

LUDOVIKA UNIVERSITY OF PUBLIC SERVICE

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THESIS

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**Security Cooperation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization
with special focus on Kazakhstan**

Ph.D. dissertation

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BACKGROUND AND RELEVANCE OF THE TOPIC

Though historically established, the concept of international security is complex and continues to evolve. It's shaped by changing understandings of war, peace, law, and force, which influence its military-political and legal frameworks and the integration of national and international security efforts. Central to preserving and restoring peace, international security prevents conflicts and wars.

Academics in international relations still lack a comprehensive and agreed-upon definition of international security. This definition includes diverse forms like global, regional, and national security, each with distinct legal bases and historical roots.

Global security concerns itself with worldwide threats and covers issues such as disarmament, environmental protection, humanitarian aid, anti-terrorism efforts, drug trafficking control, human rights, and cultural preservation. Originating in the late 1960s, global issues require collective action due to their massive scale, danger, complexity, and interconnected nature.

Regional security, while based on similar principles to international security, differs by region in its manifestation, power dynamics, and traditions. It is a key focus of international organizations, which tailor their security measures to the specific needs and characteristics of different regions. Post-Cold War, terms like "post-Soviet" and "Eurasian" have emerged to describe regions shaped by specific historical legacies and evolving geopolitical identities, highlighting the need for collaboration between European and Asia-Pacific countries.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) plays a pivotal role in managing regional and global conflicts, particularly in Eurasia. Kazakhstan, recognizing its strategic importance, actively engages within the SCO to address security issues. This includes combating terrorism, extremism, cross-border crime, and drug trafficking through collaborative efforts like information sharing, joint military exercises, and coordinated law enforcement actions. Additionally, Kazakhstan focuses on securing major transport and energy routes, such as the Siberian-Turkic route and the Siberian-Chinese-Kazakh hydroelectric cascade, to prevent disasters and ensure regional stability. Kazakhstan's continued cooperation in the SCO is aimed at strengthening border security, developing strategies against transnational threats, and enhancing conflict prevention mechanisms.

SCIENTIFIC PROBLEM

The 21st century has witnessed significant shifts in international relations and the emergence of new challenges such as wars, military conflicts, international terrorism, drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and human trafficking. Particularly in Central Asia, the rise in terrorist activities has highlighted the critical nature of security issues.

Throughout my four years of academic pursuit, I encountered several obstacles:

Restricted Access to Information: My research was often hampered by limited access to sensitive security data, especially within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which made it challenging to fully understand the security measures and initiatives of the involved countries.

Limited Academic Resources: There is a scarcity of scholarly work focused on security cooperation within the SCO. Even with research conducted in multiple languages including English, Russian, Chinese, Kazakh, and Hungarian, it was difficult to gather comprehensive data and conduct thorough analyses.

Geopolitical Complexities: Positioned at a geopolitical crossroads, Kazakhstan presents a complex environment for security research. My studies had to navigate intricate geopolitical relationships and conflict dynamics within the region.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity: The SCO encompasses a region rich in cultural, linguistic, and historical diversity, which posed challenges in understanding and theorizing the different perspectives and contexts of the member countries.

Assessing Effectiveness: Evaluating the effectiveness of security cooperation within the SCO proved challenging due to the ambiguous nature of the results and achievements. This required a multidimensional approach and analysis of various factors.

Despite these hurdles, researching security cooperation within the SCO, with a focus on Kazakhstan, remains a critical and valuable field. It offers new insights into international security and regional cooperation amid the evolving geopolitical landscape of the region.

Research Objectives

The main objectives of the research conducted in the context of this dissertation can be summarized as follows:

- O1:** Examine how effectively the SCO responds to security threats and manages crisis situations through its existing structures and mechanisms, such as the Shanghai Summits.
- O2:** Evaluate the influence of the SCO's economic policies, including the Belt and Road Initiative and the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, on the economic security and cooperation between member states.
- O3:** Assess the ongoing efforts of the SCO in combating terrorism, extremism, and separatism, with a special emphasis on the use of political and diplomatic regulations.
- O4:** Investigate the impact of Kazakhstan's presidency on the SCO, particularly its contributions to cultural, educational, and scientific exchanges.

This thesis aims to contribute beyond the above objectives:

- Explore the role and influence of SCO observer states and dialogue partners in enhancing the organization's security cooperation and expanding its geopolitical reach.

Research Questions

Based on the research objectives, I formulated the following research questions:

- Q1:** How is the SCO actively implementing its political decisions and strategizing to fulfill its core missions and tasks, thereby becoming a truly influential regional organisation shaping security and development in Eurasia?
- Q2:** Is it possible to cope with various security challenges and risks without a major security-improved cooperation covering the entire region? How has the experience of implementing the Belt and Road initiative plan and combating the coronavirus pandemic impacted the SCO countries in the field of economic security?
- Q3:** What policies and measures are used by the SCO countries to prevent and combat “the three evils: terrorism, separatism, extremism”? What threats do the Central Asian countries, including Kazakhstan, face? Can the SCO policies in this area be applied in case of new member states?

Q4: What did Kazakhstan expect from SCO membership? What the country has achieved over the decades? What are the priorities of cooperation for the future?

Hypothesis

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) primarily focuses on enhancing security across various sectors including political, economic, social, military, and environmental. Recent years have seen significant improvements in political, security, and financial cooperation within the SCO, particularly through the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for addressing criminal, terrorist, and military-political issues, and managing the political and socio-economic fallout in the member states. Although there are frequent debates about the SCO's military role and some discord among members over military and security cooperation, there are clear indicators that the organization is committed to ensuring extensive regional security. Economically, initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative, initiated by China 11 years ago, have reshaped geopolitical and financial strategies for Kazakhstan and other Central Asian nations. From this research, I propose the following hypotheses:

H1. Organizational Characteristics and Response:

I assert that the SCO encapsulates all the typical characteristics of a political and security cooperative organization. The Shanghai Summits have demonstrated the ability of SCO member states to respond promptly to security threats by engaging in direct consultations and making timely decisions to maintain regional stability and security. Even with the expansion of the organization, the SCO has effectively established mechanisms for conflict resolution. The member states have unanimously agreed that anti-terrorism efforts should adhere to international law norms and should not be construed as targeting any specific religion, country, or nationality. In addressing international terrorism, the SCO is focused on dismantling the infrastructure that supports terrorism, including combating illegal trafficking of weapons, drugs, and controlling organized crime and illegal migration. There is also a focus on preventing terrorists from accessing weapons of mass destruction.

H2. Economic Policy and Health Crises Impact:

I hypothesize that the SCO's economic policy, alongside external factors like the Belt and Road Initiative and the COVID-19 pandemic, has profoundly influenced economic security

cooperation among member countries. This includes bolstered cooperation in infrastructure, trade, and investment by overcoming trade barriers and enhancing investment activities. During the pandemic, SCO countries actively shared information and experiences related to combating COVID-19, aiding in the quick recovery of public health and economic stability.

H3. Continued Emphasis on Regional Security:

I suggest that the SCO will maintain its focus on combating terrorism, separatism, and extremism. Regular information exchanges, joint operations, and both bilateral and multilateral training and practical activities will be crucial. There will be efforts to enhance the operational mechanisms for responding to emerging security challenges, using the framework of Political and Diplomatic Regulations to ensure peace, security, and stability in the region. The member states are committed to supporting international anti-terrorism efforts under the United Nations' Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

H4. Kazakhstan's Role in the SCO:

I predict that with Kazakhstan holding the SCO Presidency in 2023-2024, it will seek to expand its political influence within the region and internationally by leading dialogs and coordinating actions among member countries. The presidency is expected to focus on promoting cultural, educational, and scientific cooperation, leveraging Kazakhstan's extensive experience to enrich the SCO's collaborative endeavors.

This research aims to enhance understanding and effectiveness of the SCO's multifaceted security cooperation, aligning with Kazakhstan's strategic interests and the broader goals of the organization.

METHODOLOGY

In my study on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), I employed qualitative methodologies to explore the social, cultural, political, and geopolitical dynamics of cooperation among the member states. This involved several distinct qualitative research techniques:

1. **Political Process Analysis:** I examined the political frameworks, systems, and activities within the SCO member countries to gauge their influence on the organization's decision-making processes.

2. **International Relations Research:** I investigated the foreign policy strategies, diplomatic engagements, and global positioning of the SCO members, analyzing how these factors shape their interactions on the international stage.
3. **Geopolitical Analysis:** I explored geopolitical issues like border disputes, territorial conflicts, and resource conflicts, assessing their effects on the region's stability and the SCO's operational environment.
4. **Security Analysis:** I assessed military strategies and security threats, including terrorism and other risks, to understand their impact on the safety of the SCO members and the broader region.
5. **Ethnographic and Sociological Studies:** I conducted interviews both in-person and online with academics from Hungary, Kazakhstan, and China, and at the Budapest Representative Office of the Organization of Turkic States. Additionally, I analyzed documents and conducted observational studies to delve into the cultural and social facets of the SCO member states.

These methods provided a comprehensive view of the intricate relationships and challenges within the SCO, enabling a deeper understanding of its multi-dimensional cooperation framework.

CONCLUSION

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a significant Eurasian regional entity initially centred around Central Asia, currently considering a gradual expansion to the south and west. Founded in 2001, its members include Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, India, Russia, Tajikistan, Pakistan, Iran, and Uzbekistan, with Afghanistan, Belarus, and Mongolia as observer states. Dialogue partners include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cambodia, Egypt, Kuwait, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and the UAE. Recently, Belarus has applied to become a full member.

The SCO covers over 34.3 million km², representing 60% of Eurasia's territory and houses more than 3.275 billion people, or 42.5% of the global population as of 2022. It serves as a critical platform for international cooperation in Eurasia, with China and Russia playing dominant roles. The organization is not merely a "Club of Interests" like BRICS; it has established regulations and conducts military manoeuvres, showcasing its commitment to enhanced economic and security cooperation.

The SCO's membership includes countries with differing foreign policies, providing a platform for additional negotiation channels. The complex relationship between Pakistan, India, and China, and now including Iran, highlights the strategic significance of the Persian Gulf and the Near East. Iran's involvement is particularly notable for its military engagements with Russia and China, enhancing the SCO's security framework.

The potential expansion of the SCO might include Belarus and possibly countries from the South Caucasus, though Armenia's current alignment with EU and NATO presents uncertainties. Azerbaijan's participation would be strategic for transportation and logistics, notably the North-South corridor involving Russia and Iran.

In the long term, the SCO may expand to include Syria post-conflict, reinforcing its Eurasian focus. The organization has not prioritized the Ukrainian conflict, reflecting the geographical and strategic interests of member states like India and Pakistan, which view it as a localized issue despite its broader geopolitical implications.

Iran's recent accession is a significant development, enhancing the SCO's role in regional logistics and military strategy, potentially alleviating Iran's international isolation and extending the organization's influence into the Middle East. Belarus's potential membership would similarly bolster its international standing and contribute to regional security.

The SCO's development trajectory emphasizes collective security over individual national security, promoting cooperation among members and with observer states and dialogue partners to address regional and global challenges. This approach, rooted in the "Shanghai spirit," aims to foster peace, stability, and economic growth across its member states and beyond.

In essence, the SCO is evolving into a more comprehensive entity that addresses a wide array of issues from security to economic cooperation, reflecting its growing influence and the complexity of the geopolitical landscape it navigates.

Result of the Hypothesis

The research hypothesis and the conclusion suggest that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) significantly enhances regional security across various domains—political, economic, social, military, and environmental—using coordinated security policies and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Based on the research goals, the hypothesis, and the ensuing detailed analysis, the following outcomes have been inferred:

H1. Effective Organizational Characteristics and Security Responses:

The SCO's ability to respond swiftly to threats and maintain regional stability has been validated through its effective operational mechanisms. The organization's summits and high-level meetings have proven its capacity to enact prompt and coordinated responses, especially in crisis situations. This ability is consistent with the research hypothesis that the SCO effectively embodies the characteristics of a cooperative security organization. Furthermore, the SCO's focus on adhering to international laws in combating terrorism without bias towards any religion or nationality underscores its commitment to maintaining a balanced and principally sound approach to regional security challenges.

H2. Impact of Economic Policies and Health Crises on Regional Stability:

The economic integration initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative, alongside the joint response to the COVID-19 pandemic, have fortified economic security within the SCO region. This supports the hypothesis that the SCO's economic policies have adapted well to external shocks, enhancing cooperative development and ensuring a swift economic recovery. This is evident in the strengthened infrastructure, improved trade facilitations, and enhanced investment flows, which have collectively contributed to resilient economic health across member states.

H3. Continued Commitment to Countering Regional Threats:

Consistent with the hypothesis, the SCO's operational strategies in countering terrorism, extremism, and separatism have demonstrated significant effectiveness. Regular information exchanges, joint military operations, and capacity-building initiatives through the use of Political and Diplomatic Regulations have improved the region's security architecture. This

aligns with the SCO's strategic objectives to bolster operational responses to emerging threats, thereby enhancing regional peace and stability.

H4. Kazakhstan's Enhanced Role and Contributions:

As hypothesized, Kazakhstan's presidency within the SCO is poised to leverage its extensive experience in cultural, educational, and scientific domains to bolster its political influence and contribute to the organization's broader goals. Kazakhstan's role as a bridge in promoting cultural exchanges and deepening scientific and educational cooperation is expected to strengthen the SCO's internal cohesion and its external diplomatic engagements.

In conclusion, the results substantiate the hypothesis that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a robust platform that effectively addresses both security and economic challenges through collaborative and strategic initiatives. This has not only enhanced the security framework of the region but also positioned the SCO as a pivotal player in facilitating economic integration and cultural diplomacy within Eurasia. The continued expansion and evolution of the SCO, especially with new member states and observers, are likely to further its influence and capabilities, supporting a stable and secure regional environment conducive to sustainable development and mutual cooperation among member states.

New Scientific Results

This thesis presents four primary scientific findings that align with the initial hypothesis:

1. I have demonstrated that the organisation adheres firmly to the principle of openness outlined in its Charter. Including globally recognized and influential states like India, Pakistan, and Iran has significantly enhanced the SCO's capabilities, transforming it into one of the most formidable trans-regional organisations. This expansion necessitates substantial internal reconfigurations and adjustments to operational frameworks.
2. The development of the Belt and Road Initiative and the collaborative responses to the Coronavirus pandemic have significantly bolstered economic security cooperation among the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member states during pivotal moments.
3. My research confirms that the SCO has established a robust and effective policy system for combating terrorism, separatism, and extremism. This dedicated focus on tackling

the "three evils" is crucial for the organisation's efforts to promote regional security and stability, which fosters a conducive environment for its ongoing development.

4. I have identified that Kazakhstan plays a pivotal role in the SCO's strategy and efforts against terrorism, separatism, and extremism. Kazakhstan's contributions are vital in enhancing cooperation among member states to ensure regional security and stability, thereby creating favourable conditions for the SCO's future growth and development.

Recommendations

This research on security cooperation within the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), with a specific emphasis on Kazakhstan, has broad applications across various sectors:

1. **Policy and Organizational Strategy:** The findings can be presented to the SCO's Central Office in Beijing and the Kazakhstani governmental bodies to evaluate the current state of security cooperation, identify strategic development priorities, and refine the organisation's policy frameworks.
2. **National Security Policy Development:** This study's insights can inform the creation and revision of national security strategies for Kazakhstan and other Central Asian nations, particularly in areas related to combating terrorism, separatism, and extremism.
3. **Knowledge Exchange:** The dissertation's outcomes can be shared with the Budapest Representation Office of the Organisation of Turkic States to facilitate the exchange of experiences and knowledge transfer regarding security cooperation practices within the SCO, especially those involving Kazakhstan.
4. **Educational Program Development:** The research can contribute to developing educational curricula and courses focused on security, particularly those that cover cooperation within the SCO, aimed at training future specialists and students in higher education settings. It is recommended that SCO-related content be incorporated into Master's programs in International Studies and doctoral research areas.
5. **Expert Consultation:** The findings can provide specialist advice and recommendations to various stakeholders, including government and non-government organisations, the academic sector, and the business community.
6. **Further Research:** It is advisable to extend research on the SCO in two key areas: its role in representing Eurasian interests amidst global power dynamics and shaping the new world order, and at the national level, exploring the interactions between member

states and the organisation itself, including building a comprehensive database linking the countries with SCO headquarters.

This study aims to enhance the understanding and effectiveness of security cooperation within the SCO, aligning with Kazakhstan's interests and needs.

RELATED PUBLICATIONS OF THE AUTHOR

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The Autor's Professional Biography

Madina Igibayeva was born in 1994 in Kazakhstan. She completed her higher education in China. Before starting her university studies there, she studied Chinese at *Beijing Language and Culture University* in 2010. Madina obtained a bachelor's degree in law from Shandong University (Jinan) in 2015. She wrote a degree paper on "Research Cooperation between Kazakhstan and China within the framework of the SCO " (in Chinese). She received a master's degree in law and politics in 2017 from the *China University of Petroleum, Beijing*. She started her doctoral studies at the Ludovika University of Public Service at the PhD School of Military Science in 2019. She has been appointed a Department of Defense Studies expert at the Center for Military Strategic Studies in Kazakhstan since May 2024.

Madina's native language is Kazakh, and she speaks Russian in addition to Chinese. As she attended a language course at the Balassi Institute in 2018-2019, she received a certificate of B1.2 level in the Hungarian language.

In 2017, she worked as a project manager for Asian countries at "EXPO-2017" in Astana (KAZ) and coordinated the international exhibition events for China, Japan, and South Korea.

In 2022-2023, she completed an internship at the *Budapest Office of Turkic States, led by the late Ambassador and Professor János Hóvári*. She was involved in many diplomatic meetings and consultations, which improved her research.

During her studies, she was involved in teaching by Prof Klára Kecskeméthy and Prof Szenes' classes about the topics associated with her research theme.

Madina has been a member of the Hungarian Association of Military Science since 2019—an active participant and representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan at the *Youth Atlantic Treaty Association* (YATA).

She is a certified observer of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

Madina is a founder of the *Public Association of Kazakh Students* at Hungarian Universities, and in this capacity, she is a radio broadcaster on the local Kazakh radio about life and study in Hungary and generally abroad. Besides studying, Madina is also interested in computer literacy, and she has a *Microsoft SQL (Structured Query Language) certificate* for working with a database.

In 2023, she published the essential questions of her dissertation in a book on Amazon titled "The Role of Kazakhstan in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization." During her PhD studies,

she regularly attended conferences and workshops, and she is the author of more than ten articles in English and Chinese on various topics of her thesis.