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The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in the Context of the Chinese Grand Strategy By Tommaso Rossotti

Abstract

Being the most populous country and the second biggest economy in the world, the People's Republic of China is under every aspect one of the most important players in today's international system. As every great power, China acts rationally in its foreign relations, and, doing so, it follows what has been labelled as a "Grand Strategy". The aim of this paper is to analyse Chinese Grand Strategy in a practical perspective; in particular, it will be discussed how the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) fits in Beijing foreign policy and in its Grand Strategy. The paper moves from a working definition of Grand Strategy, to suddenly analyse how and if the different aims and goals of the SCO are aligned with China's interests and long-term objectives.

Keywords: China; People's Republic of China; Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO); Grand Strategy; Central Asia; Eastern Asia.

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Introduction: what is a “Grand Strategy”

China is, under every aspect, the rising star of the contemporary international system. Since the establishment of the People’s Republic, its relative power grew enormously in economic, political and military terms. As its importance on the world stage is increasing, it is more and more important to analyse China’s Grand Strategy, by starting with a working definition. With “Grand Strategy”, we intend “the collection of plans and policies that comprise the state’s deliberate effort to harness political, military, diplomatic, and economic tools together to advance that state’s national interest” (Feaver, 2009).

From this definition, we can identify three main elements that are fundamental when talking about Grand Strategy: the goals, which have to be aligned with national interest; the means, which is to say the instruments a country can actually use to achieve its goals; and the policies, here intended as how a country mobilises its resources towards an end.

Understanding a country’s goals is the starting point for every Grand Strategy. This paper will not give a definition of “national interest”, concept which has been debated for a long time, although it is clear that every country has some core values and objectives which can be considered as of national interest. Additionally, Murdock and Kallmyer (Murdock & Kallmyer, 2011) notice that “nations, like people, are not single-cell entities that pursue only one objective or interest. They pursue a combination of security, economic and value goals, each of which can be (and is) defined variably (as is from physical to material or emotional security), and which can change with the context (such as, with the nature and extent of the security threat)”. As the goals can differ greatly from nation to nation and also from an historical and political phase to another, identifying which are the objectives of a country should be the priority in analysing a Grand Strategy.

However, identifying those objectives is not enough. We live in a world characterised by scarcity; every country has military, economic, political, diplomatic resources it can use to achieve a goal; however, they are not unlimited. Thus, an effective Grand Strategy should acknowledge a nation’s capabilities and then prioritise its goals. With this in mind, Colin Dueck (Dueck, 2011) underlines that for Grand Strategy to be fruitful, it

requires “successful, accurate and realistic ordering and identification of strategic ends and strategic means, including the relationship between them”.

Finally, for Grand Strategy to be actually existent, it needs to be put practically in action by those involved in the decision-making process. While the political system is inherently different from country to country, each State has multiple actors which are involved into the formulation and implementation of its foreign policy. This is particularly true for Grand Strategy: if different means have to be used, all the stakeholders related to those means want their priorities to be included into the concept of national interest. Therefore, to overcome the different requests, national leadership needs to “expend energy and political capital” (Murdock & Kallmyer, 2011).

Having given a working definition of Grand Strategy, a question, fundamental for the aim of this paper, should be dealt with: how does Grand Strategy take shape? Ionut Popescu (2013) identifies two main models to explain the formation of Grand Strategy, design and emergence. According to the design (or rational planning) model, States “formulate, adapt and implement a long-term coherent strategic plan to define and accomplish the nation’s goal, and do so despite the efforts of adversaries to counter your actions, and in the face of inherently unpredictable changes in international system”. However, this is not the only model which has been used to explain Grand Strategy’s formation. Following the emergence model, a State’s Grand Strategy is not the result of an adequate and careful planning, but it is the consequence of an adaption process; in this sense, “organisations can learn over time, thus allowing for coherent, consistent, and often successful strategies to emerge” (Popescu, 2013).

Defining Chinese Grand Strategy is not easy nor immediate, as there is no mention of it in any official document. Because of this, some may think that the emergence model better explains Beijing’s strategy; some may even argue that China has yet to formulate one Grand Strategy (Stanzel, et al., 2017). The author of this paper believes, instead, that the PRC has a clear and carefully planned Grand Strategy, as it will be shown in the following pages.

Chinese Grand Strategy

The starting point in any analysis of China’s foreign (and domestic) policy is simple: the ultimate aim of the actual ruling class is the maintenance of *political stability* (read: the maintenance of the CCP monopoly of power). Stemming from this, Medeiros (Medeiros, 2009) identifies three long-term priorities in Chinese foreign policy: *sovereignty and national integrity*, *economic development* and *international status*. These are strictly related to the objective of political stability. If China cannot preserve its sovereignty, the ruling élite will lose its credibility; if CCP cannot provide

socio-economic development, then it will not be able to uphold its social contract, which is the source of its legitimacy; finally, the rise of China to a status of international superpower would represent the coronation of the long path started in 1949, when, thanks to the CCP and Mao, China ended the so-called “century of national humiliation”.

Having identified the objectives of Chinese foreign policy, it is important to analyse which are the tools Beijing employs to achieve those goals. For a strategy to be actually “Grand”, all the means a country owns should be used to reach its long-term objectives; this is certainly the case for China. From the economic side, a fundamental instrument for PRC is trade; China currently is among the top-three exporter for all the G20 country (UN Comtrade, 2018). This is extremely important, because, as Phillip Saunders notices, “trade dependence can generate significant political influence as groups that benefit from trade with China mobilize to protect their economic interests” (Saunders, 2014). Not only trade is important; the recent “One Belt One Road” initiative is a clear example of the usage of Chinese economic power in the international arena.

Also China’s military, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is becoming a more effective tool among Beijing foreign policy instruments. In the last few years, PRC has undergone a radical transformation of its army, following three main pillars: development and procurement of new capabilities; personnel reform and quality improvement; development of new military doctrines (Finkelstein, 2007).

Another relevant source of power for China comes from culture and what is generally referred to as soft power. Confucius Institutes, Chinese students and tourists around the world, the enormous Chinese diaspora, but also Beijing’s economic success, well represented by the 2008 Olympics and the 2010 EXPO; all of these have been used by CCP élite to represent China as a source of envy and inspiration.

Strictly related to the concept of soft power are the political tools used by China in the international arena; in particular, since after the appointment of Hu Jintao as General Secretary, Beijing has tried to build an image of itself as a country respectful of the actual international order (the so-called “peaceful rise” or “peaceful development” policy). Pursuing this plan, China has taken part in more and more international organisations and multilateral arrangements, such as the World Trade Organisation in 2001, the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area in 2002, the Six Party Talks in 2003, and, as it will be seen in the following pages, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

Before moving on with our analysis, particular attention should be given to the role of international organisation in a country’s Grand Strategy. On the one hand, it is true that an international organisation is not merely a sum of different States; they hold international legal personality, and autonomy is a fundamental characteristic of it. However, it would be

unrealistic to believe that international agencies are not dependant on the will of its member States: countries act both as part of the institutions, but they also act as sovereign entities, following their own particular interests. Because of that, international organisation are considered to have a dual capacity, or *dédoublément fonctionnel* (Barros & Ryngaert, 2014). However, the level of autonomy of the various international organisations can differ greatly from one to another, depending on its institutional mechanisms, on the member States' political preferences, on the aims and goals of the organisation, et cetera. This is fundamental to understand because the most autonomous an organisation will be, the least a country will be able to use it as a mere tool for its Grand Strategy, as the institution may have itself its own Grand Strategy.

With all these premises in mind, the aim of this paper is to analyse how Grand Strategy works in practice, and to do that it focuses of one of the most important Chinese foreign policy's instrument of the XXI century: the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), founded in 2001 and composed of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (with India and Pakistan joining the organisation in June 2017). The main aim of the SCO is primarily facilitating cooperation in the security field, but other goals are presented in its Charter; among these, we found "jointly counteract terrorism, separatism and extremism", "facilitate comprehensive and balanced economic growth" and "promote a new democratic, fair and rational political and economic international order" (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, 2001). From these objectives it may already look clear how the SCO fits Chinese Grand Strategy. Moreover, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation constitutes a good case study because, compared to other aspects of Chinese foreign policy, Beijing's approach to central Asia is generally coherent, successful and likely to continue along the existing lines (Sutter, 2010). Finally, central Asia represents an area of particular interest for China because of the new opportunities it has presented since the early 1990s, as the fall of the Soviet Union led to a partial vacuum in the region. In this sense, the SCO represents a perfect case study showing why Chinese Grand Strategy should be considered an example of emergence model, as seen above; bearing in mind the main objective of Beijing foreign policy (i.e. political stability), Chinese policy makers adapted to the new international context of post-1991 Central Asia; and, while recognising the possible problematic potential of this scenario – with the risk of a new wave of separatism – the PRC was able to deal with the region in a new way, turning it from a danger to an opportunity.

In the following paragraphs, the relationship between the priorities identified by Medeiros and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation will be analysed in depth, offering a useful case study to understand how China's Grand Strategy works in practise.

Sovereignty and national integrity

The issue of sovereignty and national integrity is clearly fundamental within Chinese foreign policy priorities; the status of Taiwan, the separatist movements in Tibet and Xinjiang and the disputes in the East and South China Seas are all questions considered fundamental by Chinese policy makers. Since the summit of the then-called “Shanghai Five” in 2000 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, the group started focusing on security issues, and, in particular, on what Chinese officials define “the three evils”: separatism, extremism and terrorism (Sutter, 2010). Therefore, the SCO plays a fundamental role when it comes to the fight against separatism (and, doing so, in preserving Chinese national integrity), in particular for what it concerns the question of Xinjiang.

Xinjiang is mainly inhabited by Uyghurs, an Islamic minority which speaks a Turkic language. The region was conquered by the Qing only in 1759, but they had serious problems in establishing their control over the region. In 1944, an independent Eastern Turkistan Republic was founded, but it was short lived, as it came back under Chinese control in 1949. Most of the Uyghurs (around 10 million) live in Xinjiang, but big communities are also found in Kazakhstan (around 220,000 people), Uzbekistan (55,000 people) and Kyrgyzstan (50,000 people); smaller communities are present also in Pakistan and Russia. The Xinjiang Autonomous Region is characterised by great social unrest, mainly due to the requests of the pro-independence movements. These movements had a momentum during the 1990s, when, as Ding (Ding, 2014) argues, “the disintegration of the Soviet Union provided a once in a thousand year opportunity for the revival of the independence of the five Central Asian states. At the same time “Turkic culture,” “Turkic world,” “Turkic green,” “Turkic homeland” and other cultural, racial, political, and territorial “Pan-nationalist” ideas heated up and spread across the Central Asian earth.” The dissolution of the Soviet Union, the civil wars in Central Asia (Afghanistan, Chechnya and Tajikistan) and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism made Xinjiang a top priority for Chinese ruling class (Sutter, 2010). The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation was then used to prevent the new-born Central Asian States to provide hotspots for Uyghurs nationalists and to become “safe heavens” where separatist movements could organise their activities. In particular, since the 1990s (years before the establishment of the SCO), the Chinese government had been collaborating with Central Asian countries on extraditing Uyghurs suspects; these activities were then formalised by the SCO Charter in 2001 (Cooley, 2014). In 2002, the Foreign Ministers of the member States officially endorsed Chinese activities in Xinjiang. Moreover, as a reaction to hijackings, kidnappings and other terroristic attack in Xinjiang and in other central Asian countries, China, together with Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan has started, since 2003, joint counterterrorism exercises (Lal, 2006).

However, considering Xinjiang as the only aspect of China's sovereignty issue in the SCO context would be at least reductive. It is important to understand the general ideology on which the Organisation is founded, usually referred to as "Shanghai Spirit". According to the Declaration on the Establishment of the SCO, the Shanghai Spirit is characterized by "mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for multi-civilizations, striving for common development". By many, the principle of "respect for multi-civilizations" has been read as another expression for "non-interference". As Ambrosio notes, the respect for state sovereignty and for non-interference in internal affairs figure prominently in the Declaration and in the Charter of the SCO. Moreover, Ambrosio also states that the SCO represents an additional defence tool against regional or global democratic trends, being therefore useful to ensure regime survival (Ambrosio, 2008). Because of these reasons, Ziegler refers to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation as the "club of authoritarians", being it established to minimise the effects of the "colour revolutions" in neighbouring countries (Ziegler, 2013). Moreover, Shlyndov (Shlyndov, 2006) notes that "one dimension of the concept of security for the nations of the SCO was the problem of their governmental and political system's stability in the face of US-inspired 'colour' revolutions, with 'stability' understood as a combination of the military, economic, political, social, cultural, and other facts that raise the resistance of the state and provide them with an adequate level of strength and viability." Thus, SCO is perfectly aligned to Beijing aims to preserve sovereignty and national integrity.

Socio-economic development

Historically, Central Asia has always been fundamental when it comes to Eurasian trade. Nowadays, the region has restored its pivotal role because of its natural resources and commercial routes (Institute for Strategic Studies, National Defense University of People's Liberation Army, 2015). Moreover, central Asian markets are complementary to the Chinese one, providing natural resources in exchange for consumer goods. In this sense, China strongly expanded its economic activities in the region, becoming the largest exporter in the region in 2008. The SCO played an important role in the economic sector. As mentioned above, its Charter emphasises the importance of economic growth and the necessity to create an alternative economic system; furthermore, President Putin, at the SCO Summit in Shanghai in 2001, clearly stated that "cooperation in economics, trade and culture is far more important than military cooperation". The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation has been a useful forum for bilateral and multilateral initiatives and investments, like the Interbank Association, established in 2005 to coordinate regional investments, or the Business Council, established in 2006 as an advisory body for the involvement of business communities. Moreover, in 2007, Wen Jiabao affirmed that China's ultimate goal was to create a free-trade

zone in the region (Cooley, 2014). The economic integration of central Asia is also functional to the first goal of Chinese Grand Strategy (i.e. territorial integrity); linking Beijing's economy to the countries at its West is fundamental for the development of the Xinjiang region, and economic prosperity guarantees more political stability in the region.

Another economic sector in which central Asia plays an important role is, as aforementioned, transports. In this context, it is impossible not to mention the so-called "One Belt One Road" initiative; of the six corridors that aim to link China to Europe, two will involve central Asian countries. The first, usually referred to as "the New Eurasian Land Bridge" will connect China to Europe through Kazakhstan and Russia, while the second, known as "Central-West Asia Corridor", will involve Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Among these countries, Kazakhstan has been particularly active, trying to maximise the impact of these new infrastructures establishing Special Economic Zones along the routes (International Crisis Group, 2017). The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is acting in a more and more proactive way vis-à-vis the One Belt One Road Initiative. In 2014, Xi Jinping announced the establishment of a Silk Road Fund of \$40 billion, and, as the SCO Secretary General Dmitry Mezentsev said, the decision was welcomed by all the SCO Member States (Institute for Strategic Studies, National Defense University of People's Liberation Army, 2015). During the 2017 Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation it was announced that the Silk Road Fund and the Interbank Association of the SCO agreed on signing a "Memorandum of Understanding on the Basis of Partnership" (Xinhua, 2017). Moreover, at the 2017 SCO Summit in Astana, Xi Jinping linked the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation to the Belt and Road Initiative and in the common declaration the leaders of the SCO countries stated that they "praised the results of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation held on 14-15 May 2017 in Beijing and spoke in favour of their implementation, including by means of coordinating international, regional and national projects aimed at cooperation in maintaining sustainable development based on the principles of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit" (Roy, 2017). However, a possible constraining factor is the presence of India in the Organisation; it strongly opposes the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which is part of the Initiative.

Finally, the energy sector is of fundamental importance. Extremely rapid economic growth and instability in the Middle East forced China to find alternative sources of energy imports (Lal, 2006). Furthermore, central Asian markets are seen as more reliable compared to the corridors in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, which, because of their many chokepoints, are vulnerable to blockades (Cooley, 2014). For what regards hydrocarbons, Beijing has been particularly interested in Kazakhstan. China has been particularly active in the country, commissioning, in 2003, the Atyrau-

Alashankou pipeline and acquiring many Kazakh hydrocarbons companies (and, in particular PetroKazakhstan, the second largest producer of oil in the country). China has also invested in energy projects in Turkmenistan, in particular building the Central Asia-China Gas Pipeline (Cooley, 2014). Regarding electricity, China has deals with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. On the energy level, the activities of the SCO have been limited. In 2006, President Putin proposed for the first time the establishment of an SCO Energy Club. The proposal was then reiterated in 2007, meeting some Chinese interest. However, it caused great concern in Europe, as SCO would be controlling much of the world's petroleum, natural gas and nuclear arsenal (Institute for Strategic Studies, National Defense University of People's Liberation Army, 2015). Since then, there were no major developments in cooperation in the energy sector.

According to Dadabaev (2007), however, SCO is doomed to face huge problems when it comes to economic integration, mainly because of its central Asian Member States. Firstly, those countries are competitors in many economic fields, and in particular in the energy sector. Secondly, efficient economic integration would probably require some loss of sovereignty, which is seen as unacceptable by all the countries. Lastly, central Asian States are currently pursuing different model of economic development: Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are implementing liberal measures, Tajikistan relies on foreign aids and Uzbekistan is characterised by State-led development.

International status

The last point of Chinese Grand Strategy aims at restoring Beijing's status as a great power in the international scene. This is pursued in two main ways: challenging the unipolar international system created by the United States after the end of Cold War, and establishing a well-defined sphere of influence on its borders. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, in light of the American policy since the 1990s, is functional to both objectives. After the collapse of Soviet Union, the United States granted recognition to the new-born central Asian countries with the Freedom Support Act of 1992. The American policy towards those countries was mainly aimed at integrating those countries in the international political and economic system, at fostering the process of denuclearisation, at accessing the region's natural resources and at protecting those countries to possible imperialistic ambitions of Russia (Ziegler, 2013). However, the region remained essentially marginal for the United States. An exception in this context was Uzbekistan, which was particularly active in NATO's Partnership for Peace program.

The situation dramatically changed with the terroristic attacks on New York and Washington: in few months, central Asia was under the international spotlights. After the attacks, central Asian countries cooperated with the United States: American bases were opened in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, while Kazakhstan and Tajikistan granted the

use of their airports for refuelling (Ziegler, 2013). Initially, the interests of the former Soviet countries, Russia, China and the U.S. in the region were compatible: fighting Islamic terrorism and providing stability. Since 2002, however, a series of events drastically changed the relation between SCO countries and the United States. According to Ziegler (2013) the most important are:

- The publication, in 2002, of the National Security Strategy in the United States, which for the first time mentioned the concept of pre-emptive attack. This has been seen as a credible threat for non-democratic States' sovereignty.
- The consequent intervention in Iraq in 2003, aimed at carrying out a regime change in Baghdad. The intervention was unanimously criticised by SCO countries, in particular with those whose population is Muslim.
- The colour revolutions: starting in Georgia in 2003, these pro-democracy revolutionary movements reached Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in 2005. They were seen by all SCO members as attempts organised by the United States to attempt regime changes.

As a result of these events, SCO members became more intolerant towards American presence in central Asia. At the Organisation 2005 Summit in Astana, Uzbekistan requested for the American troops to leave from K-2 basis, and in the final declaration it was stated that "considering the completion of the active military stage of antiterrorist operation in Afghanistan, the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation consider it necessary, that respective members of the antiterrorist coalition set a final timeline for their temporary use of the above-mentioned objects of infrastructure and stay of their military contingents on the territories of the SCO member states" (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, 2005). Moreover, in the same year Iran was granted observer status to the Organisation, causing great concern to Washington, which included Teheran in the famous "axis of evil" (Wishnick, 2009).

These have been the main elements that characterised how the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation has been functional to China's aim to gain international status as a great power: firstly, the Organisation has been used to contrast American influence in Central Asia, which, with the intervention in Afghanistan and the establishment of bases in former Soviet countries, could have led to an enlargement of NATO to China's borders; secondly, SCO is a useful tool to strengthen Chinese influence over central Asia, thus providing more stable foundations for its global claims; lastly, SCO provided China with a great forum to engage with other countries which oppose American unipolarism (primarily Russia, but also Iran).

Conclusion

As seen in the pages above, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is a useful tool in Chinese foreign policy, being it completely aligned with China's long term interests. Nonetheless, an important question which should be dealt with is how autonomous from the will of its member States the SCO is. As stated earlier, the degree of autonomy an international organisation holds varies from one institution to another, depending on a multitude of factors. According to Barros and Ryngaert (2014), a decisive element is the institutional structure, and, in particular, the system of voting: in institutions where unanimity rule applies (such as SCO), "institutional autonomy is deemed to be rather limited". Moreover, as Bordone (2008) notices, the organisation's structure is quite weak, and it is able to maintain its cohesion only as long as the interests of the various member States are overlapping. Finally, another important aspect is the importance of sovereignty in SCO's Charter; as Alimov (2018) highlights, "the SCO is not a classic example of (...) integration in which maximum unification is achieved by delegating (...) sovereign prerogatives to supranational bureaucratic institution". For all the reasons stated above, we can conclude that SCO is much more an international forum for its member States than an autonomous body, able to express its political will and to pursue its own Grand Strategy.

Since the Dushanbe Summit in 2014, because of international and regional transformation, the Organisation gained a new momentum. In the security field, in Dushanbe several central Asian leaders had bilateral meetings, focused on territorial and terroristic issues, strengthening the role of the SCO as a forum to solve such problems (Institute for Strategic Studies, National Defense University of People's Liberation Army, 2015). Regarding socio-economic development, the SCO is now under international spotlight after Xi Jinping's announcement of the One Belt One Road Project, which is seen as an economic opportunity by countries from Asia, Middle East, Africa and Europe. Regarding the international status of China and its influence in the region, the decision taken by Obama to withdraw combat forces from Afghanistan by 2014 offered new opportunities to SCO (and therefore to China) to diminish American influence in central Asia; moreover, Afghanistan will be able to be involved more in the SCO framework, strengthening the expansion southward of the Organisation (Institute for Strategic Studies, National Defense University of People's Liberation Army, 2015).

However, different problems still exist in all of those fields, limiting the potentials of the Organisation. In the security sphere, the main problems come from Russia, which is generally more focused on the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO, a formal Russia-dominated alliance that involves Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan). As Wishnick (2009) noted, Russia has been seeking to increase the cooperation between the two organisations, but it met China's

refusal. As of now, CSTO has been granted only the status of observer. For what it concerns economic cooperation, some limits have been underlined earlier. Other problems that are blocking the SCO from greater integration come, again, from Russia. As Moscow is going through a phase of financial difficulties, Russia has been cautious in getting involved in the establishment of SCO financial institutions such as an SCO Development Bank or an SCO's Development Fund (Institute for Strategic Studies, National Defense University of People's Liberation Army, 2015). Moreover, central Asian countries are getting more and more concerned of China low-cost goods, which are crushing their weak economies (Lal, 2006).

Finally, regarding Chinese influence in central Asia, the American withdrawal from Afghanistan offers opportunities as well as challenges. From China's perspective, an SCO's active role is obviously preferable than American or NATO involvement (Ziegler, 2013). However, SCO's attitude toward Afghanistan has always been problematic. As Sutter (Sutter, 2010) notes, "the U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom accomplished more in the area in five months than the Shanghai grouping had accomplished in five years". As SCO officials admit, the lack of consensus among the Organisation's member about their individual policies towards Kabul has prevented the SCO from developing coherent proposals (Cooley, 2014). Therefore, American withdrawal from Afghanistan has caused various tensions inside SCO, and a common policy has yet to be found.

Concluding, as analysed in the paragraphs above, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation has great potential to be a heavy-weight in global politics, and its recent enlargement strengthen its position. It can be a fundamental instrument of foreign policy in the hands of Beijing official, allowing them to pursue their strategic interests in the area in a much more efficient way. Moreover, the SCO represents, as stated earlier in this paper, a clear example of how Chinese Grand Strategy has been defined by the PRC policy makers not in a systematic way as the so-called design model would suggest, but more according to what is usually referred to as emergence model: Beijing adapted its strategies to the new scenario that came into place after the demise of Soviet Union in Central Asia, thus turning an area that risked to be problematic in an opportunity and an actual tool in China's hands. However, great problems still persist, and they are likely to significantly reduce SCO's ability to shape Eurasian future. The way these problems are faced, together with (sometimes partly) exogenous factors (American commitment in central Asia, the implementation of Iran nuclear deal, the stability of the Chinese regime, Russian economic performance, just to name few of them) will determine the future of the Organisation, and, perhaps, of the world.

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