Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Expanding Horizons of Regional Cooperation

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Abstract

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) started as a security and counter terrorism organization. Later it changed to a multi-function regional organization that also covers economic cooperation and active diplomatic interaction. The SCO has become the cornerstone of China's Central Asian diplomacy and its promotion of "non-alliance" forms of strategic cooperation. Russia also attaches importance to the SCO. However, despite the SCO's endeavors to portray itself as a forum for information sharing and confidence building, as well as political and economic cooperation, hard power considerations remain an important part of the organizations policy making. Moreover, with some American forces remaining in Afghanistan for the foreseeable future and the challenge of terrorism and instability. The SCO will play important role in countering terrorism, promoting socio-economic cooperation and ensuring stability in the region.

Introduction

Security communities traditionally place emphasis on the importance of communication in the development of a "we-feeling" and the understanding that co-operation is vital to the creation of peace and stability. As the theory of security
communities emphasizes, the first stage of building such a regime is often sparked by “new interpretations of social reality” which provided an incentive for greater social contact among actors (Adler & Barnett, 1998). In examining the SCO’s relatively short history, these factors are essential in explaining the course of the organization’s development. The fracturing of the Soviet Union in December 1991 provided just such a catalyst not only for the Central Asian states but also for Russia and China. “The development of the Central Asian republics has been marked by a rising number of strategic concerns in the Eurasian region, including secessionist forces, sometimes divisive clan politics, political and religious extremism, and corruption” (Gleason & Shaihutdinov, 2005).

The newly independent Central Asian republics have been distinguished by governments and governance infrastructure largely inherited from the Soviet era. Its governments were ill-equipped for the shock of independence. Geographically, Central Asia became an instant buffer zone between Russian and Chinese regional interests while adding a new dimension to the bridge building process between Beijing and Moscow. The relations between the two improved significantly with the diplomatic thaw of the 1980s and continued with the development of a “strategic partnership” signed by Boris Yeltsin and Jiang Zemin in April 1996, not only reviving Sino-Russian relations and creating a great power link separate from the United States, but also creating a comfort level essential for building a Eurasian multilateral regime. At the same time the new states of Central Asia, former subordinate actors to the Soviet empire, lacked impetus strong enough to attempt to build security regimes on their own. “Despite common security concerns, obstacles to security cooperation were exacerbated by regional governments insecure about their post-Soviet identities and sovereignty” (Swanstrom, 2004). It was therefore up to other actors to address the question of building a strategic community for Central Asia. In this case, it was great power diplomacy which was required for the SCO process to begin and accelerate. The major impetus for Eurasian
multilateral security cooperation leading to the formation of the SCO came from China. Shortly after the Central Asian republics gained independence, Beijing engaged the region with an eye to resolving the border disputes it had inherited from the former USSR. Since the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s, and especially after the border clashes of 1969, protecting this common frontier against enemy encroachment was extremely taxing to Soviet forces and China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) as well as to the economies of both states. In seeking to improve its ties with its western neighbours after the demise of the Soviet Union, Beijing had hopes that once the borders with Russia and the other successor states could be demarcated to the satisfaction of all sides, China could take advantage of warmer relations with Russia and argue for a phased pullback of ex-Red Army and PLA forces, a scheme with which Moscow was in full agreement. At the same time, "Beijing required assurance that the new states would not be either sources of pressure on China on its remote Western frontier or havens for extremist groups seeking to destabilize Chinese governance in its far west, especially Xinjiang" (Ferdinan, 2002). The possibility of a security vacuum in Central Asia was incentive enough for Beijing to embark on a regime-building process. After many years of taking a conservative approach towards security organizations, the steps leading to the SCO represented a significant policy departure on Beijing's part as well as the genesis of multilateral strategic institutional development in Eurasia.

Historical Evolution

The grouping of Shanghai Five was originally shaped on April 26, 1996 with signing the agreement on Deepening Military Trust in Border Regions in Shanghai by the heads of states of Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. In 1997 the same countries signed the agreement on Reduction of Military Forces in Border Regions at a meeting in Moscow. "Border" is a term that resonates in Chinese history, albeit with unhappy associations. It is associated with invasions and the rise of regimes
alien to China — the Khitan Liao, the Hsi Hsia, and the Jurchen Chin from the 9th century. Many of these were vessels of the Uighur Khagans, an impoverished ethnic minority designated as terrorists and separatists by the PRC today. And of course there was the Mongol invasion. The notion of border, the area of the Great Wall, rules the history of northern China.

Within a very short time this initiative has managed to encompass almost a fifth of the earth’s land area from China to Russia. Areas not within the SCO but granted observer status — such as Mongolia, India, Pakistan, Iran (and perhaps eventually Afghanistan) — also occupy the same ratio. Its member states cover an area of over 30 million km², or about three fifths of Eurasia, with a population of 1.455 billion, about a quarter of the world’s total. The Organization spans six seas — the China Seas, the Indian Ocean, the Caspian Sea, the Baltic Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Black Sea. The potential of the SCO — either as a military bloc or as a regional economic power — is enormous. But why does the physical area of the SCO give us a sense of déjà-vu? The main land area and focus of the SCO is Central Asia, as we noted. The Mongols, the most dominant of the alien regimes who ruled China for more than a century and threatened it for another two centuries, came from this area and built an empire very similar in extent to the physical space of the SCO. How is China disposed towards this historical space? What effects do its historical memory regarding border invasions play in the process?

Historically China has always seen the Mongols as outsiders. The Mongol domination in the Yuan period (1260-1368) was seen as an alien regime in which the Hans were discriminated. Bai Shouyi (2002) writes:

"Strictly speaking, the Yuan regime was not purely Mongol, though it was dominated by Mongols ... The policy of national discrimination, which created discord among many ethnic groups, was merely a means to solidify Mongol rule..."
In claiming the Yuan dynasty as an era in their own history, the Chinese have always over-looked the fact that “Yuan China was an appendage of a larger world empire. They have been oblivious to the fact that Mongolian history had its own integrity quite apart from the movement of Chinese history, even when the two histories overlapped to the great extent that they did during the Yuan dynasty. Today we must acknowledge that both the China centered and the Mongolian empire centered histories of the period are valid and that we should attempt to transcend the limits of both” (Franke—Twitchett, 1994).

China under the Yuans presented an unified economic and cultural realm stretching from China through eastern Turkestan to Persia, enabling China to reach out to the Eurasian land mass beyond her northern borders. The Mings reversed this policy when they started a series of friendship initiatives from the end of the 14th century. These were all south oriented: the occupation of Dai Viet, the colonization of Yunnan and the voyages of friendship under Zheng He.

These initiatives were directed to access maritime trade and promote Chinese hegemony on the Indian Ocean. In the process the “Ming Factor”, much like the SCO factor may do one day for nations in Central Asia, undermined and or dismantled many of the upland Tai polities which posed a threat to China. A political domino effect was visible in an arc radiating from the north of Bengal (in South Asia) to Vietnam. It is noteworthy that the Mings developed no such initiatives on the northwest border with Central Asia.

Diplomacy for Regional Cooperation

Diplomatic dialogue on border security and mutually acceptable demarcation between “China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan began in 1993, culminating in the April 1996 Five-Power Agreement in Shanghai, an agreement which regulated military activity in the border regions and forbade provocative military exercises in the frontier regions” (Graver, 1998).
The contract also encouraged strategic information distribution, the conduct of combined training, and increasing military contacts among signatory countries. A mutual verification team was established in 1999 to check force reductions in the area and to watch over the confidence building actions of the border agreements. Following these accords, "there was an increase in bilateral meetings between Chinese and Russian military officials, including inspections and increased purchases by China of Russian arms" (Aleksayev, 2005). The agreement proved beneficial for both China and Russia as it served the dual purposes of reducing tension on what had previously been a very tense borderland while simultaneously augmenting both states diplomatic and persuasive power in Central Asia.

The informal "Shanghai Five" became an important tool by which Russia, China, and Central Asia could address their strategic interests and fill a problematic security vacuum in Eurasia. As well, the meetings smoothed the process of resolving outstanding border demarcation issues. Beijing signed border agreements with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in the late 1990s and early 2000s. These deals were seen as strong proof of Beijing's new willingness to accept compromise in its regional relations, as Dushanbe gained the majority of the disputed frontier territory, twenty-seven out of twenty-eight thousand square kilometers. This goodwill, along with the country's burgeoning economy and potential as a trade partner, provided China with much political capital in Central Asia and further strengthened Beijing's particular vision of regional cooperation via community building rather than alliances. By the mid-1990s, the region's so-called "three evils", terrorism, extremism and separatism, began to cover border security concerns among the Shanghai Five as a result of the development of indigenous fundamentalist movements aligned against the secular regimes of Central Asia, as well as overspill from Taliban controlled Afghanistan. These concerns served to further cement the links between the Shanghai group members. By then, Taliban ruled Kabul was accused of supporting and sometimes training many Central Asian extremist
organizations, including the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), a group which had dedicated itself to the overthrow of the Uzbek government and the establishment of a unified Islamic state in Central Asia, including the Xinjiang region in China; it was alleged to have masterminded terrorist activities throughout the region. Although the IMU was thought to have suffered a massive blow in 2001 as a result of American-led intervention in Afghanistan after 9/11, it remains a significant threat to the region. Another group which appeared in the 1990s, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir al-Islam, or Party of Islamic Liberation, despite its advocacy of non-violent struggle, also remains a serious security concern in the region because of its goal of establishing an Islamic Caliphate in Central Asia. All five Central Asian states have banned the movement but that has not stopped the spread of the group, especially in Kyrgyzstan. Clandestine extremist groups continue to operate in the region and remain a primary security concern.

However, Uzbekistan’s “addition to the regime underlined the expansion of the group’s interests beyond that of exclusively border security to more regional based strategic cooperation. This has left Turkmenistan as the only Central Asian state outside of the SCO community. Ashgabat’s insular regime under the late President Saparmurat Niyazov adopted a watch-and-wait approach to the organization in accordance with its doctrine of positive neutrality and eschewing participation in regional organizations” (Pomfret, 2001). In June 2004, Mongolia was granted observer status, with a special liaison group “proposed which would allow for a participatory role for Afghanistan. A year later, India, Iran and Pakistan were also granted the rank of observers. The inclusion of observer members resulted from the confidence that the SCO could expand its strategic (and economic) interests beyond Central Asia. Choosing which states to admit was the product of delicate political maneuvering and compromise between Beijing and Moscow, with the former pushing for the admission of both India and Pakistan as observers and the latter
refusing to consider the question of observers unless Iran was included” (Guang, 2005).

The structure of the SCO borrows heavily from security community-building practices in Northeast and Southeast Asia, as was seen in the citation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its offspring, the larger ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). As inside these forums, there has been a focus in the SCO on informality, "the use of consensus in developing policy and the idea of open regionalism stressing inclusiveness and non-discrimination. These provisions were deemed necessary in order to accommodate different power and maturity levels and political orientations among members. The only other viable option was a modified concert system, with one or more great powers directly guiding a regional security structure" (Charles a & Clifford, 1991). Neither Moscow nor Beijing was in a position to play that role, as to do so would require considerable, long-term material and policy commitments neither was willing to undertake. Not only did the founding of the SCO signal a desire to deepen regional co-operation, but also to expand its mandate beyond purely security matters. According to the declaration, the organization’s “mandate would be to build trust and cooperation between members as well as promoting increased cooperation in the areas of trade, science and technology, culture, energy, and the environment. The Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism, which outlined SCO activities against these three threats, was signed the same month by the six members” (Charles a & Clifford, 1991). These goals took on new urgency in the wake of 9/11 and the subsequent American-led operations to dismantle Al-Qaeda and dislodge its prime sponsor, the Taliban government in Kabul.

The Charter of the SCO

The organization’s official charter was unveiled at its second meeting in St. Petersburg in June 2002. The deed established the SCO’s authorization to build joint trust, good neighbor lines and to support widespread cooperation. Other key essentials of the
In the decade-long process of mutual institutionalization, the charter included the affirmation that a Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) would be formed to act as an information nexus for regional security and that decisions would rely on consensus. “To demonstrate inclusiveness away from regional concerns, the charter also gave support to other peace-building initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region, including the ARF and multilateral initiatives on security and cooperation on the Korean Peninsula and South Asia. The third SCO conference in Moscow in June 2003 established a permanent secretariat in Beijing, which opened in January of the following year, and appointed Zhang Deguang, former Chinese ambassador to Russia, as the organization’s first secretary-general” (Chung, 2004). These were both clear signals that China remains a driving force behind the group’s development and policy building. As an acknowledgement of the growing influence of Uzbekistan within Central Asian regional dynamics, as well as the need to keep Tashkent engaged in SCO affairs, the RATS, which had originally been planned to open in Bishkek, was instead opened in Tashkent in June 2004. The security ministries of each member state are charged with providing personnel for the centre. Since its inception, the RATS has focused its activities on coordinating anti-terrorism information with member states and other international actors, including via the use of “scientific research conferences”, crafting legal documents on “combating terrorism in tandem with the United Nations Security Council and maintaining a databank of security information for use by member states” (RATS Activity, 2007).

The SCO undertakes joint military exercise for boosting confidence among the member states and develop a joint military policy against potential threats especially terrorism. The first war games took place between China and Kyrgyzstan in October 2002, and expanded set of exercises were held in Kazakhstan and Xinjiang in August 2003. All members with the exception of Uzbekistan participated. In August 2005, China and Russia, staged their own military exercises with the other SCO members as well as Iran, India and Pakistan sending observers. Dubbed Operation
Peace Mission 2005, new exercise took place near Vladivostok, Russia, and Weifang, in China's Shandong Province. These joint security operations demonstrated organization's growing confidence and maturity, especially because the SCO seeks a balance between various methods of security management and political cooperation.

The SCO as a Security Community

The founding of the SCO as an institution dedicated to the security of the Asian heartland signaled an important endeavor to address an increasingly problematic regional institutional void, and a gap in strategic cooperation in Central Asia which bilateral relations could not effectively address. The SCO’s geographical coverage and the fact that it contains two of the largest armed forces in the world makes it impossible to ignore as a strategic actor. However, the SCO was acknowledged, justifiably, as having lost much of its thunder after the terrorist attacks on the United States in October 2001 and the arrival of American forces into Afghanistan and the establishment of two air bases in Central Asia in 2002. The organization was quick to prepare a statement after the 9/11 terrorist attacks but was much slower to coordinate activities designed to assist in formulating a response to the threat from terrorist organizations operating from Afghan soil. The SCO was not consulted by Washington as it sought bilateral deals with Central Asian states to approve the leasing of bases and flyover rights. Moscow acquiesced to having American forces operating in Afghanistan. The US also established bases in two central Asian states. Beijing could do little but watch from the sidelines as American troops arrived in these bases near China's western regions. The swift establishment, “despite Russian misgivings, of American bases at Kharshi-Khanabad, Uzbekistan, and Manas, Kyrgyzstan, after 2001 was further proof of the SCO’s seeming limitations. This impression was only partly countered by the reopening of a former Soviet base at Kant, a short distance away from the Manas installation, by the Russian army in December 2002” (Johnson, 2004).
After 9/11, the SCO focus shifted to securing the region against terrorism. It also expressed some element of caution of U.S. troops in Afghanistan. In July 2005, the SCO issued a declaration calling upon international forces in Afghanistan to set a final timeline for their use of Central Asian bases as part of its Afghan operations, a request promptly dismissed by Washington (http://www.english.scosummit2006.org/en-bjzl/2006-04/21/content_145.htm).

The achievement of the SCO as a security community has been particularly significant to China, which has remained the linchpin of both SCO policy and its development since the initial meetings of the Shanghai Five. In addition to providing an important window into Central Asian affairs, including politics and trade, for Beijing, it has strengthened security on China’s western frontier, especially in Xinjiang, which has sizeable Muslim minorities sharing ethnic backgrounds with populations in Central Asia. At the same time, Central Asia has also developed into a major component of Beijing’s zhoubian (peripheral) foreign policies since the 1990s, designed to promote stable relations with China’s bordering states to improve the country’s frontier security. Since the beginning of the 1990s, Beijing, after maintaining a wary stance on regional multilateralism in security matters for decades, began to develop a greater acceptance of the concept as a means of addressing its more complicated strategic concerns.

Though the SCO monitors American military activity in Afghanistan and its deep interest in Central Asia, it takes special interest in security issues of the region and the adjoining territories. Its interests have diversified, and it has demonstrated greater confidence in addressing new challenges. First and foremost, the primary goal of the organization, namely the fight against the three evils, remains highly relevant. Maintaining security in this volatile region continues to present a challenge and this might become a critical test for the SCO’s commitment to regional security. At the RATS conference in Tashkent in April 2006, “fourteen terrorist organizations were identified as directly
threatening the security of the region, including the Taliban, the Islamic Party of Turkestan, and the Hizb ut Tahrir. At the same time, the RATS regime was praised for preventing over 250 terrorist attacks in member states since its inception" (Kyrgyz National News Agency, 2006). Thus, despite its recent attempts to broaden its mandate, the anti-terror dimension of the SCO has remained predominant.

The opening of borders of Central Asia since 1992 has enabled those engaged in trans-national crime to be more active. Moreover, “there has been much discussion of the linkages between smuggling and terrorist organizations. There is also the concern about the issues pertaining to the serious water shortages in Central Asia, disputes of the ownership of key waterways and the damage to the Aral Sea, a vital regional fresh water source, from Soviet-era misuse” (Sievers, 2001). The SCO can act as a coordinator of these grievances, as well as a problem solving body for both traditional and non-traditional security threats. In short, the security problems in Eurasia have grown and diversified to the point where unilateral and even bilateral approaches to solving them have become increasingly unworkable, thus explaining the growing regional preference for multilateral solutions.

The SCO has advocated strong linkages between economic development and security in Central Asia. The SCO is expected to evolve into an economic as well as a political and strategic union. With the signing of economic cooperation agreements amongst the SCO members, hopes have increased that the group can develop what has been described as the two wheels policy; “one wheel representing security and the other trade” (Interview with SCO official, 2005). China, has emphasized the role of trade development as an essential component of its Central Asian policy, for energy supplies (which Beijing, as a rapidly growing energy consumer, increasingly covets) and trade goods. This focus has provided “China with economic benefits but also with much soft power in the region. Belting has also expressed interest in reviving the classic role of Central Asia as a land bridge across the Asian continent, and has encouraged the development of
communication and transportation routes across Eurasia’ (Goldstein, 2005). The SCO is well placed to encourage these initiatives should it develop stronger relations with both East Asian and European economic actors. However, with strategic issues still dominating the SCO agenda and intra-Eurasian trade linkages still in need of much upgradation.

For trading purposes, there is emphasis on manufactured and consumer goods in China's exports to Russia. Raw materials and fuel constitutes the majority of trade in the other direction. The trade situation among the Central Asian members of the SCO presents more challenges, as their economies are still “based largely on raw materials, transportation routes are underdeveloped, and many artificial trade distortions and barriers remain in the region, hardly the best atmosphere for economic community building” (Lo, 2004). Thus, although economic reform in the SCO region is correctly seen as another necessary component for Central Asian peace building as well as strengthening the SCO community, the creation of a Eurasian common market is still, at best, a long-term goal.

Within Eurasia, the SCO has provided a useful conduit for the development of Chinese and Russian Central Asia policy of engagement. For Central Asia itself, as relatively new states and late developers, the SCO is a learning tool not only in community building but also in the adaptation of rules and norms on the international level. The consensus-based, community model is expected to mark trade and economic relations in the SCO.

Respect for Sovereignty and Non-interference

The SCO community endeavored to promote not only state security and respect for sovereignty among the membership but also regime security. This can be described as the mutual support of the Central Asian member governments in addressing internal and external pressures in the name of promoting highly valued regional stability. The SCO today appears to be very similar in its security policies to ASEAN which after its creation in 1967 sought to bolster Southeast Asian governments against both internal
insurgencies and communist encroachment from within and without. At the same time, “ASEAN members, had a tacit agreement not to interfere in each other’s domestic affairs and to promote the stability of member regimes” (Acharya, 2001). Although the SCO has not stressed regime security as a mandate of the organization, it has avoided interference in each other’s domestic affairs and resisted non-member states violating the sovereignty of the member states.

This facet of SCO cooperation, however, changed somewhat after March 2005 with the ouster of Kyrgyz leader Askar Akayev following a people’s uprising, later dubbed the “Tulip Revolution” reminiscent of the “Rose Revolution” in Georgia in December 2003 and the “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine in November-December 2004. All three revolutions had their origins in protests against public disenfranchisement and were the result of demands for greater democracy and an end to corrupt and autocratic rule. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, the catalysts for the uprising included an instantaneous backlash against the manipulation of the two rounds of parliamentary elections. Unlike the largely orderly demonstrations in Ukraine and Georgia, however, the protests in Kyrgyzstan were considerably more violent; government buildings were seized and many businesses sacked. Following Akayev’s rapid removal, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, a former prime minister, was declared acting president and subsequently won a presidential vote in July 2005. The result of these developments from Georgia and Ukraine, despite attempts by Kyrgyz and other Central Asian leaders to downplay them, provided concrete evidence to other parts of the former Soviet Union, including Central Asia, that post-USSR authoritarian regimes could be successfully challenged. The Tulip Revolution differed from its predecessors in the sense that it lacked a pro-West dimension as well as a strong people power aspect, being more of a transition between elites than a people’s revolution.

These developments challenged the idea that Central Asia was insulated from the political upheavals elsewhere in the former Soviet Union and also underscored the SCO’s limitations in
influencing domestic issues. As Kyrgyzstan changed governments, the other SCO members opted to maintain a non-interference stance, likely mollified by assertions by the Bakiev government that there would be no radical re-orientations in Kyrgyz foreign policy, including Bishkek’s relations with the organization itself. However, at the SCO’s leadership summit in Astana in July 2005, “the organization’s unease with the events in Kyrgyzstan was reflected in Secretary General Zhang’s speech which included an advice that the export of a ready model of social development could cause chaos for Central Asia” (Karajanov, 2007). Other SCO members began to take steps against a possible fall-out effect and in May 2005 the upper echelons of the Chinese Communist Party reportedly called for an “internal smokeless war against perceived liberal elements seeking to destabilize Chinese society, implying that the colour revolutions were in fact the result of American interference” (Kahn, 2005). The question of whether the region may experience similar revolutions in the future has thus grown to dominate analyses of not only governance in the Eurasian region but also how the SCO may respond collectively. “The violence, which Tashkent blamed on Islamic militants, was forcibly suppressed by the state’s armed forces. The official reaction of the SCO was that the uprising was an act of terrorism and needed to be viewed in the context of Uzbekistan’s ongoing struggle with extremist groups” (Shaimerdenov, 2005).

Despite the regime change in Kyrgyzstan, the SCO remained detached from the domestic uprising in these states. As Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov said that the organization was dedicated to political non-interference and the socio-economic development of the region. The events in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and the SCO’s responses and non-responses have underlined the idea that the organization is far from prepared to assume the role of guarantor of domestic-level security within its member states. What has been happening as a result of the colour revolutions, however, is a stronger sense of “closing ranks” among members and a greater wariness within the SCO towards the role of the West in the region.
Conclusions

The SCO was established in April 1996 primarily as a security organization of China, Russia and Central Asian states. It acquired greater salience after the terrorist attacks in the United States in September 2001 and US military attack on Afghanistan in October 2001. Later the U.S established two air bases in Central Asia. The SCO focused on countering terrorism in the region. However, it expressed some reservations on U.S military presence in Afghanistan.

Its goals expanded from security and countering terrorism to include economic cooperation and trade in order to make it a more wholesome regional organization. It also invited other states to its conferences as new members, observers, dialogue partners and guests. This linked the SCO with other regions and organizations.

The SCO is opposed to interference in internal affairs of the member states and extends cooperation for controlling terrorism, smuggling of narcotics and containment of illegal movement of people across national boundaries. It also encourages trade and economic relations and seeks sharing of views among the members on regional and global issues and promotion of peace and stability.

The SCO has emerged as an important regional organization of non-Western and non-U.S oriented states. Russia and China use its prime members, and with the admission of Pakistan and India as full members in 2015-16, the SCO’s territorial scope has expanded. It now comprises important states of Euro Asia, Central Asia and South Asia. This has enhanced the importance of the SCO, which has become more than a single region organization.
Notes and References


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