

Exploring the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's Identity Crisis: What is Next?^{1, 2}

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Abstract

The granting of full membership to India and Pakistan transformed the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) into the world's largest trans-regional structure and changed the trajectory of regional cooperation. However, following the expansion of its initial Central Asian focus to the wider Eurasian region, the identity of the SCO has undergone several changes. This article argues that the SCO is in fact experiencing an identity crisis. The historical perspective and environmental background of the SCO are examined, allowing the author to characterize the unique identity of the SCO and the possible scenarios to resolve the ongoing identity crisis.

Key words: Shanghai Cooperation Organisation; China; Russia; India; identity crisis

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The full-fledged membership of India and Pakistan in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) transformed the regional organization into the world's largest, with 44% of the world's population, a total gross domestic product (GDP) of \$33 trillion and a territory that covers about 40 million square kilometres or 26.6% of the total area of the globe [Akizhanov, 2017]. The geographic coverage of the SCO links the Asia-Pacific with the Atlantic region, and South Asia with the Middle East. In terms of security, the SCO consists of four nuclear powers so that half of its members have nuclear weapons. In cultural terms, members represent a vast cultural area which contains nearly 15% of the cultural landmarks included on the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage List [TASS, 2017]. Thus, the SCO is an important actor in the international arena and in the Asian region [Allison, 2004; Aris 2009; Chung, 2006; Oldberg, 2007].

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In keeping with the set of values known as the “Shanghai Spirit,” the Shanghai Five (made up of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) was primarily concerned with settling boundary issues with the post-Soviet countries. Thereafter, strengthening trust and pursuing disarmament in the border regions, the Shanghai Five group was transformed into the SCO and the agenda of the organization became focused on security issues. More recently it has transformed into an economic cooperation. With the growing global ambitions of China and Russia’s confrontations with the West, the major powers within the organization became interested in the expansion of the SCO to include India and Pakistan. Central Asian states with less powerful political voices but with pragmatic economic concerns welcomed the inclusion of India and Pakistan, both of which are huge emerging markets.

However, since the last expansion, doubts about the efficiency of the SCO have frequently been raised in the context of the SCO’s transformation crisis. Mostly, this crisis is driven by the conflict between new members. India and Pakistan have had very controversial relations during their independent histories; similarly, relations between China and India are far from friendly and open. Consequently, the main risk for the development of the organization may be the differences of position among the states of the China-India-Pakistan triangle, which possibly will weaken the cohesiveness of the organization and lead to the hypostasis of important decisions. Moreover, the efficiency of the institutional decision-making procedure of the SCO may suffer as a result of the consensus mechanism, which requires decisions to be made by general acceptance of the members without a vote. Any lack or blockage of institutional decisions could cause the organization to become deadlocked. Furthermore, the uniqueness of the organization has been its focus on Central Asia and on China and Russia as the main strategic players in the region, whereas with the inclusion of South Asian members questions arise as to whether the focus will remain on Central Asia or whether it will shift. The discourse of the SCO as having a unique role, its functional development and its core values have come into question within the expert community as a result of the changing markers of its organizational identity. Therefore, with the expansion of the SCO there are growing debates about whether the SCO’s fundamental structural changes have enhanced its institutional strength, or whether it suffers from an institutional deficit reflecting an organizational identity crisis.

Understandably, these ambiguities raise questions about the potential of the organization. Considering the its almost two decades-long history, the current situation could be explained as a crisis of transformation in that the SCO is transforming from a young organization into a more “adult,” albeit not yet fully mature, international organization (IO).

Accordingly, the objective of this article is to define the major consequences of the identity transformation of the SCO following its last expansion. It argues that the SCO is undergoing the formation of a new identity linked to a change of regional focus, new organizational goals and institutional modifications. The changes to its original identity mean that the organization is experiencing confusion regarding its core nature. In other words, it is experiencing an identity crisis. The theoretical basis for this

argument is anchored in S. Cho's identity formation theory of IOs. Based on Cho's theory, this article offers an assessment of the historical and environmental perspectives on the SCO. Based on this, the article suggests that there remains a core SCO identity which makes it unique and offers possible ways to resolve the ongoing identity crisis. Therefore, the paper is structured as follows. First, a theoretical analysis of identity in the context of international organizations provides a general understanding of the choice of theory and an explanation of the identity formation process and of identity crises in international organizations. Second, an institutional identity formation trajectory be described, charting the historical development of the SCO and its main structural mechanisms, which complies with the historical aspect of the identity formation of an IO. Third, the article will consider the interests of the major powers in order to describe the environment that influenced the SCO's identity formation, focusing in particular on their geopolitical, economic and security interests, as well as their positions toward further expansion. Fourth, the article considers feasible development scenarios, describing the current conditions of the SCO, its originality and its efforts to develop in the era of globalization.

A Theoretical Analysis of the Identity of International Organizations

Traditional theories of international relations made significant progress in explaining why states establish and maintain multilateral cooperation through the mechanisms of international organizations. Yet scholars tend to limit their focus to the institutional life cycle of IOs. Neo-realists consider IOs to be tools of powerful states to be used in pursuit of their policies [Waltz, 1979] or as mirroring power relations in the international system [Gilpin, 1984]. Neo-liberal institutionalists argue that "international institutions are created in response to state interests, and their character is structured by the prevailing distribution of capabilities" [Keohane, Martin, 1995]. Contrary to this, the functionalist approach ignores state power and political influence, stating that "the growth of functional IOs would erode the basis for identification with the nation-state by bringing together individuals from different nations into a more 'neutral' international context" [Wolf, 1974, p. 349]. Constructivists argue that state identities and interests are constructed by social structures, rather than given exogenously to the system by human nature or domestic politics [Wendt, 1994], whereas state-centred views reject the ontological autonomy of IOs as self-governing, purposeful actors [Cho, 2014].

Nonetheless, Helfer [2006] argues, "for most scholars, the story of IOs ends where it ought to begin – with their founding. What these institutions do once they have been created remains under-examined and under-theorized. This omission is a significant and consequential gap in our understanding of IOs."

Since the main purpose of this article is to determine and theorize the identity formation process and identity crisis of the SCO, an interdisciplinary approach has been used to track the sociolegal dynamic of the IO. In order to illustrate an IO's dynamic transformation over its life cycle, Cho's theory of identity, based on developmental psy-

chology as developed in his article “An International Organization’s Identity Crisis,” is used in this analysis. Cho [2007; 2014] proposed a novel perspective on the rationalist understanding of the identity formation of an IO and its consequences. He blended constructivism with a theory of identity that is informed by developmental psychology to describe a dynamic legal process of identity formation. This interdisciplinary approach provides a theoretical framework that demonstrates how an IO, as a sociolegal actor, develops, transforms and becomes more sophisticated.

A. Wendt [1994] argues that interaction at the systemic level changes state identities and interests, locating the general principles of identity formation in “structurationist” and symbolic interactionist social theory. Constructivist approaches to the construction of identities and interests take a sociological rather than an economic approach to systemic theory. They argue that states are not structurally or exogenously given, but rather are constructed by historically contingent interactions. Regional and global structures constitute interaction contexts that facilitate the dynamic of collective identity formation and as such play an indirect causal role. Wendt’s [1994] intersubjective systemic structures consist of shared understandings, expectations and social knowledge embedded in international institutions and threat complexes in the context of which states define their identities and interests. In addition, Wendt argues that dependency, whether intersubjective or material, is a key determinant of the extent to which an actor’s identity is shaped by interaction, much like a child’s development is normally influenced by parents more than by other actors.

Against these approaches, Cho’s identity theory is grounded in developmental psychologist E. Erikson’s [1968] suggestion that a person develops her or his identity by combining an understanding of the environment (group identity) with his or her personal characteristics (personal identity), which is to say that the individual and society are closely and dynamically interrelated. Erikson’s theory of identity formation focuses on a dynamic pathway of human psychology in which an individual searches for and establishes his or her genuine identity. His development model of identity formation posits that individuals pass through various stages in a life cycle, each stage with its sensitivities, identity crises and potentials.

Identity formation is not always smooth and successful. Sometimes, adolescents fail to form a genuine identity, a situation that Erikson called “identity confusion” or “identity diffusion.” Erikson argues that the successful resolution of an identity crisis has a long-lasting impact on the future stability and security of the individual, as well as on his or her ability to uphold commitments, deal with future hardships or sustain relationships [Cho, 2014]. In this analysis of the SCO, Erikson’s approach to identity formation helps to theoretically frame the SCO’s current identity confusion – a condition which in the future could push the organization to a significantly new level of development.

It is important to acknowledge that there is a degree of anthropomorphism in Cho’s application of identity theory to IOs. As Wendt observed [1994], corporate identity might not be of the same quality as human identity, and Cho also admits that an IO’s identity may not be as coherent as a person’s because biology tends to produce a more unitary identity than those of corporate bodies.

However, Cho argues that both human behaviour and an IO's operations can be observed as an outcome of intentionality, thus both humans and organizations are open systems that can self-sustain by adjusting to the environment. Regarding the environment, Cho explains that it provides an organization with necessary material resources, such as hardware (physical infrastructure), software (technology), and humanware (staff), in addition to symbolic resources such as reputation. Hence, the critical significance that the environment exerts on organizational identity, as well as on human identity. Like people, organizations pursue a homeostatic equilibrium vis-à-vis the external environment as they build and adapt their individuality to their institutional development [Cho, 2014]. Therefore, this analysis takes account of the geopolitical environment that impacted the identity transformation of the SCO.

According to Erikson's identity theory [1984], history also plays a vital role in identity formation. Like DNA in a human body, organizational history bestows upon an IO a certain institutional heredity, creating a unique path for each organization. The organizational history – represented by a charter or constitution – is often used in determining whether an IO or its participants can act in a certain way. Interestingly, the history of an IO's identity formation stems from the fact that it cannot be discarded from the organization's DNA because of inefficiency. In that sense, all institutional changes are path dependent. For this reason, the SCO's trajectory of growth and development must be examined.

Consequently, if history and environment exert a critical impact on how an IO behaves and performs, a disconnect between an IO and the external context can lead to an IO's identity crisis. An IO processes complex information provided by the environment and forms a response to external challenges. Subsequently, if an identity crisis is translated into a normative process, IO formation changes are mostly teleological and constitutive, since these changes define and redefine organizational goals. Organizational norms are a leitmotif of an IO's norm-driven identity crisis, which is also defined by P. Selznick [1949] as an "ideological weapon" which can defy opposition and mobilize support from the environment. In addition, organizational goals must be adjustable for survival since the identity itself was formed through a process of historical development [Cho, 2014].

When an IO fails to consolidate an identity, it cannot survive an identity crisis. Cho described two reasons for such a failure. First, challenges result when the environment changes but the IO holds on to its previous identity, and its unresponsiveness to the new environment eventually leads to "inefficient, self-defeating behaviour." Failure also occurs when an IO becomes confused by multiple identifications and does not commit to one coherent identity [Cho, 2014].

This article applies Cho's approach to identity formation and examines the historical and environmental perspectives of the SCO's formation. The study limits consideration of the environmental factor to the three major powers, noting that while all stakeholders have an important place within the organization, these three powers are the key decision-makers within the existing structure.

The Trajectory of the SCO's Institutional Identity Formation

The Shanghai Five group was organized on the basis of two agreements, the “Treaty on Deepening Military Trust in Border Regions” signed on 26 April 1996, and the “Treaty on Reduction of Military Forces in Border Regions” signed on 24 April 1997. Following the accession of Uzbekistan in 2001, the Shanghai Five became the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, a Eurasian political and security organization consisting of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. During the Astana summit on 9 June 2017, India and Pakistan joined the organization as full members. Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia hold observer status, and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Turkey and Sri Lanka are dialogue partners.

The SCO has a dual-level mechanism for cooperation. The highest level is made up of the Heads of State Council (HSC), which is the supreme decision-making body, and the Heads of Government Council (HGC). Both the HSC and the HGC meet once a year to discuss cooperation strategies in priority areas. There are also meetings of heads of parliament, secretaries of security councils, ministers of foreign affairs, defense, emergency relief, economy, transport, culture, education and healthcare, of heads of law enforcement agencies and supreme and arbitration courts, and of prosecutors general. The Council of National Coordinators of SCO Member States (CNC) acts as the SCO's coordination mechanism [SCO, 2017]. In keeping with the Charter of the SCO, decisions are taken by consensus without a vote. Further, there are two permanent bodies within the SCO – the SCO Secretariat based in Beijing and the Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) based in Tashkent.

The majority of the budget of the SCO before the last expansion was covered by Russia and China (23.5% each), followed by Kazakhstan (20%), Uzbekistan (15%), Kyrgyzstan (12%) and Tajikistan (6%) [CNTD, 2003]. After the accession of India and Pakistan, the new agreement from 1 December 2017 defined the budget shares for Russia and China at 20.6% for each, followed by Kazakhstan (17.6%), Uzbekistan (14.6%), Kyrgyzstan (8.8%), Tajikistan (6%), and India and Pakistan (5.9% each) [CNTD, 2017].

Concerning the development stages, in fewer than 20 years the SCO has gone through several phases of development. The pre-SCO phase, that of the Shanghai Five, was the initial phase of cooperation in the region. At that stage, the boundaries in and stability of the region were the main issues to be resolved. Based on the agreements of 1996 and 1997 to deepen military trust and reduce military forces in border regions, China secured more than 7,000 square kilometres from Russia and Central Asian states. These agreements were important for confidence building in the military sphere and for the mutual reduction of military forces in the border areas. Further meetings in Alma-Ata (1998), Bishkek (1999) and Dushanbe (2000) made important contributions to security and stability in the region and enhanced cooperation in the spheres of politics, security, diplomacy, trade, cultural and humanitarian issues, and other fields.

The Shanghai Five moved forward, creating a new vision of diplomatic practice based on the principles of mutual trust, disarmament and mutual benefit, and transformed into the SCO regional organization at the 2001 summit in Shanghai.

The institutionalization of the SCO was further consolidated from 2001–2004. During the summit in 2001, the declaration of the SCO was signed and Uzbekistan entered the organization as a member. Signing the Shanghai convention on the fight against terrorism, separatism and extremism made the SCO a pioneer organization in the fight against terrorism in the post 9/11 world. During the second SCO summit in St. Petersburg (2002), the charter of the SCO was proclaimed and the establishment of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent was announced. The Moscow summit (2003) approved the first budget of the SCO and regulated internal mechanisms of cooperation, whereas the establishment of the secretariat of the SCO in 2004 symbolized the end of the formative phase of the regional organization.

The third stage of development of the SCO was characterized by the enlargement of its membership, the development of energy cooperation and the fight against opium smuggling from Afghanistan. The acceptance of Iran, India, Pakistan and Mongolia as observers further developed regional cooperation and increased the significance of the SCO in the region. During this stage, there were summits in Shanghai (2006), Bishkek (2007, 2013), Dushanbe (2008, 2014), Yekaterinburg (2009), Tashkent (2010), Astana (2011) and Beijing (2012). Yet, in 2005, when India declared its bid for full membership, China rejected the idea of enlargement, stating that the SCO should first be developed vertically, and only after should it be developed horizontally. However, during the 2010 SCO summit the unofficial moratorium on new membership was lifted, paving the way for the expansion of the group, although the procedures for admitting new members was not yet confirmed.

The accession of India and Pakistan to the SCO in 2017 ushered in the present stage of the SCO's development. Summits in Ufa (2015), Tashkent (2016) and Astana (2017) finalized the admission of India and Pakistan to the SCO, which had a number of implications for the organization. Their membership radically changed the geographic, strategic, economic and political balance of the organization. In geographic terms, the inclusion of India and Pakistan provided links between Central and South Asia. Central Asia, with a lack of direct sea routes, obtained opportunities from links with South Asia. In political terms, following the Shanghai Spirit of mutual trust, respect and equality, the organization established a platform to discuss regional and global issues. In terms of security cooperation, the SCO strengthened the RATS to combat transnational crime, drug trafficking and terrorism in the context of increased Islamic radicalism. By exchanging databases on terrorists and cross-border flows of terrorists and drugs, as well as through cyber protection, regional and border security could be more effectively maintained. The prospects in economic terms are promising; indeed, economic integration with the second and sixth economies of the world provides prospects for enhancing mutual commercial relations. Small Central Asian states have opportunities to strengthen their positions and interests with other members, despite the tensions between the South Asian members.

Further, during the 2017 summit in Astana, members discussed the potential for further expansion. Iran and Afghanistan are in the first tier for inclusion. Despite the consent of Russia and China, Iran has not yet become a full member of the SCO due to the opposition of Tajikistan [Dudina et al., 2017]. While the majority of SCO members are in favour of continuing the expansion and are willing to consider Iran's application now that it is free from the international sanctions regime, there is an issue with the Tajik position. Tajikistan and Iran had good relations until 2015, when Iranian authorities invited Mukhiddin Kabiri, the leader of the Islamic Revival Party which had been banned in Tajikistan, to the "Islamic Unity" conference. The spiritual leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, also received a disgraced politician accused by Tajik authorities of being an armed rebel. In response, Dushanbe accused Iranian authorities of supporting terrorism. Nevertheless, Russia believes that the issue will be resolved soon [Dudina et al., 2017].

Another prospective member is Mongolia, a current observer that Russia would like to see as a full member. Turkmenistan has periodically sent representatives but remains outside of the organization due to its commitment to neutrality. Afghanistan applied in 2015 but taking into account the internal situation in the country and the foreign military presence, it is doubtful that it will meet the criteria for membership in the near future.

Meanwhile, one of the key security issues in the region is Afghanistan, where members still have not developed a collective long-term strategy. The Contact Group of 2005 and observer status of Afghanistan, granted in 2012, did not introduce any common solutions. In that sense, acceptance of India and Pakistan anticipated that a solution on the Afghanistan issue would be found. With their membership, Afghanistan is now surrounded on all sides and it is hoped that this will provide effective measures in the fight against terrorism and extremism in the region.

An important structure within the SCO is the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), which was founded during the St. Petersburg summit (2002) to combat "three evils:" terrorism, separatism and extremism. Located in Tashkent, RATS promotes information sharing and joint counterterrorism measures between members. In order to become full members of the SCO, India and Pakistan adopted 426 important documents with the cooperation of special services within the framework of RATS. Moreover, within RATS, all members work closely, whereas observer states regularly attend research and practical conferences on cooperation in the field of counteracting international terrorism and extremism. Overall, according to 2017 data, RATS possesses data on 2,500 suicide bombers and 69 terrorist organizations [Sputnik International, 2016], and successfully prevented 600 would-be attacks and extradited more than 500 terrorists through the RATS mechanism [Desai, 2017]. Thus, RATS has been an effective security structure dealing with regional issues such as China's problems with its Eastern Turkestan groups, Russia's need to control Chechen activities, Indian insurgencies in Jammu and the Kashmir region and the threat from the so-called Af-Pak region. However, China's special coordination mechanism with Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, which duplicates the functions of RATS, creates doubts about the effectiveness of the RATS structure. That said, China has confirmed that this mechanism

is focused on the maintenance of security issues in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region, while RATS operates on a regional scale [Korostikov, Chernenko, 2017].

Major Power Interests

Of the eight members of the SCO, China, Russia and India are world powers, members of the G20 and nuclear powers – thus, each has a significant voice in global politics. China and Russia are founding powers with established interests in the SCO, while India came to the organization with its own agenda to gain influence in Central Asian affairs. Hence, the SCO became an important tool of interaction, although these three important members had different expectations regarding the aims and scope of the organization. The focus on these major powers is underpinned by the assumption that they are the key decision-makers within the organization.

Initially, with a regional focus on Central Asia, the SCO gave weight to the voices of states in the region; however, the expansion of the SCO's membership decreased their political weight. At the same time, there are new opportunities to bandwagon and bring attention to regional issues, and Central Asian countries will benefit from having an additional platform to discuss regional issues with neighbouring powers. This will also lead to increased investments in the region and provides more opportunities for economic and security cooperation.

Pakistan, while it also has views on Eurasian affairs, is not internally prepared to lobby its interests due to its lack of economic development. However, Pakistan provides support for Chinese initiatives and, taking into account Pakistan's flagship projects within the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Pakistan is assumed to be a satellite of China, its strategic partner.

In order to understand relations within the organization and external environment that influenced its developmental trajectory, the geopolitical, economic and security concerns of China, Russia and India must be examined. The geopolitical dimension includes the position taken toward enlargement, as well as their own geostrategic and geopolitical positions; the economic dimension includes the condition of economic integration and their promotion of individual economic initiatives; and the security dimension includes existing security issues and their role in combating traditional and nontraditional threats facing members. In addition, the position of the Central Asian states is examined to give a sense of the general feeling in the region. It should be remembered that while the regional powers are the focus of this analysis of the background environment, Central Asia as a region has a common interest and can gain political, economic, security and strategic benefits from the great power games played within the SCO, even while each state has its own approach to achieving this goal.

China

China, as the second-largest economy in the world, has the strongest position within the organization, and for this reason the SCO is often seen as China-led. From a geo-

political perspective, China views the SCO as an important tool to gain influence in Central Asia. Security, along with the economic rationale, is the key interest that China has in the SCO. China was initially interested in resolving its border issues with the post-Soviet states. Thereafter, it had an interest in maintaining security and stability on the western border of China and acquiring energy resources from Central Asian countries. These issues were resolved and energy resources were secured first within the SCO, and later within BRI projects. Subsequently, to promote economic cooperation, the BRI as the main tool of Chinese diplomacy became a priority direction of cooperation within the SCO as well. As noted, “the SCO was seen as China’s first experiment in creating an institutional ‘condominium’ in a specific region in partnership with another major power” [Gabuev, 2017]. Yet, as Zh. Huasheng [2013, p. 436] observed, “China has contributed to the SCO the most, both politically and economically, has made it a natural duty to keep the organization moving forward, and considers the SCO first and foremost a unique instrument to implement its interest in Central Asia and beyond.”

Position on Expansion

Before the accession of India and Pakistan to the SCO, China had two main concerns regarding the acceptance of India:³ first, it considered that states seeking membership should not have conflicts over territories with members, whereas India and China have a territorial dispute in the western and eastern sectors; second, it held that accession should take place without any violation of UN Security Council resolutions, while both India and Pakistan created their nuclear weapons outside of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). A compromise was reached during the summit in Tashkent (2016), made possible by Russia which was in need of new members and global support after the Crimea crisis. Consequently, China decided to support Pakistan to balance India.

After the launch of the BRI and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the need to build a regional financial structure with Chinese capital became irrelevant and China agreed to admit India along with Pakistan. However, according to Chinese diplomats, Beijing was fully aware of the antagonistic relations between India and Pakistan and the potential that they could paralyze the functioning of the SCO [Gabuev, 2017].

Economic Rationale

Currently, deepening economic integration through the BRI is the top interest of China. If in 2010 China was promoting the SCO Development Bank and the SCO Free Trade Zone, after launching the BRI in 2013, it became the priority project of economic cooperation in the region, displacing the SCO mechanisms. Central Asian states, depending on Chinese investments, are also interested in developing economic

³ Interview with Dr. Srikanth Kondapalli, 25 August 2017 at JNU, New Delhi.

cooperation within the BRI. Every member of the SCO except India participated in the BRI summit in May 2017, a multilateral forum which garnered global attention but which was boycotted by India. However, all of the other members welcome the BRI and the integration of the BRI within the SCO.

Security Dimension

Security and stability in the region are vital issues for China. The Xinjiang Autonomous Region, famous for separatist Uighurs and the “Eastern Turkestan” movement, is one of the major concerns in the western part of China. By implementing SCO instruments such as RATS, China maintains stability in the western part of the country. Beijing sees itself as an alternative major power in Eurasian development and the SCO as a security organization at the forefront of China’s efforts to expand its strategic interests in Eurasia and solidify its security in the region [Lanteigne, 2018, p. 132].

Russia

For Russia, the SCO is an anti-western bloc that promotes Russia’s influence in the Eurasian region with the support of Asian giants. M. Konarovsky [2016] suggested that the SCO had reached a tacit consensus on a division of responsibility in the Asian region: Russia ensures security, including through the structures of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), while China provides the economic component of cooperation. The Central Asian states, taking the opportunity to manoeuvre between the major powers based on their interests, generally welcome this distribution of roles between the two powers.

The geostrategic position of Central Asia is an important pillar of Russia’s “near neighbourhood” strategy, and Russia sees the SCO as one of the platforms to maintain its traditional influence in the region. Even though “Moscow is well aware that it does not have the financial muscle and political energy to resist Beijing’s deepening influence...many elements of Russia’s policy towards the SCO show that the Kremlin is eager to make sure that this organization is not going to advance Chinese interests in Central Asia in a disproportionate way” [Facon, 2013]. Either way, Russia’s strategic objectives in the eastern and southern directions are underpinned by the consistent preservation of its role as a major influencer of the SCO’s activities [Konarovsky, 2016]. Moreover, Russian authorities are attempting to build a new Eurasian geo-economic platform for the “non-American world” through the interaction of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the SCO, the Russia-India-China triangle, and the platforms of the BRICS group of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa [Lousianin, 2017].

Position on Expansion

Russia, from the beginning, was interested in increasing the regional weight of the SCO and in consolidating cooperation within it, in addition to advocating the expansion of the organization. After complicating *relations* with the West, and in the light of

further complications in the region and the world, the eastern vector of Russia's foreign policy acquired an additional significance for Moscow [Konarovskiy, 2016]. According to President Putin, the expansion of the SCO provides "additional opportunities to actively influence the processes in our common region and in the international arena as a whole" [Abdurasulov, 2017]. Therefore, during the Dushanbe summit (2014) Russia pushed to finalize the procedure for expansion, and during its term as president of the SCO in 2014–2015 it launched the process of enlargement by granting observer status to Belarus and Azerbaijan, Armenia and Cambodia, while Nepal was given dialogue partner status. The SCO also started the procedure of granting full membership to India and Pakistan [Konarovskiy, 2016]. With the expansion of the SCO, China and Russia tried to enhance their influence through their traditional allies: Russia has friendly relations with India while Pakistan is a strategic ally of China. Russia has not had good relations with Pakistan since the Afghan war, during which Pakistan played a key role in supporting the Afghan mujahedeens.

Significantly, Putin supports the full membership of Iran, which possibly further complicates the SCO's agenda – taking into account Iran's nuclear development and the hostility of the U.S. toward Iran, Iranian membership would further increase Western suspicions about the SCO [Lanteigne, 2018, p. 125].

Economic Rationale

Russia is the third-largest producer and the second-largest exporter of oil and gas in the world. Russian oil resources are in seventh place, and the country has the world's largest gas deposits. Therefore, Russia's strategy in the SCO is underpinned by the special role of energy, which was evidenced in President Putin's proposal to create the SCO Energy Club in 2006. This was regarded as a measure to implement Russia's long-term energy strategy to guarantee Russia's active participation and the inflow of significant revenues to restore Russia's potential and status in the world [Waazi, 2018].

It is noteworthy that Russia vetoed China's 2010 proposal to establish the SCO Development Bank as well as the SCO Free Trade Zone because it was alarmed by China's economic potential. Moscow proposed conditions for joining the Eurasian Development Bank, headquartered in Almaty, where Russia controls 65.97% of the EDB's share and Kazakhstan controls 32.99%. Obviously, China rejected that condition, because China needs capital contributions to be proportional to GDP, with 80% of the capital share. After establishing the AIIB in 2014, China felt no need to establish an SCO financial entity [Waazi, 2018].

In terms of regional cooperation, Russia is interested in the integration of the EAEU with the BRI. China, on the other hand, supported Russia's proposal to establish a Big Eurasian Partnership with the EAEU, the SCO and ASEAN. At the same time, the project on trade and commercial cooperation between the EAEU and SCO is being discussed between the members of the organization based on feasibility studies by the ministries of economic development in Russia and China [Korostikov, Chernenko, 2017].

Security Dimension

Russia, with its legacy of engagement with the Central Asian region in which military bases and strong security cooperation are maintained through the mechanism of the CSTO, is considered the security guarantor of the region. Russia's national security threats come from the west, east and south of the country. SCO mechanisms maintain security in the east, while the south is maintained through the CSTO. Together those institutions provide stability in the south-east regions of Russia [Xing, 2017].

During the Ufa summit in 2015, Russia's recommendation was to consider a more formal alliance to block any future "colour revolutions" in Eurasia, but this received a cold response from Beijing. Overall, it should be emphasized that "Moscow still acts as a 'big brother' in much of Eurasian politics and security" [Lanteigne, 2018, p. 128].

India

With full membership in the SCO, India has greater visibility in Eurasian regional affairs. For a long time, India has been a "fence sitter" regarding its foreign policy in the West and Central Asia [Roy, 2012, p. 648]. Accordingly, building bridges between Central and South Asia is among the top concerns of India in the SCO. Considering that India's state-owned ONGC Videsh Limited twice failed (in 2005 and 2013) to become a shareholder in the development of hydrocarbon deposits in Kumkol and Kashagan in Kazakhstan in favour of China's state-owned CNPC, energy is among the top Indian interests in the Central Asian region. Thus, building trade and transportation links, as well as collective action to fight traditional and nontraditional threats, are priority areas for cooperation within the organization.

For India, the SCO is a dialogue platform for regional cooperation on economic and security issues, as India interested in deep and sustained engagement with Central Asian states. Also, the security challenge in the Af-Pak region is among the volatile issues facing the organization.

Position Toward Expansion

India balances against the dominance of China or Russia, and plays a significant role as an ally of the United States. In that sense, India adds credibility to the SCO by also balancing the anti-American mood of other members. Geopolitically, the admission of India helps refocus interests from the West toward Russia and Asian states. In addition, the acceptance of India institutionalizes the Russia-India-China triangle within the organization [Lousianin, 2017]. In regard to the long-lasting issues between India and Pakistan, these states have participated in the SCO as observers, and the experience of working at the same table has already shown that India and Pakistan are able to avoid direct confrontations at the multilateral level. However, strategic contradictions in their bilateral relations are not the only worry. An exchange of information on the movements of insurgents, which Pakistan currently will not share with India, might be a key challenge on which Russia and China can exert pressure [Korostikov, 2017].

Economic Rationale

For India, a platform in Central Asia is desirable because it provides greater access to major oil and gas projects. India may satisfy its energy demands through the pending TAPI pipeline (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Iran-India), the IPI pipeline (Iran-Pakistan-India) and the CASA-1000 (Central Asia-South Asia electricity transmission project) which are blocked due to Pakistan's opposition [Desai, 2017]. Also, countries will benefit from the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a multimode network of ship, rail and road routes connecting India, Russia, Europe and Central Asia. Along with INSTC, the Chabahar port project might provide significant access to the Central Asian and Russian markets.

In the meantime, the inclusion of India may challenge the implementation of economic partnerships in the context of the BRI. China is promoting its Economic New Silk Road initiative through the SCO, while India is boycotting the project. The issue for India is related to the BRI's China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) – the “flagman” and pilot project – which goes through India's disputed Kashmir territory. There are serious sovereignty issues at stake for India if it accepts this part of the BRI, and this contradiction slows projects in which India is involved, as in the case of the BCIM (Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar) project. Taking into account India's interest in developing trade and commercial ties with Central Asian states and Russia, China's BRI could pose a challenge.

Security Dimension

The vital issue in regional cooperation is security, and India's inclusion in the SCO as an integral part of the Eurasian security grouping might neutralize centrifugal forces arising from the religious extremist and terrorist groupings in the region [Roy, 2012, p. 648]. Also, the threat coming from the Af-Pak region is a concern for Indian policymakers. It is hoped that with the inclusion of Pakistan the collective effort of all members will diminish insurgencies in Pakistan and stabilize security in the region.

Central Asian States

Central Asian states at very centre of the SCO's geopolitical focus have significantly softer political voices but are able to maneuverer between the major powers in pursuit of their interests. With the intent of maintaining neighbourly relations between the post-Soviet states and China, at present, Central Asian members welcome China's grand projects in the region on which their economies are heavily dependent. Therefore, the interest of Central Asian states in the SCO is that it can advance their strategic intentions and create opportunities through their cooperation with regional powers. Central Asian states support SCO initiatives to maintain security in the region and combat the three evils, and also support joint RATS activities. Central Asian members, admitting the historical advantage of Russia in their foreign politics, have pragmatically close and comprehensive cooperation with China, and welcomed the inclusion of both India and

Pakistan. All member states agreed to the expansion of the SCO, which was evidenced during the presidency of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. In terms of economic cooperation, all Central Asian members are active supporters of the BRI, have already synergized their own national programmes with the initiative, and are interested in the further expansion of Chinese investments. Moreover, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, both members of the EAEU, support Russia's initiative to integrate the SCO with the EAEU and ASEAN.

Feasible Development Scenarios

After adopting procedures and standards, in addition to establishing procedures for the new membership, India and Pakistan signed more than 38 documents. They agreed that the two official languages would remain Chinese and Russian, adding English as a secondary language. Indeed, with the inclusion of India and Pakistan, the SCO will never be the same IO as it was before.

News about SCO enlargement is often accompanied by negative opinions on the future development of SCO activities, rooted in the identity crisis of the organization. However, according to Cho, if an organization successfully manages such a crisis, the development of the organization can reach a new level.

Taken together, the above-mentioned positions and interests and the nature of the geopolitical environment indicate that the SCO is experiencing a transformation of its identity as an IO, which is also causing a crisis within its institutional mechanisms. Consequently, given that the SCO has entered its adulthood but has not yet emerged as a mature international organization, there are several factors affecting the transformation of its identity.

Most important is the shift of geopolitical focus. If, before the expansion, the SCO was a mechanism of interaction between Central Asian states with Russia and China, the inclusion of India and Pakistan has expanded the geopolitical focus. For China, India and Pakistan, the SCO is a unique instrument for engaging in Central Asian affairs and beyond, while Russia sees the SCO as a platform to develop its influence in the Eurasian region.

Since the expansion, India balances China's and Russia's ambitions in the region. Talk about competition between Russia and China will fade as a new competition appears between China and India, or between India and Pakistan. The participation of Central Asian states will decrease due to competition between the major powers.

There is a risk that the SCO might become more ceremonial and less viable as an organization. With the significantly different views of the major powers on the organization's aims and scope, the SCO runs the risk of becoming a "formal" organization with regular summits and meetings, but without any practical output. There are a number of factors which support this thesis.

The institutional deadlocks due to the blockage of institutional decision-making could be an issue. However, reform of the SCO could modify the consensus principle in order to allow the launching of joint programmes, even if some members are unwilling

to take part. The example of Russian opposition to the SCO Development Bank is an example of this institutional deadlock in that Russia was able to prevent the establishment of a financial multilateral institution intended to upgrade the economic potential of members. In the case of India and Pakistan, this is likely to be an issue as well. The mechanism of the veto right is still operational. Hence, there is a risk of institutional overstretch as evidenced by blockages in decision-making.

The lack of a robust secretariat is another obstacle. There is a need to enhance the role and independence of the secretariat, whose officials are more accountable to their respective foreign ministries rather than to the SCO. This may introduce frictions and could complicate the functioning of the organization.

Different interpretations of the “three evils,” namely terrorism, extremism and separatism and the ways to respond to them is another source of concern. Discrepancies were seen during Russia’s counterterrorism operations in the North Caucasus in the early-2000s, and in 2008 when Moscow’s decision to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was not met with similar support. Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014 was an even more clear signal of diverging approaches to separatism. In addition, what some SCO members viewed as political extremism or outright terrorism, others perceived as the legitimate struggle of ethnic minorities for their rights [Kortunov, 2018]. Furthermore, there is a risk that the fight against terrorism will be weakened because of Pakistan’s inclusion. China has repeatedly shielded terrorists from Pakistan in the United Nations Security Council with its veto power, so if Indians or Russians accuse insurgents from Pakistan, will the matter be pursued?

Additionally, members must avoid their diversification or polarization into unofficial pairs such as China-Pakistan, Russia-India or others. This will benefit neither the organization nor the members [Lousianin, 2017].

Nevertheless, the positive practical implications of measures taken within the framework of the SCO and RATS activities are worth mentioning. The Programme of Cooperation among the SCO Member States on Counter-Terrorist, Counter-Separatist and Counter-Extremist Measures for 2019–2021 and the Anti-Drug Strategy of the SCO Member States for 2018–2023 signed during the Qingdao summit in June 2018 confirm the positive collective effort of members to combat traditional and nontraditional threats.

Therefore, at present the main challenge for the SCO is to turn the potential benefits of expansion into realities through the strengthening both of its functions and of the influence of the SCO in the world. Taking into account opportunities and challenges created by the structural development of the SCO, along with the transformation of its organizational goals, the new identity of the SCO remains tied to its core uniqueness, *inter alia*:

- The Shanghai Spirit of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, respect for diverse civilizations and pursuit of common development, as stated in the SCO charter remains the cornerstone of the SCO. The Shanghai Spirit has been consistently upheld by members to pursue pragmatic cooperation and could further enhance the SCO’s role as an integrator in the wider Eurasian space. It is assumed

that by pursuing the Shanghai Spirit, the SCO can become the platform to discuss fundamental global issues while introducing the Shanghai Spirit as a key principle of dialogue.

- Given that China, along with India, stimulated the shift of globalization toward Asia and put emphasis on emerging states, the SCO might be an alternative platform to discuss major global issues using new forms of multilateralism. The SCO comprises eight members, four observers (Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia), six dialogue partners (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Turkey and Sri Lanka) and 10 candidate observers (Bahrain, Bangladesh, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Maldives, Qatar, Syria, Ukraine and Vietnam) [Kortunov, 2018]. Accordingly 28 emerging countries are involved in the SCO's agenda. Consequently, with the driving force of the founding major powers, the organization may become a dialogue platform to discuss the liberalization of non-Western structures, as well as to contribute to the development of the emerging world.

- Moreover, the SCO might become an integrator of regional institutions. The members of the SCO are on the boards of numerous regional structures, including BRICS, the EAEU, the CSTO, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, the G20 and others. The China-led BRI and AIIB, in addition to BRICS and the BRICS's New Development Bank, are challenging the existing Washington-led system. Thus the SCO has the potential to be a pioneer in the development of a non-Western platform for global governance. China, being the second-largest economy in the world and having growing global ambitions, is interested in strengthening the influence of the SCO, whereas Russia considers the SCO as an alternative platform for Eurasian affairs as well. Hence, gathering Russia, China and India together with 24 other stakeholders pursuing the Shanghai Spirit may allow the SCO to fill this niche.

Conclusion

Covering the world's most populous and largest countries opens great opportunities for development within the SCO and beyond. It is vital to have an appropriate structure and effective mechanisms to maintain and realize such efforts. As power is shifting toward Asia and Eurasia is playing a major role in globalization, SCO members are keen to develop an emblematic, ambitious and nationalistic Asian landscape.

Despite the opportunities for enlargement, including the geographical and political landscape, it is accompanied by risks to the efficiency of the organization due to the conflicting nature of the new members and existing challenges between old ones. This article has analysed the identity formation trajectory of the SCO through the perspectives of institutional and historical development and the geopolitical environment of major powers. The goal was to define the major consequences of the transformation of the SCO since its last expansion which caused an identity crisis. This was assessed through the analysis of the identity formation of the SCO and the factors that shaped that process. Consequently, based on Cho's approach, it can be concluded that the suc-

cessful resolution of the identity crisis will have a long-lasting impact on future stability and security, as well as on the ability of the SCO to uphold commitments, deal with future hardships and sustain relationships.

Therefore, after successfully maintaining and upgrading the institutional realities of the SCO, collective efforts and adherence to the Shanghai Spirit might be the major strength of the organization. The ability to bring regional and global rivals to the same table to discuss regional issues and the development of the region itself is another key strength of the organization. Notwithstanding the positive and negative implications, there is no doubt that the SCO provides a platform for negotiations based on the principles of the Shanghai Spirit: “mutual trust, mutual advantage, equality, mutual consultations, respect for cultural variety and aspiration for joint development.” Managing common issues in the region, such as the threat of terrorism and separatism, instability in Afghanistan and the maintenance of peace and tranquillity in the border regions where insurgencies emerge, is another *raison d’être* of the organization. The important point is that the SCO mechanism establishes a collective fight against traditional and nontraditional threats which imposes no obligations on members to support aggressor-members during wartime. Thus, if the Shanghai Spirit constitutes the backbone of the SCO, guaranteeing the sovereignty of its members and allowing them to develop cooperation within agreed parameters rather than detailed codified guidelines and regulations, the organization will become a powerful regional decision-making structure.

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Кризис идентичности Шанхайской организации сотрудничества: что будет дальше?^{1, 2}

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Вступление Индии и Пакистана в число постоянных членов превратило Шанхайскую организацию сотрудничества (ШОС) в крупнейшую в мире межрегиональную структуру и изменило траекторию регионального сотрудничества. Тем не менее вслед за смещением фокуса с Центральной Азии на более широкую евразийскую повестку изменениям подверглась и идентичность ШОС. В статье приводятся доводы в пользу того, что ШОС находится в состоянии кризиса идентичности. Автор статьи рассматривает уникальные черты, присущие идентичности ШОС, и предлагает сценарии разрешения текущего кризиса идентичности на базе анализа исторического и регионального контекста.

Ключевые слова: Шанхайская организация сотрудничества; Китай; Россия; Индия; кризис идентичности

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