

Trouble to the East

The threat to American security from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

By Aaron Pultman

This paper seeks to determine what, if any, threat is posed to the security of the United States by the activities of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. This paper traces the origins of the Organization and how its purpose has evolved over time. Through analyzing its actions and decisions, this paper determines what the relationship the West may have with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and what steps can be taken to maintain peace.

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States (US), and by extension the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), has enjoyed unipolar status on the world stage. Recently, however, this condition is in danger of changing. With the rise of China and the reemergence of Russia, the future of US dominance is in doubt. A particular issue for the US is the growing strength of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). As an organization, whose members' and observers' population is nearly half of the world's, the United States must be vigilant about the effects and actions of the SCO. Currently, there is significant concern within the United States over the SCO's recent activities and what it means for the future of American foreign policy.

In 1996, representatives from five countries, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, met to create a new entity called the Shanghai Five. This was done to provide systemic solutions to issues that had been plaguing the region, including border disputes between the nations. The Foreign Ministers of the Five began to meet on an annual basis to discuss issues such as trade, culture and security. With each passing year, the cooperation between the nations seemed to grow. In July of 2000, the Shanghai Five Summit was held in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan. After the conference, a statement was released announcing the creation of a Council of National Coordinators which would better coordinate activities between the nations and ensure that the members worked towards mutually beneficial goals.^{1 2}

The Dushanbe statement also signified a more dramatic shift in the stance of the Shanghai Five. It further stressed the importance of security cooperation to defend against liberation movements, terrorism and religious extremism. None of that was inherently revolutionary; those are the "three evils" which the SCO is and has always been opposed to: terrorism, separatism and

extremism. The statement also said, though, that it would, “oppose intervention in other countries’ internal affairs on the pretexts of ‘humanitarianism’ and ‘protecting human rights;’ and support the efforts of one another in safeguarding the five countries’ national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and social stability.” While this quote does not explicitly name the United States, the implication is clear. The Clinton administration of the 1990s had staged numerous interventions from the Balkans to Haiti under the banner of human rights. The Shanghai Five made it clear that they would not tolerate US meddling in their domestic affairs. Furthermore, they decided that the defense ministers of the nations would begin to meet as well, to better coordinate military and security activities.³

After Dushanbe, the Shanghai Five met in Beijing in June of 2001. In addition to the regular members, the summit was attended by representatives of Uzbekistan. At the meeting, the Five decided to admit Uzbekistan as a member-state and later that year renamed the group the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The following year, in St. Petersburg, the six nations signed the SCO Charter, officially entrenching it in international law.

For several years, the Organization maintained its Eurasian focus. Then in December of 2004, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly passed Resolution 517 inviting the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, “to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer.”⁴ While this was an important event in SCO expansion, the major turning point came a few months later at the 2005 SCO summit in Astana, Kazakhstan. For the first time, the SCO allowed representatives from nations outside of Central Asia to attend its meetings. Consequently, Pakistan, India, Iran and Mongolia attended the conference as observer

states. A decade later, India and Pakistan were given permission to become full members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which will take effect in 2017. Furthermore, the SCO has accepted numerous observer-states and dialogue-partners. Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia are observers while Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Turkey are dialogue-partners. This international scope is fundamentally different from the original organization created in 1990s.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization was initially focused specifically on Eurasian problems; namely, trade and security. It provided a potential forum for economic cooperation between the nations. China, in particular, seeks to benefit from this relationship. As an economic stronghold, China requires two things: energy supplies and markets for their exports. Since the beginning of the Organization, China has sought to use the SCO as a “free-trade zone”. Until recently, Russia consistently blocked Chinese attempts to use the Organization to further strengthen its economy. Russia feared that China would grow too strong and seize complete control of the Organization and therefore blocked the attempts to establish free-trade throughout the Organization. Since the Russian invasion of Crimea in 2014, however, most of the international community has distanced itself from Russia and from its President Vladimir Putin. Since then, Russia has been suspended from the G8 and been subject to American and EU sanctions. This has forced Russia to pivot to the East for economic relief. Given this, it is likely that the SCO will be used to create further economic ties between the nations. Russia, however, still opposes China’s free trade plan. China also uses the Organization to secure the fuel for its manufacturing. Both Russia and Kazakhstan are home to massive oil reserves and Uzbekistan has a considerable amount as well. China has used the SCO to achieve these goals. These diplomatic relations helped pave the way

for the construction of the Central Asia-China Gas Pipeline which transports gas from Turkmenistan to China through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. President Putin has gone even further, suggesting that the SCO should become an “energy club”. This is even more important when considering states who are attempting to become members. Iran brings with it large oil reserves and the ability to contribute to this energy exchange. India, on the other hand, is similar to China; it is an industrial power in need of fuel which could be found within the SCO. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization has allowed these nations to develop economically regardless of their relationship with the West. It limits China’s and Russia’s dependency on NATO nations for energy and markets to trade with. This economic autonomy is a major benefit to SCO members.^{5 6 7 8}

The other main activity conducted by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is security coordination. This, it could be argued, is the central focus of the SCO right now. A lot of attention is being paid to defeating the three evils: terrorism, separatism, extremism. With the spread of radical Islamic terror, many Central Asian nations fear that they too will become targets. Several also fear separatist factions within their nations. China faces numerous uprisings particularly from Uighurs, Muslim separatists from the western Chinese Province of Xinjiang. Consequently, security has emerged as the top priority for the SCO. Outside of its Beijing headquarters, the SCO maintains only one other major office: The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) command in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Founded in 2004, this institution coordinates security cooperation and intelligence sharing regarding terrorism for all SCO member-states. It coordinates with the intelligence agencies of the six members to better facilitate intelligence sharing. It also addresses drug and weapons trafficking as well as

cybersecurity. RATS has tremendous resources at its disposal. It currently has a database of suspected terrorists and has permission to conduct arrests in all SCO member-states.

Furthermore, the RATS agents are not subject to criminal penalties for any actions committed in the course of their duties and are immune from prosecution in the six member-states. RATS is also a partner of the United Nations for fighting global terror. The Former Director of RATS Zhang Xinfeng has personally briefed the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee about their efforts to combat terror in Central Asia. Additionally, RATS provides security for various events and activities in the region. It helped secure the Beijing Olympics in 2008, the World Expo in 2010, and the Asian Winter Games in 2011. Furthermore, it organizes and secures training exercises between member-states. These exercises provide valuable experience and coordination to the militaries of the six members. It allows them to practice working together on a variety of scenarios from a hostage situation, to a hijacking, to retaking an oil tanker seized by terrorists. These elaborate drills can involve thousands of men and equipment as advanced as Russian Su-24 bombers, Mi-24 helicopters and a variety of armored vehicles. All of these activities have been very successful according to the leadership of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure. The current Director of RATS, Yevgeniy Sysoyev, said of a recent operation, “A commendable result was the suppression, jointly with security agencies of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, of recruitment by international terrorist organizations' emissaries conducted on transnational trains routed from those countries to Russia via Kazakhstan.” Sysoyev himself is an excellent example for where RATS gets its talent and experience. Born in the Tomsk region of Russia (the USSR at the time), he began to work for the KGB. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Sysoyev went to the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB). He quickly worked his way through the ranks of organization rising to the position of Deputy Director in

2013. As Director of RATS, he brings all the experience acquired after decades in the FSB. He also can better promote security cooperation between Russia and the rest of the SCO. The effectiveness of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure has given the Shanghai Cooperation Organization the means to efficiently combat their “three evils”.^{9 10 11 12 13 14}

The main question that has been asked since the founding of the Shanghai Five is, what is its relationship with the West and especially the United States? It is no secret that after the fall of the Soviet Union, many non-NATO states feared that America would become preponderant and dominate international relations for decades to come. This undoubtedly had an impact on the creation of the Shanghai Five as they sought to keep the US out of the region and prevent Western tampering in their regimes. Particularly after the Clinton administration staged numerous interventions abroad. Mutual cooperation on security and commerce through the Shanghai Five would maintain the status quo in the region. While this position did not become explicit until the Dushanbe Summit, it was there all along. Many have compared the creation of the Shanghai Five and the SCO to the formation of NATO, arguing that just as NATO was formed specifically to resist Soviet influence in the West, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was formed to achieve that goal vis-à-vis American and the East. While there might be some parallels between the two organizations, it is extremely important to note that NATO is a defensive alliance while the SCO is a partnership. The North Atlantic Treaty, which established NATO, includes what is commonly referred to as “Article 5”. This article stipulates that an attack on a NATO member would be considered an attack on all of the members and obligates each member to respond, explicitly making NATO a mutual defensive alliance. The SCO Charter, however, contains no corresponding article. If for example, Denmark attacked

Tajikistan, Uzbekistan would be under no formal obligation to respond. The absence of an “Article 5” in the SCO Charter casts doubt on whether the primary function of the organization is defending against the US. It is likely, nevertheless, that in the event of US military intervention in Asia the SCO member-states would respond; they just would be under no formal obligation to do so.

Regardless, the initial establishment of the SCO was certainly not an aggressive, offensive move against American interests. The United States has limited influence and resources in Central Asia. For the first decade of its existence, the Shanghai Five/SCO focused purely on issues within that region. This posed no threat to the US, it only prevented their interests from expanding. In 2005, however, when the Organization began to allow other nations to attend their summits, the sphere of influence of the SCO began to grow where it would inevitably clash with the US. To prevent this, in 2005 American officials requested permission to be an observer-state at SCO summits. The request, however, was denied leading to speculation as to the possibly anti-American intentions of the SCO. This was only exacerbated by the presence of outspoken American critic and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Around this time, the SCO was focused on pushing any trace of US influence out of their region. There was a concerted effort among SCO members to remove American military bases from Central Asia. In July 2005, the Uzbek Government demanded that America abandon the Karshi-Khanabad air base in Karshi, Uzbekistan. In nearby Kyrgyzstan, rent at the Manas air base was raised from an annual figure of 2.7 million USD to between 150 and 200 million USD. Peter Rodman, the former Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, said, “The

SCO is trying to ask us to leave the area in a hurry." Furthermore, much of the SCO pushed the United States to set a timetable for their withdrawal from Afghanistan which lies on the southwestern border of Organization's territory. The only SCO member with mixed feelings over the American presence in Afghanistan was China. China, like any other SCO member, would prefer to keep American forces far away from Central Asia. For years, however, China has been dealing with Muslim separatists called Uighurs who reside in the western Chinese province of Xinjiang. China considers these separatists a major security threat and anti-state terrorists. Prior to the US invasion, there were numerous safe-havens for Uighur militants in Afghanistan. The American military action, however, destroyed these refuges, cutting off resources to the Uighurs. Consequently, China saw a great deal of benefit in the US invasion of Afghanistan and did not come out strongly against it. During this period, it was clear that while the Shanghai Cooperation Organization would resist the expansion of American influence into Central Asia, the SCO would not make any attempts to erode US power anywhere else in the world. Recently, however, it appears that this is no longer the case.¹⁵

One of the most important questions the SCO has wrestled with is whether or not it should expand its membership and influence to other regions. For years, the Organization had allowed states from various regions to observe and participate in their meetings but membership and the privileges that come with it were not extended. In the last few years, this policy has changed. In 2015, India and Pakistan were approved to become new members and both signed their memorandums of ascension in 2016. This was the boldest move by the SCO in recent years and carries with it both advantages and disadvantages for the Organization. From the perspective of India and Pakistan, becoming full members is the obvious choice. Both nations can reap

tremendous economic benefits by joining. Membership would help strengthen ties with China, the world's second largest economy, as well as connect them to the energy-rich nations of Central Asia. Politically, SCO membership would only help increase the prestige and extend the influence of the two nations. For Pakistan, there is also an important security component. Pakistan is home to many extremist organizations and would surely receive significant assistance and resources from RATS which could be instrumental in their fight against terror. The two countries also hope that the SCO would provide a forum for resolving disputes between the two. India and Pakistan have been at each other's throats since British decolonization in the 1940s. The SCO could supply the two nations with a diplomatic arena that could, potentially, make progress in their disputes. For India, SCO membership would help it ensure that the Pakistanis do not use the SCO as a means to gain political leverage on India.^{16 17}

For the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, however, the decision to expand is not nearly as clear-cut. There are certainly numerous benefits to adding India and Pakistan to the Organization. For a start, the expansion would inject new life into the Organization and further expand its influence on international affairs. Furthermore, India is one of the largest economies in the world and would contribute heavily to the commercial activities of the SCO. This is particularly important for Russia. Since the invasion of Crimea in 2014, Russia has been subject to Western sanctions and has needed to look elsewhere for trade opportunities. The addition of India to the SCO would certainly help alleviate some of the economic distress in Russia. Additionally, Pakistan would be a valuable ally in the SCO's fight against the three evils. Many extremists use Pakistan as a safe-haven. Defeating extremism is a major goal of the SCO and giving RATS better access to Pakistan would greatly help in that endeavor. China is especially

concerned about the spread of terror as they already must contend with Uighur extremists. They worry that terrorism in Pakistan will spill over into Central Asia and believe that the best way to counteract that threat is to cooperate directly with Pakistan. The membership expansion would also allow China to grow its dominance and expand its sphere of influence to South Asia.¹⁸

Adding India and Pakistan, however, also brings numerous risks for the SCO. It is likely that they will diminish the influence of China and Russia within the organization. The more members, particularly powerful nations, the more agendas the Organization needs to cater to. With India and Pakistan in the mix, it is possible that Beijing will no longer dominate the SCO. Professor Alexander Cooley of Barnard College believes that expansion would make the SCO “even more of a symbolic organization rather than a vehicle for any kind of substantive regional integration or cooperative problem solving.” It would quickly be rendered inert and tangible solutions would no longer emerge from its meetings. The addition of India also threatens the cohesiveness of the Organization. India is a democratic state that has significant ties to the United States making it very different from the rest of the member-states. There is fear that India will raise the standards of human rights and oversight in RATS activities. The democratic nature of India might also make it less likely to side with the authoritarian governments of the rest of the members when it comes to quelling domestic unrest. Furthermore, it is possible that India and Pakistan will bring their mutual animosity to the SCO. The strength of the Organization is that it is mostly consensus driven and the rivalry between India and Pakistan will deviate from this pattern. Russia also fears that China is seeking to become the dominant entity in the SCO. They worry that Beijing is interested in expanding the SCO to extend their influence and become the other major global power along with the United States.^{19 20}

The other major expansion the SCO is considering is the inclusion of Iran. The Islamic Republic of Iran has long sought to be a part of the activities of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. It gained observer status in 2005 and applied for full membership in 2008. For several years, Iran's application had been denied as the SCO will not accept members who are under international sanctions. Since the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) also known as the "Iran Deal" and the lifting of sanctions, however, China has come out in support of the SCO accepting Iran as a member-state. Iran wants to use the Organization to boost its economy and help it increase its regional influence. Iran has long seen itself as the major power in the Persian Gulf and believes that strong alliances with powers like China and Russia will give it the backing necessary to dominate the Middle East. The Organization sees Iran as a valuable asset. It gives them another partner in security as well as trade. Iran also provides them with a path to the sea. This opens up lucrative trading routes for SCO members. Additionally, the SCO sees Iran as its path towards expanding its own sphere of influence past Eurasia. China and Russia want the Organization to be an international, not just a regional, power.²¹

Iran also fits in to the unstated goal of the SCO: countering US hegemony. Since the end of the Cold War, the world has been in a unipolar state with the United States as its head. America dominates in foreign policy, economics, and culture. Furthermore, the US is constantly seeking to extend its power and influence all across the world. Often, this is accomplished by direct military intervention in foreign countries. The Shanghai Five was founded in large part to counter this. As mentioned earlier, the Dushanbe statement clearly referenced and denounced this policy of US intervention. For the first decade of its existence, the SCO was determined to just keeping the United States out of Eurasia. It wasn't until 2005 that the SCO considered

pushing back against America. It was then that they decided to accept observers from other regions and become a bigger player on the international stage. Instead of being a purely defensive organization that was dedicated to keeping US influence out of Central Asia, the SCO began to make aggressive moves. This is best exemplified in their recent expansion. In the past few years, India has become a much more important ally of the United States. There have been deepening diplomatic and economic ties between the two nations. The decision of the SCO to accept India as a member was a direct challenge to the United States. This holds true with Iran as well. Iran has been a thorn in the side of the United States for forty years. From sponsorship of terror groups to nuclear proliferation, Iran has opposed the United States and its allies at every turn. Iran views America as a foreign entity that exerts too much influence in the Near East. Iran, however, has never had the means to effectively counter American power or hegemonic aspirations. Without a booming economy, a dominant military, or strong alliances there was little Iran could do. Recently, Iran has greatly feared US intervention. By attempting to gain nuclear weapons, Iran has been testing the United States and fears the consequences of their actions. With membership in the SCO, however, Iran could join Russia and China in their goal of balancing the power of United States. The combined strength of the SCO members would go a long way towards countering the US. Altogether, the SCO along with observer-states accounts for half of the world's population and several of the top economies. It also includes four nuclear states and one on the path towards nuclear weapons. Furthermore, the addition of Iran would bring SCO influence to a new region of the world. Currently, the Organization is active only in Central and Southern Asia. The consideration of Iran for membership, however, indicates that the SCO is willing to move towards the Middle East. In 2015, Egypt submitted an application to the SCO to be considered for Observer status. Turkey currently serves as a Dialogue Partner with

the SCO. These three states could form the basis for the expansion of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization into the Middle East, a region where the US has had tremendous influence for decades. Expansion, at first glance, appears to be a tactical move on the part of the SCO to counter American power.^{22 23}

This path, however, does not come without risk. As mentioned earlier, bringing in new members carries the risk of reducing the nimbleness and effectiveness of the Organization. Furthermore, it risks importing hostilities between nations, like India and Pakistan. India, as an American ally, also carries the danger of trying to infuse Western/democratic values into the Organization. Additionally, it is possible that India will serve as an American agent/informant within the SCO. The United States had applied for observer status but was quickly rejected in 2005. India might serve as America's end-around this rejection. Iran's possible admission also carries risks. Bringing aboard a Shia Islamic state like Iran could further alienate Sunni states like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates, further pushing them towards the United States. By attempting to gain allies against the US it is possible that the SCO will only hand the United States more allies of their own. Furthermore, Iran is a state-sponsor of much of the Islamic terror that the SCO is extremely concerned with. Introducing Iran as a member could invite conflict within the Organization. Finally, because Iran is viewed by the international community as a pariah, a rogue-state, due to its nuclear aspirations and funding for terrorism, its presence could potentially delegitimize the SCO in the eyes of the world.

There are some who believe that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization exists as a military counter-balance to the United States, that the military exercises are preparation for a potential

conflict with the United States. This, however, is a misunderstanding of the true purpose of the SCO. The SCO at its core is a partnership, not a defensive alliance, meaning that the member-states coordinate to work towards common goals. They are not, however, pledged to defend each other in times of crisis. As discussed earlier, the SCO does not contain the equivalent of NATO's Article 5. If the United States staged an intervention in one of the member-states, it is unlikely that the other members would respond with military force, though they would likely respond with other means. Additionally, the SCO operates almost entirely with soft power balancing. Soft power is a term coined by Joseph Nye of Harvard University to describe the ability to influence others through non-coercive means. Also known as the power of persuasion, in foreign policy soft power means using culture, values and economics to advance one's goals. As opposed to hard power, military strength is not used in soft power. This is the method through which the SCO hopes to counter US influence. By working together, SCO members seek to strengthen their economies and international appeal. Through projecting strength, they hope that other countries will be persuaded to join in their endeavors without any coercion. They are trying to counter the United States who are major users of soft power. From foreign aid to cultural exportation, America deals significantly in soft power politics. States like China and Russia who want to challenge the US for primacy traditionally had both soft and hard power options. Today, however, the latter strategies are ineffective. Nuclear weapons have removed the option of a great power military victory over the United States. Any attack on America would prove far too costly. Additionally, while China and Russia are strong nations, their military power is far beneath that of the United States. Furthermore, economic interdependence between America and the East prevent hard power balancing. Therefore, China has recently become very interested in the use of soft power. In 2005, China founded its first Confucius Institute in Africa to begin

spreading its culture to that continent. Today, there are 19 such institutes across Africa with plans to build more. Other SCO members have not been as successful with soft power but the point of the Organization is to strengthen each nation's standing to better fuel soft power balancing of the United States. Even the military activities of the SCO are intended for soft power. Joint exercises are a show of strength meant to impress and recruit other nations. They are not preparation for war against the United States. This practice, however, does pose a threat to US interests abroad. As the SCO expands into new regions, their money and culture follow. This limits America's ability to spread its own influence to areas like Central/South Asia and the Persian Gulf. As a soft power Organization, however, it is unlikely that the SCO would engage in military conflict with the US^{24 25 26 27}

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization does appear, however, to be a major military force. This justifiably makes some in the West nervous; the SCO could always switch to hard power strategies and confront the US/NATO directly. Notwithstanding that, it is very unlikely that they would be able to stage a joint military response to US action. This is because SCO action is constrained by the internal struggle between Russia and China. The Shanghai Five was founded to achieve the mutual goals of China and Russia but each nation still had its own aims. Russia wanted and still wants to regain the status the Soviet Union had as one of the world's superpowers. China has been steadily rising since the end of World War II and has its eyes set on the top spot in the international order. While there is much overlap between these goals, the end results are in conflict. Neither state wants to be a great power bordering on a similar power. Consequently, each nation uses the SCO to further its own aims and block the activities of the other. For example, Russia successfully opposed using the Organization for free trade which they

knew would help China's economy more than their own. China, however, has had its own victories against Russia, particularly in connection with the decision about whether to include India and Pakistan in the SCO. Russia wanted India to join the SCO but also wanted to keep Pakistan out. Russia is wary of Pakistan's terrorist connections and particularly their support for the Taliban in Afghanistan. China, who has long had connections to Pakistan, refused to allow India to become a member without Pakistan joining as well. In this instance, China prevailed in this battle of wills with Russia, seizing the opportunity to flex its muscles within the SCO and assert its position as the head of the Organization. This tension between the two major powers of the SCO prevents it from becoming a major threat to the United States. Neither nation would be willing to make moves that might propel the other to great power status. China, in particular, fears the remilitarization of Russia. After the end of the Cold War, the Soviet Union was forced to demilitarize. Since then, Russia has been rebuilding its military infrastructure. China, however, has been reluctant to provide Russia with the advanced tools to make their military a dominant force. All in all, the conflict between Russia and China decreases the SCO's effectiveness as a military tool and decreases the likelihood that it would enter into armed conflict with the United States.^{28 29 30 31}

The biggest impediment to conflict between the SCO and the West, however, is the inclusion of India in the Organization. India has recently become a strategic ally of the United States, deepening military and economic cooperation between the two. In the last three years, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has visited the United States three times and President Obama visited India in 2010 and again in 2015. India and the US are the world's two largest democracies and see much in common between themselves. It is extremely unlikely that India

would jeopardize this favorable relationship. The other members of the SCO are aware of this issue and yet still invited India to be a member. This is potent evidence that the SCO will deal exclusively in soft power issues, like economic development and energy cooperation, and provides a window into the plans of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and its objectives.³²

Currently, each SCO member uses the Organization for different reasons. This is evident from the most recent summit in Tashkent. The media from each nation has been covering the conference from very different perspectives. Newspapers in India are focusing on Prime Minister Modi pushing Chinese President Xi Jinping to support India's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group(NSG). The NSG is not affiliated with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and was not an official topic of discussion at the Tashkent Summit. Clearly, India is utilizing its position in the SCO to further its goals across the globe. Additionally, media in Russia and China focused heavily on the summit but each made it seem that their country would be running the conference. Also in attendance at the summit is the President of Turkmenistan: Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov. It is unclear what his role was at the conference as Turkmenistan is not a member or observer of the SCO. The Tashkent conference was clearly a vastly different experience for the various nations in attendance. This reflects on the Organization as a whole. It appears that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is in a bit of an identity crisis; unclear of what the future holds.³³

Conclusions:

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization serves numerous functions for the states of Eurasia. It provides a structural forum for economic, cultural and security cooperation between its members. The SCO gives sources of energy to China, international partners to Russia, and powerful friends to smaller nations like Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Its Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure enables security cooperation and intelligence sharing between the members. The Organization was undoubtedly also founded with the purpose of countering US hegemony and preempting American interventions in Central Asia. Recently, the SCO has tried to extend its network into South Asia and the Persian Gulf. While US interests are threatened, the SCO is by no means an offensive organization. It deals in soft power techniques and poses no military danger to the United States.

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