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Будущее Шанхайской организации сотрудничества в российско-китайских взаимодействиях

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Аннотация. Создание Шанхайской организации сотрудничества увеличило сеть политических взаимодействий, и это открыло новые возможности для регионального сотрудничества. Многое будет зависеть от того, как Китай и Россия – крупнейшие члены ШОС – будут взаимодействовать друг с другом. В данной статье рассматривается взаимодействие между Россией и Китаем в рамках ШОС, а также будущие перспективы ШОС.

Ключевые слова: Шанхайская организация сотрудничества, Россия, Китай, Центральная Азия.

The decision by the Chinese leader Xi Jinping in early 2013 to make Russia his first stop of his presidency has raised a possibility of the new dynamics in Sino-Russian ties. While some suggest that such visit by Beijing was to counterbalance Washington's diplomatic and security «Asia-pacific» pivot [9], a closer look at Sino-Russian relations suggests a more intimate relationship beyond that of countervailing the US presence [2; 18; 28]. Beijing and Moscow have shown their mutual commitment to strengthening their ties in various spheres, among others, the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has increased the web of political interactions, thus providing new opportunities for regional cooperation. Much will depend on how China and Russia – the largest members of the SCO – interact with each other. The internal dynamics of the SCO has been compared to «a barometer of the state of Russo-Chinese relations» [4], where the organizational development appears to be closely linked to the institutionalization of Sino-Russian relations.

As the only regional organization initiated by China, named after a Chinese city, and with headquarters located in Beijing, China's capital, China contributes significantly to the SCO, both politically and economically. More importantly, China also considers the SCO first and foremost a unique instrument to implement its interests in Central Asia and beyond [5]. Moscow, on the other hand, engages in a multidirectional foreign policy, creates partnerships and integrates Russia within different multilateral structures, such as the SCO, Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC), BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), the East Asia Summit, as well as the Organiza-

tion of Islamic Cooperation, to strengthen its goal of becoming a «bridge» between Europe and the Asia-Pacific [24; 36].

This paper argues that a rising China – and its growing «exceptionalist» tendencies – will affect the expectations it has of how the SCO should function. For China, the SCO is the primary collaborative framework in Central Asia whereas Russia utilizes the SCO to maintain stability in its immediate neighborhood and to increase its international standing. The encounter between a rising China and rejuvenated Russia has an effect on the balance of influence in Central Asia. More cooperative approach between Moscow and Beijing guarantees that more tasks will be handled through consultations within the SCO's multilateral framework rather than via ad hoc bilateral deals. Member states, however, need to guarantee that a single state does not overshadow the agenda at summits and joint statements reflect common interests of all.

Chinese Growing Exceptionalism and its expectations of the SCO

In recent times, top Chinese leaders have made mention of a «New-Type of Relationship between Major Countries» (xinxing daguo guanxi) [8; 12; 25]. While such view presumably has the United States primarily in mind [36], countries like India and Russia should not be excluded from the orbit of China's foreign policy given the plethora of Beijing's growing international interests. According to Chinese scholars, China's foreign policy is crafted primarily with its domestic interests at heart – the creation of a benevolent and peaceful external environment as an expansion of China's domestic prerogatives [22; 32; 40]. The Chinese government contends that diplomacy should ensure the country's prosperity, open up new paths for the nation's rejuvenation, and create conditions that benefit the Chinese people [22].

Since President Xi came into power, China has adopted several changes in its foreign policy interactions: (I) instead of looking at issues from a China-centric perspective, it now attempts to look at issues from a global angle, using international trends to inform its external relations; (II) there is greater awareness concerning issues of global importance, China is increasingly willing to assume responsibility on these matters; and (III) it is also focusing on innovation in its foreign relations such as first-lady diplomacy and increased communication with neighboring countries [22].

Taken together, these trends suggest that China – as a rising power – is clearly eager to present its credentials to the international community and is determined to be taken seriously as a major global stakeholder. China perceives itself as an exceptional nation – one whose rise is characterized by peace and harmony and as such, it hopes to provide a model of international relations that is not dominated by any single power, but instead involving some form of cooperation between established powers and rising powers [21; 36]. Chinese exceptionalism can be seen in three ways: (I) increased assertion of China in global affairs; (II) greater consolidation and preservation of its growing international interests; and (III) to present itself as a moral (credible) stakeholder of the global community [19]. All these demonstrate an increasingly confident and strong China that demands its proper pride of place in global affairs. With this in mind, we shall explore how this translates into its involvement in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Among China's interests, security and energy remain of paramount importance. China's top security concern in the SCO is related to «East Turkistan», a political term specifying the separatist groups that try to separate Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) from China [11]. The adoption of the term “three evil forces” within the SCO (referring to terrorism, separatism and extremism) serves as the foundation of the SCO's cooperative security concerns. This allows China to skilfully project some of its core national prerogatives onto a regional platform whose members by and large share its worldview, especially since it excludes Western participation. Cooperation between China and other SCO members in military exercises have also provided China the opportunity to stress-test the PLA's abilities, in particular in the sphere of counter-terrorism operations. Up to 2013, the SCO had conducted 11 military drills of which China had participated in all of them, six were in China's territory or partly in China's territory, thus further strengthening the security dimension that the SCO affords to China [20].

Similarly, China's energy needs oblige Beijing to place energy cooperation high on the agenda of the SCO. Presently, all energy deals between China and the states of Central Asia are signed on bilateral basis and none built into the framework of the SCO. Nonetheless, the SCO provides China with opportunities to further expand its energy cooperation network in Central Asia, particularly to allay fears that the United States could use its naval power to effect a sea blockage in the event Sino-U.S. ties deteriorate in the future. Lucrative oil deals signed between China and Central Asia countries like Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan in recent times further demonstrate Beijing's resolve to diversify its sources of energy to feed its huge oil demand, which despite recent slow-down, remains nonetheless on mark to overtake the United States by 2017, according to market projections [39].

Seen in this light, the SCO can be understood as a means for China to increase interaction and influence on the region. Given China's preoccupation with its domestic situation, it is not likely that Beijing would use the SCO as a strategic balancing tool for power, against Russia or the United States. Instead, it would seem that its interest in strengthening the SCO reflects Beijing's broader interest in promoting cooperation, stability and prosperity in Central Asia – while taking cautious steps to ensure that its participation in the SCO does not end distracting it from more important concerns at home or abroad. In this respect, its relationship with Russia would be of crucial importance.

Russia, the SCO and maintaining regional influence

Since the Russian President Boris Yeltsin's first visit to China in 1992, the two countries have pledged to establish good-neighborly, friendly and beneficial relations. For both subsequent presidents, Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev, preserving Russia's influence in the former Soviet republics remained a top priority. Despite the Kremlin's pro-European, pro-Western orientation and declining position in Central Asia in the early 1990s, Russia retained elements of regional hegemony and maintains active engagement in regional structures. These frame-

works are mainly utilized to stabilize Russia's borders in the south, maintain economic and resource access, and build up its international standing.

Russia holds strong historical and cultural ties to Central Asia and these links create a sense of a «natural» sphere of influence. It is in Russia's interest to use various frameworks, including the SCO, to maintain the status quo in the region. One of the key soft power strategies is the use of Russian language among Russian nationals in the former Soviet republics. In 2007, President Putin signed a decree establishing «Russkiy Mir Foundation» to promote «the Russian language, as Russia's national heritage and a significant aspect of Russian and world culture, and supporting Russian language teaching programs abroad» [3]. In the Eurasian context, Russian is sometimes used as language of inter-ethnic communication, even if used reluctantly and rarely given formal status as a national language [15].

Border security is another major consideration. Resolving common border issues with China allowed Russia to focus on more volatile parts of its neighborhood, especially towards the North and South Caucasus. Russia also pays attention to the expansion of NATO to the East. The Putin administration in particular used the SCO to voice its discontent with the continuous presence of foreign forces in Russia's neighborhood during 2004–2008. In the words of Vyacheslav Trubnikov, First Deputy of Foreign Minister of Russia, «I don't think we can be happy with the presence of extra-regional powers whether it is the US, China or some other country» [33]. Russia finds the SCO to be a good framework to balance its relationship with the U.S. in Central Asia and at the same time have better control over China's activities in the region. Militarily, it continues to rely on the Russian-led CSTO. It has been pushing for a greater CSTO–SCO collaboration; however, these contacts have remained rather limited [38].

China's strategic re-emergence has expanded its operational frontier throughout Central-Eastern Asia, via network of pipelines which guarantee long-term energy supply as long as the transportation of the gas and oil is protected from destabilizing forces. This development challenges Russia's long-term strategic interests. Ahead of the SCO Bishkek Summit in September 2013, Russia's deputy foreign minister Igor Morgulov downplayed the rivalry between Russia and China in Central Asia by arguing that Beijing and Moscow considered each other's interests while pursuing their policies in Central Asia [13]. Notwithstanding these mutual considerations, the economic interests of these two states will unavoidably lead into their competition. Although Russia has supported the majority of China funded SCO projects, especially in setting up a network of telecommunications and transport corridors; it opposed the free trade area [28]. Russia wants to see the economic integration through a Customs Union. The integration with Kazakhstan and Belarus started in 2010 and more countries, such as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, are planning to join in the near future to create a Eurasian Economic Union [1].

Russia and China share compatible visions of a multipolar world order and believe that the SCO is becoming a role model of an equitable mechanism enabling policy coordination, not only of regional but also global issues [14]. Beijing and Moscow on several occasions voiced their opposition to Kosovo's independence, arguing that it would create a precedent for others seeking secession [34]. Like-

wise, they have viewed genuine independence (versus autonomy) movements in Chechnya and Tibet as fundamental attacks on their states, whether conceived as federal or multinational entities.

In 2008, China and the Central Asian member states of the SCO did not show overt support for the Russian intervention in the Russia-Georgia War and the subsequent recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Beijing particularly faced a major dilemma; on one hand, it sympathized with Moscow's opposition to NATO's expansion, and on the other hand, it was concerned with endorsing the establishment of states based on ethnicity. Furthermore, it disapproved of the extensive use of force by Russia. In all major declarations that followed, the SCO member states restated their adherence to the principles of non-intervention and territorial integrity. As a result, China's presence in Central Asia has been viewed as more benign and its position within the SCO has been strengthened. In the aftermath, China succeeded in gaining support from the SCO regarding the XUAR, which in the words of the former SCO Secretary General, Bolat Nurgaliev, is part of the People's Republic of China and therefore any clashes should be dealt with as a «solely internal affair» [10; 23; 27].

In recent years, Moscow and Beijing elevated the status of their «strategic partnership» to a «comprehensive strategic cooperation and partnership» [5; 7]. They agreed to coordinate their policies, in multiple areas ranging from missile defense, internet information security, outer space and global warming, in multilateral forums: such as SCO, BRICS, G20, and the Russia-India-China mechanism [6]. Russia's Foreign Policy Concept from February 12, 2013, confirmed that deepening relations with China are Moscow's priority. President Xi Jinping's visit to Moscow demonstrated that Russia and China are at the most productive phase of their relationship. Thirty-five documents were signed during this visit and although not all may be implemented, the countries are actively seeking to move the declaratory political relations to more practical collaboration [29].

Factors that will influence future dynamics between Beijing and Moscow include the frequency of people-to-people contacts, especially in border areas and Beijing's attitude towards Russia's Far Eastern province where Russia has been facing an influx of illegal migrants from China. Another factor relates to the economic discrepancy between Russia and China. The latter's economy is four times the size of Russia's and the second largest after the U. S. [16]. In Central Asia, common interests such as fight against three «evils» and constraining the foreign (Western) presence in the region will hold for the foreseeable future. The acts of unity were seen during the 2012 and 2013 summits in Beijing and Bishkek, the SCO heads of state issued statements opposing the use of force in Iran and Syria. They called for 'dialogue' rather than «military intervention» in the Middle East [31].

The latest talks between Russia and China, on the sidelines of the 12th prime minister's meeting of the SCO in Tashkent in Uzbekistan, called for raising Sino-Russian ties to a higher level and closer coordination of investments, energy, cultural exchanges, finance, and ecological protection within the SCO. Russia is in particular interested in enhancing transportation and energy collaboration and improving cooperation between China's neighboring northeastern region and Russia's Far East region [30]. The momentum behind stronger Sino-Russian ties remains the

key driving force behind the development of the SCO. The organization will continue to serve as a platform for discussing and gradually implementing solutions to regional problems which are inclusive and consider localized contexts. Despite China's improved position in Central Asia, China still depends on Russia's experience in multilateralism and the SCO's institutional structure in managing partnerships with Central Asian republics. If the SCO aspires to increase its presence in regional and global politics as a voice calling for alternatives to the existing order, Beijing and Moscow need to carefully balance their strategic interests beyond Central Asia.

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The Future of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Sino-russian Interactions

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Abstract. The establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has increased the web of political interactions thus providing new opportunities for regional cooperation. This paper discusses interactions between Russia and China within the SCO and future prospects for the SCO.

Keywords: Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Russia, China, Central Asia.

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