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**CENTRAL ASIAN STATES IN THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION: THE ROLE AND PLACE OF THE SCO ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE POWER BALANCE IN THE REGION**

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**Annotation:** The formation of the Shanghai Five at the end of the XX century and its transformation into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization at the beginning of the XXI century is an important event in international relations. It created many opportunities for the development of foreign international and economic relations for Central Asian states within member states and also with dialogue partners. The development process of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization began with the establishment of confidence-building and the reduction of troops in the border areas of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. In this regard, the five countries signed agreements to establish mutual trust and reduce the number of troops. The SCO is the successor to the Shanghai Five, which was formed by the initiative of Kazakhstan between the People's Republic of China, Russia, and three Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The main achievement of the Shanghai Five was the signing of the Treaty on Deepening Military Trust in Border Regions. But to date, only Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan among all the Central Asian states have been able to resolve the issue of delimitation of land borders with neighboring countries. The authors of the article state that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has been used as a tool for balancing power by Russia and China over Central Asia. The geopolitical importance of Central Asia is highly appreciated not only by these countries but also by others, for example, the accession of Pakistan and India to the organization, and the new member Iran and the interest of Turkey will serve as a vivid example.

**Keywords:** Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, power balance.

**Basic provisions**

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is considered one of the authoritative and promising interstate associations. By directing its efforts to strengthen trust and good-neighborliness between the participating countries, and promoting their practical cooperation in political, trade, economic, and other fields, the SCO is a mechanism that preserves stability in the region. However, the assessments of the results of the interaction of the listed countries within the SCO vary significantly in Russia, China, India, the USA, and the EU countries.

## **Introduction**

Being in the "heart" of the continent, Central Asia is a kind of "gateway" to a number of strategically important regions of Eurasia. In the east are China and the countries of the Asia-Pacific region; in the south - Afghanistan, the Middle East, and a number of other Islamic states; in the west and north - the Caucasus, Turkey, Europe, and Russia. The balance of power in the vast expanse of the planet will largely depend on the direction in which the situation in the Central Asian states will develop. Any events taking place in the countries of Central Asia will be reflected not only at the regional level, but may also cause changes in the geopolitical balance of forces on the entire Eurasian continent, which remains the axis of world development.

The demise of the Soviet Union resulted in rising of the five independent states in Central Asia as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan. The independence of these states immediately got admitted by United Nations and was accepted as member states.[1] All of them were recognized as independent states but still needed their territories' recognition. The current borders of Central Asian countries were drawn by the Soviet Union and even changed several times. After getting independence Central Asian countries faced territorial disputes with their neighbors. So, they had to find a solution to get rid of any conflicts with neighbors.

## **Description of materials and methods**

The publication is based on the study of existing works devoted to creating and functioning the SCO in the modern world. It is analyzed the interests of the actors in the political process in the Central Asian region. Using the methods of political and economic analysis, the prospects for the development of the SCO as an organization in stabilizing and sharing the power balance between key players in the region. As the main research methods, it was chosen comparative analysis and descriptive methods. The methods used for identifying the details, along with correspondence and differences in the national interests of the Russian Federation, China, India, and Pakistan within the framework of membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Its assessment as a multidimensional organization in the international space is given, and the possibilities of Russia and China are predicted.

## **Results.**

The SCO is the largest international community. The accession of India and Pakistan to the ranks of full members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has turned this regional organization into one of the largest in the world. Now the SCO members account for 44% of the world's population, about 40 million square kilometers of the earth's surface (26.6%), and a combined GDP of \$ 33 trillion. The SCO is a kind of corridor linking the Asia-Pacific and Atlantic regions, South Asia, and the Middle East. Among the SCO members, four States, that is, half of the current membership, possess nuclear weapons. Approximately 15% of UNESCO cultural heritage sites are located on

the territory of the SCO member states. Thus, the SCO is an important player in Asia and the international arena. Last year, Iran was also approved by the participants as a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The state will become a full member in 2023.[2]

Further strengthening of strategic rivalry, elements of which are already being manifested today in the Central Asian region, gives rise to new contradictions, not on ideological, but on geopolitical and economic grounds. In addition, according to several estimates, there are serious reasons to consider the possibility of the region controlling the central part of Eurasia in geopolitical terms, resource potential, and transport links in geo-economic terms. Among the world regional powers that have had a significant impact on the formation of the geopolitical situation in Central Asia, the Russian Federation, the United States of America, the People's Republic of China, as well as Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, India, and the States of the European Union stand out.[3]

### **Discussion**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Soviet-Chinese border turned into the borders between China and four new sovereign states – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Russia, with which it was not slow to establish diplomatic relations: on December 27, 1991, the governments of China and Russia signed the “Protocol on Bilateral Relations”; On January 3, 1992, an agreement was signed with Kazakhstan, on January 4 with Tajikistan, and on January 6 with Kyrgyzstan. At the end of October 1992, a meeting of the joint delegation of the four states with the delegation of the Government of the People's Republic of China took place in Beijing. The parties confirmed their readiness to “resolve the border issues remaining from history based on the previous Russian-Chinese border agreements ...”. On October 24, 1992, documents were signed on the basic principles of creating a topographic map of the terrain on the borders of China with Russia (the western section), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

On April 26, 1996, the first meeting of the leaders of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Russia, and Tajikistan was held in Shanghai to discuss possible ways to resolve border issues between the PRC and the former Soviet republics. As a result, the first joint document was signed, the Agreement on Confidence-building in the Military Field in the Border Area, which is known as the Shanghai Declaration. Since then, these five have been called the Shanghai Five. At the meeting of the leaders of the five countries in Shanghai, it was decided to hold annual meetings of the Shanghai Five, which indicated the creation of a mechanism for regular meetings and the beginning of its functioning. The mechanism of meetings within the framework of the five participating countries was called the Shanghai Five Forum (Summit).

The terrorist attack in Tashkent on February 16, 1999, which was blamed on Islamic militants, and the ensuing invasion of the Kyrgyz region of Batken by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan led to the fact that Uzbekistan closed its border and began the construction of a barbed wire fence around long sections of its border with Kyrgyzstan in

the Ferghana Valley.[4] When the Shanghai Five was looking for a solution to territorial disputes through peaceful ways, Uzbekistan had to close its borders and, even fearing the penetration of Islamic extremists into the country, Uzbekistan unilaterally mined the border with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. At that time Uzbekistan, which borders all the countries of Central Asia, had the largest and most well-equipped army in the region. The former leader of the country did not take much bother in resolving border disputes. At the summit of the heads of state of the Shanghai Five in 2000 in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, a large-scale understanding of the establishment of good neighborliness and peaceful cooperation in the XXI century was adopted by the Dushanbe declaration. The President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov took part in this summit as an observer and announced his decision to join the Shanghai Five.[5]

On June 14-15, 2001, a meeting of the heads of six states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, which joined them, took place in Shanghai. The main outcome of the summit was the transformation of the Shanghai Five into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a new regional association that proclaimed as its goals “strengthening mutual trust, friendship and good neighborliness maintaining and ensuring peace, security, and stability of the region”. The accession of Uzbekistan meant the formal exit of the Shanghai process beyond the issues related to the former Soviet-Chinese border. Uzbekistan does not border with the People's Republic of China, it is brought together by completely different interests from the countries of the "five". In particular, he is interested in stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan and eliminating terrorist bases there, since it was the territory of Uzbekistan that the Taliban movement, which previously controlled most of Afghanistan, threatened many times to make the next arena of the struggle for the purity of Islam.

The Declaration on the Establishment of the SCO adopted at the summit reflected the fundamental guidelines for building the organization as multidisciplinary cooperation of the member states in various areas of mutual interest. For the first time, the issues of establishing multilateral economic cooperation and creating mechanisms for cooperation in the humanitarian sphere, education, culture, and science were put on the agenda. The impetus for the cooperation of the SCO members in the economic dimension was given at the meeting of the heads of government of the Shanghai Organization member countries in September 2001.[6]

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization signed the “Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization” on June 7, 2002, in St. Petersburg. The charter defines the main goals and objectives of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Strengthening mutual trust and good-neighborliness among the member states of the organization; developing multidisciplinary cooperation, protecting and strengthening regional security and stability, promoting the establishment of a new democratic, just, rational international political and economic order; a common blow to terrorism, separatism, and extremism, the sale of illegal drugs, weapons, international criminal cases, illegal migration; promotion of effective regional cooperation in political, trade and economic, State

defense, law, ecology, culture, science and technology, education, energy, transport and communication, financial lending and other areas of interest. Since the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, many important documents have been signed to develop economic cooperation between the organization's member states.

### **Russia's Role in Central Asia within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.**

From the Russian side, Central Asia does not begin immediately but seems to gradually manifest its features in the landscape, the appearance of cities, and the national and religious composition of the population long before the traveler crosses the state border. The line of formal contact between Russia and the Central Asian states is man-made, the existence of which is ensured by the goodwill of states and does not rely on such natural boundaries as mountain ranges, large rivers, or seas. In fact, Russia and Central Asia are a common space, which determines and will determine the nature and content of relations between states. In such geographical conditions, traditional forms of power interaction between powers acquire a special specificity that distinguishes them from relations between countries separated by natural barriers.[6]

Central Asia has not been a priority of Russian foreign policy for most of the post-Soviet period. However, this situation is changing at the moment. The new situation in the region and beyond increases Moscow's interest in it. Central Asia is becoming an essential element for the realization of President Putin's goal of giving Russia a leading role in the geopolitical center of Eurasia in order to turn it into an "independent" pole of global power along with the United States and China. Having no serious intention of reviving the USSR, the Kremlin nevertheless seeks to secure for itself the primary right to influence the affairs of the former Soviet republics.

Today the Russian Federation and the countries of Central Asia are undergoing another test of partnership. According to the results of the meeting in the Central Asia–Russia format, which took place in Astana, the countries of the region confirmed their readiness to develop relations, but they demand more respect for themselves. The most interesting was the theses on the creation of new trans-Eurasian corridors and the restoration of the regional unified energy system. After the European direction for Russia was closed, Moscow turned to Central Asia. In part, this appeal is forced.

### **China's interests in Central Asia**

In order to identify China's interests in Central Asia and show them in a comparative version, the "problem tree" analysis method was used. Based on this analysis, China's interests were grouped as follows.

1)geopolitical: location in the center of Eurasia, increases the strategic importance of the region for China; the spread of China's influence in the region;

2)economic: the three most priority areas: foreign trade-economic cooperation of the countries; investment activity – the possibility of influencing the economy of Central

Asian countries (such areas as oil, mining, chemical, telecommunications, and transport infrastructure); use of the transit potential of the region;

3) resource: rich natural energy resources;

4) military: preventing the possibility of creating military blocs against China;

5) fight against terrorism and extremism: elimination of terrorist activity and extremist groups capable of causing negative manifestations in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. In this case, the problem areas are considered: Afghanistan – the strengthening of the Taliban movement; Tajikistan – the presence and influence of the Islamic factor; Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan – the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the Hizb-ut-Tahrir movement, which sets as its goals the creation of a Caliphate stretching from Mongolia to the shores of the Caspian Sea. This scheme also includes the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region;

6) interests of third countries: interests of the USA; interests of Russia;[5]

7) Territorial: border security - Western Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region

### **Why did India and Pakistan join the SCO?**

It was a historic day for the SCO when two nuclear powers joined the organization at once. And besides, this is the first expansion of the line-up. The interests of both India and Pakistan in participating in the SCO are almost identical. Both countries need energy supplies from Central Asia. As for India, in general, Central Asia is of strategic interest to this state, because there is both a historical and a modern aspect here – for example, India has a Connect to Central Asia program – a foreign policy initiative, and it is not being implemented today. India views the region from the point of view of economic interests. But today the contacts remain rather weak.[7]

Pakistan's advantageous geopolitical position is a key factor in the development of mutually beneficial relations between the countries of Central Asia and Pakistan. Thus, the Pakistani seaports of Gwadar and Karachi open up the possibility of access to the sea for the states of the region. Bilateral relations between Pakistan and Central Asia are based on the realization of strategic and economic interests. In particular, Islamabad considers the countries of Central Asia as strategic partners in contradictions with India and as the main source of energy resources, since Pakistan does not have enough energy resources and is looking for alternative ways to obtain them. In this regard, Pakistan tirelessly strives to create, maintain and strengthen security in Afghanistan, aimed at reaching Central Asia to activate all types of relations with them.[8]

### **Iran's quest for Central Asia**

Iran's desire for functional cooperation, especially in the field of transport and transit, as well as energy development, was largely welcomed by the countries of Central Asia and the Caspian Sea, even though they sought similar cooperation with competing actors such as the European Union (EU) and Turkey, whose approach, in turn, It was aimed at undermining the influence of Iran and Russia.

Iran's geo-economic strategy was to offer stable and competitive routes connecting its landlocked neighbors in Central Asia with international markets in Europe and Asia.

Iran and Russia support dialogue and cooperation between the countries of the region on various issues from the Caspian Sea to Afghanistan and terrorism, and also share membership in a number of multilateral regional groupings. Their geo-economic and geopolitical concept of Eurasia is based on the development of communication and security cooperation between the states of the region and the exclusion of non-regional players.[2]

### **The power balance in the region**

The latest events in Kazakhstan may probably be the most important from the point of view of the regional security system of Central Asia, which reflects the balance of power in the region with the participation of both regional and extra-regional actors.

There are no international intergovernmental organizations in Central Asia that include only the countries of the region. The mechanism of Consultative Meetings of the leaders of the Central Asian countries is not yet an institutionalized attempt to establish such cooperation.

Among the international organizations forming the architecture of regional security, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) stand out.

Established in 2001, the SCO included China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, and in 2017 India and Pakistan joined it. The SCO Summit serves as a symbolic platform for leaders who seek to deepen their partnership and express opposition to the West. Xi Jinping wants to emphasize his dominance abroad after consolidating power ahead of an important congress of the Communist Party of China. The congress, at which he is expected to receive a third term as leader, is scheduled for October.[9]

The reasons for this meeting are very different for each of the parties, but ultimately, we are talking about optics. Putin wants to show the West that he is not isolated and he still has friends in Asia. For Xi, it is important to show that he is a key influencer and as respected a leader around the world as he is at home.

### **Conclusion.**

Being neither an economic nor a military bloc, the SCO was originally conceived as a forum through which China and Russia could manage their common powers in Eurasia and improve relations with their neighbors. But the war in Ukraine has thrown this strategy out of balance. The consequences of the invasion led to a reduction in Russia's economy, deterioration of its relations with its neighbors, and weakening of its influence. At the same time, Moscow is becoming increasingly dependent on China both economically and politically. During the meeting in Samarkand, Putin showed respect for Xi Jinping, saying

that he respects Beijing's "balanced position" on the war in Ukraine, supports the one-China policy, and opposes "provocations" by the United States in the Taiwan Strait.

For years, many analysts have warned that the balance of relations between Beijing and Moscow may increasingly shift in favor of China, which will lead to Russia becoming a junior partner in any future dynamics. Previously, the relationship between (Xi Jinping and Putin) was much more equal. Now there is no doubt that the balance of power between them has changed. This is a trend that has been observed for some time, and this meeting is another confirmation of it. But we must not forget that there are still other members of the organization and players outside such as Turkey, the European Union, and the United States who are waiting for their turn.

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## ШАНХАЙ ЫНТЫМАҚТАСТЫҚ ҰЙЫМЫНДАҒЫ ОРТАЛЫҚ АЗИЯ МЕМЛЕКЕТТЕРІ: ШЫҰ-НЫҢ АЙМАҚТАҒЫ КҮШТЕР ТЕҢГЕРІМІН БӨЛУДЕГІ РӨЛІ МЕН ОРНЫ.

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**Андатпа.** XX ғасырдың аяғында Шанхай бестігінің қалыптасуы және оның XXI ғасырдың басында Шанхай Ынтымақтастық Ұйымына айналуы халықаралық қатынастардағы маңызды оқиға болып табылады. Бұл Орталық Азия мемлекеттері үшін мүше мемлекеттер ішінде, сондай-ақ диалог бойынша әріптестермен сыртқы халықаралық және экономикалық қатынастарды дамыту үшін көптеген мүмкіндіктер туғызды. Шанхай Ынтымақтастық Ұйымының даму процесі Қытайдың, Ресейдің, Қазақстанның, Қырғызстанның және Тәжікстанның шекаралас аудандарында сенім шараларын белгілеуден және әскерлер санын қысқартудан басталды. Осыған байланысты бес ел өзара сенім орнату және әскер санын қысқарту туралы келісімдерге қол қойды. ШЫҰ Қазақстанның бастамасымен Қытай Халық Республикасы, Ресей және Қазақстан, Қырғызстан және Тәжікстан сияқты үш Орталық Азия елдері арасында құрылған Шанхай бестігінің мұрагері болып табылады. "Шанхай бестігінің" басты жетістігі шекара маңындағы өңірлерде әскери сенімді тереңдету туралы шартқа қол қою болды. Бірақ бүгінгі таңда тек Түркіменстан мен Қазақстан барлық Орталық Азия мемлекеттерінен көрші елдермен құрлық шекараларын делимитациялау туралы мәселені шеше алды. Мақала авторлары Шанхай Ынтымақтастық Ұйымын Ресей мен Қытай Орталық Азиядағы билікті теңестіру құралы ретінде пайдаланды деп мәлімдейді. Орталық Азияның геосаяси маңыздылығын тек осы елдер ғана емес, басқалар да жоғары бағалайды, мысалы, Пәкістан мен Үндістанның ұйымға кіруі, сондай-ақ Иранның жаңа мүшесі және Түркияның қызығушылығы жарқын мысал бола алады.

**Тірек сөздер:** Шанхай Ынтымақтастық Ұйымы, Орталық Азия, Қазақстан, Өзбекстан, Қырғызстан, Түрікменстан, Тәжікстан, күштер балансы.

## **ЦЕНТРАЛЬНАЯ АЗИЯ В ШАНХАЙСКОЙ ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВА: РОЛЬ И МЕСТО ШОС В РАСПРЕДЕЛЕНИИ БАЛАНСА СИЛ В РЕГИОНЕ**

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**Аннотация.** Формирование Шанхайской пятерки в конце XX века и ее трансформация в Шанхайскую организацию сотрудничества в начале XXI века является важным событием в международных отношениях. Это создало много возможностей для развития внешних международных и экономических отношений для государств Центральной Азии внутри государств-членов, а также с партнерами по диалогу. Процесс развития Шанхайской организации сотрудничества начался с установления мер доверия и сокращения численности войск в приграничных районах Китая, России, Казахстана, Кыргызстана и Таджикистана. В связи с этим пять стран подписали соглашения об установлении взаимного доверия и сокращении численности войск. ШОС является преемницей Шанхайской пятерки, которая была сформирована по инициативе Казахстана между Китайской Народной Республикой, Россией и

тремя центральноазиатскими странами, такими как Казахстан, Кыргызстан и Таджикистан. Главным достижением "Шанхайской пятерки" стало подписание Договора об углублении военного доверия в приграничных регионах. Но на сегодняшний день только Туркменистан и Казахстан из всех центральноазиатских государств смогли решить вопрос о делимитации сухопутных границ с соседними странами. Авторы статьи утверждают, что Шанхайская организация сотрудничества использовалась Россией и Китаем в качестве инструмента для балансирования власти в Центральной Азии. Геополитическое значение Центральной Азии высоко ценится не только этими странами, но и другими, например, вступление Пакистана и Индии в организацию, а также нового члена Ирана и интерес Турции послужат ярким примером.

**Ключевые слова:** Шанхайская Организация Сотрудничества, Центральная Азия, Казахстан, Узбекистан, Кыргызстан, Туркменистан, Таджикистан, баланс сил.

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