Official reviewer: PhD, Associate Professor at the School of Law and Public Administration, Narxoz University, Kusainova Ainur Kazybekovna, reviewed the dissertation titled "Legal Aspects of Trade and Economic Cooperation within the Framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," prepared by Zhang Ju for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the educational program "8D04201 – International Law"

№	Criteria	Compliance with criteria	Position of official reviewer
1.	Compliance of the dissertation topic (as of the date of approval) with the directions of scientific development and/or state programs	1.1 Compliance with scientific development directions and/or state programs: 1) The dissertation was completed within the framework of a project or target program financed from the state budget (name and number of the project or program); 2) The dissertation was completed within the framework of another state program (name of the program) 3) The dissertation corresponds to the priority direction of scientific development approved by the Higher Scientific and Technical Commission under the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan (indicate the direction)	Upon reviewing the dissertation by Zhang Ju, submitted for defense under the educational program "8D04201 – International Law", the following compliance with established criteria can be noted: – The dissertation aligns with the priority areas of scientific development approved by the Ministry of Higher Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The relevance of the topic is determined by the strategic importance of deepening trade and economic cooperation within the framework of the SCO for the Republic of Kazakhstan as a founding member of the organization. – The content of the dissertation fully corresponds to the objectives and tasks of the educational program "8D04201 – International Law". The work is executed in accordance with the academic standards of doctoral studies within the fields of "6D030100, 8D04202 – Jurisprudence" and "6D030200, 8D04201 – International Law". – The research demonstrates elements of scientific novelty, including the systematization and comprehensive analysis of the SCO's legal framework in the trade and economic sphere, as well as the identification of specific legal gaps and conflicts. – The theoretical significance of the study lies in the development of doctrinal approaches to understanding the legal nature of regional economic integration within the SCO framework. – The practical significance is confirmed by the author's well-substantiated recommendations for improving the legal mechanisms of the Organization, which may be utilized in the legislative and treaty practice of the member states. – The author employs a relevant methodological framework,

			including comparative legal and institutional analysis, which enables a comprehensive investigation. The topic is fully explored using a wide range of primary sources (SCO founding documents, international treaties) and scholarly literature. The logic of presentation, structure of the work, and the argumentation of conclusions demonstrate coherence and consistency.
2.	Importance to Science	The work **makes** / does not make a significant contribution to science, and its significance **is** / is not clearly demonstrated	The dissertation **demonstrates** substantial scientific significance, contributing meaningfully to the advancement of the theoretical foundations of international law and the doctrine of economic integration. This contribution is realized through a comprehensive and systematic examination of the legal architecture of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, wherein the geopolitical importance of the organization is consistently analyzed, and systemic legal contradictions impeding the further deepening of economic cooperation are identified. The rigorous argumentation, methodological consistency, and depth of the analysis provide compelling evidence of the scientific value and originality of the work.
3.	The principle of self-writing	Self-writing level: **1) high**; 2) average; 3) low; 4) did not write myself	The dissertation demonstrates a **high** overall quality. The text is coherent, clear, and professionally presented, reflecting a rigorous academic style. The work produces a strong and positive impression in terms of both its scholarly contribution and methodological execution.
4.	The principle of internal unity	4.1 Justification of the relevance of the thesis: **1) founded;** 2) partially justified; 3) or reasonable.	The relevance of the dissertation is **founded** by its comprehensive scientific significance and practical applicability. The topic demonstrates a high degree of scientific novelty, as it has not previously been subjected to systematic analysis within the framework of doctoral research, thereby representing an original contribution to the field. Simultaneously, the study's relevance is reinforced by the increasing economic role of the SCO on the international stage, the

		active development of trade and economic cooperation among its member states, and the pressing need to improve the legal regulation of integration processes. This establishes both the theoretical significance of the research, in terms of advancing scholarly understanding of the functioning of the SCO, and its practical value for designing effective legal and institutional mechanisms to support economic integration.
	4.2 The content of the dissertation determines the topic of the dissertation **1) determines;** 2) partially determines; 3) does not determine	The dissertation **determined** a comprehensive and in-depth examination of the stated research topic. Its structure is based on principles of logical sequence and methodological consistency: each chapter purposefully addresses key aspects of trade and economic interaction within the SCO, systematically analyzing emerging institutional and legal challenges and identifying conflicts within the normative regulation of integration processes. This approach not only ensures a holistic coverage of the subject matter but also substantiates the necessity of improving mechanisms for the legal support of economic integration.
	The goal and objectives correspond to the topic of the dissertation: **1) corresponds**; 2) partially corresponds; 3) does not correspond	The aim and objectives of the dissertation are clearly formulated and fully **corresponded** with the thematic focus of the study. The research objectives extend beyond mere formal correspondence with the aim, encompassing all critical aspects of the problem under investigation, thereby ensuring a thorough and comprehensive analysis and the achievement of the principal research goal.
	4.4. All sections and the structure of the dissertation are logically connected: **1) completely connected;** 2) partially connected; 3) no connection	The dissertation's structure is characterized by **integrity and logical coherence.** All sections are interrelated and flow systematically from one another, forming a unified, coherent system. For instance, the theoretical analysis of the SCO's legal foundations serves as the basis for identifying regulatory gaps, which in turn leads to the formulation of specific proposals for enhancing legal mechanisms. Such an organization of material demonstrates a high level of academic rigor

			and facilitates a profound exploration of the research topic.
		4.5 New solutions (principles, methods) proposed by the author are proven and evaluated in comparison with already known solutions: **1) there is a critical analysis;** 2) the analysis was carried out partially; 3) the analysis is based not on personal opinion, but on references from other authors	The author has not only proposed new scientific solutions but has also conducted a **comprehensive critical analysis** of these solutions in comparison with established legal models, such as the European Union and USMCA. This comparative-legal approach allows for an objective assessment of the advantages and potential risks of the principles and methods proposed by the author, thereby convincingly demonstrating their theoretical and practical validity. The analysis is grounded in objective research rather than subjective opinion.
5.	The principle of scientific novelty	5.1 Are the scientific results and principles new? **1) completely new;** 2) semi-new (25-75% are new); 3) not new (less than 25% is new)	The scientific results and principles formulated in the dissertation are **completely new**. The author has introduced original conceptual frameworks and methodological approaches to the legal regulation of economic integration within the SCO, which are not mere adaptations of existing scientific paradigms. These findings establish a new perspective for research in the field of international legal support of integration processes and constitute an independent contribution to the development of the relevant scientific doctrine.
		5.2 Are the findings of the dissertation new? **1) completely new;** 2) semi-new (25-75% are new); 3) not new (less than 25% is new)	The conclusions and scientific propositions presented in the dissertation are **completely new**, as evidenced by the following specific outcomes: – For the first time, structurally integrated models of key SCO development institutions have been developed and scientifically substantiated, including the Permanent Committee with a detailed mandate and the Model Investment Code, equipped with a unified implementation mechanism. – An original sectoral approach to integration has been proposed, synthesizing "hard" and "soft" law methods based on an assessment

			of integration potential and the strategic significance of specific economic sectors. – For the first time, a concrete algorithm for the harmonization of technical standards has been developed, implemented through a roadmap with criteria-based selection of product groups, ensuring the practical feasibility of the integration processes.
		5.3 Are the technical, technological, economic or managerial decisions new and justified? **1) completely new;** 2) semi-new (25-75% are new); 3) not new (less than 25% is new)	The solutions proposed in the study, both organizational and methodological, are **completely new** and are convincingly substantiated. The scientific novelty is not only asserted but also thoroughly demonstrated in the content of the dissertation, as evidenced by the following contributions of the author: – For the first time, a methodology for analyzing the legal system of SCO economic integration has been developed. – The relationship between the expansion of the organization and the dynamics of integration processes has been established and analyzed. – A set of specific new models and conceptual solutions has been proposed, including: – the establishment of the Permanent Committee on Trade; – the development of a Model Investment Code; – the creation of an Arbitration Center; – the design of the SCO Energy Community architecture.
6.	Validity of the main conclusions	All conclusions **are substantiated**/not substantiated in large-scale evidence from a scientific point of view (in qualitative research and art history and humanities)	The conclusions of the study are characterized by scientific **validity and substantiation**. Their evidentiary basis includes results from a comprehensive analysis of the normative framework, comparative-legal study, and institutional analysis. Each conclusion is supported by references to legal sources, statistical data, and the results of the author's comparative analysis, ensuring their full argumentative reason.
7.	The main principles put forward for defense	For each principle, the following questions must be answered:	The dissertation presents five main conclusions submitted for defense: **Result 1:** Justification for the establishment of the Permanent

		7.1 Is the principle proven? **1) proven;** 2) approximately proven; 3) not proven approximately; 4) not proven 7.2 Trivial? 1) yes; **2) no** 7.3 New? **1) yes;** 2) no 7.4 Level of use: 1) Narrow; 2) Medium; **3) Wide** 7.5 Proven in the work? **1) yes;** 2) no	Committee on Trade Proven: Analysis of the SCO legal framework revealed an institutional gap. Non-trivial: Development of a previously absent institutional architecture. Scientifically novel: First conceptualization of a specific mandate and accountability mechanism. Scope of application: Broad; the model can be scaled to other areas of cooperation. Confirmed in the work: A detailed model of the functioning of the institution is presented. **Result 2:** Development of the Model Investment Code Proven: Fragmentation of national investment regimes was identified. Non-trivial: Structural integrity of the proposed model. Scientifically novel: Creation of a comprehensive concept combining classical and advanced mechanisms. Scope of application: Broad; the Code can be adapted to various groups of states. Confirmed in the work: A ready-made normative template has been developed. **Result 3:** Methodology for harmonizing technical standards Proven: Heterogeneity of national technical regulations was established. Non-trivial: Transition from problem identification to a systematic solution algorithm. Scientifically novel: Development of a methodology based on economic criteria. Scope of application: Broad; the methodology is universal and applicable to other integration unions. Confirmed in the work: A feasible roadmap has been developed. **Result 4:** Model of sectoral differentiation of legal instruments Proven: Supported by comparative analysis of integration practices. Non-trivial: Rejection of a universalist approach in favor of a flexible model. Scientifically novel: Proposal of an adaptive model based on integration potential criteria. Scope of application: Broad; applicable to multilateral formats with economic asymmetries. Confirmed in the work: A strategic framework for decision-making has been formulated. **Result 5:** Establishment of the SCO Arbitration Center Proven: A connection was identified between the absence of a dispute resolution mechanism and insufficient legal certainty. Non-trivial:

			Conceptual resolution of the conflict between national sovereignty and supranational guarantees. Scientifically novel: Development of a model combining private-law jurisdiction with an international legal status. Scope of application: Broad; the model can serve as a universal prototype. Confirmed in the work: An institutional infrastructure has been created to enhance the predictability of contracts.
8.	The principle of consistency Sequence of sources and presented information	8.1 Choice of methodology - justified or methodology clearly stated **1) yes;** 2) no	**Yes.** The conducted study is interdisciplinary in nature and is grounded in a solid theoretical foundation, incorporating the works of leading foreign, Russian, and Kazakhstani scholars, as well as a rigorous analysis of documents from international organizations. The methodological strategy of the research is clearly defined and directly derived from its objectives, enabling comprehensive coverage of the subject matter and ensuring a high degree of reliability of the scientific findings.
		8.2 The results of the dissertation work were obtained using modern methods of scientific research and methods of processing and interpreting data using computer technologies: **1) yes**; 2) no	**Yes.** The methodological framework of the study represents a balanced combination of general scientific and specialized methods, including comparative-legal, normative-dogmatic, and institutional analysis, supplemented by the examination of specific practical cases. The consistent application of these methods ensured the logical coherence of the dissertation, the evidential support of the conclusions, and their compliance with contemporary standards of scientific research.

		8.3 Theoretical conclusions, models, identified relationships and patterns are proven and confirmed by experimental studies (results for areas of training in pedagogical sciences are proven on the basis of a pedagogical experiment): **1) yes**; 2) no	**Yes.** The theoretical propositions, developed models, and identified patterns underwent thorough verification. Their validity is confirmed through a comprehensive study of the SCO legal framework, analysis of international integration practices, and examination of real-world trade and economic interactions among member states. To verify the obtained results, case-study methods, comparative-legal analysis, and institutional analysis were employed, which, within the context of legal research, function as a form of experimental validation. Further evidence of the reliability of the conclusions is provided by their testing in scholarly publications and their grounding in a representative source base.
		8.4 Important claims are **supported**/partially supported/not supported by references to specific and reliable scientific literature	All key propositions of the study are **supported** by references to authoritative sources that meet rigorous academic standards. The foundation of the research is based on the core documents of the SCO, including the Organization's Charter and the Treaty on Long-Term Good-Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation.
		8.5 The list of references is **sufficient**/insufficient for a literature review	The source base of the dissertation, comprising 185 items, is **sufficient** and includes principal SCO normative documents, official materials, and scholarly literature (both classical and contemporary works), thereby ensuring the thoroughness and substantiation of the conducted research.
9	The principle of practical value	9.1 The dissertation has theoretical significance: 1) yes; 2) no	**Yes.** The dissertation is executed at a high scientific and academic level, characterized by a strict logical structure, clarity of presentation, and consistent use of specialized terminology. The volume of the study (150 pages) and its compositional structure (introduction, three chapters, conclusion, and bibliography) fully comply with established academic requirements.

		9.2 The dissertation has practical significance and has a high possibility of applying the obtained results in practice: **1) yes;** 2) no	**Yes.** The practical significance of the research is confirmed by the development of concrete mechanisms and recommendations aimed at improving the legal and institutional framework of the SCO. The main directions for the application of the results include: 1. Harmonization of legislation – proposed model acts and roadmaps for standard convergence serve as ready-made templates for unifying the legal frameworks of member states. 2. Elimination of trade barriers – detailed procedures for monitoring the implementation of agreements and developing recommendations provide an operational mechanism for reducing non-tariff restrictions. 3. Formation of a unified investment space – structured proposals for standardizing guarantees and investment protection aim to create predictable conditions for cross-border investments. 4. Implementation of infrastructure projects – institutional solutions, including the establishment of specialized bodies and an arbitration center, provide a legal basis for the execution of projects in logistics, energy, and digitalization.
		9.3 Are the practical recommendations new? **1) completely new;** 2) semi-new (25-75% are new); 3) not new (less than 25% are new)	**Completely new.** The practical recommendations presented in the dissertation are characterized by comprehensiveness and scientific novelty, as evidenced by the following aspects: – Detailed institutional architecture – Unlike existing general proposals, a concrete model of the Permanent Committee has been developed with a clearly defined mandate and accountability mechanisms, translating theoretical discussions into the realm of practical implementation. – Comprehensive legal toolkit – The SCO Model Investment Code is not a set of isolated recommendations but a holistic system of interrelated elements, including standardized procedures, protection guarantees, and a dispute resolution mechanism, unprecedented within the SCO framework. – Innovative methodological approach – The proposed sectoral differentiation in the application of legal instruments, based on an

			analysis of the economic and political characteristics of individual sectors, introduces a fundamentally new methodology for phased integration, adapted to the specific features of the SCO.
10.	Quality of writing and presentation	Quality of academic writing: **1) high;** 2) average; 3) below average; 4) low.	**High.** The academic execution of the dissertation meets rigorous standards of scholarly work, which is demonstrated in the following aspects: – Systematic presentation of material – combining coherent argumentation with clear logical links between theoretical analysis and practical conclusions. – Thoughtful composition – each structural element of the work makes a purposeful contribution to achieving the stated research objectives. – Adherence to scholarly style – including the appropriate use of specialized terminology and correct formatting of bibliographic references. – Professional linguistic level – characterized by precise formulation and clarity of expression.
11.	Comments on the dissertation		The research conducted by the author, possessing undeniable scientific value and a systematic approach, provides a solid foundation for the further development of this field of study. Prospective directions for enhancing the work include the following: – Expansion of the methodological framework – a comprehensive analysis of bilateral contractual relations between SCO member states could identify additional legal mechanisms for regulating trade and economic cooperation. – Detailing the institutional and legal mechanism – the implementation of the SCO Arbitration Court, including procedural aspects of its operation and interaction with national jurisdictions, could enhance the practical applicability of this proposal. It should be emphasized that these recommendations are forward-looking and intended to further advance the research, without diminishing the scientific value or completeness of the presented

			dissertation.
12.	The scientific level of the doctoral student's articles on the research topic (in the case of defending a dissertation in the form of a series of articles, official reviewers examine the scientific level of each doctoral student's article on the research topic)		The key theoretical propositions, conclusions, and practical recommendations of the dissertation are presented in four scientific publications, including one article in an international journal indexed in the Scopus database and three articles in journals recommended by the Committee for Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan.
13.	Decision of the official reviewer (in accordance with paragraph 28 of these Model Rules)		Zhang Ju meets the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the educational program "8D04201 – International Law."

Official reviewer
PhD, Associate Professor at the School of Law and Public Administration, Narxoz University
Kussainova Ainur Kazybekovna

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