

Igor KHALANSKII

Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University  
igor\_halanskii@mail.ru

# The Future Prospects of the SCO in Central Asia in the Context of Strategic Cooperation Between Russia and China

## ABSTRACT

The article focuses at the analysis of the role, importance and future prospects of the SCO in Central Asian region in the context of strategic cooperation between Russia and China. There are three views presented within regional academic discourse on Russian-Chinese relations as “China-ally”, “China-enemy”, “China-partner-companion.” The first “China-ally” approach is based on a shared vision of the US as an enemy that lays the foundation for future cooperation between Russia and China. The second “China-enemy” approach assumes that China is already causes a threat to Russia’s national interests. The third “China-partner-companion” approach focuses on the need for Moscow to combine flexibility and agility in the relationships with Beijing to explore opportunities to enhance Russia’s ability to cope with the Chinese challenge in the future, if any, will pose a threat. The article explores some aspects of accelerated growth of the Chinese armed forces, migration issues and economic expansion of China and its implications for cooperation between SCO member-states.

**Key words:** *Central Asia, the SCO, Russia, China, strategic interaction, future prospects*

Today the academic discourse on Chinese influence in Eurasia is seen from different angles. The most three popular approaches can be outlined – “China-ally”, “China-enemy” and “China-partner-companion.”

“China-ally” approach or *optimistic approach* is justified by the common vision of Moscow and Beijing of the US as an enemy which provides need for further cooperation. The publications of such well-known sinologists as E.P. Bazhanov, S.L. Tikhvin, M.L. Titarenko, L.P. Delyusin can be as an example. We may assume that the establishment of an overall development strategy of Russia and China in world politics able to counter-balance a long US influence in the Asia-Pacific, supported by Japan’s economic potential. Moreover, the growing partnership with China psychologically compensates the weakness of Russia’s geopolitical positions in Asia.

“China-enemy” approach or *alarmist approach* considers that the Chinese challenge has already come a reality, not a prospect, reinforcing the fact that Beijing still has a great influence on the demographic and trade situation in Russia – in the Far East and Siberia. Many Russian experts fear “creeping *kitaizatsii*” in the border regions – Far East of Russia where already about 2 million Chinese illegally live and work (Popov, 2004, 506). Representatives of this approach call for search of more active methods to contain China’s pressure, or at least find ways on how to transfer direct threats into non-risky areas for Russia. The Chinese military power may cause strategic risks for Russia in the short term, clearly warn well-known Russian experts on military-political issues A.G. Arbatov (Arbatov, 1997, 5-21) and A.A. Hramchihin.

In the current situation A.G. Dugin offers even to begin to implement countermeasures as to support separatism in Xinjiang, with a view to joining this territory to the Eurasian continental federation as to weaken China’s power (Dugin, 1997, 362). Without Xinjiang and Tibet potential geopolitical breakthrough of China in Central Asia becomes impossible. However, in our opinion, this policy option is narrow and one-sided as well as does not meet the realities of contemporary international relations. Moreover, it jeopardizes the rest of Central Asia Slavic population. Russia’s policy should be more flexible and adaptable to many set of relationships, rather than focusing on one of them.

The third “China-partner-companion” approach focuses on the need for Moscow to combine flexibility and agility in the relationships with Beijing to explore opportunities to enhance Russia’s ability to cope with the Chinese challenge in the future, if any, will pose a threat. V.S. Myasnikov, A.D. Resurrection, S.M. Trush are represent this approach. Nevertheless, in our opinion, it is necessary to take into account the fact that the realities of modern international relations is more about bringing together the objective existence of things and repel each other in the relationship between Russia and China, therefore, in our opinion, the most practical and prospective is the third approach.

We can say to certain extent that China and Russia have already divided broadly a vector of influence in Central Asia, which confirms the number of visits of top officials of Central Asian states Moscow and Beijing. The number of intergovernmental agreements show almost the same political influence of Russia and China in the region. Only in security dimension the Russian Federation has a clear advantage over China in a number of reasons.

“Strengthening ties with Russia in the field of military and secret services is intended to demonstrate the growing commitment of countries to geopolitical bloc led by Moscow at the level of the SCO, CSTO and EurAsEC. Consolidation under the auspices of Moscow in the field of safety is carried out in two directions: special services and armed forces. In the first case are mainly used: RATS SCO Forum of Secretaries of Security Councils of the SCO, ATC, the Council of Heads of Security Agencies and Special Services of the CIS. The basic mechanism of consolidation in the military field is the CSTO. According to the plan of the Kremlin, in the future, the organization aims to take on the role of the Eurasian analogue of NATO “(Pankratenko, 106).

Strengthening of the above organizations contribute very vigorously debated and spread by Moscow rumors about real and imaginary fear of international terrorism and the “Color revolutions”. As confirmation of these positions can be fairly large number of cases of real cooperation of liberal pro-Western opposition and radical Islamic movements, under auspices of both the United States and other Western countries. The logic can be the following – in order to save the ruling regimes of the former Soviet republics from Western intervention can be only the Russian protection.

Russia's privileged position can be supported by the knowledge of the Russian language in Central Asia army and security services as academic and practical experiences gained in the Soviet army and KGB many senior officers of the armed forces and security services; equipment of the army and the intelligence services and arms of the Soviet technical means of production.

However, according to our assumptions, the leading position of Russia is only temporary, and is based primarily on the Soviet heritage. In the proof of this statement that is necessary to pay attention to the following aspects that influence the development of a situation.

Linguistic aspect makes a great contribution to the preservation of the prevailing position of Russia in that Central Asian political elites, received education in the years of the Soviet Union, draws information from the Russian media, and thus unwittingly exposed to propaganda Moscow's influence. In addition much of it in the past belonged to the Soviet party nomenclature.

Demographic aspect obviously does not speak in favor of Russia, leading statistical forecasts to reduce the population by 2025. 17%. But the Chinese demographic potential, despite all the efforts of the authorities to continue to grow until at least 2040g. This aspect will eventually play an increasingly important role in the Central Asian politics of both nations, and in the balance of forces between them. Already, by a decline in the Slavic population of the region, without much publicity increases the Chinese diasporach, aided by shared borders and the rapid development of trade relations. Moreover, many Russian experts in the spirit of alarmist approach, talk about the problem of Chinese migrant workers in the Far East (Larin, 2008, 81-96).

Aspect borders gives a more positive outlook for China, which borders with three of the five Central Asian countries, against the background of Russia, which has a common border with just one country. Uzbekistan without any borders with Russia or China, is geographically located much closer to the latter. Especially in the near future they can bind planed Chinese-Kyrgyz-Uzbek railway, which at the Russian-Uzbek direction while obviously not expected. Thus, four of the five states geographically gravitate toward China.

Ethnic dimension indicates the difference between Russia and China: an overall reduction of the population in one country, and its growth in the other. In parallel, in China, in the context of ever-increasing percentage of the Han majority ethnic minorities almost completely assimilated, and, except for a small area in the north-west of the country, they never make up the majority of the population. Alarmists claim that in Russia, on the contrary, the number of Russian gradually reduced, amid the high birth rate among the Muslim, in particular, the Caucasian peoples. Russian-speaking population receives from the media well-established view that Chinese settlers arrive in Russia for permanent residence. Even Vladimir Putin stated that: "If in the near future we do not take practical steps for the development of the Far East, for several decades, the Russian population will speak in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean" (Alexeev, 2006, 98). Some Russian analysts already in the 90s. expressed concern not only territorial but also economic and demographic expansion of China (Baluev, 1998, 98-99).

Contrary to the sense of alarm, the total number of Chinese in the Russian specialists from Moscow, and the Far East is estimated at between 200-500 thousand. Man. The average annual increase in the number of Chinese migration for the period 1998-2002., In accordance with the data of the State Statistics Committee, amounted to 12.6 thousand. People (Gelbras, 2004, 34). In the Far East is home, according to the director of the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography of the Peoples of the Far Eastern Studies VL Larina, 25-30 thousand. Chinese. In Primorye, where the proportion of Chinese people in the total population is particularly large, it is estimated that 0.3-1.1% of the country's population (Larin, 2004, 109).

Resource aspect is related to the economic possibilities of the two countries. If the Chinese economic potential is based on the rate of production, the Russian economy has traditionally been based on the export of energy resources. While Russia's socio-economic stabilization is ensured by high prices on the world oil market, the future will depend on the effectiveness of the policy of the Russian state. The global financial crisis has brought Russia qualitatively new understanding of the fact that in today's market conditions, the emphasis needs to be done not on price competition and competition on quality. The Russian economy is experiencing a shortage of technological development, the inefficiency of the raw material orientation of exports, as well as dependence on external markets.

From an economic point of view, it is necessary to emphasize the crucial China's ability to rapidly copy all global innovation and respond to changes in global economic conditions. The Chinese economy — the most competitive economies of the countries of the SCO. It is the competitiveness of Chinese goods in world markets allows purposefully and confidently increase profits of Chinese manufacturers. And by the SCO, China is trying to implement the task of developing markets for its products. This situation can be viewed in a positive way, saying that China and Russia in this process can be mutually give a strong impetus for the development of each other as well as neighboring countries. Of course, we should not go on the full market opening the SCO member states for Chinese goods, on the contrary, it is necessary to use the immense Chinese market for energy production, use the powerful potential of technological adaptability of Chinese manufacturers. For example, the "export production technologies, which in Russia and its enough, would be more relevant. As for imports, the priority list can include technology management system of Chinese "(Mihranian).

All of the above is relevant to all countries of Central Asia especially in light of the rise of China as compared with the positions of Russia. If predictions about the rapid growth of both military and economic power of China are correct, then it can lead to a drastic change of geopolitical forces in the region.

The growth of economic ties speak volumes of Sino-Central Asian trade, which in the period of 2000-2007. increased an average of 15 times as compared with the volume of trading in the 90s. For example, for the period 1992-2007 gg. China's share in foreign trade turnover of Kyrgyzstan has increased from 2 to 27%. In turn, Kyrgyzstan has not played and does not play any significant role in China's foreign trade. Its total share in the period 1992-2007 gg. although increased, but never exceeded 0.05% of China's foreign trade turnover (Paramonov & Strokov). In general, the supply of Kyrgyzstan include textile raw materials, ferrous and nonferrous metals. The range of supplies from China include machinery and equipment, foodstuffs and other consumer goods. At the same time steadily fixed on China as a supplier of finished products, and for Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian countries the status of suppliers of raw materials and natural resources.

In this case, the rate of economic growth in China are directly linked with the problem of employment "surplus labor force", which, respectively, will have an impact on the socio-political stability in the country. Already today, according to official figures, the number of unemployed in the cities is about 9 million pers. They need to add people who lost their jobs as a result of the reorganization of state-owned enterprises — 9.8 million pers., As well as migrating from the countryside to the cities in search of work "peasant workers", whose numbers in 2005 reached 120 million pers. (Mo Rong, Liu Jun, & Cheng Lan, 2006, 112).

It is logical that employ this mass at city facilities is very difficult, almost impossible. Especially considering that, according to forecasts, by 2015 the working age will come about 190 million pers., including about 90 million. In cities within China proper, this problem has no solution.

This implies the problem of "Chinese labor migration", with all the attendant problems of her that is sure to rise in the agenda.

Here there is potential safety problems associated with the demographic pressure from China's new Central Asian states and the prospect of the emergence of another territorial dispute. In the case of the failure of its population policy, China will be cornered and political mentality could potentially be influenced by memories of the "lost lands".

Referring to China's military power may be noted that in the past three decades, China's military doctrine has evolved from the concept of "people's war" Mao Zedong based on the postulates of the inevitability of China unleashed against global nuclear war and hostility to the external environment, to the modern concept of "active defense" other than the development of international military-technical cooperation and aimed to win the armed conflict of the modern type.

In this connection, the White Paper "China's National Defense 2008" highlights the country's role as a major actor in international relations (Kaukenov). According to some reports the number of personnel of Land Forces has 12 million. People (Chufrin, 2007, 47). One of the most advanced programs of China is laser-based ASAT on the ground, which can destroy satellites orbiting in Earth orbits (Kuzyk B.I., Titarenko, 2006, 515). And for a number of calculations defense spending in 2020 will be about \$ 70 billion. Dollars. United States, and by 2050 they could reach 245 billion (Plotnikov, 2006, 102).

It is clear that the role of passive observer China is no longer intended to follow. In general, in the analyzed military documents clearly blurt out that China is not the first to use force against any foreign state. This is due, in our opinion, the fact that China is not yet confident in their own military capacity and can not seriously compete neither militarily with the United States nor with Russia, nor with their direct or potential allies. Also, to complete the country's economic and social transformation China is still very interested in maintaining internal stability, especially which can challenge national security, China does not see beyond its borders.

In accordance with the doctrine, illuminated in the White Paper, People's Liberation Army is characterized by high personnel potential to solve strategic and technical challenges, from nuclear to information, in military conflicts, equipped so that in the medium term to take place in the most powerful military structure APR. Tellingly, the new concept of warfare is based on qualitatively different weapons and the latest information technology. This once again confirms the thesis of serious preparation of the Chinese army to participate in local conflicts, which is important as soon as possible to seize the initiative and gain a strategic advantage (Ding, 2000, 22).

Agree with the opinion of the Kazakh scholar Syroezhkin K.L. that "the main question — in order to achieve any goals China is modernizing its armed forces, and in what areas the" main effort "they can be used — is still open" (Syroezhkin, 2008, 248). The Central Asian region as a strategic partner of China, and, accordingly, the state of the zone of Chinese strategic interests, can not help but feel a legitimate interest in the construction of new trends in defense of his neighbor.

The Chinese leadership has repeatedly stressed that it is in favor of maintaining with the Central Asian countries of friendly relations and does not seek to fill the vacuum created by the collapse of the Soviet Union. As long as the strategic interests of Russia and China are the same, curbing US hegemony in the world, it is beneficial to both parties. In addition, China attaches great importance to developing good-neighborly and mutually beneficial relations with Russia. Increased attention to China's Central Asian region could damage the growing Russian-Chinese cooperation.

It should be noted that in such a sensitive and specific field of safety and military cooperation, China will always be a sort of "shadow" of Russia, which is more beneficial to the CA, the country which, in its multi-vector policy favored the development of relations with Russia, as currently, regional security is largely supported through a strategic alliance with the Russian Federation. Russia's role as a reliable outpost security in Central Asia underlines the successful functioning of the Russian military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, military facilities in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

The value of cooperation between Russia and China in Central Asia can not be overestimated. In the medium term with a certain degree of confidence that the true form and content of the format of the strategic partnership between Russia and China will determine how the economic situation and the state of regional security in general.

Currently, Beijing on the one hand actively using the SCO in its own interests and trying to change the geopolitical balance and the traditional system of internal and external relations of the Central Asian republics. Under the auspices of the SCO realized several large projects that can dramatically change the lives of the region, in other words — to change the balance of power on the Eurasian continent in favor of China.

On the other hand, the cooperation between China and Russia in the framework of the SCO is one of the most important factors ensuring the strengthening and development of the organization. Recall, Russia and China have a different perception of the SCO that if the Chinese leadership sees the SCO as an important project of economic integration, Russia sees the main purpose of the organization to ensure the security of the region. In these circumstances, the risk is likely increased competition for influence between the two powers. And for Russia, and China is very important to restrain competition and develop mutually beneficial cooperation. So, for example, according to some experts, China prefers not to act in splendid isolation, but as part of the "six", thereby curbing its long-standing claim to the ambitious presentation of traditional accounts in the region.

SCO, possessing the highest level of competitiveness, should ensure that all member countries develop competitive potential through the strengthening and expansion of economic cooperation within the organization. Note that the total competitive potential of the SCO is formed by a set of indicators of macroeconomic parameters, which determine the degree of influence of interstate union on the international market in the resolution of political, economic and social issues and satisfy the national interests of each country of the Union, which provides a high level of competitive opportunities, all agents of regional and national markets.

Based on the foregoing, it can be concluded that as soon as possible the need for a new concept of operation of the SCO must be taken into consideration in the context of global changes. The transformation of SCO must be towards one of the centers of the multipolar world, authoritative international organization, positioning itself as a structure that has the appropriate political and military capacity for self-determination of regional problems. In this aspect, the SCO must be developed jointly with the Member States theoretically sound and executed long-term strategy of development of Russian-Chinese partnership in Central Asia. Otherwise, the policy of Russia in the framework of the SCO is destined to become inefficient in the region unable to exert any influence on the development of world integration processes. We can agree that the SCO — this is not the integration association and while it is clear that it is experiencing a fairly long period of searching for their own identity.

Levels of participating countries in its broadest sense which encompass the scale of resources and the economy as well as the interests of political elites, leads to a major problem of organization. The lack of a clear conceptual framework and the preservation of differences among member countries in the understanding of key geo-economic, geopolitical and even functional must be the primary goals of the SCO.

Fair is the statement that the SCO contributes to the solution of certain, albeit limited tasks related to security and economic cooperation of the participating countries. In its present form the SCO has created conditions for the coordination of action to prevent and mitigate the risks associated with potential terrorist threat and separatism in large parts of Eurasia. In turn, these conditions along with an increase in the overall level of confidence can stimulate the growth of economic cooperation as the SCO member states and observer countries. There is no doubt that the existing and potential can make the SCO a very significant factor in world politics and economics. To convert opportunities into reality and achievements, the SCO countries must overcome the remaining distrust and misunderstanding, abandon inherent in both China and Russia and the Central Asian members of the organization of excessive selfishness and ambition.

SCO has the potential to contribute to the implementation of the equal participation of large and small states in regional and international affairs, as well as demonstrates the ability to contribute to the solution of bilateral issues in a multilateral format. The SCO example demonstrates the smooth transfer relationship from one qualitative level to a higher level of multilateral cooperation. At the September 2013 SCO summit, Foreign Minister Salman Khurshid India commented "We see the SCO as a regional forum that can address issues relating to Afghanistan. We also see the SCO as a forum for the development of our anti-terrorism position in the regional context" (Pankratenko).

The SCO example is of great importance for India, Pakistan and Afghanistan as the experience of the interstate, constructive cooperation in the region of common security issues, the resolution of which has more unites than divides. The experience of SCO is useful in finding a model of creation of the East Asian regional security system in the Asia-Pacific region. Activities of the "six" could be useful for the countries of the Asia-Pacific, and the Middle East (Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan) and South Asia (India, the country's Indian range) as the experience of creating real mechanisms of regional security and the settlement of disputed border issues. At the same time the SCO — it is an experience of relations between large (Russia and China) and small countries (Central Asian countries) without prejudice to the interests of the latter.

Currently in Central Asia under the influence of the SCO there is a general transformation of mechanisms for international cooperation, security situation which determine the foundation for a new economy. Formed within the SCO framework a new multilateral mechanism of interaction at the regional level in the economy and in the field of security has an impact on the development of relations between the participating countries themselves, with extra-regional players and other international organizations. These relations are based on collective priorities.

Thus, the SCO provides a mechanism for multilateral consultations and agreements, therefore, it appears that for the Central Asian countries most preferred regional level relationships. The capacity of each day is gaining momentum, in turn, this also increases the possibility of the CA within its framework. It can be concluded that the SCO at the moment — very promising intergovernmental organization that promotes multilateral economic integration and plays a significant role in maintaining regional stability and security.

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