

Krystian Pachucki-Włosek*

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4527-5441>

The Role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in Shaping the Security of Central Asian States

Abstract

This article aims to present key security issues for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, which are implemented within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). An analysis of the member states' cooperation activities was carried out. Also, an analysis of the collected materials in the form of newspaper articles and literature on the subject made it possible to capture the most important areas of cooperation for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. While these countries are facing similar problems in terms of security, one difference is the classification in terms of priority. The main research methods used in the creation of the article included synthesis through causal association, analogy, induction, and deduction.

Keywords: Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, security

* Jagiellonian University, e-mail: krystian.pachucki-wlosek@doctoral.uj.edu.pl



© by the Author, licensee University of Lodz – Lodz University Press, Lodz, Poland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>)
Received: 27.01.2026. Verified: 6.04.2026. Accepted: 27.04.2026.

Funding information: Jagiellonian University. **Conflicts of interest:** None. **Ethical considerations:** The Author assures of no violations of publication ethics and takes full responsibility for the content of the publication. **The percentage share of the Author in the preparation of the work is:** 100%. **Declaration regarding the use of GAI tools:** Not used.

Rola Szanghajskiej Organizacji Współpracy w kształtowaniu bezpieczeństwa państw Azji Centralnej

Streszczenie

Niniejszy artykuł ma na celu przedstawienie kluczowych zagadnień w zakresie bezpieczeństwa dla Kazachstanu, Kirgistanu, Tadżykistanu i Uzbekistanu, które są realizowane w ramach Szanghajskiej Organizacji Współpracy (SzOW). Analiza działań kooperacji państwa członkowskie – organizacja przywiodła do postawienia tezy: widoczna jest korelacja pomiędzy zaangażowaniem poszczególnych państw w dane zagadnienia dotyczące bezpieczeństwa w ramach SzOW a zbieżnością z interesem narodowym. Analiza zebranych materiałów w postaci artykułów prasowych i literatury przedmiotu pozwoliła na wychwycenie najważniejszych obszarów współpracy dla Kazachstanu, Kirgistanu, Tadżykistanu i Uzbekistanu – z zastrzeżeniem, że państwa te mierzą się z podobnymi problemami w aspekcie bezpieczeństwa, a jedyną różnicą jest klasyfikacja pod względem priorytetowości. Głównymi metodami badawczymi wykorzystanymi podczas tworzenia artykułu były: synteza poprzez kojarzenie przyczynowe, analogia, indukcja i dedukcja.

Słowa kluczowe: Szanghajska Organizacja Współpracy, Kazachstan, Kirgistan, Tadżykistan, Uzbekistan, bezpieczeństwo

Introduction

After the collapse of the USSR, the problem of the unregulated Soviet-Chinese border arose. To resolve this issue, the Shanghai Five was established, comprising the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, and the Republic of Tajikistan. A series of agreements was signed between 1996 and 1997, which led to an increase in mutual trust and accelerated the process of delimiting and demarcating national borders. Effective dialogue led to closer mutual relations, resulting in the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in 2001. The founding members included the Shanghai Five countries and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

For the Central Asian states in the initial phase of the organisation's existence, cooperation in the field of security was a key element, provided that it did not interfere in internal affairs. Additionally, participation in the SCO enabled the

balancing of Chinese and Russian influence in the region's countries, especially in the face of growing rivalry within the New Great Game. Since 2013, following Xi Jinping's presentation of the idea of creating the New Silk Road, cooperation in the economic field has also become an important component.

The objective of this article is to **analyse the role played by the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in the process of shaping the security of Central Asian states**. This article adopts a qualitative approach, based on institutional and legal analysis and the case study method, covering Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The selection of these case studies is based on several key considerations. Firstly, all the countries in question are members of the SCO, which allows for a direct assessment of the organisation's influence on their security policies. Secondly, these countries are characterised by varying levels of institutional development, military capability, and internal challenges, such as the threat of extremism, political instability, and ethnic tensions. Thirdly, their geopolitical location – namely between Russia, China, and the unstable region of Afghanistan – makes them particularly susceptible to the influence of regional security mechanisms. Thus, an analysis of these states makes it possible to identify both common trends and specific conditions affecting the effectiveness of the SCO as a platform for security cooperation.

Methodologically, the study drew on an analysis of primary sources, such as policy documents and declarations of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, as well as secondary sources, including the academic literature on international relations and regional security. A review of the literature indicates the dominance of realist and neorealist approaches, emphasising the importance of the balance of power and great power rivalry, whilst also incorporating the perspective of liberal institutionalism, which highlights the role of international organisations in defusing tensions and building trust.

T. Ambrosio, in the article titled "Catching the 'Shanghai Spirit': How the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Promotes Authoritarian Norms in Central Asia" (2008), analyses the SCO from the constructivist perspective, arguing that the organisation not only fulfils a security function but also promotes norms conducive to the consolidation of authoritarian regimes. Ambrosio points out that cooperation within the SCO strengthens internal control within states by legitimising actions against the opposition under the pretext of combating extremism.

A. Cooley, in his article titled "Cooperation Gets Shanghaied. China, Russia, and the SCO" (2009), focuses on Sino-Russian relations within the SCO. The article demonstrates that despite declared cooperation, the organisation is an arena for rivalry over influence. The author emphasises that the SCO functions as a platform for managing competition between great powers rather than as a unified strategic bloc.

S. Aris, in the article titled “The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: ‘Tackling the Three Evils’. A Regional Response to Non-Traditional Security Challenges or an Anti-Western Bloc?” (2009), analyses the SCO’s activities in the context of the fight against terrorism, extremism, and separatism. He concludes that whilst the organisation does indeed develop security cooperation, its actions are often interpreted as a tool for limiting Western influence in the region.

S. Azizi, in the article titled “China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): The Role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Geopolitical Security and Economic Cooperation” (2018), examines the relationship between the SCO and China’s Belt and Road Initiative. He points out that whilst there are areas of cooperation, the SCO is not the primary vehicle for the implementation of Chinese economic projects. The article highlights China’s growing role and the organisation’s gradual shift towards economic cooperation.

J. Nicharapova, in the article titled “Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: A Realist Approach” (2019), examines the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation from the realist perspective, pointing out that it is primarily a tool for advancing the interests of states, particularly Russia and China. The author emphasises that cooperation within the organisation stems from geopolitical calculations, such as stabilising the region and limiting external influence. The SCO is not an autonomous actor, but a platform for coordinating the policies of the major powers. The Central Asian states play a secondary role within it, using their membership to balance influences. As a result, the organisation strengthens the region’s stability, but its effectiveness remains limited.

A review of the above studies reveals a clear diversity of research approaches, ranging from realist geopolitical analyses, through institutionalism, to constructivism. The common thread, however, remains the conviction that the SCO: 1) plays a significant but limited role in the Central Asian security system; 2) is heavily dependent on the interests of Russia and China; 3) functions more as a co-ordination platform rather than a formal alliance; 4) is evolving towards a broader geopolitical organisation, encompassing economic and normative aspects as well.

All of this leads to the following research questions: 1) What role does the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation play in the security systems of Central Asian states, and what are the structural limitations to its effectiveness?; 2) Why is the SCO relatively effective in the area of prevention and coordination (training, exercises, information exchange), but ineffective in responding to real crises and intra-regional conflicts?; 3) To what extent does the dominance of China and Russia in the SCO structures limit the effectiveness of Central Asian states in shaping the regional security agenda?; 4) Does the SCO function as a real regional security mechanism for Central Asian states, or, rather, as a platform for balancing external influences and implementing a multi-vector policy?

The study examines empirical data undertaken in practice, from joint military exercises through intelligence-sharing to mechanisms for counter-terrorism cooperation and countering religious extremism. The responses of the SCO to specific crises and security challenges in the region – including cross-border conflicts, social radicalisation, and growing cybersecurity threats – are also examined.

Particular attention is also given to the position of Russia and China as dominant actors in the structure of the SCO, their strategic interests in Central Asia, and the impact of these interests on the organization's security orientations. The subject of the study also covers the perception of the SCO by Central Asian states themselves, i.e. whether they regard the organisation as a real security guarantor or merely as a diplomatic and political forum.

All this leads to the preliminary conclusion that the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's role in the security of Central Asian states is functional and selective: the organisation strengthens the region's preventive and coordination capabilities, but remains structurally incapable of resolving internal conflicts, mainly due to the dominance of China and Russia and the limited influence of smaller member states. A stronger role for these countries does not automatically mean that conflicts would be resolved more effectively, but it could increase the likelihood of such issues being addressed within the organisation and foster a more balanced approach to security.

In the current configuration, the dominance of China and Russia means that the SCO's priorities include primarily issues of regime stability, counter-terrorism, and countering transnational threats, whilst strongly emphasising the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of states. Strengthening the position of smaller states could lead to a greater articulation of their specific internal problems (e.g. social tensions, local conflicts, or political crises) and, thus, to the expansion of the organisation's agenda to include mechanisms for mediation or the prevention of internal conflicts.

Therefore, the point is not that stronger, smaller states would resolve conflicts on their own, but that a more balanced decision-making structure could limit the selectivity of the SCO's actions and enhance its capacity to respond to a broader spectrum of security threats, including those of an internal nature.

Between regional leadership ambitions and strategic dependence: Kazakhstan and the SCO

For the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a tool to support regional security cooperation, but unlike the other Central Asian states, it does not play a central role in Kazakhstan's military security architecture.

This is primarily due to the fact that Kazakhstan possesses relatively stronger military capabilities, a more stable political structure, and a more balanced approach to the threats posed by religious extremism and terrorism. Unlike Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan – which view counter-terrorism training within the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) as a direct response to real threats arising from the activities of Islamist groups in the Fergana Valley and on the border with Afghanistan – Kazakhstan regards this component primarily as supplementary rather than strategically crucial to its security policy (Ajtenov [Айтеннов], 2018: 13). Kazakhstan's participation, despite the relatively low level of threat, strengthens the organisation's institutional cohesion, increases the predictability of the partners' actions, and fosters the creation of networks of trust that can be utilised in crisis situations. As a result, the CSTO fulfils a preventive and integrative function, rather than a purely reactive one, which fits into a broader, non-military understanding of regional security.

The Republic of Kazakhstan participates in counter-terrorism training and activities, including periodically organised manoeuvres such as the Peace Mission, but these are seen as a means of building interoperability and a political signal of engagement with regional mechanisms rather than as a response to specific internal threats. This is due to the fact that the activity of armed Islamist groups on Kazakhstan's territory is not at a high level, and problems with extremism are incidental and mostly involve propaganda activities on the Internet.

In this context, it is important to explain why, despite the existence of other cooperation frameworks – including regional cooperation among Central Asian states, the CSTO, and bilateral arrangements with China – it is the SCO that plays a prominent role in coordinating counter-terrorism efforts. The SCO's advantage stems primarily from its inclusive nature, bringing together the region's states with two key external actors, namely Russia and China. Unlike the CSTO, which remains a structure dominated by Russia and does not include all Central Asian states (e.g. Uzbekistan), the SCO provides a broader platform for information exchange, the coordination of activities, and the development of common response standards. Bilateral cooperation with China, on the other hand, whilst intensive, is asymmetrical in nature and does not provide multilateral legitimacy for security actions. The SCO thus fills the institutional gap between strictly military mechanisms and loose regional cooperation, offering a forum, which, despite operational limitations, fosters the harmonisation of approaches to transnational threats, such as terrorism.

Nevertheless, Kazakhstan – as a state with regional ambitions – actively participates in the SCO's activities of a military nature, especially in situations where it can act as an initiator or a host. The organisation of the 2010 Peace Mission manoeuvres on Kazakhstan's territory was an important diplomatic signal, showing that Astana (now Almaty as a command centre) aspires to be a regional stabiliser and a partner capable of organising international military operations.

Also significant was the deepening of military cooperation with Uzbekistan, which is a country that remains outside the structures of the Russia-controlled Collective Security Treaty Organisation. The participation of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in joint exercises within the framework of the SCO is symbolic and geo-strategic in nature, indicating an attempt to build autonomous regional security mechanisms independent of Moscow's direct oversight. Examples of this include the joint exercises 'Kanzhar-2021' and 'Kanzhar-2023', which confirmed the developing interoperability, political trust, and willingness to deepen cooperation in responding to asymmetric crises, such as the activities of terrorist groups or border destabilisation. In parallel, Kazakhstan is strengthening military cooperation with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, as reflected in the 2022 exercises held in the southern regions of the republic. For the smaller countries of the region, participation in such exercises with the participation of Kazakhstan, which has state-of-the-art weaponry and a relatively professional army, is a way to improve their own operational capabilities. At the same time, their participation in training organised by Kazakhstan shows that Astana is seen as a potential regional leader capable of taking over some of the responsibility for the security of Central Asia, especially in the context of Russia's weakened position after the invasion of Ukraine.

However, the events of January 2022, when Kazakhstan grappled with mass protests and the destabilisation of internal order, exposed the limitations of the state in resolving systemic crises on its own. The decision to call in the CSTO's troops – with a dominant role for the Russian forces – with the aim to restore public order demonstrated that, despite its ambitions, Kazakhstan remains dependent on external support, particularly in situations requiring the rapid deployment of security forces and full control over key state infrastructure.

The SCO's response to these events was virtually non-existent – the organisation, lacking a common defence system or mechanisms for immediate crisis response, remained passive. From the perspective of the SCO's functioning as a security mechanism, this highlights its hybrid and limited nature; the organisation effectively supports capacity-building, trust-building, and the coordination of actions between states, but is unable to replace traditional alliance structures in crisis situations requiring rapid military intervention. This means that the SCO primarily serves as a platform for prevention and cooperation, whilst its significance in the realm of hard security remains secondary to other mechanisms, such as the CSTO or bilateral relations (Shukuralieva, 2018a: 100–101).

As such, Kazakhstan sees the SCO as a secondary partner in the military security sphere, but at the same time considers it as an important tool for building regional cooperation and balancing Russian influence. The possibility of developing military cooperation with Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan in a multilateral formula gives Kazakhstan political space to strengthen its role in the region, without having to explicitly side with Russia or China.

For Kazakhstan, a country with huge raw material potential, energy issues are one of the key elements of national security. This importance has been further reinforced in recent years in the context of the challenges of the energy transition, deepening geopolitical rivalries, and the need to reduce dependence on the Russian Federation. In this context, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation appears as an important platform not only for coordinating the region's energy policy, but also as a potential tool for shaping Central Asia's new energy security architecture (Koolace, Tishehyar, 2013: 48–49).

Although the focus of the New European Bauhaus (NEB) was for a long time mainly on counter-terrorism issues, as early as 2007 it was recognised that the agenda needed to be expanded to include energy issues. To this end, in 2013, the Energy Club was established – a body to coordinate the member states' activities in the areas of raw materials policy, transmission networks, infrastructure investment, and the exchange of technological experience (Wojcieszak, 2016: 110). Over the years, however, the activities of this body were marginal and limited mainly to the organisation of conferences and expert dialogue (Ševeleva [Шевелева], 2014: 168–173). The blackout of early 2022, which affected the region's three largest metropolises simultaneously – Almaty (Kazakhstan), Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), and Tashkent (Uzbekistan) – proved to be a turning point. This event demonstrated not only the mutual energy dependence of the Central Asian states but also the lack of coordination and crisis management mechanisms for transmission systems. Inefficient infrastructure, outdated power plants, and growing urban energy demand, especially in winter, exposed the weaknesses of the entire region.

In response, Russia proposed the creation of a trilateral gas union involving Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, which envisaged the construction of common transmission networks and the conclusion of framework contracts for the supply of raw materials. Although this project offered short-term solutions, in the Kazakhstan authorities' view, it would lead to a deepening dependence on Russia, both politically and in terms of infrastructure. As a result, Kazakhstan has decided to redirect its efforts towards the SCO, seeking to build a multilateral energy security platform based on regional cooperation rather than the dominance of a single actor. The Southeast Europe Forum acts as a mechanism for coordination and the building of economic security, enabling member states to diversify their sources of investment and cooperate in strategic sectors such as energy, transport, and digitalisation. In the context of Kazakhstan and other countries in the region, it is seen as a tool for strengthening their negotiating position *vis-à-vis* larger partners, including China and Russia, and for supporting multilateral initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev proposed the creation of an investment fund within the organisation, which would help the member states in the process of energy transition and the decarbonisation of the economy. In July 2023,

Tokayev proposed the creation of a Joint Energy Strategy of the SCO, which would unify the energy systems of the member states, thus reducing the risk of renewed energy disruptions. One of the proposed solutions is to establish an SCO Energy Bank, which will provide emergency support on an energy-balancing basis between the participating states. At the same time, in order to avoid marginalising the problem again, Kazakhstan has expressed its readiness to take on the role of an organiser of an annual SCO energy forum (TASS [TACC], 2023a). The initiative proposed by Kazakhstan was widely supported by the members of the organisation, as confirmed by the fact that on 4 July 2024 in Astana, the 'Strategy for the Development of Energy Cooperation of the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation for the period up to 2030' was signed (TASS [TACC], 2024).

Kazakhstan also supports the idea of establishing joint research centres for nuclear and green energy. The choice of Russia as the main contractor for the first nuclear power plant in the republic carries the risk of not meeting deadlines. Hence, the Kazakh authorities have announced that they will start work on the construction of a second facility of smaller capacity in cooperation with China, not excluding that the project will be completed earlier (Azattyk Aziâ [Азаттык Азия], 2025). The elevation of this issue in the SEE is also an important issue for Uzbekistan, which is facing the choice of a contractor for a nuclear power plant on its own territory.

Kazakhstan is also betting on the development of green energy, which is something pioneered in the world by China. Hence, President Tokayev has proposed the creation of a green energy forum within the framework of the SCO to launch joint projects, increase technology transfer, and, above all, increase interest in financing projects in Central Asia by China and India. The elevation of this aspect to the NEB agenda is due to the fact that Russia has traditionally been interested in the development of traditional energy by modernising old facilities, which does not drastically increase energy production, the shortage of which is increasingly acute for the economies of the countries of the region. In the case of Kazakhstan, this is confirmed by the fact that Russian projects are centred on traditional post-Soviet power stations, particularly in the coal-mining region around Ekibastuz (Górecki, 2014: 74). Hence, the NEB, in Kazakhstan's view, could become a place of real support for solving this problem.

In the context of the SCO's role as a security mechanism, these initiatives demonstrate that the organisation can play a significant role not only in the political and diplomatic sphere but also in ensuring regional stability in practical terms. The SCO platform is becoming a forum for the member states to come together around shared energy challenges, facilitating the coordination of investments, technology exchange, and crisis management. Through initiatives such as the Energy Bank, investment funds, and the annual energy forum, is taking on a preventive and strategic role, namely reducing dependence on a single external

actor, strengthening the resilience of the region's energy systems, and enabling early coordination of actions in crisis situations. In this sense, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) becomes a security mechanism not only in the traditional military sense, but also in economic and infrastructural terms, which is crucial to the stability and sovereignty of Central Asian states (Perkowska, 2010: 63).

However, in order to do so, appropriate funding mechanisms need to be created. At the July 2023 SCO Summit, President Tokayev reiterated the idea of establishing an Investment Bank (RBC, 2023). From Kazakhstan's perspective, the creation of its own financial instruments within the framework of the NEB is a way to reduce dependence on Western and Russian sources of funding, which is part of the long-term strategy of the multi-vector policy. The aim of this policy is to have balanced relations with Russia, China, the West, and multilateral organisations, without depending on a single actor.

From the perspective of the SCO's role as a safety net, the introduction of its own financial instruments enhances the member states' resilience to external economic and geopolitical shocks, which, in turn, contributes to regional stability. The Investment Bank and similar initiatives enable the organisation to act as an economic safety buffer, facilitating the financing of strategic infrastructure, energy, and transport projects regardless of pressure or sanctions from global powers. As a result, the BRI is not limited solely to the military or counter-terrorism dimensions, but also becomes a multidimensional security mechanism, combining the region's economic and energy stability with strategic autonomy.

The cornerstone of Kazakhstan's economic strategy within the framework of the SCO includes the infrastructure projects supported by the People's Republic of China, such as the 'East-West' and 'North-South' corridor initiatives, which run through Kazakhstan. These corridors form part of the afore-mentioned China's Belt and Road Initiative, which was proposed by Xi Jinping in 2013 as China's global infrastructure and economic project. Its aim is to connect Asia, Europe, and Africa through a network of roads, railways, ports, and trade corridors, creating a modern New Silk Road. The BRI serves both to develop infrastructure and to increase trade, investment, and China's political influence worldwide. The initiative encompasses transport, energy, and technology projects, supporting the economic integration of the participating countries' regions (Jędrzejewski, Romańczuk, 2015: 33). For the countries of Central Asia, the BRI represents an opportunity to diversify trade, accelerate infrastructure modernisation, and strengthen economic security through multilateral cooperation (Naribaev, 2009: 165).

Through the emerging road, rail, and sea routes, Kazakhstan is gaining access to Caspian and Persian Gulf ports, as well as to the European, South Asian, and Middle Eastern markets. Significantly, Kazakhstan's exports of oil, rare metals, and grain to EU countries via alternative routes to Russian ones bring higher revenues, as European rates are much more favourable than those offered by Russian buyers,

who often impose conditions from their position as the dominant buyer. Owing to the new routes, Kazakhstan can not only better negotiate the terms of trade, but also gain greater market flexibility and immunity from secondary sanctions related to the activities of companies linked to Russia.

However, the development of infrastructure and economic cooperation along the 'East–West' and 'North–South' routes is increasing Kazakhstan's dependence on China, which is of concern to the political elite in Astana. Beijing's economic dominance, manifested, among other things, through the participation of Chinese companies in strategic tenders and control over some infrastructure projects, may, in the long term, threaten Kazakhstan's economic sovereignty. In response to this threat, Kazakhstan is looking for ways to counterbalance the influence of the People's Republic of China, using, among other things, the political and economic opportunities offered by cooperation between the SCO and global groupings such as the **Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa**) (BRICS). The coincidence of timing – i.e. on the same day that the BRICS expansion to include Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the UAE was announced – was used by President Tokayev to propose an in-depth SCO–BRICS cooperation (Keskin, 2023). From Astana's perspective, such a step would have several important consequences:

- the diversification of the directions of economic cooperation – especially in the context of Arab and African markets, which are developing dynamically and are less burdened by geopolitical tensions;
- an increase in investment competition, which would allow Kazakhstan to balance between Chinese, Indian, or even Arab bids, reducing the risk of dependence on a single lender or contractor;
- the strengthening of Kazakhstan's negotiating position as a state capable of playing a bridging role between the large geopolitical blocs.

In the face of the Russian Federation's increasing isolation in the international arena, sanctions, the disruption of supply chains, and the blocking of some payment channels, the SCO has become a mechanism of trade and financial stabilisation for Kazakhstan. Its membership enables it to maintain trade links with large Asian markets – including China, India, Iran, and Türkiye – without being exposed to secondary sanctions.

Owing to the format of the SCO, Kazakhstan is also able to conduct strategic dialogue with non-Western countries, but with significant trade and investment potential, which is an important competitive advantage in the current conditions. In this sense, the NEB acts as a protective buffer for the survival and development of the economy in a regional and global crisis.

The SCO as a shield for a weak state: The case of Kyrgyzstan

For the Kyrgyz Republic, the issue of security is a key area of cooperation within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Since the 1990s, Kyrgyzstan has been facing serious threats from the activities of organised crime groups, particularly in border regions such as the southern part of the country (Osh, Batken), which are part of informal trafficking routes for people, drugs, and weapons within the so-called Road Crescent. Despite involvement in various international initiatives, including cooperation with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the effectiveness of these efforts proved limited. Problems resulted from, among other things, a lack of adequate technical facilities, low levels of service coordination, and corruption within state structures.

In the absence of sustained results from its cooperation with the UN, Kyrgyzstan has begun to see the SCO as a major support facility for combating cross-border threats and organised crime. The organisation offers not only a platform for political dialogue and information exchange, but also concrete operational tools such as training, joint counter-terrorism exercises, and coordinated border operations. In this context, counter-terrorism trainings and exercises organised within the framework of the SCO are particularly important to the Kyrgyz side (Shukuralieva, 2018b: 183). They provide an opportunity to expand the competencies of the security services and the military in responding to irregular threats, including the activities of organised criminal groups taking advantage of the weakness of the borders of the Central Asian states (Toktomushev, 2017: 110–112).

One example of such activity was the border operation ‘Vostok-2015’, which involved forces from several SCO member states, including Kyrgyzstan. The aim of the operation was to identify and neutralise criminal networks involved in human smuggling and the drug route running from Afghanistan through Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan towards Kazakhstan and Russia. During this operation, the Kyrgyz border services took part in coordination activities, intelligence-sharing, and improved procedures for the identification and apprehension of suspicious convoys on mountainous borders, which are particularly difficult to monitor. Equally important was the 2017 ‘Tian-Shan 3’ exercise, in which Kyrgyzstan actively participated. The exercises focused on simulating military action against organised paramilitary criminal groups operating in the border area. During the manoeuvres, the Kyrgyz side gained experience in coordinating operations between the military, border guards, and special services, which is of great importance in the context of asymmetric threats and the growing intermingling of organised crime with religious radicalism in the Fergan Valley region (Sûèsun [Сүөсүн], 2021: 110–112).

In addition, within the framework of the SCO, Kyrgyzstan benefits from access to the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) databases and a platform for the

exchange of information on persons suspected of criminal and extremist activities. The RATS enables the creation of lists of wanted persons, the identification of smuggling routes, and the identification of funding mechanisms for illegal activities.

As a result, the RATS not only strengthens Kyrgyzstan's capacity to counter organised crime, but also builds institutional competence through exercises, the standardisation of procedures, and the integration of inter-ministerial activities. In an environment of limited resources and low institutional resilience in Kyrgyzstan, the support of a multilateral organisation such as the NEB is strategic; it increases the country's resilience to cross-border threats and strengthens control over poorly secured borders. In this context, the SCO functions not only as a coordinating forum, but also as a strategic instrument for enhancing border stability and transnational security in Central Asia.

For several years, the Kyrgyz authorities have been actively seeking the establishment of a Centre for Combating International Organised Crime in Bishkek, operating under the auspices of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. The initiative stems from the Kyrgyz side's firm belief that organised crime – which includes the smuggling of drugs, weapons, and people, as well as money laundering – poses a direct threat to the stability of the state, whose weak institutions are vulnerable to infiltration and corruption.

The proposal was first formally put forward by President Sadyr Japarov at the 2021 summit of the leaders of the SCO in Dushanbe (KABAR [КАБАР], 2023). At the time, Japarov pointed out that Kyrgyzstan, due to its geographical location at the intersection of illegal smuggling routes running from Afghanistan to Russia and China, was on the front line in the fight against cross-border crime. Such a centre would serve as a regional operational and analytical hub, facilitating the exchange of operational information, the joint analysis of criminal networks, and the coordination of cross-border intelligence and police operations.

This initiative demonstrates that the SCO is developing its security toolkit to address non-traditional and transnational threats. The proposed centre in Bishkek represents an attempt to expand the organisation's remit beyond the existing counter-terrorism structures (e.g. RATS) and addresses the need for more than just the coordination of counter-terrorism efforts, encompassing phenomena such as organised crime, smuggling, and extremism linked to criminal networks. In a context where Central Asia is grappling with intense cross-border flows of goods and people (particularly in the vicinity of Afghanistan), the development of such a centre could improve the response to cross-border threats, enhance the interoperability of services, and strengthen the SCO's position as a practical mechanism for regional security, rather than merely a political forum.

Kyrgyzstan's interest in the project was so advanced that a complete organisational and legal draft was brought by the Bishkek delegation to the 2022 Member

States' Consultative Meeting. The document contained detailed proposals on: the legal status of the institution; its operational mandate; the funding model; organisational structures; mechanisms for information exchange and cooperation with the RATS. The draft also envisaged the possibility of setting up mobile operational teams – functioning in cross-border security crises – and organising training for officers from member states' services in the fight against cybercrime and money laundering (Kaktus Media, 2023).

Despite Kyrgyzstan's strong commitment, the initiative did not receive unequivocal support from the other members of the SCO. For many of the organisation's states (including Russia and China), the project was not a priority – mainly due to the existing cooperation structures (such as the RATS), concerns about the duplication of competences, and limited confidence in the effectiveness and transparency of Kyrgyz institutions. However, this does not mean that Kyrgyzstan could not serve as a regional operational and analytical hub. Although the country has limited resources and is facing internal challenges, its geographical location – at the crossroads of key smuggling routes from Afghanistan to Russia and China – places it in a unique position to monitor cross-border criminal networks. The role of the SCO centre in Bishkek could therefore be based primarily on coordination, analysis, and information-sharing functions, utilising access to the RATS data, intelligence-sharing, and border monitoring technology, rather than directly providing security on its own territory.

The lack of real political support is reflected in practice: the topic of setting up the centre was not on the agenda of the meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO scheduled for July 2024. This may indicate not only a low level of consensus on the issue, but also competition among members for control over the operational instruments of the NEB. It is also unofficially indicated that China and Russia may be reluctant to hand over more power to a country with a relatively weak geopolitical position and an unstable domestic base, which, however, does not rule out the possibility of Kyrgyzstan serving as an analytical and coordination centre.

Despite these difficulties, Kyrgyzstan has not abandoned the initiative. In 2023, there have been reports of a possible presentation of the project in a new, more flexible format – e.g. as an observation institution or think-tank operating alongside the RATS, which would increase the chances of its acceptance. These actions testify to Bishkek's consistent efforts to strengthen its relevance within the SCO while also demonstrating how difficult it is to pursue the agenda of smaller member states in an organisation dominated by the geopolitical interests of China and Russia.

The Kyrgyz authorities had also hoped that the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation might support them in their border dispute with Tajikistan, which could balance the military advantage, given Moscow's formal neutrality,

which, in practice, showed greater favour towards Dushanbe. Bishkek had hoped for the organisation's support, but the SCO played a limited role in this dispute. The membership of both states in the SCO was not a key factor limiting intervention – the stance of Russia and China proved more significant; due to their geopolitical interests, they did not seek to involve the organisation in the direct resolution of the border conflict.

Its mandate focuses on cooperation in the fight against terrorism, extremism, and separatism (the so-called “three forces of evil”), while border issues are formally considered as internal affairs of sovereign states. At moments of conflict escalation (e.g. April 2021, September 2022, and later episodes), the NEB did not issue any firm or binding solutions to resolve the conflict, limited itself to calling on the parties to dialogue and peaceful resolution of the dispute, and did not take on the role of mediator (Pachucki-Włosek, 2025: 151–170). This function was taken over by other actors, including Russia, the CSTO, and direct bilateral channels. Hence, the conviction has been strengthened among the Kyrgyz elite that they should insist on a tried-and-tested partner – i.e. Russia – regarding security issues, while also looking for alternatives, e.g. Türkiye.

For the Kyrgyz Republic, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is playing an increasingly important role not only militarily and politically, but also as a tool for building economic security. The Kyrgyz economy – heavily dependent on raw material exports, remittances from economic migrants, and transit trade – has for years been struggling with currency instability and chronic balance of payments deficits. One of the key challenges is the acquisition of foreign exchange, primarily US dollars, which is still the dominant settlement currency in foreign trade, including with Kyrgyzstan's main partners, i.e. China and Russia.

In an environment of limited access to hard currency, mounting foreign debt, and rising costs of servicing USD-denominated obligations, the search for alternative trade settlement mechanisms is becoming a strategic issue. Against this backdrop, the initiative of President Sadyr Japarov – who proposed at the 2021 SCO summit in Dushanbe that trade between the SCO member states be settled in national currencies rather than the US dollar – has gained particular significance (TASS [TACC], 2022).

Japarov's proposal, initially treated with aloofness by some members of the organisation, gained traction after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, when Western sanctions against Russia restricted its access to SWIFT, dollars, and euros. In response, the Russian Federation officially supported the idea of the de-dollarisation of regional trade, with the proviso that it did not apply to strategic energy commodities such as oil and gas, which remain commodities settled mainly in dollars or euros for reasons of market stability and liquidity (TASS [TACC], 2022). This fits in with the realistic logic underlying the functioning of the SCO; the organisation serves as a tool for advancing state interests rather than

an autonomous entity; this means that initiatives such as de-dollarisation are the result of geopolitical calculations by the main players, particularly Russia and China (Nicharapova, 2019).

For Kyrgyzstan, which is not an energy exporter but an importer of raw materials and technology, the adoption of national currencies in trade settlements represents a real opportunity to reduce currency pressures and better manage foreign exchange reserves, which have remained critically low since 2020. Such a system would enable Kyrgyzstan to use hard currency to repay debt, stabilise the Kyrgyz soma, and finance infrastructure investment. At the same time, with settlements in national currencies (e.g. the Chinese yuan, Russian rouble, or Uzbek krona), countries in the region would be able to reduce transaction costs by becoming independent of dollar fluctuations.

Importantly, the project is gaining traction with Kyrgyzstan's neighbours, particularly Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, which, like Kyrgyzstan, are vulnerable to external currency shocks and restrictions on access to hard currency. The initiative also fits in with China's strategy, which has been promoting the internationalisation of the yuan (CNY) as a reserve and transaction currency in Central Asia, using the mechanisms of the SCO, the Belt and Road Initiative, and Asian investment banks (Alimov, 2018: 116–117). These measures reinforce the role of the SCO as a platform for coordinating economic and financial policy in the region. China's promotion of the yuan and the development of alternative settlement mechanisms form part of a broader process of building a multipolar economic order. For the SCO, this signifies an evolution from a forum for dialogue to an instrument capable of exerting real influence on the regional security architecture.

At the same time, while the settlement mechanism in national currencies is an important element of regional economic integration, the implementation of this project requires a number of adjustments, including stable exchange rates between national currencies, payment systems compatible between countries, political trust, and willingness to give up some monetary autonomy. For Kyrgyzstan, this implies the need to increase the transparency and resilience of financial institutions in order to become a credible participant in such mechanisms. This initiative strengthens economic interdependence among the SCO members such as China, Russia, and the Central Asian states. Growing economic integration acts as a deterrent to conflict – it increases the cost of any potential confrontation and helps to maintain stable political relations. Thus, although the SCO is not formally a military alliance, it builds security through a network of economic ties.

For Kyrgyzstan's economic security, the integration of the transport system of the SCO member states is strategic. Located in a mountainous and relatively isolated area of Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan is landlocked, and its economic position is limited by its underdeveloped communications infrastructure and the high cost of cross-border logistics. However, the Kyrgyz authorities see great potential in its

role as a transit country, linking China to Central Asia and further afield to Russia, Iran, and Middle Eastern markets. For landlocked countries such as Kyrgyzstan, access to alternative trade routes means greater resilience to disruptions (such as geopolitical crises or sanctions). From the perspective of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, this means creating a coherent logistics space that can operate independently of unstable global routes.

In this context, the planned China–Kyrgyzstan–Uzbekistan (CKU) railway line has become one of the most important infrastructure projects in the region. It is of key importance to Kyrgyzstan as part of a larger jigsaw puzzle – the so-called Southern SCO transport corridor, which is an alternative to the northern routes through Russia. The CKU railway line – once completed – would enable the freight route between China and West Asia and Europe to be shortened by some 900 km, with Kyrgyzstan gaining a role as an essential link in this route. For Kyrgyzstan, this would mean an increase in geo-strategic importance and, most importantly, steady income from transit in the form of customs duties, logistics services, and jobs in the transport sector. In a country where the formal sector of the economy generates limited budget revenues and the economy suffers from a chronic investment gap, transit revenues would provide a significant injection into the state budget, supporting its fiscal stability and ability to run basic public services (TASS [TACC], 2023b). Thus, integrating Kyrgyzstan into key logistics chains strengthens its internal stability, which has a direct impact on the security of the entire organisation. Countries with a weak fiscal base and limited development potential are more susceptible to political instability, social tensions, and external pressure. Stable transit revenues and the development of the logistics sector can mitigate these risks, making Kyrgyzstan a more predictable and stable partner within the SCO.

Nevertheless, the implementation of the CKU project remains difficult, primarily due to the high construction costs (estimated at 4–5 billion USD) and the mountainous terrain within Kyrgyzstan, requiring the construction of tunnels and bridges. In addition, Kyrgyzstan lacks the economic strengths to compete effectively for an infrastructure investment with wealthier and economically more stable countries in the region, such as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. These countries offer larger markets, better legal conditions, and better-developed industrial and logistical infrastructure, making them natural candidates for the location of Russian or Chinese investments.

Therefore, in order to counteract the marginalisation of the country's market and attract foreign capital, President Sadyr Japarov in 2021 proposed the creation of a SCO Development Bank and a SCO Development Fund. The purpose of these institutions would be to provide alternative financing for less-developed member states, including Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, whose investment needs are high but which remain on the sidelines of mainstream Asian economic integration (Media

Center, 2022). According to Bishkek's proposal, the SCO Development Bank would operate along the lines of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) or the BRICS Development Bank, offering preferential loans for investment in infrastructure, logistics, energy, and digitalisation. The SCO Development Fund, on the other hand, would have a stabilising and compensatory function, allowing it to respond to economic crises and support developmental projects with low returns but high social relevance. This initiative reflects the growing awareness that regional security cannot be based solely on political or military cooperation, but also requires tools for financial stabilisation and the reduction of development disparities.

Although Japarov's proposals have met with moderate interest from some members of the SCO (including Uzbekistan and Pakistan), their implementation has met with resistance from China and Russia, which fear the institutionalisation of capital redistribution within the SCO and the loss of control over regional financing mechanisms. As a result, the organisation remains a structure with limited capacity for collective action in the financial sphere, which undermines its potential as a comprehensive security system. Additionally, the lack of unanimity on the ownership structure, the location of the headquarters, and the governance model of these institutions has slowed down the project.

Despite the lack of formal decisions, the issue of establishing SCO financial institutions remains on the agenda of Kyrgyz diplomacy. The government in Bishkek sees these institutions as a key tool for levelling the playing field in the region and countering the further widening of developmental inequalities that can lead to migration, social tensions, and internal instability.

Between the Russian base and Chinese support: Tajikistan within the SCO structures

Tajikistan is paying particular attention to intensifying military cooperation. This is due to the internal problems of the republic itself, where the maintenance of order is ensured by the 201st Russian base, which houses 7,500 soldiers (Rogozińska, Olech, 2020: 56). The Tajik Army itself has about 9,000 soldiers, but it does not have sufficient combat capability to control the situation on its own (Pachucki-Włosek, 2022: 228). Hence, the support of external actors is essential. Therefore, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation has become a vehicle for obtaining direct military assistance from the People's Republic of China (PRC), which was particularly needed after 2005. It was in that year that the Group of Russian Border Troops in the Republic of Tajikistan, which was responsible for protecting Tajikistan's southern border, officially ended its mission. The withdrawal of the Russians brought about a weakening of the border, which, especially in the

Badakhshan Mountainous Autonomous Region (BMAR), became a place of infiltration for Islamic extremists.

Hence, Dushanbe's main objective became to obtain real assistance from Beijing, which was materialised in the opening of two Chinese bases in the Badakhshan Mountainous Autonomous Region, whose personnel carry out joint patrols with Tajiks on the border section with Afghanistan (Romašenko [Ромашенко], 2021). Owing to Tajikistan's efforts, the PRC has supported the construction of 10 border guard posts, with the right to rebuild another 40 with permission to man them with its own forces in case of staff shortages on the Tajik side (Tomberg [Томберг], 2022: 296; Panfilova [Панфилова], 2023). In addition, joint military exercises have been organised in the BMAR since 2015, with the main objective of training to counter terrorist entry across the border (Mullodžanov [Муллоджанов], 2019). The escalating situation in the region following the Taliban takeover has led to an agreement to hold full-scale exercises at the frequency of every two years, while micro exercises are held at least once a year (Ukrainskie Nacional'nye Novosti [Украинские Национальные Новости], 2022; TASS [ТАСС], 2023c).

An additional problem for Tajikistan's security is that the drug route from Afghanistan runs through its territory. Therefore, in 2019, Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon proposed the establishment of an Anti-Drug SCO Centre in Dushanbe. For years, this topic was not addressed, but at a meeting of the foreign ministers of the member states in May 2024, a decision was made to proceed with putting this idea into practice (Daryo.uz, 2024). Conducting coordinated activities will not only contribute to improving the security of Tajikistan itself, but will also neutralise the flow of illegal substances into the rest of the Central Asian region.

Tajikistan's heavy reliance on external support – from both Russia and China – suggests that the SCO serves as a platform enabling weaker member states to outsource their security. The organisation does not operate here as a traditional military alliance, but as a mechanism for coordinating and legitimising the military presence of major regional powers in peripheral states. China's growing involvement in securing the Tajik-Afghan border – through infrastructure, joint patrols, and exercises – demonstrates the gradual evolution of the SCO into a tool for Beijing's power projection in Central Asia. These actions enhance the organisation's ability to respond to asymmetric threats, such as terrorism or instability in Afghanistan, but at the same time shift the internal balance of power in China's favour.

Another key element is the institutionalisation of cooperation in the field of non-conventional security, as exemplified by the initiative to establish the SCO Anti-Narcotics Centre in Dushanbe. This demonstrates that the organisation is developing the capacity to counter transnational threats that have a direct impact on the stability of member states. In this sense, the SCO acts as a platform integrating police, intelligence, and border control activities, thereby strengthening the regional internal security system. At the same time, however, the case of

Tajikistan reveals the SCO's structural limitations. The lack of its own permanent operational mechanisms means that actual security measures are carried out mainly by member states on a bilateral basis (e.g. Tajikistan–China) rather than on a fully multilateral basis. This implies that the effectiveness of the SCO as an organisation depends on the will and interests of the major players rather than on autonomous institutional capabilities.

Uzbekistan in the SCO: Between independence and regional interdependence

During the period of President Islam Karimov's rule, Uzbekistan showed marked caution and even downplayed the importance of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation as a platform for regional cooperation. Despite its strategic location and the role that Tashkent could play in Central Asia, Uzbekistan's participation in the SCO initiatives remained limited for many years. An important element during this time was the presence of the aforementioned Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of the SCO (RATS) on the territory of the republic. Established in 2002, this unit aimed at coordinating the fight against terrorism and extremism at the regional level, with its headquarters precisely in Tashkent (Ryžov, Rogožina, Ivašenko [Рыжов, Рогожина, Иващенко], 2016: 61–70). However, the mere possession of this structure within Uzbekistan did not translate into active participation of the state in the organisation's activities.

Uzbekistan's cautious stance during Islam Karimov's era revealed the structural weakness of the SCO as a security mechanism; its effectiveness depended on the political will of its member states. Even the presence of the RATS in Tashkent did not automatically translate into operational activity. This indicates that the SCO lacked mechanisms to enforce engagement.

A key impetus for closer military cooperation was the post-2014 geopolitical situation, when there was a significant reduction in the contingent of US troops in the region, particularly in Afghanistan. The previous US presence gave Central Asian countries, including Uzbekistan, a certain balance of power and security support (Guardian, 2014). After the reduction of US involvement, the threat from extremism, Afghan instability, and other destabilising factors increased, forcing Tashkent to build defence mechanisms on its own and seek allies. In this context, the SCO has become an important tool, offering Uzbekistan the opportunity to benefit from joint training, exercises, and the exchange of experiences, particularly in counter-terrorism and the maintenance of public order (Falkowski, Lang, 2014: 29). The reduction of the US presence in the region has created a security vacuum, which the SCO is partly filling. In this sense, the organisation serves a compensatory function, replacing external security guarantees with regional

mechanisms. At the same time, this strengthens the role of China and Russia as the main pillars of security in Eurasia.

It was only after 2017 that one could observe a clear activation of Uzbekistan within the framework of the SCO. This change was the result of several factors, both internal and external. Uzbekistan returned to participating in joint military and anti-terrorist exercises organised by the SCO, which marked not only a symbolic restoration of presence, but also a concrete step towards strengthening security (ŠOS [ШОС], 2022). This turnaround was linked, among other things, to a change in the political and security strategy of the new leadership, which recognised the need for greater regional cooperation, especially in the context of external challenges.

Unlike Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, Uzbekistan is not a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, which is heavily influenced by Russia and focuses on collective defence. This means that in the event of military threats or political crises, Uzbekistan cannot count on automatic support from this organisation. The lack of CSTO membership thus leaves Tashkent practically self-reliant when it comes to responding to crises, which further reinforces the need to draw on cooperation within the framework of the SCO and to develop its own defence capabilities. Furthermore, unlike the CSTO, the SCO provides a flexible framework for cooperation, making it attractive to countries that prefer greater strategic autonomy, such as Uzbekistan.

The most telling evidence of the growing role of the SCO in Uzbekistan's security policy came in July 2022, when mass public protests took place in the Karakalpakstan autonomous region. The conflict over constitutional reform and the withdrawal of the region's autonomous status sparked widespread discontent that escalated into serious riots. The authorities in Tashkent had to face the situation on their own, without outside help, including from Russia or other allies. The success in containing the crisis was due, among other things, to well-trained security and military troops, who, owing to previous anti-terrorist training within the SCO, had demonstrated their effectiveness in dispersing illegal gatherings and maintaining public order (Kokošina [Кокошина], 2018). The SCO, therefore, acts here as an intermediary mechanism; in other words, it does not intervene directly, but enhances the member states' capacity to maintain order.

From the point of view of Uzbekistan's national security, the SCO plays a special role as a platform for coordination and joint action *vis-à-vis* the Afghan issue. Although bilateral relations between Tashkent and Kabul at this stage are developing on the basis of relative peace and pragmatism, history shows that this situation is still very fragile and can change rapidly. A case in point is the period of the late 1990s, when tensions and instability in Afghanistan had a direct impact on the security of Central Asian states – including Uzbekistan – leading to

numerous migration crises, the infiltration of armed groups, and an increase in the terrorist threat.

A key advantage of raising the Afghan issue in the SCO forum is the opportunity to internationalise the dialogue on this difficult challenge. For Uzbekistan, this means that the issue is not treated solely as an internal or bilateral matter, but as a regional threat that requires coordinated and consolidated action by the Central Asian states and their strategic partners, primarily China, Russia, as well as India and other members of the organisation. This approach allows Tashkent to avoid being isolated and confronting the potentially destabilising consequences of the Afghan crisis on its own. The presence of the issue on the agenda of the SCO guarantees that, should the situation deteriorate, Uzbekistan will be able to count on the support of other member states, both politically and in the form of concrete operational activities such as joint border patrols, intelligence exchanges, or anti-terrorist exercises (Garbuzarova, 2021: 429).

In recent years, the SCO has developed cooperation mechanisms to counter the spread of extremism, arms smuggling, narcotics, and the movement of armed groups from the Afghan territory. Uzbekistan, fearful of the influence of the Taliban and other radical groups, is stepping up its activities within the framework of these mechanisms, drawing on the experience and military support of its allies within the SCO. An important element of this is cooperation with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, which are also facing problems arising from instability in Afghanistan, which is fostering the development of joint strategies for border protection and countering cross-border threats.

For Uzbekistan, stabilising the situation in Afghanistan is a matter not only of military security, but also of economic and social security. Opening stable trade corridors, minimising the influx of refugees, and limiting the influence of radical groups are all prerequisites for the long-term development of the country and for increasing its importance as a regional logistical and economic centre. Uzbekistan, being the *'heart of Central Asia'*, is a country through which all trade routes run from north to south and from east to west. Subsequently, it is in the republic's interest to stimulate its development, thereby increasing the profits from transit. As a result, Uzbekistan became the initiator and first organiser of the SCO Transport Forum. The effectiveness of Uzbekistan's policy resulted in the fact that at the very first meeting, a memorandum was signed on the creation of two new transport routes: Belarus–Russia–Kazakhstan–Uzbekistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan as well as Russia–Caspian Sea–Turkmenistan–Uzbekistan–Kyrgyzstan (Gazeta.uz [Gazeta.uz], 2023).

Highlighting the Afghan issue at the SCO is also part of Uzbekistan's broader multi-vector policy strategy. Faced with the changing balance of power in the world and the growing role of China, Russia, and the BRICS countries, Uzbekistan seeks to balance its relations with various powers, minimising the risk of dependency

and maximising its own security and that of the region as a whole. In this context, the SCO appears as a platform for balanced action, multilateral cooperation, and joint responses to challenges that may threaten not only Uzbekistan but Central Asia as a whole.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is beginning to play an increasingly important role in shaping food security policy in the Central Asian region, with Uzbekistan's involvement being a clear example. For Tashkent, this issue is crucial, as the country has been facing water scarcity for years while being one of the most populous countries in Central Asia, which translates into a growing demand for food and efficient agricultural production.

As climate change continues, Uzbekistan is experiencing increasing difficulties with water management. High dependence on water supply from the territories of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – the main river sources in the region – causes political tensions, especially during periods of drought and limited water supply (Stonis, 2023: 76–77). At the same time, a large part of the irrigation systems in Uzbekistan still date back to the Soviet era and have low efficiency, generating additional losses and environmental pressures.

In 2018, the SCO adopted the Food Security Cooperation Programme, which is considered the first formal step towards institutionalising agri-food cooperation. In the same year, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev proposed the innovative concept of creating agro-industrial clusters operating within the SCO member states (Stonis, 2023: 76–77). The aim of this initiative was to create a common system of agricultural production, processing, and distribution, taking into account the different climatic conditions, resources, and specialisations of each country (Karimov [Каримов]). Despite the innovative nature of the proposal, it has met with moderate interest from other member states, especially those that do not themselves suffer as much from water scarcity or food self-sufficiency problems (e.g. Russia, India, or Pakistan). Accordingly, Uzbekistan has taken on the role of the animator and coordinator of this cooperation, as demonstrated by Tashkent's regular organisation of meetings of the ministers of agriculture of the SCO member states and bilateral initiatives within the framework of the forum. For Uzbekistan, the primary objective of activities in the SCO is not only to increase agricultural productivity, but, above all, to create a framework for an international agreement on water-sharing with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – the mountainous states where the main sources of the Syr-daria and Amu-daria are located. The Uzbek authorities are seeking to resuscitate the model of water–energy cooperation that functioned during the USSR era, when water-sharing was planned centrally, and mountainous states received electricity in exchange for transferring water to lowland states (Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan).

Uzbekistan's efforts to regulate the distribution of water resources with the mountain states demonstrate that the SCO can serve as a mediation platform

in disputes over resources. If successful, this role strengthens the organisation's ability to prevent conflicts between the member states.

An additional strand of Uzbekistan's strategy in the SCO is to promote technological cooperation in the field of modern precision agriculture (smart agriculture), which would save water and increase crop efficiency. Tashkent is seeking the transfer of know-how and investments from China and India to modernise local farms and implement solutions such as drip irrigation, smart irrigation systems, and greenhouse crop automation.

The expansion of the SCO's agenda to include food security issues demonstrates its evolution towards a comprehensive security system. Water and agricultural issues in Central Asia have the potential to spark conflict; therefore, addressing them within the SCO framework reduces the risk of tensions between states. Furthermore, the promotion of agricultural innovation in cooperation with China and India highlights the SCO's growing role as a channel for technology transfer. In the long term, this enhances the region's economic resilience, which directly contributes to its political stability and security.

Conclusion

In summary, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, whose origins lie in the process of normalising border relations following the collapse of the USSR and in cooperation within the Shanghai Five, is an example of an organisation that grew out of practical security needs rather than from ambitions to create a formalised collective defence system. Even at the stage of its formation, the principles of mutual trust, sovereignty, and non-interference were of key importance, and they continue to define the limits of its activities to this day. However, the SCO's evolution from a forum for resolving border disputes to a platform encompassing political, military, and economic cooperation has not led to its transformation into an alliance-like structure; rather, it has reinforced its consensual and coordinating nature, which corresponds to the realist view of the organisation as a tool for state cooperation rather than an autonomous actor.

In answering the key research question regarding the role of the SCO in shaping the security of Central Asian states, it must be clearly stated that its significance is substantial, yet selective and functionally limited. The organisation operates most effectively in the area of non-traditional threats, such as terrorism, extremism, and separatism, referred to as the 'three forces of evil'. The SCO has indeed developed relatively effective cooperation mechanisms in this regard, encompassing the activities of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), regular military exercises, and a well-developed intelligence-sharing network. These instruments

effectively strengthen the member states' capabilities to respond to asymmetric threats as well as foster interoperability and trust between their security forces.

At the same time, the SCO does not meet the criteria of an effective security organisation in the traditional, military sense of the term. The absence of formal defence commitments, intervention mechanisms, and arbitration tools means that the organisation is unable to respond to interstate conflicts. The case of border clashes between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan clearly illustrates this weakness. In this context, it is accurate to observe that the SCO does not function as a cohesive strategic bloc but, rather, as a platform for limited cooperation, in which the interests of states take precedence over institutional commitments.

This means that its influence on regional security is indirect, based more on prevention and confidence-building rather than on the ability to enforce peace. From the realist perspective, the organisation strengthens regional stability, but its effectiveness remains limited by the lack of shared strategic interests and the asymmetry of the member states' capabilities.

In terms of internal and interstate stability, the SCO demonstrates a clear asymmetry in its effectiveness. It exerts a significantly greater influence at the former level, helping states to maintain control over internal threats. Cooperation within the SCO helps legitimise the authorities' actions against the opposition, often labelled as extremist, which leads to the reproduction of norms that favour the stability of authoritarian political systems. Thus, the organisation fulfils not only a security function but also a normative one, shaping a specific model of the state-society relations.

At the inter-state level, however, the role of the SCO is limited to that of a platform for dialogue, which reduces the risk of escalating tensions but does not eliminate their structural causes. The SCO manages tensions rather than resolving them, which confirms its limited effectiveness as a collective security mechanism.

Kazakhstan regards the organisation as a tool for implementing a multi-vector policy, enabling it to balance the influence of Russia and China as well as to develop economic and infrastructural projects. Politically, the SCO allows Kazakhstan to maintain a balance between China and Russia; this enables the country to retain greater independence and avoid relying solely on a single ally. Membership in the organisation opens up opportunities for Kazakhstan to engage in regional multilateral diplomacy rather than just bilateral diplomacy, thereby strengthening its role as a leader in Central Asia.

Kyrgyzstan views the SCO primarily as a source of support in the areas of training and counter-terrorism whilst remaining aware of its limitations in conflict situations. In military terms, the SCO serves Kyrgyzstan primarily as a training and counter-terrorism platform rather than a traditional defence alliance. The greatest benefits include military exercises that improve tactical capabilities and interoperability, operational cooperation in combating terrorism and smuggling, as

well as access to intelligence and crisis response plans. However, in situations of an actual conflict (e.g. with Tajikistan in 2021 and 2022), the SCO remains passive, which indicates its limited usefulness in defending Kyrgyzstan's interests at the military level.

Tajikistan attaches particular importance to the SCO in the context of threats emanating from Afghanistan, viewing it as a key component of its security framework, although in practice it continues to rely on bilateral support, particularly from Russia. Despite its attachment to the Moscow, in an era of growing threats from an unstable Afghanistan and increased activity by terrorist groups, the role of the SCO is becoming crucial to ensuring Tajikistan's long-term security.

Uzbekistan, on the other hand, utilises the organisation in the most pragmatic way, i.e. as a platform for strengthening its regional position, internationalising economic issues, and increasing its strategic autonomy. The future of Uzbekistan's cooperation within the SCO will depend on further changes in the geopolitical situation, both in the region and globally. However, it can already be said that the SCO constitutes an important platform for Uzbekistan, enabling it to actively participate in shaping regional security on its own terms. Unable to rely on bilateral agreements with its neighbours regarding the sharing of water resources and agricultural development, Uzbekistan uses the SCO as a forum for internationalising these issues. Although the organisation does not yet possess strong enforcement mechanisms in the field of agriculture, it is becoming a tool for Tashkent to exert political pressure as well as a channel for securing technological and investment support. Owing to this, Uzbekistan is not only strengthening its position as a diplomatically active state but also securing the foundations of its economy and social stability, which are underpinned by food security.

An analysis of case studies from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan confirms that the perception and use of the SCO both vary greatly and are shaped by national interests, which once again aligns with the realist view of the organisation. The states in the region treat it instrumentally as a tool of foreign and security policy rather than as a binding alliance.

Another significant conclusion is that the SCO serves as an instrument for managing the rivalry between Russia and China in Central Asia. The organisation does not eliminate this rivalry, but provides it with an institutional framework, thereby limiting the risk of open confrontation. At the same time, the dominance of these two actors influences the direction of the SCO's development, subordinating its agenda to their geopolitical interests. As a result, the Central Asian states operate within an asymmetrical structure in which their role is limited, though not entirely marginal; through their participation in the organisation, they gain room for manoeuvre and the ability to pursue a policy of balancing.

Taking into account the broader geopolitical context, it is also important to highlight the growing significance of the economic dimension in the activities

of the SCO, particularly following the announcement of China's Belt and Road Initiative. Although the organisation is not the primary vehicle for implementing these projects, it serves as an important forum for political coordination as well as for legitimising infrastructure and energy cooperation. This points to a gradual shift in the organisation's focus towards economic cooperation and China's growing role within its structure. Thus, the SCO is gradually evolving into a multidimensional platform that combines security issues with economic development.

From the theoretical perspective, the functioning of the SCO confirms the validity of the realist and neorealist approaches, which highlight the dominant role of states and their interests. At the same time, constructivist elements allow us to grasp the normative dimension of the organisation's activities. They demonstrate their significance in the context of non-traditional threats and security discourse. Finally, this perspective highlights the importance of great power rivalry as a factor structuring its functioning.

All in all, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is neither an effective guarantor of security in the military sense nor a cohesive geopolitical bloc. Its significance lies primarily in creating a framework for cooperation that enables Central Asian states to manage threats, strengthen internal stability, and pursue a policy of balancing power amidst great-power competition. At the same time, the organisation contributes to the consolidation of certain political norms and is increasingly becoming part of the broader context of economic cooperation linked to China's initiatives.

In this sense, the SCO constitutes a significant but insufficient element of the regional security architecture, complementing other mechanisms such as bilateral alliances or the Collective Security Treaty Organisation. Its future role will depend on the dynamics of Sino-Russian relations, the evolution of threats in the region, and the ability of the member states to make it more effective. Despite differences in prioritising specific issues, these are challenges that affect all four Central Asian republics under discussion, which means that the process of mutual support in pushing projects onto the SCO agenda is observable. Consequently, the organisation's significance in shaping the security of Central Asian states is being strengthened.

Bibliography

- Ajtenov, N.Ž. [Айтеннов, Н.Ж.]. 2018. Kazakhstan and the SCO: Main Results and Problems of Cooperation. *Journal of Oriental Studies* 81(2): 9–15. <https://doi.org/10.26577/JOS-2017-2-939>

- Alimov, R. 2018. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: Its Role and Place in the Development of Eurasia. *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 9(2): 114–124. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euras.2018.08.001>
- Azattyk Aziâ. 2025. «Rosatom» vozglavit stroitel'stvo pervoj AËS v Kazahstane. Kak Astana delala vybor [Азаттық Азия. 2025. «Росатом» возглавит строительство первой АЭС в Казахстане. Как Астана делала выбор]. 14.07., <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/rosatom-vozglavit-stroitelstvo-pervoy-aes-v-kazahstane-vtoruyu-aes-kitay-predpolozhitelno-kak-astana-delala-vybor/33443071.html> (accessed: 20.07.2025).
- Daryo.uz. 2024. V Dušanbe poâvitsâ Antinarkotičeskij centr ŠOS [В Душанбе появится Антинаркотический центр ШОС]. 22.05., <https://daryo.uz/ru/2024/05/22/v-dusanbe-poavitsa-antinarkoticeskij-centr-sos> (accessed: 17.06.2024).
- Falkowski, M., Lang, J. 2014. *Zakladnicy Moskwy, klienci Pekinu. Bezpieczeństwo w Azji Centralnej w dobie malejącej roli Zachodu*. Prace OSW 51.
- Garbuzarova, E.G. 2021. The Role of the SCO in the Process of Neutralizing Regional Challenges and Threats. *Post-Soviet Issues* 8(4): 425–436. <https://doi.org/10.24975/2313-8920-2021-8-4-425-436>
- Gazeta.uz. 2023. V koridorah ŠOS išut novye puti. V Taškente prošël pervyj transportnyj forum stran organizacii [Газета.uz. 2023. В коридорах ШОС ищут новые пути. В Ташкенте прошёл первый транспортный форум стран организации]. 02.11., <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2023/11/02/transport-sco/> (accessed: 17.06.2024).
- Górecki, W. 2014. *Coraz dalej od Moskwy, Rosja wobec Azji Centralnej*. Prace OSW 48.
- Guardian. 2014. Obama Announces Plan to Keep 9,800 US Troops in Afghanistan after 2014. 27.05., <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/27/obama-us-afghanistan-force-2014> (accessed: 17.06.2024).
- Jędrzejewski, W., Romańczuk, M. 2015. Bezpieczeństwo Azji Centralnej w kontekście strategii współpracy USA i ChRL z państwami regionu. *Bezpieczeństwo, Teoria i Polityka* 2: 31–46.
- KABAR. 2023. Priorityty Sotrudničestva Kyrgyzstana v ramach ŠOS [КАБАР. 2023. Приоритеты сотрудничества Кыргызстана в рамках ШОС]. 23.10., <https://kabar.kg/news/priorityty-sotrudnichestva-kyrgyzstana-v-ramkakh-shos/> (accessed: 03.06.2024).
- Kaktus Media. 2023. Sadyr Žaparov podnâl vopros otkrytiâ v Biškeke Centra po bor'be s orgprestupnoš'û [Садыр Жапаров поднял вопрос открытия в Бишкеке Центра по борьбе с оргпреступностью]. 04.07., https://kaktus.media/doc/483284_sadyr_japarov_podnial_vopros_otkrytiia_v_bishkeke_centra_po_borbe_s_orgprestupnostu.html (accessed: 03.06.2024).
- Karimov, A. Uzbekistan v rakurse prodovol'stvennoj bezopasnosti ŠOS [Каримов, А. Узбекистан в ракурсе продовольственной безопасности ШОС]. *CER*.

- <https://cer.uz/uz/post/publication/uzbekistan-v-rakurse-prodovolstvennoj-bezopasnosti-sos> (accessed: 17.06.2024).
- Keskin, O. 2023. Prezident Kazahstana predložil ob'edinit' Usiliâ BRIKS i ŠOS [Президент Казахстана предложил объединить усилия БРИКС и ШОС]. 24.08., <https://www.aa.com.tr/ru/> (accessed: 17.06.2024).
- Kokošina, Z. 2018. Antiterrorističeskie učeniâ Šanhajskoj organizacii sotrudničestva [Кокошина, З. 2018. Антитеррористические учения Шанхайской организации сотрудничества]. *The International Relations*. <https://interaffairs.ru/jauthor/material/2085> (accessed: 03.06.2024).
- Koolace, E., Tishehyar, M. 2013. An Outlook on Energy Cooperation Approaches in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Region. *Geopolitics Quarterly* 8(4): 41–71.
- Media Center. 2022. Tol'ko plúsy. Čto daet Kyrgyzstanu členstvo v ŠOS? [Только плюсы. Что дает Кыргызстану членство в ШОС?]. 15.09., <https://media-center.kg/ru/news/Tolko-plyusi-CHto-daet-Kirgizstanu-chlenstvo-v-SHOS-1303366198> (accessed: 17.06.2024).
- Mulłodžanov, P. 2019. Kitajsko-tadžikskie učeniâ v GBAO: bor'ba s terrorizmom ili zašita investicij KNR v regione? [Муллоджанов, П. 2019. Китайско-таджикские учения в ГБАО: борьба с терроризмом или защита инвестиций КНР в регионе?]. 18.08., https://cabar.asia/ru/kitajsko-tadzhikskie-ucheniya-v-gbao-borba-s-terrorizmom-ili-zashhita-investitsij-knr-v-regione#_edn1 (accessed: 03.06.2024).
- Naribaev, M. 2009. Cooperation between Kazakhstan and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as a Factor in the Development of Foreign Economic Activity Today. *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 4–5(58–59): 159–169.
- Pachucki-Włosek, K. 2022. The Potential of Selected Central Asian States to Provide Security in Crises. *Przegląd Strategiczny* 15: 227–242. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ps.2022.1.14>
- Pachucki-Włosek, K. 2025. The New Great Game for Central Asia: A Case Study of the Kyrgyz-Tajik Border Conflict. In: P. Pietrzak (ed.), *Exploring the Implications of Local and Regional Conflicts* (pp. 151–170). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-2877-4.ch006>
- Panfilova, V. 2023. Kitajskij voennyj interes k Tadžikistanu rastet [Панфилова, В. 2023. Китайский военный интерес к Таджикистану растет]. 17.10., https://www.ng.ru/cis/2023-10-17/5_8854_tajikistan.html (accessed: 03.06.2024).
- Perkowska, A. 2010. Szanhajska Organizacja Współpracy – geopolityka. *Economy and Management* 3: 58–74.
- RBC. 2023. Učastniki ŠOS vspomnili pro sozdanie banka i fonda razvitiâ [Участники ШОС вспомнили про создание банка и фонда развития]. 04.07., <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/04/07/2023/64a3fe999a794705e4f8e89d> (accessed: 17.06.2024).

- Rogozińska, A., Olech, A. 2020. *Zagraniczne bazy wojskowe Rosyjskiej Federacji*. Raport Instytutu Nowej Europy.
- Romašenko, S. 2021. Kitaj postroit bazu dlâ specnaza MVD Tadžikistana [Ромашенко, С. 2021. Китай построит базу для спецназа МВД Таджикистана]. 28.10., <https://www.dw.com/ru/kitaj-postroit-bazu-dlja-specnaza-mvd-tadzhikistana/a-59649110> (accessed: 03.06.2024).
- Ryžov, I., Rogožina, E., Ivašenko, M. 2016. Šanhajskaâ organizaciâ sotrudničestva i ugrozy regional'noj bezopasnosti v Central'noj Azii. *Rossiâ i novye gosudarstva Evrazii* 4: 61–70 [Рыжов, И., Рогожина, Е., Иващенко, М. 2016. Шанхайская организация сотрудничества и угрозы региональной безопасности в Центральной Азии. *Россия и новые государства Евразии* 4: 61–70].
- Ševeleva, M. 2014. Ėnergetičeskij klub Šanhajskoj organizacii sotrudničestva i formirovanie strategii mnogostoronnego sotrudničestva v sfere ėnergetiki. In: M. Ševeleva (ed.), *Aktual'nye problemy meždunarodnyh otnošenij i global'nogo razvitiâ* (pp. 168–173) [Шевелева, М. 2014. Энергетический клуб Шанхайской организации сотрудничества и формирование стратегии многостороннего сотрудничества в сфере энергетики. В: М. Шевелева (ред.), *Актуальные проблемы международных отношений и глобального развития* (с. 168–173)].
- Shukuralieva, N. 2018a. Azja Centralna: uwarunkowania bezpieczeñstwa regionalnego. *Środkowoeuropejskie Studia Polityczne* 2: 99–114. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssp.2018.2.7>
- Shukuralieva, N. 2018b. Bezpieczeñstwo regionalne – integracja obronna pañstw Azji Centralnej. *Sprawy Międzynarodowe* 71(4): 179–194.
- ŠOS. 2022. Uzbekistan – ŠOS: novye grani mnogoprofil'nogo vzaimodejstviâ (o prioritetah predsedatel'stva Uzbekistana v Organizacii) [ШОС. 2022. Узбекистан – ШОС: новые грани многопрофильного взаимодействия (о приоритетах председательства Узбекистана в Организации)]. 13.04., <https://rus.sectesco.org/20220413/830053.html> (accessed: 03.06.2024).
- Stonis, D. 2023. Comparative Analysis of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and European Union Strategy on Central Asia: Confrontation or Cooperation? *Polish Political Science Yearbook* 52(1): 69–90. <https://doi.org/10.15804/ppsy202230>
- Sùèsun, F. 2021. Sušestvuûšie mehanizmy Šanhajskoj organizacii sotrudničestva i ih problemy dlâ bor'by s netradicionnymi vyzovami bezopasnosti. *Vestnik meždunarodnyh organizacij* 16(1): 107–126. [Сюэсун, Ф. 2021. Существующие механизмы Шанхайской организации сотрудничества и их проблемы для борьбы с нетрадиционными вызовами безопасности. *Вестник международных организаций* 16(1): 107–126]. <https://doi.org/10.17323/1996-7845-2021-01-05>

- TASS. 2022. Kirgiziâ perešla na trgovoye rasčety s Rossiej v rublâh [ТАСС. 2022. Киргизия перешла на торговые расчеты с Россией в рублях]. 20.07., <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/15261005> (accessed: 17.06.2024).
- TASS. 2023a. Kazahstan nameren v ramach predsedatel'stva v ŠOS povyšat' ee rol' na mezhdunarodnoj arene [ТАСС. 2023а. Казахстан намерен в рамках председательства в ШОС повышать ее роль на международной арене]. 04.07., <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/18182551> (accessed: 17.06.2024).
- TASS. 2023b. Prem'èr Kirgizii predložil sozdat' v ŠOS obšij èkonomičeskij rynek [ТАСС. 2023b. Премьер Киргизии предложил создать в ШОС общий экономический рынок]. 26.10., <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/19118497> (accessed: 17.06.2024).
- TASS. 2023c. Tadžikistan i Kitaj planiruiut raz v dva goda provodit' učeniâ po antiterorru [ТАСС. 2023c. Таджикистан и Китай планируют раз в два года проводить учения по антитеррору]. 17.10., <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/19039757> (accessed: 03.06.2024).
- TASS. 2024. Strany ŠOS utverdât ènergetičeskuû strategiu sotrudničestva na sammite v Astane [ТАСС. 2024. Страны ШОС утвердят энергетическую стратегию сотрудничества на саммите в Астане]. 29.03., <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/20394825> (accessed: 17.06.2024).
- Toktomushev, K. 2017. *Kyrgyzstan – Regime Security and Foreign Policy*. New York. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315533490>
- Tomberg, I.G. 2022. Voennoe i voenno-tehničeskoe sotrudničestvo Kitaâ so stranami Central'noj Azii v XXI veke. *Problemy postsovetskogo prostranstva* 9(3): 289–300 [Томберг, И.Г. 2022. Военное и военно-техническое сотрудничество Китая со странами Центральной Азии в XXI веке. *Проблемы постсоветского пространства* 9(3): 289–300].
- Ukrainskie Nacional'nye Novosti. 2022. Tadžikistan i Kitaj dogovorilis' o sovmestnyh voennyh učeniâh po menšej mere raz v god [Украинские Национальные Новости. 2022. Таджикистан и Китай договорились о совместных военных учениях по меньшей мере раз в год]. 22.10., <https://unn.ua/ru/news/tadzhikistan-i-kitay-domovilisya-provoditi-spilni-vijskovi-navchannya-schonaymenshe-raz-na-rik> (accessed: 03.06.2024).
- Wojcieszak, Ł. 2016. Ewolucja Szanghajskiej Organizacji Współpracy – od militarnego do gospodarczego wymiaru kooperacji. *Studia Politicae Universitatis Silesiensis* 16: 95–117.