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COLLECTIVE SECURITY WITH(OUT) COLLECTIVE ACTION? A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE COLLECTIVE SECURITY TREATY ORGANIZATION (IN)ACTION UPON REQUESTS FOR INTERVENTION BY ITS MEMBER STATES

MA Thesis

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AUTHORSHIP DECLARATION

I have prepared this thesis independently. All the views of other authors, as well as data from literary sources and elsewhere, have been cited.

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Abstract

The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is an Eurasian military alliance created in 2002. On one hand the Organization was developed with the aim to counter threats present in the region; on the other, its members continue to struggle with a plethora of state, transnational and domestic menaces. Thus, in four instances its members requested military assistance: Kyrgyzstan in 2010, Tajikistan in 2021, Kazakhstan and Armenia in 2022. However, only in the case of Kazakhstan CSTO granted its request and intervened. As a result, one might wonder why the organization is unable to provide effective security to its members besides their own requests of help. Hence, this thesis attempts to find explanations for ineffectiveness in alliances built on collective defense mechanisms. With this aim, this qualitative work makes a comparative analysis of the cases, using the Most Similar System Designs (MSSD) in order to trace a pattern which explains the observed divergent outcomes. Consequently, interviews with seven experts were made in order to gather data for the analysis. The MSSD analysis spotted four relevant factors, with two of them being determinant for the outcomes. Nonetheless, an alternative analysis, unable to be done with the same design, had other significant findings. By utilizing the rationalist approach of International Relations theory in order to interpret the results, the research showed two complementary rather than differing frameworks: the first which focused on the common consideration of threat by the alliance as well as the Russian interest in the matter, and the second concentrated on the other member states' interests and in the context they operate. This thesis concludes that the best explanation consists of binding those two approaches in order to provide an answer for the research question.

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Abbreviations

ACC – Arab Cooperation Council

ATOP – Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provision

CDM – Council of Defence Ministers

CFAM – Council of Foreign Affairs Ministers

CIS – Community of Independent States

CSC – Collective Security Council

CSCE – Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe

CSSC – Committee of Secretaries of Security Councils

CST – Collective Security Treaty

CSTO – Collective Security Treaty Organization

EU – European Union

IGO – International Governmental Organization

IMU – Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

IO – International Organization

IR – International Relations

MSSD – Most Similar Systems Design

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

OAU – Organization of the African Unity

OSCE – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

SEATO – Southeast Asia Treaty Organization

UN – Organization of the United Nations

UNODC – United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

UNSC – United Nations Security Council

US – United States of America

USSR – Union of the Socialist Soviet Republics

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Studying abroad was, for a long time, my dream. As I graduated with a bachelor's degree in International Relations, I felt my knowledge was not even close enough to try to make sense of the world. After all, if I wanted to understand the world, I needed to leave home and see it for myself. Thus, I put together a desire and a need and decided to pursue a master's degree outside my home country, Brazil. Although I was accepted for several programmes, I had both the concrete reasons and the feeling the University of Tartu was the right choice. After more than two years, I can safely say I could not have made a better decision. In Tartu, I have not only learned a lot, but also enjoyed the best time of my life with amazing people. For that, I will also carry the University and Estonia with me, wherever I go.

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Introduction

Since immemorial times, the use of alliances has been a constant in the world arena. From ancient polities to modern states, the use of these security agreements have been fundamental in order to enhance security and avoid destruction in the hands of opponents. As global society developed, so did alliances: from bilateral agreements between political entities, they were frequently transformed into multilateral organizations, with headquarters, secretariat, regular meetings, joint exercises, military forces, etc. (Evans and Newnham, 1998, pp. 15, 270). It is no exaggeration to say many countries nowadays depend almost entirely on alliances in order to ensure their continuing existence.

These alliances were formed with the aim of containing threats. Consequently, they are subject to several features such as its international and regional environment, interest of the states involved, their capabilities, power asymmetries between its members, internal dynamics, among others which determine its scope, goals, persistence, etc (Evans and Newnham, 1998, pp. 15-16). Thus, when the Soviet Union collapsed and several nations – most with no tradition in statehood – appeared on the map on a short timespan, they were faced with a plethora of internal and external issues they had never faced as being part of a stable superpower. Their new security needs required cooperation in order to achieve the best possible outcome for all (Davidzon, 2022, pp. 74-76).

With this scenario, the Collective Security Treaty (CST) was created in 1992 in order to guarantee these security needs were met. Its main task was to counterbalance external aggression, but its members expanded its scope given the new challenges in the field of security, such as terrorism, transnational crime, internal unrest, etc. (Weitz, 2018, p. xi). As a result, on one hand, some members left the alliance, disillusioned with its lack of success in dealing with their main menaces. On the other hand, in order to consolidate its expanded range and activities, it developed into the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in 2002, maintaining the existing and adding new features to its predecessor (Davidzon, 2022, pp. 77-79).

Its new framework, however, was unable to fully succeed in responding to the evermore complex regional security issues presented to the alliance. The Organization directly failed to answer their members' own requests of assistance. While CSTO denied the first two demands – Kyrgyzstan, in 2010, and Tajikistan, in 2021 – it successfully promptly aided Kazakhstan, in 2022, when internal protests challenged the government. If this appeared to be a new age of a more active role of the alliance, almost all hopes were crushed

when a new request, made by Armenia, a few months later, was rejected during its war with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Considering these outcomes, one can claim CSTO is an inefficient Organization. Thus, the obvious question arises: why? If the alliance has proven itself able to work – as Kazakhstan's case shows – what can explain its overall low performance? In other terms, what explains ineffectiveness in alliances built on collective defense mechanisms? This thesis aims to answer this research question by analyzing these four cases – which account for all instances in which its member states requested military intervention – in order to find a pattern of (in)action by CSTO.

This topic is relevant for two main reasons. First, CSTO is one of the most powerful military alliances of the world, having Russia as its most military capable member, which is joined by other five post-Soviet states: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Consequently, it is a noteworthy actor in Eurasian security architecture. Second, there is relatively very little literature regarding CSTO, with most of the international security-related publications only briefly mentioning its existence. Thus, this research can potentially open new paths for future studies on the alliance, as well as new possible generalizations explaining its persistence albeit its results.

Hence, this qualitative thesis utilizes process-tracing, with interviews with policy experts and political analysts as it means of gathering data for achieving the outlined goal. It then proceeds to an analysis using Most Similar Systems Designs (MSSD) as a method to establish a pattern of factors explaining the outcomes of intervention – or its lack of. This methodology was chosen due its suitability to the challenge of researching these four cases, within this specific organization, considering the lack of extensive literature and existing official documents, which could be used as data sources.

Therefore, this work is divided into four chapters. The first chapter outlines a theoretical and conceptual background which is useful to understand both CSTO as an alliance and in the interpretation of the results. Second chapter contains the methodology of the study, further detailing and justifying the research outline seen in the last paragraph. This section is followed by an overview of the security in Eurasia as well as CSTO's history and activities. Finally, the last chapter presents the cases, the results of research, followed by its analysis and discussion.

1. Fundamental concepts and theories

This chapter constitutes the first substantive part of the thesis. Its purpose is to introduce the main concepts and theories this thesis will deal with. More specifically, it will define the most relevant concepts utilized to understand CSTO as a modern military alliance organization, as well as presenting the theoretical approach which is going to be the underlying basis of the analytical part of this work. Accordingly, it is divided in three parts: the initial one will address the concepts of Alliances, International Organizations, Collective Security and Collective Defense, as well as Regional Security; the second is going to describe both Functionalist and Distributive branches of Rationalist theory of IR, as well as to address the problem of international cooperation. Finally, the last one comprises a small summary of the section.

1.1 Conceptual framework

1.1.1 Alliances

If one wants to understand how alliances work, then it is necessary first to understand what they are. Hence, alliances are tools created in order to advance states' interests in the field of security. In other words: they increase their security against external threats – and possibly internal as well (Duffield, 2008, p. 292). Thus, alliances can be defined as "formal agreement between two or more actors – usually states – to collaborate on perceived mutual security issues" (Evans and Newnham, 1998, p. 15). They are established usually by a treaty, which will contain the conditions under which the use of force will be available, as well as the mutual obligations in case of violence (Evans and Newnham, 1998, p. 15).

Those security arrangements are extremely common in international politics. According to the Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provision (ATOP) Project, from 1815 to 2003 there have been 648 alliances, most of them encompassing European powers. In addition, they were categorized as offensive, defensive, non-agression pacts, neutrality agreements and consultation frameworks (Duffield, 2008, p. 292). Since so many types of collective security arrangements might blur the distinction of those to alliances, Duffield (2008, p. 293) argues the difference stands on the former enhancing "the security of their

participants *vis-a-vis* each other" while the latter does the same although "*vis-a-vis* external parties". We'll cover the first concept again in more detail in the next pages.

This conceptualization, however, does not explain why alliances last. Logically, once the threat has been dealt or no longer exists, the alliance should disband (Duffield, 2008, p. 295). However, this is not the case with many of them. One famous example is NATO, which was created in order to protect Western European countries against possible Soviet aggression, and has not only outlasted its opponent, but has consistently expanded since its foundation (Duffield, 2008, pp. 300-301). Hence, in order to explain why alliances persist – or disappear – Duffield (2008, p. 295) has approached the question using alliance formation theories. Consequently, he has grouped several explanations into two main determinants: external and internal.

The first explanation on the external dimension for alliance formation is balance of power. States will balance more powerful states by forming alliances in order to contain the threat, following Kenneth Waltz's theory. Conversely, if the powerful state declines or ceases to exist, the alliance tends to disintegrate as well. Second, closely associated with the first, is the balance of threat. It considers that directly threatened states, such as the ones geographically close to more powerful ones, or states concerned with strong offensive capabilities by a third party, will seek alliances in order to counter the threat. Following the same logic, a reduction in the threat – for example, in its military capability – can also mean the end of the alliance. Finally, alliances can also be a tool for certain states to control and restrain its other members. Whereas external balancing still glues the arrangement together, this explanation is particularly useful when looking into reasons for extinguishing alliances. If the restrained state becomes too powerful or threatening for the balance, then the alliance will disappear (Duffield, 2008, pp. 296-297).

By its turn, the internal determinant is based on the political, ideological and/or cultural similarity of the member-states of the alliance. Thus, authoritarian regimes, for example, tend to ally themselves with other authoritarian regimes, democracies with democracies, etc. This happens because those similar-minded states tend to have common interests and interpretation of threats, making it therefore easier to ally themselves. Furthermore, weak regimes benefit from alliances with similar states by enhancing its domestic legitimacy by being part of a broader international movement. Alternatively, regime change can provoke the dismantlement of the arrangement, and tensions might arise even with similar nations if the national interests are dictated by a single authoritarian regime leadership. As a result, some support the argument that alliances between democratic states

are stronger due to their more consistent bonds due to their internal stable public preferences and political leadership. Finally, strong domestic rule of law and institutions result in more commitment to alliances (Duffield, 2008, pp. 297-298).

Although alliance formation theories help to explain why alliances last even after the threat is gone, it is not the only approach to explain this phenomenon. Duffield (2008, p. 298) argues there are two other relevant sets of factors which can provide further explanatory power to the debate: institutionalization and socialization. Those are factors closely associated with the theories explaining the formation of International Organizations (IOs). This intersection is particularly interesting since many alliances – and definitely the most powerful ones such as NATO and CSTO – have, since their foundation as alliance treaties, become increasingly institutionalized at the point they now are, in fact, IOs. They have a common security framework, fixed headquarters, staff, budget, regular meetings, joint military exercises, weapons procurement, and other features which compose military IOs (Evans and Newnham, 1998, pp. 15,270). Hence, we will now focus our attention on the concept of International Organization.

1.1.2 International Organizations

International Organizations can be defined as "formal institutional structures transcending national boundaries which are created by multilateral agreement between states" (Evans and Newnham, 1998, p. 270). Two institutional characteristics distinguish IOs from other international institutions, such as international regimes, for example: centralization – an organizational structure managing activities – and independence – a degree of authority and autonomy to act (Abbot and Snydal, 1998, pp. 4-5). As alliances, IOs are created by treaties, which establish their competencies, organization, framework of cooperation, etc. They are tools to promote cooperation between states in several areas, such as economy, security, social matters, diplomacy, etc. International Organizations are divided into two types: Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) and non-governmental Organizations. Examples of the first include the United Nations, the League of Nations, among others, while the latter include Amnesty International, Red Cross, etc. (Evans and Newnham, 1998, p. 270). For the purposes of this work, we are going to focus on the former type.

Neoliberal theory of IR focuses on IGOs as important actors in the international system, making it a very useful approach to look at those institutions. It presupposes that

states are rational and utility-maximizing entities that make decisions based on cost-benefit calculations. This means, then, that creating and being part of IGOs is in the best interest of states – otherwise, these formal institutions would not be such a common trend in global politics (Sterling-Folker, 2013, p. 115). Thus, the obvious question arises: what are the benefits for states creating and participating in IGOs?

According to Abbot and Snydal (1998, p. 10), centralization and independence enhance the efficiency of cooperation. More specifically, the former supports interactions between states' by providing stable negotiations settings, giving political context to issues, promoting issue-linkages (as trade of goods in WTO, for example) and embodying "the precise terms of state interaction" (Abbot and Snydal, 1998, p. 10), such as formalizing power imbalances in votings, or, conversely, protecting rights of small states for example. Moreover, it enables the elaboration of procedures for the establishment of norms, which would be otherwise difficult to replicate in decentralized cooperation patterns (Abbot and Snydal, 1998, p. 15). Finally, centralization allows support for decentralized cooperation conferences, to discuss specific matters to advance collective action (Abbot and Snydal, 1998, p. 10).

By its turn, independence supplies proactiveness by laying the ground for both initiation and support of interactions. In other terms, IGOs not only facilitate cooperation by serving as ground for meetings and talks, but also actively pushes forward for issue resolution – sometimes even being a party to negotiations. This happens due to the fact IGOs are seen as neutral – or at least more legitimate – compared to powerful states, which could play this role, but would be positively seen as such compared to the organization itself (Abbot and Snydal, 1998, p. 17).

Since they are neutral, they can provide information and accountability from other states' activities, thus generating certainty and a more suitable environment for cooperation and diminishing disputes. Furthermore, formal institutions enable "laundering" – activities generally not accepted through common states' interactions, but which are permitted if they happen within the framework of an IGO. One example is UN peacekeeping: while a powerful state unilaterally sending forces for conflict resolution purposes could be interpreted otherwise by many states, under the UN banner prevents both the state being evolved in a regional conflict and others from using the conflict for their own advantage (Abbot and Snydal, 1998, pp. 17-21).

Abbot and Snydal (1998, pp. 24-27) additionally point out two important benefits provided by the independent character of IGOs: community representation and enforcement

management. The first refers to the IGOs' ability "to act as a representative or embodiment of a community of state", in which "states work out and express their common interests and values." (p. 24) In this context, fundamentally, IGOs would serve as a tool for developing and promoting its members' norms and aspirations. The UN Security Council (UNSC), for example, is responsible for maintaining international peace and security, acting through the will of the community of states, being empowered to enforce measures if it considers necessary (Abbot and Snydal, 1998, p. 24).

Directly linked to the last example is the enforcement management feature. Enforcement and managerial skills are instruments of guaranteeing the members commitments. Without those, states are more likely to cheat on their commitments. While managing compliance might be sufficient when the incentives to defect are low, enforcement can be the only option otherwise. Managing can include "dispute resolution and other third-party procedures, including fact finding, good offices, interpretation of international agreements, and mediation", etc. (Abbot and Snydal, 1998, p. 26). On enforcement, options range from forums, reporting from states and withholding benefits to retaliation, such as economic sanctions, and, in extreme circumstances, use of force (Abbot and Snydal, 1998, p. 27).

Whereas those are the main benefits for states creating and maintaining IGOs, as we have seen, Duffield (2008, pp. 298-300) has outlined two main features for alliances' persistence apart from alliance formation theory: institutionalization and socialization. The first is closely connected to Abbot and Snydal's (1998, p. 10, 15) centralization aspect: by institutionalizing alliances, states facilitate cooperation, expand the organization's capabilities and scope, and, as a consequence, by making it a more efficient institution, it increases its operational time (Duffield, 2008, pp. 298-299). The latter is linked with Abbot and Snydal's (1998, p. 16, 24-26) concept of independence, and particularly, the aspect of community representation. It holds that socialization between states' in IGOs activities, such as regular meetings, leads to common worldviews, and consequently form a political community in which states would see themselves as belonging to it. Thus, alliances would last longer due to the formation of a community of shared interests and worldview (Duffield, 2008, pp. 299-300).

Therefore, IGOs are a common phenomena in international politics because it benefits states in several ways. Fundamentally, they facilitate and improve efficiency of cooperation on a myriad of issues (Abbot and Snydal, 1998, p. 10). On the specific case of institutionalized alliances, besides the previously mentioned benefits of alliances such as

enhancing security by balancing and increasing capabilities, it can be summarized alliance organizations provide a stable platform for interactions and exchange of information, forum for solution of common security issues (both internal and external), and, in the case of the most advanced in terms of institutionalization, the development of similar worldviews and norms, etc. (Abbot and Snydal, 1998).

Finally, the creation of organizations aimed for maintaining international peace and security and the institutionalization of alliances created the normative grounds for the development of the concepts of Collective Security and Collective Defense, which are going to be further explored in the next section. Those ideas permeate the functioning of the main security organizations until this day, being, thus, fundamental concepts for understanding the work of those institutions, and, consequently, of international relations.

1.1.3 Collective Security and Collective Defense

Collective Security stands for the notion that security is better understood as a responsibility of all states - or at least those which are members of a collective security organization. Thus, the international community must mobilize in order to assist an attacked country and maintain adherence to international norms and rules - such as non-aggression, for example (Garcia, 2013, p. 19). In other terms, as Evans and Newnham (1998, p. 77) argue, the concept underlies the notion that the security dilemma can not be overcomed by self-help and balance of power, but rather through “the institution of communal commitments whereby each state undertakes to join in common actions against those which threaten the territorial integrity or political independence of others.” Hence, deterrence and punishment with the goal of re-establish order are tools within collective security (Evans and Newnham, 1998, p. 78).

Morgenthau (2003, p. 784) summarized the Collective Security concept with the motto “one for all and all for one”. Furthermore, the scholar dictated three conditions for the proper functioning of the system. First, the participating states must possess and be willing to use an overwhelming force so that any potential aggressor would be unwilling to risk confrontation in order to avert the order the collective security system withholds. Second, these nations must share a common definition of security and interests; Third, these states must voluntarily subordinate their own interests to the common good in terms of common defense defined by all member nations.

The term was first implemented in the creation of the League of Nations (1919-1946), which is widely considered the first Collective Security Organization in history. Its goal was to safeguard international peace and security after the end of the First World War (Garcia, 2013, p. 18). However, it failed to pursue its goal since several countries and territories were invaded in the interwar period and due to the persistence of individual interests of states compared to common actions and goals in the conduct of their foreign policies within the framework of collective security (Evans and Newnham, 1998, p. 78). The League was then replaced by the current UN, which still preserves the concept as its core existential purpose, and has the Security Council as its main action body (Garcia, 2013, pp. 27-31).

Besides the UN, the beginning of the Cold War Era (1945-1989) also gave birth to other security international organizations. One, specifically, inherited Morgenthau's (2003, p. 784) motto of collective security in its founding Charter's Article 5: "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them [...] shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that [...] will assist the Party or Parties so attacked" (NATO, 2023). Although not explicitly stated, NATO was founded with the purpose of containing potential Soviet aggression to its members through deterrence (Duffield, 2008, p. 300). Thus, by identifying a common enemy and forging a coalition of nations to balance it, a collective defense organization can be formed. This is precisely the main distinction of the concepts of Collective Security and Collective Defense, according to Rynning (2013, p. 2):

> "Collective security is not directed against anyone; it is instead committed to good governance and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. It calls on all nations to respond to acts of aggression but it does not single out potential causes of such aggression. Collective security, therefore, has no geography. Collective defense is inversely directed against specific opponents. The purpose is to provide a military capacity for defense, and this capacity is inherently linked to geography."

Collective Security and Collective Defense are not only pivotal concepts for current international relations especially due to their importance as foundational principles in the creation of most security IGOs, but also basis for different types of orders. In other terms: if states in a given context have good awareness of each other's intentions and work for the common good, an international order based on Collective Security may arise; conversely, if tension and competition are running high, states will seek alliances and a system based on Collective Defense tends to form (Rynning, 2013, p. 2).

Finally, two more features regarding those concepts are worth noting: first, in practice, those concepts can be overlapped in the normative framework of a security IGO. NATO, for example, is an alliance and a self-declared collective defence organization (NATO, 2024). Nevertheless, as we have seen, its Charter contains elements of Collective Security as defined by Morgenthau (2003, p. 784). Hence, certain organizations can have aspects of one or both concepts. Second, geography is a fundamental factor for Collective Security, as mentioned by Rynning's (2013, p. 2) direct quote. This regional feature is also important for the creation of several IGOs with security components. Therefore, I will introduce in the next topic the concept of Regional Security.

1.1.4 Regional Security

As mentioned earlier, the new international Cold War order resulted in the emergence of several IGOs. Those organizations were mostly regional formal institutions – IGOs with membership limited to one or more geographical regions. The UN Charter, influenced by the understanding of the importance of regional institutions to its objective, recognized their role within the global security framework designed by the organization. Those institutions were responses to the new challenges brought by the new global context, marked by bipolar rivalry, decolonization and creation of new states – many of them weak ones. Particularly, those IGOs had the role of providing Regional Security (Fawcett, 2008, pp. 313-314). This concept refers to the promotion of "peaceful and predictable relations among its members" and "to build security and community through cooperation (Adler and Barnett, 1998 in Fawcett, 2008, p. 311). Accordingly, a regional security organization has the provision of security "through the coordination of defence, security and foreign policy" as its main goal (Fawcett, 2008, p. 311).

Hence, several organizations in different parts of the globe were formed during this period. Some of them are the Organization of the African Unity (OAU), the Arab League, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC), NATO, Warsaw Pact, among others. While some promoted cooperation on security issues and peaceful resolution, such as the OAU and the Arab League for example, others were arrangements formed to contain other states. This is the case with SEATO, for example, which was an alliance to contain Vietnam; likewise, the ACC against Iraq; the Warsaw Pact contained the United States (US) and its

allies, etc. (Fawcett, 2008, p. 314). Thus, the international order directly influenced the scope and intent of the provision of regional security by those organizations.

With the end of bipolar competition, the prospects of international security changed. On the regional domain, it became more accessible and vulnerable to states. Consequently, the end of the Cold War prompted a new wave of creation of regional IGOs – and the development of existing ones. One example is the development of the European Union (EU), which not only boosted economic and political integration, but also created common security and defence policies. Moreover, those regional formal institutions had an increased role in this new Era, given the overextended capacities of the UN on fighting the new challenges. As a result, the then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali called for a Chapter VIII revival (Fawcett, 2008, pp. 316-317).

Regional organizations have since, then, assumed an important role in Regional Security. One of the main features of this protagonist are peacekeeping missions and interventions on member states. From observer to re-establishment of democracy/order and even nation-building missions, regional IGOs have been making an impact around the globe. Nonetheless, several organizations have been criticized by their more active role in regional security. First, many missions were laid out without UNSC authorization. Second, many claim those IGOs are partial and illegitimate to carry out those operations. Third, powerful member states could be using the organization's flags in order to pursue their own gains, such as Russia in CSTO, for example (Fawcett, 2008, pp. 319-320).

Finally, terrorism has been a growing concern for states, and tools for security cooperation, such as information sharing, joint military exercises, capacity-building and other cooperation frameworks have been laid out in recent years to contain this threat. In addition, regional IGOs have also made normative developments in order to counter terrorism, such as NATO’s Concept for Defence Against Terrorism, for example. However, there remain some difficulties, especially regarding a common approach to the problem. Smaller member states might regard the emphasis on terrorism as a distraction from more important problems, while this could demonstrate the influence on more powerful actors in these regional organizations (Fawcett, 2008, p. 321).

1.2 Functional and Distributive Rationalist theories

The theories of International Relations (IR) can further help us to give context for the work of CSTO. This field of study was marked by several grand debates between its main theoretical approaches. The first debate was between liberalists and realists. The second revolved around methodological approaches, dividing those who supported a more systematic approach to the discipline – the behaviorists – and the ones who still favored a more traditional approach. The third debate revolved around the developments of the liberal and neorealist theories, respectively the neoliberal and neorealist theories (the so-called "neo-neo" debate). Finally, the final debate divided all existing paradigms into two groups: rationalism and reflectivism (Kurki and Wight, 2013, p. 16).

There are several ways of dividing those two opposing groups. One of them is the difference between explaining and understanding. Rationalists seek to explain phenomena using scientific methods in order to identify general causes, while reflectivists focus their understanding on the analysis of social meanings, such as beliefs and languages, which are then seen as the most important ontological aspects. For rationalists, those features cannot be incorporated into a scientific framework, since it requires an empirical approach, and thus meanings, beliefs and ideas cannot be validated under such a mechanism (Kurki and Wight, 2013, p. 20).

Robert Keohane (1988, p. 386), responsible for officializing the Fourth Debate, illustrates how rationalism approaches international institutions. The author argues that since actors are rational and work on a cost-benefit decision-making, international institutions serve to facilitate cooperation and reduce costs of bargaining. In other words, "institutions reduce certain forms of uncertainty and alter transaction costs". Furthermore, international institutions reward those who follow the rules and punish those who do not. The rules are a reflection of the power asymmetry of its members. Finally, the author concludes that the development of institutions, as well as its persistence, is simply the consequence of those calculations made by states: if transaction costs are negligible, institutions would not need to exist; if they are too high, then its creation becomes impossible (Keohane, 1988, p. 386).

In this work, the rationalist approach was chosen due its suitability to answer the research question for two main reasons. First, it is focused, through neoliberalism, on the study of IGOs as well as in the dynamics of cooperation and its problems. This implies a more rational, and consequently, a less socially-oriented view of CSTO, an organization

which, as we are going to see, its members are more concerned about concrete goals than in potential shared norms and values – which are relatively lacking in CSTO compared to other organizations of the same type, such as NATO, for example. This definitely does not mean CSTO or its members do not necessarily hold any norms or values: I only argue it is not a main feature for the framework of this analysis.

Second, my aim is to explain and provide generalizations. As seen in the last Grand Debate, this is exactly what the rationalist approach is looking for. As Kurki and Wight (2013, p. 20) argue, rationalists seek to identify general causes for a phenomena, while reflectivists will look deep into social meanings and beliefs, for example. Again, this is not to neglect the latter approach. It only means it is not the most suitable approach for this empirical study, having in mind the object of study, research question and available methods. Thus, rationalism will provide more clear answers for the purposes of this thesis.

Although Keohane (1988, p. 386) explicits how international institutions are interpreted by the rationalist approach, it should be noted rationalism is not a unified pattern. Rather, rationalist theories are formed under a single theoretical underlying basis, as shown previously. Moreover, they are further diversified when regarding the study of IGOs, which is the focus of this work. Thus, Voeten (2019) developed a typology of rationalist theories regarding the institutional design of institutions, with the goal of answering why they work the way they do and why they are (or not) efficient. He then classified four types: Rational-functionalist, Distributive-rationalist, World Polity theories and Historical Institutionalism.

The first emphasizes the institutional design as an optimal response to the problem the IGO seeks to solve; the second see IGOs as a product of powerful states interests; the third sees the design as a result of cultural, political and social environment the IGO operates; and finally, Historical Institutionalism focus on past institutionalization and interdependence to explain efficiency of current institutions. Some theories might be part of more than one class, and some even might be in the boundary of one type. Furthermore, in order to fully understand the design and efficiency of a specific institution, more than one group of theories is needed (Voeten, 2019, p. 149). For the purposes of this thesis, which is focused on the CSTO's case, we will focus on the first and second type of approach: the functionalist and distributive.

To begin with, these theories follow two important dimensions. First, the incorporation of dynamics of international institutions. While some theories suppose the institutional design is dictated by a dynamic process of creation of identities, actors and

interests, both functionalist and distributive approaches consider “institutions as efforts to induce equilibrium behavior.”, emphasizing on the bargain which founded the arrangement (Voeten, 2019, p. 148). The second dimension is based on the common agency-structure problem of IR. Functionalism considers the design as a response to the political and strategic environment the IGO is inserted. By its turn, the Distributive theories focus on the agent, which influences the design according to its “incentives, interests, values, initiatives, and power” (Voeten, 2019, p. 148).

Hence, Functionalism assumes a game-theory background, in which institutionalization would serve as a means to guarantee better informational basis and enforcement. Moreover, since institutions are created in order to solve cooperation problems seeking an optimal outcome, the design variation can be understood by its underlying cooperation problem it aims to resolve. The approach was further developed to include some more aspects, which consider that the design might not be the most efficient, contradicting its initial assumption of institutional optimality (Voeten, 2019, p. 150).

First, institutions assist not only in international cooperation issues, but also in domestic ones. For example, economic integration projects can help democracies to manage public support and opposition. Thus, domestic politics are a possible explanation of suboptimal institutional efficiency. Second, incorporation of sovereignty-costs. In other words: states pay in terms of autonomy by delegating authority to institutions. Accordingly, states weigh those costs with the benefits when acting within IGOs. It is also worth to note IGOs have agendas of their own, which is important when calculating those costs. Third,, variation of preferences and capabilities of states were also added, since power considerations are usually excluded from functionalist analysis (Voeten, 2019, pp. 150-151).

Although those recent developments help to further provide explanation and generalization within the functionalist approach, there are still some limitations. The main critique concerning functionalism is the lack of consideration of a distributive power and political aspects, which are being finally considered by the most recent theories as we have seen in the last point. In addition, the functionalist approach is particularly useful to understand efficient IGOs, but rarely used to understand suboptimal institutions, relying mostly on domestic politics as the main cause for this result. Lastly, functionalism assumes institutions arise from common strategic problems, disconsidering other aims which can, for example, explain persistence of IGOs (Voeten, 2019, pp. 151-152).

Consequently, as Voeten (2019) argues, a better explanation would need more than a single approach. This is the reason why Distributive theories are important: combined with

functionalism, the latter works best in aspects not totally covered by the former. Therefore, rationalist distributive theorists ask themselves: who benefits from the institutional rules and what are the means to achieve their goals? Scholars under this approach examine the influence of powerful states over the institutional design of organizations. They consider each actor will pursue its own interests and influence the institutional design in order to achieve positive results. Hence, institution design is not seen as an effort of states' interactions whose purpose is to achieve an efficient common result, but rather a product of powerful states which structure institutions in their favor – often leading to an inefficient outcome. At the same time, those institutions, designed under strong influence of the more powerful states, would safeguard the distribution of power. In other words, institutions are "shaped by and shape power politics" (Voeten, 2019, p. 152).

As with functionalism, distributive theories also have their problems. One of them is that the focus on the divergent interests of actors with different capabilities results in a lack of generalization (Voeten, 2019, p. 154). Again, the other theory (in this case, the functionalist), is able to counterbalance the problem since it possesses the ability to produce generalizations (Voeten, 2019, p. 149). Therefore, Moe (1990, p. 213 in Voeten, 2019, p. 152) summarizes the main differences:

> "Political institutions serve two very different purposes. On the one hand, they help mitigate collective-action problems, particularly the commitment and enforcement problems so debilitating to political exchange, and thus allow the various actors in politics to cooperate in the realization of gains from trade. On the other hand, political institutions are also weapons of coercion and redistribution. They are the structural means by which political winners pursue their own interests, often at the great expense of political losers. If we are to understand where political institutions come from and why they take the specific forms they do, we have to pay serious attention to both sides of their theoretical story."

One central feature of distributive rationalism is bargaining power. If a state has more options outside the cooperation framework to achieve an outcome, it can use the potential of unilateral action to shape the design and rules of an institution (Voeten, 2019, p. 153). Furthermore, bargaining power is directly related to the states' power – which in turn translates to more influence over norms, rules and procedures of the organization, affecting its efficiency as we have seen. Apart from bargaining, neoliberals have also identified two

other aspects which directly affect the institutional design and efficiency of organizations: defection and autonomy. By their turn, those are part of the broader problem of cooperation, a major theme when dealing with inefficient IGOs (Sterling-Folker, 2013, pp. 122-125).

1.3 The problem of cooperation

Even though IGOs are created to promote and facilitate international cooperation, this is not always a reality. As we have seen, its members can sometimes fail to comply with its commitments and rules, thus preventing a positive outcome from cooperation. Hence, this subchapter is intended to outline two other cooperation features present in the work of IGOs which are explored by neoliberals – defection and autonomy. Moreover, it will further investigate a game theory-based model of cooperation patterns from Davidzon (2022, pp. 29-32), who precisely aims to explain CSTO's behaviour.

1.3.1 Defection and Autonomy

Defection happens when states fail to comply with their commitments. This is a problem not only for the implementation of actions by an IGO, but also discourages states from entering into cooperation agreements. Moreover, fears of free-riding are an additional concern for actors who have to deal with defection by others. Power considerations on the part of the member states have strong influence on who defects or free-rides, as well as who will face the defectors (Sterling-Folker, 2013, pp. 122-123). Thus, there are two aspects which are important when pursuing a solution for this problem: compliance and enforcement: "Compliance involves the extent to which states can be induced or encouraged to abide by the international agreements to which they are parties. Enforcement involves the extent to which states can be forced into compliance and possibly punished for their failure to do so" (Sterling-Folker, 2013, p. 123).

Compliance can be achieved by monitoring state behavior and highlighting areas of most likely defection. This will raise awareness among potential defectors, who know they will face international and maybe even domestic pressure to comply with the agreement, consequently discouraging defection. In other words: collecting and sharing information on member states behaviour is key. However, only monitoring and sharing information might not be enough to fully prevent defection. Thus, compliance combined with more active

measures, such as reduced implementation costs and the threat of sanctions, can be more effective than sole compliance measures. Nevertheless, sanctions only work if all relevant members adhere to it, and the process of convincing states in pushing sanctions forward is known as "coercitive cooperation" (Martin, 1992 in Sterling-Folker, 2013, pp. 123-124).

Autonomy, by its turn, refers to the independence of IGOs to carry out its agenda (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998 in Sterling-Folker, 2013, p. 125) and actions (Joachim et al. 2008, in Sterling-Folker, 2013, p. 125). As we have seen in previous topics, IGOs are created by states to facilitate cooperation, and as a consequence, have authority delegated by its members in order to comply with its functions (Abbot and Snydal, 1998, p. 24). Considering this, then the question arises: if IGOs are created by states' interests, is it possible to separate those interests from the attributes of those organizations? One way of looking at the problem is to analyze the implementation of tasks assigned to IGOs by states. Organizations do not simply execute assignments – their staff must interpret them and build them into procedures and doctrines, which can then be used to carry out daily activities (Sterling-Folker, 2013, p. 125).

The debate on IGOs' autonomy has led to the neoliberal issue of principal-agent theory, which discusses the role of the principals – states – over the agents – IGOs. Particularly, it focuses on how the principals delegate tasks and authority to these organizations, which in turn become representatives of those states in a given area of cooperation. While this delegation of tasks serves the interests of the member states, it also enhances the IGOs ability to work independently and seek their own agendas. As a result, when divergence of interests between the principals and agents arise, the former developed tools in order to control the agents' influence and autonomy. Finally, this generates a paradox: while the delegation of tasks has evolved with the aim of more effectively promoting states' interests, this also has enhanced institutional autonomy (Sterling-Folker, 2013, p. 125).

1.3.2 Patterns of Cooperation

According to Davidzon (2022, pp. 29-32), there are four game-theory patterns which can be used to explain (non)cooperation in CSTO: Collaboration, Coordination, Suasion and Assurance. The first consists in a situation in which the member states defect in order to obtain immediate gains, such as pursuing their own goals. The defector tends to form bilateral agreements which do not reflect their allies' security needs, thus jeopardizing long-term

cooperation. The causes of the defectors can be attributed to interdependence, which then need to be incorporated into the multilateral framework in order to solve the issue and cover the other alliance members, while those which lack high levels of interdependence have incentives to freeride – as long as the other continues to cooperate. An additional form of defection can be joining an IGO with incompatible aims with the alliance. Finally, in order to prevent defection, the alliance needs a mechanism that promotes long-term gains of cooperation or counter-incentives, such as withdrawal of military support or elimination of the benefits of military-economic cooperation (Davidzon, 2022, pp. 29-30).

Coordination refers to the opposite situation: all members are willing to cooperate and have no incentives to defect. The cooperation problem regards the disagreement of strategies to pursue between its members, such a strategy of collective defense. One example was NATO's debate on whether or not to push its forward presence for the Baltic States and Poland in the aftermath of Russia's annexation of Crimea. In other terms, all member states sought to cooperate, but disagreed on its method. In the end, the alliance decided to extend its forward presence in the edges of NATO's territory (Davidzon, 2022, pp. 30-31).

The third pattern, Suasion, involves the creation of the alliance by a hegemon, and the smaller member states, without cohesion to cooperate, have incentives to free-ride. This situation is based on both power and interests asymmetry, in which the hegemon has the interest to cooperate and provide security for the alliance, whereas the smaller states, knowing the hegemon will cooperate independently of cooperation of the others, have incentives (coming from domestic political or economical motivations) to free ride. Therefore, membership in the alliance for the hegemon means regional influence, while for the weaker members means gaining benefits such as security assurances – even without cooperation with the powerful actor. One example was President Trump's pressure on many NATO members to raise defence expenditures to 2% of their GDP. The solution for this problem lies on the hegemon, who can push the smaller states to cooperate by threatening to defect or decrease/deny the benefits in exchange for cooperation (Davidzon, 2022, pp. 31-32).

Lastly, Assurance stands for a pattern in which mutual defection is possible, although all members perceive cooperation as the best outcome. On this problem, defection would arise from uncertainty regarding the other party's action. There are two practical situations on this problem: first, a member state might wonder whether or not the other allies will give support in case of conflict, then prompting the member to preemptively defect, consequently resulting in mutual defection; second, a rational actor seeks cooperation as an optimal

outcome, however, due to domestic changes, it can alter its course and prefer not to cooperate – in a problem of domestic commitment. The solution consists in creating a mechanism of transparency – close to that of compliance as seen previously – in order to fight uncertainty. Finally, this problem is most visible in alliances composed of democracies, considering its fluid domestic political processes (Davidzon, 2022, pp. 32).

* * *

In conclusion, this theoretical framework attempted to introduce the main concepts used to understand CSTO as a military alliance and international organization provider of regional security. Furthermore, it outlined the theoretical approach this thesis will use – rationalism, and, more specifically, both functionalism and distributive approaches. Accordingly, on one hand, I argue the effectiveness of CSTO is the result of the interests of its states in seeking to maximize their gains at the expense of collective action. On the other hand, it is an alliance heavily reliant on terms of capacity and decision-making by one hegemon – Russia – which uses this organization to expand its power and influence over other smaller members. Binding those two approaches is the most theoretically sound path to analyze this military alliance which failed to provide military assistance when requested in three out of four analyzed cases.

2. Methodology

This section will outline the methodology utilized in this work in order to answer the research question. It is divided into five parts. The first sub-section aims to justify the chosen research design and methods. It argues that the best approach is to make a comparative analysis, using Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD) and Process-tracing, with the goal of finding a pattern explaining the outcome. The second part will provide the data collection and a brief analysis of the interviews. The next part will address the case selection - which consists of all cases in which CSTO failed to provide military assistance to its member states after being requested to do so. Fourth concerns the factors analyzed by the study given the collected data and how they were chosen. Finally, a concluding sub-section will explore the research limitations considering the scope of this work.

2.1 Research Design and Methods

In order to answer the research question: "what explains ineffectiveness in alliances built on collective defense mechanisms?", this thesis focuses on CSTO's actions regarding its member-states. More specifically, it compares all cases in which its member-states requested military assistance from the alliance, and attempts to find a pattern given the divergent outcomes. Out of four cases, all except one ended without the Organization's intervention, despite requests made by their respective host. Hence, this thesis utilizes qualitative research, in a comparative analysis, in a Small-N sample of cases, considering the relatively small number of available phenomena.

Having in mind this research outline and goals, MSSD was chosen in order to make the analysis. This path was the natural one, considering the similarity of CSTO member states and the outlined cases. In other words: all nations are post-soviet countries, possessing either authoritarian or hybrid regimes, and half of the members and three out of four cases are from Central Asia. Furthermore, as Landman (2008, p. 70) argues, MSSD is the more adequate design to explain a divergent outcome in similar countries, since it "seeks to identify the key features that are different among similar countries and which account for the observed political outcome." For this reason, MSSD is particularly suited for area studies (Przeworski and Teune, 1970, p. 33 in Landman, 2008, p. 71). Consequently, it is corresponding to the

cases of this work, and, therefore, this research design was chosen due to its suitability to this very specific scope of research.

This search for the identification of factors which cause a certain result is the goal of the method of Process-tracing. It aims, above all, not to find correlations, but to provide explanations - a causal inference (Beach and Pedersen, 2013, p. 1). Specifically, the theory-building type of Process-tracing is pursued. This form, according to Beach and Pedersen (2013, p. 16), is suitable when the outcome is known, in opposition to the causes. Moreover, those authors argue that it is then inductive and aims at building a more or less generalizable theory out of the empirical evidence collected.

Apart from its inductive-empirical nature, researchers utilizing this method also present previous theoretical work in order to boost inspiration, since "existing theory can be conceived as a form of grid to detect systematic patterns in empirical material, enabling inferences about observable manifestation" (Beach and Pedersen 2013, p. 18). Accordingly, this thesis attempts to bring relevant concepts and theoretical considerations in the previous section, with the aim of assisting in the interpretation of the empirical results. Thus, definitions of concepts under which CSTO operates, such as alliance and International Organization, as well as theories concerning the institutional design of international institutions and cooperation patterns, will be useful in the analysis of evidence in the next pages.

Finally, Process-tracing requires input data. Considering how little literature focused exclusively on CSTO exists (Weitz, 2018, and Davidzon, 2022, were the only books the author of this work found, for example), let alone updated enough to encompass such recent cases (until 2022), it was certain that new sources had to be arranged. In addition, official documents and statements concerning meetings and declarations are, for example, lacking. And, even if they were available, they would not provide alone reliable answers explaining the outcomes. In other terms, data has to be acquired somewhere else apart from the more traditional sources, such as academic literature and documents. Hence, this thesis utilized interviews with experts and policy-makers, in order to keep an adequate balance between validity and reliability, as well as serving as the source of the identified factors.

2.2 Data

Initially, the interview sampling was planned to include two groups: first, experts in CSTO and/or Eurasian Security; second, policymakers, such as diplomatic staff and representatives of the Organization or its member states. For each sample, it was intended to realize at least five interviews. Naturally, it was expected to have a higher difficulty regarding the second group since authoritarian states tend to be less accountable and open to the disclosure of information. Accordingly, the feasibility of achieving one or two interviews was still considered. Nevertheless, no interviews with policy-makers occurred. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs of all CSTO states were contacted, as well as the alliance's headquarters staff. Moreover, embassies of those countries and representations were also contacted, in the hopes of different results compared to their Ministries. In the end, out of those, even with follow-ups for all messages, only one Ministry answered, which although agreed with an interview, kept consistently postponing it, and at one point stopped answering the author's messages.

From the expert's side, the acceptance rate was significantly greater. I was able to successfully interview seven experts, from scholars to members of civil society and political analysts. Again, considering all member states of CSTO are authoritarian or hybrid regimes and many of the interviewees reside or come from the alliance's member states, it was possible that many would fear and refuse conceding the interviews since they could be punished for exposing their views. Anticipating this issue, I have conceded the option of anonymity for those willing to proceed to the interviews in the interview and data protection form, as well as the option of no recording.

On one hand, this allowed the interviewees to fully express their views without the consternation of being penalized for their opinions. Consequently, they released more data than they would have if the anonymity option had not been given. On the other hand, the research could look more interesting if their identities were public, considering the diverse origin and background of the interviewees, including their high-profile in some cases. Hence, three interviewees agreed on the Informed Consent and Data Protection Form to release their identities for this research, and, fortunately, all participants allowed their interview to be recorded at least on audio. More detailed information regarding the interviews, including date and length, can be found on the table below. From now on, specific information cited on this

work which was gathered through interviews will be referenced according to their number (Interview 1, for example).

Figure 1: Interviews

Interview number	Date	Name/Identity	Length
1	October 13th	Anonymous	39 minutes
2	October 28th	Hovsep Khurduhsyan	57 minutes
3	October 31st	Anonymous	41 minutes
4	November 3rd	Anonymous	31 minutes
5	November 9th	Aigerim Nurseitova	36 minutes
6	November 24th	Anonymous	25 minutes
7	December 15th	Igor Davidzon	56 minutes

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured form. In this way, I was able to retain control on the information I was seeking, at the same time being flexible to gather more data whenever it seemed useful. Moreover, some interviewees had more information concerning one case than the others. For example, Armenian political analyst and civil society leader Hovsep Khurduhsyan had more information about his country's government, its relations with CSTO and the question of Nagorno-Karabakh than data concerning the cases from Central Asia. Thus, in his interview, even though all questions in the form were asked, the discussion was centralized on Armenia's case in 2022.

Nine questions were to be asked for every interviewee, ranging from open ones to more specific topics. This was done in order to ensure a proper balance between , on one hand, gathering information related to my expectations, hypothesis, information existing in literature and, on other hand, any new information or view the interviewees could contribute. Hence, specific questions included whether or not CSTO's member states had enough incentives in order to pursue effective security cooperation, or had a shared perception of threats, if there were common norms and values, whether Russian influence had any influence on the outcomes, what made Kazakhstan's case outcome being different from the other ones, etc. Open questions focused on the interviewees' own thoughts. Thus, questions

regarding their opinions on why CSTO failed to intervene in three of the cases, the alliance's future or additional factors which were not spoken, were asked.

The form containing all the nine questions, as well as the Interview's Information Sheet and Data Protection Form can be found in the appendix of this thesis. The latter was based on the model created by Natalia Kovyliaeva, one of my instructors of the course of Qualitative Research Methods, who authorized me to use it. Therefore, I have made the necessary modifications to the original form with the aim of adapting the document to the purposes and dynamics of the interviews of this work.

2.3 Selection of cases

The analyzed cases consist of all the instances CSTO's member states requested military assistance and the Organization failed to provide it. Those cases are: Kyrgyzstan, in 2010; Tajikistan, in 2021; Kazakhstan, in 2022; and Armenia, also in the same year. It is then necessary to define exactly those requests and what would then consist in military help. This is important since the member-states in the outlined cases did not make the demand in an uniform way. As we are going to see in Chapter Four, the way the intervention was solicited differed from some cases to others.

Likewise, the latter concept needs to be properly defined in order to avoid confusion with other types of military assistance given by CSTO. The next section shows that the Organization provides security in various ways - from military missions or peacekeeping, to training exercises and the sending of technical assistance and military equipment to its state members. Finally, without precise definition of those concepts, the selection of the cases would be blurred - since all cases in which CSTO received requests for intervention are being analyzed.

Thus, for the purposes of this work, and, more specifically, for setting the threshold of the cases, interventions consist in the deployment and engagement of ground troops - part of CSTO's collective forces or not – under the alliance's banner or one or more member states in the territory of the solicited member-state. The engagement can – but does not necessarily – mean active combat, but rather actions with the aim of opposing the menace which prompted their presence (protecting critical infrastructure, such as airports and governmental buildings, for example). In other words, sending military equipment or observers, providing military

training and/or technical assistance, etc., constitute other forms of military assistance – but not interventions.

By its turn, the requests for those interventions are determined by official calls by a member state demanding such action directly to CSTO or to any other member state, which then brought the issue to be discussed within the Organization decision-making framework as a collective decision. In other terms, calls for intervention on the basis of bilateral security agreements (or bilateral alliances) between two CSTO members do not count as cases since they were not considered within the Organization framework. Therefore, the requests have to be discussed and processed within CSTO's structure and its members, regardless if the initial solicitation was made to a specific member state or directly to the Organization.

These concise definitions are also important due to the fact that other works disagree on the threshold of what is the request for an intervention – and, as a result, in how many cases there are. Libman and Davidzon (2023, p. 1300), for example, consider all the four cases mentioned in this work – but add a fifth one: Armenia, in 2021. However, as mentioned in the example in the previous paragraph, Armenia did not request the intervention for CSTO – nor the issue was discussed within the alliance's framework. Instead, the request was delivered on a bilateral basis to Russia, on the legal basis of a 1997 security treaty between those countries (OC Media, 2021). Thus, this case will not be counted in this work due to the fact there is no information or record proving this solicitation was discussed in CSTO's framework. The other cases' history and results will be analyzed in more detail in Chapter 4.

2.4 Factors

Given the number of interviews, nature of questions and their answers, it was possible to spot a pattern of factors which were considered relevant to the observed outcomes. In order to set a threshold for considering a factor significant for the research within the data gathered from interviews, it was decided that each factor would have to be cited by at least three interviewees. This criteria is necessary in order to separate the main factors, responsible for the cause of the outcomes, from lesser ones, which have, accordingly, a less important relation with the results. Following the same formula, the factor's existence for each case was considered or not in a yes/no answer in the MSSD table. This was possible due to the existence of many closed questions, requiring direct answers, and also due to the

interviewees concise answers (after being more directly questioned by the interviewer if needed). Therefore, the four factors which have fulfilled the threshold are:

Consideration of a common and/or prioritary security threat

When directly asked whether CSTO member states have a shared consideration of threats, are able to prioritize them and deal with those in the same way, five interviewees – all except 2 and 4 – agreed that the alliance's members are unable to do any. As we have seen in the previous section, security arrangements are made to counter perceived security threats, such as another state or terrorism, for example (Evans and Newnham, 1998, p. 15). If there is a lack of agreement regarding common security threats, or, at least, there is considerable divergence on how serious the security threat is to the member states, how can those nations collectively act in order to promote their security?

Presence of an "external actor"

Although there was no single question addressing this factor directly, it was a common issue in the interviews, since three interviews – 1, 5 and 6 – pointed to this factor as a significant force leading to an intervention. The recognition of an "external actor", in other terms, outside forces which generate a security threat for one or more CSTO member states is a crucial point for an alliance based in a collective defense mechanism. It is after this understanding that the Organization can act militarily, according to its own rules (Davidzon, 2022, p. 93). One example was CSTO's intervention in Kazakhstan, when it was recognized by both the host country as well as by the other members of the alliance the existence of external forces behind the security menace (Libman and Davidzon, 2023, pp. 1302-1303).

Threat against government

As it was with the last factor, no question directly addressed this issue. Nevertheless, it was a relevant point for the interviewees. In four interviews – 2, 3,5 and 6 – the fact the menace targets directly the government (and not necessarily the state), clearly or at least possibly aiming at a regime change, was a relevant factor leading to an intervention or not. The matter is not, however, whether the solicitor (or host, if the dispatch of troops is approved by CSTO) has enough power – either political or military – to prevent the collapse

of its government, but in fact, if there is a non-negligible threat to it. In this case, the other member states, being also hybrid or authoritarian regimes, would be more likely to act in order to save a similar government – an implicit form of authoritarian cooperation. (Interviews 2, 3)

Russian interest in intervention

The Russian interest to act, was, to different degrees, a significant factor for all interviewees. While some considered CSTO a Russian-led or even controlled alliance – such as interviews 2 to 6 – others viewed a more moderate role of Russia in the organization, as the other interviews – 1 and 7 – indicated. For the first group, CSTO was dependent on Russia, given its military capabilities and political power, and would be in the most extreme of opinions, nothing more than a tool of Russian foreign policy and interests, with little or no regard to other member states' positions. For example, an interviewee even called these other members “puppets” of Russia (Interview 2). In contrast, the second group emphasized for instance, the military capabilities of Russia, which are the main component of CSTO’s forces, as well as the alliance’s voting system, in which all members must consent to military action – including obviously Russia. Therefore, Russia, as the most powerful member, would be relevant for approving or not an intervention, but it would not dictate the alliance’s decisions.

2.5 Limitations

This work contains some limitations and difficulties found doing the process of research. The first, as previously mentioned, is the lack of interviews with policy makers and public officials. Those were intended to, together with the sample of experts, create a balance between validity (from the first sample) with reliability (from the second sample). Of course, interviews with experts provide both valid and reliable data. Yet, it could still have its validity boosted with the first sample. As researchers know, it is hard – but far from impossible – to have interviews with policy makers and/or public officials. It is, however, even harder to conduct those interviews with officials from authoritarian or hybrid regimes due to the fact that those states are known for having less accountability and being more controlling regarding its own information. Moreover, it also needs to be considered the sensibility of the issue: CSTO is an Organization heavily criticized for its lack of effectiveness.

Thus, answering questions regarding the absence of collective actions could potentially put the policy-maker in a difficult position. Nonetheless, there were reasons to believe interviews with policy-makers were possible, especially regarding Armenia. This country has been publicly criticizing CSTO and its members due to its lack of action regarding the last events in Nagorno-Karabakh. Hence, it is likely to use any opportunity to voice out its discontent to the Organization – and expose why it is not effective. Unsurprisingly, it was the only Ministry of Foreign Affairs to answer my invitation, and even to agree to concede an interview, at least initially. Despite the impossibility of gathering data from this sample, it can be argued it did not significantly decrease the quality of data and its subsequent analysis, since experts alone provide both valid and reliable data. However, any further increase in validity would be most welcome.

Another issue is the lack of experts from Russia. Since the beginning of the invasion of Ukraine, experts working at Russian higher institutions – which are increasingly controlled by the government – need to ask for authorization from their superiors in order to conduct interviews. Moreover, Russian scholars have been more silent and many unable to speak about international political issues. One example is the closing of the traditional Carnegie Center in Moscow, home to influential scholars such as Dmitri Trenin and others. As a result, out of the three invitations done to scholars residing in Russia, two did not answer either the first message or their follow up, and one accepted if the authorization came – one which was never even answered.

3. Security in the Post-Soviet Space

This chapter aims to provide an overview of CSTO's history, organization, capabilities, missions and the modern security trends and challenges the post-soviet countries face currently. It is divided in two parts: the first describes CSTO's history, scope, structure, dynamics and military forces; the second contains an analysis of the main security threats and issues faced by the alliance's member states, focusing on Central Asia and Caucasus regions. It should be noted that, on the latter subject, for the purposes of this thesis, other regions, such as Eastern Europe, will not be explored since they are not part of the analyzed cases of this thesis. Thus, this sub-chapter will focus in the regions where this thesis' cases are located.

3.1 The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)

3.1.1 History

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in Dezember 1991, a new geopolitical reality arose in the space of the erstwhile state. Fifteen nations, most with no tradition in statehood, emerged from the ashes of the former empire. Internally, those new states had to face numerous challenges such as the transition from planned to market economy and new political systems. Thus, considering the imminent changes, Russia, Ukraine and Belarus created the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in order to serve as a forum of cooperation of economical, political and military issues which came with independence (Weitz, 2018, pp. 1-2). On the security scope, the CIS served as a dialogue tool to solve problems such as the control and division of the assets of the former Soviet Armed Forces – whose units were now occupying several independent states – as well as its unconventional weapons. Thus, a joint command of the CIS armed forces was established and several intergovernmental structures were created in order to support these tasks (Davidzon, 2022, pp. 74-75).

Nonetheless, the CIS lacked strong structures, as a result mainly of disagreements between its members. Furthermore, the Commonwealth was weakened since its foundation due to the lack of adherence from many post-soviet states: the Baltic States never joined since they opted to pursue membership in western institutions, and Turkmenistan became only an

associate member (Weitz, 2018, p. 2). Besides, several security threats started to appear as soon as the Soviet empire collapsed. There was a conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, and Islamic terrorism was rising in Central Asia, coming mainly from extremist cells in Afghanistan and Uzbekistan and spilling over to its neighbors. Therefore, the new states were facing security threats which the CIS framework was simply not designed to deal with. A new security arrangement was then needed (Davidzon, 2022, pp. 75-76).

In May 1992, Russia, Belarus, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia and Uzbekistan signed the Collective Security Treaty (CST), which ensured collective defense against external aggression (Weitz, 2018, p. 2). Moreover, it provided legal obligation for support in case of threat at the request of the menaced state, as well as prompted its members to abstain the use of force against both members and third parties and seek peaceful resolution of problems. It also extended, from 1995 (except for Azerbaijan), Russian nuclear deterrence for the other member states. Finally, the treaty also established several bodies in order to promote cooperation among the political and military leadership of those countries, such as the Collective Security Council and its subordinated committees of Council of Defense Ministers and Council of Foreign Affairs (Davidzon, 2022, pp. 76-77).

From a political perspective, Russia envisioned CST as a way to promote its influence in the region, whereas the other post-soviet states sought security considering Russia's promises of respecting their sovereignty, as well as access to Russian military weapons and technology since their military forces still relied on soviet equipment (Weitz, 2018, p. 3). Nevertheless, CST had a serious problem. Its members were divided among several lines: Russia – Georgia, Uzbekistan – Tajikistan, and Armenia – Azerbaijan (Georgia and Azerbaijan joined CST in 1994). Hence, the capacity of the members to agree to cooperate jointly was undermined, which in turn significantly decreased the effectiveness of the alliance (Davidzon, 2022, pp. 77-79).

This lack of effectiveness would soon prove fatal for CST. Due to its inability to provide security against internal terrorism, Uzbekistan left CST in 1999. In the same year, Azerbaijan left since it could not solve the Nagorno-Karabakh issue with Armenia within the framework of the treaty; finally, also in 1999, Georgia withdrew from CST due to its change in foreign policy to a more Western-centric one. Thus, CST's demise can be summarized in two aspects. First, its members failed to resolve its disagreements and cooperate in order to make CST effective; second, the arrangement was designed to provide security mainly against state actors, and not non-state actors such as terrorists, which are a critical security

threat for Central Asian countries such as Uzbekistan. Consequently, the CST's fiasco needed a replacement (Davidzon, 2022, pp. 77-79).

In 2002, CSTO was founded after its Charter was signed by Russia, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Tadjikistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan – the latter of which last withdrew in 2012. It was a successor to CST, but with some notable differences: the new organization would deepen political and military cooperation between its members and create more institutionalized structures. The Article 7 of the Treaty lays the ground for the *modus operandi* of the Organization (Davidzon, 2022, p. 79):

> "The Member States shall take joint measures to achieve the purposes of the Organization to form thereunder the efficient system of collective security providing collective protection in case of menace to safety, stability, territorial integrity and sovereignty and exercise of the right to collective defense, including creation of coalition (collective) forces of the Organization, regional (united) groups of armies (forces), peacekeeping forces, united systems and the bodies governing them, military infrastructure" (Davidzon, 2022, pp. 79-80).

3.1.2 Scope and obligations

As CST, CSTO has the goal of a traditional military alliance: providing collective defense for its members against external threats. However, in contrast to its predecessor, the Charter also recognizes its collective and regional security aims, since its Article 3 defines that its goals "[...] shall be strengthening of peace, international and regional security and stability, protection of independence on a collective basis, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Member States [...]" (Davidzon, 2022, p. 93). Moreover, Article 8 recognizes the existence of non-state threats such as terrorism, drug trafficking, weapons smuggling, organized crime and illegal immigration, thus broadening the scope of the alliance to one more suitable for the security challenges post-Cold War. (CSTO, 2002) Nuclear proliferation and cyber threats have also been included in CSTO's agenda posteriorly (Weitz, 2018, p. 7).

However, its collective defense mechanism has exceptions. Kyrgyzstan, in 2010, requested CSTO's troops to assist to maintain order amidst interethnic tensions. On the occasion, the then President of Russia, Dmitry Medvedev, since according to his view, the Organization collective security mechanism activation criteria "is a violation by a state or any

non-state entities of the boundaries of the CSTO member-states, that is, in other words an attempt to seize power from outside" (Tihomirov, 2016, p. 38 in Davidzon, 2022, p. 93). Nevertheless, 10 years later, Putin considered sending troops to Belarus in order to assist in the crackdown of protests attempting to bring down Lukashenko's regime – although support from the other member states for sending troops was debatable (Davidzon, 2022, p. 94). Therefore, it can be argued the possibility of troops deployment in accordance with CSTO's collective security mechanism is dependent upon political interpretation and willingness – especially from its most powerful member.

In this regard, it should be noted that even though according to the CST (which was amended with the 2002 treaty to form CSTO) aggression against a member state is considered an aggression against all and members are obliged to send support, military deployment is not automatic and is conditional to unanimous decision by all members. In fact, an aggression or threat should prompt the consultation mechanism between its members to formulate a common response to the menace – which can, or not, be in the form of military intervention (Davidzon, 2022, p. 95).

This is part of an exchange of information framework which also serves as a tool to manage tensions between the member-states, pursuing a peaceful resolution of problems considering the legal requirement of refraining the use of force in inter-state relations (Davidzon, 2022, p. 94). This mechanism is relevant, since, apart from it, CSTO does not contain any other mechanisms to solve disputes among its own members (Weitz, 2018, p. 66). Thus, when Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan forces clashed in 2021 and 2022, the Organization offered mediation if their members consent to it, which both countries did not. Furthermore, all members have the right to request the alliance's military assistance and deployment outside CSTO's territory can only occur within the interests of the international community in accordance with the UN Charter (Davidzon, 2022, p. 95).

Finally, there are two more relevant obligations for the parties. First, the alliance member states have the obligation of not joining other alliances and not concluding treaties which are incompatible to CST. Second, there is a requirement in which any member states that desire to allow third parties troops into its territory (e.g foreign military bases) must first get into consultation with the other member states. This clause – CSTO's Article 7 – follows Russia's position of caution regarding the allowance of foreign troops, especially from the US, China and Türkiye in the Post-Soviet Space (Davidzon, 2022, p. 96).

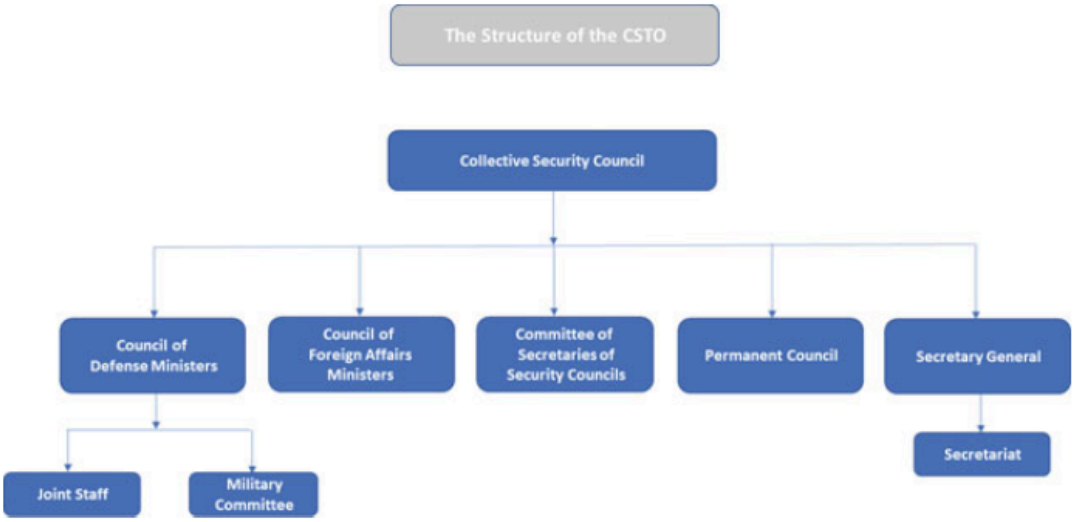
3.1.3 Organization

Compared to its predecessor, CSTO has a more complex and legally refined structure. Its most important organ is the Collective Security Council (CSC), which is composed by the head of states of the members and defines the Organization's goals and makes the decisions to pursue them (Weitz, 2018, p. 5). All other committees are subordinated to this Council and have mostly advisory and executive capacity. In other words, they implement and support the CSC decisions. Thus, the Secretary-General is elected on three-years terms by the CSC on recommendation by the Council of Foreign Affairs Ministers (CFAM) (Davidzon, 2022, pp. 97-98). The appointed must oversee the administration of the Organization and represent the entity. He is the head of the Secretariat, which is headquartered in Moscow, and provides administrative and technical support for CSTO's activities (Weitz, 2018, p. 6).

The Permanent Council (PC) coordinates the activities of the alliance between the CSC's sessions. The CFAM is responsible for the promotion of cooperation in foreign policy and serves as a platform for consultations. The Council of Defence Ministers (CDM) coordinates the activities in the military scope, including policies, construction and technical cooperation. It is subdivided in a Military Staff and a Military Committee. The Committee of Secretaries of Security Councils (CSSC) ensures coordination of its members in their national security policies (Davidzon, 2022, pp. 97-98). All cited bodies adopt resolutions on a consensus voting, except for procedural ones, and are as a rule, binding (CSTO, 2002).

Additionally, CSTO has other minor bodies, which, similarly to the previous ones, have a more supportive role than decision-making power, such as the Parliamentary Assembly Council, which seeks to harmonize internal legislations, a Drug Trafficking Commision, an inter-agency body, etc. Finally, CSTO organizes *ad hoc* presidential summits and high-level meetings that adopt statements and declarations on collective security concerns as well as future goals. Those issues can range from missile defence to Iran and Syria, and usually back Russia's position although it is also possible to support other member's views. By speaking collectively, CSTO members seek to elevate their standing on global security issues (Weitz, 2018, pp. 6-7).

Figure 2: CSTO's organizational structure



Source: Davidzon, 2022, p. 97.

3.1.4 Capabilities and dynamics

It should come as no surprise the fact that Russia is, by far, the most powerful member state in CSTO. On the economic sphere, the Russian Federation has, for example, a GDP more than ten times bigger than CSTO's second biggest economy, Kazakhstan (Country Economy, 2023). Moreover, it had 86% of the EAEU's economy in 2020, which contains all CSTO's members except Tajikistan (Dadvidzon, 2022, p. 61). In the military realm, there is a similar disparity between Moscow and its partners. Russia is CSTO's biggest military provider, and has the largest and most capable forces (Weitz, 2018, p. xii).

Accordingly, the other member states are dependent on its weapons, technologies and expertise. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, for example, "depend on the CSTO (i.e., Russia) for modern military equipment, defense training opportunities, and national protection" (Weitz, 2018, p. 64). Armenia and Belarus also depend on Russia for military equipment and assistance, as well as energy, trade, etc. Although not as dependent as the others, Kazakhstan also finds in Russia an important provider of weapons and military expertise, as well as a fundamental economic partner (Weitz, 2018, p. 64).

This dependency on Russia's military capability has consequences for both Moscow and the other member states. On the Russian one, it can be said Moscow has been exploring

its importance in several ways. First, it uses the other member states' need for security to establish military bases throughout the Post-Soviet Space, thus securing its influence and preventing military presence of other foreign powers. Second, it utilizes CSTO as a source of international legitimacy and influence in its partners national security policies. However, this approach comes for a cost. Due to its dependency on Moscow, CSTO is often regarded in the West as dominated by Russia. This view was also reinforced by Russian concerns and efforts to prevent foreign military presence in CSTO's area, such as when it influenced Kyrgyzstan to close its Manas airport to US military and to refuse anti-drugs centers and task forces in its territory (Weitz, 2018, pp. 64-65).

On the other member-states perspective, there are, again, both positive and negative consequences. For the former, as we have seen, those countries can boost their internal capabilities and external security. This is vital considering this diverse group of states face a wide range of threats, from traditional menaces (such as other states, in the case of Armenia, for example) to transnational ones (terrorism, organized crime, inter-ethnic conflicts, revolutions, etc., such as the Central Asian countries, for example) and most do not have the proper means to deal with them (Weitz, 2018, pp. 63-64).

For the latter one, it should be noted that apart from Russia, the other CSTO member states pursue multi-vector foreign policies – in order to enhance their options and situation in the international arena, which leads frequently to divergent positions (Davidzon, 2022, p. 51). In other words, they balance between Russia and other partners, such as China and NATO/EU with the goal of getting the most benefits (Laruelle, 2015, p. 7 in Davidzon, 2022, p. 63). Thus, excessive Russian influence can not only threaten their regional and global strategies, but also bring fears of loss of sovereignty, which is especially concerning given their shared imperial past (Davidzon, 2022, p. 4).

This dilemma between provision of security against respect for sovereignty faced by the post-soviet states is one of the driving forces behind CSTO's institutional design and means. Three main features deserve special attention. First, its consent voting system in practice gives each member a veto power – which will obviously be used by a member if it feels its sovereignty threatened. Second, since delegating too many functions and providing significant autonomy to CSTO's bodies, such as for example the Secretariat and its Secretary-General, would inevitably decrease the states autonomy, and possibly threat their sovereignty, those bodies cannot, on their own, create policies or an agenda, being only able to take initiative on organizational, consultative and technical issues. Lastly, CSTO forces lack autonomy and consistency. Its deployments are not permanent, and each unit remains

under national command until deployment for operation (Davidzon, 2022, pp. 101-103). Thus, Davidzon (2022, p. 104) argues that

> "the fact that the decision on their deployment and use is made by consensual decision- making, it could be assumed that Article 4 (collective defense) of CST has non-committal character—practical military assistance is conditional upon the activation of a consultation mechanism in which allies are supposed to make a decision regarding the use of the forces (Collective Security Treaty, 1992: Article 2). Hence, it implies that similar to other decisions of CSTO, also a decision on providing collective defense is also tied to the national interests of the member-states."

3.1.5 Military Forces

CSTO currently has five multinational forces. Out of those, three work within a limited geographical scope, while the two others can work within all the alliance's territory and even abroad. In common, all military regional formations have a common unified air defence system. Hence, the first is the Collective Rapid Deployment Forces (CRDF), which operates in Central Asia. Its main purpose is to repel external military aggression and participate in counterterrorism operations. It precedes CSTO since it was founded in 2001 by Russian, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan due to instability in the region provoked by Taliban's takeover in neighbouring Afghanistan. It has around 5000 personnel and is part of the 14th Russian air force, which is headquartered in Kant airbase, Kyrgyzstan (Dadvizon, 2022, p. 80).

The second one is the Collective Rapid Reaction Forces (CRRF). It was created in 2009 in order to quickly counter security threats to CSTO members and can operate within all alliance's territory and is composed of around 18.000 personnel coming from all member states. Its main goals are to demonstrate military readiness; repulse armed attacks including aggression; support of borders protection and military facilities of a member state; and participation in anti terrorist operations, drug trafficking and other types of transnational crime (Dadvizon, 2022, pp. 80-81).

Third and fourth ones were established on similar lines. The Joint Group of Forces of Caucasus Region (JGF-CR) and the Joint Group of Forces of East European Region (JGF-EER) were established on bilateral agreements incorporated into CSTO between Russia

and Armenia and Belarus, in 2015 and 1999, respectively. For the Caucasus, its main tasks include repelling external aggression against both countries, protecting its land borders, airspace, and participation in air defense of troops. It should be noted though the issue of terrorism and transnational crime is not clearly addressed. For East Europe, the arrangement also focuses on collective defense, without, again, specifying other non-traditional threats. Finally, CSTO has established Peacekeeping Forces (PF). They were founded in 2007 and consist of approximately 3600 personnel, with participants coming from all member states and are able to operate both inside and outside CSTO's territory (Davidzon, 2022, pp. 81-83). Moreover, they have police and civilian components and can work within UN missions if requested (CSTO, 2007, pp. 2-3).

Figure 3: CSTO's military forces

Original name in Russian	English version	Foundation year	Geographical scope	Participating states
KSBR- Kollektivnyye Sily Bystrogo Razvortyvaniya	CRDF- Collective Rapid Deployment Forces	2001	Central Asia	Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan
KSOR- Kollektivnyye Sily Operativnogo Reagirovaniya	CRRF-Collective Rapid Reaction Forces	2009	All CSTO states	All CSTO members
OGVKR-Obyedinennaya Gruppirovka Voysk Kavkazskogo Regiona	JGF- CR- Joint Group of Forces of Caucasus Region	2016	South Caucasus	Russia+Armenia
OGVVR- Obyedinennaya Gruppirovka Voysk Vostochnoyevropeyskogo Regiona	JGF-EER- Joint Group of Forces of East European Region	1999	West Russia and Belarus	Russia+Belarus
MS - Mirotvorcheskie Sily	PF- Peacekeeping Forces	2008	Inside and outside the territory of the CSTO members	All CSTO members

Source: Davidzon, 2022, p. 81.

Since CSTO has only deployed one operation – Kazakhstan in 2022 – the combat readiness of its forces are kept with military exercises (Davidzon, 2022, p. 83). Therefore, the Organization has been organizing around six exercises each year in order "to improve the organization's capabilities for collective defense, counternarcotics, counterinsurgency, reconnaissance, and rapid response" (Weitz, 2018, p. 17). The "*Vzainmodeystviye*" exercises are the annual exercises of CRRF focused on conventional capabilities. The "*Rubezh"* are centered on the quick response of forces against hypothetical terrorist threats based in Central Asia or Afghanistan. The "Indestructible Brotherhood" are peacekeeping drills occurring since 2012. Other exercises include the participation of internal security forces, and focus in a wide range of drills such as fight against drug trafficking to emergency response and

reconnaissance of terrorist groups using air, ground and special force units. Those exercises can include dozens of thousand soldiers, such as “Center-2015”, which included 95.000 personnel and more than 7000 hardware pieces (Weitz, 2018, pp. 17-19).

3.2 Regional security challenges, issues and trends

In 2016, CSTO launched its “Collective Security Strategy” until 2025. In this document, it outlined the main security challenges and trends faced by the alliance in the upcoming years, as well as laid down strategies and tools in order to manage those threats. It divides menaces according to their proximity to the alliance: world trends, external and threats to the collective security of CSTO trends and internal (inside the alliance’s borders) threats. For the first, it cites the escalation of international and domestic conflicts, “colored revolutions” and “hybrid wars”, military build-up, inther-ethnic conflicts, etc. (CSTO, 2016, pp. 5-6).

For external threats and collective security threats, are cited “political and socio-economical instability” near its member’s borders as well as unresolved conflicts, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, illegal immigration and penetration of terrorists and extremist groups into CSTO coming from third countries (CSTO, 2016, p. 6). Finally, internal issues such as terrorist activity with the aim of destabilizing the domestic situation of member states, interethnic and interfaith divides which can provoke conflict, transnational crime (including drug-trafficking), the use of information with destructive potential on the social political and economical environment, natural disasters, etc (CSTO, 2016, pp. 6-7).

Davidzon (2022, p. 83) also notes that the document emphasizes as menaces the traditional external aggression issue, and also the use of technologies of the coloured revolutions and hybrid wars, as well as interference in the internal affairs of the member states. According to him, this threat perception comes from internal revolutions, such as Ukraine in 2005 and 2013-2014, and Kyrgyzstan in 2010, which could threaten the regimes of many member states (Davidzon, 2022, p. 83). Klein (2019, p. 30) agrees and argues that it is in the interests of authoritarian leaders to receive Russian support (via CSTO) in case military assistance is needed to crush a revolution and maintain their regimes, while Russia benefits from making it formally easier to define an undesired change of power as a security problem and potentially avert it.

While those are the general security threats for CSTO both globally and internally, now we will look in more detail into the regions which this thesis' cases are concentrated: Central Asia and Caucasus.

3.2.1 Central Asia

The vast steppes of Central Asia are home to several countries and half of the members of CSTO, which need to deal with a variety of security threats. Externally, their position is challenging. They are at a crossroad between the volatile Middle East, troubling Afghanistan, China's Xinjiang province in the east, and Russia in the north and west. Internally, those countries face many threats, such as islamic extremism, drug-trafficking, inter-ethnic conflict, among others. It should be noted, however, that many of those issues are linked to each other and some internal problems are at least partially the result of spill-over effects from other countries (Aben, 2019, pp. 52-53).

By far, the most problematic of those neighbours is Afghanistan. While the country has been a menace since the 1990s, when Taliban took over, going through the West-backed regime after NATO's intervention (and now again with the new Taliban regime) the problems remained consistent. The country is a huge exporter of narcotics, especially opium, and uses the Central Asian route to deliver the product to Russia and Europe. The profit of this illegal trade sponsors terrorist groups, which buy weapons and bribe border guards to infiltrate both products and people into its neighbours, thus enhancing extremism from Afghanistan. This is an especially serious problem for Tajikistan, which shares a 1300 km border with the Taliban and lacks the capabilities to properly secure its frontiers. Illegal immigration is also an issue in the region (Weitz, 2018, pp. 7-8).

Terrorism, however, is a recurring problem for those countries. Several groups have been internally acting since the fall of Union of the Socialist Sovier Republics (USSR), such as the Islamic Resistance Party of Tajikistan, the Islamic Jihad Union, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), and in recent years Al-Qaeda and ISIS. The IMU, for example, is one of the main terrorist groups in the region and its main objective is the replacement of Uzbekistan's current regime with an islamic republic (Weitz, 2018, p. 8). They have "detonated bombs in Uzbekistan, attempted to assassinate [President] Karimov, and invaded southern Kyrgyzstan, where IMU fighters seized foreigners as hostages and ransomed them for money" (Weitz, 2018, p. 9). Furthermore, they have connections to both Al-Qaeda and

Taliban, which permitted using Afghanistan as a training ground and even conducting operations within the country. Finally, they are suspected to operate in other countries, such as Tajikistan (Weitz, 2018, pp. 9-10).

Another issue connected to terrorism is the return of Central Asian jihadists from their recent fronts in Syria and Iraq. From 2012 on, around 4000 sympathizers from this region have joined ISIS, Al-Nusra Front and other terrorist organizations acting in Syria and Iraq, which were prompted to join their ranks due to poor socio-economic conditions and political repression. With fighting practically over, those fighters are returning and are determined to continue their extremist activities in their home countries. In addition, as we have seen, those terrorist groups are interconnected, and these returning jihadists have ties with extremists from other countries and ethnicities apart from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, such as the Caucasus region, Xinjiang, and others. Hence, monitoring these individuals and their activities, as well as sharing information concerning them is a security priority for the states of the region (Aben, 2019, p. 54).

Besides terrorism and transnational crime, interethnic conflict is also an important security threat for Central Asian states. The modern boundaries of these post-soviet nations are a legacy of the Stalinist era, which paid little attention to ethnic distribution, thus grouping different groups within the same territory (Aben, 2019, p. 59). With the weakening of Moscow's central authority in late 1980s, ethnic conflicts erupted, with the most notorious being the 1989 massacre of Meshi Turks in Uzbekistan, followed in the next year by violence between the Kyrgyz majority and Uzbek minority in Kyrgyzstan. Minor confrontations also occurred in borderlands and multi-ethnic villages. With the fall of the USSR and the rise of the new multi-ethnic post-Soviet Central Asian states in 1991, there was an increase in social and religious-based violence in the region (Abashin, 2018, p. 4). More recent events, such as the 2010 conflict in Kyrgyzstan prove that although ethnic violence is not constant throughout the years, it still remains a security threat for the countries in the region.

Finally, other internal conflicts and revolutions which can lead to the overthrow of governments constitute an important concern for those countries. As we have seen, "colored revolutions", "political and socio-economic instability", unresolved conflicts, as well as other internal issues are among CSTO's (2016, pp. 5-7) security concerns. In this regard, we can cite: Tajikistan, which has been on a lasting internal conflict since 1992 between Islamic radicals and the secular government; Uzbekistan, which faces a similar problem and left CSTO due to its inability to deal with its terrorist opposition; and Kyrgyzstan, which had its own "colored revolutions" in 2005 and 2010. The problem is aggravated due to spill-over

from neighbouring countries (invasion of radicals of Uzbekistan into Kyrgyzstan, for example) and lack of cooperation and even inter-state confrontation, such as border disputes between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan since soviet times, and Uzbekistan refusal to accept Russian military presence in the region, as well as its tensions with neighbouring Tajikistan and its unilateral decision to mine its border with Kyrgyzstan (Davidzon, 2022, pp. 75-78).

3.2.2 Caucasus

Like Central Asia, the Caucasus is an extremely complex and diverse region. All three Caucasian states – Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan – were for several years (1993-1999) jointly parties to the CST. However, nowadays only the first remains a member of CSTO. Although both Georgia and Azerbaijan decided to leave CST in the same year and procedure – by not signing CST' membership extension protocol – they left for different reasons. Baku had its foreign policy tied up to its dispute with Armenia on the Nagorno-Karabakh matter, with CST's consultation mechanism and dialogues within the Treaty's framework failing to produce results under their view. By its turn, Tbilisi decided to focus efforts to pursue European integration while distancing itself from Russian influence, which prevented further partnership with the alliance – and totally destroyed any future expectation after a Russian invasion in 2008, as it withdrawal from the CIS exemplifies (Davidzon, 2022, p. 78). Therefore, given the scope of this thesis in analyzing the cases from CSTO member's perspective, we will now approach security in the region focusing on Armenia.

Like Azerbaijan, Yerevan had much of its foreign policy up until recently connected to its efforts to keep control of Nagorno-Karabakh. In fact, it made the enclave its top priority national security policy. Considering its weaker military capabilities compared to its rival, it made sense to be part of a collective defense organization – clearly seeking military assistance from the alliance in case of an armed attack. Due to this strategy, Armenia was one of the most active members of CSTO. For example, in 2009, assigned one military unit to the then new CRRF, and has since then participated in its exercises and even hosted several of them, as well as being responsible for finalizing the current Organization's Security Strategy up to 2025. Moreover, the country has been heavily dependent on Russia, since the latter is its main trading partner, main provider of military equipment, and has military bases in its territory. It has also mediated peace talks on Nagorno-Karabakh. For Moscow, it is in their

interest to have an ally as well as keeping a military presence in the region (Weitz, 2018, pp. 28-29).

However, Armenia finds it difficult to count both with its main partner and other CSTO members when it comes to its main security priority. Russia has been the biggest weapons provider to Azerbaijan, which imports fourth-fifths of its military equipment from Moscow. Given its dependency on Russia, Armenia can do little besides protesting as well as hoping its alliance with Russia (being bilaterally or via CSTO) will deter future Azerbaijaini aggression. In addition, other CSTO members keep supporting Azerbaijan, infuriating Yerevan and lowering the prospects of military assistance in case of future conflict. Kazakhstan, for example, argued CSTO's role in case of war should be one of negotiation rather than being belligerent; others defended since Nagorno-Karabakh was inside Baku's UN-recognized territory, it was thus outside of the alliance's responsibility of collective defense. Finally, even Armenia's biggest – at least nominally – ally, Russia, has interest in maintaining a balance of power in the region, instead of pushing forward Yerevan's claims (Weitz, 2018, pp. 31-33).

Apart from Azerbaijan, Armenia does not have any significant security threats. Differently from many of its neighbours and CSTO's counterparts, the country is ethnically homogeneous, does not have any major separatist movements and terrorism is not a relevant issue. Türkiye poses a threat due to its close relationship with Azerbaijan, providing political-military support which was key for the latter winning the war against Armenia, in 2016 – and also later in 2022. Nevertheless, any potential Turkish military incursion into Armenia is unlikely (Branch, 2018, pp. 50-54) – especially after Azerbaijani victory in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Hence, Armenia's biggest security threat is still Azerbaijan, and the consequences of the last conflict, especially with the fall of the Armenian-supported Artsakh government in Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan a few months ago results in problems for the whole CSTO. First, because Armenia already has a more western-oriented government since a revolution in 2018. Second, because CSTO has been failing to aid its members consistently. Already in 2022, when Armenia was still in control of significant parts of the disputed region, Armen Grigoryan, Head of the Armenian Security Council stated: "All hopes that the CSTO response mechanisms will finally work have completely disappeared" (Martirosyan, 2022). Lastly, with CSTO's absence, nothing can guarantee Azerbaijan will not realize further incursions into Armenia, since the latter has been fighting alone and the former still occupies military territories inside Armenia internationally-recognized borders as of December 2023.

Therefore, it is not surprising that Armenia has been giving clear signs about its dissatisfaction with CSTO after its total defeat in Nagorno-Karabakh. After all, the alliance stood aloof while Azerbaijan took over the whole region, with President Aliyev literally walking above Artsakh's flag in the old presidential palace, in Stepanakert – recently renamed Khakendi (Eurasianet, 2023). As this thesis' last update, there are claims the Armenian government is considering withdrawing its membership in the alliance and adopting a "non-bloc" status, refusing to become part of any other military alliances (Mgdesyan, 2023). If one day Armenia decides to leave, as did Georgia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, CSTO would be weakened – not only by the loss of an active member, but simply because it would prove it failed its purpose as an alliance: to defend its members against external threats.

3.3 Brief literature review on CSTO

As mentioned previously, there is relatively little comprehensive literature on CSTO. Most of it considers a "Russian-led alliance", with important news and political analysis portals covering the post-Soviet space, such as Eurasia.net, adopting this view, as well as important authors as Weitz (2018), who wrote one of the two books available on the Organization. The latter author argues that the alliance is used as a tool of Russian influence on the region, while the other members benefit from membership since they have access to military equipment and education, training, etc. However, the other members disagree on the security issues and how to deal with them, resulting in a weak and ineffective alliance (Weitz, 2018, p. xii). Klein (2019, p. 32) agrees, and adds that Russia also uses CSTO in order to multilaterally legitimize its presence in the region, although to a limited degree since the alliance lacks coherence due to distrust of Moscow's intentions by its other members.

Other authors, such as Mankoff (2009, pp. 270-272), agree with the claim that Russia uses it as a mechanism to keep a grip over the Eurasian space, more specifically Central Asia, and add that it was set to be a counterpart to NATO and an armed arm of CIS. It also highlighted the dependency with which the other members have regarding military hardware. Accordingly, CSTO follows Russian lead on political questions, such as in 2007, when it adopted a joint declaration criticizing the planned launch of a anti ballistic defence system in Eastern Europe by the United States, as well as in the Russian-Georgian war in the subsequent year, when it adopted a pro-Moscow stance (Mankoff, 2009, p. 271).

Nonetheless, there is a less Russian-centric approach to CSTO, which is a minority one considering the whole literature. In the second book regarding exclusively the alliance, Davidzon (2022) argued that CSTO is a product of Eurasian integration, consequently having features unique to the region's nuances. The alliance members prioritize their independence and sovereignty, since they are new states with an imperial legacy tied to Russia, which continues to be by far the most powerful actor in the region. Thus, their members seek to benefit the most from Russian capabilities via CSTO (such as the ones previously mentioned) while keeping a safe distance in order to avoid potentially losing their autonomy. Finally, the regimes integrating the Organization have low capabilities and centralized decision-making, as well as several issues and rivalries between themselves, which lowers their willingness to effectively cooperate and turn CSTO into a more active alliance (Davidzon, 2022).

4. Cases and Analysis

This chapter consists of the empirical part of this thesis. It has the aim of exploring the four cases and providing the analysis with the data gathered from the interviews. Thus, it is divided into three parts: the first will investigate the cases, the second is going to formulate the analysis using MSSD, and the final part will supply an alternative analysis, complimentary to the previous one.

4.1 Kyrgyzstan (2010)

The events of Kyrgyzstan in 2010 are a perfect precedent for CSTO's concerns over ethnic conflicts and "colored revolutions" as security threats. In the 1920s, the Soviet Union had a policy of creating artificial administrative borders in the republics in Central Asia in order to prevent the recreation of their historical limits. Hence, from 1926 to 1936, Kyrgyzstan was an autonomous Soviet republic within the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic, and incorporated several villages and towns of the Ferghana valley, inhabited by Uzbeks, into its territory. Moreover, the decision occurred based on the reason that the nomadic Kyrgyz people needed urban centers to adhere to the Soviet economic policy of modernization and development. In 1936, Kyrgyzstan was elevated to union republic, being separated from Russia, hence having a significant ethnic Uzbek minority in the south. By 1989, this minority comprised approximately 25-30% of the whole population of the region, being even a majority in some areas (Abashin, 2018, pp. 3-8).

This administrative division was part of an understanding that each Soviet republic would have a dominant ethnicity, even though ethnic minorities would have rights as citizens – but as a minority within a political entity. However, as time passed, there was the development of a division between the majority Kyrgyz people who were the "locals" within their own republic, while the minority Uzbeks were considered "foreigners". As we have seen, the late Soviet period under Gorbatchev's policies provided an opportunity for the deep ethnic divisions to rise, given the weakening of Moscow's central power in the region (Abashin, 2018, p.8).

Tensions reached a critical point in 1990, when in a farm owned by Uzbeks, near the town of Osh, some Kyrghyz people started a protest requesting ownership of a piece of the land of the property. As the government ceded to the demands, the Uzebks felt discriminated,

and started to pressure for the creation of an Uzebk autonomous entity in southern Kyrgyzstan. As days passed, more people from both ethnicities arrived at the site to support their respective sides, and, when violence broke out, the police opened fire and several Uzbeks were killed (Abashin, 2018, p. 8).

The episode sparked conflict throughout the region, with ethnic persecutions, killings, burnings, attacks on public officials and buildings, robberies and in the formation of assault and self-defense squads based in order to attack and protect their respective ethnicity. Violence was only stopped by troop deployment from other Soviet republics, leaving officially 171 people killed – two-thirds being Uzbeks – with several thousand crimes reported. As both sides considered themselves victims, they fought vigorously on what they perceived to be unfair treatment from their counterparts (Abashin, 2018, pp. 8-9).

The scale of the violence was not forgotten by either side, since, exactly 20 years later, violence broke again in the same region. In 2010, a revolution brought down President Bakiyev and opposition assumed the government, while the former chief of government fled to his home region, in the south. The President's move and political instability created rumors that Uzebks were murdering Kyrgyzs, and soon violence broke out. This time, however, the destruction was even larger: 426 people were killed, 2000 injured and about 3000 houses and public facilities were destroyed. Again, most of the casualties were on the Uzbek side, and many fled to neighbouring Uzbekistan seeking protection (Abashin, 2018, p. 10).

The scale of violence was so great that the interim Kyrgyz government requested Russia to send peacekeeping forces in order to end violence and stabilize the situation. Nevertheless, Moscow refused a pending decision in a CSTO emergency meeting – thus referring to the consultation mechanism. Two days later, instead of sending military forces, the alliance decided to send military equipment for Kyrgyzstan's security forces (Nichol, 2010, p. 1). As the then Russian President Medvedev argued, there was no ground for intervention considering it was an internal affair of Kyrgyzstan and no external forces were involved or behind it – a point which was also agreed by the alliance's Secretary-General Bordyuzha. Leaders from other member states, such as then Uzbekistan President Karimov agreed fearing creating a precedent for future interventions (Weitz, 2018, p. 77).

CSTO's refusal to intervene in Kyrgyzstan, despite Bishkek's own request, was shocking and had serious repercussions. First, the death toll could have been reduced had intervention taken place. Kyrgyzstan has low military expenditures and poor security capabilities (Dadvizon, 2022, p. 123), thus, foreign military assistance would have helped in stabilizing the situation. Second, the alliance issued a statement in which it characterized

Kyrgyzstan's government actions as “insufficient for the stabilization of the situation”, thus implicitly recognizing the need for help (Tynan, 2010). Finally, since it was the first case in which CSTO demanded military action by a member-state, it also created its first deception as a military alliance.

4.2 Tajikistan (2021)

Tajikistan has been facing several security problems since its independence, in 1991. A civil war broke out right after the establishment of its statehood following a regional-ethnic divide, which only ended in 1997 following an agreement between the belligerents. One of its legacies are the regular clashes between government authorities and protesters in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region, a former separatist region populated by the Pamir ethnicity (Bifolchi, 2022). Moreover, Tajikistan has a border dispute with Kyrgyzstan which has led to military clashes in 2021 (Baratov, 2021) and 2022 (ALJazeera, 2022).

Nonetheless, Tajikistan’s biggest recent security threat is by far an external: its neighbour Afghanistan. Although the country has been experiencing political instability since Tajikistan's independence in 1991, its situation became increasingly critical with the progressive withdrawal of US-led troops from the country from 2014, culminating in the toppling down of the western-backed Afghan government in August 2021 and the consequent return of Taliban into power (Davidzon, 2022, p. 173). As we have seen in Chapter 4, Afghanistan’s spill over terrorists and drug-trafficking, especially opium, to Tajikistan as well as other countries, making it a matter of concern for the whole alliance (Weitz, 2018, pp. 7-8). This border-crossing by terrorists and drug traffickers is facilitated by the fact that the country has a long mountainous frontier with Afghanistan, and that its security forces are small and lack proper equipment and training (Davidzon, 2022, pp. 125-128). Finally, attacks and bomb-shelling from the other side are common (Bifolchi, 2022), as well as bribery for Tajik border guards in order to allow crossings (Weitz, 2018, p. 8).

Hence, this situation is unsurprisingly a matter of concern for the whole alliance. In 2013, with growing insurgence near its southern border, CSTO’s CSC passed a resolution which approved a package of military-technical assistance with the aim of strengthening Tajikistan’s border security within three months (Kucera, 2013). The project had two steps. Frst, rearming the country’s border forces (Baratov, 2021). Second, improving the border infrastructure, including the construction of new frontier guard posts, restoration of warning

and signaling systems, means of air patrol and radars (Kucera, 2013). However, the implementation of the resolution did not leave paper to become reality. Tajikistan constantly reminded CSTO of the promised measures, such as in 2015 when its foreign minister publicly demanded its execution and in January 2021 when President Rahmon and then CSTO's Secretary-General Zas met. Nevertheless, CSTO limited itself to talks within its consultation mechanism (Baratov, 2021).

On July 5th 2021, after 1500 Afghan soldiers crossed the border fleeing Taliban with the takeover of major cities, Tajikistan mobilized 20.000 soldiers and made contact with Russia, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to discuss the situation. Two days later, Tajikistan's representative in CSTO requested "[...] an adequate response within the framework of the CSTO, including the adoption of measures to strengthen the capacity to protect the southern borders." Moreover, the 2013's resolution implementation was, again, called for full execution (Baratov, 2021). In spite of the circumstances, CSTO concluded that alliance's troop deployment was out of the question since Tajikistan still had control over its borders, although other forms of assistance would still be required (TASS, 2021). Furthermore, CSTO officials argued that the implementation of CSC 2013's resolution would take time and could not be done fastly (Baratov, 2021).

This is not the first time Tajikistan has not earned what it has been promised for. Russia has failed to comply with its promises with Dushanbe several times. In 2014, Moscow promised to spend more than $1 billion in the modernization of Tajikistan armed forces, which was not achieved. Previously, 2 years before, Russia had promised $200 million worth of equipment, being partially achieved in 2017 when Moscow ceded $122 million, and the rest was covered by the transfer of two Russian military bases and its equipment to Tajik forces. It is argued that Russian promises of military equipment and upgrade of military infrastructure on the border are tools in order to keep Tajikistan in Moscow's sphere of influence, such as maintaining its military bases in the territory. Since Dushanbe does not have political leverage within CSTO, the best it can do is to remind its counterparts of its security concerns and commitments (Baratov, 2021).

Although as of December 2023 Tajikistan has not lost control over its southern border, it is alarming CSTO has failed to provide any relevant assistance to the country – even though its head of states approved a resolution promising to do so more than 10 years ago. Besides, this frontier still holds the same problems as before. Recently, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has recognized the challenges previously highlighted in securing Tajikistan's borders, and has been providing trainings for the country's border

guards, as well as promoting other forms of assistance in order to enhance Dushanbe's forces effectiveness in fighting drug-smuggling and securing the borders (UNODC, 2022). It is not absurd to assume CSTO, an alliance with military staff, could better assist Tajikistan if only complied with its resolutions. The questions that remain is: how long will Tajikistan limit itself to protest instead of seeking other ways – and partners – to provide for its security?

4.3 Kazakhstan (2022)

Kazakhstan's case is the one that brings more attention for one simple reason: compared to all other ones in CSTO's history, it was the only occasion in which a member state requested military assistance and was granted. Consequently, it is the only case in this study which has a deviant result. Nonetheless, until 2022, few analysts could foreseen CSTO's intervention in Kazakhstan. The country was considered one of the most stable regimes in the post-Soviet space if compared to its counterparts in the alliance: Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Belarus have had internal revolutions/conflicts and even interstate wars in Yerevan's case. By its turn, apart from a few episodes of ethnic clashes, Kazakhstan had no serious conflicts or threats to its regime, which was headed by Nursultan Nazarbayev, who then successfully made a peaceful power transition to Kassym-Jomart Tokayev (Libman and Davidzon, 2023, pp. 1293-1303).

In 2022, the Kazakh government cut the subsidies for liquified petroleum gas, used as fuel by a good part of cars in the country. This led to protests, which quickly escalated to nation-wide political protests demanding the resignation of the executive and the parliament. Seeing no effect, the protesters became violent, attempting to take over governamental facilities and police stations. Tokayev's government then declared a state of emergency in several provinces and ordered the suppression of protests by security forces. Moreover, he also sacked former President Nazarbayev from his office as chair of Kazakhstan's Security Council (Libman and Davidzon, 2023, p. 1302).

This measure served both as a tool to appease the masses, and the result of a power struggle between Tokayev and his allies against Nazarbayev and the old political elites. Finally, Tokayev, citing supposed foreign sources of the agitations and considering the acts a form of external aggression and a threat to the country's integrity, called for CSTO's military assistance (Libman and Davidzon, 2023, pp. 1302-1303). The Kazakh's government request

was based on the articles 2 and 4 of the CST, as well as in the Agreement on CSTO Peacekeeping Activities (CSTO, 2022).

Tokayev's solicitation was quickly granted by the alliance. CSTO decided to send a peacekeeping force consisting of 2000 Russian soldiers, also joined by some Armenian troops. This force did not, however, take part in any action against the protesters. Rather, the force was used for military exercises and in protecting infrastructure, such as Almaty's airport. Only 5 days after being demanded, Tokayev declared that the CSTO operation was completed and requested the force to leave the country, being fully withdrawn after 8 more days (Libman and Davidzon, 2023, pp. 1303-1304).

Hence, CSTO forces were small, especially if compared to the 70.000 strong Kazakh security personnel employed in fighting the protests, had no experience or expertise in anti-riot operations, and did not directly intervene in the demonstrations, leaving the matter to Kazakh forces under orders from Tokayev. Thus, one might wonder what was the importance of CSTO's forces in the protests, considering this apparent inoperability. One argument is that CSTO forces were used as a tool to enhance Tokayev's legitimacy both domestically and abroad (Libman and Davidzon, 2023, pp. 1305-1306):

> "[...] by sending their troops,the CSTO countries (and especially Russia) were demonstrating their commitment to Tokayev as the president of the country rather than trying to change the situation on the ground. This notion that value resided in the 'spectacle' of a military mission does not imply that Russian involvement was irrelevant or unimportant—on the contrary, the signal sent by deploying the CSTO mission to Kazakhstan could have played an important role in determining the course of events. However, it was the signal that mattered, not the military capacity of the Russian forces in Kazakhstan per se. In short, it was more important that the CSTO involvement took place at all, than that the CSTO soldiers made a contribution to the stability of Kazakhstan" (Libman and Davidzon, 2023, p. 1306).

For the authors, the cooperation pattern and efficiency can be explained by two aspects. First, the level of dependency on the security cooperation arrangement: the higher it is, the less incentives the regime has to actually cooperate. Thus, the more symbolic is cooperation, the higher chances a state has to accede to the arrangement. Second, the credibility of a partner's commitment: the less constrained the counterpart is, the riskier cooperation becomes, consequently the probability of solely symbolic cooperation rises. The

problem of credibility is also enhanced by the fact that authoritarian regimes might take advantage of their political and economic power in order to exercise influence, thus leading to suspicion from their counterparts and, consequently, inefficient Organizations. Those aspects are exacerbated by the fact that Eurasian cooperation is made of states which have a short independent history and have a power asymmetry compared to Russia (Libman and Davidzon, 2023, pp. 1296-1298).

Finally, Libman and Davidzon argue that the character of the intervention is a result of several factors. First, the fact that CSTO forces would not be necessary in actual fighting (whereas interventions in the last cases would need active use of force) contributed to its deployment. Second, Chinese influence in the region limited the scope of action of the force – since there is a competition between Russia and China for influence in the region, an overreaching military action by the former was constrained by the latter. Third, the mission's symbolic nature was also influenced by the heavy importance Kazakhstan (and the other post-Soviet states) put on independence and sovereignty, considering the Russian extensive military action can threaten the country's autonomy – thus making it short and limited in scope. Finally, the lack of trust in Russia – given both its power asymmetry and past actions – make undoubtedly difficult for future interventions to occur with CSTO member states consent after the invasion of Ukraine (Libman and Davidzon, 2023, pp. 1295-1296).

4.4 Armenia (2022)

As we have seen, Armenia's relevant security concerns revolve around only one issue: Nagorno-Karabakh. In 1923, the USSR established the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast within the territory of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic, with the former having approximately 95% of its population being ethnically Armenian. Although tensions and sporadic clashes existed throughout Soviet rule, conflict erupted as soon as Moscow's power started to vain, in 1988. At that year, the region's parliament requested to officially join Armenia, resulting in the first conflict. By 1993, Armenia was in control of the disputed territory, besides occupying 20% of Azerbaijan's area. In the next year, Russia mediated a cease-fire agreement in which turned Nagorno-Karabakh as, in practice, an independent state (known as the Artsakh Republic) dependent on economic and military ties with Yerevan (Global Conflict Tracker, 2023).

After the Bishkek Protocol (1994), the conflict again entered a period of sporadic clashes, but without any major territorial changes. However, tensions rose again starting in 2016, when fighting along the ceasefire line led to hundreds of casualties. After four days of violence, hostilities ceased, but negotiations broke down, with mutual accusations of violations of the agreement, and high tensions continued. Four years later, conflict returned, with increased violence: more than seven thousand civilian and military casualties. Hostilities only ended with Russian mediation and use of its peacekeepers to separate the belligerent sides. The Second Nagorno-Karabakh War (2020) thus ended with Azerbaijan reoccupying most of the territory it had lost in the past decades of protracted conflict. By its turn, Armenia was only connected to the region through a thin corridor named Lachin, which was to be patrolled by Russian peacekeepers (Global Conflict Tracker, 2023).

With failed mediation to solve the conflict, mainly led by the Minsk Group within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), tensions remained high. (Global Conflict Tracker, 2023) Hostilities restarted one year later, when dozens of soldiers from both sides were killed, injured or captured. As usual, both sides mutually accused each other of starting the violence. Nevertheless, this time, Armenia argued it has suffered an external aggression against its territorial integrity and requested Russian military assistance on a bilateral basis under a 1997 treaty (OC Media, 2021). The assistance, however, was not delivered, and Azerbaijan gained more ground. Again, mediated by Russia, the belligerents came to an agreement, and Armenian troops left several areas they were occupying for the last 30 years, thus ending the violent episode (Teslova, 2021).

Following a cycle, on September 13th 2022, Azerbaijan launched an offensive against Artsakh and Armenia. On the same day, there was a video summit of the head of states of CSTO member states, in which the issue was discussed with a speech from the Armenian Pashinyan. On the next day, Pashinyan officially requested CSTO's assistance under Article 4 (military assistance in the case of "armed attack threatening safety, stability, territorial integrity and sovereignty against any Member States"). Nonetheless, CSTO answered by sending a "fact-finding" mission headed by its chief of Military Staff to Armenia and the alliance concluded that the matter should be solved using only political and diplomatic tools. On September 14th, Armenia and Azerbaijan held talks for a cease-fire, and CSTO used this as a justification for not sending peacekeepers. The conflict ended with Azerbaijan occupying areas inside even Armenia itself (Mejlumyan, 2022).

4.5 Analysis of factors using MSSD

Having in mind the previously outlined cases as well as the factors explained in the methodology section, it is possible to realize intersections between both using the method of Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD). This systematic analysis will consider each factor, in the same order as described in the methodology section, and is going to further apply the factor to each case. Hence, we will start from the "Consideration of a common and/or prioritary security threat" and consider this factor in each case. Also, it is worth remembering that the analysis will consider whether or not each factor was present in each respective case. This means each intersection will have either a "yes" or "no". A table at the end of this subsection summarizes the analysis.

Therefore, the first factor, as we have seen in Evans and Newnham (1998, p. 15), is a fundamental component behind the functioning of alliances. After all, threats can only be balanced with the formation of an alliance when there is, logically, an understanding between its members of what or who is a threat, and how to counter it. Otherwise, if states disagree on whether they consider an entity or event a menace, they cannot act upon it – and even might be unable to create or keep the alliance. Consequently, the lack of understanding towards a threat, as well as the level of priority within the alliance's concerns and activities, is a factor that directly affects an alliance's effectiveness. As a result, it is not a surprise five interviewees evaluated that CSTO does not possess a common understanding of threats and how to prioritize and deal with them (Interviews 1,3,5,6 and 7).

This point of view is backed by empirical evidence. In Kyrgyzstan (2010), although the need for assistance was recognized, intervention was denied based on the justification of internal jurisdiction of the Kyrgyz state on the situation of its territory (Tynan, 2010). However, this argument proved to be an excuse, since CSTO has not used this argument when considering intervention in Belarus in 2020 (Davidzon, 2022, p. 93) or when it approved an intervention in Kazakhstan in 2022. By its turn, Tajikistan's case shows a similar pattern: even though CSTO acknowledged the menaces which terrorism and internal crime represent, (Weitz, 2018, p. 4) as well as the difficult situation the country faced in its Southern borders, it still refused to provide ground troops (Kucera, 2013). In Armenia (2022), the lack of consideration of the threat was total. CSTO limited itself to sending a mission and did not even condemn Azerbaijan (Mejlumyan, 2022).

The only case in which the Organization was able to collectively consider a common threat and act accordingly was in Kazakhstan (2022). In fact, as previously mentioned, CSTO's response in sending troops was even quick (Libman and Davidzon, 2023, p. 1303). Thus, the question of whether CSTO considers common threats and prioritizes them in terms of response is unsurprisingly followed by their respective outcomes. In other terms, Kyrgyzstan (2010), Tajikistan (2021) and Armenia (2022) were disconsidered by the Organization in this sense, whereas Kazakhstan's case (2022) was interpreted as a common threat and a collective response was taken.

The second factor – "presence of an 'external actor" – is, both politically and legally, a requirement for any CSTO intervention, since the alliance is based on the collective defense principle (Davidzon, 2022, p. 93). As we have seen in the Organization's debate on whether or not to assist Kyrgyzstan in 2010, it was argued there was no external entity – state or not – involved in attempting to seize power (Tihomirov, 2016 in Davidzon, 2022, p. 93). It was considered only a domestic clash. Thus, it was argued there was no ground for intervention. (Davidzon, 2022, p. 93) If we apply this conception to the other cases, it is possible, nonetheless, to spot external vectors influencing all other cases.

In Tajikistan (2021), for example, instability was boosted by the collapse of the neighboring Afghani government and advance of the Taliban (Davidzon, 2022, p. 173), which resulted in confrontation between both sides at the border, (Bifolchi, 2022) as well as an increase in the threat of transnational crime (UNODC, 2022). In Kazakhstan's (2022) case, it was explicitly recognized the acting of "external forces" behind the protests. (Libman and Davidzon, 2023, p. 1303). Finally, the case of Armenia (2022) illustrates, in the most clear way, the action of the armed forces of a foreign state – Azerbaijan – engaging in direct combat with the former's forces. As a result, only in Kyrgyzstan's (2010) case there were no external vectors directly involved – or, at least, as far as CSTO is concerned (Tynan, 2010).

The next factor is mainly related to the nature of the threat. In other words, whether or not it in fact directly posed a threat to the regime. Hence, menaces which targeted the government with, for example, the aim of regime change, are considered (Interviews 3,5 and 6). Following this threshold, the Kyrgyz (2010) crisis developed into a so-called "colored revolution", after ethnic violence spread throughout the country, to the point of the new government asking for intervention in order to stabilize the situation (Nichol, 2010, p. 1). A similar path was that of Kazakhstan (2022), when protests rooted in economic reasons spilled over to the political elites, and many protestors explicitly challenged the government and

demanded changes (Libman and Davidzon, 2023, p. 1302). For this reason, both cases are examples of threats which menaced their regimes.

On the other hand, other cases had threats not necessarily against the regimes. In fact, the menaces encountered in these cases are related to territorial disputes. In the instance of Tajikistan (2021), the dispute is related to the control of the border, (Kucera, 2013) and in no matter related specifically to Rahmon's regime. Similarly, Armenia's (2022) engagement in Nagorno-Karabakh is solely connected to the latter's territorial control in opposition to Baku. The likelihood of intervention given the threats to the regime can be explained, according to some of the interviewees, because there is a degree of cooperation and solidarity between its member states' regimes due to its political similarity. (Interviews 2, 3) This point closely resembles Libman and Davidzon's (2023, p. 1312) argument that Kazakhstan's intervention was approved with the aim of enhancing Tokayev's regime legitimacy amid its crisis.

Lastly, the Russian interest for intervention is, by far, the most significant in all means. It was unanimous for all interviewees – although in different degrees – that the country's motivation to act is a relevant factor explaining CSTO's troop deployment (Interviews, 1-7). This is not surprising since Russia is, by far, the most powerful member of the alliance, being its most militarily capable as well as its main troop and equipment provider (Weitz, 2018, p. 15). Moreover, this importance is supported by empirical evidence. After all, in CSTO's sole intervention in Kazakhstan (2022), Russia not only voiced its approval, but also headed the Organization's peacekeeping forces – composed almost exclusively by Russian troops (Libman and Davidzon, 2023, p. 1303).

In contrast, the other cases did not receive any form of explicit Russian interest. In Kyrgyzstan (2010), as previously mentioned, the then President Medvedev argued a matter of internal jurisdiction (Davidzon, 2022, p. 93). In Tajikistan (2021), Russia provided military equipment on a bilateral basis, as well as promised to support Rahmon's regime in case of incursions coming from Afghanistan (Reuters, 2021). However, the request for troops was disconsidered by both Russian and CSTO (TASS, 2021). Similarly, Russia stood aloof when war broke out between its ally, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. It only limited itself to statements and support for CSTO's "fact-finding mission", even though it had peacekeepers deployed in Nagorno-Karabakh as well as a military base in Armenia (Mejlumyan, 2022).

The correlation between the cases' outcome and Russia's power asymmetry relative to its other members led four of the interviewees to consider that CSTO is nothing more than a tool of Russian foreign policy. In other terms, the alliance would be controlled by Russia, and all its decisions are based on Russian interests (Interviews 2-6). Interviewee 4 went as far as

to state that the Organization can not be an alliance since it has different goals: its aim is to retain the member states within Russia's sphere of influence – and far from membership in other institutions, such as NATO, for example. Thus, the cases in which CSTO refused to intervene should not be considered as failures, simply because the Organization is not meant to provide security against those threats (Interview 4).

In the case of Kazakhstan, two interviewees outlined Russian interests in intervening. Besides protecting and/or legitimizing Tokayev's regime, those interviews showed Moscow's economic interests in Kazakhstan. More specifically, the country has important oil reserves as well as a strong economy within the Eurasian Economic Union – which Russia is part of. As a result, intervening would be a form of keeping this important state, both in political and economical terms, close to Russia. Hence, Kazakhstan's case (2022) is the main and only example that CSTO and Russian positions regarding intervention are intertwined – and would possess a causal relation (Interviews 5,6).

Therefore, after considering all factors and cases, the table below summarizes the analysis utilizing MSSD. Following the method, it is clear that the main causal factor leading to divergent outcomes is the last one: "Russian interest in intervention". This happens because it is the only factor which possesses a divergent result in the divergent outcome. Consequently, if this work analysis focused only on the explanations proposed on the table, our answer would be that CSTO intervenes according to Russian interests. Nevertheless, the interviews also showed another approach to the problem.

Figure 4: MSSD analysis

Cases/Factors	Kyrgyzstan (2010)	Tajikistan (2021)	Kazakhstan (2022)	Armenia (2022)
Consideration of a common and/or prioritary security threat	No	No	Yes	No
Presence of an “external actor”	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Threat against government	Yes	No	Yes	No
Russian interest in intervention	No	No	Yes	No
Result	**No intervention**	**No intervention**	**Intervention**	**No intervention**

Source: elaborated by the author utilizing the data from interviews.

4.6 Alternative analysis

The interviews demonstrated an alternative analysis which can not be interpreted through the lenses of MSSD. The alternative is based on the contributions and details of all interviewees, followed by a thorough analysis. The result resembles a similar view of particularly one interview – with Dr. Igor Davidzon. The main idea is that these other member states are unwilling to cooperate effectively, thus making the Organization’s effectiveness being compromised. The reasons for this outcome stem mostly from the interests and capabilities of these states and their regimes – apart from the ones contained in the previous analysis (Interview 7).

To begin with, it is necessary to consider the position of these nations: new countries, formed after the collapse of the Soviet Union, with many – especially the ones in Central Asia – being small and fragile states. In other words, they have limited military capabilities and many face internal threats, such as terrorism, transnational crime, etc (Davidzon, 2022, p. 137). Furthermore, many have disagreements and even conflicts among themselves, such as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, which have had several episodes of confrontation due to their border dispute (Baratov, 2021). Finally, these countries are also economically weak, and

dependent on Russian both for trade and/or remittances from its citizens living abroad (many in Russia) as well as for military equipment and training (Weitz, 2018, pp. 15,29).

Another important feature is their regimes' nature. All CSTO member states possess either authoritarian or hybrid regimes. This is important for some reasons. First, their main priority is to survive: the regimes want to stay in power, and the states want to continue independent – especially considering their history of Russian dominance. Thus, they will do whatever it takes in order to ensure these priorities are met (Interview 7). Second, their decision-making is centralized. Authoritarian regimes have both less constraints and counterbalances regarding their decisions. For those reasons, they are also less likely to comply with agreements – especially if their interests at a given moment are not contemplated (Interview 2). Hence, those states are more likely to defect from cooperation if they consider their interests are not being taken into account (Interview 7).

Another reason connected to the former point is their relationship with Russia. Having a powerful neighbor has positive and negative implications. If, on one side, those countries can benefit from Russia using CSTO's framework (access to military equipment, trainings, military-technical cooperation, etc), on the other, letting Russia get too close will affect their capacity of exerting sovereignty. In other words, approving and/or supporting interventions in CSTO member states can open precedents for further Russian incursions – considering that Russian contingents account for almost the totality of the alliance's forces. Therefore, those states seek the best trade-off in terms of cooperation with Russia (Interview 7).

Those elements create, still according to the interviewees, a "fractured alliance", in the words of Hovsep Khurdushyan (Interview 2). This happens also because those states have low material capabilities, and thus unwilling to compromise their already scarce and limited military forces in missions abroad. After all, they are concerned with their own problems, and not with neighbors which, at many times, have rivalries and unsolved controversies (Interview 7). Furthermore, as authoritarian regimes, their commitment to rules do not face as many constraints as in democracies, resulting in a "free-hand" for those regimes in their foreign affairs (Interview 2). Consequently, having in mind all these factors, effective cooperation becomes increasingly difficult.

Apart from this, those states also receive benefits from participating in CSTO – even if acting as free-riders. As we have seen previously, the alliance's member states have access to cheaper military equipment, military-technical cooperation, joint training, information sharing on security issues such as terrorist activities, among others (Weitz, 2018, p. 15). Consequently, if they are able to benefit even without contributing significantly, lowering

their willingness to cooperate; why would one pay for something it is possible to have for free? Even less considering a much more powerful actor can fulfill one's duties.

Nonetheless, this view does not totally prevent cooperation at all times. Not only because the case of Kazakhstan proves security cooperation is possible – although unlikely –, but also due to some congruence of interests – which is low, but exists to a certain degree (Interview 1 and 7). For example, the interviewees argued that authoritarian regimes can act jointly due to their political similarity (Interviews 2,3). Furthermore, in the specific case of post-Soviet states, there is a certain degree of shared norms: they are against colored revolutions, internal opposition, islamic extremism, etc. (Interviews 3,4, and 5).

Of course, interests' congruence of one or more of those factors does not guarantee joint actions within CSTO. One example is Uzbekistan, which left the Organization twice due to its lack of action against islamic terrorists (Davidzon, 2022, p. 77). Moreover, there is the matter of how to define a threat, even if all members agree. For example, terrorism has a different meaning in Belarus and Russia, which are mainly connected to ideology, than for Central Asian countries (Interview 6). And even when there is a general understanding of the threat, such as colored revolutions, common action might not come. There were countless changes of regime in Eurasian states in the last decades – Kyrgyzstan, for example, had this experiment twice since 2010. Therefore, something else has to explain rare events such as CSTO's intervention in Kazakhstan in 2022.

4.7 Discussion of the results

As it was shown, the interviews have generated two types of explanatory models. The first, which organized the factors using MSSD, and the second, which did not use MSSD due to its unsuitability. At a first glance, one can easily conclude that those explanations are, in principle, opposed to each other. However, paradoxically, I argue the contrary: in fact, they are complementary and, if joined together, result in an in-depth explanation for the variation of the observed outcome and provide a reasonable explanation for the research question. Furthermore, it is possible to use the conceptual and theoretical background in order to better understand the results. Thus, this sub-section will propose an explanation based on the two models, as well as interpreting the results according to the theoretical and conceptual background.

In order to reach a common ground between the two models, it is first necessary to further analyze the MSSD model. Looking at the table (Figure 4), it is evident that two factors explain the divergent outcome: “Consideration of a common and/or proprietary security threat” and “Russian interest in intervention”. In other words, when combined, these factors enable an intervention by CSTO on a given case, since they are the only ones which are only present in the divergent outcome. Furthermore, those factors would also be the only ones if none other explanation came forward.

The alternative analysis brings not only other relevant factors, but as important as the latter, context to the first analysis. After all, it is necessary to understand how CSTO members, which are new states, with a history of domination by Russia, and possessing authoritarian regimes, work differently than states with the opposite traits, such as Western democracies, for example. Moreover, those regimes – many fragile or with low capabilities – also have rivalries between themselves, as well as frequent divergent interests. Thus, their likelihood to cooperate is low (Interview 7).

Therefore, by looking differently at each analysis, one can say that, in fact, none of these models bring new conclusions to the discussion. After all, the first analysis focuses on the role of Russia and CSTO as an alliance led by the former, which was the argument utilized by authors such as Mankoff (2009, pp. 270-272) and others. In addition, the factor of common threat is directly related to the condition outlined by Duffield (2008, p. 295) for the formation – or the dissolution – of an alliance. This factor is also a necessary condition for the functioning of Collective Defense, which is exactly based on a common action against a common menace. On the other hand, the approach which centers on the role of the other member states and their unwillingness to cooperate given their internal and external characteristics is also close to the conclusions adopted by Davidzon (2022).

Consequently, if considered separately, this work does not uncover any new factors which have not been previously taken into account by previous scholars. The reason for that is simple: the interviews did not reveal any new factors and/or explanations leading in this direction – only views already elaborated on previous works. As a result, one might ask what is the conclusion and contribution of this thesis for the research on CSTO and, more broadly, ineffectiveness of alliances. I then argue there are two: an explanation which joins the two former analyses as well as some considerations on the mainstream scholar view of CSTO.

This explanation is, broadly speaking, a common denominator between two analyses which are mutually complementary. Hence, it is possible to consider CSTO as an organization led – but not necessarily controlled – by Russia, its most powerful member and

contributor, as well as the actor responsible for making the other member states coming together – and also preventing them to seek greater regional security cooperation, due to its power asymmetry, which can result in a loss of sovereignty of the other members. From the latter's side, there is generally a lack of unwillingness to cooperate, due to features such as internal rivalries, concerns about menaces to independence and regime stability, lack of common and/or prioritary security issue, the fact that authoritarian regimes have more centralized decision-making and less internal constraints to comply with agreements, which leads to a more likely defection, etc.

If we apply this general view of CSTO to the divergent case – Kazakhstan (2022) – then there is a correspondent explanation. Following the MSSD's analysis, it is the only case in which the members collectively considered a common threat (by definition, since CSTO's CSC needs unanimity in its decisions, as well as a collective recognition of threat to the alliance) and Russia, with the interests as we have previously seen, contributed for the Organization to approve an intervention. This unique combination of factors, which are the necessary conditions for an intervention, created the perfect environment for collective action. However, this intervention was also limited in scope, duration and mandate (Libman and Davidzon, 2023, pp. 1305-1306), which also prove the lack of unwillingness of the other states to promote effective security cooperation – even when they, paradoxically, agree to collectively intervene, or host the mission.

This explanation also puts together theoretical foundations, which aim to better explain and support the analysis of this work. It has shown that the alliance's member states act solely on their interests, based on cost-benefit calculations, as the rationalists argue (Keohane, 1988, p. 386). This can be seen, for example, in the Russian interest in intervention (due to economical and political interests, for instance) and in their unwillingness to act together due to different interests, such as divergent security threats for each state (as Armenia considers and prioritizes Azerbaijan as its main threat and Tajikistan transnational crime correspondingly, for instance). Thus, those states act on a rational basis – which directly influences CSTO's effectiveness as an alliance and International Organization.

Having in mind this rationalistic feature of these states, it is necessary to consider, once more, the focus of each analysis separately: the first, on Russia; and the second, on the other states and in their domestic and international environment they are inserted into. These views are directly connected to Voeten's (2019) typology of rational theories on international institutions – and, more specifically, the Distributive and Functionalist approaches, respectively. After all, while the former emphasizes the force of powerful states in the

molding of IGOs, the latter focused on the environment in which the institution was formed, including the political and cultural environment. (Voeten, 2019, p. 149) Consequently, both analyses are connected to two of the author's types.

In common, according to Voeten (2019, p. 148), both types attempt to form institutions seeking to establish equilibrium behaviour. This can be seen from the foundation of CSTO to the current dynamics of the Organization. As Weitz (2018, pp. 2-3) recalls, the alliance was founded to provide security to those new states in a new international order with new challenges as well as in an uncertain future, counting mostly on the capabilities of Russia in order to achieve this goal. Hence, its design was formed in a way it was able to both safeguard the interests and sovereignty of those smaller states, as well as counting in Russia as the biggest troop, equipment and technical-military assistance supplier. (Davidzon, 2022) In other terms, keeping Russia close enough to benefit from its presence, and distant enough not to menace their own independence (Interview 7).

Under the lenses of Functionalism and Distributive approaches, this means that CSTO is, to simply put, the best possible arrangement given the interests of all parties – but not necessarily the most effective. For functionalist view, it can be said CSTO cannot intervene more than it has because its member states, except Russia itself, fear its more powerful neighbor actions. In other words: cooperating, in the case of approving interventions, can potentially turn a threat to the member states in the future (Interviews 5,7). For example, if state A requests intervention, state B might refuse because it fears to create a precedent and suffer an undesirable intervention from Russia troops – the by far the most numerous component of the alliance's military forces.

Other Functionalism features can be seen in CSTO's activities – mainly in the assistance of domestic issues and the sovereignty costs. The former explains CSTO's intervention in Kazakhstan, since it supported the government against the protesters – even if the action was rather symbolic than an actual military mission, as Libman and Davidzon (2023) have argued. The latter explains why the Organization, as we have seen, safeguards the states' rights, such as sovereignty, which can be seen in its voting system and its rules on the matter of military action (Davidzon, 2022, pp. 101-102). Again, Kazakhstan's case is an empirical example since when Tokayev called off intervention after a few days, it was promptly granted. Thus, this means that CSTO – and its members – do not yield their sovereignty to the Organization because, simply, they are not willing to, which results in a less present alliance.

By its turn, the Distributive contributes by explaining why CSTO is ineffective regarding the answers to its requests for intervention. First, as previously mentioned, Russia is both a positive and a negative force. While its main military contributor, its presence also prevents further cooperation given its power asymmetry compared to its peers (Interview 7). Its interest in maintaining a grip over what it considers to be its sphere of influence and preventing the states present in the area from joining other IGOs help to explain why Russia invests its troops, equipment and political support in the Organization's activities (Mankoff, 2009, p. 270). Thus, as the MSSD analysis showed, its support for intervention is a necessary condition for a positive outcome, which corresponds to Voeten's (2019, p. 152) claim that powerful actors will utilize Organization in their favour, which can lead to an inefficient outcome. In other words, Russia will support intervention whenever it suits itself, which can frequently lead to a suboptimal outcome (request for intervention being denied).

The interpretation of results utilizing those two lenses is also connected to the broader problem of cooperation. Particularly, defection and (lack of) an IGO's autonomy are common features regarding international cooperation (Sterling-Folker, 2013, pp. 122-125), especially for ineffective Organizations. In CSTO's case, defection was spotted in three out of four cases. However, to what extent IGO's usual solutions to the problem – compliance and enforcement – are able to be applicable to this alliance remains controversial, at least. This happens because while the state that requested intervention considers the other members which fail to act in its favour as defectors, this same state can act as a defector if the situation was reversed. Consequently, what are the incentives for more effective cooperation utilizing compliance and enforcement with this aim? In other words, is it in their interest to promote effective security cooperation – even when they are not inclined to act in a single case?

Additionally, CSTO has a low level of autonomy. Decisions are taken by unanimity, and the Organization lacks a common agenda, as well as an independent and proactive Secretariat which actively pushes for collective actions, etc. They only execute what is outlined by the member states – something which is the result of CSTO's own charter (Davidzon, 2022, pp. 100-105). If the principal-agent is a problem for neoliberals analyzing IGOs, it is definitely not a problem for CSTO, since the alliance is clearly controlled by their member-states and lacks autonomy.

Finally, with this scenario in mind, as well as Davidzon's (2022, pp. 29-32) types of cooperation problems, it is possible to classify CSTO as a case of both Collaboration and Suasion. The first due to the fact most member states also have relevant relations with other entities – such as Armenia with NATO, or Central Asia states with the SCO – which might be

inconsistent with the Organization's aims. Thus, they prioritize seeking their own goals in the short-term instead of pursuing long-term cooperation with the other members. By its turn, Suasion is seen in a prominent Russian role within the alliance as well as in lack of cooperation from the other members, which prefer to free-ride (for example, by having access to cheap military equipment, information-sharing, military-technical cooperation) in spite of promoting more effective participation – such as when requests for intervention are denied.

Conclusion

This thesis attempted to answer the research question: what explains ineffectiveness in alliances built on collective defense mechanisms? With this goal in mind, it focused on the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the requests for military intervention by its member states, trying to find a pattern in its (deficiency of) collective action given the divergent outcomes. For that, it planned to conduct interviews with experts and policy-makers, since they could potentially provide answers for the results of an Organization which lacks transparency and effective responses to security challenges, as well as documents and literature dedicated specifically for this entity.

Although it was not possible to interview policy-makers due to the fact most have not answered the invitations or have not proceeded to the conversations, the data gathered from experts provided meaningful insights into the alliance's activities and outcomes. Nonetheless, it failed to provide new factors if compared to the relatively small literature regarding the alliance. Instead, it confirmed the two types of scholarly views on CSTO: on one hand, as a Russian-controlled alliance, which serves the purpose of keeping the post-Soviet countries in Moscow's range (Weitz, 2018; Klein, 2019, p. 32; Mankoff, 2009, pp. 270-272); on the other, an alliance composed entirely of authoritarian regimes which are more concerned with their own aims than safeguarding long-term security cooperation (Davidzon, 2022).

While those two lines of thought are indeed contrasting one another, it is also possible to argue both have their own merits and are part of the same reality. In other words, a middle ground can be found within those two theories – and existing IR literature can help to explain and support this analysis, as it was shown on the first and last sections of this work. After all, even apparently opposite theories, as for example, realists and liberals in the field of IR, can find common ground and agree on the anarchic nature of the international system, centrality of the states as main actors of the system, and rational behavior of them.

Likewise, the same can be said about CSTO. The analysis of interviews have shown how this Organization can be, at the same time, dependent on Russia in terms of military capabilities and political willingness to act, and how the other member states have and still shape the activities and scope of the alliance. As a consequence, CSTO can be considered an Organization whose apparent ineffectiveness results not only due to its most powerful member state and its interests, but also from the unwillingness of the other member states of making it more present – even when they themselves are interested in a positive outcome. In

a nutshell, CSTO is the product of what its members want from it, and it is easy to complain when one's requests are not contemplated, but hard to comply when its neighbor's requests have a similar fate. They are too busy utilizing the alliance for their own aims, with no regard to the other members' needs – all of them.

Having that in mind, it is possible to answer the research question in several ways. Considering the existing literature on alliances and the analysis of this work, the lack of common agreement and/or priority of threats (whether those are fixed or not), absence of interest and willingness of the member states (regardless of power dynamics), and subordination of their interests with the aim of cooperation, are necessary conditions for the functioning of both Collective Defense and/or Collective Security Organizations given the conceptualizations of Evans and Newnham (1997, p. 77), Morgenthau (2003, p. 784), and Rynning (2013, p. 2). Moreover, other factors such as their domestic political regimes, which entails a different engagement with external commitments (Libman and Davidzon, 2023, p. 1296), as well as possibly the scarcity of shared norms and/or values can also be accounted for.

The shortfall of complying with its member's requests and will from the states in turning CSTO into the military alliance many compare to NATO leads anyone to consider this organization is uneffective. However, comparisons such as this one, despite being common, are not viable since they are simply not meant to work in the same way as well as providing the same outcomes. Rather, they need to be considered different entities, even if both are labeled as alliances – not because of their outcomes, but due to their members, its interests and dynamics; institutional design; scope; capabilities; among others. This is the reason why many interviewees question if CSTO is an alliance at all – or maybe some because they see it as a mere tool of Russian foreign policy.

The author's personal conclusion from the research is that CSTO should be regarded as a product of its member states, their interests and needs. It was formed in uncertain times (as CST), and it continues its activities in a region where some crave for regional dominance, while others struggle to survive, balancing between one or more powers for that end. Its outcomes are dictated by these complex dynamics, and cannot be compared to other Organizations which act under totally different contexts. Thus, one can wonder whether CSTO is ineffective at all – since it was not designed nor is it in their member's interests to be turned into a more active entity.

Therefore, this thesis main contribution consists not in the discovery of new explanatory factors, but rather in a different understanding regarding CSTO. With this

consideration, several potential future research paths are open – especially because little literature exists on the topic. How do security organizations composed by authoritarian regimes differ to their democratic counterparts regarding fulfilling their requests and in promoting military action? What is the influence of shared norms and values in the functioning of security organizations? What explains persistence in (apparently) ineffective security organizations? Those are a few ideas for further research ideas which might be interesting to dig deeper into. At the end of the day, as Professor Viacheslav Morozov says: more research is always necessary.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Questions of the interviews

1. CSTO has not intervened in three out of four requests for military assistance by its member-states: Kyrgyzstan in 2010, Tajikistan in 2021 and Armenia in 2022. Why in your opinion the alliance is not effective in accomplishing its goals?

2. Do you believe there is a lack of incentives for the member-states in order to promote effective security cooperation?

3. In your opinion, do CSTO member states have a shared perception of threats? In other terms, to what degree do they consider and prioritize the same security issues and are willing to deal with them in the same way?

4. Do you believe there is a lack of shared norms and values between CSTO member states? If positive, does this lack affect the outcome of the cases?

5. Do you believe that the fact all member states are generally considered hybrid or authoritarian regimes influences CSTO's effectiveness? In other words, do domestic political systems matter?

6. Which factors led to Kazakhstan's (2022) case being different from the other ones?

7. To what degree do you believe Russia leads the organization given its strong military capabilities compared to the other member-states? If high, do you believe this dependence on Russian capabilities contributes to the alliance's ineffectiveness?

8. How do you see CSTO's future? In other terms, do you believe the alliance can become operationally null or even dissolve itself?

9. Do you have any additional comments or thoughts? Any additional features leading to CSTO's ineffectiveness - apart from the discussed ones?

Appendix 2: Interview's Information Sheet and Data Protection Form

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
(for participation in the academic research)

Dear Madam or Sir,

You are being invited to participate in a research project concerning the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO/Организация Договора о коллективной безопасности) and its member states' requests for military assistance, as part of the Master's degree dissertation carried out by Pedro Lopes de Castro Barbosa, student of the double degree in International Relations and Regional Studies of the University of Tartu and in East European Studies of Freie Universität Berlin.

You have been selected to participate in this study because you have been involved in, or possess knowledge of, the activities and/or relations of CSTO with its member states. The information provided in this form is to help you decide whether you would like to take part in this study. If you have any questions, please contact the researcher via e-mail at pedro.lopes.de.castro.barbosa@ut.ee or info@pedrolopes.international.

Aims and implications of the research: This research aims to explain the effectiveness of CSTO given its member states' requests for military intervention and their respective results. The central question is: what explains ineffectiveness in alliances built on collective defense mechanisms?

Procedures of the research: Should you agree to participate, it will take approximately 20 minutes of your time to be interviewed by the master's student Pedro Lopes. During the interview, you will be asked to answer questions about the reasons which led CSTO to intervene or not after being requested by a member-state, as well as its consequences. The interview can be video and audio recorded or only audio recorded. This ensures the researcher has an accurate record of the discussion. You can also choose not to be recorded at all. You are going to choose your preference in the Informed Consent and Data Protection Form (see next document).

Possible risks and benefits for participants: This research involves minimal risk to participants. Participants are free to withdraw from the project at any time and may skip a question if they feel uncomfortable giving an answer. You are not expected to directly benefit from participating in this research study except for insight you might gain through answering the interview questions. If you are interested in obtaining a summary of research findings, please let the researcher know.

Confidentiality of personal data and identity: The participants will choose between having their identities revealed or not, and whether they wish to be video and audio recorded, solely audio recorded, or not recorded at all. For those who choose to keep their identities confidential, their information will accordingly be kept anonymous and will only be known by the researcher, as well as their data. Moreover, given allowance for recordings of any type (regardless of identity confidentiality or not), the data (video and/or audio) files' access will be limited to the interviewer, Pedro Lopes, and can be shared only if requested by the Thesis' Committee with the University of Tartu and Freie Universität Berlin. In this case, the identities of the participants who opted for anonymity still will be respected. Furthermore, the confidential participants will remain unidentifiable after the thesis' defence. Video and audio recordings will be destroyed after the thesis defence in cases if the interviewee does not give her/his consent on further usage of these materials. Finally, the information from this study may be published and publicly presented, but interviewees who opted for identity confidentiality will remain as such.

Rights of research participants: You can choose not to participate in this study or withdraw your participation at any time during or after the research begins. Refusing to be in this study or deciding to discontinue participation will not affect your relationship with the researcher or the University of Tartu/Freie Universität Berlin. Should you encounter problems as a direct result of being in this study, please contact the researcher at the end of this Participation Sheet.

Information Sheet: You are freely making a decision whether to participate in this research study. Agreeing to the interview means that you have read and understood this document, you have had your questions answered, and you have decided to be part of the research study.

If you have any questions before or during the study, you should talk to the master's student Pedro Lopes.

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this study!

If you want to participate please sign - either manually and turning into PDF file or digitally - the attached informed consent form.

This information sheet is for you to keep.

Study Personnel:

Pedro Lopes, pedro.lopes.de.castro.barbosa@ut.ee or info@pedrolopes.international

INFORMED CONSENT AND DATA PROTECTION FORM
(for participation in the academic research)

I want my identity to be (mark your choice):

( ) Public ( ) Confidential

I allow the type of recording below (mark your choice):

( ) Video and audio recording ( ) Only audio recording ( ) No recording at all

I have read the attached Participant Information Sheet on the above-named study, and understand the purpose and procedures described within it.

I have been made aware of any known or expected inconvenience, risk, discomfort, or potential side effects and of their implications as far as the researcher currently knows them.

I understand that my participation in this study will involve me taking part in a video- or audio discussion-interview and that the questions asked will relate to CSTO and the reasons for its acceptance or refusal of military assistance by its member states and its consequences.

I understand that the data and results gathered from the interview may be diffused through the communication channels of the University of Tartu and/or Freie Universität Berlin.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have received.

I freely agree to participate in this study and understand that I can withdraw at any time without affecting my current or future relationship with the University of Tartu or Freie Universität Berlin.

I will respect the choice of publicity of identity for the interview as well as the type of recording (if any).

I allow the use of the data of the interview for the purposes of this master's thesis work.

Name/Pseudonym: _____

Signature: _____ Date/Location: _____

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