ABSTRACT

of the dissertation submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the educational program «8D02209 – Oriental Studies»
by by Nazarova Kulayshi Bimakhanbetovna
on the topic: Shanghai Cooperation Organization: the chinese approach and china's role in the organization

General description of the research. The dissertation examines the "Chinese approach" within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), based on the principles of implementing global partnership for sustainable development. The role of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the activities of the organization is scientifically substantiated. The ideological and strategic foundations of the "Chinese approach" are analyzed, which are expressed in a relational strategy whereby China's influence in the region is expanded not through pressure, but through the strengthening of a comprehensive network of economic, political, cultural, and humanitarian ties based on long-term interdependence and trust. The mechanisms for implementing this approach, as well as the opportunities and risks of its application within the SCO framework, are also examined.

Relevance of the research. The modern world system is experiencing deep crises, an escalation of geopolitical conflicts, and a weakening of the effectiveness of the legal norms of international institutions, which necessitates the search for new models of cooperation and partnership in international relations. Trust and mutual understanding between states are becoming increasingly important as tools for overcoming these crises. Today, the world needs a new consensus based on trust, openness, and shared responsibility.

These global challenges have prompted the international community to take joint action and have identified sustainable development as a key priority on the global agenda. In this context, the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015, represent an important initiative aimed at a comprehensive solution for promoting global partnership. The implementation of the SDGs aligns with the development strategies of the SCO member states and has become one of the organization's long-term priority objectives. This process highlights the necessity for the SCO to adapt to new challenges. Accordingly, the relevance of this research topic is manifested at three levels.

Firstly, within the SCO, it is important to form a system of relations based not only on ensuring sustainable development from an economic and political perspective, but also on partnership and cooperation. In this context, China actively applies a relational approach.

Secondly, at the global level, amid the deepening of geopolitical contradictions, the partnership model proposed by China-based on the principles of «consensus», «mutually beneficial cooperation», and «harmony» - gains particular relevance as an alternative paradigm in international relations.

Thirdly, at the scientific level, the concept of the "relational approach" in international relations theory remains insufficiently studied, and the analysis of its

institutional and practical manifestations within the SCO defines the methodological novelty of this research.

Thus, the study of China's relational approach within the organization is both relevant and practically significant for understanding contemporary global stability and regional interdependence.

The creation of the SCO in 2001 marked an important stage in the formation of a new security architecture in Central Asia. China, as the initiator and leading member of the organization, proposed a new way of building cooperation based on mutual trust, equality, consensus, respect for different civilizations, and principles of joint development. In this way, China promoted the resolution of regional sustainable development and security issues not through "demonstration of force," but on the basis of "consensus."

However, over nearly twenty-five years of the organization's existence, this approach in the security sphere has evolved and is now applied across all areas of SCO activity, transforming the organization from a negotiation platform into an institutional space for regional security and cooperation.

Accordingly, the relevance of the research topic is determined by a number of key questions. Firstly, there is the question of how consistently and institutionally China's relational approach is implemented within the SCO. Secondly, there is interest in the actual practical results of applying this approach in the regional context.

China's relational diplomacy within the SCO is distinguished by its philosophy based on the principle of "not by force" and its orientation toward long-term peaceful problem-solving. This distinction is particularly evident in comparison with other organizations that possess a military-political component, as seen in the SCO's experience of implementing cooperation in various areas through preventive mechanisms such as information exchange, joint exercises, and consultations.

In this regard, a deep and comprehensive study of China's strategy of relationship-building based on the relational approach is of significant practical importance, not only for understanding regional policy but also for the global scientific community.

The aim of the study is to determine the role of the People's Republic of China in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization through a comprehensive examination of the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the "Chinese approach" and its practical implementation, as well as to identify its significance for the future development of the organization and for Kazakhstan.

To achieve this aim, the following objectives were set:

- to analyze the theoretical foundations for the study of regional organizations;
- to determine the ideological and strategic foundations of the "Chinese approach" in China's foreign policy;
- to characterize the main principles and collective mechanisms of the "Chinese approach" in the field of security;
- to assess the effectiveness of investment projects and infrastructure initiatives within the SCO framework, as well as their impact on cooperation and partnership among member states;

- to identify the level of humanitarian and cultural exchange within the SCO space;
- to substantiate China's strategic role and its regional influence on the institutional development of the SCO
- to determine possible scenarios and prospects for the development of the SCO.

The **object of the research** is the role of China in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

The subject of the study is the theoretical, conceptual, and practical aspects of the implementation of the "Chinese approach" within the framework of the SCO.

The theoretical basis of the study is formed by the concepts of relational diplomacy and Chinese diplomatic philosophy. Within relational approaches, key theories are considered. Chinese relational theory (Confucian relationality) demonstrates that interactions between states are carried out through mutual trust, respect, and long-term ties, which directly relates to China's diplomatic practice within the SCO. Social relational theory examines the essence of states through their mutual actions and analyzes agreements from a relational perspective. Additionally, network relational theory describes international relations as a network of nodes and connections, where the density and reliability of these connections serve as indicators of stability and influence. The constructivist relational theory emphasizes norms and culture formed through social interaction, while critical/postcolonial relational approaches explore the relational nature of power, dominance, and dependency.

In the study, these theoretical directions were applied to analyze China's diplomatic practice within the SCO. In particular, China's exercise of influence in the region not through pressure, but through strengthening a system of economic, political, cultural, and humanitarian ties, is considered a practical demonstration of relational theories. These theoretical foundations allowed for a systematic study of the features of Chinese relational diplomacy within the SCO and scientifically substantiated its role in forming a network of partnerships based on long-term interdependence and trust.

Research methods. The dissertation employs a combination of theoretical and empirical methods based on the principles of systematization, consistency, and objectivity. Theoretical methods include system analysis, content analysis, and comparative analysis. Among the empirical methods, expert interviews and SWOT analysis (strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats) were used.

Hypothesis of the research. Crises in contemporary world politics and the international relations system require the supplementation and updating of their theoretical and practical foundations. In this context, China's relational approach, based on the principles of mutual trust, equality, and joint development, contributes to the deepening of cooperation among the countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and plays a role in ensuring regional stability and security.

Scientific novelty of the research:

- for the first time, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization within the system of international relations has been examined through a comprehensive scientific and

theoretical analysis, which thoroughly studies the relational and psychological aspects of mutual understanding among SCO member states;

- in domestic scholarship, a relational approach based on the principles of mutual trust, effective cooperation, and harmony in international relations has been proposed for the first time, and its theoretical and practical potential for strengthening stable relations between states has been identified;

- for the first time, China's relational strategy, aimed at exerting influence through the strengthening of economic, political, cultural, and humanitarian ties, has been systematically analyzed, allowing for a rethinking of the mechanisms for forming long-term and interdependent partnerships in international politics;

- using SWOT analysis, the strengths and weaknesses of the "Chinese approach" within the SCO, as well as its regional opportunities and threats, have been identified, which made it possible to scientifically substantiate the strategic potential of China's relational diplomacy and its global influence.

The practical significance of the study lies in the possibility of applying its results and conclusions to promote global partnership and strengthen cooperation. The findings of the study can serve as a guide for the practical activities of state bodies engaged in foreign policy, as well as for the development of economic and investment relations. They can also be used in the educational process in Oriental studies, regional studies, and international relations at higher education institutions, and be valuable for researchers.

Main provisions for defense:

1. Regional organizations within the system of international relations act as actors contributing to the sustainable development of peace and the promotion of global partnership. In this context, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is scientifically substantiated not only as a political and economic structure but also as a space for cultural and civilizational harmony and partnership;

2. The «Chinese approach» is considered a holistic institutional system based on philosophical, cultural, and methodological principles, which defines the ontological, ideological, and strategic foundations of China's foreign policy;

3. China's relational diplomacy is effectively implemented within the SCO in the fields of security, economy, and cultural-humanitarian cooperation, contributing to the sustainable development of the region and strengthening partnerships. In this context, the "Shanghai Spirit" has been established as a procedural and institutional foundation of the organization;

4. China's relational strategy, aimed not at pressure or the use of force but at strengthening economic, political, cultural, and humanitarian ties, creates conditions for forming a network of partnerships based on long-term interdependence and trust. Thus, China expands its influence in the region through the strengthening of its system of interconnections;

5. SWOT analysis allowed for the identification of the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of applying the "Chinese approach" within the SCO framework. China plays an important role in strengthening regional economic growth and security through its resource and institutional potential. At the same time, the sustainable development of regional cooperation is possible only with balanced

management of political and economic risks by the organization and the alignment of interests among all member states. These results make it possible to elevate partnerships within the SCO to a new qualitative level and assess the organization's strategic potential.

Approbation of the research. The dissertation was conducted at the Chinese Studies Department, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University.

Publications of the PhD candidate include: 1 article published in an international peer-reviewed journal indexed in the Scopus database (Q2, Asian journal of political science, percentile – 65), 4 articles published in national journals recommended by the Quality Assurance Committee of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and 3 articles presented at international scientific conferences.

The structure of the dissertation includes normative references, definitions, symbols and abbreviations, an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a list of references, and appendices.