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SCO and NATO: comparative evaluation of the activity in the foreign research

Processes of regional cooperation in non-Western world become a separate area of research in international relations. In this regard, SCO is an interesting object of analysis. All members of this organization are facing common traditional and new security threats. Need to confront to these threats creates a natural basis for cooperation. At the same time, researchers abroad significantly differ in their assessment of results of SCO practical activity. In Western circles, Shanghai Cooperation Organization is often compared with NATO is considered as anti NATO. From this perspective, the article analyzes the views of Western researchers and political representatives about SCO, it is proved that SCO is not anti NATO and its activities are not directed against the United States.

Key words: SCO, NATO, Security, Central Asia, International Relations, Foreign Policy, International Organizations.

On problems of relations with NATO of SCO adjoins problematic relations with the U.S. Many experts suggest that, in spite of official statements of the organization that SCO is not directed against anyone whatsoever, the true purpose of SCO — containment of U.S. hegemony in the world and in the region.

In its present configuration, SCO is a typical defensive-oriented organization primarily addressing regional problems. According to its charter organization does not seek any aggressive or expansionist aims. On the contrary, one of the main objectives of the organization — maintaining internal stability, which threat is constituted of terrorism, separatism and extremism.

According to the Russian researcher A. Baranov, confrontation between SCO and NATO would be a clear mistake. SCO does not become a «NATO of the East», because a significant increase of SCO member states cause substantial harm to the Organization: in comparison with European countries Asian countries have too different political culture and history. Today it is clear that SCO member countries are not ready to create a unified military organization with a common command [1]. However, SCO can play a significant role in maintaining peace and stability in one of the most volatile regions of the world. Cooperation of biggest countries in Asia to combat terrorism, in order to avoid regional conflicts — not only possible, but also necessary.

Till «reset» in the West prevailed interpretations about SCO as a counterweight to NATO. However for this purpose, there were reasons. In summer 2005, followed Astana Declaration by the results of the SCO summit, which caused a strong reaction in the west. In declaration were call to coalition members to set a date for withdrawing its bases in Central Asia. United States, represented by the Minister of Defense Donald Rumsfeld lashed out at the russian foreign policy doctrine. According to Rumsfeld, Russia, China and North Korea prevent cooperation in security sphere between Asian countries: «They can get in the way unless become more open». Criticizing foreign policy of Russia and China, United States argued by «Russian attempts to restrict the freedom of neighboring countries, lack of transparency in China's military spending as well as the threat of North Korea's nuclear activities» [2].

Response to the SCO declaration adopted in Astana in 2005 was the adoption U.S. Congress resolution from July 19, 2005, expressing concern to SCO statement, which was regarded as «a blatant attempt of China and Russia to squeeze out of the United States from this region» [3].

In 2006, Iran was adopted as an observer of SCO, which is also considerably affected the perception of the organization in the west, where in a press SCO became known as «anti-NATO». For example, one of the conservative American experts responded to the said event following opinion: «...» anti-terrorist «SCO appropriated observer status to Iran, the main state sponsor of terrorism in the world, which annually hosts the regular meetings of almost all terrorist groups on our planet» [4]. In addition, according to Rumsfeld, Tehran cooperation with the SCO, putting it mildly, is not logical. Speaking at a conference on security in Singa-

pore, Pentagon chief called Iran a major terrorist state and said, that he considers as very strange Iranian involvement in the work of SCO — organization fighting against terrorism [5].

During the Administration of Bush Jr. all countries of the SCO leaders in varying degrees evoked disapproval from Washington. It was believed that every year SCO becomes increasingly anti-American. Particularly U.S. was irritated by invitation of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on the anniversary SCO summit in Shanghai in 2006.

«It is unclear why the organization, declaring rejection of terrorism, calls on his meeting a lead sponsor of terror in the world» [5] — then said Rumsfeld. Then «overseas partners» was assured that «Iranian problem» will not be considered at the summit. And Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov promised, that Iranian nuclear issue would not be discussed at the summit. Moreover, SCO does not intend to expand.

At the same time, when the idea of Iran concerning the anti-imperialist goals of SCO is wrong. Russia itself is an observer-member of NATO, China and Central Asian countries have good trade relations with America, Europe. In this regard, we can say that SCO countries are not going to endanger security of their economic development at the cost of protecting Iran.

Taking into account propensity of the SCO member states to the West, their policy can not be prone to the East, to Iran within a unified and perspective policy, that ensures the long-term interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Therefore, we can assume that Iran join the SCO will be possible, when the problems between Iran and the West will be solved; these problems can not be solved by SCO member states in favor of Iran, and commitment to the East will be considered involuntary. In any case, it seems that Iran's entry depends not only on SCO, but also depends on the solution of nuclear program problem and other issues, i.e. Iran's membership in the SCO from the perspective the international community is associated with each member of the SCO. Consequently, the waste of time and assets for adoption of Iran is likely in the near future will remain inconclusive.

It should be noted that on the eve of the summit well-known American political scientist Ariel Cohen in his article in the Washington Post called the summit «meeting of the Bear and Dragon». He writes that «SCO has become a leading economic and military alliance in Eurasia», I advise Washington «to find a way to start a dialogue with the SCO». Otherwise, White House may suffer from «another humiliating defeat from Moscow or Beijing» [6].

The sharp increase and expansion of the SCO, which happened at the summit in Ufa (Russia) 2015 July 1, did not go unnoticed in the West. Moreover, influential Western publishers have sounded the alarm on the strengthening of a multipolar world and, consequently, reduce the hegemony of the West. Plans for joining India and Pakistan to SCO show a multipolar world, which is caused a concern in the West, it said in an article entitled «The new eastern bloc: China, Russia and India are joining forces» devoted to the SCO summit in Ufa and published in the electronic version of the US weekly magazine Newsweek.

The magazine, commenting on the expansion plans of the SCO, said that «an international organization all but unknown in the West is set to announce that its membership will soon include countries representing half the world's population» [7]. Weekly magazine also denotes that «If the hopes of its leading backers — particularly Russia — are realised, the 15th annual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in the Russian city of Ufa will mark the moment when this previously obscure body starts to demand much closer attention from the West» [7].

The publisher notes «The idea behind these invitations is to extend the SCO's reach south across the Asian landmass, bolstering its claim that it is a counterbalance to the Western-dominated international institutions that have held sway since the end of the Second World War» [7]. There is something to discuss about the interaction of SCO and NATO. For today, the vast region of Central Asia is located in the center of Alliance attention, and NATO's policy in the region has growing trend towards cooperation with the region. At the Istanbul summit in 2004, NATO countries have identified Central Asian region as the area of strategic importance to interests of the alliance and ensuring stability in Eurasia [8].

NATO penetration to Central Asia occurred in 2001 under the auspices of the antiterrorist operation in Afghanistan. After the final stage of military action against the Taliban, NATO leaders decided to take responsibility for maintaining peace and stability in Afghanistan, thus, receiving the possibility for continued presence in the region.

It is obvious, that over the next years the strategic importance of Central Asia for NATO will increase [9]. Although, possessing problems for NATO, this region also opens up opportunities for enhanced coopera-

tion, that can help NATO to counteract security threats of the XXI century in the ongoing transformation process.

Until recently, the nature of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was mainly political and economic. However, existing threats signal the need for closer security cooperation in Central Asia. However, SCO lacks of essential elements, which NATO has: integrated military-political structure with permanent operational headquarters, rapid reaction forces and continuing political debate. Another significant difference of NATO from SCO is that NATO is mainly oriented to the external security risks, while SCO attention is concentrated mainly on the territory of its member states. It was mentioned earlier, that in Western estimates SCO is seen as emerging mechanism, forcing the United States and its allies from Central Asia, and as consequence, the threat to Western security interests. SCO project «Energy Club», the idea of which belongs to the President of the Russian Federation VV Putin, in a similar manner perceived as a threat to the energy security of the West. The Alliance has a cooperative relationship with all members of SCO, except China. Since 1990 Brussels develops bilateral relations with five Central Asian countries in the framework of the «Partnership for Peace», and also has a special relationship with Russia, which since 2002 are implemented under the NATO-Russia Council. However, China often finds its suspicion to the shares of the alliance in Asia.

China realizes emerging threats in Asia, may consider cooperation of SCO with NATO as the best way to solve many regional problems. In November 2005, SCO established a contact group with Afghanistan. At the SCO summit in Bishkek in 2007, was expressed a concern about the destabilization of the situation in Afghanistan, which also affects the Central Asia. It turns out that Central Asia is the only region in the world, where the armed forces of Russia, China and NATO acts regularly in close proximity to each other. Nevertheless, NATO has no formal institutional ties with the SCO, and with China. After the cooling-off period in respect of damage mistakenly hit the Chinese embassy in Belgrade by NATO warplanes during the Kosovo campaign in 1999, Chinese ambassador to Belgium met in October 2002 with NATO Secretary General Robertson to discuss the question about establishing a close relations. Official PRC officials have expressed particular interest in the bilateral dialogue on the events of strategic importance, and security threats in Central Asia. And in July 2004, the Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer said that NATO wants to cooperate with China in several areas of common concern: fight against terrorism, counter-proliferation of WMD and «maintaining regional stability», particularly in Afghanistan and Iraq [9]. This manifestation of mutual interest has not yet led to concrete progress. Unlike Japan, China does not have even «dialogue partnership» with NATO. In response to the establishment of official relations with China, NATO members could insist on building a partnership with the SCO. Instead, the Alliance could determine SCO as «a global partner» in order to emphasize the value of cooperation in the field of general security.

Suggested relations would entail cooperation between NATO and SCO concerted in certain functional areas. Topics that might arouse the interest of SCO in working with NATO governments may include regional development in the socio-economic field, energy exploitation, fight against terrorism, drug trafficking intersection, people and weapons.

Thus, in April 2008, SCO Secretary-General Bolat Nurgaliev said in an interview, that the potential areas of interaction between the SCO and NATO can be the fight against terrorism, drug trafficking and weapons, and there are no any principal obstacles for the establishment of such cooperation with NATO in the future [10].

For cooperation between two organizations has performed President of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf, who believes that SCO could participate in strengthening security in Afghanistan in conjunction with NATO, and if SCO will contribute to the solution of the Afghan problem, it will mean that there is no confrontation of NATO with this organization [11].

In order to explore issues of potential interaction between the SCO with U.S. and NATO in June 2008, was initiated an international conference. It was organized by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (Germany), Alexander Knyazev Public Foundation (Kyrgyzstan), Ahmad Shah Massoud Foundation (Afghanistan). The conference was attended by experts and representatives of political and scientific circles of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Iran, Italy, UK and Germany. Was agreed the final document which among others stated that:

– Absence of cooperation between the SCO and NATO in Afghanistan is not in the interests of member states of both organizations, as well as other states in the region and the world. There is a real possibility of using SCO potential, as well as some of the NATO member states, ready for dialogue and mediation in order to establish close interaction.

- The conference participants recognize the fact that the international coalition and NATO contribute to military deterrent of «Taliban» and development of Afghanistan.
- SCO, as well as all Afghanistan's neighbors, is not willing to defeat in Afghanistan, but have the right to have full information and insights about the effectiveness of the intersection of drug trafficking and international terrorism.
- The intention to keep U.S. military bases in Afghanistan and Central Asian countries should be clearly motivated and linked to the interests of the countries themselves.
- U.S. Strategic Partnership with Afghanistan will find support from neighbors only if it is not directed against them. If Afghanistan becomes a launching pad for attacks on Iran, Iran will be able to respond in the strongest terms, turning the Central Asian region into the arena of war against the United States and the international coalition. It disturbs the SCO - Afghanistan has to decide issues of relations with neighbors, including Iran itself.
- On Pakistan direction, SCO has significant opportunities: it could contribute to better relations and understanding between Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- For NATO, it would be appropriate to begin consultations on the future of Afghanistan with participation of all neighbors, including Iran, Russia, China, India and the Gulf countries.
- SCO and NATO as a whole have a common understanding of tasks for integration of Afghanistan to Central Asia and international community, so that this entire region stopped being hearth of international terrorism.

It is clear that Afghanistan stands alongside among multiple factors threatening sustainable development in the Central Asian region. The current military and political situation in Afghanistan, U.S. and NATO military contingent buildup in this country, say that the conflict is still far from a final resolution and continues to cause tension, representing a real threat to stability not only in Central Asia but around the world community.

In this situation, as an objective solution of this problem may be unification of the efforts of states in order to expand military-political cooperation, which can be established in the framework of cooperation between the SCO and NATO. In this regard, the invitation for U.S. representative to participate in the tenth SCO summit, should be considered as an invitation to NATO more open dialogue on Central Asia.

Also it should be noted, that during a senate hearings in December 15, 2009 many of senators have expressed concerns about the development of relations between SCO and NATO. These relationships are considered as promising areas of USA, Russia and China interaction in Central Asia [12].

At present, in Russian political circles are considered three perspective models of cooperation: full Russian membership in NATO, alliance with western alliance on the basis of a bilateral agreement on cooperation, and establishment of coordinating council. This Council will be called to coordinate the activities of NATO and SCO, correspondingly will bring triangle US-Russia-China relationships to a new stage of development.

Should also pay attention to variant of «China-NATO» council creation on the model of the council, «NATO-Russia» and taking measures, that will develop closer cooperation with the SCO on the basis of these councils, proposed by employee Clingendael Institute of International Relations Marcel de Haas [13].

At the same time, recent events show that the United States has progressively changed their attitude toward the SCO. In 2007, only six months later, after the Munich speech of V.V. Putin, at the peak of US-Russian relations cooling, U.S. Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia Evan Feigenbaum, making a report at the Nixon Center, stated that United States believes that the SCO will not play any antagonistic role toward the United States, moreover — America needs SCO help on security issues in Central Asian region [14]. Among the problems, impeding full cooperation of U.S. with SCO, E.A. Feygenbaum allocated organizational weakness of SCO, lack of ability to define its foreign policy agenda.

However, after 3 years, permanent rapporteur of congressional hearings on Central Asian topics Stephen Blank, on the basis of the Tashkent summit of SCO notes, that the organization «has passed the age test», it is possible and necessary agree: Beyond the ongoing interest in full membership, perhaps the most striking evidence of the SCO's maturation is the fact that the United States is publicly showing interest for the first time in what the group is up to. Uzbekistan is assisting US participation in the 2010 summit. For years, Washington kept its distance from the SCO, but it will have representatives in Tashkent for this year's summit. It's willingness to engage the organization is certainly connected to Afghan stabilization efforts, but it is also a reflection of a stronger US-Uzbek strategic relationship. It is too soon to say whether the United

States will formally recognize the SCO as a major security provider in Central Asia, but there is no question that the group led by Moscow and Beijing is coming of age [15].

U.S. realize the expediency of cooperation with the SCO, at least based on the fact that such cooperation will help U.S. to forestall Russian attempts use SCO as a tool for anti-Western policies and prevent SCO from becoming paramilitary organization. There is a mutual interest between United States and SCO: U.S. needs energy supplies from Central Asia, and Central Asian countries need a reliable investment. Another area of mutual interest is Afghanistan, with which SCO formed a contact group. Both the U.S. and SCO seek to early establishment of peace in Afghanistan, and effect of their activities may increase due to the cooperation SCO and NATO.

Such cooperation will not simultaneously eliminate major differences between the U.S. and SCO about issues such as democratization and human rights, but will include already much more than the development of joint declarations. This interaction may provide mutually beneficial joint projects on global security. NATO and the SCO can work on neutralization of landmines in Afghanistan, carry out joint preparation law enforcement agencies and conduct operations against drug trafficking.

Quite possibly, it's time to move to more integrated forms of collective security and military cooperation with all countries concerned to solve the Afghan problem. And in this context, relationships between SCO and NATO look quite perspective.

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ШЫҰ және НАТО: қызметінің шетелдік зерттеулердегі салыстырмалы талдауы

Қазіргі уақытта аймақтық қауіпсіздік үрдістері халықаралық қатынастар шеңберіндегі жеке зерттеу бағыттарының бірі болып отыр. Осы тұрғыдан алғанда ШЫҰ талдаудың өзекті объектіне айналуда. ШЫҰ-ның барлық мүше-мемлекеттері қауіпсіздіктің дәстүрлі және жаңа қауіп-қатерлерімен бетпе-бет келіп отыр. Мұндай қауіп-қатерлерге қарсы тұру қажеттілігі ынтымақтастықтың шынайы негізін қалап берді. Сонымен бірге ШЫҰ-ның тәжірибелік қызмет нәтижесіне қатысты шетел зерттеушілерінің әр түрлі көзқарастары қалыптасқан. Батыста ШЫҰ-ны НАТО-мен салыстырып, анти НАТО ретінде қарастырып келді. Осыған орай мақалада ШЫҰ туралы батыс зерттеушілері мен саяси өкілдерінің көзқарастарына талдау жасалды.

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ШОС и НАТО: сравнительная оценка деятельности в зарубежных исследованиях

Процессы регионального сотрудничества в незападном мире становятся отдельным направлением исследований в рамках международных отношений. В этом плане ШОС представляет собой интересный объект анализа. Все члены этой организации сталкиваются с общими традиционными и новыми угрозами безопасности. Необходимость противодействия этим угрозам создает естественную основу для сотрудничества. В то же время зарубежные исследователи существенно расходятся в оценках результатов практической деятельности ШОС. В западных кругах Шанхайскую организацию сотрудничества часто сравнивают с НАТО, рассматривают как антиНАТО. С этой точки зрения в статье анализируются мнения западных исследователей и политических представителей о ШОС.

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