

REVIEWING THE ROLE OF COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS) WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO U.S. RIVALRY TOWARDS CENTRAL ASIA

Dr. Faisal Javaid and Dr. Asghar Ali Dashti

ABSTRACT

The history of Eurasia was diametrically changed when the erstwhile Soviet Union disintegrated into 15 new independent states. Afterward, close cultural, political and socio-economic similarities and divergent interest led these states to form the CIS. Since its inception, the CIS has played a significant role in the ever-changing international affairs, especially pertaining to Central Asia. Since all CIS states possess immense energy resources, they would play the central role in the New Great Game and the New Silk Road. Moreover, the region surrounding the CIS is also expected to be the central and decisive place for the upcoming cut-throat competition between the US and China in the imminent new cold war. The article will analyze the history briefly and the underlying objectives of the CIS and its main organizational structure. It also takes into consideration the increasing relations between the CIS and the CARs. Since the US is a major player in the region and its engagement is also augmenting, the article will discuss the economic and military relations and objectives of the US with the CIS.

Keywords: CIS, CARs, the US, Energy Game, Geopolitics, Mutual ties, Competition

INTRODUCTION

Formation of Commonwealth of Independent States

The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is the regional organization established in December 1991. It is composed of those states that once formed the greater part of the Soviet republics in the last month of its existence. When the fateful disintegration of the Soviet Union seemed inevitable and imminent, these republics including all the Central

Asian and Caucasian republics except Georgia, created a regional organization to immensely help one another in achieving specific predetermined objectives. These objectives include fostering shared financial, political, military, social, cultural, and linguistic ties while facilitating their political, economic, and defense cooperation as developing independent states. The all-out and meaningful cooperation and coordination in the afore-mentioned fields, soon after their independence were quite imperative because their all institutions were bereft of the adequate workforce to function efficiently in the aforementioned areas.

Against this background, the CIS founding members aimed at creating a much looser alternative to the USSR, entering as independent states into a voluntary union with the limited objective of only cooperation, but not integration, unlike the USSR. Toward that end, on December 8, 1991, the heads of the Soviet states of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus met in Belarus, where an accord was signed to form the CIS (Lewis & Marks, 1998, p-60), what became known as the Belovezh Accords (Spencer, 2010, p-222). The founding members made it clear that the CIS was not meant to be a Slavic alliance, and thus would be open to all Soviet republics willing to join it.

The CIS structuring practically heralded the end of the Soviet Union. On December 21, 1991, the CIS became a loose union of all the former Soviet republics apart from the three Baltic republics (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia) and Georgia, which sought a pro-Western life in the post-independence period. The leaders of the other 11 Soviet republics gathered at that time in the capital of Kazakhstan, Almaty (then Alma-Ata), to sign the CIS charter (Peimani, 2009, pp-295-296). The document stipulated that states, on equal chance, would set up the Commonwealth of sovereign States. Accord was also signed on collaborating organizations of the Commonwealth of sovereign Republics. On the basis of this document, to resolve matters relevant to with the synchronization of the commonwealth in the ground of common concerns, the decision took place to form the highest body of the Commonwealth titled as "The Council of Heads of States and The Council of Heads of Governments" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus). Coming out of two devastating civil wars in Abkhazia and South Ossetia that led to the practical (but not the official) independence of those republics, and facing many other internal political, economic, and security challenges, the exhausted Georgian

government joined the CIS in December 1993 to secure Russia's assistance, as the main backer of its breakaway republics, in dealing with those republics (Corso, 2005).

The headquarters of the CIS was in Minsk, Belarus. Since 1991, almost every CIS chairman (called the executive secretary), had been from Russia or Belarus (Lewis & Marks, 1998, pp. 59-62). At least theoretically, this regional organization was not established to create a new country along the lines of the USSR, nor was it meant to pave the way for that over time. Its creation was partially the result of the realization on the part of the member republics of the impossibility of the continuance of the Soviet Union and the need to supply a medium for a civilized divorce for the Soviet states.

Objectives and Principles of Commonwealth of Independent States

As per Article-1 of the year 1993 Contract of the Commonwealth of sovereign Republics, the CIS was found on standards of independent parity of all its members that were sovereign topics of universal law with equal privileges. The Contract of CIS puts down a multi-purpose organization based on region with quite secure collaboration in the field of politics, armed forces, finance, culture and social areas (Danilenko, 1999, p-66).

Collaboration between the members that took place by CIS was to carry out in harmony with the standard of parity all the way through cooperating organizations shaped on the basis of equality and functioning in the manner recognized by the accords between commonwealth members, which was neither a republic nor a super-republic formation (The End of the Soviet Union, 1991).

The objectives of the Commonwealth were communicated in Article 2 (Voitovich, 1993, p-419) of the Contract;

- I. To collaborate in the field of politics, finance, nature, culture, civilizations, and others;
- II. To provide complete and balanced financial and social growth in a good way of the member republics within the structure of a conventional financial space, throughway collaboration and incorporation;
- III. To guarantee the rights of human and essential liberty according to

the standards recognized worldwide and standards of global law and the CSCE documents;

- IV. To collaborate amongst the Member Republics in securing global peace and safety;
- V. To execute competent acts for the decrease of weapons and military expenses, to eliminate the nuclear and other types of arms of mass devastation and to achieve the widespread and whole disarmament;
- VI. To promote open communication, associates and progress within the Commonwealth for the citizens of the Member States;
- VII. To provide joint legal help and collaborate in other areas of lawful relations;
- VIII. To offer the passive conclusion of disagreements and clashes amongst the Commonwealth States.

The principles of the CIS were expressed in Article 3 (Ibid, pp.419-420) of the Charter:

- I. Give value to the independence of the Member States, for the absolute privilege of citizens to self-fortitude and for the privilege to decide their future with independence with no interference from outside;
- II. the holiness of boundaries of States, respect of present limits and the refusal of illegal possessions in territories;
- III. the uprightness of territories of States and denial of every acts to tear territory of another;
- IV. the non-utilization of power or the hazard of power in opposition to the political sovereignty of a Member State;
- V. the resolution of arguments by the passive way, to keep away from intimidating global stillness, safety, and impartiality;
- VI. the preeminence of global rule in thruway relationships;
- VII. non-interference in the interior and exterior matters of each other;
- VIII. the guaranteeing of human rights and fundamental liberties for all citizen with no difference of race, cultural individuality, religion, language or political or other beliefs;

- IX. authentic completion of compulsions recognized in agreement with documents of Commonwealth together with the current Contract,
- X. taking account of the concerns of each other and the entire Commonwealth;
- XI. moreover, depiction support in all grounds of their joint relations on a joint approval foundation;
- XII. joint endeavor and common support to produce passive live forms for the citizens of the Member States of Commonwealth and guarantee their financial, social and economic growth;
- XIII. the growth of jointly valuable financial, systematic and technological collaboration and the expansion of the incorporation procedure;
- XIV. the divine harmony of their citizens based on esteem for their uniqueness, close collaboration in the protection of cultural principles and cultural trade.

Membership

The CIS had 11-member states when it was established in December 1991: The Republic of Republic of Belarus, Republic of Armenia, Azerbaijan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan on equal footing form Sovereign States of the Commonwealth. Later, in December 1993, Georgia joined the Commonwealth, increasing the number to 12 (Official Website of Commonwealth of the Independent States- CIS).

The chance of future membership of the only ex-Soviet republics not in the CIS (the three Baltic States: (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) was practical unless the current situation changes, a highly unlikely scenario. This was evident by their membership in NATO and the EU, a situation that practically rules them out having any interest in joining the CIS. In the nonappearance of any apparent desired on the part of these former Soviet republics to join the organization, there was no realistic chance for the CIS's expansion in the foreseeable future. In fact, the opposite would likely be the case, as evident in certain policies of Turkmenistan, Georgia, and Ukraine. Hence, Turkmenistan ended its permanent membership on August 26, 2005, in the CIS to become an associate

member, explaining the decision as a necessity to make its position within the organization consistent with its international neutrality status (Turkmenistan Declares, 2005).

Georgia departed from the CIS Council of Defense Ministers in March 2006 as a step toward its membership in NATO. Georgian president Mikhail Saakashvili justified the decision by saying it could not be part of two military alliances at the same time (Georgia Opts Out, 2006). Georgia's planned to leave the CIS became a reality in the result of the Georgian-Russian war of August 2008. President Saakashvili, on August 12, announced his decision to leave the CIS (Georgia to Leave Alliance, 2008). The Georgian parliament adopted certain resolutions to that effect on August 14, 2008, based on which the Ministry of Foreign affairs of Georgia sent a memo on the same day to the executive committee of CIS in which it was notified that Georgia has withdrawn from the CIS (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, 2008). August 18, 2008, in the CIS Executive Committee, acknowledged a memo from the Foreign Affairs' Ministry of Georgia to withdraw from the CIS. During a summit of Foreign Ministers Council of CIS held in Bishkek on October 9, 2008, termination of the membership of Georgia was decided from the Commonwealth of Independent States, according to which Georgia's withdrawal from the CIS will be held twelve months after composed notification of the CIS Charter depositary. Thus, in according to the CIS charter, 18 August 2009, Georgia formally ended to be an associate of this global organization (Nesterenko, 2009).

A draft bill was approved in the parliament of Ukraine in which proposal was given to surrender from the CIS subsequent the Crimea's seizure by Russia. Ukraine determined to discontinue the CIS presidency of the country. Ukraine then filed a note on March 20 to the Executive Committee of CIS to postpone the presidency of the country in the Commonwealth of sovereign States (CIS) and commenced the course of extraction out of the CIS (Draft bill on Ukraine's withdrawal, 2014).

Structure of the Commonwealth of Independent States

The CIS was an unstructured merger of the past Soviet States. Not like the past Soviet merger, the Commonwealth did not have rigid central structure, and there was slight collaboration in interior and exterior matters amongst the member states. As per the Contract of CIS, the Commonwealth did not have states of being a state and did comprise any

powers of supranational type” (Leonard, 2006, p-376).

The Russian language has been nominated as the working language of the Commonwealth. 84 bodies are formed by the Sovereign States of The Commonwealth that includes 69 of sectoral collaboration. Pronouncement of the CIS leaders Council on to improve and reform the arrangement of the Commonwealth of Sovereign States on April 2, 1999, endorsed the plan of CIS (Official Website of CIS).

According to the CIS charter, the most critical intergovernmental organs are as follows (Voitovich, 1993, pp. 418-429):

- **The Council of State Heads** is the supreme body of the Commonwealth of Sovereign States. It mainly debates on the matters and solves the problems related to the common interests of the member states. The council meets annually to discuss, and its decisions are adopted by consensus and are not binding. (Art. 21)
- **The Council of the Heads of Government** organizes collaboration between the executive authorities of the member states in the social, financial and another area. The council meets twice annually to discuss, and its decisions are adopted by consensus and are not binding. (Art. 22)
- **The Council of Foreign Ministers** is the CIS decision-making body for collaboration in the activities related to the foreign policy of the member states. Through this council, the member states attempt to formulate their common stand on such issues as a crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a crisis on Kosovo, and wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The council is one of the main bodies in establishing the CIS peacekeeping forces. (Art. 27)
- **The Council of Defense Ministers** is a body under the Council of the State Heads. It coordinates military cooperation of the CIS members. (Art .30)
- **The Council of Border Troops Commander** is a body of the State Heads Council and accountable for maintaining stable condition on the outer borders of the CIS and for coordination activities of the border guards of the CIS. (Art. 31)
- **Economic Court** of the CIS ensures implementation of economic

commitments within the CIS. The court settles economic controversies and dispute among the member states. (Art. 32)

- **Inter-Parliamentary Assembly** is a consultative institution of parliamentary cooperation created to coordinated constitutional reforms in all republics. The assembly is represented by parliamentary delegations of each member state. (Art. 37)

Following are other vital organs that were created at various dates:

- **Interstate Statistical Committee** was formed according to the decision CHG in December 1991 and to coordinate activities of statistical organizations of member states, develop and implement a standardized statistical methodology, facilitate information exchange among the member states, aid national statistical services, and create and maintain the common statistical database.
- **Council of Collective Security** is the highest political body of CIS member signatories of the Agreement on Collective Security of May 15, 1992. It coordinates joint activities of the state signatories of the agreement.
- **Interstate Bank** was created in an exceptional signed Accord in the Minsk meeting conducted on January 22, 1993. It is an organ for organization and implementation of the multilateral interstate settlement of financial transactions between the central banks as well as for coordination of monetary policies of the member states (The text of the Agreement, 1993, p-6).
- **The Economic Council** is the principal decision-making body accountable for execution of the judgments approved by CHG and CHS concerning the Accord on Formation of Free Trade Zone and its procedure. It approves by the Resolution of the CHS 25 January 2000.
- **Executive Committee** is the managerial, directorial and synchronizing body of CIS that managed all actions of the State Heads Council, Government Council, Council of Foreign Affairs Ministers, Economic Council and other CIS bodies. It was approved by the CHS 21 June 2000 (Kemal, 2001, pp. 97-98).

In harmony with Article 34 of the CIS countries Contract based on the

accords of member states on collaboration in the social, financial and other disciplines might be created bodies of sectoral collaboration to perform the growth of decided standards and regulations for such collaboration and assist their execution (Official Website of CIS).

Commonwealth of the Independent States and Central Asia

The CIS was established to help the ex-Soviet republics, with their extensive multidimensional ties, in coordinating their post-independence activities in major areas of importance to all of them, particularly the foreign and economic fields (Fowler, 2007). Theoretically, the CIS provides a forum for political, economic, military/security, and parliamentary cooperation among its member states. Its various councils are meant to facilitate such cooperation. As a regional organization, the CIS is not a cohesive union of its member states. Nor is there any indication that it is heading that way, thanks to the strong reluctance of most of its members for that type of organization (Peimani, 2009, p-297).

Before the year 1992, Central Asia was considered a fraction of a combined financial room. The formation of the CIS was a significant step in allaying the fears of Central Asian states regarding reassertion of Russian hegemony and redrawing of boundaries. The CIS in the form of a group splashed in years 1992-94 to participate in local clashes in the Moldova and Caucasus and abound within Tajikistan and as financial matters were driven into the backdrop. Tajik civil war woke up the Central Asian states and Russia to the dangers of religious extremism and cross-border terrorism. A more integrated security framework evolved in the form of the Collective Security Treaty (CST) that was approved in the year 1992 with Armenia, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and, later, Tajikistan as a member (Ubaidulloev, 2010, p-44).

Central Asian Republics feared from Islamic Extremism, drug trafficking, Border issues, regional conflicts, and instability. The CIS Collective Security Treaty of 1992, the stationing of Russian troops in Tajikistan, etc. The rise of the Taliban and after 9/11, War against terrorism dramatically changed the security situation in Central Asia. Russia became the chief security guarantor of Central Asia (Ibid, p-46).

Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were against the CIS as dominated by Russia and to lessening over under the pressure of polygonal organizations. Though; supposedly a CIS member Turkmenistan stopped

even to offer secretariat the figures (Sakwa & M, 1999, pp. 379-415). Turkmenistan, with considerable export grosses from cotton and natural gas, approved an autarchic political arrangement, looking for guarantees by United Nations that it would remain neutral (Pomfret, 2008, p-20).

In the CIS, on one occasion, a mass of accord was signed by Central Asian heads to guarantee an assessment of the stability of their regimes. These accords enclosed amongst others, such segments as combined safeguarding scheme, combined border defense, keeping the peace, combined with Russia armed forces bases and collaboration of top-secret services and ministries of interior affairs, including exile of those wanted in link with political or criminal actions (Gretzky, 1997).

On October 10, 2000, five CIS states Belarus, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan founded the Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) (Zhalimbetova & Gleason, 2001). Furthermore, Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan had forged significant economic relations, which served their interests as neighboring states with extensive ties to the Soviet era. On October 6, 2007, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia announced in Dushanbe commence of a customs union in the year 2011 for which all required documents had been signed by the concerned governments (Xuequan, 2007).

Despite the numerous troubles tackled by CIS in its expansion and the complexity of its assimilation, the CIS still has a major piece in upholding the protection. A Summit Conference of CIS was conducted on October 7, 2002 in Moldova's capital Chisinau, at which a note for a combined counteract-terrorism agenda was approved, identifying collaboration on the edges of the member states, preparation on their combined acts to confront offense between years 2003 and 2004, in addition to getting an accord to augment the system of air-defense of members of CIS. From the duration of June to August 2003, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan attached in a CIS combined exercise of air-defense titled with the code "Fighting Coordination-2003," the next stage of which was conducted in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The counter-terrorist center of CIS also held a sequence of exercises to counter the terrorist in the Central Asian region. Then in summer of the year 2003 also, Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan conducted an armed forces exercise coded as "2003 calling for Counterterrorism" (Xiaoyang & Chang, 2006, p-75).

The Counter-Terrorism Center of CIS was held in regional discussions with Central Asian counter-terrorism and counter-extremism services in on October 17-18 in Bishkek. The members emphasized on likely results of the future addition of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) from Afghanistan and northern areas of Afghanistan might turn out to be a bridgehead of terrorism-related activities in opposition to countries of Central Asia. Shapes and techniques of activities related to terrorism and close ties of extremist and terrorist organizations being operational in Central Asian countries with global organizations of terrorist and intercontinental prepared criminal factions are converting. The making and smuggling of the drug from Afghanistan were managed by global groups of criminals that were connected with terrorists and the business of drug. They decided to hold an exercise of counter-terrorism under the head of CIS in the region of Central Asia in the year 2013 and Kyrgyzstan declared as the host of that exercise (CIS Counter-Terrorism Center, 2012).

Commonwealth of the Independent States and the United States of America

CIS had the intention to offset the mounting bounds being prepared by states of Central Asia with western authorities, for example, the United States and with NATO bounds that Russia sensed destabilized its regional greatest situation. Though, distrusting the intentions of Russia and wishing to declare a sovereign individuality, states of Central Asia have not clinched these proposals as enthusiastically as Russia would have desired for and carried on strengthening their bonds with western authorities in the shape of plans such as the Partnership of NATO for Peace program.

However, the 9/11 events in the U.S fundamentally transformed the geopolitics of the Central Asian locale, which got to be essential to US security intrigues. Both vitality and global terrorism attracted US physical vicinity to the locale. Though earlier it functioned through peace programs of NATO, it now became the chief security substitute for the Central Asian countries. The US and other Western companies have been steadily gaining entrance to the energy resources of the region, and with the coming of US troops, there was a real fear of CIS being marginalized in it is near abroad.' As a result, CIS started playing a more active role in Central Asia resulting in Russia's augmented armed forces and safety existence in the region (Ubaidulloev, 2010, pp. 36-37).

Following US military presence in Central Asia, Russia through CIS

showed a greater sense of urgency to balance American influence by some steps that brought the regional states into close security alliance with Russia. Tajikistan allowed a permanent Russian military base on its territory, while Kyrgyzstan permitted an airbase at Kant. Collective Security Treaty (CST), which was converted into an organization, Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), has an Anti-terrorist Centre in Bishkek (Ibid, p-47).

CIS's military entity, the Coordinating Staff (CF), was necessary for the majority of the member states lacking a military of their own in the 1990s, especially during the early years. Additionally, the growing military ties between many CIS countries and non-CIS members first and foremost with the United States, as well as with the U.S. dominated NATO had also decreased the CF's importance for many CIS member states. Apart from addressing the shortcomings of their early years of independence, the eroding enthusiasm of these states for the CIS was a result of their expanding relations with the non-CIS countries, including those in Asia and the West (Peimani, 2009, p-299).

Many of its members are apparently pro-American, seeking extensive ties with the Western countries, and thus see their long-term interest as lying in integration into the Western bloc. In part, this orientation has been reflected in the membership of all the CIS states in Partnership of NATO for Peace, while Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Ukraine have taken steps toward or expressed an apparent interest in joining NATO as members. Furthermore, it has been evident in the bid on the part of many of them to establish close ties with the European Union. The aforementioned three countries and Armenia have aimed at membership, with varying chances for success in the foreseeable future. Most important, between 2003 and 2005, three CIS countries turned into close allies of the United States because of a series of color revolutions, namely, Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan. Its growing ties with the European Union, Moldova seemed to be gradually moving away from the CIS, although this was not yet an inevitable development (Ibid, p-299).

CONCLUSION

It is axiomatic that the CIS was a grand development in the Eurasian politics. The regional organization has succeeded to gain some underlying objectives in the course of its history. However, despite possessing a comprehensive organizational structure and tremendous energy resources,

the CIS has failed to make significant headway. It is sad that the CIS has also dismally failed to foster its relations with CARs. Now, it is likely that the changing and challenging international relations would instigate some mounting issues for the organization to maximize its core objectives. More importantly, the markedly conflicting and divergent interests of the US and China about the region would bring about some stumbling blocks for the organization to achieve its targets. If the member states show seriousness and move with a commitment to reform the CIS plausibly, there still exist some chances that the organization would reap rich dividends.

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