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Shanghai Cooperation Organization – Threat for the West?

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ABSTRACT

Immediately following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, a number of states were newly created in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. The hegemony of Russia, which had guaranteed the security of the region, had kept the peace in Central Asia. However, Russia's economic reforms of the 1990s significantly impacted its ability to project power and ensure security in the region. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was created in order to stabilize the region and resolve the security instabilities. It is unique amongst other security initiatives because it is the only one which involves China. Other members of the SCO are Russia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. The organization raises concern because of the suspicion vis-à-vis the totalitarian regimes of Central Asia, Russia and China. Is this fear really justified? This essay will argue that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a regional security organization that specifically addresses the instabilities in Central Asia and does not threaten the security of the West. Security concepts are ambiguous and the determination of threat levels depends largely on perspectives. This paper will use a positive-sum framework to demonstrate that the SCO is improving the stability of Central Asia and neighbouring states by resolving the security instabilities, improving cooperation and preventing the escalation of violence. As a consequence of the institutionalization of the SCO, there is a corresponding reduction of Western influence in Central Asia. Conversely, the overall impact of the SCO results in a more secure environment for every one. Therefore, it is in the interests of the West to cooperate with the SCO in order to resolve security issues within the SCO area of influence such as in Afghanistan and Iran.

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INTRODUCTION

When human society advances to the point where classes and states are eliminated, there will be no more wars, counter revolutionary or revolutionary, unjust or just; that will be the era of perpetual peace for mankind.

- Mao

Since the end of the Cold War, the security situation around the world has significantly changed. The period immediately following the Cold War was a period of respite as well as a period of reflection for the armies of the West. Their relevance was questioned since the world had achieved unprecedented level of security under the watchful eyes of the United States. Immediately following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, a number of states were newly created in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia¹. The independence of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia (see Figure 1)² has changed the security situation in that region. The hegemony of Russia, which had guaranteed the security of the region, had kept the peace in Central Asia.³ Nonetheless, this independence forced Russia to disengage involuntarily from the Central Asian region in the military, political and

¹This paper deals primarily with the member states involved in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Consequently, any references to Central Asia or region is intended to include Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, the Xinjiang region in Western China and the join border area between Russia and Kazakhstan.

²Olga Oliker and David A. Shlapak, *U.S. Interests in Central Asia: Policy Priorities and Military Roles* (Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation, 2005), iii, http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND_MG338.pdf; Internet; accessed March 29, 2009.

³Roy Allison, "Regionalism, Regional Structures and Security Management in Central Asia," *International Affairs* 80, no. 3 (2004), 464, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mth&AN=13424568&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed November 21, 2008.



Figure 1: Map of Central Asia

economic domains. Russia's economic reforms of the 1990s significantly impacted its ability to project power and ensure security in the region.⁴

Today's reality is that most of the Central Asian states are facing serious economic and political challenges with similar security issues such as terrorism, drug trafficking, religious extremism and ethnic rivalry. Despite the similarities, the enmity between the different ethnic groups in the region has increased the tension between the states. Moreover, further tensions are introduced by regional powers which have competing interests in Central Asia. The new republics are fragile and they are trying to resolve their instabilities.⁵

There have been some initiatives to create various interstate structures to address those security challenges. Those initiatives are critical to address the underlying instabilities and their successes will largely impact the future of the region.⁶ One of the most promising initiatives is that proposed by China. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is unique because it is the only one which has China involved in Central Asia. Other members of the SCO are Russia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. The organization was created in 1996⁷ and did not receive significant attention until 2005 when Iran was accepted as an observer state.⁸ Since then, the SCO

⁴Lena Jonson and Roy Allison, "Central Asian Security: Internal and External Dynamics" in *Central Asian Security - the New International Context*, eds. Roy Allison and Lena Jonson (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 2-3.

⁵*Ibid.*, 13.

⁶Roy Allison, "Structures and Frameworks for Security Policy Cooperation in Central Asia" in *Central Asian Security - the New International Context*, eds. Roy Allison and Lena Jonson (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 219.

⁷The organization was originally called the Shanghai Five. It was renamed the SCO in 2001 with the addition of Uzbekistan.

has been variously labelled with terms such as “OPEP with bomb”⁹ or “Eastern NATO.”¹⁰ These terms clearly illustrate the fear of the West because of the suspicion of analysts vis-à-vis the totalitarian regimes of Central Asia, Russia and China. Is this fear really justified? This essay will argue that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a regional security organization that specifically addresses the instabilities in Central Asia and does not threaten the security of the West.

The Western perspective of the menace of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is largely based on the theoretical lens through which it is analyzed. Authors who view the SCO as a threat use a zero-sum perspective. Specifically, they argue that the development of the SCO in Central Asia is balanced with an equivalent weakening the influence of the West. Alternatively, this paper will argue from a positive-sum perspective. The SCO provides an alternate method for resolving security instabilities and increases mutual trust and cooperation amongst the member states. Even though the West is losing influence in the region, it is compensated by increased stability and security in Central Asia. The example of the terrorists’ attack on 9/11 demonstrated the significant impact that unresolved instabilities can have on the West. Consequently, the stability in Central Asia is potentially good for the West and does not result in a threat.¹¹

⁸Michael Petrou, "Is this a Rival to Nato?" *Maclean's*, 7 August 2006, 33.

⁹Christopher Coker, "Why NATO should Return Home the Case for a Twenty-First Century Alliance," *RUSI Journal : Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies* 153, no. 4 (2008), 9.

¹⁰Nataliya Zaderei, "Evolution of the Western Attitude Toward the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *Far Eastern Affairs* 36, no. 2 (2008), 54, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=34733676&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed February 15, 2009.

¹¹Thomas J. Christensen, "Fostering Stability or Creating a Monster? The Rise of China and U.S. Policy Toward East Asia," *International Security* 31, no. 1 (2006), 81-83,

The first chapter will analyze the geopolitical situation of Central Asia in order to establish the motivations for the creation of a regional security organization. The region suffers from serious security challenges which are transnational and can not be permanently resolved nationally. Similar problems elsewhere in the world have been successfully addressed via multilateral approaches which do not result in threats because they resolve security challenges and stabilize their regions. In Central Asia, a multilateral approach can also work to solve the security challenges and stabilize the region. Consequently, according to the positive-sum perspective, a multilateral approach in Central Asia would also not be a threat to the West. Furthermore, it will be asserted that Central Asia is part of a Security Complex which reinforces the need to resolve instabilities via a multilateral approach.

Subsequently, the analysis will shift from the causes of the instabilities to what is the 'raison d'être' of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. It can be determined that the organization, by means of its institutionalization, is addressing the actual security challenges in Central Asia. Once again, since the SCO has been created specifically to solve the regional security instabilities in the region, the West should not see it as a threat.

Then, the examination will shift again to the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. It will be demonstrated that the member states are not threatening the West. This is important because arguably, even if the SCO is not a threat, the member states could influence the organization and use it in order to pursue their own malicious interests.

The fourth chapter will address specific concerns about the new norms that China is trying to promote via the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Those norms have been the source of significant fear in the West because it has been argued that they are promoting authoritarianism and are against democracy. It will be argued that the norms are different from the ones in most Western international organizations but are not promoting dictatorship or subverting or undermining democracy. This demonstration is necessary as it will reinforce the central argument that the West should not feel threatened by the SCO.

Finally, there will be a short analysis on the potential growth of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to include existing observer states. The security instabilities, within the SCO member states, are also impacting their neighbours to various degrees. Arguably, the observer states should be as much part of the solution as the member states. This section will also include some recommendations on the potential benefits for the West to involve the SCO in order to address the issues of Afghanistan and Iran.

CHAPTER 1 - CENTRAL ASIA: A SOURCE OF INSTABILITY

War is the highest form of struggle for resolving contradictions, when they have developed to a certain stage, between classes, nations, states or political groups, and it has existed ever since the emergence of private property and of classes.

- Mao

Since the dissolution of the USSR, Asia has seen the creation of a number of new countries. The new Islamic republics of Central Asia have been a source of opportunities and concerns for their neighbours. Even the United States has shown an increased interest in the region since the 1990s.¹² Central Asia is becoming the stage of a 'new great game' between the United States and China. They have replaced Russia and Great Britain who fought for this region in the nineteenth century.¹³

Central Asia is an important region of the world. It is the link between Europe and the Far East. It has been historically at the crossroads of the ancient Silk Road.¹⁴ The region has also significant unexploited underground oil and gas resources. Hydrocarbons are critical resources to fuel the economy of the United States and China. Central Asia is also next to the Middle East, a region which also has its share of problems. Moreover, Central Asia is significant because its transformation, since the demise of the Soviet Union, has an impact on the regional and international security. There have been many

¹²Evgeny F. Troitskiy, "US Policy in Central Asia and Regional Security," *Global Society: Journal of Interdisciplinary International Relations* 21, no. 3 (2007), 417, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=26386567&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed February 6, 2009.

¹³Niklas Swanström, "China and Central Asia: A New Great Game or Traditional Vassal Relations?" *Journal of Contemporary China* 14, no. 45 (2005), 569, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=18908765&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed March 8, 2009.

¹⁴Rajan Menon and Henri J. Barkey, "The Transformation of Central Asia: Implications for Regional and International Security," *Survival* 34, no. 4 (1992-93), 68.

examples of instabilities in Central Asia such as an uprising in the city of Andijan in Uzbekistan in 2005 and the explosion of terrorist or radical religious groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).

This Chapter will highlight the security instabilities in Central Asia in order to establish the rationale for the creation of a regional security organization in the region. Artificial boundaries and diverse ethnicities, Islamic extremism, competing external interests and economic security are often transnational and can not be addressed nationally. Similar challenges in the world have been successfully dealt with via cooperation under the auspice of regional organizations. Those organizations were successful at defusing instabilities and improved the stability of their region. They do not pose a threat to other parts of the world because they are neutralizing potential instabilities and improving stability via cooperation and dialogue.

Furthermore, it will be argued that the countries in Central Asia and some of their neighbours form a Security Complex. According to Barry Buzan, a Security Complex is a “. . . group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another.”¹⁵ This analytical framework will serve to reinforce the argument that the region’s security issues justify the creation of a regional security organization. Moreover, according to the positive-sum perspective, such an organization would not pose a threat to the West because it can resolve the instabilities in Central Asia.

¹⁵Barry Buzan, *People States & Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1991), 190.

ARTIFICIAL BOUNDARIES AND ETHNICITIES

The security predicaments in Central Asia did not appear all of a sudden in the early 1990s. It all started at the beginning of the 20th Century. The region came under Soviet influence during the Russian Revolution of 1917. The various Soviet republics were created in the mid 1930s by Stalin - “[a]s in Africa during the years of European colonialism, boundaries in Central Asia were drawn by Moscow with scant regard for ethnic considerations.”¹⁶ The boundaries were hence loosely delimited based on geography and the predominant ethnic group in the area. Consequently, these borders remain a significant source of territorial dispute between all of the Central Asian Republics.

In addition, Central Asian republic borders often divided same ethnic groups. In a census completed in 1999, there were only 53% of Kazakhs in Kazakhstan, 65% of Kyrgyz in Kyrgyzstan, 80% of Tajiks in Tajikistan, 80% of Uzbeks in Uzbekistan and 85% of Turkmens in Turkmenistan.¹⁷ In addition, there remain relatively large ethnic minorities in all Central Asian countries and their neighbours such as China, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey and Russia. For example, there is a large proportion of ethnic Russians in Kazakhstan and Uighurs in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in Western China. The later are ethnic Turks and Muslims which represent approximately 40% of the population in the region.¹⁸ The strong rivalry between the

¹⁶Menon and Barkey, *The Transformation of Central Asia: Implications for Regional and International Security*, 70.

¹⁷Central Intelligence Agency, “The World Factbook,” <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>; Internet; accessed March 10, 2009.

¹⁸Guangcheng Xing, "China and Central Asia" in *Central Asian Security - the New International Context*, eds. Roy Allison and Lena Jonson (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 161.

different ethnicities is intensified by the central governments. This is a consequence of the governments trying to instil a strong sense of nationalism necessary to build their 'young' republics.¹⁹

The loose boundaries, ethnic rivalries and attempts by the leaders to inspire a fervent sense of national identities are contributing to the security instabilities of the region. Historically, such issues have hardly ever been resolved peacefully. The civil war in Tajikistan in the 1990s as well as the India and Pakistan dispute over the Kashmir region are examples of discords that have not been handled peacefully.

Notwithstanding the potential for border disputes to escalate, there are examples in the world where cooperation via a multilateral approach has been successful in defusing the situation. The border disagreement between Slovenia and Croatia over the Piran Bay provides an example of how a territory dispute can be resolved. Slovenia has been a member of the European Union since 2004 and Croatia has made an application to join in 2009. However, the border dispute is impeding the process. The European Union is now involved and the European Parliament has told both parties that if they could not reach an agreement, a third party would be called to mediate or the situation would be resolved via international arbitration.²⁰

Ethnic and frontier disputes are inherently very difficult to resolve because they often involve conflicting national interests and significant emotions. Furthermore, they are transnational and can not be resolved nationally. In the example of ex-Yugoslavia,

¹⁹Alexei Malashenko, "Islam in Central Asia" in *Central Asian Security - the New International Context*, eds. Roy Allison and Lena Jonson (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 38.

²⁰Alic Anes, "Slovenia, Croatia, the EU and Piran Bay," Internal Relations and Security Network, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Current-Affairs/Security-Watch/Detail/?id=53176&lng=en>; Internet; accessed March 14, 2009.

the European Union is playing a leadership role in solving the border dispute. The European Union is a multilateral organization which is not bellicose and does not pose a threat to the security of any region in the world. Consequently, artificial boundaries and ethnicity issues justify the creation of a regional security organization. In Central Asia, a regional organization can take an active role in solving those challenges and significantly stabilize the region. Therefore, according to the positive-sum perspective, the resolution of border disputes and ethnic tensions can increase the stability in the region and would do not pose a threat to the West.

ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM

Contrary to the ethnic rivalries and border disputes which create tensions between the various Central Asian republics, Islam is instead a source of instability within each of the states. Furthermore, Islamism is also a transnational challenge that can not be addressed properly nationally. After so many years of religious repression within the atheist Soviet Union, it created a desire to re-connect with Islam within the population of the new Central Asian republics.²¹ Islamic political organizations are involved in the government at various levels in the region. For the most part, the governments have been kept secular but the Islamic opposition in Tajikistan has been blamed for the 5-year civil war in the 1990s.²²

It is important to differentiate the re-emergence of Islam with Islamic radicalism. The first one does not automatically link with the second. The reality is that “[t]he

²¹Farhad Kazemi and Zohreh Ajdari, "Ethnicity, Identity and Politics : Central Asia and Azerbaijan between Iran and Turkey" in *Central Asia Meets the Middle East*, ed. David Menashri (Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass, 1998), 55.

²²Malashenko, *Islam in Central Asia*, 52.

Muslims of Central Asia are Sunnis of the Hanafi school, the predominant school of law in the Islamic world known for its historical co-operation with secular authorities.”²³

Nevertheless, the history of Central Asia has been too short and the republics too fragile to rule out the potential growth of religious radicalism.²⁴

The Islamic situation in the region is extremely complex, unpredictable and very emotional. At this time, the attitude of the majority of the population is leaning towards a moderate approach to Islam. However, there is a real danger of general discontent by the population due to economic or social difficulties. In the past, this discontent often had the unwanted outcome of increasing the support of extremist views. Historically, this has been particularly true with Islamic states.²⁵ For example, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) had as much as 2000 men under arms in the late 1990s. The group was able to move freely from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. They were able to create chaos for short periods of time and then disappear before the military could intervene. They were also training and buying weapons in Afghanistan while the country was under the control of the Taliban.²⁶

Transnational Islamic fundamentalism is not just a concern for Central Asia. There is a real concern in the United States that religious extremists or terrorists will enter its territory via Canada or Mexico. Therefore, the United States has entered into

²³Kazemi and Ajdari, *Ethnicity, Identity and Politics : Central Asia and Azerbaijan between Iran and Turkey*, 63.

²⁴Menon and Barkey, *The Transformation of Central Asia: Implications for Regional and International Security*, 72.

²⁵Kazemi and Ajdari, *Ethnicity, Identity and Politics : Central Asia and Azerbaijan between Iran and Turkey*, 66-67.

²⁶Albrecht Rothacher, "Allying with an Evil Axis?" *RUSI Journal : Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies* 153, no. 1 (2008), 69.

bilateral agreements with Canada and Mexico to address the terrorist threat collectively. The United States recognized that a collective approach with its neighbours was the only way to tackle the problem short of shutting down its borders.²⁷

Since religious extremism is transnational, even the United States can not resolve this problem nationally. In this example, the bilateral agreements within North America are not threats to the rest of the world and they increase the stability of the region. The nature of the issue requires cooperation amongst states which is better encouraged via multilateral or bilateral agreements. In the case of Central Asia, Islamic fundamentalism can not be resolved independently and requires the creation of a regional security organization. Such an organization can address this transnational problem and stabilize the region significantly. Consequently, according to the positive-sum point of view, the West should not consider such a multilateral organization a threat from this perspective.

COMPETING EXTERNAL INTERESTS

In addition to internal factors already discussed which impact upon the security of Central Asia, there are also external 'players' who add to the already complex situation in the region. Historically, the indigenous residents of Central Asia have borrowed three critical elements from distinct Islamic groups. First of all, they have emulated their religious beliefs from the Arabs, then they have borrowed the bureaucracy from the Persians and finally their military skills from the Turks.²⁸ Later, they were greatly influenced by the Russian culture during the rule of the Soviet Union. It is not surprising

²⁷Joel J. Sokolsky and Philippe Lagassé, "Suspenders and a Belt: Perimeter and Border Security in Canada-US Relations," *Canadian Foreign Policy* 12, no. 3 (Winter 2005), 25-26.

²⁸Kazemi and Ajdari, *Ethnicity, Identity and Politics : Central Asia and Azerbaijan between Iran and Turkey*, 52.

that the Central Asian Republic's relations were still very strong with Russia even after the end of the Soviet Union. Their economy and infrastructure were still very much linked together. Also, the élite in the Central Asian states and the workers with specialized technical skills are still very much ethnic Russian.

During the 1990s, Turkey and Iran aimed at influencing the Central Asian Republics. Both were independent Islamic states which could be used as models for the newly created republics. In the case of Turkey, they attempted to increase their economic, political and cultural influence on Central Asia.²⁹ Turkey wanted to extend their area of influence east because they were looking to diversify their economy by seeking new markets for their products. They also had a unique secular political system. Turkey's efforts to significantly impact Central Asia were moderated by its large debt, high inflation rate and relative knowledge of the region.

Initially, Iran was also interested in Central Asia in order to promote Islam and to prevent Turkey's influence in Central Asia. While Turkey is a Muslim country like Iran, it is often perceived as a proxy to the United States in the region. In an effort to promote Islam, Iran opened religious schools and mosques, distributed religious books and broadcasted Iranian television in Central Asia.³⁰ Later, Iran looked for economic opportunities. The most important geopolitical benefit that Iran sought to propose to Central Asia was and is access to the Indian Ocean. Furthermore, it offers the resident of

²⁹Pierre Pahlavi, "La diplomatie culturelle à l'ère de l'interdépendance globale: La Turquie à la recherche des éléments fédérateurs de l'identité panturque," *Études internationales* 33, no. 2 (2002), 248-268.

³⁰Edmund Herzig, "Iran and Central Asia" In *Central Asian Security - the New International Context*, eds. Roy Allison and Lena Jonson (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 176.

Central Asia an alternative to Russia in order to travel outside their land locked region.³¹

The main problem for expansion of Iranian influence in Central Asian is based on language and alphabet. All the republics except for Tajikistan decided to switch their alphabet from Cyrillic to Latin. Furthermore, most educated Central Asians were bilingual and could speak a Turkic dialect and Persian. Yet the Turkic dialect was the dominant language for administration.³²

The United States is another country which is trying to influence Central Asia because it has economic, military and political interests in the region.³³ The energy resources of the Caspian region and the routes to evacuate them are a source of important apprehension for the United States as it tries to secure its vast requirement for energy necessary to sustain its dominant economy. Also, the United States needs military bases in Central Asia that allow it to conduct operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Lastly, the United States is trying to position itself in Central Asia in order to offer ‘an alternative’ to the dominant powers in the region (Russia and China).³⁴

Finally, China is extremely interested in Central Asia because of security concerns on its Western border. There are real concerns that instabilities from that area will spill over the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. Security in this region is a priority for China as it is particularly interested in the enormous hydrocarbon resources it

³¹Kazemi and Ajdari, *Ethnicity, Identity and Politics : Central Asia and Azerbaijan between Iran and Turkey*, 61-62.

³²*Ibid.*, 60.

³³Stephen Blank, "The United States and Central Asia" in *Central Asian Security - the New International Context*, eds. Roy Allison and Lena Jonson (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 127.

³⁴Troitskiy, *US Policy in Central Asia and Regional Security*, 417.

has to offer.³⁵ China's interests in the region is also an attempt at decreasing the significant influence Russia has in Central Asia and at the same time opposing the increasing weight of the United States.

Since the dissolution of the USSR, there has been a 'vacuum' that Turkey, Iran, the United States and China have attempted to fill. Each of these external actors has attempted to pursue its national interest within the region. However, their interaction with the Central Asian republics has been destabilizing for the most part. First of all, the influence of external powers and transnational influences could serve to intensify the partitions within already vulnerable societies.³⁶ Secondly, there are obvious tensions between the various neighbours (Iran – United States, Russia – China, etc) which are enhanced over their national interests in Central Asia.

Consequently, in order to stabilize the region, there is a requirement for a concerted approach towards security in Central Asia. As Lena Jonson and Roy Allison argue: "For the region to become characterized instead by cooperative dynamics a much greater effort is necessary by each of the regional powers to find common ground for joint approaches to security in Central Asia."³⁷ Arguably, the best method to achieve the level of cooperation needed to enhance security in Central Asia is the creation of a regional/international organization in which all parties would share common interests.

Central Asia is not the only region of the world where there are external interests influencing the stability. Africa is arguably an entire continent where external interests

³⁵Thierry Sanjuan, "Le défi Chinois," *Documentation photographique*, no. 8064 (2008), 26.

³⁶Jonson and Allison, *Central Asian Security: Internal and External Dynamics*, 4.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 18.

have played a most destabilizing role. The African Union has been created in 1999 in order to integrate the various states in the continent to enable it to play a more predominant role in the world while addressing serious developmental issues. In respect to its relation with external factors, one of the objectives of the African Union is to “. . . rid the continent of the remaining vestiges of colonization and apartheid; to promote unity and solidarity among African States. . .”³⁸ Consequently, the African Union is providing a forum which improves cooperation amongst member states and correspondingly reduces the destabilizing impact of external interests.

The African Union is an organization which does not pose a threat to the rest of the world even if its mandate is to reduce the influence of external actors because it is stabilizing the continent while promoting cooperation. Since the Central Asian republics are relatively weak, compared with some of the external actors which are trying to project their influence in the region, they need to cooperate in order to offset the destabilizing impact. This justifies the creation of a regional cooperation organization in Central Asia that can improve the stability of the region but can also consequently reduce or mitigate the influence of certain external actors. In a similar sense as the African Union such an organization in Central Asia would stabilize the region. This is positive for the West as it will prevent the escalation of violence within and outside the Central Asia. This is not a threat for the West.

ECONOMIC SECURITY

The last potential security risk for the region that will be analysed is economic security. This is a concept that has attracted a lot of attention in Western governments

³⁸African Union, "African Union in a Nutshell," http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/AboutAu/au_in_a_nutshell_en.htm; Internet; accessed April 11, 2009.

and has been claimed to be a goal for the state and its citizen. Third World countries have tried to use this concept as their road map for success. However, according to Buzan, “[t]he idea that economic security represents an absolute value with wide application is an illusion, and the pursuit of it is the pursuit of a chimera.”³⁹ His argument is based on the fact that the dominant model of world macroeconomic is capitalism which is by definition a system that is fuelled by competition, therefore it is intrinsically founded on insecurity.

Conversely, economic security at the individual level is in terms of access to basic needs such as food, shelter, education, etc. Hence, chronic poverty is the extreme of economic insecurity. Beyond lacking the essential needs, it is difficult to link the individual economic situation to security. Another referent to economic security is the state. If the same logic is applied, then economic security for the state means what is necessary for its survival. The equivalent to basic human needs for the state is access to natural resources to feed its people and supply essential industries.⁴⁰

This section will argue that economic security is still a relevant factor that will influence security in Central Asia as long as the focus remains on the extremes. In other words, acute poverty and lack of access to critical resources will be significant factors that will create instabilities in the region. Furthermore, economic security is a transnational challenge which can not be resolved nationally. For example, there are requirements for strategies to ensure the adequate sharing of essential resources such as

³⁹Buzan, *People States & Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, 235.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 235-242.

water which is only available in significant quantities in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Central Asia being an arid region, it relies profoundly on water for irrigated agriculture.

The economic situation of Central Asia during the period of the USSR was relatively acceptable, although the region had the lowest per capita industrial output.⁴¹ Arguably, the communist system, while not perfect, offered a decent level of living, access to affordable goods and employment for most of its citizens. However, shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the economic situation deteriorated in Central Asia.⁴² In addition to economic complications left behind by the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Human Development Index for Central Asian countries and their neighbours is relatively low (see Figure 2⁴³). While the index is not at levels of failed or failing states, the proportion of the population which is poor is still quite high. In terms of economic security, the situation is still very precarious and must be addressed.

The economies of Central Asian republics rely greatly on the transport infrastructure which must be re-designed to reflect the reality of the market since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The infrastructure and the distribution of natural resources in Central Asia (roads, oil, pipelines, electrical grids, water, etc) were designed

⁴¹Martha Brill Olcott, "Central Asia: Common Legacies and Conflicts" in *Central Asian Security - the New International Context*, eds. Roy Allison and Lena Jonson (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 25.

⁴²G. Chufrin, "The SCO: Changing Priorities," *International Affairs: A Russian Journal of World Politics, Diplomacy & International Relations* 53, no. 1 (2007), 58, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=24666317&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed November 21, 2008.

⁴³The table was constructed based on the 2008 annual report found on the United Nations Development Programme Web Site at : <http://www.undp.org/>; Internet; accessed March 10, 2009. The Human Development Index takes into consideration the Gross Domestic Product per capita, life expectancy, literacy, education and standard of living of each country.

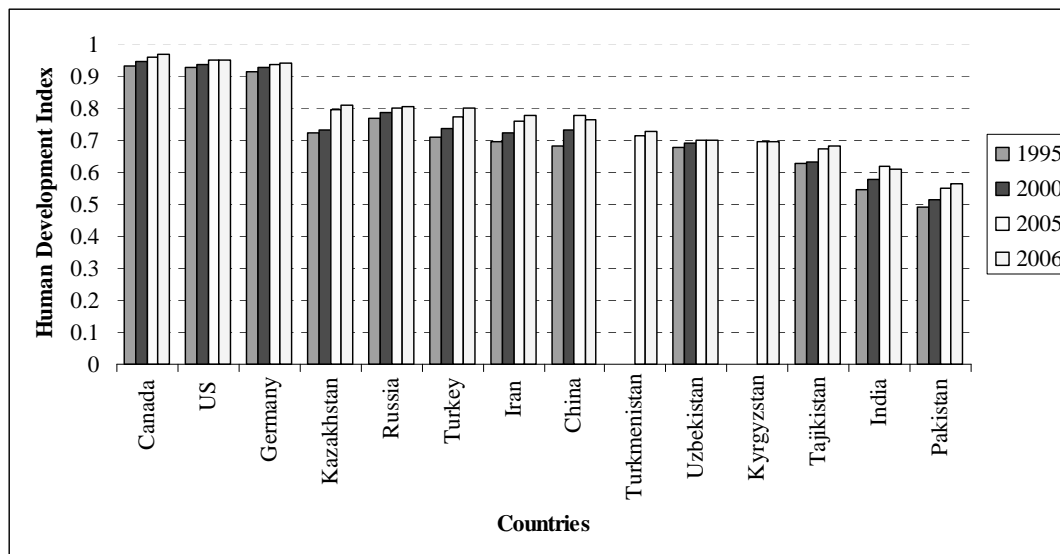


Figure 2: UN Human Development Index

to work within the USSR communist system. Furthermore, the Central Asian republics do not have the wealth to invest in the critical infrastructure. Consequently, the region must rely on private partners and foreign aid in order to improve its infrastructure and its economy.

Central Asia is not the only region of the world where investments are necessary to improve its infrastructure and economy. South American states came together in 2000 and stood up the Initiative for Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA). The initiative was created to develop a multilateral approach to the development of roads and energy link between the states and hubs to reach world markets. It now plays a key role in the economic development and strengthens the position of South America in the world economy.⁴⁴ The IIRSA is improving the

⁴⁴Pitou Van Dijck, "Troublesome Construction: The Rationale and Risks of IIRSA," *European Review of Latin American & Caribbean Studies*, no. 85 (October 2008), 101-106,

economy of South American states by focusing on the common development of key transport infrastructures which does not pose a threat to other regions of the world.

South America has realized the importance of multilateral economic cooperation to develop its infrastructure which is necessary to improve its economy. In Central Asia, there are also significant infrastructure investments required and trans-border natural resources which must be managed in order to allow the region to develop and prosper. This situation provides the impetus for the creation of a regional oversight organization which can improve access to investments and manage the scarce natural resources. Such a regional organization focused on the economic development and provision of essential resources to the inhabitants of Central Asia can increase the stability of the region and consequently would not be a threat to the West.

THE CENTRAL ASIAN SECURITY COMPLEX

Roy Allison argues that Central Asia is a new 'Security Complex' that has emerged since the collapse of the Soviet Union.⁴⁵ A Security Complex appears in terms of patterns of amity and enmity that are confined within a geographical area. The term emphasizes the close link between deep rivalries and shared national interests. It is important to mention that a "Security Complex can exist and function regardless of whether or not the actors involved recognize it . . . they may well not see, or appreciate fully, the whole pattern of which they are a part."⁴⁶ The states will recognize the threats

<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=35650178&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed April 11, 2009.

⁴⁵Roy Allison, "Conclusion: Central Asian Security in the Regional and International Context" in *Central Asian Security - the New International Context*, eds. Roy Allison and Lena Jonson (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 263-264.

around them but might not be able to appreciate fully the fact that they may be perceived as a threat by their neighbours. Ultimately, the endeavour of a state to increase its security is likely to have consequences on other states also part of the Security Complex whether it is intentional or not.

After analysing the relationships between the various states in Central Asia, it is important to expand the Security Complex to countries outside of the five Central Asian states. Arguably, the regional Security Complex can be extended to Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, India, Russia and China.⁴⁷ They all share similar security concerns, have strong culture and historical bonds between each other but are also strong rivals. Finally, the Security Complex is not just a framework that has been created to understand regional security by Buzan. It highlights the necessity to address the security issues in Central Asia from a multilateral point of view.

As discussed in this chapter, there are four factors which cause instabilities in Central Asia. Artificial boundaries and ethnicities, Islamic fundamentalism, competing external interests and economic securities are transnational and can not be resolved in isolation. The security challenges in the region justify the establishment of a regional organization in order to resolve them. In other areas of the globe, multilateral approaches were employed successfully to address similar instabilities and improve stability. Consequently, it was argued that a similar approach in Central Asia can improve stability.

⁴⁶Buzan, *People States & Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, 192.

⁴⁷The Security Complex will be used as a framework to address the potential expansion of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the final chapter of the essay.

The positive results that can be achieved in increasing stability and security in the region would balance the reduction of influence of the West and would not be a threat.

CHAPTER 2 – SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION: FILLING A SECURITY VOID?

War is the continuation of politics. In this sense war is politics and war itself is a political action; since ancient times there has never been a war that did not have a political character. . . It can therefore be said that politics is war without bloodshed.

- Mao

Central Asia suffers from a number of transnational security predicaments which prevent it from developing. They can not be addressed in isolation which validates the creation of a regional organization in order to resolve them. The fall of the Soviet Union has left a security void in the region that can be resolved by way of multilateral cooperation amongst the Central Asian republics. Such an organization would not pose a threat to the international community because it would actually improve the stability of the region.

This chapter will look briefly at first security cooperation organizations that were stood up by the Central Asian states and Russia. There were mostly unsuccessful at improving the security situation in Central Asia for various reasons. Conversely, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has been stood up specifically to address the critical security issues in the region. It is unique because it is the only regional security organization in Central Asia where China plays an important role. Since 2005, the organization has attracted attention when Iran became an observer state.

The organization is not well known so a succinct overview of the organization will be provided. Then it will be demonstrated that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has been created specifically to address the security instabilities in Central Asia. Moreover, since the SCO has been stood up exclusively to address regional

security challenges and stability, it will be shown that it does not constitute a menace for the West.

BEFORE THE SCO

Initiatives to address the regional security instabilities by the Central Asian states started as early as 1992. Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan formed the Central Asian Union in 1994. Its results in increasing the regional security were initially discouraging; the Central Asian states were not ready to cooperate in a formalized way which had the potential to influence significantly internal security policies.⁴⁸ The organization was renamed the Central Asian Economic Union in 1998 to reflect the focus of the group to improve economic cooperation. It finally merged with the Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC) which now has members outside of Central Asia.

Another regional security organization to be created was the Commonwealth of Independent State (CIS). It was a Russian initiative and included most of all of the former republics of the Soviet Union. In terms of providing security “. . . the core agreement of the CIS has been the 1992 CST [Collective Security Treaty] and various institutional offshoots of the treaty.”⁴⁹ The CST evolved into the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in 2002 and has clearly a military and security focus. Russia’s intention, as the lead state, is to “. . . use it [CSTO] as a macroregional platform to support its standing as a ‘security manager’ for Central Asia and to confirm recognition for the CSTO as, at least, a coequal security actor in the region with

⁴⁸Niklas Swanström, "The Prospects for Multilateral Conflict Prevention and Regional Cooperation in Central Asia," *Central Asian Survey* 23, no. 1 (03, 2004), 44, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=13532313&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed March 15, 2009.

⁴⁹Allison, *Structures and Frameworks for Security Policy Cooperation in Central Asia*, 226.

NATO.”⁵⁰ Conversely, the organization does not have the necessary resources to tackle the threats and will unlikely be successful in addressing the urgent regional security problems in Central Asia.⁵¹

The regional security organizations described so far have had mitigated successes. The lack of trust between the Central Asian republics and the concern that Russia would impede the development of their national identities remain two serious obstacles to meaningful cooperation. Nonetheless, there is a compelling requirement to have within the group at least one strong participant that has strengths and resources.⁵² Since the Central Asian republics have been reluctant to trust Russia any multilateral cooperation organization in Central Asia will need to have China.

It is not by accident that China is involved in regional security cooperation in Central Asia. First of all, it is in this country’s national interest to stabilize its Western border. Besides, there are further advantages for the Central Asian states to participate in a regional security organization with both China and Russia than with only one of the two. The influence of the two dominant powers in the region is more balanced and the Central Asian republics will not have to choose between the two.⁵³

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has been an initiative from China to address the security instabilities within Central Asia and its Western border area

⁵⁰Allison, *Regionalism, Regional Structures and Security Management in Central Asia*, 471.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 471-473.

⁵²Swanström, *The Prospects for Multilateral Conflict Prevention and Regional Cooperation in Central Asia*, 41.

⁵³J. K. Alyson Bailes and others, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *SIPRI Policy Paper*, no. 17 (2007), 15.

(Xinjiang). It is composed of four of the five Central Asian states⁵⁴, Russia and China. Furthermore, it has also four observer states: Iran, Pakistan, India and Mongolia. The SCO has been relatively little studied and is mostly unknown. The next section will begin with an historical perspective and its institutions.

SCO ORIGINS AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization evolved from “confidence building measures”⁵⁵ that were designed to reduce the tension and the number of military forces on the borders between China and the former Soviet Union (Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan). These diplomatic dialogues started in 1993 and culminated in 1996 with the creation of the Shanghai Five. According to Jienwei Wang, “The original intent was to create a stable and peaceful border of more than 7,000 km.”⁵⁶ The states agreed to reduce their troop levels, military activities, deployment of weapons and provide security transparency. The Shanghai Five had quick successes in resolving border issues between China and Russia and was slowly transitioning its emphasis from border security to addressing other regional security problems.

The early successes were significant, because they started a trend where cooperation started to replace distrust between the main actors in Central Asia and stability was starting to emerge in the region. At the fifth meeting of the Shanghai Five

⁵⁴Turkmenistan is the only republic of Central Asia that is not a member of the SCO. The central government has chosen to be neutral and does not participate to any multilateral organization.

⁵⁵V. Lavrov, "SCO: Law and Security in the 21st Century," *International Affairs: A Russian Journal of World Politics, Diplomacy & International Relations* 54, no. 2 (2008), 54, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=34733579&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed November 21, 2008.

⁵⁶Jianwei Wang, "China and SCO: Towards a New Type of Interstate Relations" in *China Turns to Multilateralism*, eds. Guoguang Wu and Helen Lansdowne (New York: Routledge, 2008), 107.

in 2000 at Dushanbe (capital of Tajikistan), Uzbekistan was granted observer status. It was at this meeting that China proposed the transformation of the organization from “. . . a series of ad hoc meetings into regular and institutionalized mechanism for multilateral cooperation.”⁵⁷ As the successor of the Shanghai Five, the SCO was created in June 2001 and had six members (Uzbekistan was now a full member of the organization).

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization adopted their Charter at their second meeting in St-Petersburg in June of 2002.⁵⁸ The new focus of the organization was to take active steps to combat Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism.⁵⁹ Those three security issues specifically identified in the SCO Charter have been called by various authors the three evils.⁶⁰ These three goals were the focus of the organization and they have been the basis for the creation of the Regional Counter-Terrorism Structure.⁶¹ The SCO is also based on the following principles “. . . mutual respect for sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and inviolability of borders, non-interference in internal affairs, non-

⁵⁷Chien-Peng Chung, "The Shanghai Co-Operation Organization: China's Changing Influence in Central Asia," *The China Quarterly*, no. 180 (2004), 991, <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=795959491&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD>; Internet; accessed November 21, 2008.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 889.

⁵⁹Official Document System of the United Nations, "Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization A/57/88-S/2002/672," <http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N02/429/84/pdf/N0242984.pdf?OpenElement>; Internet; accessed March 16, 2009.

⁶⁰Marc Lanteigne, "In Medias Res: The Development of the Shanghai Co-Operation Organization as a Security Community," *Pacific Affairs* 79, no. 4 (2006), 608, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=25091225&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed November 21, 2008.

⁶¹The Regional Counter-Terrorism Structure (RCTS) was original called the RATS (Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure). The information was updated on the Shanghai Cooperation Web Site in the Winter of 2009 at <http://www.sectSCO.org/EN/AntiTerrorism.asp>; Internet; accessed April 15, 2009.

use of force or threat of its use, and equal rights of all member states.”⁶² These principles and some variations of them have been referred as the ‘Shanghai Spirit’⁶³ which will be further discussed in chapter four. These principles are extremely important for the SCO; they were first discussed in 2000 during the last meeting of the Shanghai Five. They reflect the philosophy of the region which did not approve of the bombardments in Kosovo (1999) lacking the approval of a UN resolution.⁶⁴

The SCO is developing rapidly into an institutionalized organization. The SCO has been able to achieve this institutionalization quickly because much of the groundwork had been done within the Shanghai Five forum. During the SCO summit of 2003, the organization was practically fully developed with the approval of an emblem, flag and the candidature of the first executive secretary.⁶⁵ It also approved legal documents regarding the institutionalization of the meeting mechanism, various councils and the two permanent bodies.⁶⁶ The Secretariat stood up in January 2004, the Regional Counter-Terrorism Structure in October 2003.⁶⁷ The Secretariat is based in Beijing and was

⁶²Official Document System of the United Nations, *Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization A/57/88-S/2002/672*, Article I.

⁶³Chung, *The Shanghai Co-Operation Organization: China's Changing Influence in Central Asia*, 991.

⁶⁴Chien-Peng Chung, "China and the Institutionalization of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *Problems of Post-Communism* 53, no. 5 (2006), 8, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mth&AN=24081172&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed November 21, 2008.

⁶⁵Aleksandr Lukin, "Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Problems and Prospects," *International Affairs: A Russian Journal of World Politics, Diplomacy & International Relations* 50, no. 3 (2004), 34, <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=1&hid=7&sid=c63e6901-f306-418d-a9a3-668c7b703c60%40SRCSM2&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWVhc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=aph&AN=13933617>; Internet; accessed March 8, 2009.

⁶⁶Wang, *China and SCO: Towards a New Type of Interstate Relations*, 111.

⁶⁷Chung, *China and the Institutionalization of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization*, 7.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION

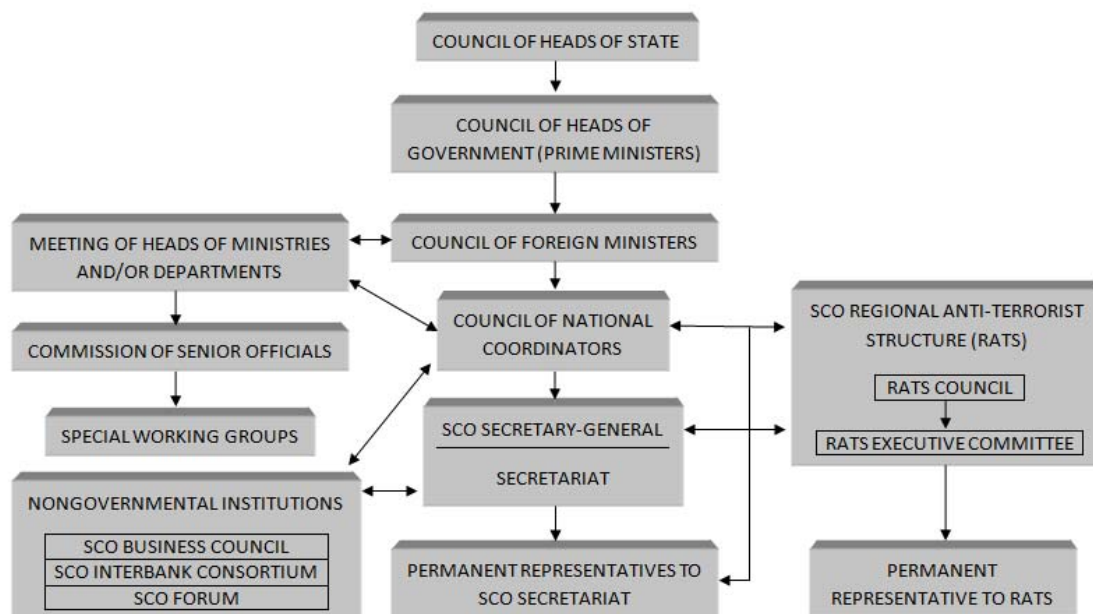


Figure 3: The Structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization⁷⁰

originally staffed with 30 people and the RCTS is located in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The permanent bodies share an annual budget of approximately \$3.5M.⁶⁸ This is a small budget compared with the military budget of NATO of approximately \$700M in 2001.⁶⁹

The Secretariat is the main executive body of the SCO. It performs a number of functions of which the most important are: providing technical expertise, developing

⁶⁸Lanteigne, *In Medias Res: The Development of the Shanghai Co-Operation Organization as a Security Community*, 614.

⁶⁹The military budget also supports the operating costs of the NATO command structure for peacekeeping activities (PSO) in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. The total budget approved for 2001 amounted to 746M Euros. Information taken from <http://www.nato.int/docu/handbook/2001/hb0904.htm>; Internet; accessed March 29, 2009.

⁷⁰This information is published on the Shanghai Cooperation Web Site at <http://www.sectsc.org/EN/index.asp> but it is only available in Chinese or Russian. This translated version was taken from Wikipedia at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Structure_of_the_SCO.jpg; Internet; accessed March 16, 2009.

cooperation within the SCO framework and overseeing the execution of the decisions taken by the SCO institutions. The Regional Counter-Terrorism Structure's main tasks are to gather information on terrorist activities within the SCO member states, assist in the preparation of counterterrorism exercises, drafting of international documents with the United Nations and hosting scientific conferences on the field of terrorism, separatism and extremism.⁷¹

The structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is composed of 6 main groups. The first one is the Head of State Council which is the highest level within the organization where decisions are taken. They meet once a year in one of the member's capital. The next group is the Head of Government Council which also meets on an annual basis. It is at this level where they discuss the strategy of the SCO, provides the priority for the organization's work and approve the annual budget. Each year during the summit, there is also mechanisms for ministers of various departments to meet and discuss their particular issues. The Council of National Coordinators of the SCO is in charge of coordinating the interaction within the structure of organization. Some of the information is published but only a fraction is translated in English, which makes it more difficult for Western experts to access and interpret.

The SCO coordinated joint counterterrorism exercises designed to increase confidence among members and develop a coordinated approach against likely threats. The first exercises were conducted in 2002 and only involved China and Kyrgyzstan. The following year, other military exercises were conducted which included all member

⁷¹Information from the SCO has been obtained primarily from the organization's web site at <http://www.sectSCO.org/EN/index.asp>; Internet; accessed March 8, 2009.

states except Uzbekistan.⁷² After the creation of the RCTS, the SCO has coordinated joint counterterrorism exercises every year since 2005.

SCO FILLING A SECURITY VOID?

The SCO has made significant progress in its institutionalization in the short time it has existed. Some authors have questioned its effectiveness and legitimacy because of the lack of emphasis on promoting democracy within its Charter. However, the SCO is addressing the complex security situation in Central Asia from a different perspective based on promoting “. . . the principles of mutual trust, mutual advantage, equality and cooperation, contributing to a radical weakening of the factors undermining security, and the eradication of sources of new threats.”⁷³ This new type is different from the Western model which emphasis on solving security by instituting democracy. The following section will demonstrate that the SCO is contributing to the regional stability of Central Asia by addressing all of the security instabilities. Furthermore, according to the positive-sum perspective, the SCO should not be perceived as a threat because it increases the stability in the region.

Artificial Boundaries and Ethnicities

During the reign of the Soviet Union, the borders within Central Asia were mostly selected arbitrarily. During the Cold War, there were significant tensions between China and the USSR and a significant amount of troops massed along the border. The impetus for the creation of the predecessor of the SCO was first and foremost the resolution of the border dispute between China and the former USSR and the implementation of

⁷²*Ibid.*, 611.

⁷³Official Document System of the United Nations, *Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization A/57/88-S/2002/672*, Article III.

confidence-building measures that are essential to stabilize the region. For example, the ‘Shanghai Five’ was able to resolve long standing border disputes between Kyrgyzstan, Russia and China. “Kyrgyzstan ceded an entire mountain range, and Russia ceded marshland and islands on the Ussuri River. . .”⁷⁴ These successes increased trust and cooperation which allowed to stabilize the region and to reduce the military forces at the borders.

There are also tensions amongst Central Asian republics about the definition of their own borders. For example, Uzbekistan is double land-locked. There are ‘islands’ of Uzbekistan within Kyrgyzstan, a situation clearly far from perfect. These borders issues are not only a matter of sovereignty but the tensions amongst the SCO member states are compounded by the various ethnic minorities on each side of the borders. This situation is also recognized in the SCO Charter at article III:

The SCO member States will make efforts for the prevention and peaceful settlement of international conflicts associated with inter-ethnic, inter-faith, territorial, political and other differences, in strict accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law.⁷⁵

The SCO member states recognize the multi ethnic situation of Central Asia but also advocate that any disputes within the SCO should be dealt peacefully.

Some experts have argued that the SCO has not been very successful at addressing these border issues. The border disputes between China and the former USSR republic have been resolved. However, the other border disputes amongst Central Asian republics have not.⁷⁶ Despite the relative success so far, the SCO allows for all the

⁷⁴Rothacher, *Allying with an Evil Axis?*, 69.

⁷⁵Official Document System of the United Nations, *Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization A/57/88-S/2002/672*, Article III.

member states to discuss their differences within a formalized forum where all parties are equal.⁷⁷ The efforts of the SCO in addressing the artificial boundaries and ethnic rivalries are stabilizing Central Asia and accordingly should not be considered a threat for the West.

Islamic Fundamentalism

The SCO was originally created to address border disputes but it quickly evolved into a regional security organization focusing on combating the ‘three evils’: Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism. It has also recognized that these issues are transnational or even international and close cooperation within the member states is necessary to address the problem. Article II of the Charter of the SCO states: “Within the framework of the SCO, active steps will be taken . . . to adopt appropriate texts on multilateral cooperation in curbing illicit narcotics and arms trafficking and other types of criminal activity of a transnational character. . . .”⁷⁸ The trans-border illegal activities identified in the Charter are essential to fund the ‘three evils’ of the SCO and must be addressed properly in order to improve the regional security. The SCO also recognizes that those issues are not confined within Central Asia and there is a need to cooperate with the international community to resolve them. Within the Charter, it is explicitly stated that the SCO will rely on the international community to cut financing sources for terrorism, separatism and extremism and they will make sure their country is not a refuge for them.⁷⁹ This is not

⁷⁶Rothacher, *Allying with an Evil Axis?*, 69.

⁷⁷Official Document System of the United Nations, *Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization A/57/88-S/2002/672*, Article I.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, Article II.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, Article III.

just rhetoric; the SCO has invited the West to participate at a forum on Afghanistan in March 2009. The Secretary-General has declared that the International Community must join the SCO efforts to eradicate the drug trafficking problem in Afghanistan which is a significant source of instabilities in Central Asia.⁸⁰

The SCO is not making the automatic association between the resurgence of Islam in Central Asia and terrorism, separatism or extremism. However, some extremist groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) or the Hizb-ut Tahrir al-Islami (Party of Islamic Liberation) tend to give the Islamic religion an unfavourable international reputation because of their association with terrorist activities.⁸¹ Article III of the SCO Charter specifically states that the fight against terrorism should be conducted without discrimination: “The struggle against terrorism must be waged on the basis of the norms and principles of international law, must not single out any religion or individual countries or ethnic groups, and must be devoid of bias and double standards.”⁸² This is important because it also provides a legal framework on how the authorities will deal with this problem.

Another indication of how seriously the SCO member states take the terrorist, separatist and extremist threats to the security of the region is the creation of the Regional Counter-Terrorism Structure (RCTS). As discussed already, the RCTS is not a multinational intervention force, but a small group who spearhead the SCO initiatives on

⁸⁰Shanghai Cooperation Organization, <http://www.sectsco.org/EN/show.asp?id=55>; Internet; accessed April 16, 2009.

⁸¹Lanteigne, *In Medias Res: The Development of the Shanghai Co-Operation Organization as a Security Community*, 608.

⁸²Official Document System of the United Nations, *Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization A/57/88-S/2002/672*, Article III.

counterterrorism. Their most important contribution to improving the security within the SCO member states is the coordination of military and law enforcement exercises. The largest ones were named 'Peace Mission 2005' and 'Peace Mission 2007'.⁸³

The goals of the exercises according to the Chinese Defence Minister Cao Gangchuan were "... to demonstrate the determination of the SCO member states in the fight against the three evil forces, as well as the common desire to ensure security and stability in the region and stimulate common development and prosperity."⁸⁴ The scenario simulated something very similar to a Color Revolution where a terrorist group would take control of a city and would try to overthrow the government with the help of the domestic political opposition. The country would not be able to deal with the situation and ask the SCO for help.

These military exercises were a significant show of force with 10,000 troops in 2005 and 7,000 in 2007.⁸⁵ The exercises clearly demonstrated to the known terrorists, separatists and extremists that the SCO has the military might and the political will to deal with the security instabilities the three evil groups are able to create. Since the military forces within the Central Asian republics are far from being well trained and equipped,⁸⁶ the exercises also served as a means to improve cooperation and coordination amongst the member states military and law enforcement agencies.

⁸³M. de Haas, *The 'Peace Mission 2007' Exercises: The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Advances* (Shrivenham, England: Defence Academy of the United Kingdom,[2007]).

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 2.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 12.

⁸⁶Allison, *Conclusion: Central Asian Security in the Regional and International Context*, 254-255.

Another important part of the scenario is that the political side of the SCO member states were also involved. As part of the scenario, the SCO would only approve a joint military intervention once a United Nation resolution had been passed.⁸⁷ It is unlikely that the SCO would bypass this step because it would seriously undermine the legitimacy of the UN Security Council. It is a source of significant influence in international relations for China and Russia.⁸⁸ Furthermore, the SCO's Charter is very explicit about the importance, once again, to obey international law, even if a military response is necessary:

. . . it is crucially important to formulate principles within the framework of the United National and also a clear, universally binding international legal basis for counter-terrorist activities which would not allow for dual interpretation and would not serve as a cover for interference in the affairs of other states and infringement of their sovereignty.⁸⁹

This is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it means that the SCO is not a threat to the international community because they recognize the legitimacy of the United Nations and the SCO would not take any necessary military actions unless it was sanctioned by the Security Council. Secondly, the SCO does not endorse any military intervention that would not be approved by the Security Council.

The SCO takes the threat of Islamic fundamentalism very seriously. They are considered as part of a group referred as the 'three evils'. The SCO recognizes that the problem is trans-national and that the drug and arms trafficking and similar criminal activity are part of the problem because they are a source of funding for those groups.

⁸⁷Haas, *The 'Peace Mission 2007' Exercises: The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Advances*, 2.

⁸⁸Russian Federation, "The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation," *International Affairs*. Moscow 54, no. 5 (2008), 11.

⁸⁹Official Document System of the United Nations, *Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization A/57/88-S/2002/672*, Article III.

Furthermore, the SCO will only approve of any joint military action if it is requested by a member state and if approved by the United Nation. The SCO is not bellicose and its efforts in combating the ‘three evils’ are stabilizing Central Asia. Consequently, on this discrete issue, the West should also not consider the SCO as a threat.

Competing External Interests

Central Asia is surrounded by countries which have competing interests in the region. Religion, language, ethnicity and vital resources are all factors which contribute to the instabilities of the region. As discussed previously, the SCO is unique because it is composed of two of the main competing actors in the region. It is ‘protecting’ the weaker Central Asian republics against hegemonic domination because Russia and China can not act unilaterally within the organization. Furthermore, Article I of the Charter of the SCO ensures that all member states are equal partner in the organization.⁹⁰

Another strong power with competing national interests in the region is the United States. Its military bases and the intervention in Afghanistan were originally welcomed by the SCO. However, in 2005, during the Astana summit, the SCO issued a statement asking the United States when it would pull its troops from Central Asia.⁹¹ The US military presence in Central Asia is now perceived as a destabilizing factor by the SCO member states.⁹² In fact, according to Evgeny Troitskiy⁹³: “US policy in Central Asia

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, Article I.

⁹¹Régine Serra, "Organisations régionales asiatiques - Conjoncture 2005-2006" in *L'état du monde 2007 - Annuaire économique géopolitique mondial* (Montréal: Éditions du Boréal, 2006), 356.

⁹²The air base in Uzbekistan is now closed and the one in Kyrgyzstan will be shut down before the end of summer 2009 after. BBC, “Kyrgyzstan leaves US in the Cold,” http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/7901426.stm; Internet; accessed, April 20, 2009.

does not seem to contribute to the long-term stability in the region, which is unattainable unless a real multilateral security cooperation encompassing Central Asian and the interested big powers. . .”⁹⁴ The US military presence was a significant source of discomfort for China and was causing frictions and security instabilities in the region. As demonstrated in chapter 1, the conflicting influence in a region can have destabilizing effects that a multilateral organization can mitigate.

Arguably, the decision to expel the United States military forces from Central Asia could be perceived as a threat to the West. However, it is not the case for two reasons. Firstly, the SCO was not acting belligerently but only focussing on increasing the stability for Central Asia. It is only the US military presence which was destabilizing for the region. Other Western military forces are still operating from their military bases in Central Asia such as Germany in Uzbekistan.⁹⁵ Furthermore, the United States has been allowed to resupply their troops in Afghanistan from the port of Riga in Russia via Kazakhstan.⁹⁶ Lastly, the SCO has invited the international community, including the United States, at their latest Special Conference of Afghanistan in March 2009. At the end of the Conference, the Secretary-General of the SCO said that “Effective settlement of existing problems can be possible only with due regard for the interests of all parties, through

⁹³This statement was made in reference of the military presence of the United States in bases in Central Asia.

⁹⁴Troitskiy, *US Policy in Central Asia and Regional Security*, 428.

⁹⁵North Atlantic Treaty Organization, <http://www.nato.int>; Internet; accessed March 29, 2009.

⁹⁶BBC, “Necessity Pushes US and Russia Closer,” <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7929689.stm>; Internet; accessed April 20, 2009.

their involvement in the ongoing process, not through isolation.”⁹⁷ He recognized the importance of cooperation versus competition in order to solve the instabilities in Afghanistan and in Central Asia.

The focus of the SCO has always been the stability of Central Asia. The presence of the US military forces in the region was destabilizing so they were evicted. The end result is a continued presence of NATO bases in Central Asia, the start of cooperation between the SCO and the international community and increased stability in the region. From a positive-sum perspective, this is very helpful for the West even if the US lost some of their influence in the region. Consequently, the West is not threatened by the SCO.

Economic Security

Shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union, the SCO member states came together to resolve their border disputes. In 2001, the impetus for the creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was to combat terrorism, separatism and extremism (the three evil). However, the SCO also recognized the importance of addressing some of the root causes for terrorism: poverty, unemployment and illiteracy.⁹⁸ Article II of the SCO Charter further emphasizes the intent of the member states to develop economic partnership:

To this end, the negotiation process will be intensified on issues of the establishment of favourable conditions for trade and investment and the formulation of a long-term programme of multilateral trade and economic cooperation . . . in such spheres as building transport links and energy

⁹⁷Shanghai Cooperation Organization, <http://www.sectsco.org/EN/show.asp?id=55>; Internet; accessed April 16, 2009.

⁹⁸Official Document System of the United Nations, *Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization A/57/88-S/2002/672*, Article III.

projects, water use, obtaining and transporting energy resources, and also other spheres of mutual interest.⁹⁹

The key area for development (energy sector) and essential resources (water) that could be the origin of further instabilities in Central Asia were identified.

The economic development of Central Asia is becoming increasingly important for all SCO member states. The energy sector for example is especially significant for China because it needs increasing amount of energy to sustain its expanding economy.¹⁰⁰ The SCO framework allows China's national corporation to invest massively in the energy sector in Central Asia by facilitating custom procedures and common quality standards.¹⁰¹ Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are the two countries which are benefiting the most from the investments in gas and oil explorations and pipeline projects. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are also benefiting from hydro electric investments. There are important projects to build pipelines from the Caspian Sea to the western border of China.¹⁰² There were further investments in the province of Xinjiang to link up China to Central Asia via railways, pipelines and electric networks.¹⁰³ The SCO has also recognized the importance of investments and aid in Afghanistan in order to reduce poverty and stabilize the region. The organization is providing free aid in order to build road infrastructure,

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, Article II.

¹⁰⁰Vitaly Frolenkov, "China and the SCO Member Countries of Central Asia: Cooperation Over Energy," *Far Eastern Affairs* 36, no. 2 (2008), 67, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=34733678&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed November 21, 2008.

¹⁰¹Rothacher, *Allying with an Evil Axis?*, 71.

¹⁰²Sanjuan, *Le défi Chinois*, 26.

¹⁰³Chien-Peng Chung, "The Defense of Xinjiang," *Harvard International Review* 25, no. 2 (2003), 60-61, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mth&AN=10260663&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed November 21, 2008.

communication lines, hospitals and schools. The SCO member states have also written off significant portion of the Afghanistan overdue debts.¹⁰⁴

Russia has proposed the creation of a SCO 'Energy Club' or gas cartel and brought energy issues to the forefront. These proposals coincide with the addition of Iran as an observer state. Some analysts have argued that an energy cartel would be a threat to the interests of the United States in Central Asia. However, it is very unlikely that this 'Club' will ever be brought to fruition because it is not in China's interest to do so, as a net importer of energy. Moreover, China needs energy in order to sustain its developing economy and it is highly unlikely it would ever influence the markets to increase the prices.¹⁰⁵

The SCO framework has provided a mechanism for Central Asian countries to benefit from significant investment in new development projects but also to renovate old Soviet infrastructure. The development of the economy within Central Asia and Afghanistan is helping to reduce poverty and improve education. The Human Development Index of Central Asia and neighbouring countries are still relatively low but the situation continues to improve. The efforts of the SCO have improved stability. Consequently, the SCO is not a menace to the security of the West.

SCO: STABILIZING CENTRAL ASIA

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Central Asia has been plagued with security instabilities slowing its development. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization

¹⁰⁴ Shanghai Cooperation Organization, <http://www.sectSCO.org/EN/show.asp?id=55>; Internet; accessed April 16, 2009.

¹⁰⁵ Gene Germanovich, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: A Threat to American Interests in Central Asia?" *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 6, no. 1 (2008), 25, <http://www.isdp.eu/files/publications/cefq/08/gg08scoamerica.pdf>; Internet; accessed March 16, 2009.

has been created in 2001 specifically to address the transnational security challenges in the region. This analysis is also shared by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). According to the authors:

[The SCO] has apparently achieved some degree of coordination and interoperability among its members' armed forces and security services in regard to potential anti-terrorism deployments. It has developed . . . joint policies in the related fields of domestic and functional security, and it has broached topics that are highly relevant to economic security such as energy cooperation and infrastructure.¹⁰⁶

The Charter, RCTS and other institutions of the SCO were developed in order to resolve the security challenges and bring stability in Central Asia.

The analysis of the Charter and institutions of the SCO has demonstrated that it is not a threat to the West. Furthermore, article V of the SCO Charter states: "We confirm that the SCO is not a bloc or a closed alliance, is not directed against individual countries or groups of states, and is open to broad cooperation with other states and international associations . . ."¹⁰⁷ This point of view has been confirmed on a number of occasions by SCO officials. It has been reiterated especially during the joint military exercises where the show of force could have been perceived by the West as a threat.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, the rhetoric of the organization has been backed by the reality of its actions. The SCO invited the West to participate at its Special Conference on Afghanistan in March of 2009. It will collaborate with the West in order to resolve the imbroglio in Afghanistan which is destabilizing Central Asia.¹⁰⁹ According to the positive-sum perspective, it was

¹⁰⁶Bailes and others, *The Shanghai Cooperation Organization*, 28.

¹⁰⁷Official Document System of the United Nations, *Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization A/57/88-S/2002/672*, Article V.

¹⁰⁸Sanjuan, *Le défi Chinois*, 27.

shown that the SCO improves security and stability in Central Asia which is beneficial for the West. Consequently, the SCO is not a threat to the West.

¹⁰⁹ Shanghai Cooperation Organization, <http://www.sectsco.org/EN/show.asp?id=55>; Internet; accessed April 16, 2009.

CHAPTER 3 - A THREAT FROM WITHIN?

To achieve a lasting world peace, we must further develop our friendship and cooperation . . . We must endeavour to establish normal diplomatic relations, on the basis of mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty and of equality and mutual benefit, with all countries willing to live together with us in peace.

- Mao

So far, this essay has considered the question of the potential of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization under two different angles. The first one analysed the reasons to justify the creation of a regional organization to solve the transnational security instabilities in Central Asia. The second one considered the vocation of the SCO through its Charter and institutions. These two complementary approaches have confirmed so far that the SCO is addressing the security challenges in Central Asia and stabilizes the region. In order to determine whether the SCO is a threat, this chapter will consider the question from a third angle. Instead of looking at the organization itself, the focus will be on the member states. Arguably, even if the institution of the SCO is not a threat to the West, it could be misleading if member states are influencing the organization for their own belligerent motives.

Within the SCO, there are two categories of member states. Russia and China are both nuclear states, permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and strong military and economy compared with the other members of the SCO. On the other hand, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are struggling economies and have weak military forces. The analysis will be, therefore, broken down into three sections: the four Central Asian members, the former Cold War adversary and the Rising Dragon.

Hitherto, the demonstration considered the threat to the West from a positive-sum perspective, this framework does not apply perfectly to the analysis of this chapter. Instead, the threat will be analysed with the concept of ‘power of resistance’ which was defined by Arnold Wolfers as ‘What a country does to bolster its own security through power can be interpreted by others, therefore, as a threat to their security.’¹¹⁰ This standpoint is particularly important when Russia and China’s foreign policy will be examined because their initiatives to improve their own security can be perceived as a threat to the West.

This chapter will argue that the four weak Central Asian states need Western investment and aid to develop their weak economy. In the case of Russia, their new foreign policy concept published in 2008 is focused on increasing its influence within its ‘near abroad’ and at the same time promoting multipolarity. As for China, its strategy is focused on the new security concept and a peaceful rise. China’s is reassuring the West and its neighbours that it is a responsible power. The SCO member states rely to some degree on the hegemonic power of the United States and it is not in their interests to threaten the West.

FOUR CENTRAL ASIAN MEMBERS

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have their own foreign policies and identities but broadly speaking, they are facing similar challenges. This section will argue that they do not pose a threat to the West for three reasons. First of all, as discussed in more details in chapter 1, all Central Asian states are considered relatively weak politically, economically and militarily. Their influence is extremely limited and

¹¹⁰Arnold Wolfers, "National Security' as an Ambiguous Symbol," *Political Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (1952), 494, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2145138>; Internet; accessed April 9, 2009.

does not go much beyond their immediate neighbours. Since the Central Asian republics have gained their independence from the Soviet Union, they have been struggling to establish themselves as sovereign states and have been focusing on establishing nationhood. It has been especially difficult for Tajikistan who had to deal with a Civil War in the 1990s. More recently in 2005, Kyrgyzstan had to recover from the Tulip Revolution. Moreover, Central Asian states do not have the resources to invest in the exploitation and exploration of their natural resources.

Secondly, they rely heavily on investments from the West, Russia and China to develop their economy.¹¹¹ Their foreign policies have been an act of balancing between their two large powerful neighbours (China and Russia) and also between the West and the East. They have used the opposition to balance the influence of all actors in Central Asia and prevent any one of them from gaining a significant advantage. The Central Asian republics have also benefited from bidding wars to access their natural resources.¹¹² Furthermore, they have profited from military assistance and substantial Western financial aid, especially from the United States (See Figure 4). The investments in Central Asia have increased substantially since the US led invasion of Afghanistan. The security of the region has benefited since the eviction of the Taliban which provided a refuge for terrorists such as the IMU. The direct involvement of US military in Central Asia has receded now that both air bases have

¹¹¹Lukin, *Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Problems and Prospects*, 34.

¹¹²Martha Brill Olcott, "The Shrinking US Footprint in Central Asia," *Current History* 106, no. 702 (2007), 334-335.

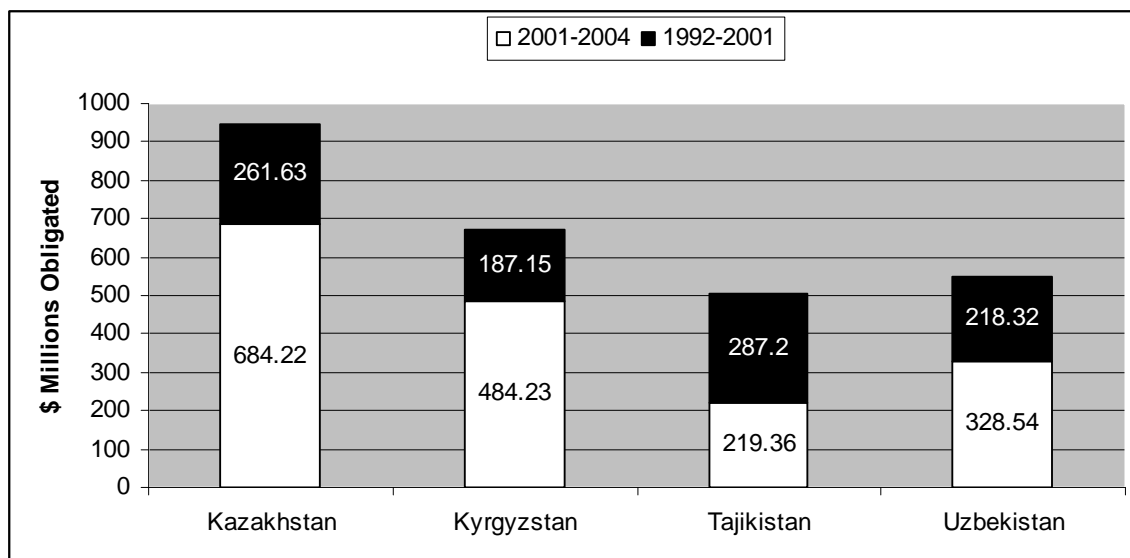


Figure 4 : US Government Assistance in Central Asia 1992-2004¹¹³

been closed.¹¹⁴ However, they continue to host bases for other NATO countries such as France and Germany.¹¹⁵

Lastly, the Central Asian republics are not threats to the West because they are involved with Western security institutions. They are member of the Organization for the Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It is one of the largest intergovernmental organization which focuses on military and human security, and economy. They all participate within this organization at various degrees, Kazakhstan being the most active member. It is even seeking chairmanship of the OSCE in 2010.¹¹⁶ The Central Asian

¹¹³Oliker and Shlapak, *U.S. Interests in Central Asia: Policy Priorities and Military Roles*, 14. Original source from the US State Department 2004.

¹¹⁴The Manas base in Tajikistan will be closed by the end of summer 2009.

¹¹⁵North Atlantic Treaty Organization, <http://www.nato.int>; Internet; accessed March 29, 2009.

¹¹⁶Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, <http://www.osce.org>; Internet; accessed March 29, 2009.

states are also member of NATO Partnership for Peace. With the exception of Uzbekistan¹¹⁷, they all have participated in recent military exercises.

The Central Asian republics' foreign policy is ambivalent as they are cultivating their relationships as much with the West as with their powerful neighbours. Because their economies are weak and they are developing as independent republics, they are 'bandwagoning' and taking advantages of all possible investments and foreign aid.¹¹⁸ They will likely continue to participate as much with Western institutions as with the SCO because it is in their interests to do so. Consequently, the Central Asian will not influence the SCO to threaten the West.

THE FORMER COLD WAR ADVERSARY

Contrary to the Central Asian republics which are developing, Russia is much more powerful and has more influence on the destiny of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Since the dissolution of the USSR and the fall of the Berlin Wall, Russian foreign policy has been focused on the United States. They have alternatively considered the Americans either friend or foe. This contradictory position has been reflected in Russian political statements and official documents.¹¹⁹ However, Russia has published its *Foreign Policy Concept* in 2008 which will help determine its intention and potential

¹¹⁷Uzbekistan has been less enthusiastic about its relations with the West since the government was criticized in 2005 on its action in Andijan.

¹¹⁸Gregory Gleason, "Foreign Policy and Domestic Reform in Central Asia," *Central Asian Survey* 20, no. 2 (2001), 173, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=5203006&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed April 19, 2009.

¹¹⁹Andrew Monaghan, "'Calmly Critical': Evolving Russian Views of US Hegemony," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29, no. 6 (2006), 988, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=23462855&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed March 28, 2009.

threat to the West. It will be argued that the foreign policy has been driven by the advance of the hegemonic United States within Russian historical sphere of influence.¹²⁰ Consequently, according to Wolfers' principle of 'power of resistance', Russian's foreign policy and recent actions have not been designed to be belligerent against the West but instead have been focused on increasing its own security.

For the most part, Russia believes that the hegemonic position of the United States has a negative influence on the world:

However, what is a unipolar world? However one might embellish this term, at the end of the day it refers to one type of situation, namely one centre of authority, one centre of force, one centre of decision-making. It is world in which there is one master, one sovereign. And at the end of the day this is pernicious not only for all those within this system, but also for the sovereign itself because it destroys itself from within. And this certainly has nothing in common with democracy. Because, as you know, democracy is the power of the majority in light of the interests and opinions of the minority.¹²¹

Two events persuaded Russia that unilateralism was destabilizing. First of all, the Kosovo bombing in 1999 against Serbia, a former ally of Russia. The unilateral decision of the United States with NATO to attack Serbs in Kosovo without the authorization of the United Nation Security Council seriously undermined Russia's influence and contributed to antagonize Russians.¹²²

¹²⁰Mark Kramer, "Russian Policy Toward the Commonwealth of Independent States: Recent Trends and Future Prospects," *Problems of Post-Communism* 55, no. 6 (2008), 3, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=35811492&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed April 9, 2009.

¹²¹Isabelle Facon, "Moscou-Washington, La coopération dans la conflictualité" in *Moscou et le monde -L'ambition de la grandeur: Une illusion?*, ed. Anne de Tinguy (Condé-sur-Noireau, France: Éditions Autrement, 2008), 86-87. The English version of President Poutine's speech at the XLIII Munich Conference on 10 Feb 2007 was taken from the Washington Post at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/12/AR2007021200555.html>; Internet; accessed March 30, 2009.

¹²²Aleksandr Kramarenko, "The Ideology of Russia's Foreign Policy Concept," *International Affairs. Moscow* 54, no. 5 (2008), 33.

Secondly, the US and UK invaded Iraq in 2003, once again without an authorization from the UN Security Council. The invasion was significant because it destabilized the region and undermined the joint efforts to combat terrorism by upsetting Russia and other powers. Furthermore, these military actions will potentially create a greater demand for weapons of mass destruction from enemies of the United States such as Iran.¹²³ For Russia, these two events were also significant because military operations were conducted in a foreign country without a UN Security Council resolution. The UNSC is an important diplomatic tool for Russia to counter-balance the powerful United States.¹²⁴

On top of US unilateralism, Russia perceives the expansion of NATO very negatively. In the foreign policy, it specifically states that: “. . . plans of admitting Ukraine and Georgia to the membership in the alliance, as well as to bringing the NATO military infrastructure closer to the Russian borders on the whole, which violates the principle of equal security . . .”¹²⁵ This is significant because it highlights clearly that Russia feels threaten by NATO and the United States. Furthermore, another element which impacted Russia’s foreign policy is the support by the United States of the Colour Revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia. Russia interpreted those revolutions as an attempt by the United States to export its democratic model.¹²⁶ This was also perceived as a direct threat to Russia’s traditional area of influence. Arguably, Russia’s military

¹²³Monaghan, *‘Calmly Critical’: Evolving Russian Views of US Hegemony*, 997.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, 997.

¹²⁵Russian Federation, *The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, 24.

¹²⁶Facon, *Moscou-Washington, La coopération dans la conflictualité*, 98-99.

intervention in Georgia was conducted in order to restore the balance of security and the integrity of its 'near abroad' and not an act of territorial enlargement.¹²⁷

Accordingly, Russia was 'forced' to reconsider its perception of the world politics and pursue multipolarity as an alternative for US hegemony.¹²⁸ Russia has been seeking to create an anti-hegemonic coalition which did not intend to threaten the United States but allow the member states to prevent unilateral outcomes to conflict with their own security interests. This is not a formal coalition but rather an alliance of convenience in which members do not share values or interests.¹²⁹ Russia has primarily sought partnership with China to form its anti-hegemonic coalition. Its relationship with China has been both bilateral and multilateral via the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Together they have committed themselves to the establishment of a 'New World Order' which would be "based on the principles of equality, mutual respect and mutually beneficial cooperation as well as the norms of international law."¹³⁰ In other words, this new multipolar world would recognize that Russia is also a great power¹³¹ and should not

¹²⁷Pierre-Emmanuel Thomann, "Russie-Géorgie: Première guerre du monde multipolaire," *Défense nationale* 64, no. 10 (2008), 36.

¹²⁸Russian Federation, *The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, 11.

¹²⁹Thomas Ambrosio, *Challenging America's Global Preeminence : Russia's Quest for Multipolarity* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2005), 78.

¹³⁰Russian Federation, *The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, 13.

¹³¹Thomas Gomart, "Russia Alone Forever? The Kremlin's Strategic Solitude," *Politique étrangère* (2008/5), 31.

be considered a junior partner.¹³² Furthermore, it is non-confrontational and intends only to limit unilateralism in international politics.¹³³

There are distinct signs that Russia understands the importance of building a strategic partnership with the United States, forgetting their differences and focussing on the real threats.¹³⁴ For example, there has been an ongoing cooperation between Russia and the United States on anti-terrorism. A working group set-up specifically to look at the issue of terrorism has had 15 meetings between 2002 and 2007.¹³⁵ Furthermore, Russia and the US are cooperating in order to resolve the drug trafficking and instabilities in Afghanistan. Russia is allowing supply trains to go through its territory to reach US troops in Afghanistan¹³⁶ and has welcomed the US presence at the latest SCO forum in March 2009.¹³⁷

Russia's foreign policy concept is focused on the consolidation of its traditional sphere of influence. Russia views US unilateralism as a threat to its sovereignty and global security. It will work towards strengthening its global and regional influence and prestige in a new multi-polar world which is focused on equality and cooperation instead of confrontation.¹³⁸ Accordingly, the perceived threat of Russia has been exaggerated. It

¹³²Thomas Gomart, "Politique étrangère Russe: L'étrange inconstance," *Politique étrangère* (2007/1), 54.

¹³³Kramarenko, *The Ideology of Russia's Foreign Policy Concept*, 35.

¹³⁴Russian Federation, *The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, 24.

¹³⁵Facon, *Moscou-Washington, La coopération dans la conflictualité*, 106-108.

¹³⁶BBC, "Necessity Pushes US and Russia Closer," <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7929689.stm>; Internet; accessed April 20, 2009.

¹³⁷David Gollust, "US to Attend Shanghai Group Meeting on Afghanistan," Voice of America, <http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-03-19-voa51.cfm?rss=europe>; Internet; accessed March 31, 2009.

is difficult to predict how the foreign policy of Russia will evolve. However, it appears that if the West is not pursuing its own security aggressively, the former Cold War adversary will be quieter. For now, Russia does not pose a threat to the West and will not persuade the SCO to threaten the West because it is not in its interests to do so.

RISING DRAGON

Of all of the SCO member states, it is arguably China's rise that is generating the most fear in the West. China's foreign policy under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping has changed significantly since the death of Mao in 1976.¹³⁹ Mao was threatening the world with comments such as: "We are advocates of the abolition of war, we do not want war; but war can only be abolished through war, and in order to get rid of the gun it is necessary to take up the gun."¹⁴⁰ Deng Xiaoping understood that the policy of isolationist did not work and he shifted to a more open economy and friendlier foreign policy. However, the fear of China is still very much present. The essential questions are why, and is the perception a reality?

It is relatively easy to explain why the 'China threat' is very much a perceived reality in the West and Asian neighbours. First of all, China's military expenses are significant and its military has gone through a period of intense modernization in the 1990s. Furthermore, military exercises and missile tests near the Taiwan Strait have been as much a strong message towards Taiwan and the US.¹⁴¹ Second, the increased

¹³⁸Roy Allison, "Russia Resurgent? Moscow's Campaign to 'Coerce' Georgia to Peace," *International Affairs* 84, no. 6 (2008), 1171.

¹³⁹Régine Serra, "Asie méridionale et orientale" in *L'état du monde 2007 - Annuaire économique géopolitique mondial* (Montréal: Éditions du Boréal, 2006), 205.

¹⁴⁰Mao Tse-tung, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*.

influence of China in Asia through its involvements in multilateral regional organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the ASEAN¹⁴² Regional Forum (ARF) has been perceived as deliberate attempts by China to hedge against US influence. Finally, there has been a constant anti American rhetoric by Chinese politicians and citizens.¹⁴³

The demonstration that these reasons are just stereotypes and have little real substance is a relatively easy task. While it is true that China has reinvested in its military, they are still lacking significantly compared with the US. There is consensus amongst specialists that China's military technology is at least 20 years behind the US.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, it has also been argued that the Chinese military threat is an excellent excuse to justify military spending in the US.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, from a positive-sum perspective, it has been argued so far in this paper that regional security organizations are not automatically a threat if they are reducing the influence of the West in Asia. Finally, the anti-American rhetoric has almost completely stopped. The Chinese politicians have realized that they need the cooperation of the US to solve some of their most challenging

¹⁴¹Avery Goldsteing, *Rising to the Challenge - China's Grand Strategy and International Security* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005), 85.

¹⁴²ASEAN is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

¹⁴³Robert G. Sutter, "China's Regional Strategy and Why it may Not be Good for America" in *Power Shift : China and Asia's New Dynamics*, ed. David Shambaugh (London, England: University of California Press, 2005), 291.

¹⁴⁴Avery Goldstein, "Power Transitions, Institutions, and China's Rise in East Asia: Theoretical Expectations and Evidence," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 30, no. 4-5 (2007), 648, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ijh&AN=58.2766&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed March 9, 2009.

¹⁴⁵Russell Ong, *China's Security Interests in the 21st Century* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 115.

security issues such as North Korea.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, it is extremely difficult to accept that the Chinese population is anti-American when most of them would immigrate to the US if they could and those that can afford it send their children to study in America.¹⁴⁷

Unfortunately, those justifications are not sufficient in answering the fundamental question as to why China is a possible threat to the West. As defined by Wolfers, it is the rise of the power of China that is perceived as a 'power of aggression'.¹⁴⁸ Historically, rising powers have been seen as challengers to the world order and precipitated major wars.¹⁴⁹ As a consequence of this perception, China has adopted two significant shifts in its foreign policy. First, in 1997, China has proposed a 'new security concept' and then has adopted a 'peaceful rise' strategy. China, as a responsible power, will be more likely to be perceived as peaceful rather than destabilizing.¹⁵⁰

China recognized that vigorous economic development could not be achieved unless there was stability and security in China. The new security concept was unveiled in order to achieve better relations with its neighbours. It is based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence and features¹⁵¹ "mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination . . . the settlement of international disputes and hotspot issues by peaceful

¹⁴⁶Zhang Yunling and Tang Shiping, "China's Regional Strategy" in *Power Shift : China and Asia's New Dynamics*, ed. David Shambaugh (London, England: University of California Press, 2005), 57.

¹⁴⁷Jean-Luc Domenach, *Comprendre la Chine d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: Perrin, 2007), 154, 296.

¹⁴⁸Wolfers, 'National Security' as an Ambiguous Symbol, 494.

¹⁴⁹Michael Yahuda, "The Evolving Asian Order - the Accomodation of Rising Chinese Power" in *Power Shift : China and Asia's New Dynamics*, ed. David Shambaugh (London, England: University of California Press, 2005), 347.

¹⁵⁰Ong, *China's Security Interests in the 21st Century*, 118.

¹⁵¹Sutter, *China's Regional Strategy and Why it may Not be Good for America*, 290.

means.”¹⁵² The new security concept encourages the peaceful cooperation between states and is opposed to acts of aggression and expansion. China also stressed the importance of the rules of law and international organization such as the UN to safeguard the world norms supported by China.¹⁵³

In addition to the new security concept, China’s politicians have been advocating a peaceful rise strategy. The intent is to assuage fears of a Chinese threat by eliminating situations where its neighbours could feel threatened or dominated. This is significant because it was contended by Wolfers that this is the best way to “. . . convince those who might feel threatened that the accumulation of power is not intended and will never be used for attack.”¹⁵⁴ In order to accomplish this, China has increased its involvement in regional and international organizations. These are important because they encourage dialogue between states on common issues and provide a forum to resolve misunderstandings before they escalate into conflicts. Moreover, organizations such as the SCO and ARF constrain a ‘rising powers’ because they are based on equality and consensus.¹⁵⁵ China’s rise is also highly dependent on the integration of its economy with Western financial institutions. This interdependence with the West is necessary for the development of China and it would be harmful to damage these relations by threatening the West.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵²White Paper of the Government, “China’s National Defense in 2008,” http://www.china.cn/government/whitepaper/node_7060059.htm; Internet; accessed March 20, 2009.

¹⁵³*Ibid.*, 290.

¹⁵⁴Wolfers, *National Security' as an Ambiguous Symbol*, 495.

¹⁵⁵Yahuda, *The Evolving Asian Order - the Accomodation of Rising Chinese Power*, 347.

In spite of the arguments above of a peaceful rising China, some authors argue that this is only a temporary state of affairs. Chinese foreign policy has been fluctuating and reacting to the world around it. As China becomes more confident and powerful, there is the potential for a shift and more aggressive behaviours. According to different international relations theories, the rise of China could be perceived as a threat or not. For example, Avery Goldstein has analysed a few theories such as Polarity, Balance of Power, Interdependence, Institutionalism, etc to demonstrate that China could be a threat.¹⁵⁷ In a follow-on article, he compared two different theories (Power Transition and Institutionalism). He illustrated that the rise of China, even if peaceful, could be a threat to the West. The power transition theory predicts that as China rises, it will potentially be increasingly dissatisfied with the world order and dangerous.¹⁵⁸ However, Steve Chan has done a comprehensive analysis on this theory and came to the conclusion that there is very little evidence pointing to an upcoming power transition between the United States and China.¹⁵⁹

Conversely, the institutionalism theory suggests that China, as a responsible power, will pursue its interests in multilateral institutions which are used to facilitate cooperation and peaceful resolution of conflicts.¹⁶⁰ Since China has made a significant

¹⁵⁶Rex Li, "Security Challenge of an Ascendant China" in *Chinese Foreign Policy : Pragmatism and Strategic Behavior*, ed. Suisheng Zhao (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 2004), 38-39.

¹⁵⁷Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge - China's Grand Strategy and International Security*, 81-101.

¹⁵⁸Goldstein, *Power Transitions, Institutions, and China's Rise in East Asia: Theoretical Expectations and Evidence*, 641.

¹⁵⁹Steve Chan, "Is there a Power Transition between the U.S. and China?" *Asian Survey* 45, no. 5 (2005), 701.

shift in its foreign policy to use multilateralism to promote stability, the institutionalism theory is likely the most accurate one to predict, at least, in terms of a short period trend. The fact that China has also created and taken the lead in the institutionalization of the SCO is another reason why this theory is more probative.

It was illustrated that China is not a military and political threat to the West. China's recent strategy changes towards the new security concept and peaceful rise provide stability and security in Asia in order to stimulate China's economy. Furthermore, China's increased involvement in international institutions will constraint it to resolve differences peacefully. Consequently, the Rising Dragon is not a threat to the West. In addition, it will not influence negatively the SCO because economic stability is essential to China's prosperity, at least in the short term.

NO THREATS FROM WITHIN

This chapter considered the threat of the SCO from a third angle. The intent was to determine if any of the SCO member states could influence the organization in order to threaten the West. The four Central Asian republics are concentrating on developing their national identities. They are involved in Western international organizations such as NATO's Partnership for Peace and the OSCE. Their economies are relatively weak and they have received significant foreign aid from the US. Therefore, it is not in their national interests to be threaten the West.

In the case of Russia and China, they are often perceived as threatening the West because they are increasing their own security. While China is trying to diminish the fear of the West by adopting a strategy of peaceful rising, Russia, on the other hand, has taken

¹⁶⁰Goldstein, *Power Transitions, Institutions, and China's Rise in East Asia: Theoretical Expectations and Evidence*, 641.

aggressive actions to protect its traditional sphere of influence. Moreover, Russia's foreign policy concept has been influenced by the US unilateral actions and has been a strong supporter of a multipolar world. However, Russia believes in the importance of strategic partnership with the US and NATO in order to address the real problems such as international terrorism and drug trafficking. Russia's foreign policy is not confrontational and its initiatives to increase its security have been misinterpreted as a threat to the West.

Conversely, China is rising peacefully and focussing its strategy on the new security concept. It is involving itself in multilateralism and promoting values such as cooperation, equality and peaceful resolution of differences. China relies significantly on its economy, which is interdependent on Western institutions, to promote its development and prosperity. China will not take any measures that will compromise stability in Asia which would impact its economy. It is not in the interest of China to threaten the West. Furthermore, since China is the founder of the SCO and the main actor in the organization, it will not influence it negatively in such a way to pose a threat to the West. Overall, there is no evidence showing that the SCO member states are threatening the West and will use the organization to pursue a belligerent agenda.

CHAPTER 4 – ‘SHANGHAI SPIRIT’

Certain German writers on international questions have expressed their frank astonishment that while the world has talked a great deal of the menace of the German militarism, it has had relatively little to say of the menace of British ‘marinism.’ The reason however is not far to seek. British naval predominance, be its effects what they may, is not in any case a “menace” – it is an accomplished fact.

-Norman Angell

This dissertation has so far argued that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is not a menace because it is addressing the security instabilities in Central Asia. Yet, there are authors who have compared the organization with an ‘Evil Axis’¹⁶¹ or a ‘Rival of NATO’¹⁶². These are not just terms selected for sensationalism; they express a common view from the West, more specifically the United States, that the SCO is promoting authoritarianism. The West ‘feels’ threaten because the SCO is promoting different values than those they share. Wolfers has argued that “. . . security, in an objective sense, measures the absence of threats to acquired values, in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked.”¹⁶³ The demonstration that the SCO is not a threat so far in this paper has answered the security from the objective point of view. However, according to Wolfers, it is also important to consider security from a subjective perspective.

Consequently, this Chapter will analyze the threat for the West from a perceived point of view by arguing three main ideas. Firstly, while the political systems preferred

¹⁶¹Rothacher, *Allying with an Evil Axis?*, 68.

¹⁶²Sam Alexandroni, "Nato's Rival in the East," *New Statesman* 137, no. 4858 (20 August 2007), 14, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=26228820&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed November 21, 2008.

¹⁶³Wolfers, *National Security' as an Ambiguous Symbol*, 484.

by the member state of Central Asia are not democratic, the SCO is not against democracy. Second, the new norms proposed by the SCO are not bellicose; conversely, they are centered on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for multi-civilization and striving for common development. Third, Stephen Blank has stated in front of the Helsinki Commission that the promotions of those values can also potentially cause instabilities.¹⁶⁴ It will be argued that this is not the case and the new norms are increasing the stability of the region and the West should not ‘feel’ threatened by the SCO.

SCO NOT AGAINST DEMOCRACY

The member states of the SCO are not recognized for being democracies. A survey published by Freedom House, an independent, non government organization, has measured the level of political freedom and civil liberties.¹⁶⁵ The results for the 2007 survey are shown at Table 1¹⁶⁶ and clearly demonstrate that with the exception of Kyrgyzstan, which is partially free, none of the member states of the SCO are free.

However, all of the noise in the various Western media about the SCO being anti-democratic appears greatly exaggerated. The SCO member states view international politic from a different point of view which does not try to undermine the political power

¹⁶⁴*The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Is it Undermining U.S. Interests in Central Asia?* September 26, 2006 sess., 2006, , <http://www.csce.gov/>; Internet; accessed March 17, 2009.

¹⁶⁵ States who offer the best level of political freedom and civil liberties receive a score of 1. The worst states receive a score of 7. NF means Not Free, PF Partially Free and F Free.

¹⁶⁶Freedom House, “Table of Independent Countries,” <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/Chart114File166.pdf> ;Internet; accessed March 22, 2009.

	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan	China	Russia
Political Rights	6	5	6	7	7	6
Civil Liberties	5	4	5	7	6	5
Status (Free, Partly Free, Not Free)	NF	PF	NF	NF	NF	NF
1 = Best, 7 = Worst						

Table 1: Freedom House Ratings of Political Rights, Civil Liberties and Overall Status

of other states. The principles enunciated in the Charter of the SCO specifically state that it is based on mutual respect for sovereignty independence and non-interference in internal affairs.¹⁶⁷

The apparent anti-democratic rhetoric of the SCO member states is not so much against democracy but rather resistance against American interventions.¹⁶⁸ The issue is that NGOs, highly subsidized by the United States, are promoting the benefit of free and fair elections.¹⁶⁹ They are perceived as Trojan Horses by the SCO member states because the NGOs are not so much promoting democracy but instead hoping for regime change. This perception is intensified by the fact that authoritarian regimes that are ‘friends’ of the United States do not received the same pressure to change. A prime example is the case of Saudi Arabia, which has received very low evaluations by Freedom House¹⁷⁰, but is not receiving the same pressure to change.¹⁷¹ Furthermore, it is

¹⁶⁷Official Document System of the United Nations, *Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization A/57/88-S/2002/672*, Article I.

¹⁶⁸Thomas Carothers, "The Backlash Against Democracy Promotion," *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 2 (2006), 55, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=19895477&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed March 8, 2009.

¹⁶⁹Marshall I. Goldman, "Russia and the West: Mutually Assured Distrust," *Current History* 106, no. 702 (2007), 318.

¹⁷⁰The Freedom House survey results for Saudi Arabia are, PR 7, CL 6 and NF. Freedom House, "Table of Independent Countries," <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/Chart114File166.pdf>; Internet; accessed March 22, 2009.

often argued that: “How can a country that tortures people abroad and abuses rights at home tell other countries how to behave?”¹⁷² On a conceptual level, it would be very difficult for SCO member states to listen to the United States rhetoric on democracy when they are able to argue that the US does not have its own house in order on similar issues.

NEW NORMS FOR THE SCO

Conversely, it does not mean that the SCO is promoting democracy or authoritarianism. Thomas Ambrosio has argued that the values being normalized within the institutionalization of the SCO are in fact promoting authoritarian regimes.¹⁷³ While his argument is solid, he misinterprets the norms of the organization which leads him to the wrong conclusion.

Norms play an important role in influencing members of international organizations because they have a quality of ‘oughtness’. They are similar to a code of ethics for a profession. Norms do not typically appear from thin air; they are actively promoted by ‘norm entrepreneurs’ who have a solid understanding of them or the desired behaviour within their community. Norm entrepreneurs also need a platform at the international level to promote their norms. Before norms can be internalized by target states, they must usually be institutionalized within international organizations.¹⁷⁴ In the

¹⁷¹Carothers, *The Backlash Against Democracy Promotion*, 58-64.

¹⁷²*Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁷³Thomas Ambrosio, "Catching the 'Shanghai Spirit': How the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Promotes Authoritarian Norms in Central Asia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 60, no. 8 (2008), 1322, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=34280632&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed February 15, 2009.

case of the SCO, the norm entrepreneur is China. As discussed in the previous chapter, China's 'new security concept' advocates principles that have been referred to as the 'Shanghai Spirit'. Those principles are: mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for multi-civilisations and striving for common development.¹⁷⁵ Consequently, the 'Shanghai Spirit' is the new norms being advanced by China.¹⁷⁶ The promotion of the new norms did have some success because they can be found in the 2008 *Foreign Policy Concept* of Russia.¹⁷⁷

Ambrosio identified stability and diversity, as the two norms within the SCO promoting authoritarian regimes in Central Asia. He argues that stability is the rhetoric used within SCO to combat Color Revolutions and the three evils and diversity makes it illegitimate for outsiders to critic internal policies within Central Asia.¹⁷⁸ It is true that stability is a recurring theme in the Charter and in public statements of political leaders of the SCO. However, as discussed in previous chapters, the main reason for the creation of the SCO is to resolve the instabilities in Central Asia. Consequently, stability is not a value being promoted but a goal or 'raison d'être' of the SCO.

Ambrosio identified diversity correctly as a norm of the SCO but he fails to mention other important ones such as mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation,

¹⁷⁴Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998), 896-900, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=1414106&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed March 8, 2009.

¹⁷⁵Ambrosio, *Catching the 'Shanghai Spirit': How the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Promotes Authoritarian Norms in Central Asia*, 1327.

¹⁷⁶Wang, *China and SCO: Towards a New Type of Interstate Relations*, 117.

¹⁷⁷Russian Federation, *The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, 13-15.

¹⁷⁸Ambrosio, *Catching the 'Shanghai Spirit': How the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Promotes Authoritarian Norms in Central Asia*, 1322-1323.

and striving for common development. The 'Shanghai Spirit' represents norms which promote cooperation and peaceful resolution of conflicts. The norms adopted by the SCO are not promoting any political system or ideology. An example that the SCO is not promoting authoritarianism is the Tulip revolution in Kyrgyzstan. The Tulip revolution was allowed to happen without intervention from neighbour countries or the SCO. The new government was accepted in the SCO even though it was more democratic.

On the other hand, Blank argued that the 'Shanghai Spirit' is destabilizing for the region because they are norms promoted by totalitarian regimes. Conversely, the process of normalization within the SCO is actually providing stability. Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink have analyzed various theories which argue that norms produce stability because they regularize behaviour and limit the options available.¹⁷⁹ Norms reduce erratic behaviours which are usually a significant cause of instabilities. It is unfortunate that some authors are confusing authoritarianism with irrational behaviour which further tends to incite instability.

ALTERNATIVE TO 'POWER POLITICS'

The SCO member states are not democracies and they have often been labelled anti-democratic. The reality is the rhetoric of the SCO has been against interference from the United States who is strongly pursuing its political agenda of democratization. This agenda is often perceived as a hidden mechanism to promote regime change rather than trying to institute real democratic changes. In fact the Charter and the principles of the SCO are instead promoting non-interference and respect for sovereignty independence.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹Finnemore and Sikkink, *International Norm Dynamics and Political Change*, 894.

The response from the SCO to the United States pressures has been the promotion of new norms or the 'Shanghai Spirit'. The intent is first to demonstrate that states with different civilization and political systems can coexist in peace. Then, the era where states are either enemy or ally is the past. Instead of alliance, the SCO is promoting partnership in order to avoid polarization that existed during the Cold War.¹⁸¹ The promotion of those norms within the SCO is actually stabilizing Central Asia because they are regulating the behaviour of member states.

Considering security from a subjective point of view, the West should not 'feel' threatened by the 'Shanghai Spirit'. The new norms being promoted by the SCO are not challenging the Western norms but instead offer a different option than what is being proposed by the West. The 'Shanghai Spirit' is not destabilizing for Central Asia but instead offers an alternative to 'power politics' usually practiced by the often characterized 'hegemonic' United States.

¹⁸⁰Official Document System of the United Nations, *Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization A/57/88-S/2002/672*, Article I.

¹⁸¹Wang, *China and SCO: Towards a New Type of Interstate Relations*, 118.

A QUESTION ANSWERED

But we must be modest not only now, but forty-five years hence as well. We should always be modest. In our international relations, we Chinese people should get [rid] of great power chauvinism resolutely, thoroughly, wholly and completely.

- Mao

So far, the emphasis of this paper has been on demonstrating that the Shanghai Cooperation is not a threat to the West. The emphasis will now shift somehow to the future of the SCO. While Albrecht Rothacher has made the contention that the organization will likely fail,¹⁸² others such as Chien-Peng Chung has advanced that the future of the SCO is certain because China will not likely let it fail.¹⁸³ Nonetheless, the intention is not to predict the prospect for success or failure, which would just be speculation.

Instead, this chapter will try to address the concerns on the possible expansion of the SCO. This is important because one of the reasons the SCO has received much more attention in the last five years is the addition of Iran as an observer state. It will be contended that what is ultimately important is to recognize that the security instabilities are present throughout the Central Asian Security Complex. It is essential for the SCO to engage all states within the Security Complex in order to properly resolve the security challenges. Also, this chapter will provide two recommendations on what the priorities should be for the West in its dealings with the SCO and a conclusion section for this paper.

¹⁸²Rothacher, *Allying with an Evil Axis?*, 72.

¹⁸³Chung, *China and the Institutionalization of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization*, 12.

EXPANSION WITHIN THE SECURITY COMPLEX

There have been few papers written on the future expansion of the SCO. Most of them focus their attention on economic advantages for China in particular. The addition of Iran, for example, provides access to significant oil and gas resources that are necessary for the expansion of the Chinese economy.¹⁸⁴ The analyses also warn of the potential challenges of bringing additional conflicts within the SCO such as the Pakistan and India border dispute.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, the expansion of the SCO would also make it more difficult to reach a consensus as it is the case with larger organization such as the UN and NATO.

The authors have focused their arguments on the benefits and constraints of a potential expansion of the SCO. Those arguments are all interesting but they fail to address the real issues and consider the justification for the creation of the SCO which is to resolve the security instabilities within Central Asia. Those plaguing Central Asia are not confined within the borders of the SCO member states. As discussed in the first chapter, Central Asia is part of a Security Complex.¹⁸⁶ It includes all the SCO member states, the observer states (India, Pakistan and Iran)¹⁸⁷ and Afghanistan. Once again, a Security Complex is a group of states whose security challenges are similar enough that

¹⁸⁴Matthew Brummer, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Iran: A Power-Full Union," *Journal of International Affairs* 60, no. 2 (2007), 187, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mth&AN=25069441&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed November 21, 2008.

¹⁸⁵Norling and Swanström, *The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Trade, and the Roles of Iran, India and Pakistan*, 431.

¹⁸⁶Allison, *Conclusion: Central Asian Security in the Regional and International Context*, 263-264.

¹⁸⁷Mongolia is geographically located between China and Russia. However it does not share their security issues, concerns and interests. It is not part of the Security Complex.

their national securities can not be resolved independently. This principle is true whether the states are aware of that they are part of the complex or not.¹⁸⁸

The reality is that it does not matter if there are significant concerns about the adhesion of additional members to the SCO. All of the states within the Security Complex are as much responsible for resolving the problems as creating them. A good example is Afghanistan. The country is faced with a significant drug problem which is used to fund the terrorist activities.¹⁸⁹ The drugs are being exported from Afghanistan through Central Asia. In order to solve the terrorism problem in this country, it is essential to stop the traffic of drugs via the Central Asian republics. Moreover, it is very difficult to deny that the inclusion of Iran, for example, is also extremely problematic for the SCO. First of all, it will be hard to convince the international community of the seriousness of the SCO in its role of combating extremism with Iran as a member. Iran has historical connections to radical Islamic and terrorist groups.¹⁹⁰ Also, it would certainly instigate fear in the United States.¹⁹¹ Nonetheless in the case of Afghanistan

¹⁸⁸Buzan, *People States & Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, 190-192.

¹⁸⁹Norling and Swanström, *The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Trade, and the Roles of Iran, India and Pakistan*, 441.

¹⁹⁰Brummer, *The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Iran: A Power-Full Union*, 196.

¹⁹¹A number of articles have been written in the Washington Times sparking the fears about the inclusion of Iran as a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Michael Mainville, "Central Asian Bloc Considering Iran for Membership," *Washington Times, the (DC)* (5 June 2006), <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=n5h&AN=4KB320060605042931000&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed February 6, 2009, Katie Stuhldreher, "Western Fears Grow Over New Security Group," *Washington Times, the (DC)* (10 July 2006), <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bwh&AN=4KB320060710042607001&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed November 21, 2008, David R. Sands, "Tehran Pushes to Join Central Asian Alliance," *Washington Times, the (DC)* (2 April 2008), <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bwh&AN=4KB520080402025758002&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed November 21, 2008, David R. Sands, "Shanghai Alliance Not Military, U.S. Told," *Washington Times, the (DC)* (1 October, 2007),

and Iran, the SCO could play an important role in helping them to resolve their transnational security issues. The same can be said about the Pakistan and India or China and India border conflicts.¹⁹²

It is essential to understand that in order to resolve the security instabilities in Central Asia, the SCO must also address the issues within the Security Complex as a whole. The creation of the SCO Afghanistan Contact Group in 2005 is a step in the right direction.¹⁹³ The inclusion of Iran, Pakistan and India as observer states is also recognizing that they are as much causing security instabilities as they are responsible for resolving them within the Central Asian Security Complex.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As stated earlier, there are authors who perceived the SCO as nothing more than a show or, in the worst case, a threat to the stability in Central Asia. However, this essay has demonstrated that the SCO is a regional security organization focused on addressing the security challenges in Central Asia. In addition, it has the potential to resolve issues taking place in Afghanistan and Iran which are part of the Central Asian Security Complex. The West should work collaboratively with the SCO to address the current security challenges with Afghanistan and Iran. These are arguably the two most problematic issues for the West within the area of influence of the SCO. Moreover, the

<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bwh&AN=4KB520071001025924001&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed November 21, 2008.

¹⁹²A. F. Klimenko, "Military-Political Aspects of Future Cooperation among Russia, India and China in the Bilateral Format and within SCO," *Military Thought* 16, no. 2 (2007), 90, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mth&AN=31401868&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed November 21, 2008.

¹⁹³Kevin Sheives, "China Turns West: Beijing's Contemporary Strategy Towards Central Asia," *Pacific Affairs* 79, no. 2 (2006), 212, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=23266187&site=ehost-live>; Internet; accessed March 8, 2009.

SCO has likely better chances of success than the West because of the different norms promoted by the organization.

It is in the interests of the SCO as much as the West to see the challenges in Afghanistan resolved permanently. Fortunately, there has been some progress in that direction when the US government and NATO accepted an invitation to attend the Moscow conference on Afghanistan under the auspices of the SCO in March 2009. In order to cooperate with NATO in Afghanistan, the SCO will focus on specific measures to reduce drug trafficking, organized crime and terrorism in Central Asia.¹⁹⁴

It is also in the interests of the West to cooperate with the SCO to address the potential 'nuclearization' of Iran. It is not in the national interests of any SCO member states (especially Russia and China) to see their neighbour manufacturing or acquiring weapons of mass destruction.¹⁹⁵ Furthermore, one of the reasons why Iran feels compelled to arm itself is because it fears a potential US invasion as in Kosovo or Iraq. Iran would feel somewhat protected within the SCO and would be able to prosper because of the new economic opportunities the organization offers. These are two conditions that would help Iran disregard its ambitions to possess weapons of mass destruction.

The SCO is a unique ally to the West because it has potentially better chances of success. The organization has different norms ('Shanghai Spirit') which are less prescriptive and emphasize on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect

¹⁹⁴Gollust, *US to Attend Shanghai Group Meeting on Afghanistan*.

¹⁹⁵Brummer, *The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Iran: A Power-Full Union*, 196.

for multi-civilisations and striving for common development. Those new norms are particularly important for Iran which has been bullied too often in the past.

THE ANSWER

This paper started by analysing the justification for the creation of a multilateral security organization in Central Asia. Artificial boundaries and diverse ethnicities, Islamic extremism, competing external interests and economic security are the most serious security instabilities in the region. Central Asian republics are not capable of solving their challenges on their own because most of the problems are transnational. Examples where similar instabilities were resolved by regional security organization have been analysed. The conclusion was drawn that in Central Asia, a regional security organization can resolve those issues and would not be considered a threat to the West.

Secondly, the SCO was created to address specifically those regional security instabilities. The review of the Charter and the institutions of the SCO determined that its goals are primarily to address the border issues, combat the three evils: terrorism, extremism and separatism, and foster economic prosperity. The Charter is very explicit in saying that the SCO is not a bloc or military alliance, it is a partnership. The SCO is not directed against any individual states. Since the role of the SCO is specifically to resolve regional issues identified in the chapter 1, the SCO is not a threat to the West.

Third, the analysis shifted from the SCO to its constituents. The examination of the foreign policy of the member states was conducted in order to determine if they were a menace to the West. This section was deemed important in order to determine if the member states could use the SCO as a conduit to threaten the West. The analysis revealed that the foreign policies of the four minor partners within the SCO are not

threatening the West because it is not in their national interest to do so. Russia has been promoting multipolarity and has sought a coalition predominantly with China to diminish the influence of the United States in international politics. While Russian's rhetoric against the West has been significant, China has been working diligently at convincing the West that they are peaceful and not looking for confrontation. The threat posed by a rising China is very much dependent of the analytical theory used. However, the leadership role China is taking in the SCO has reaffirmed its desire to use international organizations to further its national interests. Consequently, the analysis of the foreign policies of the SCO member states did not reveal any threats to the West.

Last, the SCO has been accused of promoting instabilities in the region because it appears to be against democracy and promoting authoritarianism. The paper discussed in details the new norms being promoted by the SCO. Those norms, often referred as the 'Shanghai Spirit', are mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for multi-civilisations and striving for common development. The new norms do not promote totalitarianism and are not a threat to the West. They are however a sharp contrast to current 'power politics' advocated by the United States.

Central Asia is part of a 'Security Complex' which includes Afghanistan, Iran, Russia, China, Pakistan and India. It is important to understand that the SCO will not be able to provide long term solutions to the security instabilities in Central Asia without also addressing the issues within all the states in the Security Complex. They are all as much the cause for the problems as responsible for resolving them.

Is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization a threat to the West? This paper used a positive-sum framework to answer the question. The SCO is improving the stability of

the region by resolving the security instabilities and preventing the escalation of violence. As a consequence of the institutionalization of the SCO, there is a corresponding reduction of Western influence in Central Asia. Conversely, the overall impact of the SCO results in a more secure environment for every one. In other words, it is a win-win situation for all states if Central Asia is more stable. Hence, the SCO is not a threat to the West. Moreover, it is in the interests of the West to cooperate with the SCO in order to resolve security issues within the Central Asian Security Complex such as in Afghanistan and Iran. The different approach to international relations being normalized within the SCO is likely to provide dividend in solving those long lasting problems where 'power politics' has failed.

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