, considering that such actions, in a situation in which they would have manifested themselves in the region, will not be justified and will not have diminishing circumstances, and will therefore be judged and incriminated harshly. Thus, by terms defined by the Convention, at article 1, is stated:

- *terrorism* means: a) any act recognized as an offence in one of the treaties listed in the Annex to this Convention and as defined in this Treaty; b) any other act intended to cause death or serious bodily injury to a civilian, or any other person not taking an active part in the hostilities in a situation of armed conflict or to cause major damage to any material facility, as well as to organize, plan, aid and abet such act, when the purpose of such act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate the population, violate public security or to compel public authorities or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act, and prosecuted in accordance with the national laws of the Parties. As a parenthesis, the definition given by the signing parties to this concept would have been more complete if they had posted online the Addendum to this Convention, as stated at sub article a). This is still an aspect that makes researching difficult, represented by lack of transparency concerning the attitude of the members of the Organization towards disseminating official information on security related issues.
- *separatism* means any action that brings harm to territorial integrity, including the taking of any part of territory or the disintegration of the member state, committed in a violent manner; also, the planning, mantling or provoking such an action;
- *extremism* is implied by any action whose goal is to confiscate power by use of violence, or with violent change of the regime of a state that had been constitutionally chosen beforehand; also, organizations or armed illegal groups that bring harm to public security.

For the prevention, identification and deletion of the previous stated acts, the signing parties will cooperate according to their own national laws (art. 2, pct. 1) and to the international one concerning extradition or legal counseling in cases of organized cross-border crime. They will cooperate by means of “competent central institutions” [11], named by each party at a national level on the basis of: intelligence sharing; measures development and implementation regarding the identification, prevention and deletion of terrorist, segregating and extremists

acts; the implementation of measures concerning the identification, prevention and deletion of financing, weapon and ammunition supplying or any other forms of assistance for the person and/or the organization whose purpose is to commit terrorist, separatism and extremist acts; implementation of identification measures and forbidding training activities of individuals or organizations whose purpose is to commit activities that are terrorist, separatism or extremist in nature; experience, expertise, training and teaching exchanges of specialists involved in the prevention and counteraction of any terrorist, separatism and extremist threats [12].

As we see, the mutual exchange of information represents the fundament of an efficient cooperation regarding the initiation of actions pointed against terrorist, separatism and extremist actions whose targets are heads of state, ministers, and personnel of diplomatic missions, of consular services and of international organizations, other political, sports or official figures as well as against actions that wish to target the manufacturing, obtaining, depositing, transfer, transport, illegal sell of toxic products, toxic battle substances, explosives, radioactive materials, weapons and nuclear ammunitions [13]. Of course, for this mutual exchange of information to be efficient, it is made taking into account documents with a high degree of confidentiality (art. 8) [14] and the assurance with logistic and human resources – forces specially trained to react to targeted threats (art. 11).

4. REGIONAL ANTI-TERRORISM STRUCTURE (RATS, 2002)

In June 2002, in the Council of Heads of State from Sankt Petersburg, the accord concerning the establishment of the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure was signed. This new structure was also included as a component of SCO in the Charta of the Organization and was signed with this occasion. Also, at Sankt Petersburg, was signed the deal concerning the cooperation of states in counteracting the traffic of drugs, psychotropic substances and its derivatives, and after the summit there was the official ceremony of the creation of the Executive Committee of RATS. The nucleus of this structure was established by one the additional conventions signed at 15 June 2001 at Shanghai, in the moment of the creation of the SCO.

RATS is headquartered in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The RATS Council started its activity in October 2003, the Executive Committee began its works on the 1st of January 2004, and RATS began to function in June 2004, having as its mission to coordinate member states of the SCO in the purpose of counterbalancing the three “evil” forces: terrorism, separatism and extremism [15].

According to protocol, the director of the Executive Committee of the RATS is designated by the Council of the Heads of State, its first director being Viaceslav Temirovici Kasimov (Uzbekistan) ranked as a general-major, after 30 years of activity as a KGB [16] officer and previously as an officer in the ranks of security structures of Uzbekistan.

In January 2007 – December 2009, Marzakan Subanov (Kirgizstan) [17] was director, who, after graduating Frunze Academy, was commander in different theaters of operations, including Afghanistan. Following, he was minister of defense and chief of the External Intelligence Service of the Kirgizstan Republic. From January 2010 until December 2012, this function will be filled by Djenisbek Djumanbekov (Kazakhstan), former chief of the intelligence service who occupied high functions in the Kirgizstan Embassies in the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan.

From 2006 the first data base of RATS is functional and it contains terrorists and terrorist organizations. In this data base there is also the name and personal data of all

persons that are tracked internationally for acts of terrorism, separatism and extremism, as well as a list of organizations

whose activities are forbidden on the territory of the SCO member states.

According to SCO Convention regarding terrorism, separatism and extremism, RATS may engage in training activities of special anti-terrorist forces which they hold. Similar to the joint SCO – Peace Mission exercise, RATS places its military exercise “Norak-Antiterror” [18]. In 2009, this happened in Tajikistan, 35 km south of its capital city of Dushanbe, attracting in its coordination high dignitaries of the Tajiki Council of National Security, of ministers of defense, internal affairs, emergency situations etc. As observers, there were called representatives of OSCE, UN, officers of diplomatic missions of the US, Pakistan, India, Iran and Russia.

Another resemblance to the joint military exercise ‘Peace Mission’, is given by the place in which this action is placed, which gives signals to the persons engaged in organizations of terrorist activities. In this case, the targeted group was the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, preoccupied to occupy the Fergana Valley and to declare this territory an Islamic caliphate. Ultimately, special anti-terrorist forces benefited from technical abilities and state of the art military equipment: aircraft, helicopters, shielded vehicles etc. RATS office from Tashkent is made up of 30 persons, 7 from Russia, 7 from China, 6 from Kazakhstan, 5 from Uzbekistan, 3 from Kirgizstan and 2 from Tajikistan.

Like any self-respecting organization of such sort, the SCO has access to a budget [19] that is comprised of financial contributions of its members, being proportional to the economic power of each one in particular; Russia and China – each with 24% from its total budget; Kazakhstan – 21%; Uzbekistan – 15%; Kirgizstan – 10% și Tajikistan – 5%. If in 2004 [20], this budget reached a mere 3.5 million \$, from which 2.16 million \$ were dedicated to the Secretary of the SCO, and 1.34 million \$ to the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure, in 2007 [21], this allocation reached a mere 4 million \$. We see however that this budget is insignificant compared to the real financial possibilities that China and Russia are capable of, as main initiators of programs in this organization. It may be that these sums may sustain only the administrative functions from the SCO, and not at all the whole wide range of military, economic, investment activities.

5. SCO – AFGANISTAN CO-OPERATION

As we have mentioned in the beginning of the article, the year of 2009 is the debut of a series of measures that the SCO has taken in regards to the situation in Afghanistan, co-signing a series of documents that refer to common actions for counteracting terrorism, illegal narcotics traffic and organized crime. The most important measures taken are:

a) **Fight against illicit drug trafficking:** in inter-agency information exchange; in conducting joint operations; in controlling trafficking in drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors; in training of personnel of anti-drug agencies; in drug abuse prevention activities, including demand reduction measures, as well as in developing and introducing new modes of treatment, social and medical rehabilitation of drug addicts.

b) **Fight against terrorism:** border control; checking individuals suspected of being involved in terrorist activities; conducting joint operations to counter terrorist threats; establishing effective mechanisms to prevent and suppress terrorist activities; making joint efforts to obtain information regarding terrorist organizations threatening the security of SCO Member States and Afghanistan; setting up an expert consultation mechanism on the basis of the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure and Afghan relevant authorities; exchanging information on terrorist activities and organizations and experience in fighting against them; exchanging lists of terrorist suspects between SCO Member States and Afghanistan, on a mutual basis; providing assistance in apprehension and transfer of terrorists; tracing and cutting off the sources and channels of funding terrorist organizations; inviting relevant Afghan bodies to take part in joint law enforcement exercises carried out by the Member States as well as in workshops, courses and other SCO events related to combating terrorism.

c) **Fight against organized crime:** advance cooperation with relevant Afghan authorities to fight illicit trafficking in weapons, munitions and explosives and other forms of transnational organized crime; improve the exchange of operational information and experience related to combating organized crime; improve the exchange of operational information and experience related to combating organized crime; implement, by all available means, various programs of further and advanced training of Afghan law enforcement officers. What is to be understood from this is the validation of a promotion concept of regional security by a multilateral approach, opposed to bilateral alliances that we have got used to.

6. CONCLUSIONS

As an alliance open to the multilateral co-operation and having string principles such as partnership, mutual trust, respect and the equality of the cultural diversity, SCO has become, in my opinion, an organization which keeps on developing in real time, displaying dynamism and force in outlining and developing its projects. SCO considers all levels of co-operation of a very high importance, thus becoming a coveted role-model for other security organizations of the same type.

Until now, in the field of intelligence, the Organization has managed to impose at a regional level, the following measures: the growth of a tight co-operation between intelligence services and defence structures of a member states; the activation of meetings mechanism between secretaries of Security Councils; joint planning and the management of antiterrorist actions; the harmonization of national legislation to security problems; the establishment of an efficient intelligence mechanism that will act against new challenges and threats.

Also in a short period of time, SCO, as an international security organization has been capable to create its own intelligence organism – Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure, whose leadership, data bases, exercises and military applications prove the fact that the intelligence activity, as well as policies and promoted strategies up until now by the organization have been relying on some fundamental principles of modern intelligence: knowledge, prevention and cooperation, therefore, an intelligence of integrated security.

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“Mircea cel Batran” Naval Academy Scientific Bulletin, Volume XIV – 2011 – Issue 1
Published by “Mircea cel Batran” Naval Academy Press, Constanta, Romania

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- [13] *Ibidem*, art. 7.
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