

**UNIVERSITY
OF TWENTE.**



Bachelor Thesis

The impact of China's role within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

June 2023
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Wordcount: 10.092

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I. Abstract

This bachelor's thesis focuses on analyzing the relationship between China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a prominent multilateral platform. The objective is to examine the extent to which China utilizes the SCO for its own enrichment and interests. Through a comprehensive study, it has been established that the organization operates on the principle of mutual benefit, where all member states utilize the platform to achieve their personal goals. The aim is to answer the research question which is: "Is China aiming for hegemony in the Central Asian region through its cooperation with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization? A case study analyzing China's influence within the SCO." There is no substantial evidence indicating that China intentionally exploits the other member countries within the SCO.

II. List of abbreviations

SCO – Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

BRI – Belt Road Initiative

RATS – Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure

CHS – Council of Heads of State

CHG – Heads of Government

1. Introduction

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has emerged as a significant regional multilateral forum in Eurasia, fostering cooperation and dialogue among its member states. With China being a prominent member and a major power in the region, its role within the SCO has garnered considerable attention. This bachelor thesis aims to comprehensively examine and analyze the impact of China's role within the SCO on regional dynamics, security, and cooperation. By delving into China's motivations, strategies, and interactions within the organization, this research seeks to shed light on the implications of China's involvement for the broader Eurasian region and the SCO's objectives. Understanding China's influence within the SCO is essential for comprehending the evolving dynamics of regional cooperation and its potential ramifications on regional stability and geopolitics.

The SCO was established in 2001 and currently consists of eight full member states: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, and Pakistan. The organization's main objectives include enhancing regional security, promoting economic cooperation, and strengthening cultural and humanitarian exchanges among member states. It aims to maintain peace, stability, and development in the region. The SCO operates on the principles of consensus and non-interference in internal affairs, providing a platform for member states to discuss and decide on various issues through regular meetings of heads of state, heads of government, and foreign ministers.

Studying the relationship between China and the SCO is of utmost relevance due to its significant impact on shaping regional dynamics in Eurasia. Understanding China's role within the organization provides crucial insights into the evolving geopolitical landscape, regional power dynamics, and potential implications for neighboring countries. This knowledge is vital for policymakers, scholars, and analysts who are keen on comprehending the complexities of the region and formulating effective strategies.

The goal of this bachelor thesis is to answer the research question: "Is China aiming for hegemony in the Central Asian region through its cooperation with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization? A case study analyzing China's influence within the SCO." To address the research question effectively, several sub-questions will be explored. These sub-questions will help break down the research question into more specific outcomes that need to be presented in order to answer it comprehensively. The sub-questions include: "What is the SCO, what are its goals, and how does it work?" This sub-question will provide a foundational understanding of the SCO and its functioning. Another sub-question is "Which states are members of the SCO, and what are their positions within the organization?" This sub-question will focus on the member states and their respective roles and interests within the SCO. Additionally, "What are the challenges faced by the SCO, and how is China involved?" will explore the obstacles the organization encounters and China's level of engagement in addressing these challenges. Lastly, "What are the achievements of the SCO, and how is China involved?" will examine the accomplishments of the organization and China's contributions to its success.

To fulfill the aim of answering the research question, the thesis will first present the theoretical and methodological approaches utilized in the study. Subsequently, an extensive introduction to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization will be provided, including a historical overview, a detailed display of the member states, the organization's goals, and an exploration of its structure and decision-making processes. The thesis will then delve into an analysis of internal and external challenges faced by the SCO, examining the influence of member states within the organization, the security actions undertaken, and evaluating the significance of China's Belt and Road Initiative within the SCO framework. Finally, the thesis will present an evaluation and summary of the research findings, followed by a comprehensive conclusion. The concluding section will also feature a review of relevant literature to support and contextualize the study's findings.

2. Theoretical approach

The theoretical background is relevant for scientific work because it provides the framework for investigating and analyzing the topic. A theoretical foundation strengthens the methodological approach and the validity of the results. By integrating relevant theories and concepts, research can be better interpreted and explained. In addition, the theoretical background helps in formulating hypotheses or assumptions to be tested in the research. The hypotheses also formulate the expectations and predictions of the study. Following the hypotheses also allows for informed discussion and interpretation of the research findings. The results can be compared with existing theories and findings to identify relationships, discuss contradictions, and generate new insights. In the following, the relevant theories are presented and hypotheses are formulated.

2.1 Realism

In order to better understand international politics, various theories of international relations have been developed over time. One of these theories is realism. In 1948, Hans Morgenthau published his work, "Politics among Nations". With this book the theory of realism was born. Until then, theories such as idealism and liberalism were the predominant theories of international politics, which mainly emphasized the rationality of man and cooperation through which perpetual peace should be maintained. However, after the Second World War, it became clear that the idea of perpetual peace was not a realistic idea, and as a result, realism was born as a counter to idealism (Kleinschmidt, H), An anthropological¹ emphasis was placed on this, stating that idealism was incompatible with the nature of man. In doing so, realism was also invoked in the writings of Thomas Hobbes, in which he expressed that man is power-hungry and fixated on self-preservation. This behavior of man was applied to the behavior of states. In classical realism, power is the central concept (Sauer, F., &

¹Anthropology is the study of what makes us human.

Masala, C. 2017). Power is the goal and the means of foreign policy, since all states at some point strive for more power to arise, again balancing new conflicts and interests, always temporary. It is assumed that when one state gains power, another loses power. According to realism, the central goals of states are: Gaining, maintaining, and demonstrating power (Krell, G., & Schlotter, P. 2018).

In addition to classical realism, neorealism later emerged, which was coined by Kenneth Waltz. The concept of power was still central, but Waltz developed a new approach, as the anthropological derivation was not enough for him. In both forms, the military is in the foreground and there is anarchy, i.e. no monopoly on the use of force in international politics. This means that states are responsible for themselves and the principle of self-help applies. Optimally, states would spread their power and influence and thus accumulate more power (Kleinschmidt, H).

Since realist theorists assume that the international arena is characterized by a state of anarchy, in which there is no overarching authority, it is crucial from a realist perspective that states develop their own military strength to defend themselves against potential threats and protect their national interests. However, there is an extension to this by, for example, Robert Gilpin, who is a professor at Princeton. According to Gilpin the aspirations of states can lead them to join forces with others and then intend to change the international system if the expected gains of change exceed the expected costs, which is possible if states have superior economic, political, cultural and military resources compared to other powerful competitors (Krell, G., & Schlotter, P. 2018). States seek to maximize their power and influence to strengthen their position in the international hierarchy. This can be achieved through strategic alliances, such as the SCO, military deterrence, economic strength, and territorial expansion. Realists believe that states act rationally in their decisions and are willing to engage in both cooperation and confrontation to achieve their goals (Krell, G., & Schlotter, P. 2018).

2.2 Pursuit of hegemony

In the current world order, international politics is similar to a multipolar world view, because there is no center of power for it, but there are several regional powers. In contrast to the anarchy of state power, where there is a lack of power and there is no monopoly of power, there is the hegemonic order. In the hegemonic order, there is one state that is in supremacy and acts as a monopoly of violence. Thus, one can explain the U.S. during the East-West conflict, but in this work, the question is whether China is currently striving for the hegemonic position in the Asia bloc (Schubert, K., & Klein, M. 2011).

This thesis examines whether China aims to become a hegemonic power within the SCO. China may be striving to become a leader within the SCO and to assert its own interests and preferences over other member states. For example, in areas such as the economy. China is already an economic leader and could seek economic hegemony within the SCO by leveraging its economic power and influence in the region. This could be achieved through investment, trade, and the promotion of economic cooperation (Schneider, C. T. G. 2023), or in the area of political leadership; China could seek to

provide political leadership within the SCO by exercising its political ideas and preferences in other member states. This could involve building political alliances, promoting certain policy ideas, or pushing through policy decisions (Schubert, K., & Klein, M. 2011). It also involves security and influence. China might seek to expand its sphere of security and influence in the region to achieve its policy goals. This could include strengthening its military presence, promoting security cooperation, or influencing the security policies of other member states (Schneider, C. T. G. 2023).

2.3 Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical framework discussed earlier, this thesis formulates hypotheses that will be tested to examine the impact of China's role within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

H1: "China's only goal within the SCO is to represent its own interests in order to gain more power and subjugate the other member states." This hypothesis posits that China seeks to assert its dominance and influence within the SCO to further its own interests. The dependent variable in this hypothesis is the extent of subjugation of other member states to China's interests and influence. Subjugation can be measured through political alignment, economic dependence, and decision-making dynamics within the organization. The independent variable is China's pursuit of its own interests and the consolidation of power within the SCO. This variable will be examined through an analysis of China's policies, actions, and statements within the organization.

H2: "China is not supportive of challenges within the SCO when it does not directly benefit from them." This hypothesis explores China's stance towards challenges faced by the organization. The dependent variable is China's level of support for addressing these challenges, while the independent variable is China's perceived benefit from them. To test this hypothesis, the various challenges faced by the SCO will be identified, and China's level of involvement and support in addressing them will be analyzed. This will provide insights into whether China's support is primarily driven by its own interests or a broader commitment to the organization's goals.

H3: "When China gains power, the power of the member states within the SCO decreases." This hypothesis examines the power dynamics within the SCO in relation to China's increasing influence. The dependent variable is the power of the member states, while the independent variable is China's power within the organization. Power can be assessed through factors such as political status, economic leverage, and military capabilities. By analyzing the distribution of power and examining China's role within the SCO, this hypothesis aims to determine the relationship between China's ascent and the relative power of other member states.

By testing these hypotheses, this research aims to provide insights into China's objectives, motivations, and interactions within the SCO, and their implications for regional dynamics, security, and cooperation.

3. Methodological approach

The chosen research design for this bachelor's thesis is an explanatory case study, which aims to explain the relationship between China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). The research question, "Is China aiming for hegemony in the Central Asian region through its cooperation with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization? A case study analyzing China's influence within the SCO," falls under both exploratory and explanatory research categories. The objective is to understand China's role within the SCO and investigate how China utilizes the organization to achieve its hegemonic ambitions in the Asian region.

This research will involve exploring and describing China's role within the SCO. The nature of China's engagement, its motivations, and its activities within the organization will be uncovered through a comprehensive examination of existing literature and exploration of various perspectives and factors that contribute to China's involvement. The goal is to explain the mechanisms, strategies, and outcomes associated with China's possible utilization of the organization for its hegemonic ambitions. Historical patterns and available evidence will be examined to provide a contextual understanding of China's role within the SCO.

The research question primarily adopts a qualitative approach. It seeks to gain a deep understanding of China's role within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and how China utilizes the organization to achieve regional hegemony in Asia. Qualitative methods, such as interviews, observations, case studies, and textual analysis, will be employed to explore and understand phenomena in a holistic and nuanced manner. The analysis will rely on qualitative data sources, including policy documents, historical context, scholarly literature, government reports, academic articles, and public data archives. These sources will provide diverse perspectives and contribute to a more detailed and comprehensive answer.

It is important to note that the analysis will not only focus on China as the main actor but also on the member states of the SCO, external actors such as the United States, and organizations with which the SCO cooperates. Individual cases, such as the Belt and Road Initiative, will be analyzed to establish a connection to economic cooperation. This broader analysis will provide a comprehensive understanding of the SCO and its interactions with various actors.

However, it is worth mentioning that the availability and reliability of literature on the topic have presented certain challenges. The existing literature tends to be superficial, lacking argumentative diversity, and making claims without sufficient scientific backing. Some sources have even provided incorrect or incomplete information, leading to difficulties in obtaining accurate and comprehensive data. For instance, certain official websites, despite claims of availability in multiple languages, lack accessible information in English. Furthermore, limitations in finding information and restricted access to certain web pages have posed additional obstacles in gathering comprehensive data. Despite these challenges, efforts have been made to utilize available sources and build a meaningful argument based on the obtained information.

In conclusion, this research employs an explanatory case study approach to investigate the relationship between China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Through a qualitative analysis of various data sources and sub-questions, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of China's role within the SCO and its pursuit of hegemony in the Central Asian region.

4. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation an Introduction

The SCO is a supranational organization, nowadays, the largest regional organization in Eurasia. The total territory of its member states covers more than 34 million square kilometers over the half of the eurasian region. The total population of the member states adds up to over 3 billion people, which adds up to ½ of the world's population (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation 1A, 2023).

4.1 Historical approach

In the 1990s after the end of the Soviet Union and the cold war, it led to profound changes in Central Asia. The newly independent states in the region faced challenges such as economic transformation, transnational crime, and extremist threats. In the 1990s, there were border conflicts between some Central Asian states, especially between China and Central Asian countries. These conflicts and related security concerns increased the desire for close cooperation and conflict resolution in the region (Senkyr, J. 2022).

In 1996, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan had their first meeting in Shanghai and discussed border issues as well as regional security. These meetings led to the establishment of the Shanghai Five - an informal platform to promote dialogue and confidence building among member countries. Five years later, in 2001, the Shanghai Five members signed the Shanghai Treaty, which marked the formal establishment of the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation 1A, 2023). The treaty established the SCO's goals, including promoting regional stability, cooperating on security issues, and strengthening economic cooperation (Yuan, J. 2010).

The historical background of the SCO reflects the need to address regional challenges, promote dialogue and cooperation among countries, and support stability and development in Central Asia. Over time, the SCO has evolved into a major platform for political, economic, and security cooperation, and its agenda has expanded (Senkyr, J. 2022).

4.2 Member states

In June 2001, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was established and Uzbekistan was admitted as the sixth Central Asian state. Over the next decades, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization admitted more member states and expanded cooperation with various international institutions: Between 2004 and 2005, the SCO accepted Mongolia, Pakistan, India, and Iran as observer states which are not allowed to vote (Xue, Y., & Makengo, B. M. 2021a). Later, at the Astana Heads of State

Meeting in June 2017, Pakistan and India became full voting members. After the admission of Pakistan and India, the rest of the full members of the Organisation, which were eight, represented about 1/3 of the global GDP and almost the half of the world's population, and also four declare nuclear powers (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation 1A, 2023; Senkyr, J. 2022).

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization added more member states and expanded cooperation with various international institutions over the next few years. During the 2017 Summit, both India and Pakistan were admitted as full members. In September 2021 in Dushanbe, the process of upgrading Iran to SCO member of the SCO was pulled through at the SCO Main Committee meeting (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation 1A, 2023; Senkyr, J. 2022).

In 2022, at the Samarkand Summit, a similar process was initiated with respect to Belarus, however they remain Observer states to this day. The SCO thus has a total of nine member states - the Republic of India, Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of China, Kyrgyz Republic, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Russian Federation, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Uzbekistan and Islamic Republic of Iran. In addition, the three observer states; Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Belarus, Mongolia and eight countries are partners in SCO dialogue: Republic of Azerbaijan, Republic of Armenia, Arab Republic of Cambodia, Kingdom of Egypt, Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, Republic of Saudi Arabia, Republic of Turkey and Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (Шанхайская организация сотрудничества, 2023).

Furthermore, over time, the Organisation has spread its cooperation to other Corporations, including the United Nations, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and several others. To give a better overview, the member states divided by their status, are shown in figure 1.



Figure 1 (Hussain, Z. 2022)

4.3 Goals of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

The main goals of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) are the following: Enhancing Regional Security, Promoting Economic Cooperation, Strengthening Cultural and Humanitarian Exchanges, Facilitating Political Dialogue and Enhancing Regional Cooperation (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation 1A, 2023).

To achieve these goals, the states must have a strong cohesion within. In their internal relations, guided by "Shanghai spirit", the member states should follow the principles of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, mutual consultation, respect for the diversity of cultures and the pursuit of common development, while in their external relations they observe the principle of independence from the Cooperation, the member states and regions, and freedom to decide for oneself, for example, which alliances to join (Bildung, B. F. P. 2023).

The SCO provides a platform for member states to engage in political dialogue, exchange views on regional and international issues, and enhance cooperation on matters of common interest. It serves as a forum for discussing and coordinating policies on various political, security, and economic issues in the region (Senkyr, J. 2022). Furthermore the SCO aims to foster cultural and humanitarian exchanges among its member states. This includes promoting personal human contacts, academic and cultural exchanges, and partnership in areas as education, healthcare, tourism, as also environmental protection (Bildung, B. F. P. 2023)

4.3.1 Security Goals

All members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization strive for more security. The goal is to promote regional security and stability among its member states. This includes combating terrorism, separatism, and extremism, as well as addressing transnational organized crime and drug trafficking. The SCO aims to foster cooperation and coordination among member countries to ensure the security of the region. To achieve this goal, they enter into counter-terrorism and military cooperation within the organization (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation 1A, 2023). States, especially Russia, after they have already had to deal with terrorist attacks, and China, which wants to suppress Islamic insurgencies, are very supportive of that idea. But not only them, all member states are concerned when it comes to the situation in Afghanistan and wish that the events there do not spill over into their countries. For this purpose, the Regional Antiterrorism Structure (RATS) was also placed in Tashkent (Uzbekistan) after it was established in 2004. The task of RATS is not only to fight terrorism, but also to control drug smuggling through the member states (Aris, S. 2009).

In addition, China and Russia conducted joint military exercises in 2004, claiming that they were for SCO purposes. The other member states have also planned joint operations maneuvers. At the end of 2007, an agreement was signed by the SCO members, which is the Collective Security Treaty, which was about deepening cooperation in the areas of security and drug trafficking (Bordyuzha, N. 2011). However, although such arrangements were made, the SCO is not officially a defense alliance,

according to its own statements. Some others have understood the emergence of the SCO as a security threat and that it is only possible first steps of a cooperation that may eventually threaten „North Atlantic Treaty Organization " (NATO) (Varfolomeeva 2017; Darling 2015; Adomanis 2014).

4.3.2 Economic goals

The economic goals of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) include various aspects of economic cooperation and integration among member countries. In addition to the SCO's cooperation against the three "terrorism, extremism and separatism". The SCO seeks to facilitate economic cooperation and integration among its member states (Aris, S. 2009). This involves promoting trade, investment, and joint economic projects to enhance economic development and prosperity within the region. The organization focuses on areas such as transportation, energy, agriculture, finance, and technology to promote economic cooperation (Yuan, J. 2010).

This is to be achieved by trade promotion, the SCO aims at simplifying trade between the member countries. For this purpose, trade restrictions are to be reduced, there are to be fewer tariffs, and the economic relations between the member states are to be strengthened. This economic cooperation between the member states should be promoted in several spheres such as agriculture, energy, technology and investments. For this purpose, the states should cooperate with each other and exchange knowledge in order to become stronger through joint projects. Not only should tariffs be reduced and knowledge exchanged, but in addition to promoting free trade, there should also be an adjustment of norms and standards and the creation of framework conditions for the smooth flow of goods and services within the region (Шанхайская организация сотрудничества, 2023). Furthermore, energy cooperation is to be strengthened. Since energy resources in the SCO region are high, the organization aims to strengthen energy cooperation. This includes the exchange of energy resources, the development of energy infrastructure projects, cooperation in energy efficiency and technology, and the establishment of energy security mechanisms (Yuan, J. 2010).

In order to finance the above, the SCO seeks financial and monetary cooperation. Financial and monetary cooperation is supported to promote the stability of national currencies and the financial system in the region. This includes the expansion of payments, exchange of currencies, promotion of investment, and cooperation between central banks (OBOReuropa. 2020)

4.4 Structure and decision making process of the SCO

The SCO has a complex organizational structure. The decision-making process in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization involves several key steps and mechanisms. An overview of the decision-making process within the SCO is provided in this Part. Decision making in the SCO primarily takes place through meetings and summits. The organization holds regular meetings at various levels, including meetings of heads of state, heads of government, foreign ministers, and

working groups. The SCO Summit, held every year, serves as the highest decision-making body (Шанхайская организация сотрудничества, 2023).

The central decision-making body of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is the Council of Heads of State (CHS), which meets annually in one of the capitals of the member states. There is also the Council of Heads of Government² (CHG) and regular meetings of foreign ministers. The CHG also meets once every year to discuss a strategy for multilateral cooperation and precedenced areas of cooperation within the Cooperation, to solve some key and pressing economic and other matters, and to adopt SCO's yearly budget. The SCO operates on the basis of the consensus principle, which means that decisions are made through mutual agreement among member states. Consensus requires all member states to reach a common understanding and support a decision (Yuan, J. 2010; (Шанхайская организация сотрудничества, 2023).

The agenda for SCO meetings is set in advance, and member states can propose topics or issues to be discussed. The SCO Secretariat, located in Beijing, plays a role in coordinating the agenda and facilitating discussions. The Secretariat has the Secretary General at the top, which coordinates, provides information on analytical, legal and organizational matters and gives technical support for the Organization's activities. The Secretariat coordinates cooperation of the Organization with observers and dialogue partners in accordance with SCO legal documents. It also maintains contacts with States and international organizations on issues relating to the Organization's activities and, as agreed by member States, concludes relevant documents for that purpose (Шанхайская организация сотрудничества, 2023).

Before decisions are made, member states engage in consultations and negotiations to address differences, find common ground, and reach consensus. The SCO has established various working groups and expert committees on specific areas, such as security, economy, trade, and cultural cooperation. These groups conduct in-depth studies and provide recommendations on relevant issues, which can inform the decision-making process (Шанхайская организация сотрудничества, 2023). The secretariat also interacts with non-governmental entities within the SCO framework in accordance with the legal documents regulating their activities. The Secretariat organizes briefings for journalists and posts its own articles on the official SCO webpage. In agreement with member States and within budgetary limits, the Secretariat also recruits scientific experts for the research work on topics of interest to the SCO and organizes scientific symposia and conferences (Yuan, J. 2010; Шанхайская организация сотрудничества, 2023).

Also, the SCO has two permanent bases: a headquarters in Beijing and a Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, which was already mentioned before. Commissioned in 2004, the RATS is designed to ensure effective cooperation among participating agencies and the development of a database of suspected persons, as well as to serve as a forum for operational-tactical

² the prime Ministers.

exercises (Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation). This is followed up with military exercises, including visible cooperation among member states. Under the code name the first collective training between China and Kyrgyzstan took place on the common border in October 2001. In the following years, the "Peace Mission" format, in which primarily Russia and China participate, as well as sporadic participation by Central Asian states, became the most popular (Li, W., Dongchen, Z., & Kolotova, A. 2020),

After discussions and consultations, decisions are often formalized in the form of joint statements, declarations, or agreements. These documents outline the shared positions, goals, and actions agreed upon by member states. Once a decision is reached, it may require ratification or approval by the respective national legislatures of member states. Implementation of decisions is the responsibility of individual member states, and they are expected to take necessary actions to fulfill their commitments (Xu, X., & Rogers, R. A. 2023). In order to get a better understanding of the complex structure, gradation and connection between the organs of the organizational body of the SCO, figure 2 is inserted.

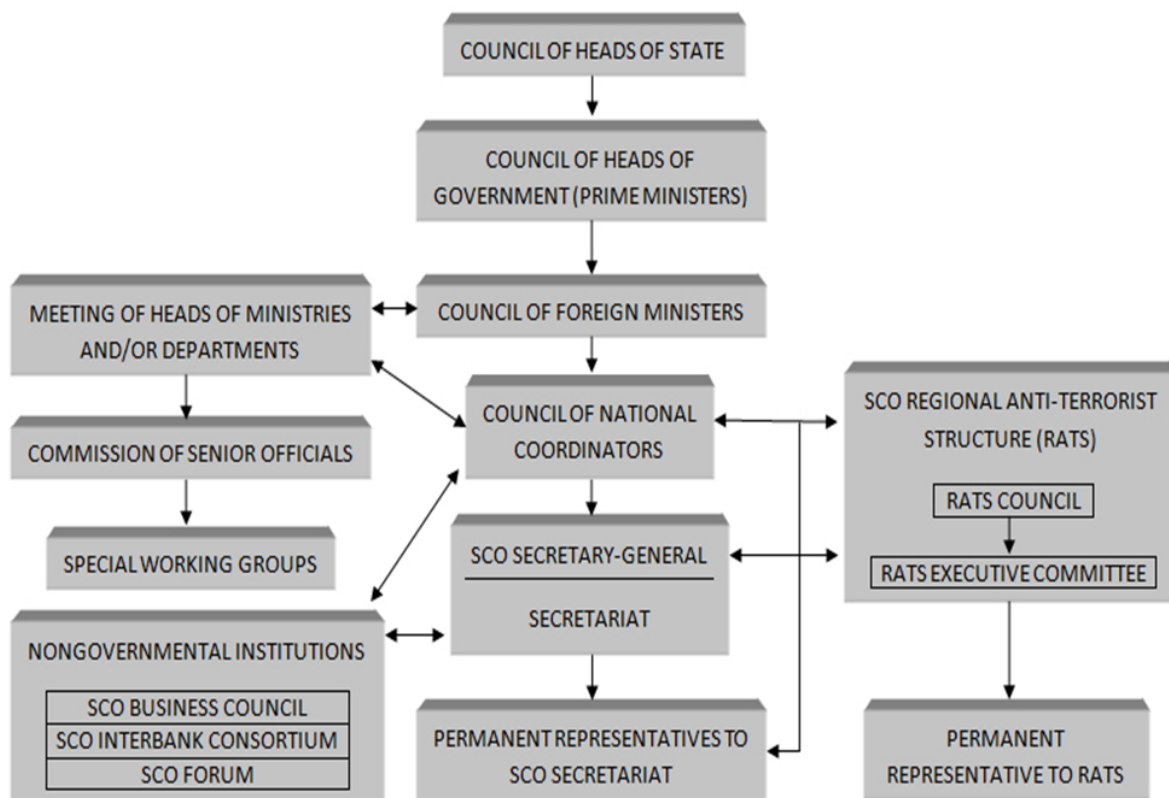


Figure (2) & (Hussain, Z. 2022)

5. Internal Challenges

Although the organization seems well organized, it is still an alliance of powerful countries which covers more than 34 million square kilometers and about 42% of the world's population, and each member wants to impose its own country. In the following part, the challenges within the organization are presented (Yuan, J. 2010).

5.1 “Shanghai Spirit”

In every organization, there is an inner force that explains the cohesion of the organization. It is claimed that the reason why the Shanghai Cooperation Organization continues to exist, takes on more influence within global politics, and is one of the most significant unions in the Asian area is the "Shanghai Spirit." This is considered to be the inner point of attraction that has bound the association together since its inception, helping SCO states to maintain inter-state relations and work together to address challenges (CMFA, 2016).

Basically, the spirit is based on member states trusting each other, being beneficial to each other, being treated equally by each other, accepting cultural differences, and striving together for more advanced development. The "Shanghai Five" have already invoked the "Shanghai Spirit" (Senkyr, J. 2022).

Two treaties signed by them set the first steps towards common trust, the Agreement on Strengthening Military Confidence in Border Areas, signed in 1996, and the Agreement on Mutual Reduction of Forces in Border Areas, signed one year later, in 1997 (Mutual Reduction of Military Forces in the Border Areas; IV Agreement between the Government of the Republic of India 1997).

This was the beginning of a new cooperation with a special cohesion, which had not existed before in such a form. The basis was created for a cooperation of states with collective interests. Over time, the Shanghai Spirit has evolved, but still represents an important reference point for SCO cohesion today (Senkyr, J. 2022).

In 2018, President Xi Jinping delivered an important speech during the SCO Summit in Qingdao titled "Carrying forward the Shanghai Spirit and Building a Community with a Shared Future." Wang Yi made a similar speech in 2022, titled "Carrying forward the spirit of Shanghai to continuously promote the building of a closer SCO community with a shared future." Both speeches focused on "strengthening solidarity and cooperation" by "building mutual trust and safeguarding the sovereignty, security and development interests of all countries." Promote participation in deepening the quality of belt and road cooperation and more, which can be seen in the appendix. In summary, the development of the SCO in recent decades has brought the Shanghai spirit back to the forefront (Full text of President Xi's speech at SCO Summit; Senkyr, J. 2022; ; Xue, Y., & Makengo, B. M. 2021a).

5.2 Collective Identity Crisis

The structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization with the currently eight member states can be described as three major countries and five smaller countries. While the SCO is led by the principles

of the "Shanghai Spirit" and the concept of an Organisation looking forward to a shared future, the understanding of this shared future within the SCO is relatively weak. There are several factors contributing to this situation (Senkyr, J. 2022).

On the one hand, the competition in the middle of the leader states China, Russia, and India have somehow diminished the Organisations sense of community. As major countries, all three aspire to exert their influence and leadership within the SCO, often seeking key roles in the organization's development. On the other hand, the smaller countries of the SCO prioritize their individual national interests and development strategies. The member states, which became independent because of the fall down of the Soviet Union, highly value their sovereignty. They prioritize their own interests and are unwilling to relinquish more rights to the SCO. This approach hinders the development of a cohesive community and shared aims within the organization (Senkyr, J. 2022).

It was decided that India and Pakistan would be admitted as full members to the SCO, at the Astana Summit back in 2017. Prior to this decision the two "leaders" were Russia and China, and the other four member states were equally participating but had redirected the flow of the SCO.

In June 2017, the SCO saw a change within the organization with the admission of India and Pakistan as two new member states during the Astana Summit. This was the first enlargement since the founding of the SCO. This enlargement changed the dynamics of the member states. Previously, there were two (Russia and China) who were perceived as leaders, and the remaining four member states had the same rights, all had to agree on decisions and also had the right to veto, but they were subordinate in terms of power. Not only did the dynamics within the SCO change with the admission of the two countries, it also had an impact on the development of the interests of the member states. The difference between China, Russia and the others proved to be that China and Russia, as world powers, had more national strength, status and influence than the four Central Asian states (Senkyr, J. 2022). Although they all have the same diplomatic decision-making power, in this case the point is that the two powerful states, because they had more experience, took more initiatives and were more decisive in ensuring equal rights for all members (Li, W., Dongchen, Z., & Kolotova, A. 2020).

At the same time, however, they supported the organization the most through financial means. Thus, they have been able to assert their own interests within the organization and at the same time the two (Russia and China) have given up the most. Unfortunately, there is hardly any evidence on the shares of financial participation, so no more precise information can be provided in this regard.

Later, the SCO's internal power structure changed significantly, and the internal pattern of cooperation became more complex. The inclusion of India, an important country in South Asia, disrupted the previous pattern of China and Russia (Li, W., Dongchen, Z., & Kolotova, A. (2020).

This shifted the relationship within the organization from a two-way relationship between China and Russia to one that included India. This meant that the leaders were now Russia, China, and India.

While the new membership changed the dynamics within the organization, the position of power remained with China and Russia. Whose relationship is currently better than ever (Timofeev, I. V.,

Lissovolik, Y., & Filippova, L. 2017; Senkyr, J. 2022). Why India did not bring decisive changes will be discussed in more detail later.

6. External Challenges

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is often viewed as the opposition to the western society. The question that arises is whether that is true.

6.1 SCO and USA

Currently, the USA, China, Russia and India are the most powerful countries that are connected to the SCO. Only the USA is not a member of the organization. However, the United States comes very close to the problems of the SCO. As mentioned earlier, Afghanistan is a problem area for the members of the SCO. And the U.S. has some influence in Afghanistan, even after the withdrawal of troops by the current president, the influence in the region has not been abandoned (Fredholm, M. 2013). Under the Trump administration, the United States launched the Indo-Pacific Strategy³, which implies that leading Asian states like India, Japan, and Australia would join forces with the United States to counter China's rise. This framework has been seen as a sign of a "New Cold War" (Chao, W. 2021).

The United States has also implemented the New Afghanistan strategy, which encompasses a comprehensive regional approach. It advocates a shift from a more observative perspective to a more present one, employing all available diplomatic, economic, and military tools. This strategy aims to achieve significant outcomes in Afghanistan, prevent the resurgence of terrorist safe havens, and maintain U.S. leadership in the region. It also seeks to avoid a sudden withdrawal that could create a security vacuum and enable the reemergence of terrorism (Tian, 2018). In addition, the United States has introduced the New Central Asia Strategy, which promotes the emancipation and sovereignty of all states in the region. This strategy aims to strengthen the sovereignty and independence of Central Asian states, mitigate terrorist threats, promote stability in Afghanistan, enhance connectivity, facilitate rule of law and human rights reform, and promote U.S. investment and development in the region. Territorial integrity is also to be strengthened by the U.S. However, even after the withdrawal of forces, the U.S. does not want to lose its connection to the region in order to continue to assert itself. (Putz, 2020).

³ Indo-Pacific strategy is a political concept that encompasses the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean region. It is used by various countries and organizations to describe their interests and strategies regarding security, economics, and diplomacy in this region. In general, the Indo-Pacific Strategy aims to maintain an open and rules-based order in the region and promote cooperation among countries. It emphasizes the importance of freedom of navigation and free trade, as well as the promotion of democratic values, human rights, and the rule of law. (The white House, 2022)

It seems that the U.S. would give a lot to suppress Russia and China, these strategies such as emphasizing the problems in the Asian region in particular gives a different angle to the situation and increases the criticism of China (Rowden, 2018). It can be assumed that the U.S. would like to instigate disputes within the SCO states in order to benefit from them afterwards (Hao, 2021).

6.2 SCO as an anti-Western alliance?

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is an international organization in which the United States and the West have no direct influence. It is the largest regional political organization in the world with considerable economic potential. It may be that some SCO states do not trust the U.S. completely and seem rather skeptical toward it. However, most of them want to have a peaceful relationship, especially with regard to the economic aspect, and none of them wants to come into conflict with the USA (Center for Security Studies. 2008). In addition, it lacks a common vision and a clear political concept. The loose organizational structure does not open up much room for maneuver, and a considerable portion of the SCO's activities are limited to symbolic politics and representational tasks. Nevertheless, the SCO's potential should not be underestimated (Senkyr, J. 2022). It is a basis for dialogue for countries that might otherwise never get to share common goals and strive for them. The new focus on strengthening trade, economic, cultural, and humanitarian ties and improving connectivity among member states can provide important impetus for economic development in the region. With the admission of Iran and soon maybe Belarus, the SCO is moving closer to Europe. This should be taken into account in the foreign and economic policy concepts and projections of the EU and also Germany (Senkyr, J. 2022).

7. Influence the member states have within the SCO

Since the beginning China had a position of influence, even as a part of the Shanghai five, due to economical, political and military power. Russia and India are considered China's leading colleagues. However their power is not consistent even though they have the resources.

7.1 Russia's Influence is decreasing

The political, military and cultural influence of the Russian Federation in the post-Soviet space remains strong. On the economic level, however, China has meanwhile taken over the leading role. And Russia's dominance is also declining in the area of military cooperation. This can be seen especially since the beginning of the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine. Russia has already had to withdraw troops and military equipment from its bases in Central Asia several times in order to send them to the front in Ukraine (Senkyr, J. 2022). In doing so, it is putting its role as a power of order in the region at risk. This became clear with regard to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Already during the last war between the two countries in 2020,

Armenia hoped in vain for support from Russian troops stationed in the country. Russia, as Armenia's ally, helped negotiate a ceasefire with Azerbaijan and installed peacekeeping troops in the disputed region. However, on 13 September 2022 - shortly before the SCO summit began - Azerbaijani troops again attacked Armenian territory (Senkyr, J. 2022).

Between the two Central Asian states of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, there was an armed confrontation immediately before the SCO summit over the border area in the Fergana Valley claimed by both sides. Russia has military bases in both countries. Armenia as well as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are members of the Russian-dominated military alliance "Collective Security Treaty Organisation" (CSTO), which was about deepening cooperation in the areas of security and drug trafficking, and it remains to the development in the near future whether Russian influence is still sufficient to get these conflicts under control. However, it is giving other member states the possibility to use the situation (Senkyr, J. 2022).

7.2 Summit in Samarkand

Following the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic four years ago, the leaders of the SCO member states met again in person for the first time for their annual summit in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, on September 15-16, 2022. An important item on the agenda was Iran's admission as a full member of the SCO. Iran had applied for SCO membership 15 years ago, but first had to settle for observer status. Last year, the application was officially accepted and it will take another year to complete all formalities (Senkyr, J. 2022).

The first meeting where Russian president Vladimit Putin participated after his invasion of Ukraine, was followed with great attention. It was an SCO Summit where Xi Jinping was participating as well (Hussain, Z. 2022).

Despite the events, the two leaders stuck together. They called for a reordering of the international order and criticized Western "bloc politics" and interference in the internal affairs of third countries. This referred to the democratic revolutions and transformation processes to overthrow autocratic regimes in the last two decades, also known as "color revolutions." (Senkyr, J. 2022; Xue, Y., & Makengo, B. M. 2021a).

Russia was not criticized by China and expressed its understanding of the situation with Taiwan⁴. The Russian war of aggression in Ukraine generally played no role at the SCO summit and was largely ignored by participants (Knipp, K. 2022). Only India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his conversation with Vladimir Putin, was critical of the consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, saying that "the present era is not a time of war (Die Shanghaier Organisation für Zusammenarbeit und ihre geopolitische Bedeutung. 2022).

⁴ The problem between Taiwan and China lies in their long-standing political conflict over Taiwan's status. While China seeks reunification under the "one China principle," Taiwan seeks international recognition and preservation of its sovereignty.

8. Security

Security is the original goal of the SCO. The member states of the SCO take various measures in the military sense to ensure security in the region. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation member states regularly conduct joint military exercises to improve the cooperation, interoperability, and coordination of their armed forces. These exercises include various scenarios such as counterterrorism, peacekeeping, cross-border operations, and disaster response. In addition, SCO member states share information and cooperate on security and intelligence activities. They share intelligence on terrorism, extremist groups, organized crime, and other security-related issues to combat common threats. To ensure border security and control, members work closely together, coordinating their border security operations, sharing information on cross-border activities, and fighting smuggling, trafficking, and other cross-border crimes (Bildung, B. F. P. 2021).

One focus of the SCO is the joint fight against terrorism. Member states coordinate their efforts to identify and combat terrorist organizations and extremist groups. They share information, experience, and best practices and conduct joint counterterrorism operations (Center for Security Studies (CSS)).

To avoid conflicts in general, measures are also taken within the SCO for conflict prevention and resolution. SCO member states work together not only to resolve existing conflicts but also to prevent conflicts (Huisken, R. 2009). They promote dialogue, negotiation, and diplomacy to find political solutions to regional disputes. The SCO also supports the resolution of border disputes and promotes stability in the region.

However, it must be noted that the SCO is not a military alliance, but only a political platform, including security cooperation. In the West, the SCO's military exercises in particular caused irritation. These gave rise to fears that the organization could build up a permanent military force and use it to assert its interests in the region (Center for Security Studies CSS 2008). However, there is little evidence that the SCO could expand its military component. The SCO also states that it is an exercise with anti-terrorist objectives. In fact, the majority of the scenarios chosen were about dealing with terrorists or insurgents rather than interstate conflict. Member states cooperate in the military field to strengthen security, stability, and cooperation among member states, focusing on non-traditional threats such as terrorism, extremism, and transnational crime (Bildung, B. F. P. 2021).

9. Belt and road initiative

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) holds significant importance for the relationship between China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) due to its wide-ranging implications. The BRI aims to enhance connectivity and promote economic integration among participating countries, primarily through infrastructure development, trade facilitation, and investment cooperation. This comprehensive initiative encompasses various sectors, including transportation, energy,

telecommunications, and finance, creating extensive opportunities for collaboration between China and the SCO member states (Shakhanova, G. V., & Garlick, J. 2020).

As a regional organization consisting of China, Russia, and several Central Asian countries, the SCO stands to benefit from the BRI's infrastructure projects. The development of transportation networks, such as roads, railways, and ports, can improve regional connectivity, strengthen trade links, and foster economic growth within the SCO. By enhancing transportation infrastructure, the BRI helps reduce trade barriers, enhance logistics efficiency, and expand market access for goods and services. This is particularly advantageous for landlocked SCO member states in Central Asia, as improved transportation corridors provide them with enhanced connectivity and access to global markets (Shakhanova, G. V., & Garlick, J. 2020).

Moreover, energy cooperation plays a pivotal role in the SCO-China relationship and among member states. The region is rich in significant energy resources, while China's energy needs continue to grow rapidly. The BRI includes projects related to energy infrastructure, such as pipelines, power grids, and renewable energy initiatives. These projects facilitate energy cooperation by enabling resource sharing, investment collaboration, and enhanced energy security between China and SCO member states. The joint development of energy resources and the establishment of energy transportation routes contribute to the overall stability and sustainability of the region.

Beyond the economic aspects, the BRI also holds geopolitical significance. The initiative represents a significant shift in the international political and economic order, providing a new element and platform for restructuring global relationships. By promoting mutual credit and economic development, the BRI becomes a catalyst for reshaping the international landscape. The SCO, as a regional organization, can leverage the BRI as a starting point to deepen cooperation in Central Asia and neighboring regions. The expansion of the SCO's membership and its interaction with the BRI and the Eurasian Economic Union transformed it into an amphibious organization with a broader geographical reach and enhanced cooperative advantages.

Furthermore, the BRI fosters diplomatic cooperation between China and the SCO member states. It encourages bilateral and multilateral dialogues, negotiations, and partnerships to promote infrastructure development and connectivity. Through such engagements, the SCO and its member states can deepen their collaboration with China on various fronts, including economic, political, and cultural matters. This strengthens the overall relationship between China and the SCO, creating a platform for broader regional cooperation and mutual benefits.

In summary, the BRI's focus on infrastructure development, trade expansion, energy cooperation, and diplomatic engagement aligns with the goals and aspirations of the SCO. It provides a framework for deeper economic integration and cooperation between China and the SCO member states, enhancing their relationship and fostering regional development and stability. By capitalizing on the opportunities presented by the BRI, the SCO and its member states can tap into the potential for economic growth, improved connectivity, and enhanced cooperation across a wide range of sectors.

In order to get a better overview of the “One Belt One Road” figure 3 is added.

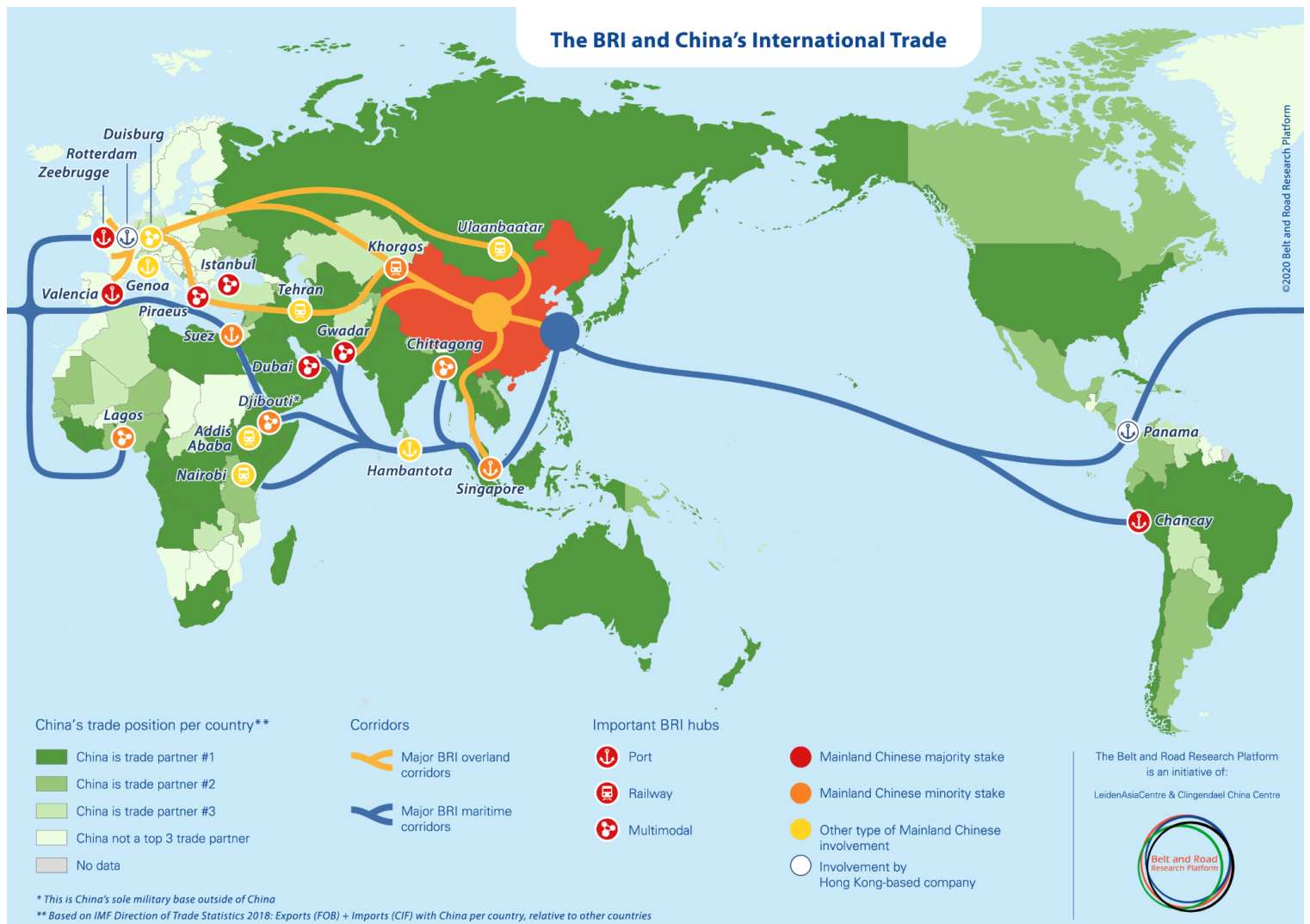


Figure 3 (Jonas, 2022)

9.1 Funding

The general founding of the SCO each member country contributes financially to support the organization. The amount of the contribution is usually based on the economic and financial potential of each member country. The exact funding mechanisms of the SCO may vary depending on the organization and the time period. Member countries may make their financial contributions in the form of membership fees, donations, or other financial support. In addition, they may also provide voluntary contributions for specific projects or activities within the SCO (Xiaoqiong, G 2023).

Unfortunately, the financial details of the SCO are often not publicly available and not fully disclosed. The exact financial contributions of each member country may be treated as confidential information and may change over time (Shakhanova, G. V., & Garlick, J. 2020).

An important direction in further regional economic integration within the SCO is financial cooperation. It not only serves to build joint projects, but is also useful for economic transformation and structural adjustment within member states. In February 2011, China proposed the establishment of an SCO development bank to promote financial support for bilateral and multilateral infrastructure projects. The continuous deepening of energy cooperation is also of great strategic importance (Xiaoqiong, G 2023).

The SCO development bank is on the one hand about expanding financial cooperation and continuous deepening in investment and financing within the SCO. As the organization develops and expands its financial role, some banks, such as China National Development Bank, have gradually raised the credit line for infrastructure development in the region. The SCO Interbank Consortium (SCO Interbank Association), established in October 2005, created a diversified platform for financial cooperation that takes into account national conditions by building on government support and business participation to advance the sustainable development of economies and societies in member countries (OBOReuropa. 2020).

On the other hand, the system of country currency swaps has been gradually improved. The development of settlement in local currency under the SCO remains important for the regionalization strategy of the Renminbi⁵ (RMB) and Rupee⁶. China and Russia are calling for a change in the current international monetary system in the interest of developing countries to eliminate the risk caused by the dollar in trade settlement. In June 2011, the central banks of both countries concluded a new swap agreement. The total amount of effective bilateral currency swaps between China and Russia was already 150 billion RMB, or around 20 billion euros, in 2014.

9.2 Impact on the SCO and its members

Since its establishment, the members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization have achieved considerable success. One of them is that regional economic cooperation has been strengthened. Through trade integration, interbank cooperation and energy development. For example, in 2000, the total trade volume between China and other member states was less than 10 billion U.S. dollars, while in 2016 it was more than 93.7 billion. The volume of trade between SCO countries approached \$3 trillion in 2017, and the total volume of mutual investment exceeded one trillion. Unfortunately, there is no exact data on what share was contributed by each member state (Yuanhong, H. 2019).

With the BRI launched by China in 2013, a global development and infrastructure strategy to integrate the markets of Asia, Europe and Africa with China, it is also known as the "New Silk Road" (Summers, T. 2016). Russia has promoted BRI from the beginning, as most transportation routes from China to Europe pass through Russian territory. Many member states of the Shanghai Cooperation

⁵ The Chinese money is called Renminbi - "money of the people". The currency is the yuan, but when paying, it is sometimes called kuai.

⁶ Die Wahrung Indiens ist die indische Rupie.

Organization, especially in Central Asia, are also now involved in BRI and have had extensive infrastructure, logistics, and transportation projects built on their territories as part of it. Therefore, the BRI is also supported by most of the governments of the SCO countries (Rab, A., & Zhilong, H. 2019; Yuanhong, H. 2019).

Only India refuses to participate in the initiative. This is partly due to tensions between India and China over historic border disputes in the Himalayas. Also, India is concerned about China's growing interest in South Asian countries such as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, the Maldives, and Nepal, which it considers traditional Indian spheres of influence (Rab, A., & Zhilong, H. 2019). Arguably, the main obstacle to India's participation in the BRI is the establishment of an economic corridor between China and Pakistan, India's rival. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor is a flagship project of the BRI, building roads, railroads, digital communications networks, ports, and special economic zones on Pakistani territory. Many of the connecting routes between Pakistan and China pass through Kashmir - a region claimed by both New Delhi and Islamabad (Summers, T. 2016).

10. Evaluation and summary of the results

Now that all the important aspects regarding the relationship between the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and China are presented, it will be further discussed, analyzed, and summarized below. Internal cohesion within the SCO faces challenges, primarily due to its complex organizational structure. While the structure may be intricate, it does not necessarily equate to an effective framework. The implementation of any idea requires the agreement of all member states. Consequently, members tend to initiate very few projects as they have to engage all members from the outset to secure their votes. If the organization aims to achieve success, this aspect presents an opportunity for improvement. Thus, not only China but also other major countries tend to prioritize their own interests within the SCO.

China actively pursues its economic interests in the region and seeks opportunities to foster trade, investment, and economic cooperation within the SCO. This aligns with the pursuit of power and economic advantage, as emphasized in the realism perspective. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) exemplifies this approach. The initiative received significant support and implementation due to China's direct involvement. Consequently, it has become evident in recent years that formerly underdeveloped countries are experiencing steady growth and expanding their markets across the Asian region. SCO members benefit from the BRI as it brings them closer to their goal of economic security. To finance the initiative, China established development banks to provide financial support and began providing loans to countries requiring infrastructure development within their borders. However, those countries that borrowed heavily from China are now indebted, granting China additional influence over the member states should it choose to leverage it.

China and Russia have demonstrated a strong partnership within the SCO. This is evident in their mutual non-criticism of events such as the war in Ukraine and Russia's silence on the potential invasion of Taiwan. Under the pretext of SCO goals, the two countries conduct joint military exercises. Russia has been supportive of the BRI from the outset, as many transportation routes from China to Europe pass through Russian territory. Simultaneously, Russia has shown a decline in economic growth, creating opportunities for China's development. This aligns with the principle that when one state loses power, another benefits. Despite Russia's diminished regional power, it remains a dominant energy supplier and possesses a formidable military force.

When India joined the SCO, it displayed some interest in asserting itself as a leading force. However, the strong relationship between Russia and China overshadowed India's aspirations. According to the realism perspective, India was unable to challenge either Russia or China for power. The United States, as a global power, currently poses as the largest opponent to China, and this rivalry extends to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Both countries possess regional and global influence in economic, political, and military realms. Both China and the U.S. share an interest in combating terrorism and extremist ideologies, which is a priority area for the SCO. While they can cooperate within the SCO on specific counterterrorism initiatives, the organization's proximity to Afghanistan renders it vulnerable and reliant on the de-escalation of disputes in that area.

China's growing influence within the SCO is viewed by some as a challenge to U.S. influence in the region. The SCO's focus on regional integration, connectivity, and economic cooperation through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative aligns with China's broader regional aspirations. This has raised concerns about potential competition or strategic rivalry between China and the United States in the Eurasian region. Moreover, the SCO does not include the U.S. in its decision-making processes, making it one of the few organizations where the U.S. lacks influence. It is in the U.S. interest to portray China in a negative light, as this increases its chances of prevailing — a perspective consistent with realism.

11. Conclusion

Before addressing the research question, comments will be provided on the hypotheses presented in the theoretical approach. The first hypothesis posits that "China's only goal within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is to represent its own interests in order to gain more power and subjugate the other member states." Based on the earlier arguments, this hypothesis can be partially confirmed. China indeed represents its own interests and seeks to advance them, but there is no evidence to suggest that China is actively aiming to subjugate the other member states. Therefore, the hypothesis is not entirely valid.

The second hypothesis states that "China is not supporting challenges within the SCO when China does not profit from it." The entire organization is built upon the idea of member states benefiting

from joint projects. Consequently, it would be impossible to implement a project if all members did not agree through the decision-making process alone. Therefore, this hypothesis is not entirely supported.

The third hypothesis suggests that "When China gains power, the power of the member states decreases." This hypothesis can be considered true based on the earlier arguments. China holds a superior position in the three categories of economics, military, and politics compared to the other member states, granting it a dominant role within the SCO. However, if either Russia or India were to catch up with China in these categories, China would no longer maintain its status as the most powerful country within the SCO.

The research question of this thesis is "Is China aiming for hegemony in the Central Asian region through its cooperation with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization? A case study analyzing China's influence within the SCO." Now that the information has been collected and evaluated, we can provide an answer to the research question. It cannot be definitively stated that China is striving for hegemony through the SCO based on the arguments presented. While China has the potential to develop into a hegemonic state in the Asian region, it has not yet taken active actions in this regard. China seeks to maintain and expand its power and influence in the region. As the largest member country of the SCO, China holds a significant economic and military position. Through its membership in the SCO, China can solidify its regional leadership role and influence policy decisions and initiatives. However, it is worth noting that member states, particularly those that were once part of the Soviet Union, are currently unwilling to relinquish their sovereignty again.

12. Outlook

The SCO and China are likely to continue strengthening their cooperation in various areas. The Organization provides a platform for regional dialogue, economic integration, and security cooperation. As China aims to expand its influence and enhance its regional standing, it is expected to actively engage with the SCO, leveraging its economic and diplomatic initiatives, including the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Also the economic integration within the SCO is likely to remain a priority. China's economic prowess and the BRI's infrastructure projects can contribute to regional development, trade expansion, and connectivity. This can foster closer economic ties between China and SCO member states, creating mutual benefits and shared prosperity. China's diplomatic engagement with the SCO is expected to continue, aiming to shape regional dynamics and increase its influence. China may seek to utilize the SCO as a platform for engaging with neighboring countries, resolving disputes, and promoting its foreign policy objectives.

China's desire for power involves expanding its influence regionally and globally. Through initiatives like the BRI, China seeks to enhance connectivity, economic integration, and infrastructure development, thereby increasing its influence over participating countries. The SCO can serve as a platform for China to strengthen its regional influence, particularly in Central Asia. China's economic

growth and desire for power are closely linked. China's rising economic strength allows it to exert influence through trade, investment, and economic partnerships. China's pursuit of economic dominance is evident in its efforts to establish economic corridors, increase market access, and shape regional trade agreements.

It's important to note that China's desire for power is a complex and multifaceted topic, influenced by various factors and geopolitical dynamics. The outlook for the SCO-China relationship and China's pursuit of power will depend on a range of internal and external factors, including evolving regional dynamics, geopolitical shifts, and the responses of other countries involved.

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