

**Interstate Rivalries in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization:  
Trust Building and Reinforcement as Impetus for Rivalry  
De-escalation**

Thesis Submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
At the University of Leicester

by

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May 2020

## Abstract

### *Interstate Rivalries in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Trust Building and Reinforcement as Impetus for Rivalry De-escalation*

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The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a relatively new intergovernmental organization but has demonstrated its staying power over the past nineteen years, despite internal contradictions, such as competition among its members. Relations between these countries have always been fractious at best, especially since the fall of the Soviet Union, and the onset of independence among the Central Asian states.

This thesis examines the presence of interstate rivalries among the six founding members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan and the role, if any, the organization has played in de-escalating the rivalry impulses among them.

Through the case study method, and using process tracing, the research determined there are at least six dyadic rivalries that exist among these states. However, despite the presence of such triggers for conflict escalation as nondemocratic regimes, territorial disputes, and contested control of resources, none of these potential rivalries have escalated such joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. In fact, the rivalries seem to have de-escalated tensions in some ways.

This thesis argues that it is the SCO itself that helps to build and imbed trust among its members. This trust is reinforced over time through specific mechanisms such as summitry and joint military exercises. In this way rivalry impulses are tamped down among the SCO's member states, and rivalry backsliding – the reemergence of the rivalry after it has de-escalated or terminated – is prevented.

The research is premised on the hypothesis that rivalries did form but have been restrained through the structural framework that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization amalgamates among its members: specifically, their interactions in formal settings, which are repeated consistently, over a prolonged number of years. This thesis adds new knowledge to the study of interstate rivalries and the SCO.

## Acknowledgements

On the long road to a PhD I have many people to thank for their insight, knowledge, and support. I would like to thank Dr. Ben Zala, my first supervisor, who took on my project and gave valuable input my first few years, as well as Dr. Jon Moran, for taking over Dr. Zala's role and giving me useful feedback.

Dr. Helen Dexter, as my current first supervisor, and Dr. Tara McCormack, my second supervisor, were instrumental in helping to hone my sometimes-disparate research strands into a narrow and well-defined thesis topic, forcing me to jettison out all my unnecessary arguments. To them I owe a special thanks for having patience with me and taking the time to review my many drafts.

I would also like to thank Dr. Michael Turner, for providing me with early inspiration on my thesis topic, and for his recommendation to the University of Leicester. Also, I would especially like to thank Dr. Marianna McJimsey for taking the time to review and edit my chapter drafts. Her critiques were invaluable in improving my writing skills. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. David Strachan-Morris and Dr. Rob Dover for conducting a mock viva with me on short notice. They helped calm my nerves and prepare me for the real thing.

Last, but certainly not least, I owe a special debt of gratitude to my family. My parents, Bruce and Leigh, especially, I would like to thank for their support all these years of my academic endeavors, both moral and financial. Without them it would not be possible. My daughter Emma for having patience while I work, and helping me to relax, laugh, and have fun, when I was not working. She helped me keep my sanity.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I would like to thank my wife Kyoko for her support and encouragement. I would not have made it through this project without her. She is my inspiration and my rock; this thesis is as much for her as it is for me, more so in fact. I can never repay her unwavering patience as she put up with me conducting research all these years.

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## List of Abbreviations

ARF:	ASEAN's Regional Forum
ASEAN:	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BOMCA:	Border Management for Central Asia
CACO:	Central Asian Cooperation Organization
CICA:	Conference on Interactions and Confidence Building in Asia
CIS:	Commonwealth of Independent States
CCP:	Chinese Communist Party
CST:	Collective Security Treaty
CSTO:	Collective Security Treaty Organization
EAEC:	Eurasian Economic Community
ECSC:	European Coal and Steel Community
EEC:	European Economic Community
EU:	European Union
FDI:	Foreign Direct Investment
ICWC:	Interstate Commission for Water Coordination
IFAS:	International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea
IMU:	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
NATO:	North Atlantic Treaty Organization

MIDs:	Militarized Interstate Disputes
OSCE:	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PfP:	Partnership for Peace
PLA:	Peoples' Liberation Army
RATS:	Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure
RFE:	Russian Far East
SCO:	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
UN:	United Nations
UNSC:	United Nations Security Council

## Chapter One

### Introduction

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, (SCO), holds a curious position within the international system. A post-Cold War international organization with nascent interstate rivalries existing among its members, it was predicted to fall apart by some experts.<sup>1</sup> Instead the organization has not only survived but thrived. With the inclusion of Pakistan and India last year, its membership now boasts nearly half the world's population, more than any other regional intergovernmental organization.<sup>2</sup> Not only that, but it sits at the intersection of four major world religions and cultural identities: Christianity (Orthodox), Confucianism, Hinduism, and Islam.<sup>3</sup> The SCO has asserted itself on the global stage, taking positions on Eurasian security and economics.

On the surface however, the organization appears to be a brittle structure with its members involved in petty disputes and rivalries.<sup>4</sup> Rivalries in international relations have been observed as a leading cause of interstate war. Yet, these rivalries have not escalated to war or other forms of conflict. Instead, it seems that they have even de-escalated. How then has this organization, the SCO, with its internal contradictions, dismissed by its critics as *passé* in the post-Cold War era,<sup>5</sup> not only has endured for nineteen years with no signs of breaking-up, but managed these rivalries? This question forms the *raison d'être* for this thesis.

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Blank, "China's Defeats in Central Asia", Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, August 14, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Pepe Escobar, "The SCO Just Became the World's Largest Political Organization", Russia Insider, June 21, 2017, accessed May 31, 2018 at: <https://russia-insider.com/en/politics/sco-just-became-worlds-largest-political-organization/ri20170>.

<sup>3</sup> Alexander Lukin, "Eurasian Integration and the Clash of Values," *Survival*, Vol. 56, No. 3, (May 2014): 43-60.

<sup>4</sup> Derek Grossman, "China Will Regret India's Entry Into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization", The Diplomat, July 24, 2017, accessed May 31, 2018 at: <https://thediplomat.com/2017/07/china-will-regret-indias-entry-into-the-shanghai-cooperation-organization/>.

<sup>5</sup> Leon Hadar, "Hey, guys – the Cold War is over! Really!" The Business Times, Singapore, August 1, 2001.

In fact, this thesis will argue that the very structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization allows it to de-escalate rivalries among its members. In addition, the dissolution of the Soviet Union led to the formation of new states in the center of Eurasia. These newly formed states have their own histories of rivalry that have not been fully explored in the still evolving literature on post-Soviet Central Asia. Specifically, whether interstate rivalries do exist among the four Central Asian states that are also members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. If these rivalries are present, and there is some dispute in the literature that they do, their rivalry process- how they have formed, escalated, and most importantly de-escalated (if they have) has been, so far, neglected by many scholars of Central Asian politics.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter will be organized into five sections. In the first section the research puzzle will be introduced, specifically it will discuss what prompted the thesis question, and what historical context the research should be seen in. This will be followed by a re-statement of the thesis question, and why it is important. The third section will give a brief overview of the research method used, including some definitions of terms. The research method will be given a more thorough treatment in chapter three. The fourth section will demonstrate what new knowledge this thesis will contribute to the scholarship on rivalries, trust in international relations, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The final section will give an overview of the remaining thesis chapters.

### **Research Puzzle**

One of the major sources of interstate wars is long-standing animosity between two states which can morph into an interstate rivalry. Rivalries have been a staple of the international system since antiquity, the intense conflicts between Persia and Greece, Athens and Sparta, and

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<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, Sally Cummings, *Understanding Central Asia: Politics and Contested Transformations*, (New York: Routledge, 2012).

Rome and Carthage could all be classified as rivalries.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps, more so than other interstate interactions, rivalries have been identified in the broader literature as a major source of wars and conflicts between states. These rivalries can exist for decades, even centuries, in extreme cases, spanning multiple regimes and generations. Rivalries have been identified by earlier scholars, but in the post-Cold War era, scholarship that has focused on interstate rivalries has formed some prevailing consensus on the phenomenon; specifically, that a connection between rivalries and conflict exists.<sup>87</sup> For example, contiguous rivals involved in territorial or border disputes may be more likely to be war prone.<sup>98</sup> In addition to being prone to conflict, or perhaps because of their tendency toward conflict, rivalries from over an intractable issue between two states, such as territory, making the rivalry extremely difficult to de-escalate from conflict. In fact, repeated wars or lower intensity conflicts are a common denominator in rivalries. Thus, one of the most important questions facing IR scholars is how do rivalries de-escalate?

The existing literature on rivalries has not addressed, completely, the de-escalation process. While it is true that many wars were started by a rivalry, not all rivalries lead to war, others de-escalate and eventually terminate, (if a rivalry can truly terminate). It is also true that several historical rivalries have ended or de-escalated to the point that they are not considered rivalries anymore in the past thirty years.<sup>10</sup> But what causes some rivalries to de-escalate without resolution of the core impetus of said rivalry, and how do they stay de-escalated? Adding to this puzzle is the fact that some rivalries de-escalate and then recur over time, leading to more conflict.<sup>11</sup> Continual de-escalation of rivalry impulses, or even outright termination of the rivalry are the ideal goals, but how are these outcomes achieved?

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<sup>7</sup> Claudio Cioffi-Revilla, "The Political Uncertainty of Interstate Rivalries: A Punctuated Equilibrium Model" in: *The Dynamics of Enduring Rivalries*, Paul F. Diehl, ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 66-67.

<sup>8</sup> Gary Goertz, Paul F. Diehl, "Taking 'Enduring' Out of Enduring Rivalry: The Rivalry Approach to War and Peace," *International Interactions*, Vol. 21, No. 3, (1996): 291.

<sup>9</sup> John A. Vasquez, "Distinguishing Rivals That Go to War from Those That Do Not: A Quantitative Comparative Case Study of the Two Paths to War," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 4, (Dec. 1996): 544-546.

<sup>10</sup> Germany-France for example was a long-standing rivalry in the nineteenth, and first half of the twentieth century, fighting three wars in seventy years. Now, it is highly improbable that the two states would go to war. Partly this is due to institutional restraints. Brigitte Weiffen, Matthias Dembinski, Andreas Hasenclever, Katja Freistein, Makiko Yamauchi, "Democracy, Regional Security Institutions, and Rivalry Mitigation: Evidence from Europe, South America, and Asia," *Security Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 3, (2011): 389, 391.

<sup>11</sup> Gennady Rudkevich, Konstantinos Travlos, Paul F. Diehl, "Terminated or Just Interrupted? How the End of a Rivalry Plants the Seeds for Future Conflict," *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 94, No. 1, (March 2013): 159-160.

This rivalry de-escalation process has been examined by several groups of scholars with much of the literature pointing to “shocks” as a necessary condition for rivalry de-escalation.<sup>12</sup> This focus on shocks precludes other, equally plausible explanations for rivalry de-escalation, and was the prompt for this research study. What of rivalries that de-escalate without shocks? Or does some element precipitate shocks in the de-escalation process? These questions, asked very broadly, formed the basis of the research puzzle.

Since the end of the Cold War, and the breakup of the Soviet Union, international politics has shifted from a bipolar world to a brief “unipolar moment,”<sup>13</sup> and now an emerging multipolar world system.<sup>14</sup> The advent of a more multipolar world system over the past twenty years has made the rivalry phenomenon more, instead of less, likely to cause war.<sup>15</sup> A multipolar world system is considered less stable since there are more independent actors and thus more interaction opportunities, some of which may lead to war.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the study of rivalries, a major source of interstate war, and especially their resolution or de-escalation, has taken on more urgency.

Additionally, the end of the Cold War has led to a proliferation of intergovernmental organizations, some with security as their main focus and with long-standing rivalries among their members. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is among these organizations, whose members have or had rivalries among them, yet have not seen an escalation toward sustained conflict. It could be argued that these inherent rivalries have de-escalated despite the absence of

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<sup>12</sup> Gary Goertz, Paul F. Diehl, “The Initiation and Termination of Enduring Rivalries: The Impact of Political Shocks,” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 39, No. 1, (Feb., 1995): 30-52.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (Winter 1990/1991), pp. 23-33.

<sup>14</sup> Christopher Layne, “The Unipolar Illusion Revisited: The Coming End of the United States’ Unipolar Moment,” *International Security*, Vol 31, No. 2, (2006): 37.

<sup>15</sup> There is some dispute among scholars if the post-Cold War world exhibits multipolarity or unipolarity. See Hal Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Rise of the Post-Cold War Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), and Nuno P. Monteiro, *Theory of Unipolar Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), for an argument for the latter, while other scholars have stated there is sufficient pushback from other states in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to call the world system multipolar. See Thomas Ambrosio, *Challenging America’s Global Preeminence: Russia’s Quest for Multipolarity*, (London: Routledge, 2005). This thesis will assume a brief unipolar moment after the collapse of the Soviet Union, with now an emerging multipolar system coming into place.

<sup>16</sup> See: Karl Deutsch, J. David Singer, “Multipolar Power Systems and International Stability,” *World Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 3, (Apr. 1964): 390-406, and Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 171.

obvious shocks in the rivalry relationship. It is within this framework, the study of rivalry de-escalation and the SCO, that this research project should be placed, marking it as relevant to the existing literature on these phenomena.

### **Thesis Question**

There are two main empirical arguments that form the basis for the research question. The first argument is that *interstate rivalries* exist among the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. No scholarly consensus has emerged about the nature of rivalries in these newly formed Eurasian states so this thesis will contribute new knowledge about the contours of these rivalries. The second argument which leads directly from the first is that these rivalries within the SCO have de-escalated, or at least not escalated to conflict, in part due to membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

These two arguments all lead to the same central question for this thesis: Were interstate rivalries present among the founding members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and if so, does the organization play a role in restraining these existing rivalries from escalating to conflict? This leads to the working hypothesis that this thesis will attempt to use to answer this question: There were rivalries among all the founding members of the SCO, but rivalry impulses, the desire or need to escalate the rivalry to conflict, among them are restrained through the structural framework that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization amalgamates among its members: specifically, their interactions in formal settings, which are repeated consistently, over a prolonged number of years.

The creation of new states at the break-up of the Soviet Union means that a new region was created, replete with its own issues, such as border disputes, religious and ethnic strife, ownership of natural resource, and economic development to name a few that have emerged over the past thirty years. The SCO has endured for two-thirds of that time, its members occupying a significant portion of post-Soviet space, and is now seen by some of its members as an important

element of their foreign and defense policy.<sup>17</sup> A sufficient amount of time has elapsed since the end of the Cold War to observe trends in the development of the emerging post-Soviet states, and how the Shanghai Cooperation Organization functions. There has been little scholarly attention paid to how the SCO has developed, in particular how it has managed the interactions among its members. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is not a military alliance, like NATO, or even the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) which shares some of the same members as the SCO, nor is it strictly an informal economic bloc, like the G-7, or BRICS. Instead, it is an intergovernmental organization that focuses on security and trade among its members, not dissimilar from the European Union (EU), although not to the same extent. Unlike the EU, which originated from the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), focusing on trade, the SCO started with security and then worked toward greater economic and social cooperation with its members.<sup>18</sup>

Since the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is still relatively new, scholarship on how this process of rivalry de-escalation developed has not been examined closely. With the SCO now home to half the world's population and showing no signs of dissolving, the process of how it aids in rivalry de-escalation deserves closer attention. In particular, how it manages to keep rivalries from reemerging, or backsliding. This aspect of rivalries has been neglected in much of the literature, and the SCO with its myriad rivalries is an ideal subject to examine this process. This is why this thesis question is posed at this time.

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<sup>17</sup> Hongsub Lee, "Multilateralism in Russian Foreign Policy: Some Tentative Evaluations," *International Area Review*, Vol. 13, No. 3, (2010): 37.

<sup>18</sup> European Parliament, Directorate-General for Research, "From European Coal and Steel Community to European Union: The European Parliament, the First Forty Years," (Brussels: Official Publications European Communities, 1994).

## Research Path

This thesis will employ a case study approach as the research method to answer the proposed question.<sup>19</sup> For the three Eurasian rivalries, despite their differing underpinnings they developed a shared outcome – that their rivalries de-escalated, and not due to a shock. The purpose in choosing these cases was to find mechanisms, or, more accurately, pathways, to show phenomenon X leads to Y for example, that will bolster the argument that de-escalation of rivalries can occur without a shock. Instead, some other pathway, or pathways, is instrumental to de-escalating rivalries. In this case, it is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and its structure that leads to mutual trust being built and reinforced, which leads to a de-escalation of rivalry tensions. In order to find these mechanisms in the selected cases for this thesis, process tracing was employed.<sup>20</sup> Process tracing was used to explain the framework by which the rivalries in these particular cases de-escalated. This method and what pathways are actually being traced will be analyzed in more detail in chapter three.

For this thesis, the argument made, based on the research, will be that the regional rivalries that were absorbed by the SCO, namely the China-Russia rivalry, the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan rivalry, and a complex triadic rivalry between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, have been de-escalated, without conflict. The factors that influence this outcome are the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as a regional intergovernmental organization, with its focus on security, and its various institutionalized mechanisms which helped de-escalate the rivalries by building and reinforcing trust. The mechanisms under scrutiny will be the pathways that link these factors and the outcome.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> John Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 83.

<sup>20</sup> The main purpose of process tracing, or of any research endeavor, is to discover how or why a particular event takes place. Derek Beach, Rasmus Brun Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 32.

<sup>21</sup> Friedrichs defines causal mechanisms as “recurrent sequences of actions that generate a specific outcome.” Jorg Friedrichs, “Causal Mechanisms and Process Patterns in International Relations: Thinking Within and Without the Box,” *St. Antony’s International Review*, Vol. 12, No. 1, (May 2016): 77-79.

In the case of this thesis these pathways would be steps that led, first to the emergence of the rivalry, in the case of the Central Asian members of the SCO, as well as those steps that led to the de-escalation of all the rivalries being investigated. For example, territorial disputes would lead to a rivalry in some historical cases, so it might be so in the Eurasian rivalries among the SCO members. In addition, rivalry de-escalation may occur after several summit meetings between leaders of rival states; which would lead to trust building; this would be an example of a mechanism that would strengthen the thesis's arguments.

The next part of this section will give operating definitions of the key phenomena this research will examine. Specifically, the thesis will look at the principle of reinforcement of trust, which is defined here as the repeated, formalized, and often institutionalized bilateral and multilateral exchanges that two or more states conduct among each other with the intent to foster mutual trust in order to de-escalate existing tensions, and/or to prevent a re-rise of tensions, as the main mechanism used to de-escalate rivalries. This reinforcement, the thesis will argue, is the linkage that helps trigger rivalry de-escalation and prevents rivalry backsliding – the reoccurrence of the same rivalry between the same two states in the future. The most important characteristic of reinforcement is that it is repetitive. It happens over and over again to the point that it will eventually become second nature to the states involved. If done correctly it will allow trust to outlast regimes, and prevent rivalry backsliding, which is an element of rivalries not accounted for in the existing literature. Reinforcement has happened both outside and inside the structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, but the institutionalization of the process within the SCO provides for an easier path toward tamping down rivalry impulses.

Mutual trust is defined here as a state of being that exists when two or more adversaries in a potential conflict believe that the opposite adversary (or adversaries) have peaceful intentions toward them in their dispute, and these intentions are therefore reciprocated. Mutual trust between two states is a rare phenomenon in international relations, but when it is in place

trust can lead to a sustained peace between two or more states. At its most basic trust is confidence in the face of risk and uncertainty.<sup>22</sup> The very basis for rivalry de-escalation is that the respective embers of the rivalry dyad (or triad) trust that their neighbors have nothing but peaceful intentions. In order to get to that stage however, all the actors have to demonstrate their capability for peace, and earn that trust, and this is where reinforcement plays such a vital role.

Reinforcement is the mechanism by which trust is earned among nation-states. The more reliable the state is in its actions, the greater the amount of trust is bestowed on it by other states. By focusing on the role the SCO plays in building, and reinforcing, mutual trust to de-escalate rivalries, this thesis brings a fresh approach to the study of interstate rivalries.

An interstate rivalry is defined as when the disagreements between two states over singular or multiple issues become intransigent enough as to create friction between them, leading both to employ any number of state or non-state resources to resolve the dispute in their favor, no matter the time involved. A rivalry would have to last a minimum of one year, preferably at least five years, to exclude short-term disagreements, and an enduring rivalry is one that would last a minimum of ten years, to include rivalries such as Russia and China.

It helps to know when a given rivalry begins, before its de-escalation process is examined, and finding the beginning and end points of rivalries is not always a simple matter. For instance, when did the China-Russia rivalry begin – 1619, 1655, 1816, 1857, or 1862? When did it end – 1949, 1986, 1989, or 1994? Different scholars have assigned different dates to the rivalry, depending on when they believed the rivalry began and ended.<sup>23</sup> And this is with a so-called consensus rivalry. Identifying rivalries and their duration may be a matter of scholarly

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<sup>22</sup> Morten Frederiksen, "Trust in the Face of Uncertainty: A Qualitative Study of Intersubjective Trust and Risk," *International Review of Sociology*, Vol. 24, No. 1, (2014): 132.

<sup>23</sup> Carl Jacobsen marks Sino-Russian relations as competitive, even contentious, between 1619 and 1985, with tensions only de-escalating between the two states after that time. Carl Jacobson, "Russia-China: The New 'Strategic Partnership,'" *European Security*, Vol. 7, No. 4, (1998): 1-2. Diehl and Goertz on the other hand see the rivalry as beginning in 1862 and ending in 1986. Paul Diehl, Gary Goertz, *War and Peace in International Rivalry*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 145.

perception.<sup>24</sup> How violent they really need to be and what levels of measurement are used by political scientists and other international relations specialists are another point of contention in identifying rivalries.<sup>25</sup> So, there is no real scholarly consensus for how rivalries emerge, nor on how they end, or even what constitutes a rivalry. With a working definition of the main concepts analyzed in this thesis now in hand, the next section will focus on the main contribution to the wider scholarly literature the thesis makes.

### **Contribution and Originality of the Thesis**

This thesis will contribute new knowledge to the field of international relations in the following ways. First, it will re-analyze the rivalry de-escalation process. As the literature review in the following chapter will demonstrate no scholarly consensus has developed on how rivalries de-escalate and eventually terminate. Prevailing literature has focused on shocks – a crisis or series of crises that precipitate the collapse of a rivalry. This thesis, instead focuses on how trust reinforcement, noted in the previous section, is the main driver of rivalry de-escalation, at least in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. As stated previously, this organization is still new, and the literature on it is emerging and evolving. There has been little scholarly examination of the SCO as a driver of rivalry de-escalation, thus this thesis will shed new light on the rivalry de-escalation process within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, specifically how this process is accomplished.. This is a novel approach and will contribute new understanding to the rivalry process.

All of these rivalries de-escalated in much the same way, or so the research has found. In that a shock did not precipitate the de-escalation. It was rather through the incremental building of trust, and the reinforcement of that trust, to prevent rivalry reemergence. The main driver for this trust building was membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The

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<sup>24</sup> William R. Thompson, "Principle Rivalries," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 39, No. 2, (Jun 1995): 195-196.

<sup>25</sup> Eric Gartzke, Michael W. Simon, "Hot Hand: A Critical Analysis of Enduring Rivalries," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 61, No. 3, (Aug. 1999): 782. The authors name several different mechanisms in identifying rivalries.

SCO facilitated the emergence of institutional trust, trust that stems from codified agreements, norms, or institutions. The crux of this type of trust is that it creates domestic breathing space for the rivals and allows them to have an effective voice in negotiations.<sup>26</sup> The main proponents of institutional trust have focused on treaties and norms, not only organizations. Additionally, institutional trust scholars do not see trust being built incrementally, in stages. However, the trust building that occurred under the aegis of the SCO has been incremental and has occurred despite an absence of norms among the participants. Thus, this thesis will propose a new de-escalation model with a focus on trust building within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as the main impetus for rivalries to de-escalate.

Secondly, this thesis will add knowledge on four new rivalries and one established rivalry. In the latter case, it will re-examine the long-standing China-Russia rivalry and how it did not de-escalate with a shock as much of the literature presumes, but through the principle of reinforcement of trust. In the case of the former, new rivalries will be extrapolated from the collected data. These rivalries formed out of the post-Soviet space after 1991. They include rivalries between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and among Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Prior knowledge on these rivalries has been scant, either on their formation or de-escalation, especially in the case of Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Uzbekistan where very little, if any, literature has been written on it. The next section will give an overview of the remaining thesis chapters.

### **Thesis Overview**

This thesis will be laid out in seven chapters. The following chapter, chapter two covers the literature on rivalries, trust, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Specifically, this

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<sup>26</sup> Aaron Hoffman, *Building Trust: Overcoming Suspicion in International Conflict*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 43.

chapter will, starting within the existing IR literature, argue that, contrary to much of the literature on rivalry de-escalation, it is not necessary for a shock to precipitate the end or de-escalation of a rivalry, but rather it is through the principle of reinforcement that this can be achieved, and that the SCO plays an instrumental role in reinforcing this trust. The literature on trust in international relations is also reviewed. Trust is seen as instrumental in building relationships, but what types of trust are most enduring and how that trust is built is disputed in the literature. Thus, a critical examination is needed to find what the literature already states, and what it leaves unstated. Finally, a review of the literature on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is commenced to see how SCO scholars view the burgeoning intergovernmental organization.

Chapter three provides the methods and conceptual framework used in this thesis. It will begin with the case selection, detailing why these particular cases were chosen, and then segue into an analysis of the main research tool used in the thesis: process tracing, and what pathways are specifically looked at that lead to rivalry de-escalation. The next section of this chapter will provide a framework for analysis on rivalry de-escalation in the SCO.

The first part of this framework will examine the rivalry process, how rivalries form among states. This is necessary to examine in detail since it will be one of the pathways analyzed in the two Central Asian case study chapters. The second section of this framework will focus on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's contribution to rivalry de-escalation. It will be argued here that the design of the SCO is specifically set up to build and reinforce trust among its members. This framework will form the core analysis that will be examined in the three case study chapters which follow chapter three.

Chapter four analyzes the China-Russia rivalry, the first of the three rivalries in the case study chapters. This chapter argues that, using the pathways set up in chapter three, the rivalry between China and Russia, one of the oldest and longest interstate rivalries, de-

escalated, and remains de-escalated, due to mutual trust being reinforced through the specific mechanisms of the SCO. The first section of this chapter will examine the signaling that occurred to begin the rivalry de-escalation process. This is followed by a close scrutiny of the confidence-building mechanisms the two states set up, and which ultimately led to the creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The following section of this chapter will analyze the role the SCO has played in building and reinforcing trust between Russia and China to keep their rivalry de-escalated.

Chapter five examines the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan rivalry that emerged after the Cold War ended. This chapter argues in the first section that the relationship between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan post-independence (1991 to the present) is marked by a rivalry between them. Thus, the rivalry process, which includes disputes over territory and borders, as well as sour relations between their respective leaders, is analyzed.

The second section of this chapter will argue that the rivalry de-escalated due to mutual trust being built between them through the auspices of the SCO. Signaling, confidence-building mechanisms, and trust reinforcement, the elements essential for rivalry de-escalation, all occurred through the mechanisms provided by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The rivalry began to de-escalate prior to the death of longtime leader Islam Karimov, and the process was accelerated by his successor, Shavkat Mirziyoyev. Thus, rivalry de-escalation occurred without a shock, contrary to what most of the established rivalry literature argues.

Chapter six analyzes a unique situation between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan that has been rarely observed in the rivalry literature. This chapter argues that the relationship between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is marked by a triadic, or complex, rivalry. Rivalries that involve three states are a rare phenomenon, and the identification of a contemporary triadic rivalry in Central Asia is novel. The same rivalry process pathway used in the previous chapter will be used here to examine how this rivalry has

proceeded. This will be followed by a detailed examination into the role the SCO has played in its de-escalation. As with the Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan rivalry, the primary elements of rivalry de-escalation occurred within the SCO's framework. That is to say, this chapter argues that the process of signaling, confidence-building measures, and trust reinforcement, mainly occurred through the annual summits and military exercises the Shanghai Cooperation Organization hosted. Chapter seven will conclude the thesis. This final chapter will summarize the findings, re-position the thesis in the current literature on rivalries and trust in international relations and look to paths for future research.

## **Chapter Two Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

This chapter gives a detailed examination of the current literature on interstate rivalries, trust in international relations, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. This literature review includes gaps that this thesis will address in its arguments. These gaps will be revealed in both the existing literature on interstate rivalry de-escalation, trust in international relations, and on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. In rivalry de-escalation, the prevailing literature has focused on shocks, (to varying degrees) as the impetus to de-escalation and eventual termination of rivalries. Instead of shocks as the primary driver of rivalry de-escalation this thesis argues that reinforcement of trust is more essential to the rivalry de-escalation process.

This is particularly true to prevent rivalries from backsliding, an element of rivalry de-escalation that has not been fully explored. Even the literature on trust in international relations has not given comprehensive answers as to how trust can endure over time between former adversarial states. Rivalries that were once thought to have de-escalated or outright terminated have reemerged over time. This reemergence, termed backsliding here, is best prevented through the consistent application of mutual trust.

Trust is more enduring if it is reinforced gradually through formal mechanisms such as summitry. These mechanisms should be institutionalized, preferably within the framework of an intergovernmental organization with a focus on security issues, thereby giving them more sustainability. The literature on trust has not delved deeply into how trust can ensure rivalry de-escalation and prevent backsliding, with no scholarly consensus on what trust is, or how it can be built. Much of it revolves around overcoming the security dilemma, and that interpersonal relations between leaders, or shared values are the defining factor in trust building. Little has

been said about the role multilateral institutions can play in building sustainable trust over a prolonged period of time.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is an example of a regional intergovernmental organization. It is not too big, like the UN or the WTO, as to prove unwieldy, nor is its focus exclusively on economics like the BRICS group or the G-7. It is a newer organization, having emerged in the post-Cold War era, and thus the literature on it, and its role in the international system, is still evolving. Even still, a brief review of that literature is undertaken here to pinpoint where this thesis will argue a new understanding as to how the SCO works to build mutual trust.

### **Rivalries**

Academic scholarship on rivalries has a long history. However for many years there was no systemic approach to the study of rivalries, with scholars focusing on individual Great Power interactions, where rivalry was one aspect, instead.<sup>1</sup> Current scholarship on rivalries has largely focused on them as international processes in their own right, exclusive of other phenomena such as alliances, arms races, or state collapse.<sup>2</sup> The literature on rivalries has observed that they are a major source of conflict among states, especially *enduring* rivalries, which are defined, informally, as “long-term hate-affairs between nations.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, enduring rivalries are rivalries that last for a long period of time (measured in years, often decades, and sometimes centuries), and that are marked by repeated militarized confrontations over this time.<sup>4</sup> These enduring rivalries were not identified in the academic literature as such until 1992 by Diehl and Goertz. Building on a study by Maoz and Gochman, who found

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance: Robert Jervis, Jack Snyder, *Dominoes and Bandwagons, Strategic Beliefs and Great Power Competition in the Eastern Rimland*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> Claudio Cioffi-Revilla, 67.

<sup>3</sup> Zeev Maoz and Ben D. Mor, “Enduring Rivalries: The Early Years,” *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 17, No. 2, (1996): 141.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

patterns in militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) between 1816 and 1976 utilizing the Correlates of War dataset,<sup>5</sup> Diehl and Goertz observed greater dispute-proneness among certain nation-state dyads over a prolonged period of time.<sup>6</sup> These dyads were identified by Diehl and Goertz as “enduring rivalries.”<sup>7</sup> The co-authors saw disputes in these dyads centered around territory and expanded on this concept in their first book.<sup>8</sup> Territories that were more disputed tended to lead to recurring conflict between the two states disputing the territory.<sup>9</sup> Over time this dispute would form the basis of an enduring rivalry.<sup>10</sup>

This linkage between territorial disputes and rivalries was new. Diehl, in an earlier work, examined the relationship between territorial contiguity and military escalation, finding the two elements related.<sup>11</sup> However, prior to Diehl and Goertz’s research territorial disputes were considered mostly ancillary to other causes of war.<sup>12</sup> Research on territorial disputes irrespective of rivalry dyads was developed by Huth<sup>13</sup> and later expanded by other scholars, particularly Gibler who noted that the literature on territorial disputes, and the adjacent rivalry literature, does not give clear indications as to which territorial disputes escalate to conflict, or how others de-escalate without conflict.<sup>14</sup> Gibler sees regime type as integral to whether territorial disputes are settled peacefully, and develops the territorial peace theory, which examines the democratic peace theory through a territorial lens, whether states become more democratic after the settlement of territorial disputes.<sup>15</sup> The groundwork for this theory was set in an earlier article he co-wrote along with Tir, which looked specifically at how positive peace

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<sup>5</sup> Zeev Maoz, Charles S. Gochman, “Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1816-1976: Procedures, Patterns, and Insights,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 28, No. 4, (Dec. 1984): 585-616.

<sup>6</sup> This was the first peer-reviewed published study on enduring rivalries, prior to this the authors had co-written a paper presented at the International Studies Association annual meeting in 1991. Gary Goertz, Paul F. Diehl, “The Empirical Importance of Enduring Rivalries,” *International Interactions*, Vol. 18, No. 2, (1992): 151-163

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 151.

<sup>8</sup> Gary Goertz, Paul F. Diehl, *Territorial Changes and International Conflict*, (New York: Routledge, 1992)

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 91.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 34.

<sup>11</sup> Paul F. Diehl, “Contiguity and Military Escalation in Major Power Rivalries, 1816-1980,” *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 47, No. 4, (1985): 1209.

<sup>12</sup> Paul K. Huth, *Standing Your Ground, Territorial Dispute and International Conflict*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 8.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

<sup>14</sup> Douglas M. Gibler, *The Territorial Peace, Borders, State Development, and International Conflict*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 23.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 114.

(mutual cooperation) and resolution of territorial disputes are interconnected.<sup>16</sup> The literature on territorial disputes has since diverged somewhat from that of rivalries, but rivalry scholars still see the linkage between territory and war-proneness in certain dyads.<sup>17</sup>

The early literature on rivalries focused mostly on conflict propensity of rivalry dyads, including those focused on territory. Research also showed that there were a number of dyads that seemed frozen in place, neither escalating to war nor de-escalating to peaceful relations. Diehl and Goertz observed that rivalries tended to begin and end at the onset of a political “shock” - a dramatic change in the environment of the dyadic relationship.<sup>18</sup> Shocks were considered essential to rivalry formation, de-escalation, and eventual termination. Without them, an enduring rivalry could last in perpetuity. This focus on shocks in turn led to research on the rivalry approach to war and peace.<sup>19</sup> Again Diehl and Goertz provide a framework by borrowing the theory punctuated equilibrium from biology and argue that rivalries would enter long periods of stasis from which only an evolutionary “bump” or shock would move it in one direction (escalation) or another (de-escalation).<sup>20</sup> This emphasis on shocks became integral to rivalry studies, as other experts incorporated shocks into their rivalry models.<sup>21</sup> Another more recent collaboration between the two scholars looked at how rivalries are maintained, through the failure of governments to end them, either through the

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<sup>16</sup> Douglas M. Gibler, Jaroslav Tir, “Settled Borders and Regime Type: Democratic Transitions as Consequences of Peaceful Territorial Transfers,” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol 54. No. 4 (2010): 951-954.

<sup>17</sup> John Vasquez, Brandon Valeriano, “Territory as a Source of Conflict and a Road to Peace,” in *Sage Handbook on Conflict Resolution*, eds. Jacob Bercovitch, Victor Kremenyuk, and I. William Zartman, (London: Sage Publications, 2009), 197.

<sup>18</sup> Gary Goertz, Paul F. Diehl, “The Initiation and Termination of Enduring Rivalries: The Impact of Political Shocks” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 39, No. 1, (1995): 30.

<sup>19</sup> Paul F. Diehl, Gary Goertz, *War and Peace in International Rivalry*, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 134.

<sup>21</sup> For instance, Ishtiaq Ahmad and Hannes Ebert applied Diehl and Goertz’s model to the India-Pakistan rivalry. See Ishtiaq Ahmad, Hannes Ebert, “Breaking the Equilibrium? Old Rivals and New Structures in the India-Pakistan Rivalry,” *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, Vol. 42, No. 1, (2015): 46-75.

inability to achieve victory in the rivalry or by the failure of conflict management by the government.<sup>22</sup>

Other scholars have picked up on Diehl and Goertz's work but added their own modifications to it. William Thompson authored the article, *Principal Rivalries*, in which he argued that rivalries need to be more precisely defined.<sup>23</sup> This included not relying too much on MID data to define rivalries, and distinguishing between rivalries that are primarily spatial (territorially-based) and those that are positional (contesting spheres of influence).<sup>24</sup> John Vasquez has attempted to distinguish between those rivalries that lead to war and those that do not, finding, as Diehl and Goertz did, that territorial disputes are central to whether war is initiated in a rivalry, but with more updated data.<sup>25</sup>

Building on Vasquez's model, and their own earlier work, Thompson and Rasler co-authored an article on rivalry formation, arguing that Vasquez was half-right about territory initiating disputes, but neglecting the spatial component, which Thompson had argued for earlier as key to defining rivalries, especially among Great Powers.<sup>26</sup> This collaboration led to another, more comprehensive study on rivalries which they co-authored along with Colaresi. In *Strategic Rivalries in World Politics*, the trio argue that strategic rivalries are distinct from enduring rivalries. An enduring rivalry has some level of dispute-density, a certain number of MID, whereas a strategic rivalry is more about perception (two sides that view each other as rivals) and may or may not include militarized disputes between the two rivals.<sup>27</sup> In addition, they point to the fact that some rivalries do not require a spatial dimension, that two states could compete over influence in a region or sub-region in a positional rivalry.<sup>28</sup> An example of a

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<sup>22</sup> Paul F. Diehl, Gary Goertz, Bradford Jones, "Maintenance Process in International Rivalries," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol 49, No. 4 (2005): 742.

<sup>23</sup> William R. Thompson, "Principal Rivalries," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 39, No. 2, (Jun., 1995): 195.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> John A. Vasquez, "Distinguishing Rivalries That Go to War from Those That Do Not: A Quantitative Comparative Case Study of the Two Paths to War," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 4, (Dec. 1996): 556 .

<sup>26</sup> Karen Rasler, William R. Thompson, "Explaining Rivalry Escalation to War: Space, Position, and Contiguity in the Major Power Subsystem," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 3, (Sep., 2000): 505.

<sup>27</sup> Michael P. Colaresi, Karen Rasler, William R. Thompson, *Strategic Rivalries in World Politics: Position, Space, and Conflict Escalation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 3.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 79.

positional rivalry is the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War, albeit on a global scale. The two superpowers did not contest specific territory, instead their rivalry was a struggle over ideological and power.<sup>29</sup>

Rasler and Thompson co-authored another study along with Sumit Ganguly on rivalry termination in *How Rivalries End*.<sup>30</sup> This work built on an earlier article Rasler wrote on how revised expectations can lead to rivalry de-escalation.<sup>31</sup> In the article Rasler argued that shocks, either endogenous or exogenous lead to a revision of expectations among rival states.<sup>32</sup> Writing with her co-authors, they provide a comprehensive model on rivalry de-escalation and termination. They argue that in order for a rivalry to be terminated certain conditions must be met, specifically that expectations between the two rivals must be revised.<sup>33</sup> Once expectations are revised and reciprocated by the other party, and reinforced in some way, then the rivalry will terminate. Expectations are revised through shocks, third-party pressures, and the emergence of entrepreneurial leadership in at least one of the rivalry states that is willing to take risks.<sup>34</sup> Not all of these elements are necessary to revise expectations, but some are according to the authors.

Maoz and Mor have co-authored an attempt to form a comprehensive theory on enduring rivalries, including how they are formed, how they are managed, and how they ultimately end.<sup>35</sup> Among their findings, utilizing both historical case studies and game theory, is that rivalries should be considered as evolutionary processes, (such as Diehl and Goertz argued), as well as being strategically interdependent.<sup>36</sup> A rivalry only terminates, according to the model they developed, when both sides are satisfied, that is the grievances of one of the

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<sup>29</sup> Sara McLaughlin Mitchell, Cameron G. Theis, "Issue Rivalries," *Journal of Conflict Management and Peace Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 3, (2011): 234.

<sup>30</sup> Karen Rasler, William Thompson, Sumit Ganguly, *How Rivalries End*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

<sup>31</sup> Karen Rasler, "Shocks, Expectancy Revision, and the De-escalation of Protracted Conflicts: The Israeli-Palestinian Case," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 37, No. 6, (2000): 699-720.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 702

<sup>33</sup> Rasler, Thompson, Ganguly, 20.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

<sup>35</sup> Zeev Maos, Ben D. Mor, *Bound by Struggle: The Strategic Evolution of Enduring Rivalries*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 257.

rivals is addressed.<sup>37</sup> The authors are unclear how this result could be achieved on a consistent basis.

The role of domestic politics in rivalry formation is looked at in two books. The first is by Colaresi. He looks at the role of domestic pressures on rivalry management, incorporating a model of dynamic two-level pressures.<sup>38</sup> Borrowing ethnic outbidding from anthropology he places the concept in a rivalry context, arguing that domestic pressures may keep a rivalry going, even though the elites, the leadership, may want to terminate it.<sup>39</sup> Thus, a rivalry may exist even though one of the participants is democratic. Colaresi utilizes a mixed-method approach, using case studies from the Israel-Egypt, China-U.S., and the Ethiopia-Somalia rivalries, in addition to a large-N study to find correlations between outbidding and future expectations. De-escalation of a rivalry usually occurs when both rivals have a common external enemy according to Colaresi.<sup>40</sup>

In the more recent work, *Asian Rivalries*, edited by Sumit Ganguly and William Thompson, the editors and their authors delve deeper into the nexus between domestic and international politics, with a comparative look at seven rivalries in East, South, and Southeast Asia.<sup>41</sup> Asia, rather than Europe, is considered more ripe for rivalry, given the more multipolar nature of the Asian subsystem compared to Europe.<sup>42</sup> Utilizing the standard rivalry case studies, among them India-Pakistan, China-India, North and South Korea, the U.S.-China, and the Soviet Union-China, the authors conclude that while two-level games are present in Asian rivalries, they are hardly a deciding factor in their outcome.<sup>43</sup> The main point of this book was to raise the profile of Asian rivalries, which have sometimes been neglected in scholarly studies relative to European or Middle Eastern rivalries. Dittmer wrote on the Soviet-Sino rivalry where

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 286.

<sup>38</sup> Michael P. Colaresi, *Scare Tactics: The Politics of International Rivalry* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2005).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Sumit Ganguly, William Thompson, eds. *Asian Rivalries: Conflict, Escalation, and Limitations on Two-Level Games*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 209.

the author views with skepticism the more recent period of Russian-Sino cooperation, considering the two former rivals as good neighbors rather than strategic partners.<sup>44</sup>

Other scholars have of course contributed to the rivalry literature. A few of note are Dreyer, who has co-authored with Thompson the *Handbook of International Rivalries* as well as written articles as a solo author. The *Handbook of International Rivalries* gives a cursory examination of more than two hundred rivalries the authors deemed strategic over the last two hundred years.<sup>45</sup> The handbook details the rivalries by region, demarking them as spatial or positional and how or if the rivalry was resolved. Dreyer has also focused on issue accumulation as an element of rivalry prolongation.<sup>46</sup> The more issues a rivalry has embedded in it, the harder it becomes to de-escalate, according to Dreyer.

Another, more recent, rivalry scholar is Valeriano, whose *Becoming Rivals: The Process of Interstate Rivalry Development* develops his own steps-to-rivalry model.<sup>47</sup> The model builds on Vasquez's steps-to-war model and includes the following steps. The first step is the issue that defines the rivalry.<sup>48</sup> Once this has been established the two rivals go about building alliances and building up arms as steps two and three.<sup>49</sup> This is followed by escalating bargaining demands, and finally linkage with other rivalry dyads.<sup>50</sup> This theory states that, contrary to Diehl and Goertz who advocate that rivalries begin with shocks, rivalries instead occur in a series of stages, as illustrated above.

The term "enduring rivalries" has appeared in the literature quite consistently. It was first studied in the 1980s and brought to the fore of the academic debate on war-proneness by Diehl and Goertz.<sup>51</sup> However, it has only been in the past two decades that the concept has been seriously studied by scholars.<sup>52</sup> Rivalry scholars have largely agreed on a loose set

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 143-144.

<sup>45</sup> William R. Thompson, David Dreyer, *Handbook of International Rivalries*, (London: Sage Publications, 2010)

<sup>46</sup> David R. Dreyer, "Issue Conflict Accumulation and the Dynamics of Strategic Rivalries," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 54, No. 3, (Sept. 2010): 779-795.

<sup>47</sup> Brandon Valeriano, *Foreign Policy Analysis: Becoming Rivals: The Process of Interstate Rivalry Development*, (New York: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 37-39.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 40-41.

<sup>51</sup> Paul Diehl and Gary Goertz, *War and Peace in International Rivalry*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 19.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

definition of what a rivalry needs to consist of in order to be labeled as such. According to Diehl and Goetz there must be three elements present for a rivalry to exist: spatial consistency, duration, and military competitiveness.<sup>53</sup> Rivalries are considered dyadic in nature and consist of independent states.<sup>54</sup> Substate actors or non-state actors cannot have rivalries, although one state can have multiple rivalries at any given time.<sup>55</sup> Some scholars see a linkage between rivalries held by the same state,<sup>56</sup> a topic which will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

Rivalries also must be distinguished from isolated military confrontations. There is no set time limit for a rivalry (some intense rivalries are very short in duration, other rivalries that are longer see less intensity), but a rivalry should last long enough for either or both states to adjust their strategic outlook to accommodate the rivalry.<sup>57</sup> Finally, there should be some “military competitiveness” between the rivalry states. There is some disagreement among rivalry scholars over what exactly constitutes military competitiveness;<sup>58</sup> however, it must be present enough to separate the rivalry from “friendly” competitiveness.

Another point of contention in the rivalry literature is the existence of asymmetrical rivalries. These are rivalries between states that are not peer competitors. One defining criteria of a rivalry is that each state must see the other in the dyad as a competitor. However, some scholars have suggested that asymmetry is possible in rivalry relationships,<sup>59</sup> still most enduring

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>54</sup> Recent scholarship has argued that a few rivalries are triadic, a concept that will be examined in more detail in chapter five. See: Brandon Valeriano, Matthew Powers, “Complex Interstate Rivalries,” *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 12, No. 4, (Oct. 2016): 552-570.

<sup>55</sup> Multiple rivalries with one state are quite common. Israel, for instance held simultaneous rivalries with Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Jordan at one time. Likewise, China held simultaneous rivalries with the Soviet Union, the US, Taiwan, and Vietnam. *Asian Rivalries, Conflict, Escalation and Limitations on Two-Level Games*, eds. Sumit Ganguly, William R Thompson, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 13.

<sup>56</sup> Douglas M. Stinnett, Paul F. Diehl, “The Path(s) to Rivalry: Behavioral and Structural Explanations of rivalry Development”, *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 63, No. 3, (Aug. 2001): 721.

<sup>57</sup> Diehl, Goertz 113.

<sup>58</sup> Diehl and Goertz state that a rivalry must have at least six militarized disputes for a dyad to be considered an enduring rivalry Ibid, 26. Also see William Thompson, “Principle Rivalries,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 39, (1995): 195-223.

<sup>59</sup> China-Vietnam is one example of an asymmetrical rivalry See: Brantly Womack, “Asymmetric Rivals: China and Vietnam,” in *Asian Rivalries*, 176-195. Another unbalanced, asymmetrical rivalry is that of the United States and Iraq between 1990-2003 See Brandon Valeriano, *Foreign Policy Analysis: Becoming Rivals: The Process of Interstate Rivalry Development*, 103-137.

rivalries are between states on the same level. Thus, the states are able to match each other militarily over a longer period of time. In order for a rivalry to qualify as enduring, it should last for at least twenty years, according to Diehl and Goertz.<sup>60</sup> In addition to enduring rivalries, which most of the literature on rivalries focuses on, two other types of rivalries classified by duration have been identified by Diehl and Goertz: isolated, and proto.<sup>61</sup> Colaresi, Rasler, and Thompson make three assumptions about strategic rivalries: that the rivals see each other as competitors, sources of threat, and as enemies.<sup>62</sup>

Most rivalries fall under the category of isolated.<sup>63</sup> They are intense for a brief period of time, and the chances of reoccurring are small. A few more are proto rivalries that last longer than isolated rivalries, but are over soon.<sup>64</sup> The fewest number of rivalries are classified under enduring that last for decades, even centuries, as for example, Greece-Turkey, or France-Germany.<sup>65</sup> When conceptualizing the three rivalries that make up the case studies, it is important to classify each of them as enduring, proto, or isolated rivalries.

Besides duration, scholars have also classified rivalries by rationale. There are three primary reasons states enter rivalries, (and several more secondary reasons), these are spatial, positional, and ideological.<sup>66</sup> In spatial rivalries, states conflict over the exclusive use of territory. Usually this comes into play if there is a border dispute or if a strategic piece of territory changes hands during a previous war, as was the case with the Alsace-Lorraine territory.<sup>67</sup>

Positional rivalries see the rivals contesting more than just territory. Rather it is more a contest of power positioning in either the global system or one or both rivals attempts regional domination. The Cold War is an example of a positional rivalry. Finally, ideological differences, be they economic, cultural, religious, or political can create a rivalry. The Cold War between the

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<sup>60</sup> Diehl, Goertz 23.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>62</sup> Michael Colaresi, Karen Rasler, William R. Thompson, *Strategic Rivalries in World Politics*, 25.

<sup>63</sup> "Over seventy-five percent of rivalries involve one or two militarized disputes" Diehl, Goertz, 52.

<sup>64</sup> Gary Goertz, Paul F. Diehl, "Enduring Rivalries: Theoretical Constructs and Empirical Patterns," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 2, (1993): 158.

<sup>65</sup> Diehl, Goertz, 54.

<sup>66</sup> Colaresi, et. al., 79.

<sup>67</sup> Hugh Clout, "Alsace-Lorraine/ Elsaß-Lothringen: destruction, revival, and reconstruction in contested territory, 1939-1960," *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 37, (2011): 95-98.

United States and the Soviet Union, in addition to being positional can also be classified as an ideological rivalry, between communist countries siding with the Soviet Union and capitalist countries siding with the United States. There are other secondary reasons why rivalries begin (control of resources, control of access, protection of ethnic minorities), but for the most part rivalries can be classified under one of these three main types.

Some scholars have focused on strategic rivalries, those rivalries which are contested by two states of roughly equal capability contending over an intractable issue, wherein both states see each other as competitors, a threat source, and an enemy. A strategic rivalry does not need to have any militarized interstate disputes between the participants. The United States-USSR rivalry in the Cold War is the classic example of a strategic rivalry.

Strategic rivalries differ from enduring rivalries. An enduring rivalry is a rivalry that has a specific number of MIDs over a certain number of years; Armenia-Azerbaijan is an example of an enduring rivalry, it could be considered strategic as well, but strategic rivalries are mostly about perception.<sup>68</sup> An interstate rivalry is defined more simply. D. Scott Bennett defines an interstate rivalry as “a dyad in which two states disagree over the resolution of some issue(s) between them for an extended period of time, leading them to commit substantial resources toward opposing each other...”<sup>69</sup> This definition, while broad, is also apt for the purposes of this thesis, which will avoid the term strategic rivalries from here on as a definition. One of the main drawbacks of much of the rivalry literature is that it relies heavily on quantitative methods to measure the rivalry, its duration, intensity, and eventual de-escalation. This in itself is not a negative attribute, however in taking a broad brush to rivalries, scholars usually only give a cursory examination of the underlying rationale for the rivalries’ existence. That is to say a brief consultation of the diplomatic histories of two states in a particular dyad is sufficient to include them as a rivalry as long as it matches similar criteria of other rivalry dyads. Such an approach is

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<sup>68</sup> Laurence Broers, “Diffusion and Default: a Linkage and Leverage Perspective on the Nagorny-Karabakh Conflict,” *East European Politics*, Vol. 37, No. 3, (2016): 378-399.

<sup>69</sup> D. Scott Bennett, “Democracy, Regime Change, and Rivalry Termination,” *International Interactions*, Vol. 22, No. 4, (1997): 370-371.

useful to understanding rivalry as a general phenomenon, if one assumes the causes of one war can be universally applied to all wars and conflicts.<sup>70</sup> In other words, there is no emphasis on causal mechanisms.

War is generally a complicated affair and the reasons a state chooses war, or another form of conflict, and enters into rivalry with another state are myriad, and likely a combination of factors. Therefore, while Bennett's definition of rivalry is quite broad, it also makes no assumptions about the reasons any particular rivalry began.<sup>71</sup> Since defining a rivalry can be quite difficult and indeed most rivalries are not defined as such until well after they have begun, and scholars backtrack to find the origins of the rivalry, this thesis will adopt a broader definition of interstate rivalry. The next section will examine several rivalry de-escalation models that have appeared within the literature.

### **De-escalation Models**

One aspect of rivalry development that has been recently receiving closer attention in the wider literature is how rivalries de-escalate and eventually terminate. There have been many attempts to explain the de-escalation of rivalries over the past two decades. This section will not recreate all those arguments, but instead will focus only on four pertinent de-escalation models: Diehl and Goertz, Maoz and Mor, Cox, and Rasler, Thompson, and Ganguly. These four models deal with rivalry onset and termination specifically, and often overlap with each other.<sup>72</sup>

Rasler, Thompson, and Ganguly have developed the revised expectation model, which is the most comprehensive de-escalation model in the literature to date, which will be examined

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<sup>70</sup> John A. Vasquez, Brandon Valeriano, "Classification of Interstate Wars," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 72, No. 2, (April 2010): 292.

<sup>71</sup> D. Scott Bennett, "Security, Bargaining, and the End of Interstate Rivalry," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 2, (1996): 160.

<sup>72</sup> Karen Rasler, William R. Thompson, Sumit Ganguly, *How Rivalries End*, 204-209.

last. Prior to their publication, Eric Cox developed another model of rivalry de-escalation.<sup>73</sup> Cox argues that rivalry de-escalation is precipitated by changes in a state's foreign policy posture relative to the rival state.<sup>74</sup> If hawks are prevalent in a state's foreign policy decision-making process then a rivalry will continue on unabated. It is only when moderates or doves become dominant in foreign policy decisions that a rivalry will terminate. Doves will always terminate a rivalry, while moderates will terminate a rivalry if they think it is the best course of action.<sup>75</sup>

Cox presents a more theoretical approach to rivalry termination, eschewing much of the earlier quantitative work on the subject, in favor of a qualitative approach.<sup>76</sup> Cox sees policy makers in rivalry states divided into three camps: hawks-who favor aggressive military action to resolve disputes, doves-who prefer peaceful means to resolve disputes, and moderates-those who stand between hawks and doves and seek compromise.<sup>77</sup> A rivalry only ends when doves override or overcome the hawks' position and bring the moderates along with them. Cox theorizes that this only happens when a rivalry state experiences a combination of domestic and foreign policy failures, which marginalizes the hawks and empowers the doves.<sup>78</sup>

Cox noted the importance domestic politics plays in shaping a rivalry in his model. Foreign policy failures alone are not enough to place the doves in a position to end a rivalry. Instead there must be a domestic policy failure in conjunction with the foreign policy failure.<sup>79</sup> Doves are not the only ones who can make peace. There could be a "Nixon goes to China" moment- a strong hawk who makes dovish overtures to the rival, which would split the hawkish camp. Nixon's opportunity to de-escalate the United States' rivalry with China was granted due to domestic (economic decline) and foreign policy (Vietnam War) failures on the part of his predecessor Lyndon Johnson, who was also a hawk.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Eric W. Cox, *Why Enduring Rivalries Do – Or Don't – End*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishing, 2010)

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, 12-13.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>76</sup> Cox, 28.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, 19.

With those failures, a change in foreign policy orientation, whether it is the doves formally taking control of the government through election or coup, or if enough moderates are persuaded to join with the doves, will take place. Like the punctuated equilibrium model, the foreign/domestic policy failure model emphasizes an abrupt change, a shock to one or both of the rival states. In this case, dual shocks, domestic and foreign, are necessary conditions to end the rivalry, whereas the punctuated equilibrium model states one shock is sufficient for rivalry termination. However, the Cox model excludes rivalries that change gradually, and leaders who might have a change of policy. For instance, Ronald Reagan could be classified as an unmitigated hawk in his early administration, yet became a leading dove after Gorbachev's ascension to power.<sup>81</sup>

The second model to look at is Diehl and Goertz who borrow from biology the punctuated equilibrium theory to explain rivalry onset and termination.<sup>82</sup> Punctuated equilibrium, originated by paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould and his colleague Niles Eldredge, states that the reason some species evolve faster than others is because evolution is not a quick process. It happens in small spurts followed by long periods of stasis.<sup>83</sup> These spurts have as their impetus shocks and changes to the environment of a species that then forces it to adapt-evolve-or perish. This model of evolution challenged the status quo theory of gradualism, which believed that evolution was a long drawn out process that developed very slowly.<sup>84</sup>

Diehl and Goertz observed that major political shocks: world wars, independence movements, and shifts in the Great Power system contributed to the beginning and ending of rivalries.<sup>85</sup> Diehl and Goertz borrow the model to help explain the structure of rivalries in international politics. They emphasize the importance of shocks to rivalry formation and de-escalation (shocks could be wars, regime changes, foreign policy reorientation, domestic

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<sup>81</sup> James Graham Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation: Gorbachev's Adaptability, Reagan's Engagement, and the End of the Cold War*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 199.

<sup>82</sup> Diehl, 132.

<sup>83</sup> See: Stephen Jay Gould, *Punctuated Equilibrium*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

<sup>84</sup> Diehl, 140.

<sup>85</sup> Paul Diehl, Gary Goertz, "The Initiation and Termination of Enduring Rivalries: The Impact of Political Shocks," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol 39, No. 1 (1995): 30.

turmoil), as the punctuations that help a rivalry evolve.<sup>86</sup> Without these shocks a rivalry may never come into being or may never end, it becomes stable, a part of the status quo. When utilized for rivalries, the punctuated equilibrium model states that a rivalry will have rapid change in the inception of the rivalry (akin to the creation of a new species), stasis throughout most of the rivalry's existence and then rapid decline into termination (paralleling the evolving of a species).<sup>87</sup> What is key to the rivalry's formation and termination is the environmental shock, the impetus to start and end the rivalry. These shocks vary from rivalry to rivalry, but according to the authors, their presence is vital in order for a rivalry to end.

Maoz and Mor's model for de-escalation focuses on state preferences and capabilities.<sup>88</sup> Rivalries are instigated by states dissatisfied with the status quo, and not ended until they become satisfied or a shock changes the dynamics of the rivalry. As long as the rivalry states maintain their capabilities, the rivalry will continue; exhaustion, war defeat, economic collapse, and even regime change, all considered shocks, may alter a state's capabilities. This would change their preference from continuing the rivalry to discontinuing it, and thus becoming satisfied states. In doing so, they would settle for less than they had initially hoped for when instigating the rivalry, but they would have perceived they had gained something.

The main thrust of de-escalation in the Maoz and Mor model is a change in perception, more than likely due to a shock, that forces at least one of the rival states to seek termination of the rivalry. This change may be only temporary if a new group of policy makers decides this new status quo is unacceptable or if they perceive their capabilities are enough to resume the rivalry. In their view conflict may be endlessly perpetrated in a rivalry until one side knows complete and total defeat.

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 138.

<sup>88</sup> Zeev Maoz and Ben Mor, *Bound by Struggle: Strategic Evolution of Enduring International Rivalries*, 30.

The last de-escalation model to be discussed is the Rasler, Thompson, Ganguly model that looks at revised expectations.<sup>89</sup> As with the previous models, the authors emphasize the importance of shocks that lead to a revision of expectations about the rivalry. This expectancy revision should then be followed on by reciprocity, that is to say the new expectations are reciprocated in the opposing state and reinforcement of this “new” normal. Additional factors that are sufficient but not necessary conditions to terminate a rivalry are the intervention of third parties (states, international organizations) and the appearance of new policy entrepreneurs, new policy makers with a fresh approach to handling the problems associated with the rivalry.

New policy entrepreneurs could fall under the category of shocks since their arrival could signal a regime change, or at the very least a new foreign policy orientation. What is different about this model from the previous ones is the element of reinforcement, which is paramount to keep the rivalry from escalating again. An example of reinforcement comes from the United States – United Kingdom relationship, which has been termed a “special relationship,” a phrase often repeated by American presidents, British prime ministers, diplomats, academics, and the media over the past several decades.<sup>90</sup> This comes after nearly a century of strife between the two countries, including two wars and several diplomatic challenges in the nineteenth century. Yet since the beginning of the twentieth century, the United States and United Kingdom improved their relations dramatically and in such a way that currently they are seen as the closest of allies. However, that rapprochement takes work, as there have been challenges to their special relationship, such as over the Suez crisis in 1956, the Vietnam war, and the United States invasion of Grenada in 1983.<sup>91</sup> Hence, the use of the phrase

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<sup>89</sup> Rasler, 13-30.

<sup>90</sup> John Dumbrell, “The US-UK ‘Special Relationship’ in a World Twice Transformed,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 17, No. 3, (2004): 438.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

“special relationship” repeated over and over by different actors is a form of reinforcement, to ensure that the rivalry will not reoccur.

Another approach to rivalry de-escalation, although not strictly limited to dyadic rivalries, is rapprochement. There is much literature on this subject in and of itself, but one book that is directly related to this thesis topic is Kupchan’s on stable peace.<sup>92</sup> The author argues that states can go from rivals to a condition of stable peace – the formation of a security community or even in some cases a union – through rapprochement.<sup>93</sup> The author builds on earlier work by Rock who examined great power rapprochement in the twilight of the Cold War.<sup>94</sup> Kupchan envisions a four-stage process to stable peace. The first stage is a unilateral rapprochement by one of the rivals, which in turn is reciprocated by the other rival.<sup>95</sup> The third and fourth stages involve societal integration (stage three) and narrative generation (stage four) to finally bring about stable peace.<sup>96</sup> Kupchan uses a scene from the movie *Hunt for Red October*, based on the novel by Tom Clancy, to illustrate an example of unilateral accommodation.<sup>97</sup> This is followed by his supporting cases, mainly U.S.-Great Britain relations from 1895-1906.<sup>98</sup>

Kupchan’s model is illustrative with his focus on unilateral accommodation as the impetus for rivalry de-escalation. However, he is unclear how this accommodation is initiated on a consistent basis. Great Britain had a foreign policy reorientation in the late nineteenth century to focus on a rising threat in imperial Germany, while Norway and Sweden did not have an initial dispute, Norway simply broke away from Sweden.<sup>99</sup> Finally, in his third case, Argentina-Brazil, both states reverted back to democracy in the 1980s from military rule, usually

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<sup>92</sup> Charles A. Kupchan, *How Enemies Become Friends: The Sources of Stable Peace*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 15.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, 41.

<sup>94</sup> Stephen Rock, *Why Peace Breaks Out: Great Power Rapprochement in Historical Perspective*, (Chapel Hills, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 151-154.

<sup>95</sup> Kupchan, 45.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>97</sup> In the example, the American submarine captain wants to signal to his Soviet counterpart his peaceful intentions by reversing his engines, thus exposing his position to the Soviets. *Ibid*, 46.

<sup>98</sup> There are two other cases he uses, one that is not considered a rivalry in the wider rivalry literature – Norway-Sweden, and one that is considered to have ended via a shock Argentina-Brazil. *Ibid*, 83-127.

<sup>99</sup> There was some talk of invading Norway, but this was mostly rhetorical as the Swedish cabinet decided to let Norway succeed on the same day it was announced. Robert A Young, “How do Peaceful Secessions Happen?” *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 27, No. 4, (Dec., 1994): 781

considered a shock in the wider rivalry literature.<sup>100</sup> Despite this, Kupchan has hinted at the process of rivalry de-escalation. Rasler and her co-authors did not see his model as workable as a wider theory for rivalry de-escalation. However, they did adapt at least a variation of it in the revised expectations model, namely reciprocation and reinforcement. Ultimately the de-escalation of the once American-British rivalry, which Kupchan used as his main case study, is a story of reinforcement, which this thesis will elaborate on as the main driver of rivalry de-escalation, at least among the observed rivalries in this study.

Most of the literature on rivalries states that they are defined by their shocks. Rivalry genesis and termination are the products of shocks, but without reinforcement, a rivalry risks returning. Shocks are considered the main driver for rivalry de-escalation and termination; however, this thesis will argue that reinforcement is the key element in rivalry de-escalation. In all of the aforementioned de-escalation models, the theorists recognize that a big change, a “shock” or a failure has to occur in order for at least one of the rival states to change its perception and its expectations about the rivalry. That change has to be acknowledged, recognized, and acted upon by the opposing state in order for the rivalry to truly end. Finally, there must be reinforcement, constant reminders that the two states are now friends and to let bygones be bygones in order to ensure that a state of rivalry does not return. A shock may be present, but the risk is that a shock may be interpreted differently by the rivals, or ignored altogether, is very real.<sup>101</sup>

To summarize then, this review of the rivalry literature finds that rivalries are a consistently reoccurring phenomenon of international relations, and that certain rivalry dyads

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<sup>100</sup> Brigitte Weiffen, Matthias Dembinski, Andreas Hasenclever, Katja Freistein, and Makiko Yamauchi, “Democracy, Regional Security Institutions, and Rivalry Mitigation: Evidence From Europe, South America, and Asia,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 20, (2011): 403.

<sup>101</sup> Such as in the case of the Afghanistan-Pakistan rivalry. There were multiple shocks to the rivalry, including the removal of Soviet troops, the end of the Rabbani-led government, and the 9/11 attacks and subsequent American invasion. Yet, Pakistan has maintained its rivalry with Afghanistan, through different regimes, either ignoring or misinterpreting the shocks. See Khalid Hodayun Nadiri, “Old Habits, New Consequences: Pakistan’s Posture toward Afghanistan since 2001,” *International Security*, Vol. 39, No. 2, (Fall 2014): 132-168.

account for a preponderance of conflict, including war, over the last two centuries. Rivalries that are based on territory tend to be more conflict-prone than those that are not. Rivalries either escalate by a series of steps or by shocks to the rivalry, but mostly de-escalate, and terminate by shocks or foreign policy reorientations (e.g. another, greater threat to one of the rivals is observed). However, there is still much that is not known about rivalries, including the process of de-escalation, in particular what role trust plays in de-escalating rivalry tensions. The next section will examine that role.

## **Trust**

Trust is a vital element of rapprochement among states and thus rivalry de-escalation. It is the basis for all good relationships, and it evolves and changes over time. The literature on trust in international relations has borrowed from psychology; broadly speaking there are three types of trust that have been identified in the trust literature: calculus-based, knowledge-based trust, and identity-based.<sup>102</sup> Lewicki and Tomlinson have identified four facets of trust and distrust based on these three types: Calculus-based trust, calculus-based distrust, identification-based trust, and identification-based distrust.<sup>103</sup> In order to create trust, the authors argue, it is best to build calculus-based trust.<sup>104</sup> These are all parts of social trust. Social trust is the individual's belief in the trustworthiness of others.<sup>105</sup> Of these types, identity-based trust is the most durable. This type of trust is exhibited in only a few relationships, but it is characterized by the notion of a shared or collective identity and strong interpersonal connections.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Roy J. Lewicki, Barbara Benedict Bunker, "Trust in Relationships: A Model of Development and Decline," in Barbara Benedict Bunker, Jeffrey Rubin, eds., *Conflict, Cooperation, and Justice: Essays Inspired by the Works of Morton Deutsch*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Baas, 1995), 119-124.

<sup>103</sup> Roy J. Lewicki, Edward C. Tomlinson, "Trust, Trust Development, and Trust Repair," in Peter T. Coleman, Morton Deutsch, and Eric C. Marcus, eds. *Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice*, (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 112-113.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*, 126.

<sup>105</sup> Florian Justwana, Ryan Bakkerb, Jeffrey D. Berejikianb, "Measuring Social trust and Trusting the Measure," *The Social Science Journal*, Vol. 55, (2018): 149.

<sup>106</sup> Roy J. Lewicki, Maura A. Stevenson, "Trust Development in Negotiation: Proposed Actions and a Research Agenda," *Business & Professional Ethics Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 1/3, (1997): 108.

Calculus-based trust (CBT) is the pure rational calculations that individuals make upon entering a relationship, the costs and the benefits of such a relationship.<sup>107</sup> CBT forms the building blocks that lead to knowledge-based trust and then identity-based trust.<sup>108</sup> This type of trust is more common among nation-states. Faced with anarchy within the international system, states cannot be expected to form an identity-based trust or even knowledge-based trust, which is based on the predictability of the other side's behavior, right away.<sup>109</sup> Distrust is caused by a lack of knowledge of the opponent's intentions, and is a key escalator to conflict.<sup>110</sup> Trust must be embedded in a relationship in order for it to endure.<sup>111</sup> Thus, the dilemma for rivalry de-escalation becomes how to lessen distrust and strengthen trust.

Calculus-based trust at the nation-state level of analysis is trust based on past and future behavior. Calculus-based trust is not without its critics; it originates from deterrence-based or rational-based trust, and is considered by some scholars barely trust at all, but rather a managed distrust.<sup>112</sup> It is based on a cost-benefit ratio for the parties involved in the relationship. That is to say, trust will only exist in the relationship as long as the parties obtain a net benefit from that trust.<sup>113</sup> Trusting relationships are noted for their lack of hedging strategies by the parties as well.<sup>114</sup> Both trust and hedging reduces risk in the international system, thus the two behavior patterns, according to Keating and Ruzicka, are similar, but where there exists a great deal of

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<sup>107</sup> Lewicki, Bunker, 120.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 124.

<sup>109</sup> This is exacerbated by the security dilemma. Ali Bilgic, "Trust in World Politics: Converting 'Identity' into a Source of Security Through Trust-learning," *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 68, No. 1, (2014): 46

<sup>110</sup> Deborah Welch Larson, "Trust and Missed Opportunities in International Relations," *Political Psychology*, Vol. 18, No. 3, (Sep., 1997): 716.

<sup>111</sup> Martin Gargiulo, Gokhan Ertug, "The Dark Side of Trust," in *Handbook of Trust Research*, ed. Reinhard Bachmann, Akbar Zaheer, (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2006), 178.

<sup>112</sup> See: Sinikukka Saari, "Managing Distrust in the Wider Black Sea Region," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 3, (2011): 217-218; Russell Hardin, *Trust and Trustworthiness*, (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004); Martin Hollis, *Trust Within Reason*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 10-11.

<sup>113</sup> Jan Ruzicka, Nicholas J. Wheeler, "The Puzzle of Trusting Relationships in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty," *International Affairs*, Vol. 86, No 1, (2010): 73.

<sup>114</sup> Vincent Charles Keating and Jan Ruzicka, "Trusting Relationships in International Politics: No Need to Hedge," *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 40, (2014): 761. Hedging is defined here as a behavior pattern which a state pursues in order to mitigate risk within the international system. The state can pursue a variety of policy options as it "hedges" against risk to itself. Kuik Cheng-chwee, "The Essence of Hedging: Malaysia and Singapore's Response to a Rising China," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (2008): 163.

hedging in an interstate relationship, there is likely little trust.<sup>115</sup> Trusting relationships therefore can be distinguished by the amount or degree of hedging done by one or both parties.

Trust is not acquired consciously, rather Rengger states that trust is a matter of habit that becomes embedded in some interstate interactions.<sup>116</sup> Habits, according to Hopf, “both evoke and suppress actions.”<sup>117</sup> Trust can be evoked as a habit, and at the same time the “habit” of rivalries may be suppressed. Hopf argues that habits are acquired through either cost-benefit calculations or through socialization.<sup>118</sup> Habits are acquired over time and become part of an automatic process that is done without thinking about it, akin to riding a bicycle.<sup>119</sup> This is how, ultimately, calculus-based trust is built by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Calculus-based trust starts at zero, that is it begins as a distrusting relationship. However, CBT can be strengthened over time by repeated and multifaceted interactions among the parties.<sup>120</sup> The trust model used for this thesis does not assume that CBT is static, that it will not grow, but instead will remain in its primitive “trust but verify” mode, but rather it will become embedded through habit to instill a sense of trust in the members of the SCO. Since there is anarchy in the international system, conceptualizing trust between nation-states is difficult. Calculus-based trust is often dismissed as too broad, incorporating any interstate interactions not involving conflict. However, the key difference between this deterrence-based trust or calculus-based mistrust, and calculus-based trust conceptualized here is the repetitiveness of the behavior, to the point it becomes habit forming, reinforcing the trust. Without this habit-forming behavior calculus-based trust risks reverting back to a state of distrust over time.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Keating and Ruzicka, 762-763.

<sup>116</sup> Nicholas Rengger, “The Ethics of Trust in World Politics,” *International Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 3, (1997): 472

<sup>117</sup> Ted Hopf, “The Logic of Habit in International Relations,” *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 16, No. 4, (2010): 541.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, 542.

<sup>119</sup> Henk Aarts and Ap Dijksterhuis, “Habits as Knowledge Structures: Automaticity in Goal-Directed Behavior,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 78, No. 1, (2000): 53.

<sup>120</sup> Roy J. Lewicki, Edward C. Tomlinson, Nicole Gillespie, “Models of Interpersonal Trust Development: Theoretical Approaches, Empirical Evidence, and Future Directions,” *Journal of Management*, Vol. 32, No. 6, (2006): 1008-1009.

<sup>121</sup> Lewicki, Tomlinson, “Trust, Trust Development, and Trust Repair,” 108.

On some occasions calculus-based trust can lead to identity-based trust in international relations. The ultimate expression of this type of trust is indicated in the formation of security communities, groups of nation-states that have formed trust as habit to the degree that war or conflict with each other is no longer considered a viable policy option.<sup>122</sup> For the purposes of this thesis it is not necessary to establish that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a security community, or even that identity-based trust exists. It is only sufficient that calculus-based trust has become embedded enough, becoming habit among the SCO members, to the point that the interstate rivalries that exist between them can be de-escalated without resorting to conflict or war.

Until recently, there has not been a great deal of the literature on trust applied to international relations. However, since the end of the Cold War, in attempts to determine how and why it ended, trust has been given a closer examination by IR scholars. Although, there are still too few scholars who connect trust with rivalry de-escalation. Trust is difficult to obtain and easy to lose, mainly because it is hard to conceptualize.<sup>123</sup> The existence of disputes does not in and of itself indicate distrust.<sup>124</sup> States trust other states when they believe their interests won't be betrayed.<sup>125</sup> Trust itself is elusive in international relations.<sup>126</sup> States are more prone to distrust than to trust given the anarchy of the international system.<sup>127</sup> Yet, trust is necessary to ensure cooperation and prevent conflict. Trust has been defined by Booth and Wheeler as a state of being that arises between two or more actors when those actors can believe, based on an interpretation of the other(s) behavior "can be relied upon to desist from acting in ways that will be injurious to their interests and values."<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> See: Emanuel Adler, Michael N. Barnett, *Security Communities*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998),

<sup>123</sup> Nicholas Rengger, "The Ethics of Trust in World Politics," *International Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 3, (Jul. 1997): 482.

<sup>124</sup> Oelsner, 266.

<sup>125</sup> Aaron M. Hoffman, "A Conceptualization of Trust in International Relations," *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 8, No. 3, (2002): 378-379.

<sup>126</sup> Distrust is hard to disprove and can be the natural default for states. Deborah Welch Larson, "Trust and Missed Opportunities in International Relations," *Political Psychology*, Vol. 18, No. 3, (Sep., 1997): 716-717.

<sup>127</sup> Andrew H. Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007),

<sup>128</sup> Ken Booth, Nicholas J. Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation, and Trust in World Politics*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 230.

In other words, if a state exhibits good behavior over a prolonged period of time then distrust of that state's intentions will lessen, and trust will increase. High levels of trust require states to act with little information about their adversaries, but when trust is at a lower level more information is needed.<sup>129</sup> In order to obtain more information about their rivals, and thus lessen distrust, greater access to that information is needed. The dilemma for states then is how to engender trust, gain greater access to information about their rival for instance, without themselves becoming vulnerable.

Kupchan has argued that states should signal unilaterally to hostile states their intentions to accommodate.<sup>130</sup> Wheeler defines this as an example of the "leap in the dark" model where a leader takes an extreme risk to attempt to accommodate a rival.<sup>131</sup> It is unusually rare to find the leap in the dark in international relations. Kupchan himself can only find one major instance of this accommodation, in the Anglo-American rapprochement of the 1890s, but this may be more a case of Britain buying off a strategic challenger than making itself vulnerable.<sup>132</sup> Wheeler himself believes the best way to build trust is through leaders' interpersonal relationships.<sup>133</sup> Interpersonal relations are important to establish empathy, which can lead to greater trust.<sup>134</sup> Wheeler presents an interesting argument in that the trust built through interpersonal relations can reduce the enemy image that rivals might hold of one another, thus alleviating the security dilemma between them.<sup>135</sup> The main problem with Wheeler's approach for interpersonal relations, while useful in building trust, is that after leaders establish their amicable relationship between each other, it should last throughout their time in office, and upon the termination of one or both leaders' tenure (through election, coup, or death), that

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<sup>129</sup> Michael P. Jasinski, *Social Trust, Anarchy, and International Conflict*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 80.

<sup>130</sup> This is the "Red October" gambit as Kupchan uses an example from the film *Hunt for Red October* to illustrate his point. Kupchan, 45-46.

<sup>131</sup> Nicholas Wheeler, *Trusting Enemies: Interpersonal Relationships in International Conflicts*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 27.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*, 48.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, 45.

<sup>134</sup> Naomi Head, "Transforming Conflict: Trust, Empathy, and Dialogue," *International Journal of Peace Studies*, Vol 17, No. 2, (Winter 2012): 38.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid*, 133.

relationship must continue with their successor(s). A case in point was the relationship between Gorbachev and George H.W. Bush. Despite being Reagan's vice president while the former was negotiating the Intermediate-nuclear Forces (INF) treaty with Gorbachev, Bush said he still did not trust the Soviet leader.<sup>136</sup> Even after becoming president there was a brief pause in US-Soviet relations before Bush eventually warmed up to Gorbachev.<sup>137</sup> Relations between states, in a sense, have to be rebooted after leaders leave, if they are determined on the interpersonal connection between those leaders.

Incrementally building trust in isolation has had disappointing results, leaders still feel vulnerable without guarantees from their opposites.<sup>138</sup> A far better approach to improving trust is through incrementally building that trust through reinforcement. Charles Osgood in 1962 proposed a model to reduce tensions in the Cold War, the Graduated Reciprocation in Tension Reduction (GRIT) model, where one side unilaterally offers a concession to the other, and does not assume the other side will immediately reciprocate.<sup>139</sup> Instead the side that is willing to concede at least something must repeatedly signal its intentions. If the party remains consistent then eventually the other party will signal its receptiveness, according to Osgood.

Trust, therefore, has to be reinforced, and in such a way that it will outlast the leaders who initiated it (assuming the leaders; successors will continue the policy). The best way to do that, and to ensure continuity and consistency between regimes, is to have institutional structures in place that will have sustainability. Institutions, particularly liberal institutions are seen as incremental to this approach. "Institutions that promote trust help alleviate the commitment

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<sup>136</sup> Frank Lynn, "Politics; Bush Wants Conditions Met Before He'll Trust Gorbachev," *New York Times*, December 15, 1987.

<sup>137</sup> Andrew Kydd, "Trust, Reassurance, and Cooperation," *International Organization*, Vol. 54, No. 2, (Spring, 2000): 348.

<sup>138</sup> Aaron M. Hoffman, "The Structural Causes of Trusting Relationships: Why Rivals Do Not Overcome Suspicion Step by Step," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 122, No. 2, (2007): 311.

<sup>139</sup> Deborah Welch Larson, "Crisis Prevention and the Austrian State Treaty," *International Organization*, Vol. 41, No. 1, (Winter, 1987): 32 Also see Svenn Lindskold, "Trust Development, the GRIT Proposal, and the Effects of Conciliatory Acts on Conflict and Cooperation," *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 85, No. 4, (1978): 776.

problems among rival states.”<sup>140</sup> International institutions are defined as “explicit arrangements negotiated among international actors, that prescribe, proscribe and/or authorize international behavior.”<sup>141</sup> Joint membership in IGOs links two states together since their representatives will see each other in formal settings.<sup>142</sup> Mutual trust exists when states recognize that their respective institutions are similar, more durable, and long-lasting.<sup>143</sup> These institutions have long been assumed to be liberal and democratic in nature, rather than autocratic: NATO, for example. A chief benefit of NATO enlargement in Eastern Europe was building trust among new members in Eastern Europe, while they democratized, and the main drawback was the lessening of trust between NATO and Russia, which did not democratize.<sup>144</sup>

Even though scholars assume these third-party institutions should be liberal in order to de-escalate conflict, this does not have to be the case. Rivalry de-escalation can and does occur with non-liberal states and in non-liberal IGOs.<sup>145</sup> The key to that de-escalation is to have consistent reinforcement mechanisms that instill mutual trust between the two rivals.<sup>146</sup> So the rival states should be comfortable, at least, with the institution in order for the reinforcement process to work.

The rivals do not necessarily become fast friends once this reinforcement mechanism is enacted. The presence of a system of mutual accountability through confidence and stability building measures (CSBMs) is indicative of a cold or stable peace.<sup>147</sup> Additionally, Rathbun

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<sup>140</sup> Brandon C. Prins, Ursula E. Daxecker, “Committed To Peace: Liberal Institutions and the Termination of Rivalry,” *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 38, (2017): 18.

<sup>141</sup> Barbara Koremenos, Charles Lipson, Duncan Snidal, “The Rational Design of International Institutions,” *International Organization*, Vol. 55, No. 4, (Autumn, 2001): 762.

<sup>142</sup> Han Dorussen, Hugh Ward, “Intergovernmental Organizations and the Kantian Peace: A Network Perspective,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 52, No. 2, (April 2008): 190.

<sup>143</sup> P.E. Digeser, “Friendship Between States,” *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 39, (2008): 338.

<sup>144</sup> Andrew Kydd, “Trust Building, Trust Breaking: The Dilemma of NATO Enlargement,” *International Organization*, Vol. 55, No. 4, (Autumn 2001): 808.

<sup>145</sup> The Israel-Egypt rivalry for example, has de-escalated despite Egypt having not democratized. In addition, there have been several rivalries in Southeast Asia that have de-escalated under the auspices of ASEAN without outright democratizing. See: William B. Quandt, *Camp David, Peacemaking and Politics*, (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institute Press, 2016), and Joseph Chinyong Liow, *The Politics of Indonesia-Malaysia Relations One Kin, Two Nations*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 36.

<sup>146</sup> Brian C. Rathbun, “Before Hegemony: Generalized Trust and the Creation and Design of International Security Organizations,” *International Organization*, Vol. 65, No. 2, (Spring, 2011): 250.

<sup>147</sup> Andrea Oelsner, “Friendship, Mutual Trust, and the Evolution of Regional Peace in the International System,” *Critical Review of International Society and Political Philosophy*, Vol. 10, No. 2, (2007): 266.

argues that states in a multilateral security arrangement cannot engage in a continuous exchange of actual benefits, only dealing in promises for some future arrangement.<sup>148</sup> However, third parties can serve as a repository of trust if they are considered reliable by the rival states.<sup>149</sup> Interstate organizations can be considered third parties.

Anarchy has long been assumed to be one of the foundations of the international system, and thus real trust can never be established between states.<sup>150</sup> Outside of Kupchan, few scholars have linked trust to rivalry de-escalation. Deborah Welch Larson, one of the earliest trust scholars, examined the Cold War through the lens of mistrust, finding the United States and the Soviet Union would cooperate in circumstances where the two superpowers trusted each other or if “one side made a series of unilateral concessions to alleviate mistrust.”<sup>151</sup>

The Cold War, particularly the turn in U.S.–Soviet relations under President Reagan and Secretary Gorbachev, is also fertile ground for Andrew Kydd,<sup>152</sup> and Nicholas Wheeler.<sup>153</sup> Kydd argues that despite the anarchical nature of international politics, and the presence of the security dilemma, states do have the capacity to trust each other.<sup>154</sup> This trust will lead to greater cooperation and reduce the risks of conflict even if the states previously harbored animosity toward each other.<sup>155</sup> He uses Reagan’s relationship with Gorbachev as an example, where the once fierce foe of communism and the Soviet Union signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Treaty with Gorbachev, which eliminated an entire class of weapons.<sup>156</sup> Kydd sees trust through the lens of the security dilemma.<sup>157</sup> The author argues that most states, no matter how small, have some international ambition, no matter how modest.<sup>158</sup> These ambitions will, more often than not, come into conflict with other states’ ambitions causing uncertainty as to intentions.

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<sup>148</sup> Rathbun, 247-248.

<sup>149</sup> Herbert C. Kelman, “Building Trust Among Enemies: The Central Challenge for International Conflict Resolution,” *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Vol. 29, (2005): 645.

<sup>150</sup> Ruzicka, Wheeler, “The Puzzle of Trusting Relationships in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty,” 71.

<sup>151</sup> Deborah Welch Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust: U.S.-Soviet Relation in the Cold War*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 5.

<sup>152</sup> Andrew H. Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 215-242.

<sup>153</sup> Nicholas Wheeler, *Trusting Enemies, Interpersonal Relationships in International Conflict*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 143-190.

<sup>154</sup> Kydd, 5-6.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, 33.

Thus, the dilemma becomes how to overcome this uncertainty. Kydd argues that states can indeed overcome uncertainty and cooperate if they have reassurances through costly signaling.<sup>159</sup> Kydd defines trust as the expectation that others will cooperate.<sup>160</sup>

Wheeler sees trust as more enduring between states if leaders of those states create an interpersonal relationship.<sup>161</sup> Like Kydd, he uses the Reagan-Gorbachev relationship as an example of mistrust turning into trust. For Wheeler interpersonal trust can lead to the de-escalation of crises between rivals. He uses India-Pakistan relations in 1998-99 during the Kargil war, and U.S.-Iran relations during the lead-up to negotiations of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2009-10 as further examples of interpersonal trust.<sup>162</sup> The main drawback with these approaches to trust is that they do not account for the reoccurrence of conflict between the same antagonists, which this thesis will attempt to address.

For instance, while true that U.S.-Soviet relations warmed at the end of the Cold War, with Reagan and Gorbachev making a personal connection, that relationship did not extend much beyond their predecessors. Today, the relationship between the United States and Russia is marked by suspicion and mistrust.<sup>163</sup> One could say that the relationship has backslid into rivalry. Thus, there is a gap in the literature that this thesis seeks to fill.

Hoffman suggests three different models where trust comes from: trust as a learned response to an opponent's behavior, trust that centers around a shared identity, and trust that forms within an institutional environment.<sup>164</sup> Hoffman also makes a distinction between trust and trusting relationships, focusing mostly on the latter. But trust is needed for a relationship to be considered trusting, and that mutual trust must be enduring. In his analysis Hoffman rejects the first two models as not enduring. He believes that learned trust over time, following the GRIT

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>161</sup> Wheeler, 44.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> For example, the INF treaty, hallmarking the end of the Cold War has now been abrogated by the United States, in the latest of a series of crises with Russia. Shervin Taheran, "U.S. Counts Down to Quitting INF Treaty," *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 49, No. 1, (January-February 2019): 27.

<sup>164</sup> Aaron Hoffman, *Building Trust, Overcoming Suspicion in International Conflict*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), 38-44.

model formulated by Osgood is not realistic. This is because states must start with smaller transactions in order to build trust and allay suspicions. Since states have interests, on major issues they are unlikely to develop trusting relationships incrementally, according to Hoffman.<sup>165</sup> Similarly, he rejects the identarian model of trust building, arguing that “trust is a consequence, not a cause of identifying with others.”<sup>166</sup> Instead, Hoffman settles on his third model for building trust, institutional trust. Hoffman defines institutional trust as the setting of rules, norms or decision-making processes which transform the social space in which states interact.<sup>167</sup>

There are two key elements of this institution-based trust formation. Hoffman argues that institutionalizing allows for each actor to have an effective voice in the dispute which led to the distrust to begin with, and it gives domestic breathing space to the principles.<sup>168</sup> In other words, a different institutional framework provides cover for the leaders of rival states to negotiate. It also gives them a chance to have their objections heard in a structured, plausibly fair environment. Hoffman states that having an effective voice and breathing space give rivals the chance to de-escalate their rivalry, in the way that other types of trust building do not.<sup>169</sup>

Hoffman’s contribution to the literature is especially important as he identifies a key way in which trust can be built to ensure rivalry de-escalation. He is correct that an institutional model of trust building provides the best framework to foster trusting relationships. However, his downplaying of incremental trust building, or learned trust, weakens his argument.

In addition, Hoffman’s case studies looked at treaty negotiations when the American colonies created the Articles of Confederation and the US Constitution, European integration in the post-World War II era, and Israeli-Arab water rights negotiations.<sup>170</sup> These treaty negotiations were one-off events, that in some cases (negotiations over the US Constitution in 1787 and the 1986 Single European Act) led to greater trust being built, and in other cases did

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid, 41.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid, 43.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid, 45-47.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid, 47-48.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid, 53-54.

not. In those instances, in which trust was built through negotiations, the Single European Act was a culmination of many decades of careful dialogue among the participants, while the US Constitution was formed after the failure of the Articles of Confederation. In both cases trust was built incrementally.

For Larson, Kydd, Wheeler, Hoffman, and other scholars trust is an essential element in international relations, however they disagree exactly on what trust is, how it should be conceptualized, and how it can be implemented. The main take-away from this review of the trust literature and what each of these authors does not address, is that trust can be built, but needs to be built incrementally and should be institutionalized in order to lessen uncertainty. These ideas will be expounded upon later in this chapter. The next section will give a brief examination of the emerging literature on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

### **Shanghai Cooperation Organization**

There have not been many works that focus exclusively on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Most scholars see the organization as a vehicle for Chinese security concerns and economic development in Central Asia.<sup>171</sup> One of the earliest attempts to critically examine the SCO is Lanteigne's work on China and international institutions.<sup>172</sup> Lanteigne argues that the SCO is one of China's first attempts to take "the lead to develop a regional regime."<sup>173</sup> The author only dedicates one chapter in his book to the SCO, but sees room for the organization's expansion, including India and Pakistan (which did occur in 2017), as well as a driver for Chinese economic development of Central Asia in exchange for access to the region's biocarbon reserves.<sup>174</sup> He finds similarities between the SCO's development and that of ASEAN

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<sup>171</sup> Zhao Huasheng, "China's View of and Expectations from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 53, No. 3, (May/June 2013): 436-460.

<sup>172</sup> Marc Lanteigne, *China and International Institutions, Alternate Paths to Global Power*, (London: Routledge, 2005), 115-142.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid*, 116.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid*, 124, 131.

and ultimately finds the organization a very promising endeavor for Chinese foreign policy goals.

Later authors have also focused on the SCO as primarily a China-led organization. Weiqing Song writes that China can “manage its great power relations” with its neighbors Russia and India within the context of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.<sup>175</sup> Like Lanteigne, Song sees the SCO as a way for China to make greater gains in Central Asia, particularly in energy cooperation. The organization, argues Song, is an outgrowth of China’s neighborhood policy.<sup>176</sup> It corresponds to China’s great power ambitions as it allows them a dominant hand in Central Asia free of Western influences.<sup>177</sup> Aris, in *Eurasian Regionalism: the Shanghai Cooperation Organization* examines the security challenges facing the members of the SCO.<sup>178</sup> The author sees the SCO as a regional framework for cooperation.<sup>179</sup> Aris’s work is significant as it is one of the first monographs focused exclusively on the SCO. He underscores that the leaders of the Central Asian states see the SCO as a vehicle for their own security, rather than being under Russian or Chinese influence.<sup>180</sup> According to Aris, Russia, China, and the Central Asian states all use the SCO for their own, sometimes cross, purposes.<sup>181</sup> He has also co-edited with Andreas Wenger *Regional Organisations and Security: Conceptions and Practices* in which Aris writes a chapter and gives an updated version of how the SCO works as a regional security actor.<sup>182</sup>

Another recent work that examines the SCO in depth is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Eurasian Geopolitics published by the Stockholm International Program for Central Asian Studies (SIPCAS) - a set of workshops and presentations that culminated in the

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<sup>175</sup> Weiqing Song, *China’s Approach to Central Asia: The Shanghai Co-operation Organisation*, (London: Routledge, 2016), 4.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid*, 12-13.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid*, 158.

<sup>178</sup> Stephen Aris, *Eurasian Regionalism: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 17.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid*, 49.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid*, 69-75.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid*, 159.

<sup>182</sup> Stephen Aris, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, A Eurasian Security Actor?” in *CSS Studies in Security and International Relations: Regional Organisations and Security: Conceptions and Practices*, eds. Stephen Aris, Andreas Wenger, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 142.

published work.<sup>183</sup> In it several authors give their perspectives on the SCO. Michael Fredholm, editor for the volume, argues that the SCO has too many obstacles, including rivalry over energy resources, to overcome before it can be considered a legitimate security organization.<sup>184</sup> These rivalries in Central Asia could limit the SCO's potential as a security guarantor, Fredholm argues.<sup>185</sup>

In contrast, Pan Guang and Yu Bin, writing in separate chapters, view the SCO as more than just a security organization but also as a vehicle that promotes cooperation among its members via economic, diplomatic, cultural, as well as military interactions.<sup>186</sup> Yu Bin sees the SCO as the only international organization at the crossroads of five great civilizations (Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism), however this confluence can also be a source of potential conflict.<sup>187</sup>

All the authors in this work see the SCO as a primarily Chinese-driven organization. This work represents one of the first comprehensive academic works to seriously consider the SCO as a legitimate regional organization. It sees the SCO as having the potential to be if not an alliance perhaps a "community" focused on peaceful interactions among its members. The authors also acknowledge the existence of rivalries within the organization; however, they provide scant details of the evolution of these rivalries or the role the SCO may, or does play in de-escalating them.

Since the end of the Cold War, the role for International Organizations (IO), and Intergovernmental Organizations (IGO) in peacemaking and peacekeeping has increased, as has the scholarly output examining this phenomenon. Much of the focus of the IGO literature has been on the United Nations, and its peacekeeping efforts, focusing on post-conflict efforts.

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<sup>183</sup> Michael Fredholm, ed. *The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Eurasian Geopolitics*, (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2013), 6.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid*, 10-13.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

<sup>186</sup> Pan Guang, "The Spirit of the Silk Road, The SCO and China's Relations with Central Asia," *Ibid*, 27

<sup>187</sup> Yu Bin, "The SCO Ten Years After: In Search of Its Own Identity," *Ibid*, 39.

Boehmer, Gratzke, and Nordstrom have found that security-oriented IGOs see "...the prospects for peace increase for those organizations that contain extensive institutional structures."<sup>188</sup> Additionally, it depends on the goals of the IGO, whether they are effective in promoting at least conflict de-escalation.<sup>189</sup> There is some evidence then that IGOs make a positive contribution to de-escalating or resolving interstate conflicts. IGOs are important because they can keep open the channels of communication through which signals can be transmitted, and can give states an "effective voice" and breathing space more efficiently than treaty negotiations can. In order to be effective in building trust, an IGO should have a manageable number of nation-states as members. This prevents factions from arising within the organization.

The United Nations, for example, counts nearly every nation-state in the world among its members, thus it can be too unwieldy to effectively build trust among rivals over a sustained period of time. Since rivalries are usually centered on intractable issues such as territory, the task of de-escalating them is not a good fit for the UN.<sup>190</sup> In addition, the United Nations has had mixed results in promoting peace in the conflicts it does intervene in.<sup>191</sup>

Doyle and Sambanis argued that the United Nations can be effective at building peace, provided it can help develop a framework to establish participatory politics, that is to say the inclusion of former enemies in the post-conflict political process.<sup>192</sup> The authors drew on selected case studies where the UN intervened in civil wars, or intrastate disputes, concluding

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<sup>188</sup> Charles Boehmer, Erik Gratzke, Timothy Nordstrom, "Do Intergovernmental Organizations Promote Peace?" *World Politics*, Vol. 57, No. 1, (2004): 29.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid*, 30.

<sup>190</sup> David R. Dreyer, "Issue Intractability and the Persistence of International Rivalry," *Conflict Management and Peace Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 5, (2012): 471-489.

<sup>191</sup> Much of the work of the United Nations peacebuilding initiatives in the post-Cold War focused on post-conflict resolution or even active conflict resolution rather than de-escalating existing rivalries. In this way the UN is reactive rather than proactive in peacebuilding. See Madhav Joshi, "United Nations Peacekeeping, Democratic Process, and the Durability of Peace after Civil Wars," *International Studies Perspective*, Vol. 14, (2013): 362-382, and Lisa Hultman, Jacob Kathman, and Megan Shannon, "Beyond Keeping Peace: United Nations Effectiveness in the Midst of Fighting," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 108, No. 4, (2014): 737-753.

<sup>192</sup> Michael W. Doyle, Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 30.

that the UN can expand participatory politics in post-war states under certain conditions.<sup>193</sup> Namely, if local capacities and infrastructure are of a certain level, and if the state has greater ethnic homogeneity, then peacebuilding efforts are more likely to succeed.<sup>194</sup>

In *Making Peace, the Contribution of International Institutions*, edited by Guillaume Devin, the contributors find that international organizations can be successful at creating peace as long as they have the consent of the parties involved in the dispute.<sup>195</sup> This speaks to the lack of trust between warring states, or sub-state actors, and the limitations IGOs have in resolving disputes. Charles Call argues that third parties, including IGOs have difficulty building legitimacy after conflict.<sup>196</sup> He does, however, see a role for regional IGOs to play in conflict resolution.<sup>197</sup> There has been little academic study on the utility of IGOs in preempting potential conflicts emerging from long-standing rivalries, or rivalry issues, and no works on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's role in conflict de-escalation.

There is some disagreement in the literature on IGOs as to whether states need to formulate trust before joining a security organization, (bandwagoning), or if they join because they do not trust the other members, and fear being balanced against.<sup>198</sup> There is a great deal of literature on this subject, in particular Rathbun's work on American multilateralism and domestic ideology, examines trust in this capacity.<sup>199</sup> However, this thesis takes the view that different states can have different levels of trust when they enter or create a security institution. In the case of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization some level of trust existed before its creation, between Russia and China, and trust was built through the institutional framework of

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid, 338-339.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Guillaume Devin,, "Introduction: Who Makes the Peacekeeping Institutions" in *Making Peace, The Contribution of International Institutions*, ed. Guillaume Devin, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 21.

<sup>196</sup> Call argues that in order for peace to be sustained, political legitimacy must be established, however this legitimacy is difficult for outside forces to impose on an intrastate conflict, due to a lack of trust about intentions. Charles Call, *Why Peace Fails: The Causes and Prevention of Civil War Recurrence*, (Washington, D.C.: George Washington University Press, 2012), 238-239.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid, 273.

<sup>198</sup> See: Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, (Ithaca, Cornell University Press).

<sup>199</sup> Brian C. Rathbun, *Trust in International Cooperation, International Security Institutions, Domestic Politics and American Multilateralism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 50-51.

the organization. It does not have to be an either, or scenario. States have their own reasons for forming or joining security organizations, but trust is built, unintentionally, through repeated interactions which become habit.

To be sure, there have been other works on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, but nearly all examine the SCO based on its goals, or from a great power perspective, chiefly how does China benefit from it, or how China developed the SCO to achieve its goals.<sup>200</sup> There are few, if any works, that look at the SCO's processes, or indeed how a regional intergovernmental organization in general can manage interstate rivalries at all. The still burgeoning literature on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the literature on the contributions that IGOs can make toward furthering peacemaking, and conflict and rivalry de-escalation, has ample room to explore the role the SCO in particular plays in building trust among its members. Thus, this thesis will add to the literature on the SCO, looking specifically at the process of rivalry de-escalation within the organization through the principle of reinforcement.

This chapter reviewed the literature of the phenomena under scrutiny in this thesis. The literature review examined the evolution of the scholarly approach to rivalries over the years. Rivalries have been determined to be a key source of conflict between states. These rivalries, according to much of the existing academic literature, are often centered on territorial disputes and are started and ended based on a series of shocks to the rivalry. One aspect however that has been neglected in much of the literature on rivalry studies is the process of rivalry de-escalation. In particular, there is little work on how rivalries stay de-escalated without reoccurring, or backsliding. While the building of trust is seen as important to conflict de-escalation, how that trust can be sustained over time has not been examined closely, even within the established literature.

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<sup>200</sup> Such as, Kevin Sheives, "China Turns West: Beijing's Contemporary Strategy Towards Central Asia," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 2, (2006): 205-224.

In addition to the literature on rivalries and trust, the literature on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was reviewed. The findings of this chapter reveal that scholars have paid scant attention to the internal mechanisms of the SCO, and its ability to reinforce mutual trust. The literature on the SCO is still growing as the organization matures, and this thesis will add a new contribution to that body of scholarly work. The next chapter will examine more closely the rivalry phenomenon and how trust is instrumental to de-escalating tensions among rivals.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Conceptual Framework**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter introduces the conceptual framework this thesis will rely on, and which will be examined in the following case study chapters. The main framework for this thesis is rivalries and rivalry de-escalation via membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. As examined in the previous chapter, much of the literature on rivalries views their de-escalation as a result of a shock to the rivalry. This thesis takes a different approach, arguing that rather than shocks, a durable de-escalation of rivalries must include the embedding of mutual trust into the rivalry. The way this is accomplished is through an incremental approach via a formalized process. The formalized process is more enduring if it is done under the auspices of a regional intergovernmental organization.

The framework will include a more detailed examination of the methods used in this thesis, including an expanded conceptualization of signaling and trust, two elements that were alluded to in the literature review. As stated in the introduction the thesis employs the case study approach and will use process tracing as the main unit of analysis. The specific pathways this process tracing will find are examined in this section. There are slightly different pathways for each of the rivalries examined in the case study chapters since these rivalries evolved at different times. However, the end result for each rivalry is the same, that it de-escalated, and was assisted by the mechanisms within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's structure.

The rivalry process will be analyzed next, as the factors that contribute to or exacerbate rivalry tensions are looked at. The rivalry process is one pathway that is examined for two of

the rivalries. Thus, in order to frame the context of the pathway, it is necessary here to examine the specific steps a rivalry takes to form. This is followed by a detailed examination of the contributions to rivalry de-escalation made by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, including trust building and reinforcement (the fourth pathway), which forms the main argument for this thesis. The thesis's main contribution to the field of rivalry studies is that the SCO assists in de-escalating rivalry tensions by developing and reinforcing mutual trust between its member states, using the specific mechanisms embedded within its structure. This is the principle tool for rivalry impulses to be assuaged, thus de-escalating a rivalry. The SCO, it is argued here and in the substantive chapters which follow, is designed to build trust, even institutionalizing that trust to a certain extent.

Institutionalization, the formal processes that states undertake such as treaties or intergovernmental organizations, as defined by Hoffman in the literature review, is best suited to develop mutual trust, and a reinforcement mechanism for that trust. This is because it provides both breathing space and an "effective voice" for the rivals. However, this chapter argues the SCO builds trust in a way that differs from Hoffman's in three key respects. One is that this model assumes an incremental application of trust, defined as calculus-based trust, over an extended period of time, a notion that Hoffman rejects. Secondly, creating breathing space, domestically, benefits both rivals, while an "effective voice" is usually beneficial to the weaker party. A state's "effective voice" will be strengthened the more breathing room it has. Lastly, this model assumes institutionalization as involving membership in intergovernmental organizations, rather than treaties, or laws between the two rivals which shape their worldview. It is through membership specifically in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization that institutional trust can be reinforced to the point that rivalry de-escalation can occur, and backsliding, in other words the reemergence of a rivalry that has de-escalated, can be prevented.

## Methods

### Case Selection

This thesis will use a qualitative case study research design as the main method by which to argue the proposed argument. This case study will be an exploratory case study, that is to say it will examine the pathways that lead, ostensibly, to rivalry de-escalation among the SCO members. The original member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization were selected as the main unit of analysis for three reasons. First, the SCO was chosen so that the case represents new knowledge. As stated in the introduction and the literature review, the SCO and its ability, if any, to de-escalate rivalry tensions among its member states has not been examined in great detail. Secondly, the SCO, given its members and increasing influence in international politics, is a sustainable organization. That is, it is not likely it will fade into obscurity in the near future; thus, it is worthy of serious scholarship on what its role is as an intergovernmental organization. Does the SCO, as an intergovernmental organization with a security focus, contribute to peace making or conflict resolution in some way? This thesis makes an argument that in at least one aspect of conflict resolution: rivalry de-escalation, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization makes just such a contribution. The third reason is that rivalries present a particular conundrum in international relations scholarship. They are long-lasting and difficult to de-escalate, and this study on the SCO's role in rivalry de-escalation is a different tack within that scholarship.

Most research to date on interstate rivalries has focused on how rivalries have emerged, their linkages, and how they increase conflict propensity.<sup>1</sup> These studies take a broader brush to the field, with some focus on specific cases of rivalries, such as between Israel and its neighbors

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<sup>1</sup> For instance: Zeev Maoz, Ben D. Mor, *Bound by Struggle: The Strategic Evolution of Enduring International Rivalries*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), Eric W. Cox, *Why Enduring Rivalries Do-Or Don't-End*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Books, 2010), and Micheal P. Colaresi, *Scare Tactics: The Politics of International Rivalry*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005).

Egypt and Syria. Israel fought four major wars with these Arab states, and still has disputes with Syria over the Golan Heights.<sup>2</sup> It is a common case and rivalry scholars use it to investigate the dynamics of why the Israel-Egypt rivalry de-escalated and the Israel-Syrian rivalry did not. There have been fewer pure case studies of less established or recent rivalries, which is unfortunate since rivalries are not linear, and no two rivalries evolve the same way. Statistical studies on rivalries have, if not yet exhausted their potential, found seemingly clear patterns in how rivalries form, how they proceed, and how they de-escalate.<sup>3</sup> However these studies are often insufficient to explain the contours of one, two, or a handful of rivalries. With more scholarly focus on these types of studies there have been few pure case studies done on rivalry formation and termination.

The case study method employed here will allow for more breadth and depth in the study of these particular rivalries. Indeed, several prominent rivalry researchers stated a decade ago that future research on rivalries would likely be of the small-N variety since large-N studies were in abundance.<sup>4</sup> In those instances when a case study design is employed the case study is of a very well-known or common rivalry such as Israel-Egypt, or Israel-Syria, or Ecuador-Peru.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, in order to determine covariance in rivalries, including in-depth analysis of mechanisms or triggers for de-escalation, a narrower and more refined search is needed. Additionally, due in part to the proliferation of new states after the break-up of the Soviet Union and in part to new conflicts arising in recent years not all rivalries have been covered by the large-N statistical studies. This is especially so in the case of the rivalries in Central Asia. For these reasons is why the case study was chosen as the methodological frame for this thesis's arguments.

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<sup>2</sup> Ritchie Ovendale, *The Origins of the Arab Israeli Wars*, (New York: Routledge, 1984).

<sup>3</sup> Rivalry scholarship has from the early years intentionally focused on large datasets in order to more easily discern patterns. Zeev Maoz, and Ben D. Mor, "Enduring Rivalries: The Early Years", *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 17, No. 2, (Apr. 1996): 141-160.

<sup>4</sup> Michael P. Colaresi, Karen Rasler, William R. Thompson, *Strategic Rivalries in World Politics: Position, Space, and Conflict Escalation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 287.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher Darnton, *Rivalry and Alliance Politics in Cold War Latin America*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 143.

India and Pakistan need mentioning here since they are members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as well. However, they only joined the SCO in 2017, and while they have an obvious rivalry going back to 1947 they have not been members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization long enough for their membership to have any meaningful impact on their rivalry.<sup>6</sup> Thus, these two states have been excluded from the case study chapters. There will be a cursory mention of them later in this chapter, in the discussion on the processes within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization that lead to trust building. The next section will detail the means of analysis used in this case study, which is process tracing, and what specifically it will be looking at.

### **Process Tracing**

The type of case study chosen for this research is an exploratory case, using within-case analysis. As stated in the introduction this thesis will employ the method of process tracing to conduct the within case analysis of the three cases under scrutiny. Process tracing is defined by George and Bennett as a method “which attempts to trace the links between possible causes and observed outcomes.”<sup>7</sup> There are normally three different variants of process tracing: theory-testing, theory-building, and case-specific.<sup>8</sup> The process-tracing used in this thesis is case specific and not theory-based. This is the most commonly applied use of process tracing. It is used only to provide a minimally sufficient explanation as to what role, if any, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization had in de-escalation of these three rivalries.<sup>9</sup>

The underlying pathways, the links as George and Bennett put it, that were investigated for this thesis were the rivalry process, and what led to the de-escalation of those

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<sup>6</sup> China and India also have a rivalry and the impact of India joining the SCO on that rivalry is not known at present. For more on the China-India rivalry see: John W. Graver, *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry In the Twentieth Century*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001). For the India-Pakistan rivalry see: Stephen P. Cohen, *Shooting for a Century: The India-Pakistan Conundrum*, (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institute Press, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Alexander L. George, Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 6.

<sup>8</sup> Beach, Pedersen, 11.

<sup>9</sup> Joachim Blatter, Markus Haverland, *Designing Case Studies: Explanatory Approaches in Small-N Research*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 101.

rivalries, specifically signaling, confidence-building measures, and trust building. Table 3-1 shows the specific pathways that the case study chapters will follow.

**Table 3-1  
Case Study Pathways**

Initial Observation	Pathway 1	Pathway 2	Pathway 3	Pathway 4	Outcome Observation
Rivalry was present among SCO states	Rivalry Process	Signaling	Confidence and security building Measures	Trust built and reinforced	Rivalry de-escalates, does not reemerge

The first pathway is to establish the rivalry process in each instance. In the first case study this thesis presents the Russia-China rivalry. It is a so-called consensus rivalry, that is scholars have by and large agreed that the relationship between China and Russia has at least at some points in the past could be defined as a rivalry.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the Russia-China rivalry has a well-established literature on it.<sup>11</sup> Thus, there is no need to elaborate in great detail about the formation of that rivalry, or its history, only in its de-escalation. The first pathway for the China-Russia rivalry then will begin with signaling, as laid out in Table 3-2.

**Table 3-2  
China-Russia Rivalry Pathways**

Initial Observation	Pathway 1	Pathway 2	Pathway 3	Outcome Observation
Rivalries formed among SCO states	Signaling	Confidence and security building Measures	Trust built and reinforced	Rivalry de-escalates, does not reemerge

## Signaling

<sup>10</sup>There are 23 “consensus” rivalries that most rivalry studies agree were rivalries at some point between 1815-2006. See Colaresi, et. al, 57.

<sup>11</sup> This will be expanded on in the next chapter, but one of the first comprehensive works on the rivalry was Oliver Edmund Clubb, *China and Russia: the “Great Game,”* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971). Many more works have followed.

In order to embed trust, communication between the rival states should be clear. Effective communication is created through diplomatic signaling, which occurs when one of the rivals reaches out to the other.<sup>12</sup> Signaling by states normally falls into three broad categories: public statements, private statements, and actions.<sup>13</sup> Katagiri and Min argue that actions are a more valued signal than either private or public statements, as they reduce the diplomatic “noise” around the signal.<sup>14</sup> Signaling also carries the risk of being costly, that is the signal can be misinterpreted or misperceived by the opposing party.<sup>15</sup>

Perception is a very important part of how signals are interpreted; leaders can misinterpret intentions, even overestimating their own importance in the eyes of the other party, thus it is important for policy makers to minimize misperceptions by making their own intentions more explicitly known.<sup>16</sup> Threat perception, as a subset of overall perception, is the process of recognizing and interpreting a threat, which is a verbal or nonverbal means of involuntary coercion.<sup>17</sup> In threat perception, it is only what the other party perceives to be a threat that matters. Not all threats are perceived and not all perceived threats are real. Threat perception also plays a vital role in the formation of rivalries. If states perceive a threat, then a threat no matter how small usually exists. However, there should be a rationale for perceiving the threat. There are two elements that make up a threat, capabilities and intent.<sup>18</sup> Of these two, intent is always the most dangerous. This is why al-Qaeda and ISIS are considered threats. Their capabilities are small, relatively speaking, to the United States, but their intent to do harm is so strong that they will find a way to inflict some damage on the United States.

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<sup>12</sup> Christer Jonsson, Martin Hall, *Essence of Diplomacy*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 75

<sup>13</sup> Azusa Katagiri, Eric Min, “The Credibility of Public and Private Signals: A Document-Based Approach,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 113, No. 1, (2019): 157.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 157-158.

<sup>15</sup> Todd Hall, Keren Yarhi-Milo, “The Personal Touch: Leaders’ Impressions, Costly Signaling, and Assessments of Sincerity in International Affairs,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 56, (2012): 560-573; Joshua D. Kertzer, Brian C. Rathbun, Nina Srinivasan Rathbun, “The Price of Peace: Motivated Reasoning and Costly Signaling in International Relations,” *International Organizations*, Vol. 74, (2020): 95-118.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, 410.

<sup>17</sup> Janice Gross Stein, “Threat Perception in International Relations,” in *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, Leonie Huddy, David O. Sears, and Jack S. Levy, eds., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 365.

<sup>18</sup> Patricia A Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances: Proponents of Peace, Weapons of War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 18.

On the other hand, some states could state their intention to do harm, but their lack of capabilities would render their rhetoric meaningless. Monaco, for example, may harbor all the intent in the world to harm a major power like the United States or the United Kingdom, even though it currently lacks any reasonable capability. Figure 3-2 below shows a wide range of state relationships and potential threats. The threat level is dependent on the threat's capabilities and will to do harm.

**Figure 3-1**  
**Spectrum of Relationships and Threats**

Ally – Low level threat – Competitor – Modest threat – High level threat – Adversary

Not all threats are created equal. The Soviet Union posed a major challenge to the United State during the Cold War, and China has the potential to be a major adversary. By contrast, Afghanistan, under Taliban rule, did not have the same capabilities as the Soviet Union. It was still a threat to the United State and its NATO allies, but a more modest one.

A survey conducted in 2000 of politicians, academics, journalist, security officials and other observers of Central Asian politics noted the poor bilateral relations among all the Central Asian states, excluding Turkmenistan, except for two dyads - Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan-Tajikistan.<sup>19</sup> If poor relations between two or more states are perceived and disputes exist between them, and resolution of those disputes is challenging, then it is probable that a government or leader may perceive a threat emanating from the other state. Once a threat is perceived then the state treats that threat accordingly.

Empathy also plays a role in how leaders perceive signals and avoid threats, those leaders that can identify with their opposite's situation can find more common ground to de-escalate real or perceived tensions between their respective states.<sup>20</sup> In a similar vein Yarhi-Milo has argued that decision makers are influenced both by the vividness (the "emotional interest of information") of information presented to them, and by what information the decision makers

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<sup>19</sup> Kirill Nourzhanov, "Changing Security Threat Perceptions in Central Asia," *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 63, No. 1, (2009): 98-99.

<sup>20</sup> Joshua Baker, "The Emphatic Foundations of Security Dilemma De-escalation," *Political Psychology*, Vol. 40, No. 6 (2019): 13.

believe to be credible; in other words what affirms what they already believe about their adversary.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, Wheeler has argued that signals of peaceful intent are more readily accepted by an adversary if there is some element of “bonded trust” between the leaders, usually in the form of good interpersonal relations.<sup>22</sup> However, this approach begs the question, if trust has been established, why is there a need to signal peaceful intent?

There is, then, some consensus in the literature that leaders make decisions based on their personal perception of the signals they receive from both real and potential adversaries. For the purposes of this thesis, signaling will be defined as the informal and formal ways in which states communicate desires, wants, and needs with other states.<sup>23</sup> This can be done through private channels, public channels, or overt actions. This thesis will take the view that overt actions are the strongest signaling device a state has available to it, followed by private channels, and then public channels. In this way, signaling noise is decreased, and the signal will be clearer. The reasoning for the signal does not have to be clear, a leader could display more empathy for the rival state for example, or simply weighs the costs of further escalation of the rivalry versus the benefits of de-escalation.

Either state can signal the other, but it must be reciprocated in order for the next observed pathway in rivalry de-escalation to take place. Only one instance of a reciprocated signaling is sufficient to begin the rivalry de-escalation process, although there may be more. Likewise, there may be many signaling attempts until it is reciprocated. The more signals conveyed, the costlier they may become, and thus the risk of conflict increases. So, this thesis will assume that signaling is done intermittently.

The second pathway is the implementation of confidence and security building measures (CSBMs) between the rival states. These measures can be any “practical actions that

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<sup>21</sup> Keren Yarhi-Milo, *Knowing the Adversary. Leaders, Intelligence, and Assessment of Intentions in International Relations*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 29-34.

<sup>22</sup> Nicholas Wheeler, *Trusting Enemies*, 45.

<sup>23</sup> Jonsson, Hall, 76, and Robert F. Trager, “Diplomatic Signaling Among Multiple States,” *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 77, No. 3, (2015): 635-647.

are aimed at creating attitudes of cooperation” among states.<sup>24</sup> Confidence-building measures can be institutionalized in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, or could come earlier, as is the case in the Russia-China rivalry. The CSBMs are instilled incrementally over time and must pertain specifically to the rivalry. Not all confidence-building measures will work, some are quite temporary, and some are not focused on trust, so the focus here is on which CSBMs were sustainable that could lead to trust being built between the rivals.

The third pathway for this rivalry is that trust is built and reinforced, allowing it to de-escalate and not reemerge. This trust reinforcement continues the work begun by the CSBMs, and is assisted by the mechanisms present within the structure of the SCO. This pathway and the SCO’s role in it will be examined in more detail later in this chapter. The final observed outcome is that the rivalry has de-escalated and has not reemerged. In other words, armed conflict between the two states is not imminent despite the fact that there may or may not be any resolution to the issue or issues which led to the creation of the rivalry condition in the first place.

For the Central Asian members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, it is less clear that they have rivalries. There is a dearth of information on rivalry formation in the Central Asian states, either because the states are new or there has been a lack of scholarly focus on the subject. Therefore, a more in-depth argument of how these states formed rivalries after independence is needed. Thus, the starting points for the process tracing pathways for chapters five and six will differ slightly from chapter four. The pathways, or connections, will be the same; the rivalry process among these states, followed by signaling, the establishment of confidence-building measures, and trust building and reinforcement. As in the case of the Russia-China rivalry trust reinforcement is primarily done within the framework of the SCO as an organization. The confidence-building measures in these rivalries occurred mostly in the

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<sup>24</sup> A.Z. Hilali, “Confidence- and-Security-Building Measures for India and Pakistan,” *Alternatives*, Vol. 30, (2005): 191

Shanghai Cooperation Organization, however not exclusively so. Signaling occurred both inside and outside the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, but stronger signaling occurred at SCO summits.

These pathways, this thesis argues, led to the observed outcome that these rivalries de-escalated without the need for conflict, immediate regime change, or the resolution of the rivalry issue or issues. The thesis therefore has two observations. The initial observation is that rivalries formed among the original members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. With these different pathways, there are two different arguments for the three case studies under scrutiny here. One, is that rivalries formed among these original members of the SCO, and secondly that they de-escalated without a shock. This thesis argues that it is not necessary for a shock to precipitate the end or de-escalation of a rivalry, but rather it is through the principle of trust reinforcement that this can be achieved. This is the main outcome of all three rivalries, that they de-escalated in a way that is atypical that many observed rivalries have de-escalated in the past. The next section will detail the data collection methods used for this thesis.

### **Data Collection**

Since this thesis examines different rivalries, with slightly different starting points in their pathways, not to mention different cultures and languages, triangulation is used as part of the data collection. In other words, these case study observations and pathways are analyzed using a variety of different sources: interviews government documents, contemporary newspaper articles, as well as secondary sources.<sup>25</sup> This triangulation enabled the thesis to provide the most holistic approach toward arguing the proposed explanation to the research question. In order to more fully establish the rivalries in Central Asia, interviews were conducted with policy makers and direct observers of the foreign policy processes of these states. These observers included journalists, members of third-party organizations such as the UN, EU, and NATO and

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<sup>25</sup> Beach, Pedersen, 128.

independent policy analysts and academics in the countries. In total there were eighteen interviews conducted with observers or experts on Central Asian relations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Due to the plethora of existing secondary sources on the China-Russia rivalry, and because it is a high-profile rivalry, no interviews were conducted on it.

There was limited data on the purported rivalry between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, so interviews were conducted with direct observers and foreign policy experts in and out of these countries, which were useful to improve understanding on how the rivalry progressed. Additionally, the triadic rivalry among Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan had very little literature on it, thus interviews were essential to establishing the foundations for the rivalry, as well as its de-escalation.

Political speeches were another primary source that was mined to further understand the rivalry process in the Central Asian states. Speeches made by heads of state or major policy makers of the member states were examined and analyzed using discourse analysis. Another source that was exploited was media reports. Newspapers, especially, were essential to establishing specific points of contention among the Central Asian states, even if they did sometimes come from official government news agencies. These four primary sources: government archival documents, interviews, speeches, and media reports, formed the core of the primary source data that was collected.

One of the main drawbacks in researching this topic was the lack of potential interview subjects in the Central Asian states. Due primarily to the authoritarian or semi-authoritarian nature of these regimes some policy makers in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were reluctant to speak even off the record about sensitive political issues such as bilateral relations with other Central Asian states. Because of this and, also because foreign policy decision-making in these states is in the hands of the singular leader and his, or her,

close circle of trusted advisers it was difficult to get the official policy stance of these states' governments on the issue of rivalry.

Despite this, there were enough observers of Central Asian politics, some of whom were in policy positions, who were willing to speak, both off and on the record. Indeed, the information gathered from these interviews was quite useful to the development of the thesis and complements what other primary and secondary sources state about the relations among these countries. It is unlikely that, if main policy makers (e.g. Presidents, Foreign Ministers, First Secretaries) had been willing and available to be interviewed, they would say anything contrary or be as frank as the interviewees who were chosen.

The next section will examine one of two of the pathways that will be traced throughout this thesis, the rivalry process. This will be followed by the second pathway examined, trust reinforcement, specifically trust reinforcement within the SCO's framework. Signaling and confidence-building measures have been given definitions in the previous section, and are more self-evident pathways than rivalry process and trust reinforcement. Thus, no further explanation of these two mechanisms are offered, however empirical evidence of them will be provided in the case study chapters.

### **Rivalry Process**

The sources of rivalry are rooted in a state's interests which includes a mixture of domestic politics and foreign policy outlook. The impetus for a rivalry may be a disputed territory between adjacent states. Territorial disputes are quite prevalent and are a common catalyst for rivalries to emerge<sup>26</sup> since they can fester and become long-standing. Disputes over territory have multiplied post-World War II as de-colonization created many new states in Africa and Asia. Many African states did not demarcate their borders as they became independent,

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<sup>26</sup> Paul Diehl, Gary Goertz, *Territorial Changes and International Conflict*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), 14

which in some cases led to disputes, but in many instances did not.<sup>27</sup> However, despite border demarcation not being a priority for many African states, there were still a plethora of disputes, thirty-one according to Huth, more than in any other region.<sup>28</sup> As the number of states introduced into the international system increased it would be reasonable to believe that the number of disputes, whether over territory or another issue would likewise increase.

Territory is not the only catalyst for rivalry formation. As noted previously rivals can fight over space (territory), position, (systemic power), and ideology (related to systemic power), or any number of other issues, or a combination therein. Once the driver for the dispute is recognized by both states, for example a disagreement on boundary demarcation, then policy makers, and business and media elites clearly articulate the rivalry for consumption by the general public in a process known as outbidding.<sup>29</sup> Regardless if the opposing state has manifested itself as a threat or not, cynical or opportunistic leaders can inflate the threat to further the rivalry either for domestic political reasons, (winning re-election, or neutralizing the opposition), or if foreign policy priorities are changed.<sup>30</sup>

Domestic restraints do exist on policy makers however, even in non-democratic states, so a leader cannot willfully engage his state's resources on petty feuds. A rivalry must be palatable to the public as well as the elites, although the elites can be the drivers for the rivalry. These domestic pressures, also called "win sets" by Putnam, occur on another level than the level of international transactions.<sup>31</sup> A state is free to engage in diplomacy and commerce with other states. However, major decisions: treaties, agreements, war declarations, and other manifestations of military usage are subject to this second level of win sets. Thus, decisions to escalate or even de-escalate a rivalry are subject to domestic whims.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Paul Huth, *Standing Your Ground: Territorial Disputes and International Conflict*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 26.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Colaresi, *Scare Tactics: The Politics of International Rivalry*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 20.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>31</sup> Robert Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Policies: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organizations*, Vol. 42, No. 3, (Summer, 1988): 436.

<sup>32</sup> In some instances, civilian leaders who wish to de-escalate a dispute found domestic resistance by the military. Huth, 97.

Leaders have to gauge the risks and rewards of beginning a rivalry, continuing it, escalating, or de-escalating the rivalry. In addition to the domestic level, the policy maker must determine the level of capability and support the opposing state may have, whether it is in an alliance with a stronger state for example. If so, that state may take a step toward forming its own alliance, hence creating the conditions for rivalry.<sup>33</sup> Likewise, if the opposing state's military capability is greater policy makers may decide to build up their own state's military capabilities. States are constantly involved in a security dilemma: how much security is necessary to be safe without antagonizing potential rivals. Thus, alliances can be a hindrance and actually increase a state's insecurity.<sup>34</sup>

Regime type may also be an indicator as to whether a state enters a rivalry with another. States with stable liberal democratic governments and traditions are less likely to become involved in a rivalry with like-minded states. This is linked with the larger literature on democratic peace theory.<sup>35</sup> Democracies tend to have greater transparency in their public interactions, and democratically elected leaders are vulnerable to the whims of the electorate, thus their rhetoric may be less bellicose. Nevertheless, even democratic leaders may find it difficult to apply accommodating policies to resolve disputes with rivals if public opinion sways against them.<sup>36</sup> Conversely, a peaceful resolution of a border dispute by non-democracies may lead to a liberalization of their domestic politics: peace leading to democracy instead of the other way around.<sup>37</sup>

Beyond regime type, occasionally a rivalry is defined by a singular leader, such as Saddam Hussein, former ruler of Iraq. Iraq and the United States fought two wars in 1991 and

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<sup>33</sup> Brandon Valeriano, *Becoming Rivals: The Process of Interstate Rivalry Development*, 37.

<sup>34</sup> Glenn Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 4, (Jul. 1984): 463

<sup>35</sup> Paul R. Hensel, Gary Goertz, and Paul F. Diehl, "The Democratic Peace and Rivalries," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 62, No. 4, (2000): 1175.

<sup>36</sup> David Lektzian, Brandon Prins, and Mark Souva, "Territory, River, and Maritime Claims in the Western Hemisphere: Regime Type, Rivalry, and MIDs from 1901 to 2000," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 54, (2010): 1078.

<sup>37</sup> Douglas Gibler, Jaroslav Tir, "Settled Borders and Regime Type: Democratic Transitions as Consequences of Peaceful Territorial Transfers," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 54, No. 4, (Oct. 2010): 965.

2003 and were at odds during the interwar period.<sup>38</sup> They had what could best be described as an asymmetrical rivalry, which terminated once Hussein was removed from power.<sup>39</sup> A leader in an authoritarian state may convince the elites, and the public through state-controlled media, that he is the only one capable of protecting the state from its rival, thus ensuring the rivalry continues as long as he remains leader. Saddam Hussein made the argument following the 1991 Gulf War that if he were removed, instability would follow and Iraq's rivals (Iran, the United States) would take advantage of the chaos.<sup>40</sup> While Saddam was leader, rivalries with both states were extended, but both the United States-Iraq and Iran-Iraq rivalry appear to have ended after Saddam's overthrow in 2003. Thus, the leader plays at least some part in the formation of a rivalry.

The decision to enter into a rivalry may not be a conscious one, but rather is part of a gradual process. Once an issue becomes intractable however, policy makers, faced with domestic pressure and actions by the adversarial state, may decide to implement the steps toward rivalry. Once this process begins, these steps to rivalry and potential conflict are difficult to reverse. The rivalry develops its own inertia. The foreign policy bureaucracy of the rivalry states will often times discourage alternative thinking on the rivalry. Groupthink can set in. Domestically, if there is little opposition, those elites and policy makers that are in favor of peace, or peaceful resolution of the dispute (doves) are often times sidelined, while those in favor of more direct confrontation, including the use of force (hawks) are given preeminence, and those in the middle (moderates) are swayed to the majority hawks' side.<sup>41</sup> While the formation of an interstate rivalry is rarely so simple a process as hawks versus doves in a given government, an issue, such as a territorial dispute, can gain traction. This is especially true in non-democratic states and in

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<sup>38</sup> Robert K. Brigham, *The United States and Iraq Since 1990: A Brief History with Documents*, (Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 37.

<sup>39</sup> The US reestablished diplomatic recognition of Iraq on June 28, 2004 after ties had been severed January 12, 1991, just prior to the first Gulf War. Information obtained from the US State Department, Office of the Historian, accessed February 8, 2018 at: <https://history.state.gov/countries/iraq>.

<sup>40</sup> Fouad Ajami, "Iraq and the Arabs' Future," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2003.

<sup>41</sup> Eric Cox, *Why Enduring Rivalries Do-Or Don't-End*, (Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010), 12

instances where the foreign policy bureaucracy is mired in groupthink.<sup>42</sup> Valeriano maps out his own steps to rivalry, modified from Vasquez's Steps-to-War theory,<sup>43</sup> as this: Step One: Issue, Step Two: Alliances, Step Three: Arms/military build-up, Step Four: Escalating Bargaining Demands, Step Five: Rivalry Linkage (the interconnection between different rivalry dyads).<sup>44</sup> This is a good outline but incomplete as it does not denote the different catalysts for rivalry formation. Additionally, Valeriano does not include the element of risk in the rivalry process. All leaders take risks in decision-making, none more so than on questions of conflict. Decisions on whether to escalate or de-escalate the rivalry may depend on the risk attitude of decision makers.<sup>45</sup> This attitude may be colored by perceptions or misperceptions of their opponent's strength, potential, and intent.<sup>46</sup> In conjunction with risk then is perception. A leader who perceives his opponent as weak may take additional risks, and if he misperceives his opponent's intentions then the risks he takes may undermine his position.<sup>47</sup>

Risk and perception are important elements of the rivalry process. Leaders, assuming they are rational, make a cost-benefit analysis to see if the rewards, domestically and internationally, are greater than the risks. If so, then the rivalry dyad occurs. If not, the rivalry may still occur although it might be on a smaller scale than if there was less risk. Copeland looks at this decision-making process through the lens of major wars and the reaction of declining states to threats.<sup>48</sup> The same model can be applied to the rivalry formation process.

Now with most of the elements of the rivalry process identified, a rivalry process model can now be established. In the first place an issue, be it a territorial dispute, ideological or

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<sup>42</sup> The Iraq War for instance is an example of an escalation of a rivalry that may have been influenced by groupthink dynamics. Alex Mintz, Carly Wayne, *The Polythink Syndrome: U.S. Foreign Policy Decisions on 9/11, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and ISIS*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 92-93.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Senese, John Vasquez, *The Steps to War: An Empirical Study*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 44 Valeriano, 35-43.

<sup>45</sup> Paul Huth, Bruce Russett, "General Deterrence Between Enduring Rivals: Testing Three Competing Models," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 87, No. 1, (Mar., 1993), 67.

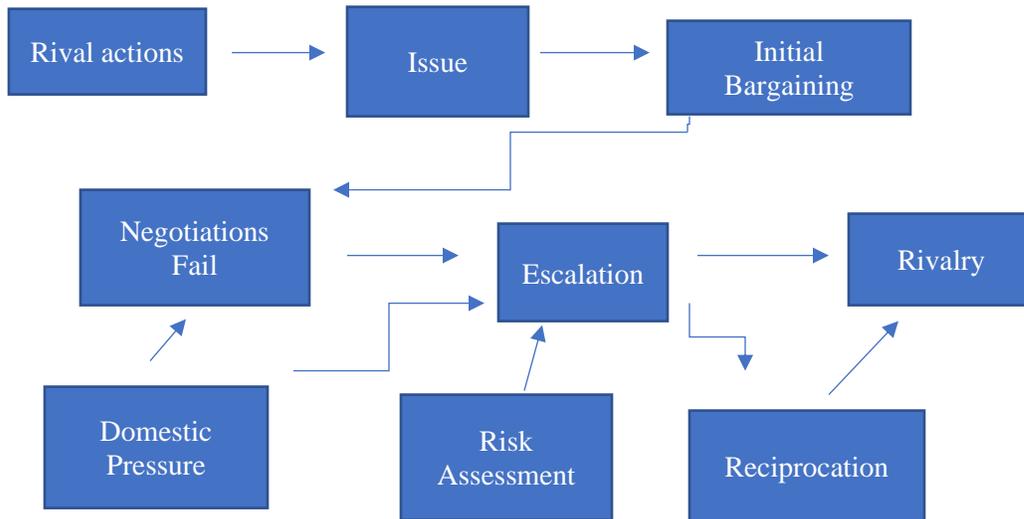
<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

<sup>48</sup> Dale Copeland, *The Origins of Major War*, (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2000), 39.

some other dispute, divides two states into opposing camps. Initial attempts to resolve said dispute peacefully are rebuffed by one or both sides, positions harden, and domestic pressure builds in response to the rival's actions (diplomatic, militarily, economically) over the issue, and resists third party attempts to resolve dispute. Next, policy makers take stock of the perceived threat (capabilities and intent) of the rival, and depending on the risk attitude, the level of domestic support, perception of the actions of the opponent make the decision to escalate the dispute. This may include increased bellicose rhetoric, economic sanctions, an arms build-up, seeking alliances, and utilizing asymmetrical warfare (cyber-attacks, terrorism). If this escalation is reciprocated by the opponent and sustained for a period of more than one year, then the dispute has reached the level of rivalry. Figure 3-2 illustrates this path to rivalry.

**Figure 3-2**  
**Flow Chart for Path to Rivalry**



This model, while simplified, denotes the common stages that a dyad goes through as it proceeds to form a rivalry, as well as the various drivers that propel the rivalry forward. To begin a rivalry there has to be a dispute, normally this is over territory, but can also be over power positioning within a region, protection of minority ethnic groups in one of the states, control of resources, or access to a vital trade route.<sup>49</sup> There can be, and usually are, more than one issue that defines a rivalry.

Once the dispute nexus has been identified and it is clear that neither side is willing to compromise over the issue, then the rivalry begins. In the beginning of the rivalry there may be some initial bargaining between the parties. If these negotiations end in failure, neither side is willing to compromise, then there may be some escalation of the rivalry by one of the parties. This escalation is usually reciprocated by the other party, and the rivalry becomes long-lasting.

Occasionally, usually if new leaders come to power, there is a reassessment of the rivalry - whether it is worth continuing. Additionally, there is domestic pressure, often in the form of outbidding, to continue the rivalry.<sup>50</sup> A rivalry continues until both sides agree to end their dispute mutually, one side is defeated or coerced into submission, or one side gives up its claim or claims unilaterally.<sup>51</sup>

Not all rivalries end in war, in fact many do not - there are lower levels of violent intensity - border clashes, diplomatic rows, threats, and bluster mark most rivalries.<sup>52</sup> Rivalries that end up in war are truly intractable and cannot be resolved without the use of major force. Even still, each state in a rivalry dyad sees the other as a potential major threat and prepare accordingly. The next section will examine in more detail the phenomenon of rivalry backsliding.

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<sup>49</sup> Colaresi, et. al, 79.

<sup>50</sup> Colaresi, 23.

<sup>51</sup> Rasler, et. al, 7-9.

<sup>52</sup> Brandon C. Prins, "Interstate Rivalry and the Recurrence of Crises: A Comparison of Rival and Nonrival Crisis Behavior," *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 31, No. 3, (Spring, 2005): 329.

## Rivalry Backsliding

As stated in the prior chapter on the literature review, one area of rivalry studies that has been neglected is when rivalries reoccur after a period of de-escalation or perceived termination. For example, did the end of the Cold War truly terminate U.S.-Russian military competitiveness and antagonism toward each other, or merely interrupted it?<sup>53</sup> Likewise, has the Egypt-Israel rivalry terminated as much of the literature assumes or is it in a state of stasis. There have been no militarized disputes between the two Middle Eastern countries since 1989 but diplomatic relations have been strained at times in the past thirty years.<sup>54</sup> Another rivalry that was deemed to have ended but reemerged was Libya-Sudan. Rasler and her co-authors list the rivalry as ending in 1985.<sup>55</sup> Yet, either due to lingering resentment toward or dislike of Libyan leader Col. Muammar Qaddafi, or revenge for the earlier hostilities between the two countries, Sudan's president Omar al-Bashir admits his country armed Libyan rebels aiming to topple Qaddafi in 2011.<sup>56</sup> This action preceded Libyan meddling in Sudan in the early 1990s.<sup>57</sup> Both incidents occur well after the presumed termination of the rivalry, belying that fact. A closer examination of other rivalries may reveal similar patterns of conflict or tension reemerging.

Research on these interrupted rivalries has been limited to one study to date, authored by Diehl and two of his colleagues, which examined why some rivalries appear to end while others reemerge.<sup>58</sup> The authors argue that interrupted rivalries reoccur based on their past dynamics.<sup>59</sup> Lingering hostilities from, or dissatisfaction with the outcome of a prior rivalry can

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<sup>53</sup> Tensions exist between the United States and Russia on a number of points – Ukraine, NATO, missile defense, US election interference, and now the INF treaty. See: Eugene Rumer, Richard Sokolsky, Andrew S. Weiss, “Trump and Russia: The Right Way to Manage Relations,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 96, No. 2, (Mar. 2017): 12.

<sup>54</sup> For example, see: Fawaz A. Gerges, “Egyptian-Israeli Relations Turn Sour,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 3, (May, 1995): 69, and “Egypt’s Parliament Expels Lawmaker Who Dined With Israel’s Ambassador,” *Arab Press Service Diplomat Recorder*, Vol. 85, No. 9, (Mar. 5, 2016).

<sup>55</sup> Rasler, Thompson, Ganguly, 8.

<sup>56</sup> James Copnall, “Sudan armed Libyan rebels, says President Bashir,” BBC News, October 26, 2011 accessed January 29, 2019 at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-15471734>.

<sup>57</sup> Asim Elhag, “The Sudanese Role in Libya 2011”, World Peace Foundation, December 17, 2012, accessed January 29, 2019 at: <https://sites.tufts.edu/reinventingpeace/2012/12/17/the-sudanese-role-in-libya-2011/>.

<sup>58</sup> Gennady Rudkevich, Konstantinos Travlos, Paul F. Diehl, “Terminated or Just Interrupt? How the End of a Rivalry Plants the Seeds for Future Conflicts,” 159.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 173.

lead to that rivalry reemerging.<sup>60</sup> This can lead to renewed and even greater conflict, especially if there are unresolved issues stemming from the rivalry. For example, rivalry dyads that are contiguous were more likely to see their rivalry backslide into conflict.<sup>61</sup>

This phenomenon, which this thesis will term as rivalry backsliding, has been little studied. All rivalry de-escalation models to date have been unconcerned with the reemergence of the same rivalry dyad, either ignoring the backsliding or not accounting for it. Yet backsliding is a very real element of rivalries, one that can lead to greater intensity of a rivalry, such as the case of Libya and Sudan. Diehl, Rudkevich, and Travlos could not explain why backsliding occurs, only the fact that it does. The focus of this thesis is, likewise, not on why this phenomenon occurs, but how backsliding is prevented in some instances. In order to prevent rivalry backsliding constraints on the rivalry need to be in place. These constraints should allow leaders of rivalry states to engage each other in dialogue, consistently over an extended period of time. Without these constraints a rivalry that has perceived to have ended, such as the recent de-escalation of the Ethiopia-Eretria rivalry,<sup>62</sup> may have the propensity to backslide, and re-emerge.

Backsliding can be prevented by reinforcing mutual trust; the notion that rival states, can, if not become friends, at least have a non-hostile relationship. Even rivalries that have been buried for decades need reinforcement. These relationships may be construed as a cold peace, and sometimes a “normal peace” wherein the parties are not in a state of immediate conflict, but conflict is not unthinkable in the long run.<sup>63</sup> The relationship between Israel and Egypt has had elements of a cold peace.<sup>64</sup> As for reinforcing mutual trust as a prevention against this backsliding, there are two historical examples that illustrate its usage. One is the France-

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 170.

<sup>62</sup> Eyder Peralta, “‘Peace Is Everything’: Ethiopia and Eritrea Embrace Open Borders After Long Conflict,” National Public Radio, December 4, 2018, accessed January 30, 2019 at: <https://www.npr.org/2018/12/04/671260821/peace-is-everything-ethiopia-and-eritrea-embrace-open-border-after-long-conflict>.

<sup>63</sup> Benjamin Miller, “Contrasting Explanations for Peace: Realism vs. Liberalism in Europe and the Middle East,” *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 31, No. 1, (2010): 135-136.

<sup>64</sup> Annon Aran, Rami Ginat, “Revisiting Egyptian Foreign Policy towards Israel under Mubarak: From Cold Peace to Strategic Peace,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 4, (2014): 563-564.

Germany rivalry, used by Diehl and his co-authors in their study, and the other is the former rivalry between the U.S. and Great Britain.<sup>65</sup>

In the case of the former, the two contiguous states had a clear rivalry, which ended after World War II. However, while it is true Germany has since democratized, and that may have contributed to the demise of its rivalry with France, from that day to this foreign troops, particularly American, have been stationed on German soil, under the auspices of NATO.<sup>66</sup> Ostensibly, these troops were station in Germany to protect Europe from perceived Soviet aggression, however a second, yet equally important task was to prevent the re-rise of German militarism.<sup>67</sup> The presence of foreign troops as a contributing factor to the de-escalation of the Franco-German rivalry cannot be ignored, but there are other factors as well, such as democratization, and closer integration as members in the eventual European Union.<sup>68</sup> Franco-German rapprochement after the war was seen as the driving force behind European integration.<sup>69</sup> As the Cold War ended the process of integration was accelerated in order to constrain a now unified Germany and allay French fears of renewed German chauvinism.<sup>70</sup> In other words, the EU could be seen as institutionalizing the reinforcement mechanism between France and Germany, in order to keep their rivalry from backsliding to conflict.

The second rivalry, between the United States and Great Britain that occurred for much of the nineteenth century, has remained de-escalated since the early part of the twentieth century. But as discussed in the previous section, that de-escalation is reinforced by the rhetoric on the “special relationship” the two states share. Aside from NATO and the UN there are no obvious institutions the two states share where reinforcement could be applied. Instead, American and British leaders have created their own platform, the special relationship, that bridged partisan

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 173.

<sup>66</sup> See Francis H. Heller, John R. Gillingham, eds. *NATO: The Founding of the Atlantic Alliance and the Integration*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992)

<sup>67</sup> Lord Ismay the first NATO Secretary-General famously quipped that NATO was formed to “keep the Soviet Union out, the Americans in, and the Germans down,” NATO website, accessed January 29, 2019 at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/us/natohq/declassified\\_137930.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/us/natohq/declassified_137930.htm).

<sup>68</sup> Thomas Horber, *The Foundations of Europe: European Integration Ideas in France, Germany, and Britain in the 1950s*, (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006), 54-55.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Michael J. Baun, “The Maastricht Treaty as High Politics: Germany, France, and European Integration,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 110, No. 4, (Winter, 1995-96): 609-610.

divides in both countries, leading to some unlikely pairings of US presidents and British prime ministers (for example FDR and Churchill, George W. Bush and Tony Blair, and Barak Obama and David Cameron). Reinforcement of trust, therefore, is a very real aspect of rivalry de-escalation. The next section will argue that this trust reinforcement can be applied to de-escalate rivalries through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and its mechanisms.

### **Trust Building in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization**

The key component to prevent rivalry backsliding, this thesis argues, is mutual trust, which lessens animosity between enemies.<sup>71</sup> This trust, this thesis argues, animates itself in the form of calculus-based trust or CBT. CBT is the baseline for forming any trusting relationship. As discussed in the literature review there is some disagreement over whether this form of trust is actual trust or can describe any non-friendly interstate relationship in the international system. This model assumes that calculus-based trust can be considered trust only if it is reinforced over a sustained period of time. In this way the trust becomes habit forming and part of state practice. It is not necessary for that trust to evolve into identity-based trust for it to work. Instead, the trust developed among the SCO members could be considered a high-functioning CBT.

In the beginning of a relationship based on CBT there is more emphasis on cost-benefit payoffs, making the relationship more transactional in nature. However, calculus-based trust does not remain static if there are continual interactions over the course of many years. Instead, if there is sufficient repetitive action between the two trusting parties then that trust becomes ingrained into the relationship, and thus moving it beyond the cost-benefit stage. At some point this calculus-based trust may form into identity-based trust. However, that process at the nation-state level of analysis takes longer to reach, and is not a necessary condition for some level of trust to be established between states. Institutional trust that emanates from

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<sup>71</sup> Nicholas J. Wheeler, "Beyond Waltz's Nuclear World: More Trust May be Better," *International Relations*, Vol. 23, No. 3, (Sept. 2009): 435.

intergovernmental organizations can lead to interstate rivalries de-escalating in tensions. Hoffman argues that trust built through institutionalization creates breathing space and effective voice for the rival states.<sup>72</sup>

The two elements are interconnected, but having an “effective voice” is only useful to small states, or the weaker party in a dispute. An “effective voice” often requires parity in negotiations, so that the parties in question will have some say in the final outcome.<sup>73</sup> Having an “effective voice” may vary in its value for the rivals, but the emphasis for the weaker state should be at least having its voice heard, regardless of the effectiveness of that voice. In reality, the “effective voice” aspect of institutional trust improves for both parties if the institution has helped create more breathing space domestically for the rivals.

Both rivals can, and often do, benefit from having more breathing space domestically. Rivalries are often centered on intractable issues, such as territory, and much of the pressure to continue the rivalry is domestic.<sup>74</sup> The weaker rival may feel more confident in signaling to or receiving signals from their ostensible rival within an institutional framework. Signaling within an institutional framework reduces uncertainty and risk for both of the rivals and makes it more likely that signal will be reciprocated. Reciprocation does not always occur, but given the repetitive nature of the institutional framework, annual meetings for example, the chances of reciprocation increase over time.

Hoffman argues that norms or treaty negotiations count as institutional frameworks that build trust.<sup>75</sup> However, this type of trust building is limited to the issue covered by the treaty, and treaties are only good as long as the two parties abide by them. If trust has not been built prior to these treaty negotiations it is extremely difficult for the treaty in and of itself to sustain trust over

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<sup>72</sup> Hoffman, *Building Trust*, 46.

<sup>73</sup> Hoffman, “The Structural Causes of Trusting Relationships,” 292.

<sup>74</sup> Paul R. Hensel, “An Evolutionary Approach to the Study of Interstate Rivalry,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 17, No. 2, (1999): 185.

<sup>75</sup> Hoffman, *Building Trust*, 48.

a longer duration. In other words, trust institutionalized by treaties or norms the two rivals that are party to the agreement assume their opponent will follow is vulnerable to failure.

Building on Hoffman's model for institutional trust, and taking into account Wheeler's argument that interpersonal relationships are a key step in building trust, this section argues that membership in an intergovernmental organization, specifically the SCO, helps institutionalize trust by creating breathing space domestically for the rivals while also giving them a platform to air their grievances due mostly to the centralization of activities and open channels of communication that an IGO provides.<sup>76</sup> This is due to the structures in place within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization that emphasizes multilateral cooperation and builds trust, by allowing leaders the chance to interact with each other in an intimate setting.<sup>77</sup> This section will examine the trust building aspect of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which will segue into a more detailed argument on how the SCO's structure assists in keeping rivalries de-escalated through reinforcing trust. The main way in which breathing space can be created is through formal summits. Summits offer rivals the chance to air grievances and present clearer channels of communication, while at the same time creating breathing space. The multilateral nature of the summits is the key to appeasing domestic critics. Few would argue about agreements reached in a multilateral forum on an international stage, which led to a de-escalation of tensions with a rival.

Building calculus-based trust among rivals is the only assured way to de-escalate tensions within a rivalry this chapter argues. This trust building is best applied in an incremental fashion, which cuts against the grain of most trust scholarship. That is, it should be done over a prolonged period of time, it should be consistent, and communication between the rivalry states

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<sup>76</sup> Kenneth W. Abbott, Duncan Snidal, "Why States Act Through International Organizations," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 42, No. 1, (1998): 11-12.

<sup>77</sup> Megan Shannon, "Preventing War and Providing the Peace? International Organizations and the Management of Territorial Disputes," 158-160; Wheeler, *Trusting Enemies*, 65-66.

is key.<sup>78</sup> Calculus-based trust can be built incrementally through a regional security-based IGO such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization through the formalization of cooperation among its members. The best way to facilitate this trust is to involve the focal points of power within a regime, specifically the leadership and military, in confidence-building measures. These mechanisms ensure that calculus-based trust can be established over time through reassurances or reinforcement the confidence-building measures initiated

In order for a rivalry to truly end then, reinforcement of mutual trust is a necessary condition. This is to ensure that rivalry backsliding will not take place and is the most sustainable way to instill trust in both parties. Without mutual trust a rivalry cannot end. Reciprocity is also vital since one state cannot end a rivalry on its own, but once a rival signals and another reciprocates then the principle of reinforcement is necessary to build trust to continue the de-escalatory momentum.<sup>79</sup> Without mutual trust a rivalry cannot de-escalate. Therefore, reinforcement, the mechanism of repeating confidence-building measures (meetings, summits, military exchanges, or other forms of bilateral cooperation) that ensure trust in a formalized setting, is more vital to rivalry de-escalation than the presence of shocks. Shocks are a sufficient condition for rivalry de-escalation or subsequent termination, that is they may be present and even have an impact on the rivalry. However, they are not a necessary condition. A rivalry can de-escalate without a shock present, either as impetus for de-escalation or as a contributing factor, or so the evidence presented in this thesis will argue.

Summitry is one vehicle by which leaders can build rapport and ease tensions. In summits leaders can interact with each other on a personal level, building rapport, which makes trust more bonding.<sup>80</sup> Summitry itself has a long history, but became increasingly important in

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<sup>78</sup> Experiments involving the prisoner's dilemma game have been conducted which demonstrate that communication was vital for trust building among the participants in order to resolve conflict. Donnel Wallace, Paul Rothaus, "Communication, Group Loyalty, and Trust in the PD Game," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Sep., 1969): 370-380.

<sup>79</sup> Signaling may take time and is itself a form of reinforcement. By some accounts, the Soviets spent ten years signaling to China that they wanted to negotiate their border and territorial disputes before the Chinese reciprocated with any seriousness. Hedrick Smith, "Soviet Press China on Border Dispute," *New York Times*, December 29, 1973.

<sup>80</sup> Wheeler, *Trusting Enemies*, 52

the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, first after the Napoleonic Wars with the Congress of Vienna, and then again after World War II.<sup>81</sup> It was during the Cold War that summitry became an increasingly visible and important platform for superpower interactions.<sup>82</sup> Additionally, the proliferation of multilateral international organizations as the international community has expanded has led to summitry being used more and more.<sup>83</sup> Summitry allows state leaders to speak face-to-face without interference from the diplomatic bureaucracy.<sup>84</sup>

This mode of diplomacy is not without its criticisms, however.<sup>85</sup> For one, summitry runs the risk of leaders developing too close a bond that hinders their negotiating prowess, or they may have personality clashes.<sup>86</sup> There are a great many risks involved in summit diplomacy as well. If a deal is failed to be negotiated between the participants for example, they may find their domestic position considerably weakened.<sup>87</sup> Despite these drawbacks, nearly every international organization and every state engages in some form of summitry. Summits are carefully coordinated so that nothing will go wrong. Joint statements are issued praising cooperation and encouraging future cooperation. Summits however can veer off script with sideline meetings – perhaps the most important function at summits.<sup>88</sup> It is one way that leaders can get their message across to rivals. Within the SCO's framework this has happened more than once, leading to breakthroughs in once-stalemated rivalries. Trust can and has been built through leaders' one-one-one meetings, but this begs the question of if that trust is sustainable enough to sufficiently de-escalate a rivalry and keep it from reemerging.

Rivalry de-escalation through summitry within an intergovernmental organization's structural framework has occurred before. In particular, Malaysia and Singapore, two members

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<sup>81</sup> Erik Goldstein, "The Origins of Summit Diplomacy," in *Diplomacy at the Highest level: The Evolution of International Summitry*, David Dunn, ed. (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), 23-26.

<sup>82</sup> David Dunn, "What is Summitry?" *Diplomacy at the Highest level*, 5.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>85</sup> G.R. Berridge, *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 186.

<sup>86</sup> David Dunn, "The Lure of Summitry: International Dialogue at the Highest Level," Discussion Paper No. 13 (Leicester: Diplomatic Studies Program, University of Leicester, 1995), 26.

<sup>87</sup> Jan Melissen, "Summit Diplomacy Coming of Age", Discussion Papers in Diplomacy No. 86, (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, 2003), 16.

<sup>88</sup> It was at a sideline meeting at an SCO summit where Kyrgyz and Tajik leaders began to settle their differences. "Tajik, Uzbek leaders to meet tete-a-tete after several years of cold relations," BBC Monitoring, September 11, 2014.

of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), who saw their rivalry de-escalated after an initial visit by Malaysian prime minister Abdullah Badawi in 2003.<sup>89</sup> ASEAN served as the development model for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization,<sup>90</sup> and similar patterns of conflict de-escalation have emerged in each organization. In fact, China may have modeled the SCO's confidence-building measures deliberately on ASEAN's and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), of which it is a member.<sup>91</sup>

In the SCO, mutual trust, which ultimately leads to rivalry de-escalation, is gleaned from the reinforcement of confidence-building measures.<sup>92</sup> The founding document of the SCO, the "Declaration on the Establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization" states in its second paragraph that the Shanghai Five had started the process of "...good- neighborliness, mutual trust and friendship among the member states..."<sup>93</sup> In order to continue those three vital elements, the SCO was formed. The SCO has the mechanism of annual summitry in which all the heads of state of the members come together for a two-day conference, as its main confidence-building measure.

In the case of Russia and China, despite their long-standing animosity toward each other, their relationship in the post-Cold War exhibited deepening trust, due mostly to interactions at summits, both multilateral and bilateral. Border disputes were settled and borders were demilitarized through formal negotiations, treaties, and the creation of the Shanghai Five forum.<sup>94</sup> Military planning was changed; no longer did Russia and China aim their weapons toward each other.<sup>95</sup> Bilateralism in the form of the Russia-China strategic partnership, emerged, and it soon

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<sup>89</sup> Jorn Dosch, "Mahathirism and Its Legacy in Malaysia's Foreign Policy," *European Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 4, (2014): 21, See also Saw See Hock, K. Kesavpany, *Singapore-Malaysia Relations under Abdullah Badawi*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006), and for background on the rivalry see K.S. Nathan, "Malaysia-Singapore Relations: Retrospect and Prospect," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 24, No. 2, (August, 2002): 385-410, and Chang Li Lin, "Singapore's Troubled Relations with Malaysia: A Singapore Perspective" *Southeast Asian Affairs*, (2003): 259-274.

<sup>90</sup> Stephen Aris, "A New Model for Regionalism: Does the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Have More Potential than ASEAN?" *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 22, No. 3, (Sept. 2009): 455. Community," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 4, (2006): 610.

<sup>91</sup> Marc Lanteigne, "'In Media Res': The Development of the Shanghai Co-operation Organization as a Security

<sup>92</sup> "SCO to boost mutual trust and benefit," *China Daily*, June 9, 2018.

<sup>93</sup> *Declaration on the Establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization*, Shanghai, China, June 15, 2001.

<sup>94</sup> "Gorbachev package includes border demilitarization offer," *Financial Times of London*, May 18, 1989.

<sup>95</sup> Russian-Chinese arms transfers increased greatly in the 1990s, to the point that some analysts almost mistook the relationship for an alliance. Robert H. Donaldson and John A. Donaldson, "The Arms Trade in Russian-Chinese

morphed into multilateralism with the creation of the Shanghai Five forum, and the eventual Shanghai Cooperation Organization.<sup>96</sup> Policy dialogue was developed between Russia and China in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as well.<sup>97</sup> Finally, a commonly defined threat was delineated, and elites in both states, projected by their state-owned media began using accommodating language toward each other.<sup>98</sup>

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is still a new organization, with a small membership, but has just added two members whose rivalries may challenge its ability to keep tensions from escalating among its members.<sup>99</sup> It has long been thought that the rivalry tendencies that still exist among the SCO members,<sup>100</sup> will threaten to undermine the organization and may prevent it from becoming integrated, like the NATO of the East.<sup>101</sup> It is true that members in the SCO still compete for influence in Central Asia.<sup>102</sup> Figure 3-3 shows the current and former rivalries that exist among the SCO member states, and their interconnectivity. As can be seen, there are two states which form a nexus for most of the rivalries: China with two rivalries, and Uzbekistan with three. China's rivalry with India and India's rivalry with Pakistan are significant obstacles for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to overcome.<sup>103</sup> This fact is not lost on the leaders of these states.<sup>104</sup>

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Relations: Identity, Domestic Politics, and Geopolitical Positioning," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 4, (Dec. 2003): 714-715.

<sup>96</sup> "China, Russia Pledge to Strengthen Cooperation in World Affairs," Xinhua, July 5, 2000.

<sup>97</sup> Silvana Malle, "Russia and China in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Moving Toward Cooperative Behavior," *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2, (July 2017): 148.

<sup>98</sup> Much of this language was, and continues to be, reproduced in state-run media in both states. See: "News Analysis: China-Russia strategic partnership of coordination reaches new high," Xinhua, October 15, 2009. 2017, accessed February 8, 2019 at: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/china-worried-india-pak-may-bring-their-differences-to-sco-table/articleshow/58948166.cms>.

<sup>99</sup> Seibal Dasgupta, "China worried India-Pak may bring their differences to SCO table," Times of India, June 1,

<sup>100</sup> Alexander Cooley, "In Central Asia, public cooperation and private rivalry," *International Herald Tribune*, June 9, 2012.

<sup>101</sup> Marseilles de Haas, "NATO Needs Armies of Shanghai Cooperation Organization," Agency WPS, February 27, 2008.

<sup>102</sup> Jean-Pierre Cabestan, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Central Asia, and the Great Powers, an Introduction: One Bed, Different Dreams?" *Asian Survey*, Vol. 53, No. 3, (May/June 2013): 426.

<sup>103</sup> Srini Sitaraman, "Tangible-Intangible Factors Interaction on Hostility Escalation and Rivalry Endurance: The Case of India-Pakistan Rivalry," *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs*, Vol. 2, No. 2, (2015): 164, and Jonathan Holslag, *China and India: Prospects for Peace*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 168-169.

<sup>104</sup> "Accession of India, Pakistan carries historic significance: SCO," UWIRE Text, June 15, 2017.

**Figure 3-3**  
**SCO Rivalries**



China, after some initial hesitation, agreed with Russia at the 2015 SCO summit in UFA to add India and Pakistan to the organization.<sup>105</sup> Despite some Chinese concerns over India's inclusion, Beijing ultimately viewed the addition of India as strengthening the organization, since China is committed to multilateralism, at least in the SCO.<sup>106</sup> Prior to India's ascension the two states were skeptical of each other in their respective regional organizations, with China ultimately still excluded from the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, (SAARC).<sup>107</sup>

China, more so than any other member, has invested significant political capital into the success of the organization.<sup>108</sup> Indeed, China's commitment to the SCO exceeds its cooperation with any other regional security organization. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization was seen as the most acceptable instrument to integrate China into a regional security architecture,<sup>109</sup> and the

<sup>105</sup> Kathrin Hille, "India and Pakistan join Shanghai Co-operation Organisation," *Financial Times*, July 11, 2015.

<sup>106</sup> Jagannath P. Panda, "Beijing's Perspective on Expansion of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: India, South Asia, and the Spectrum of Opportunities in China's Open Approach," *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 36, No. 3, (Jul.-Sept. 2012): 511. For Chinese reluctance see: Marc Lanteigne, "Russia, China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Diverging Security Interests and the 'Crimea Effect.'" in Helge Blakkisrud, Elana Wilson Rowe, eds. *Russia's Turn to the East: Domestic Policymaking and Regional Cooperation*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 124; In part China acquiesced because Indian membership was "costless" to Beijing compared to allowing New Delhi to have a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Deborah Welch Larson, "Status Competition among Russia, India, and China in Clubs: A Source of Stalemate or Innovation Global Governance," *Contemporary Politics*, Vol. 25, No. 5, (2019): 559.

<sup>107</sup> Swaran Singh, "Paradigm Shift in India-China Relations: From Bilateralism to Multilateralism," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 64, No. 2, (Spring-Summer 2011): 161-162.

<sup>108</sup> Zhao Huasheng, "China's View of and Expectations from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 53, No. 3, (May/June 2013): 439.

<sup>109</sup> Kuralai I. Baizakova, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization's Role in Countering Threats and Challenges to Central Asian Regional Security," *Russian Politics & Law*, Vol. 51, No. 1, (2013): 73.

PRC may have become the dominant foreign power in Central Asia, mainly because of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.<sup>110</sup> It is far from certain that India and Pakistan's membership in the SCO will lead to a de-escalation of their long-standing rivalry, but the likelihood of de-escalation has increased with their membership.<sup>111</sup>

Building trust is a work in progress as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization looks to serve as a regional integrator.<sup>112</sup> Without trust, deeper relations are not possible. In fact, the SCO has actively worked toward building mutual trust among its members.<sup>113</sup> Since the SCO does not promote democratic values trust has to be built using other methods.<sup>114</sup> Built from the top-down the SCO is a consensus-building partnership.<sup>115</sup> That is, despite China's investment in the organization it will not act unilaterally within it. In the same manner China expects the other member states, including its rivals, to act multilaterally. The "core principle" in the SCO is this consensus-building, and through this mutual trust is built.<sup>116</sup> As a result the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has developed into a vibrant comprehensive, and structured regional organization.<sup>117</sup>

Russia and China have seen leadership changes, as have most of the other members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. However, the organization has endured with new leaders committed to sustaining it. It is perhaps far easier for rival states to maintain trust through multilateral institutions than bilaterally, as there are more restraints and less risk is involved for them. Through annual summits the SCO formulates a top-down approach to mutual trust. If the leaders trust each other, are willing to meet, and exchange ideas, then that sense of cooperation will descend down through the bureaucracy and perhaps to the people. This notion of mutual

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<sup>110</sup> Khayrulla Umarov, Kimberly Millie, "Sino-Russian Relations within the Framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Framework," *Journal of Eastern European and Central Asian Research*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (2014): 3.

<sup>111</sup> Manu Balachandran, "Could India and Pakistan's armies come together with a little help from China?" Quartz, June 9, 2017.

<sup>112</sup> "Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Positioned To Secure Belt And Road," Business Monitor International, August 10, 2018.

<sup>113</sup> "SCO member states to deepen cooperation, consolidate mutual trust," Kazakhstan Newslines, October 15, 2018

<sup>114</sup> Alexander Libman, Anastasia V. Obydenkova, "Understanding Authoritarian Regionalism," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 29, No. 4, (October 2018): 151.

<sup>115</sup> Rashid Alimov, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Its Role and Place in the Development of Eurasia," *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2, (July 2018): 115.

<sup>116</sup> Yeongmi Yun, Kicheol Park, "An Analysis of the Multilateral Cooperation and Competition between Russia and China in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Issues and Prospects," *Pacific Focus*, Vol. 27, No. 1, (April 2012): 69-70.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, 424.

trust and cooperation is exemplified in Shanghai Cooperation Organization joint statements such as the one emanating from the 2012 summit, by the heads of state.<sup>118</sup>

The 2012 declaration reiterated the members' views that it was important to promote mutual trust in the context of security.<sup>119</sup> In addition, the SCO member states sought to reinforce the need to enhance cooperation in the border regions.<sup>120</sup> Joint statements such as the 2012 declaration are an example of the principle of reinforcement. These mechanisms help to encourage calculus-based trust, rather than identity-based.<sup>121</sup> Ultimately, while SCO members' leaders may develop personal rapport among each other, they will likely make decisions based on their interests rather than through interpersonal connections. In this way, though, the SCO's reinforcement can build trust among its members for the long-term.

Without reinforcement, the reassurances that come from official working meetings, summitry, and military exercises, mutual trust is difficult to achieve.<sup>122</sup> Through the SCO's structure reinforcement has been institutionalized in the form of summitry, the core of the organization's interactions.<sup>123</sup> Aside from summitry, real action has been taken by the SCO to promulgate mutual trust in the form of cooperation on anti-terrorism and military exercises.<sup>124</sup> Beyond the security realm the SCO has attempted to deepen trust among the people with cultural exchanges.<sup>125</sup> Cultural exchanges have not been received as well, as it has been mostly China establishing Confucius centers, with some of the Central Asian states expressing concern over colonialism.<sup>126</sup> The concept of mutual trust has only extended so far in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

One critique of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is that its members are only in it for their own interests.<sup>127</sup> Since, currently Russian and Chinese interests are converging, and the

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<sup>118</sup> "Declaration of the Heads of State of the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on Building a Region of Lasting Peace and Common Prosperity," States News Service, June 7, 2012.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Lewicki, Tomlinson, 112-113.

<sup>122</sup> Andrew Kydd, "Trust, Reassurance, and Cooperation," 325.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with anonymous former SCO official, May 18, 2018.

<sup>124</sup> Zhang Zhihao, "SCO military drill seeks trust, stability," China Daily, June 5, 2018.

<sup>125</sup> "Xi puts forward five-point proposal to consolidate, deepen SCO cooperation," Xinhua, June 24, 2016.

<sup>126</sup> There were no similar centers espousing Turkic culture in China. Dadabaev, 114.

<sup>127</sup> Weiqing Song, "Interests, Power and China's Difficult Game in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)," *Journal of Contemporary China* Vol. 23, No 85, (2014): 91, and Isabelle Facon, "Moscow's Global Foreign and

Central Asian states see added benefit in playing one major power against the other, it becomes an alignment of convenience for all involved.<sup>128</sup> Once those interests diverge, so the argument goes, then the SCO may collapse.<sup>129</sup> Another critique is that the SCO is actually less a regional organization with China and Russia involved in it.<sup>130</sup> It is true that both states dominate Central Asia, which could be an impediment to deeper integration.

Yet, despite these critiques, mutual trust has become ingrained, and even institutionalized, on security issues within the SCO.<sup>131</sup> Indeed, high levels of trust have started to emerge in the organization.<sup>132</sup> Additionally, China's new security concepts, from 1996 to the present, have argued that mutual trust is key to China's "peaceful rise" to Great Power status, with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization playing a vital role in ensuring that trust.<sup>133</sup> For China then, the SCO is a vital part of its security architecture, a vehicle to improve bilateral ties with its neighbors. Russia, too, seems to have bought into the concept of the SCO as a confidence-building measure, and sees mutual trust being built through the principle of reinforcement. The Central Asian states have also picked up on the discourse of mutual trust and the principle of reinforcement.<sup>134</sup>

Through summits and military exercise, reinforced over and over again, trust has been slowly built among the SCO members. This continues to be a consistent theme for the SCO.<sup>135</sup> Speaking about mutual trust is itself a form of reinforcement. The state-run presses in the SCO member countries constantly recycle government officials emphasizes on how the organization is working toward mutual benefits, and building mutual trust.<sup>136</sup> Reinforcement has become almost second nature at this stage of the SCO's development. And it is this reinforcement where rivalry

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Security Strategy Does the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Meet Russian Interests?" *Asian Survey*, Vol. 53, No. 3, (May/June 2013): 464-465.

<sup>128</sup> Song, 101.

<sup>129</sup> Interview with Bruce Pannier, July 20, 2017.

<sup>130</sup> Teemu Naarajavri, "China, Russia, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Blessing or Curse for New Regionalism in Central Asia?" *Asia Europe Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 2, (2012): 123.

<sup>131</sup> Taek Goo Kang, "Assessing China's Approach to Regional Multilateral Security Cooperation," *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 64, No. 4, (2010): 424.

<sup>132</sup> Baizakova, 66.

<sup>133</sup> Jaewoo Choo, "Ideas Matter: China's Peaceful Rise," *Asia European Journal*, Vol 7, No. 3, (2009): 395, and "China's Position Paper on the New Security Concept, July 31, 2002," *China Report*, Vol. 39, No.1, (2003): 131.

<sup>134</sup> "Kazakh President Nazarbayev Meets with Yang Jiechi," States News Service, December 30, 2010.

<sup>135</sup> "Sino-Russian joint military exercises to strengthens mutual trust: Russian diplomat," Xinhua, August 18, 2005.

<sup>136</sup> "China Stresses Enhanced International Cooperation for World Peace," Xinhua, November 11, 2001.

expectations can be revised without a significant shock or even third-party pressures on the rivalry. Also, it prevents rivalry backsliding, as in the case of Russia and China, and potentially for the Central Asian members, once their rivalries have sufficiently de-escalated.

The reinforcement principle will continue to work as the SCO expands, and adds new members. Thus, it was quite logical to expand SCO membership to India and Pakistan in 2017, despite their ongoing rivalry over Kashmir, and India's rivalry with China.<sup>137</sup> In 2018 all the SCO members signed the Qingdao Declaration, which reinforces the notion of mutual trust among the members.<sup>138</sup> Rhetorically, at least, India, Pakistan, China, as well as the other members have committed themselves to trusting each other within the framework of the organization. However, without the reinforcement of that trust there is little to prevent the re-escalation of these Eurasian rivalries; especially given the states' proximity to each other, with the potential that the border issues among them could reignite.<sup>139</sup> Despite the illiberal nature of most of these regimes they have taken concrete efforts to build trust.<sup>140</sup> The longer the reinforcement of general trust among the SCO states continues, the less likely their rivalries will backslide.

### **Structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization**

This section will examine the structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and how its' organs are specifically designed to de-escalate conflicts among its members. The main permanent executive body of the SCO is the Secretariat.<sup>141</sup> The Secretariat coordinates all the activity of the SCO, including providing technical assistance, and disseminating

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<sup>137</sup> "Pakistan's participation in SCO summit boost security cooperation: embassy," The Balochistan Times, May 30, 2018 and "SCO military drills will help ease Indo-Pak tensions: Chinese experts," Greater Kashmir, June 5, 2010, accessed June 19, 2018 at: <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/world/sco-military-drills-will-help-ease-indo-pak-tensions-chinese-experts/287331.html>.

<sup>138</sup> "Leaders of SCO countries adopt Qingdao Declaration and dozen other documents," Kyrgyz National News Agency, June 10, 2018.

<sup>139</sup> Karen Rasler, William R. Thompson, "Explaining Rivalry Escalation to War: Space, Position, and Contiguity in the Major Power Subsystem," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 3, (Sept. 1994): 527.

<sup>140</sup> Another example of their commitment is the recently established public diplomacy centers the SCO sponsors. "SCO's first public diplomatic centre established in Tashkent" Daily National Herald Tribune, January 30, 2019

<sup>141</sup> Stephen Aris, *Eurasian Regionalism: The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 24.

information to the media.<sup>142</sup> In addition, the Secretariat works in conjunction with the Heads of State Council, which consists of the heads of all the member states. The Heads of State Council is the main coordinating body for the SCO. This Council is the supreme body of the SCO and has final say in all decisions. The Council meets annually in the capital of one of the members chosen by the Cyrillic alphabetical order of their names.<sup>143</sup>

Along with the Secretariat, the SCO established the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS or Anglified as the Regional Counter-Terrorism Structure - RCTS<sup>144</sup>) to coordinate anti-terrorism activities among the member states. RATS and the Secretariat are the only two permanent organs of the SCO.<sup>145</sup> There are other organs within the SCO such as the Interbank Consortium and Business Council that are not permanent. The Secretariat is headed by a Secretary-General with permanent representatives from each of the member states. The Secretary-General is chosen from one of the member states, usually a career diplomat, for a three-year nonrenewable term.<sup>146</sup> The member states rotate the Secretary-General among themselves. The Secretariat works to implement policies that are set by the Heads of State Council, as well as coordinate activities with SCO observers and dialogue partners.<sup>147</sup>

The Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure is the implementation tool for the SCO. It helps coordinate anti-terrorism activities, including military exercises and police training, among its members.<sup>148</sup> Terrorism, however, is a broad term, ambiguously defined in the Shanghai Convention on Combatting Terror, and could be interpreted by member states as any

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid, 29, also see Shanghai Cooperation Organization website, “Secretariat,” accessed June 5, 2018 at: <http://eng.sectsc.org/secretariat/>.

<sup>143</sup> Shanghai Cooperation Organization website, “Structure,” accessed May 18, 2018 at: <http://eng.sectsc.org/structure/>.

<sup>144</sup> Weiqing Song, *China's Approach to Central Asia: the Shanghai Cooperation Organization*, (London: Routledge, 2016) 65.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid, 54.

<sup>146</sup> SCO website, “Structure,” accessed May 18, 2018 at: <http://eng.sectsc.org/structure/>.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> See: “SCO's regional anti-terrorism structure sets up group of border service experts,” Central Asia General Newswire, March 28, 2012, “SCO Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure to expand its functions to include anti-drug fight,” ITAR-TASS, September 14, 2012.

group that threatens the regime.<sup>149</sup> Mostly, RATS has been limited in scope and has had a mixed track record of success.<sup>150</sup>

Besides the permanent structures the SCO has set up, the Secretariat and RATS, and the annual summits between the heads of state, and heads of government, the organization has also proliferated some top-down bureaucratic apparatuses to help implement the decisions made at the summits. The main coordinating body is the Council of National Coordinators of SCO Member States, which is charged with management of meetings below the Heads of State Council. This includes meetings between “heads of parliament; secretaries of Security Councils; ministers of foreign affairs, defence, emergency relief, economy, transport, culture, education, and healthcare; heads of law enforcement agencies and supreme and arbitration courts; and prosecutors general.”<sup>151</sup>

These meetings in turn help facilitate the decisions made in the annual summits by the heads of state. For example, when the Bishkek Declaration was adopted in 2013, the Council of National Coordinators was tasked with implementing the declaration at the lower levels of government among the SCO members.<sup>152</sup> The Council of National Coordinators meets separately from, but in conjunction with, the heads of state. Their role is instrumental in furthering the trust being built in the yearly summit meetings.

Beyond security concerns, the SCO has attempted to incorporate nearly all aspects of public life within its portfolio: economics, culture, sports, education, healthcare, and transportation.<sup>153</sup> The organization has slowly become integrated, not to the extent of the European Union, but it is more than just a strictly security-based IGO. In this way, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization also institutionalizes the trust established by the Council of Heads of

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<sup>149</sup> “The Shanghai Convention on Combatting Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism,” Shanghai, June 15, 2001.

<sup>150</sup> Thomas Wallace, “China and the Regional Counter-Terrorism Structure: An Organizational Structure,” *Asian Security*, Vol. 10, No. 3, (2014): 200.

<sup>151</sup> Shanghai Cooperation Organization website, Accessed at: [http://eng.sectsco.org/about\\_sco/](http://eng.sectsco.org/about_sco/).

<sup>152</sup> “The Bishkek Declaration was adopted in the SCO Summit,” UzReport, September 13, 2013.

<sup>153</sup> Weiqing Song, *China’s Approach to Central Asia*, 62.

State. All of these elements, economic, cultural, education, security, coincide to create what all the SCO members want: regional stability.<sup>154</sup>

The more integrated the organization becomes, the greater the chance that the trust and reassurances developed in the annual summits are kept, since implementation of all the decrees and declaration is done at the ministerial or lower levels of government. The structure of the SCO focuses mostly on external affairs, and given the organization's creed of non-interference in internal state affairs,<sup>155</sup> it does not place an emphasis on domestic security. Since many of the SCO members, if not all, have an authoritarian form of government in place, regime security for these states is also paramount. The organization is tasked with battling the so-called "three evils" of separatism, extremism, and terrorism, which may help regimes deflect some domestic opposition to it. However, the degree of integration that the SCO has obtained is still limited.

There is not, as of yet, a massive bureaucracy in place such as the European Union has. Partly, this is by design, as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is reluctant to involve itself in the internal machinations of its members, keeping consistent with its organizational belief in state sovereignty. A case in point is Kyrgyzstan, which has had two popular revolts that led to sudden regime changes while being a member of the SCO.<sup>156</sup>

In addition to its formal members the SCO has four observer states. With India and Pakistan now acceded to membership, those states are: Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, and Mongolia.<sup>157</sup> Finally, there are six dialogue partners: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Turkey.<sup>158</sup> The criteria for becoming a member are that a state should belong to the Euro-Asia region, be either a dialogue partner or observer of the SCO, be on good diplomatic

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<sup>154</sup> Stephen Aris and Aglaya Snetkov, "'Global Alternatives, Regional Stability and Common Causes': The International Politics of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and its Relationship with the West," *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, Vol. 54, No. 2, (2013): 211-212.

<sup>155</sup> Article 5, "Declaration on the Establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," June 15, 2001, Shanghai.

<sup>156</sup> Kathleen Collins, "Kyrgyzstan's Latest Revolution," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 22, No. 3, (2011): 150-164.

<sup>157</sup> Shanghai Cooperation Organization website, "About," accessed June 5, 3018 at: [http://eng.sectsc.org/about\\_sco/](http://eng.sectsc.org/about_sco/).

Tashkent, Uzbekistan, June 11, 2010.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

and trade terms with all current members, have no security commitments contrary to the SCO, have no current armed conflicts, and no sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council.<sup>159</sup>

The first and the fourth criteria eliminated the United States when it applied for membership in 2005.<sup>160</sup> Likewise, Japan at one time sought entry into the SCO but was denied.<sup>161</sup> This shows that the SCO was driven by Chinese and Russian security concerns. The ascension of India and Pakistan makes it less certain that other Eurasian states will be denied entry, although states outside Europe-Asia will most definitely be excluded. The observers and dialogue partners are all Eurasian states that have good relations with Beijing and Moscow.

The SCO is first and foremost a security driven organization. In the Declaration on Establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, clause four defines a “Shanghai Spirit” that pervaded the Shanghai Five process. This Shanghai Spirit was defined loosely as “mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, joint consultations, respect for cultural diversity, and aspiration for collective development.”<sup>162</sup> In other words the members of the SCO would build an organization based on mutual interests.

The same document states unequivocally that the SCO is not an alliance aimed at any particular state, in a move likely to appease the United States.<sup>163</sup> Instead the SCO defined three “evils” that it would defend against: terrorism, separatism, and extremism.<sup>164</sup> These evils were broadly defined, but the member states were mainly concerned about Islamic extremist and separatist groups attempting to break away. Russia was embroiled in the Second Chechen War at the time; China, worried about Uighur separatists; and Uzbekistan and Tajikistan worried

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<sup>159</sup> “Regulation on Admission of New Member States to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization” Article 1,

<sup>160</sup> “US to Attend Shanghai Group Meeting on Afghanistan”, Voice of America, November 2, 2009, <https://www.voanews.com/a/a-13-2009-03-19-voa51-68772882/410841.html>.

<sup>161</sup> “Japan seeks observer status in Central Asian security group,” Associated Press, August 26, 2004.

<sup>162</sup> “Declaration on the Establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization” Article 4, Shanghai, June 15, 2001.

<sup>163</sup> Article 7 of the “Declaration on the Establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization” June 15, 2001.

<sup>164</sup> “The Shanghai Convention on Combatting Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism,” Article 1, Shanghai, China, June 15, 2001.

about the IMU.<sup>165</sup> All of the member states worried about the Taliban in Afghanistan, which was harboring al Qaeda at the time the SCO was formed.<sup>166</sup> The “Shanghai Spirit” denotes the cooperative atmosphere through which the member states of the SCO interact to combat extremism, separatism, and terrorism. The next section will look at the way in which the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has utilized its structure, to build and reinforce mutual, calculus-based trust which has contributed to the de-escalation of its members’ interstate rivalries and prevented their reoccurrence.

### **Reinforcement and Rivalry Backsliding**

This section will stress the importance that reinforcement plays in de-escalating rivalry tensions and keeping the rivalries from backsliding. There are normally two phases of de-escalation in rivalries, the initial agreement and then the consolidation phase where the agreement is reinforced.<sup>167</sup> This assumes a shock is the impetus for the rivalry de-escalating to begin with. However, even without a shock, there usually is a consolidation phase to reinforce the agreement. There are two types of post-settlement shocks that could disrupt that agreement, removal of the regime and challenges to the agreement, and can lead to rivalry backsliding.<sup>168</sup>

Reinforcement defined as the reassurances states give each other in formal, often public, settings over security issues. These reassurances usually come in the form of bilateral meetings, such as summits, or confidence-building measures, such as bilateral military exercises.<sup>169</sup> For the SCO, summits and military exercises and exchanges are the only way the organization can apply de-escalatory pressures on rivalry dynamics among its members. In particular, these mechanisms

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<sup>165</sup> The IMU initiated military operations against Uzbekistan in 1999, Richard Weitz, “Storm Clouds over Central Asia: Revival of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)?” *Studies of Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 27, No. 6, (2004): 511-512.

<sup>166</sup> Elisabeth Rosenthal, “China, Russia and 4 Neighbors Seek Common Front on Terror,” *New York Times*, January 8, 2002.

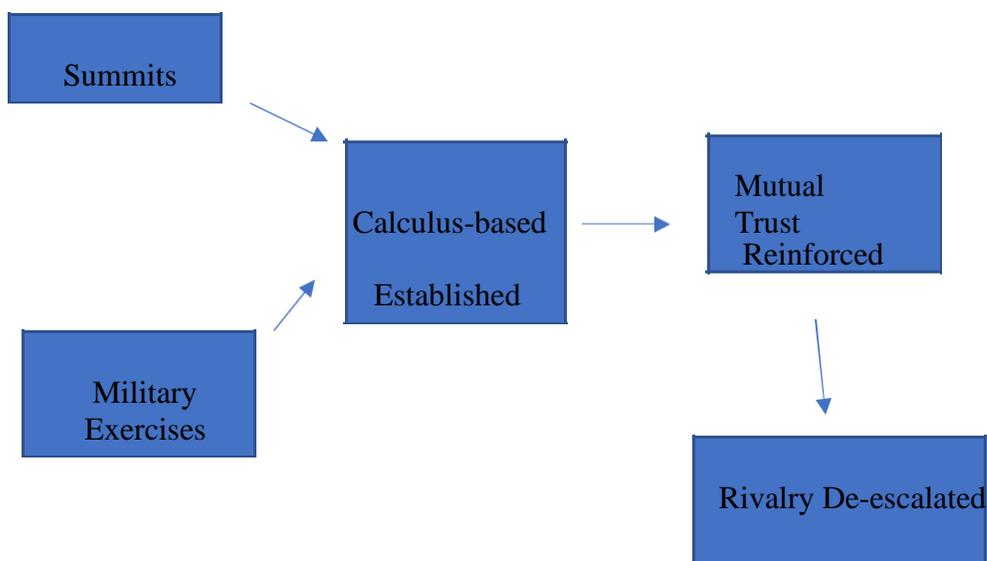
<sup>167</sup> Karen Rasler, “Shocks, Expectancy Revision, and the De-escalation of Protracted Conflicts: The Israeli-Palestinian Case,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 37, No. 6, (2000): 704.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid*, 705.

<sup>169</sup> An example of reinforcement is the reiteration of the “special relationship” between the U.S. and the U.K. by nearly every American and British leader since World War II, whether it truly exists or not. John Dumbrell, “The US–UK Special Relationship: Taking the 21st-Century Temperature,” *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 11, No. 1, (2009): 64-78.

will prevent rivalry backsliding. Significant de-escalation of these SCO rivalries has already occurred as previous chapters have demonstrated, but the lack of complete resolution of the territorial disputes makes rivalry backsliding a real possibility. Thus, the top-down structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, with its focus on cooperation in the form of summitry and joint military exercises keeps these its member states in constant contact with each other, forcing them to cooperate. Reinforcement, the repetitive nature of these forms of bilateral cooperation, keeps rivalry impulses in check and makes backsliding less, rather than more, likely. Figure 3-4 demonstrates how the SCO's model of trust reinforcement applies to rivalry de-escalation. This model is adapted from the one proposed in the conceptual frameworks chapter. As can be seen, both summits and military exercises are designed to ensure trust is established and then reinforced. This trust reinforcement leads to perpetual de-escalation of the rivalry. As long as the mechanisms are in place for leaders and military personnel to interact, it is unlikely the rivalry will reemerge.

**Figure 3-4**  
**Flow Chart of SCO Rivalry De-escalation Model**



When the Shanghai Five first met in 1996 it is unlikely that the then-leaders envisioned where the process would take their respective countries. But they did have the foresight to continue meeting, even after the border issues between them had mostly been resolved. This was largely thanks to Chinese efforts to keep the momentum going, due mostly to security concerns.<sup>170</sup> Yet, even with a change of leadership in Russia from Yeltsin to Putin, Russia continued to invest itself into the SCO security architecture.<sup>171</sup> For Russia, it was important to maintain meaningful relations with China. This was because Russian relations with the West, especially the U.S were, and remain, contentious in the post-Yeltsin period.<sup>172</sup> Additionally, Russia did not want China to gain too much influence with the Central Asian republics, which Russia still regarded as part of its near abroad.<sup>173</sup> The Central Asian states, caught between the two powers, wanted to remain relevant and balance China against Russia.<sup>174</sup>

Even though each of the members had different reasons for continuing the work of the Shanghai Five, they all wanted to continue the momentum of the border settlements. None of the actors wanted a return to the past, so moving forward was the only option. As a result, the SCO developed its own inertia.<sup>175</sup> The de-escalatory pressures this process brought to the interstate rivalries may have been serendipitous, but the results have not gone unnoticed by the

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<sup>170</sup> Zhao Huasheng, 436-437.

<sup>171</sup> John Berryman "Russia and China in Eurasia: The Wary Partnership," in *Key Dynamics and Regional Dynamics in Eurasia: Return of the 'Great Game*, Maria Raquel Freire, Roger E. Kanet, eds. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 133.

<sup>172</sup> The Russian war with Georgia, the Russian annexation of Crimea, human rights, NATO expansion, and democratization are just a few of the issues between Russia and the West. Lilia Shevtsova, *Lonely Power: Why Russia has Failed to become the West and the West is Weary of Russia*, (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010), 2.

<sup>173</sup> Carla P. Freeman, "New Strategies for an Old Rivalry? China-Russia relations in Central Asia After the Energy Boom," *The Pacific Review*, (2017): 638.

<sup>174</sup> Julie Wilhelmsen, Geir Flikke, "Chinese-Russian convergence and Central Asia," *Geopolitics*, Vol. 16, No. 4, (2011): 890.

<sup>175</sup> Anna Matveeva, Antonio Giustozzi, "The SCO: A Regional Organization in the Making," Working Paper No. 39, (London: LSE, Crisis State Research Centre, September 2008), 5.  
States News Service, October 30, 2010.

participants. In a speech in 2010 at the 5<sup>th</sup> East Asia summit, Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov stated that effective instruments were necessary “for maintaining stability and reinforcing mutual trust and understanding.”<sup>176</sup> He mentioned the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as one of the instruments being utilized to ensure regional peace, helping to reinforce mutual trust and understanding.<sup>177</sup> In an interview with Chinese press in 2014, Lavrov continued this theme, stating that reinforcing mutual trust was best achieved through dialogue and high-level meetings.<sup>178</sup> Nor is Lavrov the only high-level official who thinks this way. In 2016 President Xi Jinping stated before the Uzbekistan parliament that mutual trust between the two countries was deepening, due to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.<sup>179</sup>

In the initial stage of this model one of the adversarial states signals to the other its willingness to negotiate. Once reciprocated, the process is cemented by reinforcement. Mutual trust between the once rivals is slowly established and thus backsliding of the rivalry is prevented. A state may have any number of reasons to signal its intentions: a new greater threat emerges, a foreign policy realignment, or the fact that one or either of the rival states do not want the crisis to escalate further. This signaling is best accomplished within the institutional framework, which allows breathing space for the two rivals.<sup>180</sup> Hoffman’s model suggests that states with more room to maneuver are more likely to cooperate, since distrust is caused by the environment the states find themselves in, rather than emanating from the states’ themselves, or so Hoffman argues.<sup>181</sup>

Hoffman’s reasoning for institutional trust is debatable since rivalries emerge and endure due as much to the actions and reactions of the rivals as to the anarchical state of the international system. But it is likely true that rivals, if they believe they have breathing space, no fear of serious repercussions such as regime change or electoral defeat, may signal each other.

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<sup>176</sup> “Statement by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at the 5<sup>th</sup> East Asia Summit, Hanoi, October 30, 2010”

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> “Interview of the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov,” *China Daily*, April 15, 2014.

<sup>179</sup> “Chinese President delivers speech before deputies of Parliament of Uzbekistan,” *UzReport.uz*, June 22, 2016.

<sup>180</sup> Hoffman, “The Structural Causes of Trusting Relationships,” 307.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 311.

Being members of the SCO gives rivals the opportunity to signal one another without fear of negative repercussions, and nothing is lost if the signals go unheeded. Signaling can occur very early in the rivalry but unless it is reciprocated and that reciprocation reinforced through confidence-building measures, signaling in and of itself will not lead to rivalry de-escalation. Thus, once the signaling has led to the opposing sides to start building trust, reinforcement of that trust is a necessary condition for rivalry de-escalation. Reinforcement is best attained through the formal institutionalization of confidence-building measures. This ensures that trust can be sustained over a longer period of time, thus resulting in more enduring conflict de-escalation. This model also prevents rivalry backsliding since the confidence-building mechanisms are in place for principles to communicate if disagreements arise between them. Without these mechanisms, mostly institutionalized summitry and exchanges between former rival states' militaries, backsliding is more likely to occur. This backsliding would wipe out any would-be gains the initial signaling and de-escalation process achieved. Thus, it is important to continually reinforce trust among the former rival states. The best way to ensure this is to institutionalize the CSBMs, in that way they become habit, almost commonplace for leaders and militaries to meet in a non-hostile environment.

### **Conclusion**

Thus, the SCO has created, out of necessity, a de-escalation model that prevents the inherent rivalries between its members from re-escalating to conflict. For China, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization secures its western flank, and northern border. For Russia, the SCO makes a potentially dangerous rival a strategic partner and prevents it from being isolated internationally. For the Central Asian states, the organization gives them a chance to gain stature, air grievances, and work through their own border issues.

Scholars have interpreted the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's presence in the international system in different ways. Some have seen it as a hedge to NATO expansion in

Central Asia.<sup>182</sup> Other scholars dismiss its potential as a security bloc altogether, arguing that the organization is too fraught with infighting and diverging interests to be effective.<sup>183</sup>

This chapter has argued rather than diverging interests, the structure of the SCO is designed to promote cooperation, build trust, and thus prevent conflict escalation, especially rivalry-based conflict, from emerging or reemerging among its members.

China was the driving force behind the founding of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, but has stressed consensus building within it rather than unilateralism. The other members have followed China's lead, and thus the organization has developed its own confidence-building mechanisms to de-escalate conflict or potential conflict that could be caused by the rival dyads among its members. Mutual trust is the main impetus to de-escalate rivalries, and the SCO emphasizes summitry and military exercises to promote trust. The organization allows its members breathing space domestically, especially for the smaller states, so that they may have more freedom to negotiate over points of contention.

Trust, however, needs to be reinforced so that it outlasts regimes, and gives animosity a chance to lessen over time. And prevent rivalries from backsliding. Since the SCO is highly structured with annual meetings and military exercises, trust is reinforced, as long as states remain members. The leaders feel pressure to attend summits, lest they be left out of important discussions. Attending summits gives them a level of prestige they would not normally have in bilateral meetings. Additionally, military exercises give states a chance to demonstrate their militaries, and test their capabilities, while enhancing cooperation.

In these ways the Shanghai Cooperation Organization helps to prevent rivalry impulses from reemerging among its members. Rivalries stay de-escalated over an extended period of time to the point that armed conflict to resolve a dispute is not the default position of either former

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<sup>182</sup> T.J. Pempel, "Soft Balancing, Hedging, and Institutional Darwinism: The Economic-security Nexus and East Asian Regionalism," *Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2, (May-August 2010): 227-228.

<sup>183</sup> Crosston, 292.

rival. Rivalry backsliding becomes more difficult the longer institutional trust is sustained. However, that trust needs to be constantly reinforced in order for it to be effective.

The addition of India and Pakistan to the SCO present a challenge to this de-escalation model, since there has been no discernible thaw in their perpetual rivalry prior to membership. However, to date, there has been no significant escalation of the India-Pakistan rivalry and some de-escalation of the India-China rivalry since India and Pakistan's ascension.<sup>184</sup> More time is needed to properly study the impact new members will have on the SCO's ability to de-escalate conflict as the organization grows. At any rate, these rivalries, India-Pakistan, and India-China, are beyond the purview of the thesis.

This chapter has introduced the conceptual framework used in this thesis. Specifically, it has laid out the research methods used, an exploratory case study design that utilizes process tracing, and what pathways that process tracing will examine. In addition, it has provided context for the rivalry process, one of the pathways that the two Central Asian case study chapters share, as well as the role the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has in building trust, the main argument of this thesis

The next three chapters will detail the rivalry cases under scrutiny in this thesis. The states under consideration are all the founding members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which have had varying degrees of animosity toward each other, which these chapters will argue constitute interstate rivalries. However, these rivalries have not escalated to outright conflict. The de-escalation model proposed in this chapter, with its emphasis on the principle of reinforcement of mutual trust through institutionalization, is applied to them.

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<sup>184</sup> There was an escalation of tensions between India and China on the cusp of India's membership in the SCO over a Chinese road being built in the disputed Doklam region. Through summitry the crisis was resolved, and dialogue between the two states has continued both in and out of the SCO. Dalbir Ahlawat, Lindsay Hughes, "India-China Stand-off in Doklam: Aligning Realism with National Characteristics," *The Round Table, The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 107, No. 5, (2018): 619-621.

## Chapter Four

### The China-Russia Rivalry

#### Introduction

The China-Russia rivalry is one of the longest in history, dating back to the seventeenth century. Their relationship has gone through several phases from one of indifference, to enemies, to friends, then back to being enemies, and now in what both sides state is a “strategic partnership”, not allies, and yet not enemies either.<sup>1</sup> The focal point for much of the Sino-Russo rivalry has been territory.<sup>2</sup> The Amur river basin, which lies between Russia and China, was claimed by both countries from the seventeenth century.

After a series of conflicts and agreements, some of which the Chinese termed “unequal” treaties, lasting several hundred years Russia possessed most of the disputed territory.<sup>3</sup> Internal strife and political division marred China for much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, until the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949, culminating with the ascension of the Chinese Communist Party, and its leader Mao Tse-tong, to power.<sup>4</sup> Due to this, during the 1950s there was a brief respite in the rivalry.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed examination of the diplomatic history of the rivalry, particularly the nineteenth century, see: S.C.M. Paine, *Imperial Rivals: China, Russia, and Their Disputed Frontier*, (London: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), and Alexander Lukin, *The Bear Watches the Dragon: Russia's Perceptions of China and the Evolution of Russian-Chinese Relations Since the Eighteenth Century* (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 2003). For a broader sweep of Russian-Chinese relations from the seventeenth century see: R.K.I. Quedsted, *Sino-Russian Relations: A Short History*, (New York: Routledge, 1984).

<sup>2</sup> V.S. Frank, “The Territorial Terms of the Sino-Russian Treaty of Nerchinsk, 1689,” *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Aug. 1947): 265-270.

<sup>3</sup> David Scott, *China and the International System, 1840-1949: Power, Presence, and Perceptions in a Century of Humiliation*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008), 27. Two of these unequal treaties were with Russia—the treaty of Aigun and treaty of Beijing. Paul Unschuld, *The Fall and Rise of China: Healing the Trauma of History*, (London: Reaktion Books, 2013), 61.

<sup>4</sup> Lorenz Luthi, *Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 31.

<sup>5</sup> Rasler, et. al., 9.

Except for this brief interlude in the 1950s,<sup>6</sup> the two states had been antagonistic toward each other from the 1670s to the end of the Cold War. During the Cold War the border dispute became exacerbated by international politics, and Soviet leaders' often dismissive treatment of Mao on ideological differences.<sup>7</sup> The rivalry backslid, and morphed from a solely spatial, into a positional and spatial rivalry as the two states competed for influence.<sup>8</sup> Their rivalry culminated in a 1969 shooting clash over Zhenbao island in the Amur region.<sup>9</sup>

Recently, in the post-Cold War era the Sino-Russo relationship has entered unknown territory. Superficially, the two states appear to have papered over their long-standing border dispute and have grown closer together. There is no consensus among Sinologists or Russian observers as to what this new "strategic partnership" may mean, other than the relationship between them is far less antagonistic than it has been in the past.<sup>10</sup> The question as to why this occurred is subject to much debate in the Sino-Russian scholarly community.<sup>11</sup> Much of the literature on the rivalry argues that the shock of the Cold War's ending led to the rivalry's termination.<sup>12</sup> The Soviet Union ceased to exist, and was no longer a peer competitor of China's. Coupled with China's rise to Great Power status over the last thirty years, the Soviet Union's collapse changed the power balance between the two states.<sup>13</sup>

Contra to much of the literature on the rivalry, this chapter argues that the rivalry between Russia and China de-escalated, and remains de-escalated, not necessarily due to shocks that did occur, but a contributing factor to rivalry de-escalation is that mutual trust was reinforced

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Danhui Li, Yafeng Xia, "Jockeying for Leadership: Mao and the Sino-Soviet Split, October 1961–July 1964," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1, (Winter 2014): 24-60.

<sup>8</sup> For example, both states contested for leadership of the Communist world during the Cold War. See Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Lyle J. Goldstein, "Return to Zhenbao Island: Who Started Shooting and Why It Matters," *China Quarterly*, No. 168, (Dec., 2001): 985-997, Yang Kuisong, "The Sino-Soviet Border Clash of 1969: From Zhenbao Island to Sino-American *Rapprochement*," *Cold War History*, Vol 1., No. 1, (August 2000): 27, and Chien-peng Chung, *Domestic Politics, International Bargaining and China's Territorial Disputes*, (New York: Routledge, 2004): 62-66.

<sup>10</sup> Christina Yeung, Nebojsa Bjelakovic, "The Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership: Views from Beijing and Moscow," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol 23, No. 2, (2010): 243-281.

<sup>11</sup> Rajan Menon, "The Strategic Convergence Between Russia and China", *Survival*, Vol. 39, No. 2, (1997): 116-117 and Alexei Voskressenski, *Russia and China: A Theory of Inter-State Relations*, (New York: Routledge, 2003)

<sup>12</sup> Rasler, Thompson, and Ganguly argue that *perestroika* was a shock that altered the Soviet regime's strategic imperatives, Rasler, Thompson, Ganguly, 165-166

<sup>13</sup> Nicklas Norling, "China and Russia: Partners with Tensions," *Policy Perspectives*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (January - June 2007): 33-48

between them through the mechanisms available in the structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). In other words, de-escalation occurred gradually, without a shock, and trust needs to be continually reinforced to ensure the rivalry stays de-escalated. The overreliance on shocks to explain rivalry de-escalation is also insufficient to explain why the rivalry has not re-emerged, as Russia has become, once again, a near peer competitor with China. The chapter will have three main sections that each deal with one of the pathways toward rivalry de-escalation as set up in the previous chapter.

The first section will examine the role signaling played in the China-Russia rivalry. Signaling occurred almost immediately after the 1969 incident, but it took twenty years or more before it was finally reciprocated, and confidence-building mechanisms were put in place. This is the shortest section, and signaling occurred before the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, but it is necessary to establish this process. First, because of the length of time it took for signaling to lead to trust building, to demonstrate the difficulty in resolving a seemingly intractable conundrum such as an interstate rivalry, and secondly because without signaling there could be no further step in the rivalry de-escalation process.

The second section examines the confidence-building measures (CBMs) the two states set up, specifically summits and military cooperation, to ease rivalry tensions between them. Both of these measures laid the foundations for the SCO and its trust reinforcement mechanisms.

The Shanghai Process, which added a multilateral dimension to Russian and Chinese summits by including three Central Asian states, will also be examined. The Shanghai Process is the stepping stone between Chinese and Russian bilateral cooperation and the creation of the SCO, the multilateral venture which embodied the trust building efforts the two states had been undertaking in these CBMs.

The final section will assess the role the SCO plays in building and reinforcing trust between these two rivals. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization reinforces mutual trust through two mechanisms: summits and military exercises. These mechanisms are a natural outgrowth from the bilateral confidence-building measures Russia and China developed in the 1990s. Through these mechanisms, repeated on an annual basis, mutual trust is reinforced which has contributed to the de-escalation of this rivalry, or so this chapter will argue.

### **Signaling on Border Dispute**

The first signaling in the China-Russia rivalry, with the intention of easing tensions, came almost immediately after the 1969 clash over Zhenbao island began, as both the Russians and the Chinese sought to de-escalate the situation.<sup>14</sup> On September 11, 1969 Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin met his counterpart Zhou Enlai at the Peking airport for four hours.<sup>15</sup> Initially, the meeting did nothing more than prevent further hostilities, but it was an important first step in beginning the rivalry de-escalation process. This signal was an overt action, initiated by the Chinese. The meeting was followed by several more intermittent meetings between the two states at lower than ministry level for the next five years.<sup>16</sup>

In 1974, Peking surprised Moscow by sending congratulations on the anniversary of the October Revolution.<sup>17</sup> This was another clear signal from one rival to the other, that despite the lack of progress in resolving the border dispute, they still wished to continue trying to resolve the issue. It was a public message, but one that was unequivocally positive, thus reducing any signaling noise around it. Relations, however, did not thaw and in April 1979, a year after a border incursion by Soviet troops,<sup>18</sup> Mao's successor, Deng Xiaoping, announced to the Soviet

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<sup>14</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Intelligence memorandum, "Sino-Soviet Border Talks: Problems and Prospects," November 10, 1969, 9.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 11

<sup>16</sup> FBIS Daily Report, "Zycie Warszawy Surveys Soviet-Chinese Border Dispute," June 23, 1974. There had been ongoing regular meetings between the Chinese and the Soviets over navigation rights on the disputed waterway since 1951, and these continued until 1975. Ching-peng Chung, 101, and "Sino-Soviet Border Talks Begin in Khabarovsk," TASS International Service, June 21, 1969.

<sup>17</sup> In the message China also expressed its desire for a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union. FBIS Daily Report, "Correspondent Comments on Sino-Soviet Dispute," November 13, 1974.

<sup>18</sup> Kevin Klose, "Kremlin Admits China Incursion, Claims Mistake," Washington Post, May 13, 1978

Union that China would not be renewing the 1950 friendship treaty, effectively freezing the rivalry in place.<sup>19</sup>

It was not until the 1980s that the two states seriously contemplated a reassessment of their relationship. Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, in particular, was eager to renew the relationship with China. In October 1981 the Soviets signaled their interest in renewing talks with China on the border.<sup>20</sup> This was a relatively costless signal for the Soviets to send. China appeared receptive, and on March 24, 1982 Brezhnev made a major speech at Tashkent in which he offered talks to Peking without preconditions.<sup>21</sup> In it, he stated that the Soviet Union has "...never considered normal the state of hostility and estrangement between our two countries."<sup>22</sup> Chinese officials reciprocated positively to Brezhnev's offer to talk, but with a caveat. Citing what they called the "three obstacles" which prohibited future Sino-Soviet negotiations on the border, Chinese officials set out preconditions for border negotiations.<sup>23</sup>

These three obstacles were: Soviet troops along the disputed border between China and the Soviet Union, Soviet support for Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia, and Soviet troops who were stationed in Mongolia, and sent to Afghanistan.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, Hu Yaobang, was still receptive to negotiations on economic, trade, and cultural issues.<sup>25</sup> Brezhnev took this as a positive sign and forged ahead in another speech in Baku in September 1982, calling again for better relations between the two nuclear powers.<sup>26</sup> China reciprocated, and talks were set up in October 1982 at the vice ministry level.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> "China Will Not Renew 1950 Soviet Friendship Pact," *Washington Post*, April 4, 1979.

<sup>20</sup> Dusko Doder, "Soviets Propose To Chinese That Talks Be Renewed," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 20, 1981.

<sup>21</sup> Kimura Akio, "Sino-Soviet Rapprochement: How Far Will It Go?," *Japan Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 3, (Jul. 1983): 249, also Sino-Soviet Relations, "President Brezhnev's Speech, 24 March 1982," *Survival*, Vol. 24, No. 4, (1982): 186.

<sup>22</sup> Frederic A. Moritz, "Brezhnev Plays His 'China Card'" *Christian Science Monitor*, March 25, 1982.

<sup>23</sup> Krista Weigand, *Studies in Security and International Affairs: Enduring Territorial Disputes: Strategies of Bargaining, Coercive Diplomacy and Settlement*, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 226.

<sup>24</sup> Colin Campbell, "China Lists 3 Obstacles to Closer Soviet Relations," *New York Times*, September 18, 1983. For more on the role Vietnam played in the rivalry see Nicholas Khoo, *Collateral Damage: Sino-Soviet Rivalry and the Termination of the Sino-Vietnamese Alliance*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

<sup>25</sup> Akio, 250.

<sup>26</sup> Serge Schmemmann, "Brezhnev Stresses Issue of China Ties," *New York Times*, September 27, 1982.

<sup>27</sup> Elizabeth Wishnick, *Mending Fences: The Evolution of Moscow's China Policy, From Brezhnev to Yeltsin*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 76.

Two weeks before his death on October 28<sup>th</sup>, Brezhnev gave another speech, hailing the progress of talks and stating: “Of no small importance are relations with China. We sincerely want a normalization of relations with that country and are doing everything in our power toward this end. In Peking, they also say now that normalization is desirable. No radical changes in the foreign policy of the People's Republic of China are to be seen so far. But the new things which appear must not be ignored by us.”<sup>28</sup> On November 10<sup>th</sup> Brezhnev passed away, but the Chinese government sent a delegation to the funeral, headed by Foreign Minister Huang Hua.<sup>29</sup>

Yuri Andropov, who succeeded Brezhnev, was initially supportive of negotiations with the Chinese. In his first major policy speech he stated he would continue Brezhnev’s policies toward Peking.<sup>30</sup> However, his sudden death in 1984, coupled with his successor Konstantin Chernenko’s illness and death early the next year, stalemated talks, and froze Soviet-Sino relations.<sup>31</sup> It was not until Mikhail Gorbachev’s ascension to power that talks to improve the Sino-Soviet relationship began to gain traction.

Gorbachev made a concerted effort to accommodate Chinese demands on the three obstacles. Concurrently, the Soviet Union was experiencing internal upheaval. Gorbachev’s chosen reforms, perestroika and glasnost, instead of strengthening Communist party rule weakened it. Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe were asserting themselves more and more. The war in Afghanistan was going poorly with the Soviet Union bleeding troops and money.<sup>32</sup> A decision to disengage from Afghanistan was finally made in 1987.<sup>33</sup> Likewise, when it came to reducing forces in Mongolia, and ending support for Vietnam’s war against Pol Pot, a Chinese protégé, Gorbachev eventually acceded to China’s demands.<sup>34</sup> By 1989 the Soviet Union had

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<sup>28</sup> “Excerpts from Speech by Brezhnev,” *New York Times*, October 28, 1982.

<sup>29</sup> Akio, 251.

<sup>30</sup> “Iurii Andropov, Speech to the Central Committee of the CPSU,” *Pravda*, November 22, 1982.

<sup>31</sup> In December 1984 the USSR’s Deputy Premier Ivan Arkhipov met Chinese leaders in Peking to discuss economic issues, initiated by Andropov. This was the first high-level meeting since the Sino-Soviet split; however, the Chinese were still adamant that this meeting did not change the Sino-Soviet relationship. Wishnick, 81, 93.

<sup>32</sup> Artemy M. Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 77-78.

<sup>33</sup> Weigand, 273.

<sup>34</sup> “Soviet Union to ask Vietnam to pull out of Kampuchea,” *Kyodo News Service*, June 15, 1988.

also reduced its forces along the disputed border satisfying the last of China's three obstacles.<sup>35</sup> In 1991 the Soviet Union formally collapsed, having lost its Eastern European satellites in 1989. Gorbachev resigned December 25, 1991, and Boris Yeltsin, president of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, became president of the Russian Federation.<sup>36</sup> There is little doubt then that relations improved between the two states in the 1980s and this then carried into the 1990s. Rasler, Thompson and Ganguly assume the entrepreneurial leadership of Gorbachev was instrumental to the rivalry's termination.<sup>37</sup> However, the de-escalation process was begun even before Gorbachev's tenure. The Soviet leadership, in order to prevent an anti-Soviet bloc from forming between the United States and China, pursued rapprochement.<sup>38</sup> Certainly, there were changes in leadership on the part of both parties. Mao's death in 1976 paved the way for Deng, and the successive deaths of Brezhnev, Andropov, and Chernenko led to the rise of Gorbachev and his reformist mindset to the leadership of the Soviet Union.

Yet, rapprochement began much earlier in the 1980s, with the increase of friendly exchanges between the two states.<sup>39</sup> In this way the first seeds were planted for ultimate resolution of the Sino-Russo rivalry, long before Gorbachev and perestroika.<sup>40</sup> True, the three obstacles were not tackled directly by the Soviet Union until later in the decade, but the groundwork laid by these meetings made work on the three obstacles easier.<sup>41</sup> Trust in the Sino-Soviet relationship, while not yet established, was slowly entering the relationship at least the two sides were actively talking to each other for the first time in over a decade, beginning with

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<sup>35</sup> Rozman, Gilbert, Togo, Kazuhiko, and Joseph Ferguson, *Russian Strategic Thought Toward Asia* (Gordonsville, VA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 53.

<sup>36</sup> David R. Marples, *The Collapse of the Soviet Union, 1985-1991*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 96-97.

<sup>37</sup> Rasler, et.al., 162-163.

<sup>38</sup> The belief in a U.S. China anti-Soviet bloc was not entirely without foundation, See S. Mahmud Ali, *US-China Cold War Collaboration, 1971-1989*, (New York: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>39</sup> These were mostly on cultural and economic issues. "China and Soviet Sign \$1.2 Billion Trade Pact," *New York Times*, February 11, 1984.

<sup>40</sup> Christopher S. Wren, "Chinese Foreign Minister Voices Optimism on Improved Soviet Ties," *New York Times*, November 19, 1982.

<sup>41</sup> Vladislav Zubok, "The Soviet Union and China in the 1980s: Reconciliation and Divorce," *Cold War History*, Vol. 17, No. 2, (2017): 123-124.

the willingness by Brezhnev to reach out to Deng and the Chinese leadership.<sup>42</sup> The Chinese were receptive, up to a point. The three obstacles Deng cited were ultimately confidence-building measures that the Soviets would have to meet in order to gain more Chinese trust to eventually resolve the border issue. The Soviet leadership was slowly working toward these goals.

China, despite its insistence on the three obstacles, saw settlement of the boundary dispute and restoration of ties with the Soviet Union as a priority.<sup>43</sup> The dispute was becoming more of a distraction as Chinese policy makers wanted to re-focus on domestic issues, and relations with the United States. After the Tiananmen massacre in 1989, China's international image was damaged, complicating relations with other states.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, an arms embargo was imposed on the Chinese by the United States and most of Europe (a policy continued by the European Union) in 1989.<sup>45</sup> Thus, in a practical sense, China needed the Soviet Union, specifically they needed Soviet military equipment, a subject that will be explored later in this chapter.

Much of the literature on the Sino-Soviet/Russian rivalry credits Gorbachev with ending the rivalry with acquiescence to Chinese demands on the three obstacles.<sup>46</sup> But the seeds of rivalry de-escalation had been planted with the first signaling by China in the immediate aftermath of the Zhenbao island clash. This signaling was reciprocated by the Soviet Union, yet it took another twenty years before the two sides could achieve a breakthrough in de-escalation, with Brezhnev's Tashkent speech being the tipping point. Why did he make it? The Chinese

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<sup>42</sup> Brezhnev had initially proposed talks between Moscow and Peking for the summer of 1979. "Soviet Proposes Talks with Chinese on Ties," *New York Times*, June 5, 1979; Sergey Radchenko, *Unwanted Visionaries: The Soviet Failure in Asia at the End of the Cold War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 37-39.

<sup>43</sup> Partly this was a strategic move on the part of Beijing, as Chinese leadership believed if tensions were relieved, then Western presence in East Asia may be reduced. Sheldon W. Smith, "The Sino-Soviet Future: Some PRC Perspectives," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 5, (Jul. 1989): 89-90.

<sup>44</sup> This involved the suppression of pro-democracy demonstrators, mostly students, with extreme violence. It could be considered another shock in the Sino-Russian rivalry. See: Robert L. Suettinger, *Beyond Tiananmen: The Politics of U.S.-China Relations, 1989-2000*, (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institute Press, 2003), 103, and XueYing Hu, "Legacy of Tiananmen Square Incident in Sino-US Relations (post-2000)," *East Asia Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 3, (2016): 215-216.

<sup>45</sup> Scott A.W. Brown, "Anything But Arms? Perceptions, the European Union and the Arms Embargo on China," *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, Vol. 7, No. 1, (2011): 27.

<sup>46</sup> Jacobsen, 3-4.

response to the Soviet signal to restart talks, sent in October 1981 was positive. Thus, there was less to lose if the USSR followed China's positive signal. Brezhnev was also in poor health, the Soviet Union was facing a more aggressive threat posture from the newly installed Reagan Administration, and was becoming bogged down in the war in Afghanistan. Thus, there was greater incentive for Brezhnev to make the initial signal to Beijing and then follow up when China appeared receptive.

Trust, however, in the post-Cold War era, was not yet firmly established between the two sides, and rivalry backsliding was a very real prospect. There were still lingering concerns by both sides. The next section will examine the confidence-building mechanisms that took place in the 1990s to further alleviate potential flare-ups in the rivalry between Russia and China.

### **Confidence-Building Mechanisms**

Despite the new-found rapprochement between them, there was still a gap in trust between Russia and China. This section will examine what issues were still outstanding in the rivalry and how the trust gap was ultimately bridged using multilateral and bilateral confidence-building mechanisms (CBMs), which eventually became institutionalized, reinforcing calculus-based trust. This process should be seen as a continuation of the reconciliation begun before Gorbachev, and was the most assured way seen by both parties to prevent rivalry backsliding.

With the break-up of the Soviet Union new states and new borders were created along the Chinese and Russian frontiers. Beijing in particular was nervous about instability on its borders.<sup>47</sup> Stability on its periphery has been a core security concern for the Chinese since the days of the Han Empire.<sup>48</sup> There were still a large number of Russian troops on China's border;

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<sup>47</sup> Stephen Blank, "Kazakhstan's Border Relations with China," in *Beijing's Power and China's Borders: Twenty Neighbors in Asia*, eds. Bruce Elleman, Stephen Kotkin, Clive Scofield, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 102.

<sup>48</sup> See Nicola Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and its Enemies*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

one estimate put it at forty division, or 200,000 troops.<sup>49</sup> This is down from half a million troops during the Cold War, but it still represented a significant number and potential threat to China.<sup>50</sup> Coupled with this concern of troops on the border was the fact that the new countries that formed in Central Asia out of the Soviet Union's dissolution did not have clearly demarked boundaries.<sup>51</sup> Thus, for the Chinese government, security became a driving issue to resolve any disputes with Russia.

For Russia, nationalists, like Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, and local leaders in the scantily populated Russian Far East (RFE), such as governor of *Primorskii krai* oblast Evgenii Nazdratenko, had concerns over possible Chinese irredentist claims, as well as Chinese immigration to the RFE.<sup>52</sup> They feared the “yellow peril”- Chinese workers invading the sparsely populated Siberian hinterlands to exploit its mineral wealth.<sup>53</sup>

The Russian press often report Chinese immigration in the millions, but the Russian census conducted in 2002 placed the Chinese population on Russian territory at 34,577.<sup>54</sup> In fact illegal Chinese immigration seems to have decreased in the 1990s as the Russian economy experienced a severe contraction. Over the past decade however, when including migrants who have obtained temporary work visas, Russia has seen at least some increase in Chinese migration into the Russian Far East,<sup>55</sup> which has been seized upon again by alarmists as evidence of a Chinese takeover.<sup>56</sup> What may be a cause for even greater concern to Russian alarmists over this “yellow peril” is the population disparity between the RFE and the northern Chinese borderlands.

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<sup>49</sup> James Clay Moltz, “Regional Tensions in the Russo-Chinese Rapprochement,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 35, No. 6 (1995): 519.

<sup>50</sup> The Soviet Union had announced a unilateral reduction in troops along the Chinese border in February 1989. Lam Li Sing, “From Mikhail Gorbachev’s Policy to China’s Regional Role,” *Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 7, No. 2, (1993): 592.

<sup>51</sup> “China, Kazakhstan Far Apart on Border Dispute,” Agence France Presse, October 21, 1993, and “China Maintains High Alert on Soviet Border,” United Press International, October 21, 1991.

<sup>52</sup> Jeanne Wilson, *Strategic Partners: Russian-Chinese Relations in the Post-Soviet Era*, (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), 117.

<sup>53</sup> Eric Hyer, “Dreams and Nightmares: Chinese Trade and Immigration in the Russian Far East,” *Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 10, No. 2, (Summer/Fall 1996): 306-307.

<sup>54</sup> The census also lists 1.4 million “stateless” people who did not give their nationality to the census takers. A subsequent census conducted in 2010 did not have people of Chinese nationality listed separately. All-Russia Population Census 2002, accessed May 8, 2017 at: <http://www.perepis2002.ru/index.html?id=87>.

<sup>55</sup> Olga Alexeeva, “Chinese Migration in the Russian Far East: A Historical and Sociodemographic Analysis,” *China Perspectives*, No. 3, (2008): 27.

<sup>56</sup> “Kremlin Objects to Speculations Around Chinese Migration to Russia,” *China Business News*, March 21, 2006

There are approximately 4.3 million Russians who live in the regions bordering China, compared to over one hundred million Chinese in regions bordering Russia.<sup>57</sup>

This disparity is coupled with the fact that the RFE is rich in mineral resources, as well as being an important source for hydrocarbons. For energy-starved China, so the Russian alarmists believe, the Russian Far East was ripe for the picking. However, the Russian Far East was in dire need of economic renewal, its infrastructure is behind the rest of Russia, and its native-born population is rapidly declining. China was eager to help. Thus, when the Russian government sought foreign direct investment (FDI) to infuse the region with capital and improve infrastructure projects, China provided the bulk of the money. Fully seventy-five percent of funds earmarked for the Russian Far East Development Corporation for recent infrastructure projects came from Chinese sources, totaling over 1.9 billion dollars.<sup>58</sup> Rather than assuage fears of a “yellow peril” this news merely reinforced local perceptions of the Chinese as a threat.<sup>59</sup>

Yeltsin’s government wanted to focus on creating warmer relations with the United States and its allies in Western Europe, mainly seeking economic aid during Russia’s transition from a command to a capitalist society.<sup>60</sup> In addition to economic aid Moscow wanted drawing down of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance commitments, including opposing any eastward expansion of NATO.<sup>61</sup> The U.S. did eventually provide some economic aid, tying it to democratic reforms,<sup>62</sup> but proved reluctant to contract NATO commitments. Instead, the alliance went ahead with plans to add both former Warsaw Pact members and

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<sup>57</sup> Dragos Tirnoveanu, “Russia, China, and the Far East Question,” *The Diplomat*, January 20, 2016.

<sup>58</sup> “China invests \$2bn in Russian Far East,” *Russia Today*, March 11, 2016, accessed May 8, 2016 at: <https://www.rt.com/business/335223-china-russia-investment-projects/>.

<sup>59</sup> Shiau-shyang Liou, “Chinese Immigration to Russia and Its Non-traditional Security Impact,” *East Asia*, Vol. 34, (2017): 282.

<sup>60</sup> Lilia Shevtsova, *Lonely Power: Why Russia Has Failed to Become the West and the West is Weary of Russia*, (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2010), 8.

<sup>61</sup> Roger Cohen, “Yeltsin Opposes Expansion Of NATO in Eastern Europe,” *New York Times*, October 2, 1993

<sup>62</sup> Curt Tarnoff, “U.S. Assistance to the Former Soviet Union,” (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2007): 3.

former Soviet republics.<sup>63</sup> Moscow reacted negatively, harshly criticizing NATO.<sup>64</sup> China was also nervous about NATO's eastward expansion and wanted to secure its western border region.<sup>65</sup> Despite these concerns NATO pushed forward with expansion plans, adding former Warsaw Pact members Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic in 1999.<sup>66</sup>

The two states also had overlapping spheres of influence in Central Asia. Moscow wanted to continue influencing its former Soviet republics as much as was feasible, seeing them as vital to its security.<sup>67</sup> Meanwhile, Beijing looked at the newly created states as energy sources for China's expanding economy.<sup>68</sup> Stability on the western border was key to giving China easier access to energy supplies from Central Asia, specifically Kazakhstan, and even the Middle East.<sup>69</sup> Russia, in a much weaker position than China, wanted to still retain influence in its former Soviet republics. It feared losing them to China or the West. Relations between Russia and the United States and its allies did not go the way Moscow had hoped in the 1990s. At the very least then, Russia wanted to maintain some influence in its near abroad and to keep on good relations with Beijing.

Thus, both Russian and Chinese leaders had pressure, externally and internally, and the Sino-Russo rivalry was in danger of backsliding. In order to prevent this, and continue building institutional calculus-based trust between the two Eurasian powers, confidence-building measures

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<sup>63</sup> Fred Coleman, "The Kaliningrad Scenario: Expanding NATO to the Baltics," *World Policy Journal*, Vol.14, No. 3, (1997): 71-72.

<sup>64</sup> Christophe Beaudufe, "No NATO Enlargement before Accord with Russia: Yeltsin," Agence France Presse, September 28, 1996.

<sup>65</sup> "China Sees No Reason for NATO to Absorb ex-Warsaw Pact Nations," MTI Hungarian News Agency, April 14, 1994.

<sup>66</sup> Jane M.O. Sharp "The Case for Opening up NATO to the East," in *The Future of NATO: Enlargement, Russia, and European Security*, eds. Charles-Phillippe David and Jacques Levesque, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 25.

<sup>67</sup> Bobo Lo, *Axis of Convenience: Moscow, Beijing, and the New Geopolitics*, (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute Press, 2008), 98-99.

<sup>68</sup> Julie Wilhelmsen, Geir Flikke, "Chinese-Russian Convergence and Central Asia," *Geopolitics*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (2011): 877.

<sup>69</sup> Galiiia A. Movkebaeva, "Energy Cooperation Among Kazakhstan, Russia, and China Within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *Russian Politics & Law*, Vol. 51, No. 1, (2013): 81.

needed to be enacted. These CSBMs came in two forms, a multilateral approach involving Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, and bilateral mechanisms established, and carried out, by Russia and China. The following section will discuss the bilateral cooperation that has continued for both states to the present-day. Out of this bilateral cooperation, emerged the multilateral mechanisms that created the environment from which institutional trust emerged between them. There are two forms of bilateral cooperation that emerged after the initial rapprochement and the end of the Cold War. These are summits between the presidents of Russia and China, which led to declarations and treaties being negotiated and signed and worked on at various levels of both governments, and personnel exchanges between the two countries militaries. These two forms of bilateral cooperation eventually lead to greater multilateral mechanisms in the form of the Shanghai Process, itself a confidence-building measure, which eventually led to the creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

As stated in the previous chapter, summits and military exercises are the main vehicles by which the SCO can build and reinforce trust, and both stem from the confidence-building measures that Russia and China created to help, and keep, their rivalry de-escalate. Both former rivals carried the momentum forward from this bilateral cooperation to build their own institution, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, as a vehicle to prevent rivalry backsliding by reinforcing trust.

### **Summits**

This section will look at one of the two main confidence-building measures, which Chinese and Russian leaders worked closely on that helped define their relationship today: summitry. Summitry between Russia and China has a long history dating to the time of Mao and Stalin. However, due to the Soviet-Sino rift that erupted, there was a 30-year break between summits. The last summit meeting prior to Mikhail Gorbachev meeting Deng Xiaoping in 1989

was in 1959 between Mao and Khrushchev.<sup>70</sup> Gorbachev's first state visit to China was historic for more than one reason, however. It came at the height of the Tiananmen Square crisis, which some Chinese leaders believe was exacerbated by Gorbachev's reforms. The meeting followed tense negotiations on the border dispute. Gorbachev's visit was meant to cement the agreements and usher in a new era in Sino-Soviet relations.<sup>71</sup> For Deng it was a chance finally resolve the border issue and to display an image of strength for China. Faced with the likely collapse of its ideological brethren in the Eastern bloc and the repudiation of Marxist doctrine, Deng did not want China to become isolated. Thus, both sides had a lot riding on the outcome of this first summit meeting in thirty years.

The 1989 summit was upstaged by the ongoing student-led pro-democracy demonstrations that continued unabated until the June 4, 1989 clearing of Tiananmen Square by the People's Liberation Army (PLA), which resulted in many protesters' deaths and drew international condemnation. Deng's back was against the wall; nevertheless, the summit went ahead as planned. Deng controlled the agenda, allowing Gorbachev a handshake but not an embrace, as was the style between Socialist countries.<sup>72</sup>

What was discussed was the finalization of Beijing's three obstacles, the removal of Soviet troops along the Chinese border, removal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, and the ending of Soviet support for the Vietnamese incursion in Cambodia. With these obstacles overcome, Deng felt comfortable enough to renew relations with the Soviets, albeit cautiously. The meetings themselves between Gorbachev and Deng, and Gorbachev and then-General Secretary Zhao Ziyang were standard fare, merely putting the public face forward that the disputes that had driven the once allies apart had been resolved. The summit did however pave the way for future summits between Russian and Chinese leaders. Jiang Zemin, then-General

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<sup>70</sup> Bill Keller "Gorbachev Visits Beijing for Start of Summit Talks," *New York Times*, May 15, 1989.

<sup>71</sup> John W. Garver, "The "New Type" of Sino-Soviet Relations," *Asian Survey*, Vol 29, No 12, (December 1989): 1137.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 1136.

Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, visited Moscow May 15 through May 19 1991 during which the “Sino-Soviet Joint Communiqué” was issued. Gorbachev however would not visit China again as Soviet leader, and within two and a half years of his 1989 visit would resign from office.

Boris Yeltsin, Gorbachev’s successor, would not return to Beijing until a year later. In December 1992 Yeltsin travelled to China and met President Yang Shangkun, signing the Joint Statement on the Foundation of Mutual Relations.<sup>73</sup> Between 1992 and 1999 Yeltsin had ten summit meetings with his Chinese counterparts, first with Yang (once), and then Jiang Zemin nine times. Of these ten meetings, four were multilateral, including the leaders of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, in a forum that was dubbed the Shanghai Five.<sup>74</sup> The other six were bilateral meetings. By contrast Yeltsin had six bilateral summit meetings with American Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton while president. In addition to these presidential summits, the premiers of Russia and China began having annual meetings starting in 1996.<sup>75</sup> Table 4-1 lists the Chinese-Russian summits during the Yeltsin presidency, their dates, highlights, and the major agreement, if any, that was reached.

After Yeltsin’s resignation at the end of 1999, Vladimir Putin became President and continued his predecessor’s tradition of nearly annual summit meetings with Chinese leaders, some were bilateral, and others were conducted under the auspices of what would become the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. But it was Yeltsin’s first trip that set the tone of future Sino-Russo relations. Gorbachev’s visit was historic but all momentum from it could have easily been lost in the chaotic breakup of the Soviet Union. Yeltsin, while yearning acceptance from the West (the US and Western Europe) as he instituted capitalistic and democratic

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<sup>73</sup> Chen Qimao, “Sino-Soviet Relations After the Break-up of the Soviet Union,” in *Russia and Asia: The Emerging Security Agenda*, Gennady Chufirin, ed., Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 290.

<sup>74</sup> Joseph Y.S. Cheng, “The Shanghai Co-operation Organisation: China’s Initiative in Regional Institutional Building,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol 41, No. 4, (2011): 635.

<sup>75</sup> “Backgrounder: Major Events in Sino-Russo Relations,” Xinhua, March 19, 2010.

reforms to the old Soviet political and economic system, still sought to position Russia as an Asiatic power. Neither vision came to fruition during Yeltsin’s presidency. What did occur however was a closer relationship between Russia and China. Russia could not now dominate the Chinese in the way that the Soviet Union tried to dominate Mao in the early stages of the Sino-Soviet partnership. The tables had been reversed, China now was at the very least an equal partner, if not eclipsing Russia in terms of political clout, economic stability, and international prestige.

**Table 4-1 China-Russia Summits 1992-1999<sup>76</sup>**

Year	Location	Highlights	Result
Dec. 17-19, 1992	Beijing	Boris Yeltsin’s first state visit to China	Signing of the Joint Statement on the Foundation of Mutual Relations
Sept. 2-6, 1994	Moscow	Jiang Zemin’s first state visit to Russia	Demarcation of western boundary, and signing of no-first use of nuclear weapons document
May 8-9, 1995	Moscow	50 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II	Jiang Zemin attended celebrations marking end of WWII. No major agreements signed.
April 24-26, 1996	Shanghai	Yeltsin’s second trip to China. <sup>77</sup>	Signed Treaty on Deepening Military Trust in Border Regions

<sup>76</sup> From “Backgrounder: Major Events in Sino-Russo Relations,” Xinhua, March 19, 2010.

<sup>77</sup> First meeting of “Shanghai Five” It marked the first use of the term “strategic partnership” to define the Russia-China relationship.

April 22-26, 1997	Moscow	Second meeting of Shanghai Five	Signed Treaty on Reduction of Military Forces in Border Regions. <sup>78</sup>
Nov. 9-11, 1997	Beijing	Third Chinese trip for Yeltsin	Agreement on the demarcation of the eastern border, 4,300 kilometers in length
July 3-4, 1998 <sup>79</sup>	Almaty, Kazakhstan	Third meeting of Shanghai Five	Almaty Declaration issued: confronting terrorism and extremism main tasks for Shanghai Five
Nov. 22-25, 1998 <sup>80</sup>	Moscow	Both states stress importance of ABM Treaty	Clarification that “strategic partnership” is not directed at any specific country
August 24-26, 1999 <sup>81</sup>	Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	Fourth meeting of Shanghai Five	Bishkek Joint Statement: set framework for confidence-building measures for Shanghai Five <sup>82</sup>
December 9-10, 1999	Beijing	Last summit meeting for Yeltsin	Yeltsin and Jiang present a united front against US action in Kosovo

The summits themselves had multiple purposes beyond simply keeping the momentum of the Gorbachev 1989 meeting. In the first instance, the border issue had to be resolved. Both

<sup>78</sup> Establishment of “Sino-Russian Committee for Peace, Development, and Friendship in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,”

<sup>79</sup> “Summit Meetings among China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kirghistan, and Tajikistan,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Peoples’ Republic of China, Accessed October 30, 2019 at [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/ziliao\\_665539/3602\\_665543/3604\\_665547/t18029.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/ziliao_665539/3602_665543/3604_665547/t18029.shtml) and Zhao Huasheng, “Security Building and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization,” 21st Century COE Program Slavic Eurasian Studies, 2, (2004): 284 Accessed October 30, 2019 at [http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no2\\_ses/4-2\\_Zhao.pdf](http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no2_ses/4-2_Zhao.pdf).

<sup>80</sup> “Chinese President Leaves for Moscow Summit, ahead of Japan Trip,” Agence France Presse, November 22, 1998.

<sup>81</sup> “Summit Meetings among China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kirghistan, and Tajikistan,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Peoples’ Republic of China.

<sup>82</sup> “Full Text of China-Kazakh-Kyrgyz-Russian-Tajik Defence Communique,” Xinhua, March 30, 2000.

sides were willing to talk about it now that the three obstacles had been overcome, but an actual agreement had yet to be formulated. Thus incrementally, (the entire process would take nearly twenty years), the two countries began a series of agreements beginning in 1991 and reinforced and signed at the summit meetings. In addition to agreements on the demarcation of the disputed border, de-militarization was also discussed. For instance, Russia and China agreed to a no first-use policy on nuclear weapons at the 1994 summit, as well as de-militarization of the border areas.<sup>83</sup>

The key turning point in China and Russia's relationship came at the April 1996 summit, which was also attended by three former Soviet republics in Central Asia that bordered China: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. At this summit in Shanghai a major confidence-building measure was adopted: the treaty on Reduction of Military Forces in the Border Region, also known as the Shanghai Agreement, which limited the number of troops and military exercises within a 100 kilometer radius of the border.<sup>84</sup> Here, real progress had been made in resolving the border issue between Russia and China. The summit also came on the heels of the Taiwan Straits crisis between China and the United States, which may have influenced Chinese leadership to seek a more accommodating relationship with Moscow in order to counterbalance the U.S.<sup>85</sup>

For Russia, the summits represented a chance to gain leverage in its relationship with the United States and other Western countries.<sup>86</sup> Initially, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian policy makers wanted to model the new Russian democracy after the Western states, thinking to make a partnership or even an alliance with the United States.<sup>87</sup> However, the United States was reluctant to fully embrace the newly democratic Russia. The United States

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<sup>83</sup> "China Ready to Establish Constructive Partnership with Russia; Jiang," Xinhua, September 3, 1994

<sup>84</sup> Ming-Yen Tsai, *From Adversaries to Partners? Chinese and Russian Military Cooperation after the Cold War*, (Westport, Ct: Praeger, 2003), 94-95.

<sup>85</sup> Robert S. Ross, "The 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Confrontation" Credibility, Coercion, and the Use of Force," *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 2, (Fall, 2000): 87-123.

<sup>86</sup> Robert Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations: Power and Policy Since the Cold War 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*, (New York: Rowan & Littlefield, 2012), 276.

<sup>87</sup> Alexander Lukin, "The Russian Approach to China under Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and Putin" in *Strategic Thought in Northeast Asia: Russian Strategic Thought toward Asia*, Gilbert Rozman, ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 144.

and its NATO allies did create the Partnership for Peace (PfP) in 1994 (that Russia was a part of), which facilitated dialogue between NATO and non-NATO states.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, some Russian policy makers were incensed that NATO continued to exist at all after the end of the Cold War. The termination of that conflict should have, in their view, made the alliance obsolete.<sup>89</sup>

NATO members noted Russian concerns and proceeded to expand the alliance eastward, justifying its decision as augmenting European security.<sup>90</sup> Additionally, the Partnership for Peace program included as its members all of the former Soviet republics and Warsaw Pact members.<sup>91</sup> For this reason, the PfP was seen as a primer for NATO membership by both Russia and China.<sup>92</sup> Expansion of the alliance also included the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania which had been a part of the Soviet Union proper, and all have significant numbers of ethnic Russian minorities. Thus, with Russian security concerns over NATO unheeded by the United States and its Western partners, there was a natural sense among policy makers, particularly within the defense and intelligence communities, to gravitate toward China and away from the West.<sup>93</sup>

The NATO-led war against Serbia over the Kosovo province in 1999 further bound Russia and China closer in their summit meetings. Serbia was an historical ally of Russia and during the messy break-up of Yugoslavia was deemed responsible for a number of war crimes, including support of Bosnian Serbs committing war crimes.<sup>94</sup> The Serb province of Kosovo's population consisted of mostly Muslims of Albanian decent, and there was concern by the

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<sup>88</sup> Sarah Walkling, "NATO Unveils Expansion Plan: Russia Continues To Oppose Move," *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 25, No. 9 (November 1995): 25-28.

<sup>89</sup> Yeltsin wanted to make the OSCE, under UN auspices, the institutionalized guarantor of European security rather than NATO. Jacques Levesque, "NATO's Eastern Enlargement; An Instructive Historical Precedent" in *Foreign Policy, Security and Strategic Studies: Future of NATO: Enlargement, Russia, and European Security*, eds. Charles-Philippe David, Jacques Levesque, (Montréal: McGill-Queen's Université Presse, 1999), 173.

<sup>90</sup> Boris Nikolin, "NATO's Eastward Expansion," *Russian Politics & Law*, Vol. 36, No. 4, (1998): 43.

"Partnership for Peace and Beyond," *International Affairs*, Vol. 71, No. 2, (Apr. 1995): 240.

<sup>91</sup> Russia was included as well, but it was clear the PfP was a primer for future NATO membership. John Borawski,

<sup>92</sup> Sten Rynning, "A Balancing Act: Russia and the Partnership for Peace," *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 31, No. 2, (1996): 220.

<sup>93</sup> Lukin, "Russian Approach to China," 144-145.

<sup>94</sup> Henry R. Huttenbach, "The Genocide Factor in the Yugoslav Wars of Dismemberment," in *Reflections on the Balkan Wars: Ten Years After the Break-up of Yugoslavia*, Jeffrey Morton, Stefano Bianchini, and Craig Nation, eds., (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 26-27.

United States and its allies that they would be ethnically cleansed by the Serbs who were pursuing aggressive policies against the Kosovars.<sup>95</sup>

Circumventing the United Nations and the threat of a Russian veto, the United States, backed by other NATO states, commenced a mostly air campaign against Serbia, bombing military targets and selected targets in Belgrade, the capital. One of the buildings destroyed by NATO aircraft was the Chinese Embassy on May 7, 1999. Outrage in China followed, and even though subsequent investigations cleared NATO of any wrongdoing, many Chinese saw the act as deliberate.<sup>96</sup> At the December 1999 summit meeting Yeltsin and Jiang repeated their condemnation of the US-led campaign against Serbia. Russia went further, opposing the inclusion of Taiwan in any theater missile defense. At this summit as well, in an impromptu moment President Yeltsin lashed out at America's policies, warning that his country "...has at its full disposal a nuclear arsenal."<sup>97</sup> This tough talk was later walked back by Kremlin spokespersons who blamed fatigue for Yeltsin's outburst. Nevertheless, it was becoming evident that a rift was opening between Russia and the United States, and that Russia had found a more amenable partner in China, who had its own concerns about American interference over the Taiwan issue.

Through summitry China and Russia confidence-building mechanisms were gradually introduced, a trend that eventually led to the Shanghai process, and the formation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Trust began to build between the leaders of the two states, in part due to the perceived hostility of the United States toward Russia and China, pushing them closer together. They had common ground on which to stand on, and both states had their own reasons for continuing dialogue with each other, but real momentum was built to de-escalate

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<sup>95</sup> Benjamin Lambeth, *NATO's Air War for Kosovo: A Strategic and Operational Assessment*, (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2015), 8.

<sup>96</sup> Peter Hayes Gries, "Tears of Rage, Chinese Nationalist Reactions to the Belgrade Embassy Bombing," *The China Journal*, No. 46, (July 2001): 30.

<sup>97</sup>Geoffrey Baker, "Why Western Hegemony Could Spark a Backlash," *Australian Financial Review*, December 13, 1999.

rivalry tensions at these summits. The repetitiveness and consistency of the summits allowed for breathing space to develop in the Sino-Russian relationship, establishing the first seeds of trust between them. But there was still a gap in trust on military cooperation that needed to be overcome.<sup>98</sup> The next section will examine another category of CBMs in military exchanges.

### **Military Exchanges**

Through summitry Russia and China began to demonstrate closer bilateral relations. The final area of high-level cooperation to be analyzed is the exchanges between the two country's militaries, in terms of personnel, equipment and technology. One of the earliest examples of a military exchange visit between Russia and China occurred in August 1993 when for the first time in thirty years ships from the Russian Pacific Fleet visited a Chinese port in Qingdao.<sup>99</sup> The pace of these exchanges quickened to several times a year, and included visits by defense ministers to his counterpart, Defense Ministry personnel visits, high-level visits between general officers, and bilateral military exercises.<sup>100</sup> Much of this cooperation began to correspond with increasing Russian military equipment sales to China.<sup>101</sup>

Since China was under an arms embargo, imposed after the Tiananmen massacre, by the EU and the U.S. and Russian arms manufactures had experienced a dearth of clients with the loss of the Warsaw Pact states, China became the logical choice for a destination for much of the Russian arms trade in the 1990s.<sup>102</sup> Along with military equipment came military expertise in the form of the exchange visits. During this period China's military budget increased rapidly from 42.9 billion Yuan in 1989 to 1.3 trillion Yuan in 2015, with much of this money tied to procurement.<sup>103</sup> At the same time Russia's defense budget began to increase each year from 1992

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<sup>98</sup> Ming-Yen Tsai, 187.

<sup>99</sup> Wilson, 111.

<sup>100</sup> For a more comprehensive list of military exchange visits see: Jing-dong Yang, "Sino-Russian Defense Ties: The View from Beijing" in *The Future of China-Russia Relations*, ed. James Bellacqua, (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 211-213.

<sup>101</sup> Alexander A. Sergounin, Sergey V. Subbotin, *Russian Arms Transfers to East Asia in the 1990s*, SIPRI Research Report No. 15, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 70-72

<sup>102</sup> Lukin, "Russian Approach to China," 144.

<sup>103</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Military Expenditure Database*, accessed June 13, 2016 at: [http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex\\_database](http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database).

to 2015,<sup>104</sup> save for 1998 when a financial crisis weakened Russia's economy and caused the ruble to become devalued.<sup>105</sup> This parallel growth was mutually beneficial as China bought Russian equipment and improved its defense capabilities, while Russia, staggering somewhat under a new economic system, was infused with cash and could reinstitute its core military attributes after the budget cuts following the Cold War.

Russian and Chinese military cooperation became so close, and China was buying so much equipment from Russia, it alarmed some Western analysts who saw China as a rising threat to the US.<sup>106</sup> In recent years China's spending spree has tapered off as its indigenous industrial capacity has slowly caught up.<sup>107</sup> China still buys arms from Russia but not at the furious pace of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Russia's economy has likewise stabilized since then, with more focus on exporting hydrocarbons and other sources of energy. However, military exchange visits have continued apace with regular training exercises between the two militaries denoting a closer relationship.

These visits and exercises, both the military personnel and the general staffs, helped alleviate some of the distrust the two states' militaries held. Incrementally, military exchanges worked as a confidence-building measure, as in the case of summitry, allowing for more breathing space in order for trust to build between Russia and China. While both states certainly had an interest in greater military exchanges, with China needing Russian military hardware and Russia desperate for cash, the more the exchanges occurred the greater the chance they would help ease rivalry tensions. Regardless of the reasons each state had for greater bilateral cooperation, and certainly this cooperation served both their interests, the summits and military exchanges did lead to greater trust being exhibited between them. So much so that China, at least, wanted to take the

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Clifford Poirot, "Financial Integration under Conditions of Chaotic Hysteresis: The Russian Financial Crisis of 1998," *Journal of Post-Keynesian Economics* Vol. 23, No. 3, (Spring, 2001): 501.

<sup>106</sup> For instance: Bill Gertz, *The China Threat*, (New York: Regnery Publishing, 2002).

<sup>107</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Arms Transfer Database*, accessed June 14, 2016 at: <http://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>.

CBMs a step further. The next section will discuss the multilateral confidence-building mechanisms that eventually led to the creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

### **Shanghai Process**

The Shanghai process had its roots in the bilateral meetings established between Russia and China. At the 1992 summit, Yeltsin and Jiang signed the Memorandum of Understanding on the Guiding Principles for the Mutual Reduction of Armed Forces and the Strengthening of Mutual Trust in the Broder Region in Beijing.<sup>108</sup> This agreement reduced the number of troops along the Sino-Russian border, alleviating a major pressure point in their relationship.<sup>109</sup> This diplomatic success was followed up on with the 1994 summit where the western border was demarcated.<sup>110</sup> At these summits, and with these agreements signed, trust was incrementally reinforced between Russia and China. Moreover, this burgeoning trust needed to be sustained. The Chinese, especially, wanted to go further, and completely remove all troops in the regions bordering their country, including the newly formed borders in Central Asia.

As stated in the previous section in April 1996, Yeltsin and Jiang Zemin met in Shanghai together with the presidents of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.<sup>111</sup> The main result of this summit was the Treaty on Deepening Military Trust in Border Regions, which eventually became the basis for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.<sup>112</sup> The main confidence-building measure from this treaty established a verification system to ensure the border areas among the five states was not being used to build up military strength against another party to the treaty.<sup>113</sup> Specifically,

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<sup>108</sup> Jing-Don Yuan, "Sino-Russian Confidence-Building Measures: A Preliminary Analysis," *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 22, No. 1, (1998): 85.

<sup>109</sup> Kathy Wilhelm, "China, Russia Near Agreement on Reducing Border Troops," Associated Press, December 14, 1992.

<sup>110</sup> Jeff Berliner, "China Downplays Lingering Problems with Moscow," United Press International, September 4, 1994, and Mikhail Urusov, "Chinese-Russian Talks End, Military and Economic Agreements Signed," Moscow News, September 15, 1994.

<sup>111</sup> "China confirms Yeltsin visit," Agence France Presse, April 10, 1996.

<sup>112</sup> *Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization*, St. Petersburg, Russia, June 7, 2002, Fleming Spildsboel

<sup>113</sup> *Agreement between the Russian Federation, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Peoples' Republic of China on Confidence-building in the Military Field on the Border*, United Nations General Assembly, A/51/137, May 17, 1996.

the Shanghai agreement stated that military exercises were not to be conducted against the parties of the treaty, nor were troops to be stationed within a 100 kilometer radius of the border area.<sup>114</sup>

The Shanghai agreement did not include a provision to reduce troops already in the border area, although military observers at the time presumed that there would be a natural decrease in troops as the threat level subsided over time.<sup>115</sup> Initially, the Russian military proved reluctant to completely move troops from the Chinese border.<sup>116</sup> At the Moscow summit in 1997 a second treaty was signed, the Treaty on Reduction of Military Forces in Border Regions with Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan as parties.<sup>117</sup> The Moscow treaty firmly reduced the number of troops in the border regions, creating a buffer zone of 100 kilometers in which no regular troops would be stationed.<sup>118</sup> These two treaties, the Shanghai and Moscow agreements, formed the basis for cooperation among the five states, and prevented the remilitarization of the border region.<sup>119</sup>

In order to monitor the implementation of these agreements, and ensure that military forces were in fact being removed, the Joint Control Group (SCG) was established in 1997.<sup>120</sup> The group met annually at first and consisted of military and diplomatic experts from each of the five states. Implementation of the inspection regime was gradual. It wasn't until 2000 when mutual inspections of the border region were actually begun.<sup>121</sup> The SCG however gradually increased its duties, to the point that the pace of inspections and meetings was greatly accelerated in the next decade, with the group holding its 38<sup>th</sup> meeting in November 2018.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Pavel Felgengauer, "Shanghai Treaty Has No Provision For Troop Withdrawal," Russian Press Digest, April 24, 1996.

<sup>116</sup> Stanislav Kondrashov, Alexander Platkovsky, "Our Troops Will be Reduced but not Moved Away From Border With China" Russian Press Digest, November 20, 1996.

<sup>117</sup> Ian MacWilliam, "Presidents Sign Pact To Pacify Boundary," Moscow Times, April 25, 1997

<sup>118</sup> Jing-Don Yuan, 91.

<sup>119</sup> Roy Anthony Rogers, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, China, and the New Great Game in Central Asia," *Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 3, (2007): 96.

<sup>120</sup> "Russia, China, Central Asian Nations Trust Each Other in military Issues – Analysts," Kazakhstan General Newswire, November 24, 2006.

<sup>121</sup> "Diplomatic and Military Experts of the Shanghai Five Open Work in Alma-Ata," RIA Novosti, March 27, 2001

<sup>122</sup> "Kazakhstan: A Regular Session on Mutual Reduction and Confidence-building Measures Agreements,"

The SCG was the main confidence-building measure to emerge from the Shanghai process. Its slow start was due to the gradual implementation of calculus-based trust, but trust was slow to build. China was the main driver behind these treaties as Beijing sought security on its western border.<sup>123</sup> For Beijing, it was important to continue the momentum, a reinforcement of the necessity to keep its western border secure and de-militarized. It was not enough simply to sign treaties and then be done with the process. Russia, still reeling from its transitions after the Cold War, was in a weaker position, and followed China's lead in this regard. So too did the Central Asian states, ceding territory unilaterally to their larger neighbor. China had grave concerns in the wake of the Soviet Union's dissolution, and the Tiananmen massacre, that it too was vulnerable to regime collapse. Chinese analysts believed that unrest in the periphery-Tibet or Xinjiang autonomous regions specifically-could spread to the core regions of China and even topple the Communist government.<sup>124</sup> Both states needed more domestic and external breathing space in order to more effectively implement the Shanghai and Moscow agreements. Between 1996 and 2000 the five states, now dubbed the Shanghai Five met again, annually in each of their capitals, so that by 2001 they had held five summits in five years.<sup>125</sup> This Shanghai Five Forum led to the creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization was formed in July 2001 when Uzbekistan joined the Shanghai Five Forum. The three Central Asian republics caught between two large neighbors, all with regional security concerns, went along with the momentum China and Russia encouraged. Of the two other former Soviet Central Asian states, Turkmenistan followed its policy of positive

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<sup>123</sup> Jing-Dong Yuan, "China's Role in Establishing and Building the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)," *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol 19, No. 67, (2010): 858-859.

<sup>124</sup> Eric Hyer, *The Pragmatic Dragon: China's Grand Strategy and Boundary Settlements*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 221.

<sup>125</sup> Noor ul Haq, ed. "Shanghai Cooperation Organization (2001-2006), Vol. 1," Islamabad Policy Research Institute, May 15, 2007, 5.

neutrality and shied away from the forum,<sup>126</sup> while Uzbekistan eventually sought inclusion as a preemptive move to prevent the SCO from aligning against Uzbek interests.<sup>127</sup> Both Russia and China wanted Uzbekistan to join as both powers sought leverage over the most populous Central Asian state.<sup>128</sup>

Uzbekistan applied for membership and was made an observer of the Shanghai Forum in 2000.<sup>129</sup> In 2001 after five consecutive summits and with Uzbekistan waiting to formally join, the decision was made to formalize the forum as an international organization. On June 15, 2001 Uzbekistan joined the Forum and it was announced by the members that the Shanghai Five would become an intergovernmental organization, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was officially formed.<sup>130</sup> India and Pakistan joined in 2017 in the SCO's first expansion.<sup>131</sup>

Border demarcation proceeded apace as well. After Vladimir Putin became Russian president in 1999, he continued his predecessor's bilateral diplomacy with Chinese president Hu Jintao to the successful demarcation of the Amur river boundary in 2004.<sup>132</sup> Bilateral negotiations on the border dispute continued until July 2008. At that point the dispute over the last three islands, out of an original over 2,400 disputed islands, on the Amur River was resolved. Vladimir Putin agreed to give China back one and one half of the islands in a symbolic gesture.<sup>133</sup>

The creation of the SCO was instrumental to keeping the Russia-China rivalry de-escalated. The two countries had made great progress bilaterally to defuse the once tense border situation but could only proceed so far. China, in particular, was invested in seeing the Shanghai

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<sup>126</sup> Luca Anceschi, *Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy: Positive Neutrality and the Consolidation of the Turkmen Regime*, (London: Routledge, 2015), 8-9.

<sup>127</sup> Jim Nichol, "Central Asia's Security: Implications for U.S. Interests," Congressional Research Service Report (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, Jan. 7, 2005), 15.

<sup>128</sup> Oybek Madiyev, "Why Have China and Russia become Uzbekistan's Biggest Energy Partners? Exploring the Role of Exogenous and Endogenous Factors," *Cambridge Journal of Eurasian Studies*, No. 1, (2017): 8  
*The China Quarterly*, Vol. 180, (December 2004): 991.

<sup>129</sup> Chien-Peng Chung, "The Shanghai Co-operation Organisation: China's Changing Influence in Central Asia,"

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> Saibal Dasgupta, "India, Pakistan set to enter SCO amid differences over terrorism," *Times of India*, May 30, 2017.

<sup>132</sup> The agreement was reached in 2004, formalized in a treaty in 2005, with the final handover taking place in 2008. Neville Maxwell, "How the Sino-Russian Boundary Conflict was Finally Settled: From Nerchinsk 1689 to Vladivostok 2005 via Zhenbao Island 1969," *Critical Asian Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 2, (2007): 252.

<sup>133</sup> Eric Hyer, *The Pragmatic Dragon*, 150.

Cooperation become a reality. Russia, often seen as the weaker partner, also saw the SCO as a vehicle for its own security in the region.<sup>134</sup> Ultimately, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization institutionalized trust building and allowed both former rivals enough breathing space to keep their once intractable rivalry de-escalated. The next section will examine this process in more detail.

### **Trust Reinforcement**

The dual tracks of annual summits and regular military exchanges that China and Russia followed after the end of the Cold War led to greater multilateral cooperation involving the three Central Asian border states. Trust had begun to take hold in their relationship, but reinforcement of that trust was necessary in order to prevent backsliding of the rivalry. The creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization furthered this goal for both states. Building on the momentum established through Sino-Russian bilateral summits and military exchanges starting in the early 1990s, the organization helped, through summitry and military exercises, institutionalize trust to keep the rivalry de-escalated. This section will examine the SCO's mechanisms, summitry and military exercises, and their impact on the Sino-Russian rivalry.

### **Summitry**

China and Russia both desired to continue the confidence-building measures the Shanghai Process had incorporated, and to that end the SCO was founded after the five successive summits of the Shanghai Five. Every year the Heads of State Council meet in a wide-ranging summit.<sup>135</sup> The first several summits of the SCO oversaw the formalization of the institutions, with the establishment of the Secretariat and RATS done at the 2004 summit.<sup>136</sup> At the 2005 summit, held in Astana, the SCO matured as a security organization, calling for a

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<sup>134</sup> For Russia, the SCO was a way to preserve its influence in Central Asia, as well as expand its circle of friends and allies. Isabelle Facon, "Moscow's Global Foreign and Security Strategy Does the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Meet Russian Interests?" *Asian Survey*, Vol. 53, No. 3, (May/June 2013): 474-475.

<sup>135</sup> Article 5, "Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," St. Petersburg, Russia, June 7, 2002

<sup>136</sup> "SCO Antiterrorist Structure to open at June Summit," RIA Novosti, June 1, 2004.

timetable for the removal of U.S. military bases in Central Asia.<sup>137</sup> This was done, despite the fact that two of its members hosted American military installations.<sup>138</sup> However, one month after the summit Uzbekistan asked the United States to vacate its military from the K2 base.<sup>139</sup> Kyrgyzstan followed almost a decade later.<sup>140</sup> The message was clear that the United States and NATO were not partners of the SCO, and that the SCO would be the main guarantor of security in Central Asia. Thus, the Central Asian states had little choice but to look to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization for their security.

At the 2006 summit, held in Shanghai, the members established the SCO Business Council and Interbank Consortium, thereby expanding the SCO's purview beyond border and security issues.<sup>141</sup> Additionally, a framework was set for the organization's long-term development.<sup>142</sup> After the 2006 summit, the organization's basic structure remained unchanged. Moving forward, the organization has focused on expansion of its membership, including dialogue partners,<sup>143</sup> as well as reinforcement of the SCO's mission, including deepening security cooperation.<sup>144</sup>

Policy making in the SCO states has been dominated by the president and his inner circle of advisers. The three Central Asian states, along with Russia, followed the Soviet model upon independence and have trended toward an authoritarian presidentialism.<sup>145</sup> Elections in these countries are a farce, although Kyrgyzstan has exhibited some tendency toward liberalization. China, as well, is nondemocratic, and with the recent abolition of presidential term limits, is very much a one ruler state.<sup>146</sup> India and Pakistan, recently ascended members of the SCO, are

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<sup>137</sup> Pan Guang, "The Astana summit. A new stage in the development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *Asia Europe Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 4, (2005): 503.

<sup>138</sup> Alexander Cooley, "Base Politics," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 6, (Nov/Dec 2005): 79.

<sup>139</sup> Gregory Gleason, "The Uzbek Expulsion of U.S. Forces and Realignment in Central Asia," *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 53, No. 2, (March/April 2006): 56-57.

<sup>140</sup> Kemel Toktomushev, "Regime security, base politics and rent-seeking: the local and global political economies of the American air base in Kyrgyzstan, 2001-2010", *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 34, No. 1, (2015): 61.

<sup>141</sup> "Chinese agency hails Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit outcome," BBC Monitoring, June 15, 2006

<sup>142</sup> "Backgrounder: A brief history of SCO summits," Xinhua, September 12, 2014.

<sup>143</sup> "Shanghai Cooperation Organization to have 'dialogue partners': secretary general," Xinhua, July 30, 2008.

<sup>144</sup> Pan Guang, "The SCO's Success in Security Architecture", in *The Architecture of Security in the Asia-Pacific*, Ron Huisken, ed. Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No. 174 (Canberra: ANU Press, 2009), 37.

<sup>145</sup> Blondel, 23.

<sup>146</sup> Emily Rauhala, "China approves plan to abolish presidential term limits, clearing way for Xi to stay on," *Washington Post*, March 11, 2018.

Commonwealth countries, and nominally at least started off as parliamentary democracies.<sup>147</sup> Pakistan has since devolved into authoritarianism, while India is a flawed democracy.<sup>148</sup>

With the presidential or autocratic political systems that most of the SCO states employ we can see how useful contacts between leaders are. It is important for heads of state to make personal connection with each other, particularly if they will be leader over a long period of time. Even if the meeting is only once a year, bonds can be forged, and work accomplished between two states. This is why summitry is important within the structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. It is through summitry that trust is reinforced between the participants, in this case China and Russia, by allowing them room to maneuver diplomatically without concern for domestic repercussions. These summits form the core of interactions within the SCO.<sup>149</sup> Everything flows from the top down in the organization.

Table 4-2 details the list of Shanghai Cooperation Organization summits that have occurred since the organization’s founding. Put together with the Shanghai Five summits, which date to 1996, and there is an unbroken line of meetings between the participants that goes on for more than twenty years.<sup>150</sup> In that time no wars or major conflicts have occurred between SCO members. Disagreements on some issues have remained, but these have not been enough to escalate rivalry tensions.

**Table 4-2<sup>151</sup>**  
**List of SCO Summits**

Date	Location	Result
June 14-15, 2001	Shanghai, China	Uzbekistan joins Shanghai Five, SCO formally announced
June 7, 2002	St. Petersburg, Russia	SCO Charter signed
May 29, 2003	Moscow	Further institutionalization

<sup>147</sup> Kunal Mukherjee, “Ayub Khan’s Basic Democracy and Political Continuity in Contemporary Pakistan,” *India Quarterly*, Vol. 72, No. 3, (2016): 274.

<sup>148</sup> Democracy Index 2017, Economist Intelligence Unit, The Economist, January 2018, 15, 26.

<sup>149</sup> Interview with anonymous former SCO official, May 18, 2018.

<sup>150</sup> “History of development of SCO,” Xinhua, June 12, 2006.

<sup>151</sup> For summits through 2013, see “Backgrounder: A brief history of SCO summits,” Xinhua, September 12, 2014.

		of SCO
June 17, 2004	Tashkent, Uzbekistan	RATS launched
July 5, 2005	Astana, Kazakhstan	India, Iran, Pakistan granted observer status
June 15, 2006	Shanghai	Business Council created
August 16, 2007	Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	Agreement on Inter-governmental Cultural Cooperation signed
August 28, 2008	Dushanbe, Tajikistan	Bank cooperation memorandum signed
June 16, 2009	Yekaterinburg, Russia	Observer states first included at Council of Heads of State meeting
June 11, 2010	Tashkent	Terms for admitting new members approved
June 15, 2011	Astana	Ten-year anniversary, drug control policy approved

June 7, 2012	Beijing	Strategic Plan for the Medium-Term Development approved
Sept. 13, 2013	Bishkek	Bishkek Declaration released, states that nations should resolve disputes peacefully
Sept. 11, 2014 <sup>152</sup>	Dushanbe	SCO Development Strategy to 2025 approved
July 9, 2015 <sup>153</sup>	Ufa, Russia	India, Pakistan invited to full membership
June 23, 2016 <sup>154</sup>	Tashkent	SCO goals: peace, stability, development reaffirmed
June 8, 2017 <sup>155</sup>	Astana	India, Pakistan formally accede to membership
June 9-10, 2018 <sup>156</sup>	Qingdao, China	Reinforcement of "Shanghai Spirit"
June 13-14, 2019 <sup>157</sup>	Bishkek	India, Pakistan become more integrated in SCO structure

<sup>152</sup> "Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit opens in Dushanbe," AKI Press, September 12, 2014.

<sup>153</sup> "Ufa to host summit of Shanghai Cooperation Organization," Interfax, July 10, 2015.

<sup>154</sup> "SCO Tashkent summit gives fresh impetus to organization's development - SCO Secretary General," ITAR-TASS, June 24, 2016.

<sup>155</sup> Zhu Dongyang, "SCO can now better promote regional unity," China Daily, June 10, 2017.

<sup>156</sup> "China minister says SCO summit achieved 'great results,'" Xinhua, June 13, 2018.

<sup>157</sup> "Shanghai Cooperation Summit," Dhaka Courier, June 21, 2019.

In these summits, which have become highly scripted, the leaders of the SCO states are still afforded private access to each other.<sup>158</sup> In addition to forming personal bonds, this access allows the leaders to have free and open dialogue between them.<sup>159</sup> Without this access, it is unlikely the SCO summits would work successfully to de-escalate tensions among member states. Chiefly, the summits have worked to allow Russia and China to resolve their border differences, and reinforce the fact that their one-time rivalry has de-escalated.<sup>160</sup> In addition, the SCO summits have recently provided a platform for India and China to meet, as well as India and Pakistan, with their ongoing rivalries.<sup>161</sup> Bilateral meetings between these states would be challenging, but the multilateral structure of the SCO affords them a pretext to meet.<sup>162</sup> The multilateral aspect allows for the participants to have domestic breathing space, and thus room to maneuver.

Institutionalization of trust at these summits was gradual. The first several summits introduced the framework for the organization, including signing the charter in 2002 and the launching of the Regional Anti-terrorism Structure in 2004. At the 2007 summit the member states adopted the Bishkek Declaration, which sought to enhance security cooperation.<sup>163</sup> In addition, at the 2007 summit, the SCO's Amity and Cooperation Treaty was proposed; it was later ratified by the member states.<sup>164</sup> This act, while mostly symbolic, had the effect of binding the states, formally, closer. The message was clear, the SCO members, including Russia and China, were friends now and no longer considered each other as rivals.

This pattern of closer cooperation continued in bilateral Russian and Chinese relations. In 2008 the border dispute, the issue that had defined the relationship between the two powers

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<sup>158</sup> "Modi meets Chinese President on SCO Summit sidelines," IANS-English, June 9, 2018.

<sup>159</sup> "Russian, Chinese, Mongolian presidents' 4th meeting to take place on sidelines of SCO Qingdao summit on June 9– Ushakov," Russia & CIS General Newswire, June 4, 2018.

<sup>160</sup> Vladimir Isachenkov, "Russian, Chinese leaders vow to further expand their 'strategic partnership,'" Associated Press, November 18, 2005.

<sup>161</sup> "Modi at SCO summit: Xi Jinping accepts invite to visit India in 2019, says MEA," Hindustan Times, June 9, 2018.

<sup>162</sup> "Chinese envoy calls for India-China-Pakistan trilateral summit to strengthen regional ties," Tehelka, June 19, 2018.

<sup>163</sup> Yeongmi Yun, Kicheol Park, "An Analysis of the Multilateral Cooperation and Competition between Russia and China in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Issues and Prospects," *Pacific Focus: Inha Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 1, (2012): 72.

<sup>164</sup> "Medvedev Signs Bill Ratifying SCO Friendship Treaty," Interfax, June 17, 2008.

from the seventeenth century had finally been resolved with an agreement.<sup>165</sup> During the 2008 year, Russia and China also agreed to an “Action Plan to Implement the China-Russia Treaty of Friendship, Good-Neighborliness and Cooperation.”<sup>166</sup> At the 2009 SCO summit, Moscow and Beijing signed five memoranda, mostly on economic cooperation during the Great Recession, but also adding a protocol to their 1997 agreement on setting up regular meetings between their heads of state.<sup>167</sup>

During the early years of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the members found unity in opposing American foreign policy, such as the U.S. withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty.<sup>168</sup> An external threat was seen as the only unifier of the member states and if that threat was removed there would be no reason for these states to continue to cooperate. However, as the organization has matured, trust has grown and been reinforced.<sup>169</sup> Russia and China have resolved their border dispute after several years of dialogue at SCO summits, and their cooperation has grown to other fields, such as economic and cultural exchanges.

The SCO summits provide an important opportunity for leaders to meet, unhindered by domestic pressures, or bureaucratic interference. The summits also allow them to form personal bonds. With the summits occurring on an annual basis, these bonds will continue to reinforce mutual trust even when leadership changes occur. New leaders will feel obliged to continue the Shanghai Cooperation Organization’s summits, because they would not want to be the first to break the tradition of annual meetings. This section has examined the way in which the annual summits of the SCO have helped reinforce trust between Russian and Chinese heads of state, thus keeping their rivalry de-escalated. The next subsection will examine the role military exercises and exchanges under the aegis of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization have worked to build and reinforce trust between the Russian and Chinese militaries.

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<sup>165</sup> “Russia and China Settle Eastern-border Dispute,” International Herald Tribune, July 22, 2008.

<sup>166</sup> “China, Russia Sign Five-point Joint Statement,” Xinhua, June 17, 2009.

<sup>167</sup> “Joint Statement of the Moscow Meeting Between Heads of State of China and Russia,” Communique, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, June 18, 2009, Accessed November 6, 2019 at: [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/2649\\_665393/t573751.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/t573751.shtml).

<sup>168</sup> “China, Russia and Central Asia Unite Against US missile Shield,” Agence France Presse, June 15, 2001.

<sup>169</sup> For example, as NATO forces were poised to leave Afghanistan in 2014, the SCO contemplated its role in a post-NATO Afghanistan. “The SCO Dushanbe Summit: Opening From Eurasia To Asia – Analysis,” Eurasia Review, October 31, 2014.

## Military Exercises

In 2002 China held its very first military exercise outside its borders and with another country, with Kyrgyzstan.<sup>170</sup> It was a small anti-terrorism drill, held a year after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, but significant in that it signaled China’s willingness to cooperate militarily with other nations. More exercises would follow for China, not only under the aegis of the SCO, but also bilaterally with other states not sharing a border or organization with China. This included bilateral drills with ostensible NATO rivals, France, and the UK, and even India, albeit on a much smaller scale.<sup>171</sup> For Kyrgyzstan, it marked a rare bilateral exercise with a major power. Previously, the Kyrgyz military had participated in multilateral NATO and CIS exercises.<sup>172</sup> After the October 2002 antiterrorism exercise more multilateral and bilateral SCO exercises would quickly follow. Table 4-3 lists the joint exercises conducted under the aegis of the SCO to date.

**Table 4-3**  
**SCO Military Exercises<sup>173</sup>**

Date	Participants	Location
October 10-11, 2002	China, Kyrgyzstan	Kyrgyzstan
August 6-12, 2003	Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan,	Kazakhstan
August 18-25, 2005	Russia, China	Russia
March 2-5, 2006	Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	Uzbekistan
August 2006	China, Kazakhstan	
September 22-23, 2006	China, Tajikistan	Tajikistan
May 30-31, 2007	Russia, China, Kazakhstan,	Kyrgyzstan

<sup>170</sup> Christopher Bodeen, “China and Kyrgyzstan to hold first-ever border anti-terrorist exercises in October,” Associated Press, September 17, 2002.

<sup>171</sup> On November 14, 2003 China and India conducted an offshore naval search and rescue exercise, their first joint military exercise. This led to a mountaineering drill the following year in Tibet between the two rivals.

“Backgrounder: PLA-related military exercises since 2002,” Xinhua, September 25, 2004.

<sup>172</sup> “14 Former Soviet Bloc Nations Join NATO Exercises in the U.S.,” Washington Post, August 9, 1995, and “CIS Countries Hold Anti-Terrorism Military Exercise in South Kyrgyzstan,” Xinhua, April 27, 2001.

<sup>173</sup> Adapted from Marcel de Haas, “War Games of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization: Drills on the Move!” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* Vol. 39, No. 3, (2016): 382-

	Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	
August 9-17, 2007	Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	China, Russia
April 17-19, 2009 <sup>174</sup>	China, Russia, Tajikistan	Tajikistan
July 22-27, 2009	China, Russia	China, Russia
August 16-26, 2010	Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan	Russia
September 9-25, 2010	Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan	Kazakhstan
May 5-8, 2011	China, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan	China
June 5-12, 2012	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan	Uzbekistan
June 8-14, 2012	China, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan	Tajikistan
June 2013	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan	Kazakhstan
July 27-August 15, 2013	China, Russia	Russia
August 24-29, 2014	China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan	China
April 21-24, 2015	China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan	Kyrgyzstan
September 15-17, 2015	China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	Kyrgyzstan
September 15-21, 2016	China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan	Kyrgyzstan
June 27, 2017 <sup>175</sup>	China, Kyrgyzstan	Kyrgyzstan
August-September 2018 <sup>176</sup>	China, India, Pakistan, Russia	Russia

<sup>174</sup> “Russia, China war games begin in Tajikistan: ministry,” Agence France Presse, April 17, 2009.

<sup>175</sup> “China, Kyrgyzstan hold anti-terror drill in Xinjiang,” China Military Daily, June 27, 2017, Accessed October 30, 2019 at: [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2017-06/27/content\\_7654352.htm](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2017-06/27/content_7654352.htm).

<sup>176</sup> “Pakistan, India, China, Russia to Take Part in SCO Wargames,” The News International, April 26, 2018

September 10-21, 2019 <sup>177</sup>	China, India, Pakistan, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	Russia
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China participated in all but two of the exercises while Russia was absent from six of them. There was only one exercise without either China or Russia present. The exercises have steadily increased in both frequency, and scale, with sometimes thousands of troops involved.<sup>178</sup> China and Russia participated in their first bilateral military exercises ever under the auspices of the SCO in 2005, the third annual exercises for the organization.<sup>179</sup> The exercises were dubbed “Peace Mission 2005” and featured 8,000 Chinese and 2,000 Russian troops conducting a wide range of drills, including conducting an amphibious assault and enforcing a maritime blockade.<sup>180</sup> Such a display of military cooperation between these states would have been unheard of during the Cold War, or indeed a decade prior.

Peace Mission 2005 was soon followed by a short antiterrorism drill in 2006 with all the SCO members attending.<sup>181</sup> The following year Peace Mission 2007 took place, another full scale military exercise, this time involving troops from all the SCO countries, including every whole organizational units from the PLA for the first time.<sup>182</sup> At the 2007 SCO summit just two months prior to Peace Mission 2007, the member states signed a treaty on joint military exercises, effectively streamlining them and making them more integrated.<sup>183</sup> In 2008, China ratified the treaty, drawing the country closer to its SCO partners.<sup>184</sup>

<sup>177</sup> Ayaz Gul, “Pakistan, India Join Russia-Led Military Drills Despite Kashmir Tensions,” Voice of America, September 17, 2019, Accessed October 30, 2019 at: <https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/pakistan-india-join-russia-led-military-drills-despite-kashmir-tensions>.

<sup>178</sup> Marcel de Haas, 382-386.

<sup>179</sup> Richard Weitz, “Parsing Chinese-Russian Military Exercises,” The Letort Papers, (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2015), 5.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, 5-6.

<sup>181</sup> Roger McDermott, “Uzbekistan Hosts SCO Anti-Terrorist Drill” Eurasia Daily Monitor, Vol. 3, No. 50, (Washington, D.C: Jamestown Foundation, March 14, 2006).

<sup>182</sup> Roger McDermott, “The Rising Dragon: Peace Mission 2007” Occasional Papers, (Washington, D.C.: Jamestown Foundation, October 2007).

<sup>183</sup> “China to ratify treaty on SCO joint military exercises,” Xinhua, December 22, 2008 [http://www.china.org.cn/international/2008-12/22/content\\_16990776.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/international/2008-12/22/content_16990776.htm).

<sup>184</sup> “Legislature Approves Treaty on SCO Joint Military Exercises”, Xinhua, December 27, 2008 [http://www.china.org.cn/china/national/2008-12/28/content\\_17021927.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/china/national/2008-12/28/content_17021927.htm).

Peace Mission 2007 enhanced the SCO members' ability to coordinate their command structures in anti-terrorism drills.<sup>185</sup> This coordination could not occur without a certain level of trust among the participants, with China more eager to enhance bilateral cooperation than Russia.<sup>186</sup> Despite Moscow's tepidness Russia still readily participated within the SCO's structured exercises. Near the end of Peace Mission 2007 the SCO states sent out a joint communique reaffirming the Bishkek Declaration announced at the Bishkek summit two months prior. In it, the heads of state of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization members emphasized the need to establish a joint response mechanism to deal with destabilizing factors in the SCO region.<sup>187</sup> Incorporating this type of policy, which is tantamount to an alliance, as well as the scale and scope of military exercises led one scholar to argue that the SCO was maturing as a security alliance.<sup>188</sup>

In 2009 another Peace Mission exercise was conducted between Russia and China.<sup>189</sup> This exercise, another anti-terrorism drill, was smaller in scale and shorter in duration than the prior Peace Missions, but still saw over 1,4000 troops deployed between the two states.<sup>190</sup> In 2010 the fourth Peace Mission exercise was conducted, involving over 5,000 troops from five of the SCO states, including Russia and China.<sup>191</sup> During the 2010 Peace Mission a Chinese commander praised his troops for paying close attention to coordination with the other participants.<sup>192</sup> The closer the military coordination in these exercises, the greater trust is reinforced among the participants, and the less likely the rivalry between Russia and China will reemerge.

Ostensibly, these military exercises, and the SCO itself, are not directed at any particular state or organization. Indeed, this sentiment is enshrined in the SCO charter - a reassurance to

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<sup>185</sup> "SCO Drill Milestone of Anti-terror Cooperation, Says Expert," Xinhua, August 16, 2007.

<sup>186</sup> A.A. Migunov, "Reorganization of Chinese Armed Forces and Further Development of Russo-Chinese Relations," *Military Thought*, Vol. 17, No. 4, (2008): 134.

<sup>187</sup> "Joint Communique of Meeting of Council of Heads of SCO Member States," Shanghai Cooperation Organization website, August 16, 2007. Accessed November 5, 2019 at: <http://eng.sectsc.org/documents/>.

<sup>188</sup> Marcel de Haas, "The Shanghai Cooperation's Momentum Towards a Mature Security Alliance," *Scientia Militaria, South African Journal of Military Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1, (2008): 18.

<sup>189</sup> "Backgrounder: China-Russia joint military exercises since 2003," Xinhua, July 5, 2013

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> "SCO Anti-terror Drill Concludes, Opens New Page for Cooperation," Xinhua, September 25, 2010.

<sup>192</sup> "Interview: Chinese Troops Pay Attention to Coordination with Friendly Forces – Commander," Xinhua, September 19, 2010.

the United States and NATO, blunting the notion that the SCO is a security alliance.<sup>193</sup> On the surface, this is true, the exercises are agnostic, no single common foe unites the participants. However, common threats do unite them. Any destabilizing force that threatens these autocratic regimes is considered a threat. This includes nascent domestic democratic movements, as the SCO focuses more on stability than liberalism.<sup>194</sup>

But this also includes rivalries among its members. Unlike the European Union's Common Defense and Security Policy, the SCO does not seek to do joint military missions abroad.<sup>195</sup> Instead, the SCO operates on the principle that state sovereignty should be respected and is inviolable. Despite these limits, the joint military exercises work as confidence-building measures among the SCO members. They act as a driver to reduce tensions on border and other security issues.<sup>196</sup> The more regular, and routine the exercises become, the more trust is built up between the participants. Additionally, the exercises can involve more complicated and sensitive aspects such as intelligence sharing, or command and control.

The SCO was specifically set up to improve cooperation and build confidence among its members on security related issues. Military exercises are a key component of the SCO's mission. Without them, it would be difficult to reassure members that the initial two treaties the Shanghai Five signed would continue to remain valid. What is particularly important is the inclusion of China in the military exercises on a regular basis.<sup>197</sup> Chinese participation ensures that the state with the largest military in Eurasia is committed to the principles of demilitarization enshrined in the Shanghai Five treaties, and of peaceful cooperation enshrined in the SCO's Charter. China's participation in military drills also alleviates Central Asian concerns about being dominated by Russia.<sup>198</sup> Russia and the Central Asian states conduct their own

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<sup>193</sup> "SCO military exercises not aimed against third countries - Chinese ministry," Central Asia General Newswire, April 28, 2011, also Article 2 of the Shanghai Cooperation Charter.

<sup>194</sup> Thomas Ambrosio, "Catching the 'Shanghai Spirit': How the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Promotes Authoritarian Norms in Central Asia," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 8, (Oct. 2008): 1330-1331.

<sup>195</sup> For a list of CSDP missions see Thierry Tardy, "CSDP in Action: What Contribution to International Security?" *Chaillot Papers*, No. 134, (Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, May 2015), 19.

<sup>196</sup> Yu Xintian, "Understanding and Preventing New Conflicts and War: China's Peaceful Rise as a Strategic Choice," *Global Change, Peace & Security*, Vol. 17, No. 3, (2005): 288.

<sup>197</sup> "The SCO exercise to become regular - secretary general," Russia & CIS General Newswire, February 29, 2008.

<sup>198</sup> The SCO was seen as a check against Russian aspirations in the region. Carol R. Saivetz, "The Ties that Bind? Russia's Evolving Relations With Its Neighbors," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 3-4, (2012): 405.

exercises under the auspices of the CSTO.<sup>199</sup> The two organizations do not conduct joint military exercises since the CSTO is strictly a military alliance, while the SCO has repeatedly shied away from that label.<sup>200</sup> However, they do work closely together, ever since a memorandum of understanding was signed in October 2007 between the two Eurasian organizations.<sup>201</sup>

The SCO's military exercises are an example of the principle of reinforcement that is key to de-escalating rivalries. Treaties are a way for states to govern each other in their interactions, but without concrete actions treaties are mere words on paper.<sup>202</sup> The SCO needs a reassurance mechanism for states to see any benefit to further or future membership in the organization and joint military exercises serve that purpose. The exercises are important beyond mere symbolism, as the cooperation runs deeper between the member states' militaries, improving inter-military relations.<sup>203</sup> In this regard, they are one example of the principle of reinforcement that is necessary to de-escalate rivalry tensions.

Another useful element in improving inter-military cooperation and relations are military exchanges. Similar to military exercises, these exchanges do not need to involve large numbers of troops or military equipment. Rather, military exchanges can come in the form of meetings between defense ministers, high-ranking officials, or exchanges between line officers.<sup>204</sup> The SCO's military exercises act as a springboard, especially for China, for further military exchanges with other states.<sup>205</sup> Using military exchanges in the form of short visits between military officials is cost efficient and an easy way for SCO members to build trust. One form that

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<sup>199</sup> Irina Ionela Pop, "Russia, EU, NATO, and the Strengthening of the CSTO in Central Asia," *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 3, No. 3, (Summer 2009): 282.

<sup>200</sup> "SCO, CSTO not to hold joint military exercises – China," *Uzbek Daily*, August 30, 2007, accessed June 19, 2018 at: <https://www.uzdaily.com/articles-id-1142.htm>.

<sup>201</sup> "Interview: CSTO head eyes closer partnership with SCO," *Xinhua*, June 8, 2018, accessed June 13, 2018 at: [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-06/08/c\\_137239917.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-06/08/c_137239917.htm).

<sup>202</sup> Antonio Cassese, *International Law*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 296-297.

<sup>203</sup> Li Jengfeng, Wu Hongwei, eds. *A Strategy for Security in East Asia: Shanghai Cooperation Organization*, (Reading: Paths International Ltd, 2016), 114.

<sup>204</sup> "China, Russia issue joint statement on military cooperation," *Xinhua*, August 8, 2011.

<sup>205</sup> "Military drills, a platform for exchanges between China and other countries: expert," *Xinhua*, August 9, 2007, and "Chinese, Uzbekistani Defense Ministers Hold Talks," *Xinhua*, August 24, 2000.

is common is anti- or counter-terrorism exchanges through the RATS structure.<sup>206</sup> All the SCO member states have concerns over terrorism, with each of them having varying degrees with which they handled counterterrorism, depending on their level of exposure to the phenomenon.<sup>207</sup> The SCO has to balance these approaches, in light of the Taliban's presence and resurgence in Afghanistan, the IMU in Uzbekistan, and Uighur separatists in Xingjian province in China. Everything the regimes see as a threat has been labeled "terrorism" regardless if it is or not.<sup>208</sup>

With the removal of American forces in first Uzbekistan and then Kyrgyzstan, and then a drawing down of NATO forces in Afghanistan, the SCO became the primary security-driven entity in Central Asia.<sup>209</sup> It was easy to facilitate antiterrorism exchanges, since it was one threat all the member states could agree on. The RATS did have a wide scope and ill-defined mandate.<sup>210</sup> While admittedly it has had a mixed track record of actual counterterrorism success,<sup>211</sup> the RATS structure has improved coordination and cooperation among the SCO member states.<sup>212</sup>

Military exercises, and, to a lesser extent, exchanges between Russia and China under the SCO aegis have been instrumental to keeping their rivalry de-escalated. These exercises helped develop closer coordination and cooperation among the participating militaries, and their respective chains of command. The exercises also exposed those militaries' weaknesses to their counterparts, which could be exploited if the two countries ever commenced armed conflict against each other. Thus, a certain amount of trust is needed, first in order to initiate these

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<sup>206</sup> "Joint efforts of SCO security services stopped 167 terrorist crimes in 2015 – official," ITAR-TASS, June 24, 2016.

<sup>207</sup> Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan for example were less impacted by terrorism than their Central Asian neighbors, thus adjusted their policies accordingly. Mariya Y. Omelicheva, *Counterterrorism Policies in Central Asia*, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 134-135.

<sup>208</sup> There was some real concern over terrorism when the SCO was first founded. Chien-Peng Chung, 995. Also, Svante E. Cornell, "Narcotics, Radicalism, and Armed Conflict in Central Asia: The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 17, No. 4, (2005): 625-627.

<sup>209</sup> "Central Asia faces transborder security threats which should be deterred jointly - Russian deputy FM," Kazakhstan General Newswire, November 10, 2017.

<sup>210</sup> Thomas Wallace, "China and the Regional Counter-Terrorism Structure: An Organizational Analysis," *Asian Security*, Vol. 10, No. 3, (2014): 204.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid*, 205.

<sup>212</sup> "Interview: Fight against "three evil forces" remains main task of SCO," Xinhua, July 11, 2017.

exercises, and second to continue them on an annual basis. Therefore, trust is reinforced not only between the leaders during the SCO summits but also through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's structured annual military exercises.

### **Bilateral Cooperation at United Nations Security Council**

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is not the only forum for trust reinforcement between China and Russia. The two states have cooperated in other multilateral forums, the most visible being the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Both China and Russia view the United Nations as the most important global institution, and place the Security Council, where both have permanent seats, as paramount to upholding their own vision of world order.<sup>213</sup> This vision includes an emphasis on multipolarity, non-interference in internal state affairs, and territorial integrity, all elements present in the SCO as well. Russian-Chinese coordination at the United Nations appears to be more recent, occurring after the establishment of the Shanghai Five, the trust reinforced through the Shanghai Process, could have spilled over into other forums, like the Security Council.

At the UN, their cooperation has resulted in a coordination of their votes on the council, notably their vetoes. China has aligned its vetoes exclusively with Russia over the past twenty years. In fact, the last veto that China used not in conjunction with Russia was in vetoing a resolution on the continuation of the UN peacekeeping mission in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, dubbed UNPREDEP, (United Nations Preventive Deployment Force), in 1999. There was speculation, particularly from the US, that China vetoed the resolution in response to Macedonian recognition of Taiwan.<sup>214</sup> However, this resolution was also denied Russian support. Then-Russian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Sergey Lavrov stated

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<sup>213</sup> Marcin Kaczmarek, "Convergence or Divergence? Visions of World Order and the Russian-Chinese Relationship," *European Politics And Society*, Vol. 20, No. 2, (2019): 211.

<sup>214</sup> Albright attacks China on Macedonia veto. (1999, March 2). Agence France Presse.

unequivocally in debate prior to voting that the resolution as drafted could not be given Russian support. The Russian position was that the resolution should be amended to refocus the mission of UNPREDEP on enforcement of the arms embargo.<sup>215</sup> Russia ultimately abstained during voting, while China vetoed the resolution. China justified its veto on the grounds that UNPREDEP had completed its mission and thus was no longer necessary.

The next twelve vetoes China cast were all in conjunction with Russia. These included eight resolutions on the Syria crisis, (October 2011, February 2012, July 2012, May 2014, December 2016, February 2017, February 2019, September 2019, December 2019, and July 2020), one on Zimbabwe in 2008, one on Myanmar in 2007, and one on Venezuela in 2019.<sup>216</sup> Table 4-4 lists the vetoes by UN Security Council members since 1990.

**Table 4-4**  
**UN Security Council Vetoes 1990-2020**

Country	Total Vetoes	Solo Vetoes	Tandem Vetoes	Percent Tandem
Russia	26	14	12	46
China	14	2	12	86
France	0	0	0	0
UK	0	0	0	0
USA	19	19	0	0

Beijing has normally followed Moscow’s lead in vetoing resolutions, although not exclusively as Russia has vetoed eleven resolutions on its own in the past twenty years, where China has abstained.<sup>217</sup> But the two sides have found common ground in presenting a united front against the other three permanent members of the Security Council, the US, the UK, and France, all Western states, and members of NATO.

<sup>215</sup> United Nations Security Council 3982<sup>nd</sup> Meeting. (1999, February 25). Retrieved June 2, 2019 at: [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.3982](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.3982).

<sup>216</sup> United Nations website. Security Council Veto List, Dag Hammarskjold Library. Data available at: [http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/resguide/scact\\_veto\\_table\\_en.htm](http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/resguide/scact_veto_table_en.htm).

<sup>217</sup> About half of Russia’s vetoes have been backed by China over the last twenty years, however all of China’s vetoes since 1999 have been in conjunction with Russia. Ibid.

In coordinating their vetoes at the Security Council, Beijing and Moscow both signal each other that they are in agreement on specific issues, such as intervention in Syria, and reinforce, and even build more trust between them. Neither of the SCO members has coordinated their vetoes with any of the other Permanent Five members. In fact, prior to 2007, China and Russia (and the USSR prior to its dissolution) vetoed resolutions exclusively on a solo basis. Their coordination gives both states flexibility: breathing space, and domestic cover. In having China join Russia in vetoing resolutions it can no longer be claimed by the other P5 members that Russia is the sole obstacle at the UNSC. Chinese-Russian cooperation means there are at least two voting blocs in the Security Council, and that Moscow can rely on Beijing (so far) to, if not publicly back all of its vetoes, at least not undermine them. This goes a long way toward preventing Russia, more frequently a target of Western sanctions than China, from being isolated in the multilateral forum. For its part, China benefits from having a reassured Russia as a reliable partner. Tensions eased with Moscow means Beijing is free to focus on other priorities.

## **Conclusion**

The China-Russia relationship has come full circle: from perpetual rivals for territory, to Cold War allies, back to rivals, and now on to a strategic partnership. But why this abrupt change? Most rivalry termination scholars point to the presence of shocks as indicative of changes in a rivalry.<sup>218</sup> Indeed, there have been shocks attributed to the relationship, most notably the collapse of the Soviet Union and perestroika. However, even if the Soviet Union had not collapsed, a sufficient condition for the end of the Sino-Russian rivalry, de-escalation of the rivalry could still have occurred. The seeds of rapprochement had been planted several years prior to Gorbachev's ascension to power. The three obstacles would have eventually been removed sooner rather than later, as in fact Soviet entreaties to improve relations started as early

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<sup>218</sup> Diehl and Goertz, *War and Peace in International Rivalry*, 221-222, and Gary Goertz, Paul Diehl, "The Initiation and Termination of Enduring Rivalries: The Impact of Political Shocks," *American Political Science Journal*, Vol. 39, No. 1, (Feb. 1995): 35-37, and Rasler, Thompson, and Ganguly, 13-14.

as 1972.<sup>219</sup> While Gorbachev's perestroika reform helped propel the two sides over the three obstacles, it is insufficient to explain the willingness of both parties to at least talk about ending the rivalry long before perestroika.<sup>220</sup> Ultimately, both Chinese and Russian leaders were pragmatic about the border resolution. From 1982 to the present-day trust was built incrementally and reinforced through confidence-building measures, institutionalized within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the form of summits and military exercises and exchanges, to the point that the rivalry has been de-escalated and has not reemerged.

On the surface, the Russia-China relationship looked rife to return to the days of fierce competition. Both are peer competitors who critics of the Russia-China strategic partnership often argue are only bound together by their opposition to the United States and NATO.<sup>221</sup> While there may be some truth to this, and indeed there are a plethora of contemporary issues which this chapter has analyzed that could instigate the two into becoming rivals once more. Instead, that has not happened. It has now been more than twenty-five years since Gorbachev's summit visit in 1989, and Russia and China have demonstrated a deepening relationship in the intervening years.

The only other period to compare it to is the Sino-Soviet partnership which lasted barely a decade (although the goals of that partnership were loftier and the egos involved (Stalin, Khrushchev, Mao) were larger and perhaps more fragile). Nevertheless, with more modest goals and despite the issues that could divide the two countries they still remain if not fast friends, no longer enemies. This perception has been held by policy makers and business leaders in both states since the mid-1990s, and has slowly made its way to the masses. While the Chinese people appear to be more ambivalent toward Russia with about half of Chinese favoring Russia with a positive opinion, Russian people in higher percentages consistently view China

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<sup>219</sup> "Russia, China to end border row," Times of India, October 2, 1972. The seeds of what would become the three obstacles were planted even then, with China eventually demanding the Soviets withdraw troops from Mongolia as a precondition. "Chinese in no Mood to Make Up with Russia," Times of India, December 24, 1974.

<sup>220</sup> Wishnick, 43.

<sup>221</sup> Lowell Dittmer, "The Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership: The End of Rivalry?" in *Asian Rivalries: Conflict, Escalation, and Limitations on Two-level Games* Sumit Ganguly, William Thompson, eds. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 140.

favorably.<sup>222</sup> A comparable number of German people view former rival turned friend France in a positive light in similar polls.<sup>223</sup> Even with Chinese ambivalence, a clear majority still hold favorable views of Russia.<sup>224</sup>

Perceptions have changed in both countries since the Cold War; there is a visible trend of this despite the cultural divide between the two peoples. These perceptions are reinforced by the elites, the policy makers, who demonstrate through summits and military and diplomatic cooperation the closeness of the two states. Images of the Russian president meeting with his Chinese counterpart, or of Russian military units participating in drills with the Chinese, are televised through state-controlled media to the Russian people, and likewise for the Chinese people. It is becoming increasingly evident that Russia and China not only do not view each other as rivals, but also see no reason to resort to so-called “power politics” tactics against each other in defense of interests. Even as both states are reluctant to relent to a unipolar world, and reject Western values or intervention, they, ironically perhaps, have developed their own unique relationship, making of anarchy what they will.<sup>225</sup>

State relations, though, can be changed, interests may diverge, new leaders may come forward, and Russia and China could be set on the path of rivalry once again. Thus, reinforcement is the most important ingredient to ensure a rivalry is terminated permanently, or at least de-escalated for a long period of time. Ideally, this reinforcement would come in the form of institutionalized trust, nurtured by intergovernmental organizations.<sup>226</sup> This way, trust reinforcement is easier to accomplish, and cordial relations between the rival states easier to maintain.

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<sup>222</sup> Pew Research Center, Global Attitudes Project, accessed June 27, 2016 at: <http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/24/country/181/>.

<sup>223</sup> Pew Research Center, accessed June 27, 2016 at: <http://www.pewglobal.org/2012/05/29/chapter-4-views-of-eu-countries-and-leaders/>.

<sup>224</sup> Pew Research Center, accessed June 28, 2016 at: <http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/27/country/45/>.

<sup>225</sup> Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” *International Organizations*, Vol. 46, No. 2, (Spring, 1992): 391-425.

<sup>226</sup> Also called co-binding, power-checking practices, and institutions. Kupchan, 184.

In the case of Russia and China they have both. Their bilateral reinforcement model was successful enough to lead to multilateral confidence-building measures that ultimately led to the creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which followed a similar pattern, using summits and military exercises to reinforce mutual trust by creating breathing space, domestically for both states. Without the SCO, the China-Russia rivalry was in danger of backsliding. The two powers, as exhibited in this chapter, still have a great many areas where their interests diverge, and thus conflict may reemerge. Indeed, the strategic partnership that both states declare themselves to share has defied predictions of its demise.<sup>227</sup>

For the China-Russia rivalry, it has been the process of reinforcement, established through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and its mechanisms that has prevented backsliding. The Russia-China strategic partnership has become the “new normal”, and is a clear break from their past. Trust between the two states has endured through three Russian and Chinese presidencies with no sign of abating. However, trust must continually be reinforced and the structures, annual summits and military exchanges, must be renewed. The repetitive nature of SCO summits and exercises need to be continued for mutual trust to be retained. This mutual trust also has prevented the rivalry’s reemergence now thirty years after the end of the Cold War, despite predictions that their strategic partnership would not last.

This chapter argued that, contrary to much of the literature on the China-Russia rivalry, which states that it de-escalated due to the shock of the Cold War, the rivalry de-escalated gradually, through the reinforcement of mutual trust implemented by the SCO and incremental confidence-building measures. Without this trust it is possible that due to outstanding issues, the rivalry could have backslid or re-escalated. Instead, the two states carried momentum forward and through the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization provided a

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<sup>227</sup> Bobo Lo, “The long sunset of strategic partnership: Russia’s evolving China policy,” *International Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 2, (2004): 308-309, and Paul J. Bolt, Sharyl N. Cross, “The Contemporary Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership: Challenges and Opportunities for the Twenty-First Century,” *Asian Security*, Vol. 6, No. 3, (2010): 203-204.

trust reinforcement platform. The next chapter will look at the Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan rivalry with a similar trajectory to the China-Russia rivalry, and how reinforcement has helped de-escalate tensions between the two Central Asian states.

## Chapter Five

### The Kazakhstan Uzbekistan Rivalry

#### Introduction

This chapter will examine and analyze the rivalry between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Specifically, it will look at how it emerged and how confidence-building mechanisms within the Shanghai Cooperation organization's structure helped de-escalate tensions between the two countries by building and reinforcing trust between them. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are the two dominant countries among the Central Asian members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Kazakhstan is the largest of the four countries by land area, while Uzbekistan maintains the largest population. Both states merged from the post-Soviet breakup with similar Soviet-style autocratic governments. In both cases the state was ruled by a singular strongman from independence until Islam Karimov's death in 2016 and Nursultan Nazarbayev's resignation in March 2019. Neither state can seem to escape the shadow of their former colonizer in Russia, and may be wary of China's intentions in the Central Asian region. Both boast predominately Muslim and Turkic majorities.

There is not a copious amount of literature on the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan rivalry, and some ambiguity about it does exist. Central Asian scholars have by and large focused on other aspects of the region. The Kazakhs and Uzbeks are still, despite their Turkic origins, very different peoples with different cultural outlooks. Their economies are different, with Kazakhstan blessed with rich deposits of natural gas and petroleum, and an initial lower rate of poverty than its neighbor.<sup>1</sup> Kazakhstan has a large land area, making it the 9<sup>th</sup> largest country

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Pomfret, "Economic Performance in Central Asia Since 1991: Macro and Micro Evidence," *Comparative Economic Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 4, (2003): 462.

in the world, while Uzbekistan has a comparatively larger population. Uzbekistan has grappled with an Islamic insurgency, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), off and on over the last decade.<sup>2</sup> And each state has a different foreign policy outlook, with differing objectives.<sup>3</sup>

The rivalry, such as it is, only emerged in the last twenty years, and thus no consensus has developed as to whether the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan relationship can be sufficiently categorized as a rivalry.<sup>4</sup> Thompson and Dreyer categorize the dyad as a rivalry in their *Handbook of International Rivalries*.<sup>5</sup> One of the factors that Thompson and Dreyer mention in their classification of the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan rivalry is that both states have sought to exert influence in the region.<sup>6</sup> It is also listed as a strategic rivalry by Rasler, Thompson, and Colaresi, again this is due to the positional struggle observed between the two.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, it is mentioned in Ganguly and Thompson's *Asian Rivalries* as a rivalry but not a high profile one, thus not much is known about it.<sup>8</sup>

One of the earlier sources, and one cited by Thompson and Dreyer is Dannreuther. He states that due to Uzbek-Kazakh competition over regional leadership regional integration is impossible.<sup>9</sup> He does not go so far as to say the two states are rivals. Another source cited by Thompson and Dreyer is Kubicek, who argues that potential Uzbek irredentist claims or calls for a pan-Turkic Greater Uzbekistan may fuel conflict in the region.<sup>10</sup> This was only speculation, as neither of those scenarios came about. The International Crisis Group noted in a report in 2002 that the failure to properly demarcate the land boundaries in Central Asia, including Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, could lead to wider conflict in the region, but does not mention rivalry.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Luke Falkenburg, "On the Brink: The Resurgence of Militant Islam in Central Asia," *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, Vol 24, No. 3, (2013): 380-382.

<sup>3</sup> Avinoam Idan, Brenda Shaffer, "The Foreign Policies of Post-Soviet Landlocked States," *Post-Soviet Affairs* Vol. 27, No. 3, (2011): 250, 261-262.

<sup>4</sup> There is dispute among Central Asian scholars as to whether there is even a rivalry or not. See: Murat Laumluin, Farkhod Tolipov, "Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan: A Race for Leadership?" *Security Index: A Russian Journal on International Security*, Vol. 16, No. 2, (2010): 42.

<sup>5</sup> Thompson, Dreyer, 206.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Colaresi, et. al., 46.

<sup>8</sup> Ganguly, Thompson, 14.

<sup>9</sup> Roland Dannreuther, "Creating New States in Central Asia," Adelphi Paper No. 288, (London: Brassey, 1994), 49.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Kubicek, "Regionalism, Nationalism, and Realpolitik in Central Asia," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 4, (June 1997): 646.

<sup>11</sup> International Crisis Group, *Central Asia: Border Disputes and Conflict Potential*, (Brussels: ICG Asia Report No. 33), 2002, 7-9.

Another Central Asian scholar, Olcott, has argued that a rivalry does exist between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan for leadership in Central Asia.<sup>12</sup> Thus, there is no consensus on the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan relationship, whether it is a rivalry or not. Therefore, this chapter is an attempt to argue definitively that the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan relationship from independence until recently should be categorized as an interstate rivalry.

This assumption of rivalry is based on the border and territorial dispute between the two states, and the tense, sometimes hostile relationship between the two post-independence leaders of these two states as they compete for positional dominance of the Central Asian region. Both states' leaders, Nursultan Nazarbayev in Kazakhstan and Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan, sought to assert themselves after the Soviet collapse. They personally clashed and did not like each other.

This antipathy, coupled with the dispute over borders and territory that was left unresolved upon independence, created the conditions for rivalry between these two states. It is a common truism among observers of Central Asian politics that Stalin drew the borders of the region.<sup>13</sup> This truism stems from the national delimitation that took place between 1924-25, when the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (TASSR) was divided into smaller autonomous administrative units: Uzbek SSR, Kazakh SSR, Kyrgyz SSR, Tajik SSR, and Turkmen SSR, that would eventually become the five Central Asian republics.<sup>14</sup>

Beginning in the 1970s the demographics of Central Asia began to change as birth rates increased among the Uzbeks and Kazakhs.<sup>15</sup> In 1986, protests and interethnic violence broke out in both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.<sup>16</sup> Simultaneously, the number of Russians living in these countries, who moved there during the earlier years of the Soviet Union to improve industrialization in Central Asia, slowly decreased.<sup>17</sup> Emboldened by Gorbachevian political reforms and frustrated by a stagnant economy, the Kazakh and Uzbek youths, who made up the

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<sup>12</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, *Rivalry and Competition in Central Asia*, (Thune, Switzerland: Eurasia Emerging Market Forum, 2010), 1.

<sup>13</sup> It was not the case however as delimitation was initiated by local Bolsheviks. Nevertheless, the Soviet government implemented the idea and enforced it throughout the regime's existence. Marlene Laruelle, "What We

<sup>14</sup> William Fierman, *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 17

<sup>15</sup> Valery Tishkov, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union*, (Sage: London, 1997), 121

<sup>16</sup> Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia: the Creation of Nations*, (London: IB Taurus, 2000), 125.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

majority of the protestors, embraced their ethnic roots and lashed out at Russians and other ethnic minorities in their respective republics.<sup>18</sup>

This violence continued sporadically throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s as Soviet control weakened and eventually dissipated. The autocratic leaders left in place in the Central Asian republics exploited this nationalistic fervor to further cement their own power.<sup>19</sup> With independence looming, the leaders of the Soviet republics developed cults of personalities, and strengthened their holds on the populace.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the seeds were planted for a rivalry to take shape in Central Asia. This rivalry has only recently de-escalated, and many observers of Central Asian politics will point to Islam Karimov's death as the initial "shock" that led to that de-escalation.<sup>21</sup> However, this chapter will argue that the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan rivalry de-escalated due to trust built and reinforced through the mechanisms of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

In order to formulate how the rivalry de-escalated through the auspices of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization it is necessary to first understand how the rivalry formed, given the dearth of literature on it. The first section of this chapter will examine the factors that contributed to the rivalry process between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan after their independence. There are three elements that contributed to the development of the rivalry: disputes over territory and borders, disputes over positional leadership of Central Asia, and disputes over water resources. Disputes over resources is an aspect of rivalry that is understudied, but increasingly becoming a source of tension among states.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Saidbaev, Talib, "Inter-Ethnic Conflicts in Central Asia: Social and Religious Perspectives," In *Ethnicity and Conflict in a Post-Communist World*, edited by Kumar Rupesinghe, Peter King, Olga Vorkunova (New York: Macmillan Press, 1992), 151-152.

<sup>19</sup> Rico Issacs, "Papa-Nursultan Nazarbayev and the Discourse of Charismatic Leadership and Nation-Building in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Vol. 10, No. 3, (2010): 444-445.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 441.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with OSCE official, July 26, 2017, and George Voloshin, "Closer Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan Ties Not Enough to Resolve Broader Regional Woes," *Eurasian Daily Monitor*, Vol. 14, No. 125, (October 6, 2017), accessed September 18, 2018 at: <https://jamestown.org/program/closer-uzbekistan-kazakhstan-ties-not-enough-resolve-broader-regional-woes/>.

<sup>22</sup> Vally Koubi, Gabriele Spilker, Tobias Bohmelt, Thomas Bernauer, "Do Natural Resources Matter for Interstate and Intrastate Armed Conflict?" *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 51, No. 4, (2014): 228-229.

Once the contours of the rivalry have been established, the second section will examine signaling that occurred in the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan rivalry. The initial signaling occurred prior to the formation of the SCO, but subsequent signaling did occur within the organization's framework. This will lead into the third section, confidence-building measures. The confidence-building measures in this rivalry that helped build trust all occurred under the aegis of the SCO. This will include interactions between the Uzbek and Kazakh leaders at the annual summit meetings. In addition, the section will examine Uzbekistan's participation in selected SCO military exercises that worked as confidence-building mechanisms.

The final section will argue how trust, once built, was reinforced through the SCO's multiparty forum. Uzbekistan was a reluctant participant of many multilateral venues, but was mostly consistent in staying in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. No major conflict occurred between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, and tensions appeared to ease between them in recent years, prior to Karimov's death. Trust, built and reinforced through the SCO, helped de-escalate the rivalry, or so this section will argue.

### **Rivalry Process**

Most rivalries are based around a disputed piece of territory or where the border begins or ends. These are spatial rivalries and Colaresi, Rasler and Thompson identify 70 percent of the strategic rivalries as being spatial.<sup>23</sup> Other rivalries are based on positioning within a regional or global hierarchy, while many rivalries exhibit features of both.<sup>24</sup> This section will argue that the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan dyad is both a spatial and positional rivalry. There is conflict over land and borders between the two, and there is jockeying for dominance in the Central Asia region. In many respects, so this chapter argues, the two states act as rivals for leadership in the post-Soviet space. This section will detail the three issues that contribute the most as drivers of the rivalry:

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<sup>23</sup> Colaresi, Rasler, Thompson, 78.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

territorial and water disputes, and relations between the two leaders. It is through these three drivers that the rivalry is both positional (competition between leaders) and spatial (territorial and water disputes).

### **Territorial and Border Disputes**

The first rivalry issue to be discussed will be the territorial dispute between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Territorial disputes are a major impetus for armed conflict between states, and a major focal point for the rivalry process. As Third World countries emerged from decolonization and the breakup of the Soviet Union, border disputes became commonplace in the latter part of the twentieth century. Borders were not clearly demarcated, and some ethnic groups found themselves separated from their blood kin.<sup>25</sup> Territorial disputes usually involve a dispute over boundaries, either land or maritime, and Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan's territorial dispute is no different.<sup>26</sup>

The end of the Soviet Union brought independence for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and a fresh set of problems for these newly created states. After 1991 Russia was beset by its own set of problems, including ineffective leadership, and the Central Asian states began to exert their own independent will, gradually charting their own separate paths in foreign policy.<sup>27</sup>

As is the case of most newly created nation-states, the issue of territory and where the borders began and ended had to be resolved. Both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan saw their borders as inviolable, a principle enshrined in the Declaration on Friendly Relations and Co-operation Among States.<sup>28</sup> Complicating the border issue is that, upon independence there were many Kazakhs living in Uzbekistan and many Uzbeks living in Kazakhstan, with more Kazakhs

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<sup>25</sup> Richard Lewington, "The Challenge of Managing Central Asia's New Borders," *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 41, No. 2, (2010): 224.

<sup>26</sup> Paul K. Huth and Todd L. Allee, *The Democratic Peace and Territorial Conflict in the Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 305-435.

<sup>27</sup> Kazakhstan under Nazarbayev was looking for more regional integration and bilateral cooperation while Uzbekistan under Karimov remained aloof. "Address of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan", Nursultan Nazarbayev, to the People of Kazakhstan, October 10, 1997.

<sup>28</sup> *Declaration on Friendly Relations*, G.A. Res. 2625, U.N. GAOR 6<sup>th</sup> Comm., 25<sup>th</sup> Session Supp. (No. 18), 1883<sup>rd</sup> plenary meeting, U.N. Doc. A/8018 (1970).

living in Uzbekistan.<sup>29</sup> Despite these diasporic concerns, however, delimitation and demarcation of the border was not a high priority for the Soviet Union prior to its break-up.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the Soviets intentionally blurred the border lines to prevent pan-Turkic movements from arising.

The main territorial dispute between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan is centered on the Saryagash and Makhtaaral districts of the South Kazakhstan region.<sup>31</sup> It quickly morphed into a dispute on where the border itself should be placed between the two states. Boundaries between states perform important functions: they define the limits of a state's political and military powers, they provide parameters for ethnic unity, and allow continuity for the state.<sup>32</sup>

Uzbekistan, under the leadership of Islam Karimov (leader from 1989-2016), began to fortify its borders soon after independence.<sup>33</sup> Uzbekistan was gifted with the largest military in Central Asia after the Soviet collapse, and thus could afford to place troops on the border, whereas their new neighbors could not.<sup>34</sup>

The interethnic violence which preceded independence persisted, and worried regional leaders that it would spiral out of control. This violence also spread to the Chinese province of Xinjiang where the Muslim Uighur minority lived.<sup>35</sup> As the Central Asian republics became independent, they brought with them the old Soviet borders with China, which were never clearly demarcated. Thus, in order to prevent further Islamic unrest that could be fomented, or at least influenced, by the Central Asian republics, China sought to resolve its border issues with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Zharmukhamed Zardykan, "Kazakhstan and Central Asia: Regional perspectives," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol 21, No. 2, (2002): 170-171.

<sup>30</sup> The terms *delimitation* and *demarcation* are sometimes used interchangeably but they are very different processes. "Delimitation refers to the description of a boundary in a written document and Demarcation is the physical marking off of that boundary," Suzanne Lalonde, *Determining Boundaries in a Conflicted World*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 9.

<sup>31</sup> Seilbek S. Asanov, Malik A. Augan, Yermek S. Chukubayev, "Kazakh-Uzbek Relations in the Context of Regional Security," *UNISCI Journal*, No. 45, (Oct. 2017): 269.

<sup>32</sup> Jean-Marc F. Blanchard, "Linking Border Disputes and War: An Institutional-Statist Theory," *Geopolitics*, Vol. 10, No. 4, (2005): 691-692.

<sup>33</sup> Abazov, 91.

<sup>34</sup> George Gavrilis, *The Dynamics of Interstate Boundaries*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 127

<sup>35</sup> Nicolas Becquelin, "Xinjiang in the Nineties," *China Journal*, No. 44, (Jul. 2000): 70.

<sup>36</sup> Hyer, 219.

President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan was wary of Chinese military power but eager to placate his larger neighbor.<sup>37</sup> In addition, he wished to forestall any Uighur separatist movement from developing in Kazakhstan, and was receptive to China's demarcation plans.<sup>38</sup> Unlike Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan shares borders with Russia and China. Table 5-1 below shows the length of the borders Kazakhstan shares with its neighbors, while Table 5-2 shows Uzbekistan's borders. At independence all these borders were disputed, yet Nazarbayev wanted to focus on resolving the Chinese borders first, and sent his foreign minister to Beijing to jumpstart the process in August, 1992.<sup>39</sup> This was due in part to Kazakhstan's desire to placate China and seek Chinese markets, but also it was due to China's persistence in resolving its border issues. This was the first treaty China concluded in which the negotiations were considered equal between the two parties.<sup>40</sup> With Kazakhstan more focused on demarcation with China, the Uzbek border was ignored, and Uzbekistan's leader, Islam Karimov, was forced to watch Kazakhstan's negotiations with China from the sidelines.

The border negotiations that China had with its Central Asian neighbors and Russia eventually led to the forming of the Shanghai Five in 1996. Members included China, Russia, and the three Central Asian states that bordered China: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Both Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan were excluded. This exclusion did not bother Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov, whose government had pursued a policy of positive neutrality since independence,<sup>41</sup> but it did rankle Karimov.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Charles Clover, "Central Asia summit to set seal on borders," *Financial Times*, August 25, 1999

<sup>38</sup> Marlene Laruelle and Sebastien Peyrouse, *China as a Neighbor: Central Asian Perspectives and Strategies*, (Stockholm: Institute for Security, Development and Policy, 2009), 73.

<sup>39</sup> Hyer, 225.

<sup>40</sup> Yasmin Melet, "China's political and economic relations with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 17, No. 2, (1998): 243.

<sup>41</sup> Utku Yapici, "From Positive Neutrality to Silk Road Activism? The Continuities and Change in Turkmenistan," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* Vol. 20, No. 3, (2018): 294.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with anonymous NATO official, November 1, 2017.

**Table 5-1 Kazakhstan Borders<sup>43</sup>**

Country	Length of Border
Russia	7,548 km
Uzbekistan	2,351 km
China	1,783 km
Kyrgyz Republic	1,257 km
Turkmenistan	458.3 km

**Table 5-2 Uzbekistan Borders<sup>44</sup>**

Country	Length of Borders
Kazakhstan	2,351 km
Turkmenistan	1.793 km
Kyrgyzstan	1,314km
Tajikistan	1,312 km
Afghanistan	144 km

The border issue simmered in the 1990s, as Karimov was focused on his southern border with the Tajikistan Civil War (1992-1997)<sup>45</sup> and the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan (1996-2001)<sup>46</sup>. In May-June 1999, Uzbek troops moved into the town of Narzabek near the Kazakh border.<sup>47</sup> Soon after this, the Uzbek troops began to unilaterally demarcate the border by placing observation posts where it believed the border should be.<sup>48</sup> Kazakhstan protested and in October 1999 Uzbekistan agreed to a joint delimitation process. However, in December 1999 a Kazakhstani citizen was shot and killed attempting to cross the border into Uzbekistan.<sup>49</sup> The citizen was living in the Bostandyq region of Uzbekistan, a district that used to belong to the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic, and still hosted a large number of ethnic Kazakhs.<sup>50</sup> Uzbek

<sup>43</sup> Kazakhstan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed on December 8, 2017at: <http://mfa.gov.kz/en/content-view/delimitatsiya-i-demarkatsiya-gosudarstvennoj-granitsy>.

<sup>44</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, *World Factbook* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2016), 911.

<sup>45</sup> Stuart Horsman, "Uzbekistan's Involvement in the Tajik Civil War 1992-97: Domestic Considerations," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 18, No. 1, (1999): 44-45.

<sup>46</sup> Karimov was concerned about Islamic radicalization given that the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan worked with the Taliban and Al Qaeda. S. Yaqub Ibrahimi, "The Taliban's Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (1996-2001): 'War-Making and State-Making' as an Insurgency Strategy" *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, Vol. 28, No. 6, (2017): 961.

<sup>47</sup> Timur Dadabaev, "Securing Central Asia's Frontiers: Institutionalisation of Borders and Inter-state Relations," *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 36, No. 4, (2012): 563.

<sup>48</sup> Timur Dadabaev "Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan" in *Border Disputes: A Global Encyclopedia Vol. 1, Territorial Disputes*, ed. Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, (Santa Barbara CA.: ABC-CILO, 2015), 313.

<sup>49</sup> "Tensions Rise on the Kazakh-Uzbek Border," Radio Free Europe, January 16, 2000.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

border guards killed him as he attempted to re-cross the border after visiting relatives. This incident caused outrage in Astana.<sup>51</sup> But just a month later on January 25, 2000, Uzbek border guards drove five kilometers into Kazakhstan territory and began unilaterally demarcating a sixty kilometer tract of land, by driving stakes into the ground.<sup>52</sup> Astana responded to Tashkent's unilateral demarcation attempt with a swift denunciation and a call to demarcate the border between the two states as soon as possible.<sup>53</sup> Sideline meetings were held on the same day during the 25<sup>th</sup> Council of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) heads of state meeting at the Kremlin to resolve the situation.<sup>54</sup> Both states agreed to start the delimitation process based on the 1991 Alma-Altay Declaration. Demarcation started in February 2000.<sup>55</sup> On November 16, 2001 the two countries signed a demarcation agreement.<sup>56</sup> This would start a long and disjointed process in which it was announced several times over the years that delimitation of the Uzbek-Kazakh border was complete. But, in reality the border has never been completely demarcated.<sup>57</sup>

This delimitation process, which was long and disjointed, was met with disconcertion by residents of two border villages. The village of Bagys along with the village of Turkestanets host majority Kazakh populations but were claimed by Uzbekistan. The initial impetus was the closing of Kazakh language schools in favor of Uzbek language schools.<sup>58</sup> Residents of the villages petitioned the Kazakh government for help as early as October 2001 that they didn't want their villages to be absorbed completely by Uzbekistan.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Marat Yermukanov, "Border Incidents Sour Kazakh-Uzbek Relations," CACI Analyst, June 16, 2004, accessed October 4, 2017 at: <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/field-reports/item/9094-field-reports-caci-analyst-2004-6-16-art-9094.html>.

<sup>52</sup> "Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister Discloses Details of Border Dispute with Uzbekistan," Radio Free Europe, January 31, 2000.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> It should be noted that this sideline meeting did not involve the heads of state of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, rather it was conducted by ministerial officials. Ibid, and Gregory Gleason, "Inter-state Cooperation in Central Asia from the CIS to the Shanghai Forum," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 7, (2001): 1090.

<sup>55</sup> *The Alma-Ata Declaration*, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, December 21, 1991, *United Nations Treaty Series*.

<sup>56</sup> Rongxing Guo, *The Land and Maritime Boundary Disputes of Asia*, (Nova: New York, 2009), 74.

<sup>57</sup> Demarcation was declared politically closed at the end of 2017, but the three delimitation groups were still working. Interview with Colonel Ratkis, BOMCA, December 7, 2017.

<sup>58</sup> Rongxing Guo, *Territorial Disputes and Resource Management: A Global Handbook*, (New York: Nova Science, 2007), 60.

<sup>59</sup> Khabar Television, Astana, Kazakhstan, October 6, 2001.

The appeals were initially ignored so the villages took matters into their own hands. On January 4, 2002 the villages declared themselves independent in a bid to forestall an Uzbek takeover.<sup>60</sup> This precipitated an immediate crisis between Uzbekistan, which demanded the villages and their territory become a part of Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan, which sought to protect the ethnic Kazakhs. The problem was that the territory had shifted back and forth between the two republics while they were a part of the Soviet Union. Uzbekistan had a map from 1963 showing the village belonged to it, while Kazakhstan and the villagers relied on a 1941 map showing the village to be a part of Kazakhstan.<sup>61</sup>

Talks between the two states were held to resolve the situation with some Kazakh villagers of Bagys going so far as to go on a hunger strike to prevent permanent transfer to Uzbekistan.<sup>62</sup> By September 2002 the two sides had agreed that Bagys would not be transferred to Uzbekistan but would remain in Kazakhstan, while Turkestanets would be transferred to Uzbekistan with the condition that ethnic Kazakhs living in Turkestanets allowed to return to Kazakhstan if they chose to.<sup>63</sup>

This still did not resolve the border issue. By September 2003 there had been at least five instances of Kazakh citizens attempting to cross the border, being shot by Uzbek border guards.<sup>64</sup> There were other incidents in the following years. In 2006 Kazakhstan accused Uzbekistan of moving the border fences further into Kazakh territory in the Saryagash District.<sup>65</sup> The amount of territory in dispute between the two states was small, only four hectares, but the dispute persisted for several years since the border in Saryagash was not delimited.<sup>66</sup>

By 2012 Kazakhstan was intent on building its own border fortifications along the Uzbek and Turkmen borders, ostensibly to control or stop the flow of illegal drugs and

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<sup>60</sup> "Residents of Kazakh-Uzbek disputed border village want Kazakh citizenship," *Karavan* January 11, 2000, "Two villages on Kazakh-Uzbek border declare sovereignty," Interfax, January 4, 2002.

<sup>61</sup> Daur Dosybiev, "Village Defies Uzbek Government," Reporting Central Asia No. 51, Institute for War and Peace

<sup>62</sup> "Village residents set to go on hunger strike if ceded to Uzbekistan," *Vremya*, September 9, 2002.

<sup>63</sup> "Residents in Uzbek border village start moving to Kazakhstan," *Interfax-Kazakhstan*, November 8, 2002.

<sup>64</sup> Kazakh TV1, Astana, Kazakhstan, September 8, 2003.

<sup>65</sup> "Uzbekistan breaking border deal - Kazakh TV," BBC World Monitoring, September 17, 2006.

<sup>66</sup> "Kazakh official calls for order at border with Uzbekistan," BBC World Monitoring, June 5, 2006.

migrants,<sup>67</sup> but also to force the issue of demarcation onto Uzbekistan. In November 2009 Kazakhstan accused Uzbekistan of closing its border.<sup>68</sup> Uzbekistan denied this, stating only that it was a temporary quarantine against the H1N1 flu.<sup>69</sup> The border was eventually reopened. This happened previously in 2003 when Uzbekistan closed its border with Kazakhstan, ostensibly over food contamination fears, but may have been due to a huge outflow of hard currency to Kazakhstan after new customs rules were put in place.<sup>70</sup> In 2012 the Kazakh government accused Tashkent of violating its airspace with a drone,<sup>71</sup> another claim Uzbekistan denied.<sup>72</sup> In June 2015 a local Kazakh fisherman traveling near the border with a friend by boat on the Syr Darya river was shot and killed by an Uzbek border guard.<sup>73</sup> This section gave a brief analysis of the border and territorial disputes that arose between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan since their independence, one of the main driving factors of their rivalry. The next section will examine the personal relationship between Islam Karimov and Nursultan Nazarbayev, and how it influenced their respective countries' rivalry.

### **Leader Relations**

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan were each ruled by a single leader from independence until Karimov's death in September 2016. The presidential republics were established after independence and follow the trend of most of the former Soviet republics - eleven in total became presidential republics. The only exceptions were the three Baltic states who later joined NATO and the EU, and Moldova.<sup>74</sup> Nursultan Nazarbayev and Islam Karimov were both communist party apparatchiks who rose through the ranks of their respective Socialist Republic

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<sup>67</sup> Joshua Kucera, "Kazakhstan Fortifying Its Border With Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan," Eurasianet, May 1, 2012, accessed October 5, 2017 at: <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65339>.

<sup>68</sup> "Uzbekistan Unilaterally Closes Border with Kazakhstan," *IHS Global Insight*, November 24, 2009.

<sup>69</sup> "Uzbekistan denies closing Kazakh border but says flu quarantine necessary," *Russia & CIS Military Weekly*, November 27, 2009.

<sup>70</sup> "Uzbekistan closes border with Kazakhstan," Associated Press International, January 6, 2003.

<sup>71</sup> "Uzbek drone violates Kazakh air space - Foreign Ministry," *Interfax-Kazakhstan*, February 21, 2012.

<sup>72</sup> "Uzbekistan refutes violation of Kazakhstan's air space its drone aircraft," *ITAR-TASS*, February 23, 2012.

<sup>73</sup> "Kazakhstan to send protest note to Uzbekistan as Kazakh fisherman gets killed by Uzbek border guards: Foreign Ministry," *Central Asian News Service*, July 1, 2015.

<sup>74</sup> J. Bondel, "Presidentialism in the Ex-Soviet Union," *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 13, No. 1, (2012): 1.

Communist parties. Active since 1977 in industrial management for the Kazakhstan Communist Party, Nazarbayev was appointed party head in 1989.<sup>75</sup> He quickly consolidated his power base as Moscow's grip on its republics loosened. He was elected President of the Socialist Republic of Kazakhstan in April 1990.<sup>76</sup> Kazakhstan declared its own independence in December 1991, and Nazarbayev was elected as its first president.

Karimov's path to power followed a similar trajectory. He was appointed party boss during the ethnic riots in the late 1980s, and appointed President of the Uzbek Socialist Republic on March 24, 1990.<sup>77</sup> After the failed August 1991 coup against Gorbachev, Uzbekistan declared its independence from the Soviet Union.<sup>78</sup> Karimov consolidated his power, and brutally repressed any opposition following the Soviet model he was trained in.<sup>79</sup> Karimov was a shrewd leader in his own right, and picked his battles with Nazarbayev carefully.

Since independence, Uzbekistan's foreign policy goals have been to preserve the regime from internal threats and instability.<sup>80</sup> In this regard, Karimov has been more conservative than Nazarbayev, yet like Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan has pursued a multi-vector foreign policy, which seeks to balance Western interests in the region against Russian influence.<sup>81</sup>

As an example of this multi-vectorism, Uzbekistan was a founding member of the CIS Collective Security Treaty, but left the alliance in 1999 only to rejoin in 2006 and depart yet again in 2012.<sup>82</sup> Karimov desired regime survivability above all else and was concerned about too much perceived Russian or Western influence on his country, thus he darted in and out of the CSTO.<sup>83</sup> He did the same thing with the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development - GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova) - joining the regional

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<sup>75</sup> Gregory Gleason, *Markets and Politics in Central Asia*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 52.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, 53.

<sup>77</sup> Neil J. Melvin, *Uzbekistan, Transition to Authoritarianism Along the Silk Road*, (London: Routledge, 2000), 25.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, 26.

<sup>79</sup> Steve Levine, "Uzbekistan's president tightens his grip on the opposition; the former Soviet republic retains the closed atmosphere of the old USSR," *Financial Times*, January 26, 1993.

<sup>80</sup> Dina Rome Spechler, Martin C. Spechler, "The Foreign Policy of Uzbekistan: Sources, Objectives, and Outcomes: 1991-2009," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 29, No. 2, (2010): 159.

<sup>81</sup> Sergey Minasyan, "Multi-Vectorism in the Foreign Policy of Post-Soviet Eurasian States," *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 20, No. 3, (2012): 271-272.

<sup>82</sup> Marcel de Haas, "Relations of Central Asia with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1, (2017): 9-10.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*.

organization in 1999 and leaving it in 2005.<sup>84</sup> Uzbekistan has remained a member of the SCO however, due partly to the fact that China is also a member.<sup>85</sup>

Uzbekistan was also a founding member of the Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO), which came about as a result of an agreement to create an economic zone between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The agreement was signed at Nukus, Uzbekistan in January 1994.<sup>86</sup> Later Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan joined the union, and it became known as the CACO in 2002. In 2004 Russia joined the organization, and in 2005 it was decided to merge the CACO with the Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC).<sup>87</sup> Uzbekistan left the CACO/EAEC in 2008.<sup>88</sup> Finally, in 2007 President Nazarbayev proposed a formal integration of the Central Asian Union-an informal forum for the leaders of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan-a proposal that was rejected by Karimov.<sup>89</sup>

Before independence Tashkent was considered the cultural and political center of Central Asia, and Karimov assumed this would continue given Uzbekistan's large population and proximity to Afghanistan.<sup>90</sup> And for a short time after independence he was correct.<sup>91</sup> Kazakhstan though had, upon independence, found itself in possession of large natural gas fields and oil reserves.<sup>92</sup> These hydrocarbons coupled with trade deals with China and other states helped Nazarbayev grow Kazakhstan's economy to the point that its GDP doubled Uzbekistan's.<sup>93</sup> Karimov blamed Kazakhstan's oil wealth for Nazarbayev eclipsing him in

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<sup>84</sup> Hooman Peimani, *Conflict and Security in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 328-329.

<sup>85</sup> Emillian Kavalski, "Shanghaied into Cooperation: Framing China's Socialization of Central Asia," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 2, (2010): 138.

<sup>86</sup> Mirzohid Rahimov, "From Soviet Republics to Independent Countries: Challenges of Transition in Central Asia," *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology*, Vol. 6, (2007): 310.

<sup>87</sup> "Uzbekistan's Ascension to Benefit the Eurasian Body-Kazakh Paper," BBC Monitoring, February 2, 2006

<sup>88</sup> Natalia Leshchenko "Uzbekistan Signals Withdrawal from Eurasian Economic Cooperation Organisation," HIS Global Insight, November 12, 2008.

<sup>89</sup> Meri Bekeshova, "Central Asia: Former Soviet Countries Consider Regional Union," Inter Press Service, May 24, 2007.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with Bruce Pannier, Radio Free Europe journalist, July 20, 2017.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Richard Pomfret, "Kazakhstan's Economy since Independence: Does the Oil Boom offer a Second Chance for Sustainable Development?" *Europe-Asia Studies* Vol. 56, No. 6, (2005): 859-860.

<sup>93</sup> Elliot Wilson, "Kazakhstan: Astana's Love-In With Beijing," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 1, 2007.

power and prestige within the region, but in reality Nazarbayev was a more skilled and charismatic politician than Karimov, with a better vision for his respective country.<sup>94</sup>

This is borne out soon after independence when two events helped propel Kazakhstan over Uzbekistan and cement Nazarbayev's reputation as a statesman. The first event was the dispute over the Nagorno-Karabakh region between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Nagorno-Karabakh is heavily populated by ethnic Armenians but claimed, and in fact was given to the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic by Stalin in 1921.<sup>95</sup> As the Soviet Union began to crack and fall apart in the late 1980s Armenian nationalists pressed Moscow on the region's status. There was pushback from the Azerbaijanis and in 1989 Azerbaijan imposed a railroad blockade on Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, effectively breaking with Moscow.<sup>96</sup>

In August 1990 Armenia declared independence and a year later so did Azerbaijan.<sup>97</sup> The two sides fought a full-scale war over Nagorno-Karabakh. Even before independence Nazarbayev acted on the crisis. Azerbaijanis are Turkic and Muslim, and seeing a common bond, and an opportunity to assert a leadership role in the wider Turkic nation, the Kazakh president accepted a delegation from Soviet Azerbaijan in 1990.<sup>98</sup> In October 1991 Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan signed a ten-year agreement mutually recognizing each other's sovereignty, including Azerbaijan suzerainty over Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>99</sup>

In addition to formally recognizing Azerbaijan's claim to Nagorno-Karabakh, Nazarbayev moved to develop a personal relationship with Azerbaijan's then-President Mutalibov, out-maneuvering Karimov in the process.<sup>100</sup> Nazarbayev was at the forefront of peace talks between the two sides, when both he and Russian President Boris Yeltsin helped broker a

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<sup>94</sup> Rico Issacs, 446-447.

<sup>95</sup> *Europe's Next Avoidable War, Nagorno-Karabakh*, Michael Kambeck, Sargis Ghazaryan, eds. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 24.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, 25.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>98</sup> Rusif Huseynov, "Azerbaijan-Kazakhstan relations: current situation and prospects," *Przegląd Politologiczny*, Vol. 3, (2017): 140.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>100</sup> Graham Fuller, "Central Asia: The New Geopolitics," (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1992), 61-62.

ceasefire in 1991.<sup>101</sup> The ceasefire was short-lived<sup>102</sup> and Mutalibov was eventually deposed.<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless, Nazarbayev had demonstrated the willingness to take risks, and showed assertive leadership within the pan-Turkic community of nations-states, while sidelining Karimov.

The other scenario Nazarbayev found himself upon independence, is that Kazakhstan, along with Belarus and Ukraine, was in possession of part of the Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal.<sup>104</sup> Kazakhstan, like Belarus and Ukraine eventually agreed to return the nuclear arsenal to Russia. However, during the negotiations leading up to disarmament Nazarbayev was intentionally oblique and ambiguous regarding Kazakhstan's disarmament intentions.<sup>105</sup> The Kazakh president did not want to give up something for nothing, and eventually received security guarantees from Russia (CIS Treaty), China (border negotiations), and the U.S. (security commitment to non-nuclear states faced with nuclear attack).<sup>106</sup> The decision did not come easy for Nazarbayev and indeed Kazakhstan was the last of the three former Soviet states to pledge to remove their nuclear weapons.<sup>107</sup>

Aside from security concerns and knowing he was under intense pressure from the established nuclear powers to disarm, Nazarbayev sought to link Kazakhstan's own disarmament with the push for global disarmament of nuclear weapons.<sup>108</sup> This culminated in Kazakhstan sponsoring a UN General Assembly resolution declaring August 29 to be the International Day against Nuclear Tests.<sup>109</sup> The resolution went into effect in 2010, and commemorates the anniversary of the first Soviet nuclear test in Kazakhstan.<sup>110</sup> The Kazakh government played up

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<sup>101</sup> Fred Hiatt, "Armenia, Azerbaijan Agree to Cease-Fire; Yeltsin, Kazakhstan President Broker Initial Accord Over Disputed Nagorno-Karabakh," *Washington Post*, September 25, 1991.

<sup>102</sup> Ohannes Geukjian, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in the South Caucasus: Nagorno-Karabakh and the Legacy of Soviet Nationalities Policy* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), 186.

<sup>103</sup> "3 Peace Missions Aim to Quell Caucasus War," *New York Times*, March 10, 1992.

<sup>104</sup> There was a total of 1,410 strategic nuclear weapons and an unknown number of tactical nuclear weapons on Kazakh territory. Joseph Cirincione, Jon B. Wolfsthal, Miriam Rajkumar, *Deadly Arsenals: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Threats*, (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), 365.

<sup>105</sup> Anuar Ayazbekov, "Kazakhstan's Nuclear Decision Making, 1991-92," *The Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 21, No. 2, (2014): 151-152.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, 152.

<sup>107</sup> "Kazakhstan, the Nuclear Holdout," *New York Times*, May 18, 1992.

<sup>108</sup> Nursultan Nazarbayev, "Envisioning a World Without Nuclear Weapons," *The Hill*, April 13, 2010.

<sup>109</sup> United Nations website, "Against Nuclear Test Day," accessed June 11, 2018

at: <https://www.un.org/en/events/againstnucleartestsday/>.

<sup>110</sup> Megan Iacobini De Fazio, "Kazakhstan: Leading Battle to Ban Nuclear Testing," *Inter Press Service*, August 27,

the fact that it had voluntarily given up its nuclear arsenal, while downplaying the security guarantees and pressure received from the declared nuclear powers.<sup>111</sup>

In both of these events, Uzbekistan was mostly a nonfactor, and Karimov had to watch while his Kazakh counterpart showed off his diplomatic skill. In fairness to the Uzbek leader there was not much he could do about the nuclear disarmament issue. Nazarbayev found himself in a unique situation, and while he did give up nuclear weapons for minimal, and dubious, security guarantees, he exploited the situation, and turned Kazakhstan into a champion of nuclear disarmament. But Karimov was outmaneuvered during the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis and it seems he never forgot it.

According to one observer Karimov was “hostile to and jealous of the President of Kazakhstan.”<sup>112</sup> An example of this acrimony is that Uzbekistan was one of the only states not to move its embassy to Astana when Nazarbayev made it Kazakhstan’s capital, replacing Almaty (Alma-Ata).<sup>113</sup> The refusal to move the Uzbek embassy to Astana was not done merely out of spite. Astana is a more northerly city than Almaty, closer to Russia, in a region that has had a large ethnic Russian population. Aqmola Oblast, the oblast where Astana is located, saw its Kazakh population increase from 22 percent of the total population close to independence to 47 percent in 2003. Astana was made the capital in 1997.<sup>114</sup> In addition to repopulating the Russian north with ethnic Kazakhs, Nazarbayev wanted to demonstrate his independence and strength as a leader by moving his capital.<sup>115</sup> The significance of the capital move was not lost on Karimov, and until his death he refused to move Uzbekistan’s embassy to the planned city.

Moving his capital was far from Nazarbayev’s only achievement. In 1992, shortly after independence Nazarbayev proposed the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building

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<sup>111</sup> “Kazakhstan Urges all UN Members to Endorse Treaty Banning Nuclear Tests,” *Uzbekistan Daily*, September 26, 2010.

<sup>112</sup> Jonathan Aitken, *Kazakhstan: Surprises and Stereotypes After 20 Years of Independence*, (London: Continuum Publishing, 2012) 150.

<sup>113</sup> Interview with anonymous NATO source, November 1, 2017.

<sup>114</sup> Shonin Anacker, “Geographies of Power in Nazarbayev’s Astana,” *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, Vol. 45, No. 7, (2004): 524.

<sup>115</sup> Marth Brill Olcott, *Kazakhstan Unfilled Promise?* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010), 101.

Measures in Asia (CICA). The organization is meant as a forum for enhancing cooperation on peace and security issues in Asia.<sup>116</sup> The Almaty Act was signed in 2002, formalizing the organization during its first summit.<sup>117</sup> Karimov was absent from this summit held in Almaty, sending his prime minister instead.<sup>118</sup> He did attend the second summit in 2006, but did not send a delegation to the third summit in 2010, the only member state not to do so.<sup>119</sup> In addition, Uzbekistan does not keep a permanent mission to the CICA Secretariat.<sup>120</sup>

In another bid for prestige, Kazakhstan, in 2003, lobbied to become the next chairman of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), a move that was finally granted in 2010.<sup>121</sup> Uzbekistan supported Kazakhstan's ascension to the Chairman-in-Office (CIO), along with all the other Central Asian states.<sup>122</sup> This goodwill did not extend to Kazakhstan's bid to host the 2010 OSCE summit, the first summit in eleven years for the organization.<sup>123</sup> Instead Uzbekistan was the only OSCE member state to oppose Astana's hosting of the summit.<sup>124</sup>

Thus, Karimov and Nazarbayev had a contentious relationship. One that defined them as rivals. Leader relations are an important dynamic in the development of interstate rivalries, particularly in autocratic states where leadership turns over power infrequently, if at all.<sup>125</sup> In authoritarian regimes, a singular leader, usually the president, has ultimate control over policy. This was especially true with regards to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.<sup>126</sup> The next section will

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<sup>116</sup> Declaration on the Principles Guiding Relations Between the CICA Member-States, accessed January 17, 2018 at: [http://www.cica-china.org/eng/zyhyhwj\\_1/zywj/jcxwj/t1149356.htm](http://www.cica-china.org/eng/zyhyhwj_1/zywj/jcxwj/t1149356.htm).

<sup>117</sup> Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia, accessed on January 17, 2018 at:

[http://www.akorda.kz/en/national\\_projects/conference-on-interaction-and-confidence-building-measures-in-asia](http://www.akorda.kz/en/national_projects/conference-on-interaction-and-confidence-building-measures-in-asia).

<sup>118</sup> Statement by H.E. Mr. Utkir Sultanov, Prime-Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan, accessed January 17, 2018 at: [http://www.s-cica.org/page.php?page\\_id=235&lang=1](http://www.s-cica.org/page.php?page_id=235&lang=1).

<sup>119</sup> "Third CICA Conference Begins in Istanbul," ANSAmed, June 8, 2010.

<sup>120</sup> Only a handful of CICA members keep a mission to the Secretariat-India, China, Russia among them. This is probably due to budget constraints, so Uzbekistan is not an exception. Then again Uzbekistan is the closest CICA member to Almaty.

<sup>121</sup> Eric Marotte, "Kazakhstan's OSCE Chairmanship: A Halfway State of Affairs," *Security & Human Rights*, Vol. 21, No. 3., (2010): 182.

<sup>122</sup> Matthias Van Lohuizen, "Kazakhstan as the Chairman-in-Office 2010: Success or Failure for the Organization," *Security & Human Rights*, Vol 21, No. 4, (2010): 269.

<sup>123</sup> Walter Kemp, "The Astana Summit: A Triumph of Common Sense," *Security & Human Rights* Vol. 21, No. 4, (2010): 259.

<sup>124</sup> Aitken, 150.

<sup>125</sup> Maoz, Mor, 282.

<sup>126</sup> Ji-Eun Lee, "The Non-Institutional Factors of Foreign Policy Decision-Making in Uzbekistan," *International Area Review*, Vol. 13, No. 2, (2010): 130.

analyze the third and final issue that defined the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan rivalry, contention over water resources.

### **Water Management**

One of the main contentious issues among the Central Asian states after independence from the Soviet Union is natural resource management, specifically water management. Water is vital for human life, and as populations continue to increase and lifespans are extended, the demand for water will only grow. Additionally, the impact climate change has on this renewable but still finite resource could lead to conflict over control of freshwater supplies. Reliable estimates suggest freshwater only accounts for 2.5% of the Earth's total water supply, and only .3 percent of the world's freshwater supply is useable for the world's human and animal populations.<sup>127</sup>

The upper Central Asian steppes are dry and arid with an average annual rainfall of less than 70 millimeters (mm).<sup>128</sup> There are few areas in the world with less annual precipitation. Most are found in desert regions in the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>129</sup> The lack of rainfall is compounded by the increasingly shrinking Aral Sea, which bridges the border between both states.<sup>130</sup>

The Aral Sea disintegration has its roots in the Soviet period when the Uzbek Socialist Republic was a major producer of cotton.<sup>131</sup> Cotton production began under Russian imperial rule, in the nineteenth century, and was expanded and enlarged during the Soviet era.<sup>132</sup> The average annual rainfall in Uzbekistan is 264 mm, but ranges from 97 mm in the steppe area near

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<sup>127</sup> Dhirendra K. Vajpeyi, ed. *Water Resource Conflicts and International Security: A Global Perspective*, (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2012), 10.

<sup>128</sup> Karen Frenken ed., *Irrigation in Central Asia in Figures*, (Rome: Food and Agricultural Organization, 2013), 26

<sup>129</sup> One-third of the world's arid land is located in Central Asia. Xu Ligang, Zhou Hongfei, Du Li, Yao Haijiao, Wang Huaibo, "Precipitation Trends and Variability from 1950 to 2000 in Arid Lands of Central Asia," *Journal of Arid Lands*, Vol. 7, No. 4, (2015): 515.

<sup>130</sup> Interview with Dinara Ziganshina, January 24, 2018.

<sup>131</sup> Uzbekistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Problems of the Aral Sea and water resources in Central Asia", accessed on January 29, 2018 at: <https://mfa.uz/en/press/news/2017/05/11026/>.

<sup>132</sup> Boris Rumer, *Soviet Central Asia: "A Tragic Experiment,"* (Boston: Unwin Hyman Inc., 1989), 62.

the Aral Sea to 425 mm in the mountains.<sup>133</sup> For Kazakhstan it is slightly less with an average rainfall of 250 mm per year - with less than 100 mm per year near the Aral Sea.<sup>134</sup> In such an arid location irrigation was essential to keep up cotton production and the Aral Sea basin was the ideal candidate to draw water from. This practice continued after independence as Uzbekistan still relied on cotton as a cash crop. The Uzbek people were never nomads. They had always been farmers, and had continued in the farming tradition their ancestors had.<sup>135</sup> The Kazakhs, by contrast, were nomads, descended from the Mongol hordes and earlier nomadic tribes, and had little use for farming.

The Aral Sea is in actuality a large freshwater lake which is fed from a number of rivers. The main channel, the Amu Darya, flows from the more mountainous states of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan through Uzbekistan and into the Aral, with an annual discharge of 79 km<sup>3</sup>.<sup>136</sup> However, this river is also the main source for irrigation of Uzbekistan's cotton plants. The water from the Amu Darya has been diverted, and used in an unproductive way, thus denying the Aral of one of its main sources. Ninety percent of Uzbekistan's water usage is for agriculture, most of that for irrigation, with forty-three percent of that water coming from river diversion.<sup>137</sup>

Uzbekistan had the most withdrawals of this water table, in fact its withdrawal versus inflow discrepancy was the widest of any state in Central Asia.<sup>138</sup> The rapidly diminishing Aral Sea precipitated a crisis between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, as the latter did not have significant water flows from downstream sources. This has been compounded by the poor irrigation and farming techniques utilized by the Uzbeks, hampering preservation attempts.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Frenken, 183.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 109.

<sup>135</sup> Interview with anonymous source, March 6, 2017.

<sup>136</sup> Philip Micklin "Water in the Aral Sea Basin of Central Asia: Cause of Conflict or Cooperation?" *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, Vol. 43, No. 7, (2002): 508.

<sup>137</sup> Frenken, 194.

<sup>138</sup> Micklin, 509.

<sup>139</sup> Philip Micklin, "The Aral Sea Crisis: An Assessment in 2006," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* Vol. 47, No. 5, (2006): 548.

Both states recognized the necessity of resolve the Aral Sea crisis and other water resource management issues. Together with Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan, they signed the Almaty agreement on February 18, 1992.<sup>140</sup> The treaty established the Interstate Coordinating Water Management Commission to assist in “regulation, rational use and protection of water resources from interstate sources ...”<sup>141</sup> This was the first of several agreements signed by the Central Asian republics in an attempt to govern transboundary water issues for the Aral Sea basin. There were even some global framework agreements reached. However, the only agreement that Uzbekistan was a party to was the 1997 UN Watercourse Convention - a treaty Uzbekistan only acceded to in 2007.<sup>142</sup>

The treaties were in place, at least at the regional level, and a commission had been established, however disagreements still surfaced between the Central Asian states. This was especially the case by the mid-1990s as Uzbekistan started to develop an independent energy policy in order to avoid paying Russia for its oil and natural gas needs.<sup>143</sup> Tashkent was initially reluctant to implement serious reforms to resolve the Aral Sea crisis.<sup>144</sup>

One consequence of the Aral Sea desiccation is that once submerged land has now connected the mainland with islands in the center of the sea. In particular, Vozrorzhdeniya island, which used to lie in the Aral Sea right on the border between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, is now a peninsula.<sup>145</sup> The island is uninhabitable, due to it being the focal point of early field testing of Soviet biological weapons during the Cold War.<sup>146</sup> Animals were used as test subjects for anthrax, smallpox, and other diseases then slaughtered wholesale. The official records were

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<sup>140</sup> Dinara Ziganshina, *Promoting Transboundary Water Security in the Aral Sea Basin through International Law*, (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 72.

<sup>141</sup> “On Cooperation in the Field of Joint Water Resources Management and Conservation of Interstate Resources,” Article 7, Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan, February 18, 1992.

<sup>142</sup> Ziganshina, 77.

<sup>143</sup> Lelia Zakhirova, “The International Politics of Water Security in Central Asia,” *Europe-Asia Studies* Vol. 65, No. 10, (2013): 2003.

<sup>144</sup> Uzbekistan did implement some reforms such as afforestation projects. Interview with Dinara Ziganshina, January 24, 2018.

<sup>145</sup> Micklin, 554.

<sup>146</sup> Michael R. Edelstein “Death and Rebirth Island: Secrets in the USSR’s Culture of Contamination” in *Disaster by Design: The Aral Sea and its Lessons for Sustainability*, Michael R. Edelstein, Astrid Cerny, Abror Gadaev eds., (Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing, 2012), 40-41.

destroyed during the Cold War, but the use of the island for biological weapons became public knowledge after the break-up of the Soviet Union.<sup>147</sup> The potential that residual bacteria and viruses still exist on the island is high, creating the conditions for an ecological disaster so a thorough clean-up of Vozorzhdeniya is paramount. However, intransigence on the part of Uzbekistan remains.<sup>148</sup>

The mismanagement of the Aral Sea Basin by Uzbekistan has created a crisis - not just that the Aral Sea may soon disappear, but that there is a host of environmental and public health problems associated with it. Since the Aral Sea also crosses Kazakh territory, Kazakhstan is directly affected by Uzbekistan's actions regarding the sea. Additionally, Kazakhstan is the most water-starved of the Central Asian states, making it dependent on upstream countries.<sup>149</sup> With Uzbekistan's mismanagement of its water, over- and improperly irrigating its cotton fields, Kazakhstan's water table looks likely to decrease. So far it has not reached the level where Nazarbayev is willing to go to war with Uzbekistan over water. The next section will examine instances of signaling that occurred in the rivalry that eventually led to confidence-building measures to instill trust and trust reinforcement mechanisms within the SCO.

### **Signaling in the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan Rivalry**

Signaling in the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan rivalry was less consistent and more intermittent than it was in the China-Russia rivalry. This is because of the animosity that existed between Karimov and Nazarbayev. Soon after independence, however, there was an attempt to establish a Central Asian Union (CAU) among Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan.<sup>150</sup> This union held several multilateral summits starting in 1991, before the CAU was formed.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 44.

<sup>148</sup> Interview with anonymous NATO source, November 1, 2017.

<sup>149</sup> Interview with anonymous source, March 6, 2017.

<sup>150</sup> An actionable signal. Karlygash Ezhnova, "Central Asian Leaders Agree on Union," United Press International, July 8, 1994.

<sup>151</sup> Bruce Pannier, "Why This Central Asian Summit Could Be Different," Radio Free Europe, March 14, 2018.

However, the Central Asian Union could not reach consensus on a number of issues and its security portfolio was eventually subsumed by the SCO.<sup>152</sup>

The former members of the Soviet Union, excluding the Baltic countries of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, had formed the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) soon after the breakup of the USSR. The CIS's Council of Heads of States meets biannually in one of the member state's capital - alternating every year.<sup>153</sup> For its part, in its early stages the CIS was dominated by Russia, and is still to this day. The CIS attempted to create its own security architecture by unifying eight of its members' military forces under a single command.<sup>154</sup> Ultimately, this arrangement did not last as there were too many disagreements and too much distrust built up between the CIS states, and as a result they created separate militaries.<sup>155</sup> The CIS did develop its own security architecture, which eventually morphed into the Collective Security Treaty Organization in 2002, but it was essentially useless to resolve disputes. Most conflicts in the CIS originated internally, within member states, as in Tajikistan's civil war, were with other CIS states (Armenia and Azerbaijan clashing over the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave), or conflicts exacerbated by Russian meddling.<sup>156</sup>

The CIS was primarily a Russian-driven vehicle, but consensus was not compulsory-that is to say a member could choose which agreements to be a party to.<sup>157</sup> Therefore, neither the CIS or the CAU provided a forum for Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to receive or send signals on their rivalry, given Karimov's reluctance to use these multilateral forums.<sup>158</sup>

For Karimov and Nazarbayev then the first effort at signaling in their rivalry came in 1997, when the Uzbek leader traveled to Kazakhstan for the first time since independence.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> B.Zh Somzhureka, A.M. Yessengaliyeva, Zh.M. Medeubayeva, B.K. Makangali, "Central Asia and Regional Security," *Communist and Post-Communist States*, Vol. 51, (2018): 165.

<sup>153</sup> Charter of the Commonwealth of Independent States Adopted at Minsk on 22 January 1993, *United Nations Treaty Series*.

<sup>154</sup> Dunbar Lockwood, "Minsk Summit: CIS Military Disputes Continue," *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 22, No. 2, (1992): 22.

<sup>155</sup> Jesse Paul Lehrke, *The Transition to National Armies in the Former Soviet Republics, 1988-2005*, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 134.

<sup>156</sup> Paul Kubicek, "The Commonwealth of Independent States: An Example of Failed Regionalism," *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 35, (2009): 249.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid*, 242.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid*, 243-244.

<sup>159</sup> "Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan Keen to Expand Cooperation," *Xinhua*, June 2, 1997.

This was another actionable signal, and less ambiguous than the attempt to form the CAU, given the animosity that existed between Karimov and Nazarbayev. The impetus for this two-day visit was to improve bilateral trade between the two states, which had fallen in recent years.<sup>160</sup> In addition to trade, Karimov voiced his concern over the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan and called for an arms embargo on that country.<sup>161</sup> While the two leaders did not directly address the border and territorial issues that formed the crux of their rivalry, nor did the two foster a warmer relationship, the fact that the two met was a signal. Karimov was demonstrating his willingness to meet. Also, Karimov's concern over the Taliban may have been directed at Nazarbayev as much as it was to the international community. Greater cooperation on security and border issues is what he sought during this visit.

It is notable that the first state visit occurred two years after the Shanghai Five first began meeting: Kazakhstan, and its neighbors – Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, excluding Uzbekistan. In fact, it occurred just a few months after the second Shanghai Five summit. This timing was likely not coincidental. Karimov feared isolation as the Shanghai Five forum grew in importance. He saw his rival, Nazarbayev, meeting with regional powers China and Russia in an exclusive setting focusing on security issues and wanted to join.

While Karimov desired to chart his own path and remain as independent as he could from Moscow's influence, the inclusion of China in a regional forum was enough to engender his interest in joining.<sup>162</sup> This was due to both economic and security reasons. Economically, being denied access to China's markets was a factor in Karimov's decision. Kazakhstan was rich in natural gas and other hydrocarbons, which China desired, and Karimov worried his rival would obtain lucrative trade agreements.<sup>163</sup> On the security front, Karimov believed he had common interests with China, in fighting Islamic extremists in the form of the IMU.<sup>164</sup> He also didn't want Uzbekistan to be isolated from a fight on terrorism.

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> "Uzbekistan's President Karimov Calls for Weapons Embargo Against Afghanistan," Interfax, June 3, 1997.

<sup>162</sup> "China Welcomes Uzbekistan's Involvement in "Shanghai 5" Process," Xinhua, July 5, 2000.

<sup>163</sup> This became evident just a few months later when China's Premier visited Kazakhstan to talk about developing closer bilateral relations. "Chinese Premier Arrives in Kazakhstan," Xinhua, September 12, 2001.

<sup>164</sup> Vladimir Skosyrev, "Loners Can't Achieve Much in Asia," Vremya Novostei, June 15, 2001.

In 2001, Uzbekistan signaled its willingness to join the Shanghai Five, creating in the process the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.<sup>165</sup> At that meeting, the first Shanghai Five summit that Karimov attended, the participants agreed to take on terrorism as one of the three evils facing their countries, with extremism and separatism being the other two.<sup>166</sup> The formation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization came as Russia and the CIS states were restructuring the Collective Security Treaty, which Kazakhstan was still a member of.<sup>167</sup> Karimov saw Uzbekistan's future in the SCO and did not participate in the restructuring, nor did he join the newly formed Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in 2002.<sup>168</sup> He had made his choice, signaling with his actions clearly to Nazarbayev that he would be involved in the SCO with him. If resolution to the rivalry was to occur, it would likely be through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's platforms.

The Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan rivalry was still active, but the two states had signaled each other at least some willingness to talk. Table 5-3 details the bilateral meetings held between Karimov and Nazarbayev between 1991 and 2016. The next bilateral meeting between Karimov and Nazarbayev, after their initial 1997 meeting, did not take place until five years later, the year after Uzbekistan had joined the Shanghai Five, and the SCO had been created. Only two summits, or state visits, were held in the first fifteen years, then six in the final ten years. This is a remarkable improvement, even if President Karimov was reluctant at first to meet with Nazarbayev. This tradition of summitry between the two states has continued under Karimov's successor. Mirziyoyev met with Nazarbayev four times bilaterally since he became Uzbekistan's president and before Nazarbayev retired in 2019.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> "Russia Suggests that Uzbekistan Join Shanghai Five," RIA Novosti, March 17, 2001.

<sup>166</sup> John Pomfret, "Asian Leaders Target Muslim Extremists," Washington Post, June 16, 2001, and "Presidents of SCO Countries Sign Pact to Battle Three Forces," Xinhua, June 15, 2001.

<sup>167</sup> Vladimir Mukhin, "Collective Security Becomes a Reality," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, May 25, 2001.

<sup>168</sup> Uzbekistan had withdrawn from the CIS Collective Security Treaty in 1999. Yulia Nikitina, "The Collective Security Treaty Organization Through the Looking Glass," *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 59, No. 3, (May-June 2012): 43.

<sup>169</sup> Two visits in one year: Uzbekistan Presidential website, accessed February 7, 2018 at: <http://president.uz/en/lists/view/1028>, and, <http://president.uz/en/lists/view/328>.

**Table 5-3**  
**Bilateral Meetings Between Karimov and Nazarbayev<sup>170</sup>**

Date	Location	Highlight
June 2, 1997	Almaty	First state visit by Karimov
September 9, 2002	Astana	Working visit, Signed border agreement
March 19, 2006	Tashkent	First state visit by Nazarbayev
September 4, 2006	Astana	State visit
November 3, 2006	Tashkent	Working visit
April 22-23, 2008	Astana	State visit
March 16, 2010	Tashkent	State visit
September 7, 2012	Astana	State visit
June 13, 2013	Tashkent	State visit
November 25, 2014	Astana	State visit
April 15, 2016	Tashkent	Working visit

The initial signaling in the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan rivalry came at the insistence of Islam Karimov, who was mostly the source of antagonism in the rivalry. The signaling came after Kazakhstan had joined the Shanghai Five forum and started developing warmer relations with larger regional powers China and Russia. Uzbekistan fearing isolation also joined the forum creating the SCO. This was a clear actionable signal that demonstrated Tashkent's resolve in not being isolated in Central Asia, and that Karimov would have to be engaged at some point. As a result, bilateral summits increased significantly between the two states since 2001. The next section will examine the confidence-building measures within the SCO's structure that helped build trust between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

### **Confidence-Building Measures**

The first confidence-building measures that helped lead to trust being developed between Karimov and Nazarbayev occurred at the annual SCO summits. In 2004, Tashkent was the host for the fourth summit, as Uzbekistan held the rotating presidency of the Shanghai Cooperation

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<sup>170</sup> Culled from Xinhua, Agence France Press, BBC, and Interfax news articles.

Organization that year, giving Karimov the chance to upstage his rival, Nazarbayev. At the summit, the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure was launched.<sup>171</sup> Also, at the summit the Tashkent Declaration was signed, which codified the various agreements coming out of the summit.<sup>172</sup>

One such agreement was one that Karimov had proposed, that the Secretaries of the member states' Security Councils should hold regular meetings.<sup>173</sup> This proposal led to the creation of the forum, which has met annually since 2005 just before the SCO's annual Heads of State summit.<sup>174</sup> The Secretaries of the Security Councils help coordinate the military exercises and streamline communication with the Heads of State. They also coordinate with the SCO's anti-terrorism structure.<sup>175</sup> This type of close coordination with the individual states' military structures helped alleviate distrust and build trust. That Karimov proposed this forum was surprising, given his reluctance to be involved in multilateral endeavors, and the fact that it would involve Kazakhstan. Thus, rather than attempting to preen or upstage Nazarbayev Karimov was remarkably sober during the Tashkent summit.

The next year, the 2005 SCO summit was held in Astana, and here the Shanghai Cooperation Organization deepened its security cooperation, focusing on comprehensive security.<sup>176</sup> This was the first summit after the SCO was granted observer status at the United Nations, marking it as a durable intergovernmental organization.<sup>177</sup> It was at this summit that India, Pakistan, and Iran were granted observer status, and the member states urged the United States to withdraw its troops from Central Asia.<sup>178</sup> Some analysts saw this as Russian and Chinese led efforts to push back against perceived U.S. unilateralism.<sup>179</sup> While true that China and Russia desired American withdrawal, they were pragmatic about the U.S.'s response to their

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<sup>171</sup> "SCO Summit Begins with the Opening of Headquarters of Anti-terror Structure," RIA Novosti, June 17, 2004

<sup>172</sup> "China, Russia, Central Asian states sign "Tashkent Declaration" Xinhua, June 18, 2004.

<sup>173</sup> Tashkent Declaration, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, June 17, 2004.

<sup>174</sup> "SCO Secretary-General Vladimir Norov Attends Meeting of SCO Security Council Secretaries," States News Service, May 15, 2019.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Pan Guang, "The Astana Summit. A New Stage in the Development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *Asia Europe Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 4, (2005): 502.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid, 505.

<sup>178</sup> Ben Wetherall, "Regional Security Organisation Flexes Muscles, Calls for US Military Withdrawal Timetable," IHS Global Insights, July 6, 2005.

<sup>179</sup> Tarique Niazi, "Pushback to Unilateralism: the China-India- Russia Alliance," *Foreign Policy in Focus*, January 3, 2008, and Kirill Nourzhanov, "Too Much Mistrust for Bloc to Succeed," *Canberra Times*, July 11, 2005.

demand for a troop withdrawal. The real target of this declaration was the Central Asian members themselves, and the message was clear: the SCO should be the security guarantor for the region, not the United States.<sup>180</sup> Karimov responded a few weeks later by asking the U.S. military to vacate its forces from the Karshi-Khanabad Air Base in Uzbekistan.<sup>181</sup> Uzbekistan had made a commitment to rely on the SCO for security issues.

Trust was beginning to build among the SCO states, and this spilled over into the bilateral relationship between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. In 2006, the year following the Astana summit, the two leaders exchanged state visits at their capitals. In March, Nazarbayev visited Tashkent for the first time for a bilateral meeting with Karimov.<sup>182</sup> In September, Karimov visited Astana.<sup>183</sup> This was a remarkable improvement from just a few years ago when they were barely on speaking terms. Even still, the summits got off to a rocky start, as the two leaders moved awkwardly around each other. For instance, Karimov did not greet his counterpart at the airport when he arrived for the 2006 summit, instead he sent then-Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev.<sup>184</sup> However, during the summit, Karimov denied being in a competition with Nazarbayev.<sup>185</sup>

This small slight did not preclude the two countries' cooperation in the SCO, however. Just before the March summit, Uzbekistan hosted a Shanghai Cooperation organization military exercise for the first time, an anti-terrorism drill from March 5-9, 2006.<sup>186</sup> It also marked the first time Uzbekistan participated in a multilateral military exercise of any kind since independence.<sup>187</sup> The exercise featured all the member states of the SCO, including Kazakhstan.

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<sup>180</sup> Martin Sieff, "Central Asians kick U.S. out, turn to SCO," United Press International, July 12, 2005.

<sup>181</sup> Eric Schmitt, "No Harm Seen in Loss of Base in Uzbekistan," New York Times, August 1, 2005.

<sup>182</sup> "Presidents of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan Signed a Number of Agreements to Expand Bilateral Cooperation," Interfax, March 20, 2006.

<sup>183</sup> "Uzbekistan Ready to Remove Barriers in Relations with Kazakhstan – Leader," Interfax, September 4, 2006.

<sup>184</sup> Farkhad Sharip, "Nazarbayev Labors to Mend Fences with Tashkent," Eurasia Daily Monitor, Vol. 7 No. 61, (March 30, 2010).

<sup>185</sup> "Uzbek Head Denies Vying for Regional Leadership with Kazakhstan," ITAR-TASS, March 20, 2006.

<sup>186</sup> Roger McDermott, "Uzbekistan Hosts SCO Anti-terrorist Drill," Eurasia Daily Monitor, Vol. 3, No. 50, Jamestown Foundation, March 14, 2006.

<sup>187</sup> In 2005 Russia and Uzbekistan participated in a bilateral military exercise, soon after Uzbekistan had evicted the U.S. military and also after the 2005 Andijan massacre. They did not have another bilateral military exercise until 2017. Joshua Kucera, "Uzbekistan and Russia to Restart Joint Military Exercises," Eurasianet, July 4, 2017 Accessed November 13, 2019 at: <https://eurasianet.org/uzbekistan-and-russia-to-restart-joint-military-exercises>.

For the Uzbek and Kazakh militaries to cooperate so closely in an antiterrorism drill, albeit in a multilateral setting, meant that tensions between the two countries were easing.

The 2006 SCO drill was followed up by another antiterrorism drill in May 2007 in Kyrgyzstan, the Issyk Kul Antiterror exercise.<sup>188</sup> This drill occurred a few weeks before the 2007 annual SCO summit, and featured all the SCO members' antiterrorism units, such as special forces and police units. Later in the summer Uzbekistan attended the Peace Mission 2007 drills on the Russian-Chinese border. The Uzbek military contributed a small number of officers, at least 15, and an unspecified number of troops.<sup>189</sup> Peace Mission 2007, like its predecessor Peace Mission 2005, was a major confidence builder. It was the first time all the SCO 's members' militaries were integrated in an exercise. As one observer put it, the exercises showed that "relations between SCO members have achieved a high level of trust."<sup>190</sup> While there may be some hyperbole surrounding statements like these, this sentiment was not too far from the truth. Trust had begun to develop among the SCO members, even between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

There were more annual military exercises, but the next one that Uzbekistan participated in was in 2012, a small anti-terrorism exercise it hosted, and in coordination with RATS.<sup>191</sup> Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were the only other participants. This was the third exercise that Uzbekistan participated in alongside Kazakhstan, a large step in their relationship considering the issues that still separated them. Karimov was still reluctant to involve his military too closely with other states. Tashkent had followed a path of defensive self-reliance since independence, and it was difficult for Uzbekistan's leader to suddenly change course.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> "SCO Conducts Counter-terrorism Exercises in Kyrgyzstan," RIA Novosti, May 30, 2007. Central Asian Series, Vol. 7, No. 28, Advanced Research and Assessment Group, September 2007.

<sup>189</sup> Marcel de Haas, "The Peace Mission 2007 Exercises: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization Advances,"

<sup>190</sup> "Peace Mission-2007 Exercises Proves New Level of SCO Cooperation - Russian Expert," Interfax, August 17, 2007.

<sup>191</sup> Roger McDermott "Uzbekistan Prepares for the NATO Drawdown," Eurasia Daily Monitor, Vol. 9, No. 136, Jamestown Foundation, July 18, 2012.

<sup>192</sup> Bernardo Teles Fazendeiro, "Uzbekistan's Defensive Self-Reliance: Karimov's Foreign Policy Legacy," *International Affairs*, Vol. 93, No. 2, (2017): 412.

Later in the summer in 2012, Uzbekistan declined to participate in the annual Peace Mission exercise, even going so far as to not allow Kazakh troops and equipment to use its territory to transition to Tajikistan where the exercises were being held.<sup>193</sup> This was a small setback in Kazakh-Uzbek relations, but the nonparticipation was in line with Karimov's commitment to self-reliance and multi-vectorism.<sup>194</sup> Trust was building, albeit very incrementally. The SCO was the only multilateral forum that Uzbekistan consistently attended, and what is remarkable is not the small slights toward Kazakhstan, or the absences from the military exercises, but the fact that Uzbekistan participated at all. This participation eventually laid the groundwork for future bilateral cooperation with Kazakhstan.<sup>195</sup>

Despite not allowing Uzbekistan's military to participate in most of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's annual exercises, Karimov still attended every SCO summit. His proximity to Nazarbayev may have led him to have a more positive view of his erstwhile rival. 2006 seems to be the turning point in the Kazakh-Uzbek relationship. The frequency of bilateral visits between Karimov and Nazarbayev also increased after 2006. The relationship became more trusting and meetings became second nature to the point where they were held once every few years. There were eight state visits in the 24 years that Karimov was president, and only one in the first fourteen years of his presidency. By comparison, Boris Yeltsin and Jiang Zemin met five times bilaterally between 1992 and 1999. Trust was slowly being built through the mechanism of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Incrementally, this trust building would lead to an easing of rivalry tensions between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The next section will examine how that trust was reinforced primarily through summitry at the SCO, which helped keep the rivalry de-escalated, and prevented it from backsliding.

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<sup>193</sup> Joshua Kucera, "Uzbekistan Blocks Kazakhstan's Military From SCO Exercises," Eurasianet, June 14, 2012, Accessed November 14, 2019 at: <https://eurasianet.org/uzbekistan-blocks-kazakhstans-military-from-sco-exercises>.

<sup>194</sup> Sergey Minasyan, "Multi-vectorism in the Foreign Policy of Post-Soviet Eurasian States," *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 20, No. 3, (2012): 271-272.

<sup>195</sup> "Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to Hold Joint Military Exercises," AKI Press, July 16, 2018.

## Trust Reinforcement

This final section will look at the principle of trust reinforcement as a contributing factor in de-escalating the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan rivalry. The main way in which trust was reinforced, after being built through the SCO's CBMs, was through summitry. Ultimately, trust is harder to build than distrust, as distrust does not require as much knowledge.<sup>196</sup> Distrust can be built from rumor, innuendo, false perceptions, or perceived slights. From the outset of independence, the level of distrust in the Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan relationship was high, but perhaps not extremely so. The relationship between Karimov and Nazarbayev was complex, but it was likely a mixture of calculus-based (i.e. do the benefits outweigh the costs of the relationship) and identity-based, (sharing same values and norms). One advantage the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan rivalry has is that it never actually erupted into outright conflict, which would have made building trust more difficult.<sup>197</sup> The only way to repair a relationship with high levels of distrust is to act consistently and reliably, in other words to reinforce the principle that one party to a relationship can, in fact, be trusted.

Reinforcement of mutual trust began long before the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan rivalry exhibited any shock. Expectations were revised, albeit slowly, through trust building to the point that now even obstacle to Eurasian economic integration are being removed.<sup>198</sup> Karimov's death may indeed have accelerated the de-escalation process but the reinforcement principle that this thesis argues is vital to both de-escalation and to prevent rivalry backsliding was already in place. It is much easier for Mirziyoyev to meet with Nazarbayev since his predecessor had laid the groundwork for such meetings, due to reinforcement. No two rivalries evolve the same way, but the de-escalation process should be seen as much more gradual than the literature assumes.

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<sup>196</sup> Sybille Reinke de Buitrago, "What Role Can Trust Play? Conflicts and Trust building in East Asia," *Asian Politics & Policy*, Vol. 1, No. 4, (Oct-Dec, 2009): 742.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid*, 127.

<sup>198</sup> The rivalry was also considered an impediment to further Eurasian integration. Yulia Vymyatnia, Daria Antonova, *Creating a Eurasian Union, Economic Integration of the Former Soviet Republics*, (New York.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 56.

Shocks, such as they are, are not a necessary condition for rivalry de-escalation and termination, as can be seen in the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan rivalry.

Bilateral meetings between the two increased dramatically after the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's formation.<sup>199</sup> In addition to their bilateral meetings, the two leaders met with each other consistently over the years at every Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit.<sup>200</sup> The SCO provided the perfect forum for Nazarbayev and Karimov to discuss security issues, while allowing neither to lose face in front of the other. The two leaders began to meet informally prior to the 2008 SCO summit, which were hosted in Dushanbe.<sup>201</sup> They also met in Tashkent before the 2010 summit.<sup>202</sup> The Uzbek president was quoted as saying at the 2010 meeting that there was an "element of long-term vision" in cooperating with Kazakhstan within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.<sup>203</sup> This attitude showed a thawing in tensions, that trust was beginning to take hold in the relationship.

Calculus-based trust was being built, albeit slowly, between the two Central Asian states. Tensions on the border eased as well, especially after 2012. In 2012 Karimov and Nazarbayev along with the other members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, signed a declaration on "building a region of lasting peace and common prosperity."<sup>204</sup> In it, the members declared that they would work to resolve and avoid border disputes by, in part, developing a "new security concept featuring mutual trust."<sup>205</sup> This is an example of reinforcement; the institutionalization of mutual trust between two adversaries. This declaration helped lay the foundation for future meetings. There were four meetings between Nazarbayev and Karimov in the intervening four years after the declaration where there had been six meeting in the preceding fifteen years.

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<sup>199</sup> "Tashkent Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *The Diplomatic Insight*, Vol. 9, No. 7, (July 31, 2016): 8-10.

<sup>200</sup> Kuralai I. Baizakova, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization's Role in Countering Threats and Challenges to Central Asian Regional Security," *Russian Politics & Law*, Vol. 51, No. 1, (Jan-Feb 2013): 64.

<sup>201</sup> "Kazakh, Uzbek leaders in Tajik capital discuss bilateral cooperation," Interfax, August 27, 2008.

<sup>202</sup> "Uzbek, Kazakh leaders in talks ahead of Shanghai bloc summit," BBC Monitoring, June 10, 2010.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> "Declaration of the Heads of State of the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on Building a Region of Lasting Peace and Common Prosperity," Sates News Service, June 7, 2012.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

In addition, at the summit, the leaders noted that the SCO provided “an optimal platform for constructive dialogue” on issues related to security.<sup>206</sup> Incrementally, the notion that Nazarbayev and Karimov should trust each other was being reinforced at these SCO forums. The structures were already in place for them to meet consistently and reinforce trust. The two leaders only had one meeting prior to their countries’ ascension to the organization. Attending these summits became common practice for Karimov, despite not engaging in other multilateral regional institutions.<sup>207</sup>

At the 2015 SCO summit in July the “Agreement on Cooperation and Interaction of the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on Border Issues” was adopted.<sup>208</sup> In it, the SCO members set up a framework to streamline cooperation on border issues, including setting up annual meetings with department heads of the SCO members to coordinate implementation of the border agreement.<sup>209</sup> This was a major step toward defusing tensions in Central Asia. Ostensibly, the border agreement was designed to stem the transnational flow of drugs.<sup>210</sup> But, due to the role border disputes played in the rivalry between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, this agreement, which both states acquiesced to, resulted in them cooperating further on delimitation of their borders.<sup>211</sup>

This was a reimplementations of the 2001 delimitation agreement between them, which had been given inconsistent treatment over the years, given the number of border violations that occurred. Nearly all of these border incidents in the Uzbek-Kazakh rivalry were initiated by Uzbekistan, the challenger in this rivalry dyad. But this is not unusual. In territorial disputes, the weaker, or aggrieved, party is often the more aggressive in the dispute, “challenging” the status quo.<sup>212</sup> Kazakhstan, for its part, attempted to remain aloof, but reacted fiercely whenever one of its citizens was detained or killed by Uzbek border guards.

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Burt Herman, “Presidents of Russia, China and four Central Asian nations discuss regional security,” Associated Press International, June 17, 2004.

<sup>208</sup> Muhammad Munir, “Outcome of SCO Summit,” Pakistan Observer, July 22, 2015.

<sup>209</sup> Article 6, “Agreement on Cooperation and Interaction of the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on Border Issues” Ufa, July 10, 2015.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Interview with BOMCA official, December 7, 2017.

<sup>212</sup> Paul Huth, *Standing Your Ground: Territorial Disputes and International Conflict*, 26.

Karimov did eventually acquiesce to the border deal, reluctantly at first perhaps, as he sought to delay demarcation as long as possible.<sup>213</sup> However, through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's mechanisms, the bilateral border agreement was given additional protocols by the SCO that assisted in alleviating tensions. Most importantly, the framework which set up additional meetings between Uzbekistan and its neighbors, Kazakhstan, was one that President Karimov agreed to implement.<sup>214</sup> This showed that trust was being reinforced and gradually Karimov was relenting on the border issue. Without the cover of the SCO's mechanisms, it is debatable if Karimov would have pursued the border agreement with any kind of meaningfulness.

In 2016 the SCO presidency passed again to Uzbekistan for the third time.<sup>215</sup> Three months before that year's annual SCO summit, Karimov and Nazarbayev met bilaterally in Tashkent.<sup>216</sup> Karimov was especially conciliatory toward Nazarbayev during their summit, emphasizing the two states' friendliness toward each other.<sup>217</sup> At that year's SCO summit the members signed the Action Plan for 2016-2020, enhancing cooperation between them.<sup>218</sup>

The Aral Sea desiccation was another issue that both Karimov and Nazarbayev wanted the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to deal with. As the environmental crisis deepened Karimov took greater measures, setting up an executive body for the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS).<sup>219</sup> At the 2013 summit, held in Bishkek, Karimov stated that the SCO should work jointly with the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea.<sup>220</sup> Additionally, Karimov pledged more money to assist in recovering the Aral Sea, allocating over 3 billion dollars.<sup>221</sup> Measures were put in place to alleviate the situation, and some progress has been

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<sup>213</sup> Interview with BOMCA official, December 7, 2017.

<sup>214</sup> Rashid Alimov, "The Role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Counteracting Threats to Peace and Security," United Nations Chronicle, Accessed November 21, 2019 at: <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/role-shanghai-cooperation-organization-counteracting-threats-peace-and-security>.

<sup>215</sup> "Uzbekistan - SCO: Cooperation for Peace and Stability, Development and Prosperity," Sarkaritel, March 18, 2016.

<sup>216</sup> "Nazarbaev, Karimov Discuss Regional Security, Bilateral Ties," Radio Free Europe, April 15, 2016.

<sup>217</sup> "Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan Mull Main Areas of Cooperation," Indonesia Times, April 15, 2016.

<sup>218</sup> "Information Report on the Outcomes of the Meeting of the Council of Heads of Member States of the SCO," Sarkaritel, June 27, 2016.

<sup>219</sup> Aynur Jafarova, "Uzbekistan sets up executive body of international fund on saving Aral Sea," Azer news, August 9, 2013.

<sup>220</sup> "Islam Karimov Participates at SCO Summit in Bishkek," Uzbek Daily, September 14, 2013.

<sup>221</sup> Aynur Jafarova, "Uzbekistan to mitigate Aral Sea environmental catastrophe," Azer News, December 31, 2014.

made in arresting the Aral Sea shrinkage.<sup>222</sup> This showed the Uzbek leader's renewed commitment to saving the Aral Sea. The Kazakh president welcomed the initiatives by Karimov, which were repeated at the 2015 summit.<sup>223</sup> This showed that Karimov was very comfortable maneuvering diplomatically within the SCO's framework. His Kazakh counterpart, Nazarbayev, was perhaps more comfortable in multilateral settings, and thus could be patient and magnanimous toward Karimov as they met bilaterally, and at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. With Uzbekistan's population projected to increase in coming years, and with it, greater demands for energy, and food and cotton production the contention over freshwater resources needed to be resolved.<sup>224</sup> The SCO provided a platform for Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to trust each other enough to work on the Aral Sea desiccation problem, in both multilateral and bilateral settings.

The two leaders also seemed to have improved their personal relationship through exposure to each other at the SCO summits. In addition to the increased number of bilateral visits, Karimov's tone toward Nazarbayev notably softened, albeit sometimes for his own benefit.<sup>225</sup> The embedding of trust between Nazarbayev and Karimov due to their contact at Shanghai Cooperation Organization summits helped facilitate their reconciliation. It was not a sudden change, but the turn in the Nazarbayev-Karimov relationship happened gradually. Given the Uzbekistan president's reluctance to participate in other multilateral regional forums, it is doubtful that this change could have happened without Karimov's participation in the SCO summits. The repetition of the annual events, and Karimov's consistency in attending them (He attended every SCO summit, something that cannot be said for other multilateral forums) led to trust being reinforced between he and Nazarbayev.

After Karimov suffered a stroke in August 2016, just two months after the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's annual summit, the Uzbek leadership was thrown into some turmoil,

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<sup>222</sup> Interview with anonymous Kazakhstan government official, January 24, 2018.

<sup>223</sup> "Uzbekistan urges cooperation in emergency prevention within SCO," *Trend Daily News*, November 13, 2015.

<sup>224</sup> Antonio Gómez, César Dopazo, Norberto Fueyo, "The Future of Energy in Uzbekistan," *Energy*, Vol. 85, (June 2015): 335.

<sup>225</sup> "Uzbek President Courts Kazakh Leader to Improve Relations with Russia," *IntelliNews*, November 27, 2014.

delaying the announcement while the government struggled with finding a successor.<sup>226</sup> Karimov lived, or was kept alive, for a few days more and finally passed away on September 2, 2016.<sup>227</sup> Nazarbayev was magnanimous in his praise of Karimov at the latter's funeral, not mentioning any strife the two had in the past. To their credit, the Kazakh and Uzbek leaders did not push their states to war over their disputes, but their individual security policy encompassed threats to their border as a serious threat to their nation's security.<sup>228</sup> Uzbekistan, with the largest military in Central Asia, could have forced the issue with Kazakhstan over the border dispute. Indeed, it seemed at times that Karimov was playing a game of brinkmanship with his counterpart when he moved Uzbek troops to the border. Despite this acrimony, tensions between the two states never escalated to outright warfare, or even sustained border clashes. In fact, diplomats from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan were always quick to state that there was no tension between the countries.<sup>229</sup>

Karimov's successor, former prime minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev, was appointed president and won a special election in December 2016 with 88 percent of the vote.<sup>230</sup> Almost immediately President Mirziyoyev signaled his desire to be conciliatory toward Uzbekistan's neighbors, and expressing a willingness to cooperate on bilateral issues.<sup>231</sup> Mirziyoyev continued his predecessor's policies of meetings, and border delimitation between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan has been expedited.<sup>232</sup> It is still early in Mirziyoyev's presidency, however the new leadership in Tashkent has already taken a more proactive approach toward the border issue and the Aral Sea desiccation, and some observers are hopeful that the long-standing issues within the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan rivalry can finally be resolved, definitively.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Jack Farchy, "Transition of Power Looms after Uzbek President Suffers Stroke," *Financial Times*, August 30, 2016.

<sup>227</sup> "Uzbek President Islam Karimov Dies-Official Statement," *Russia & CIS Business and Financial Newswire*, September 2, 2016.

<sup>228</sup> Marcel de Haas, "Kazakhstan's Security Policy: Steady as She Goes?" *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 4, (2015): 626.

<sup>229</sup> Interview with anonymous OSCE official, October 17, 2016.

<sup>230</sup> "Shavkat Mirziyoyev Officially Declared Uzbekistan's New President," *ITAR-TASS*, December 9, 2016.

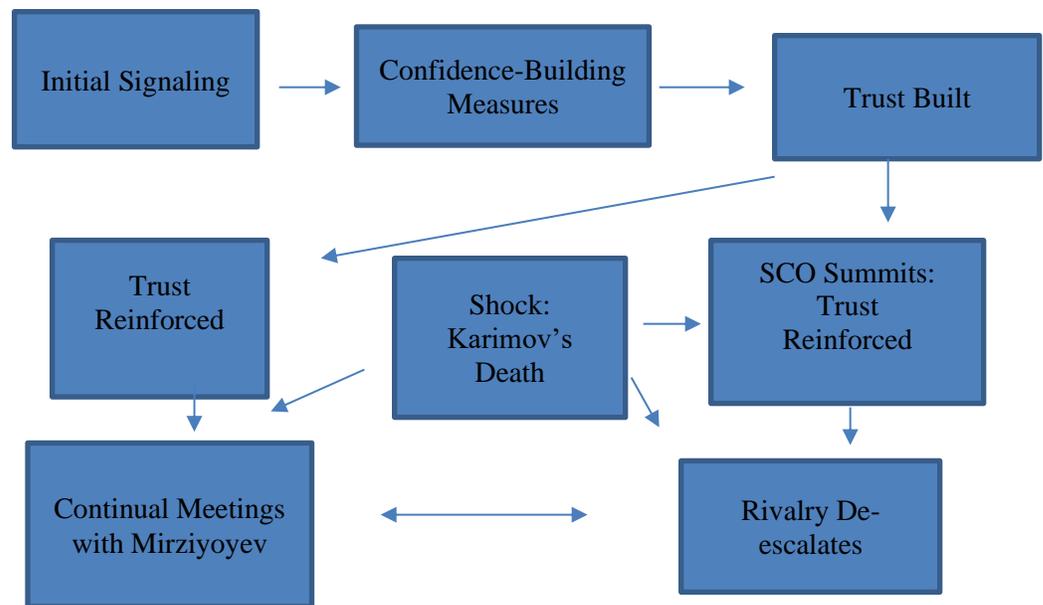
<sup>231</sup> Interview with anonymous OSCE official, July 26, 2017.

<sup>232</sup> "Kazakh parliament approves border agreement with Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan; Kazakhstan borders," *EFE Newswire*, September 12, 2018.

<sup>233</sup> Interview with BOMCA official, December 7, 2017.

The reinforcement of trust through the SCO's mechanism was essential to the de-escalation of the rivalry between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. In addition, to prevent rivalry backsliding, or re-escalation, reinforcement of mutual trust is a necessary condition. It may require constant vigilance to keep rivalries from re-escalating, which is why mechanisms are needed to reinforce trust. The more states cooperate bilaterally on security issues, the less likely they are to contest issues such as territory. The best way to ensure this cooperation is for consistent high-level contacts between states, hence reinforcement. These meetings were integral to the change in perception between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan without a change in regime, a war, or one side admitting defeat. In Figure 5-1 below we can see how the de-escalation model proposed in the conceptual frameworks chapter is applied to the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan rivalry,

**Figure 5-1 Flow Chart of De-escalation of Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan Rivalry**



Other rivalry de-escalation models argue that a shock is usually the impetus for de-escalation or termination within a rivalry dyad.<sup>234</sup> However, in the case of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the supposed shock (Karimov's death and a change of leadership) occurs after the principle of trust reinforcement has already been initiated. That is to say, the confidence-building measures that enabled calculus-based trust to be built up between the two Central Asian states were more instrumental to the rivalry's de-escalation than any shock. In turn, this trust has been reinforced through repeated interactions at the head of state level, becoming ingrained as habit in the interactions between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

The mechanisms for de-escalation were already in place and working prior to Karimov's death. This included the summits and sideline discussions that Karimov and Nazarbayev began, while both their countries were members of the SCO, led to the creation of greater breathing space for the rivals. Karimov's successor, Mirziyoyev, was able to capitalize on the momentum Karimov created. With enough domestic breathing space, and not having to worry about internal pressures, Mirziyoyev was able to forge a closer bond with Nazarbayev and other regional leaders.<sup>235</sup> In March 2018, for the first time in fifteen years, the leaders of the five Central Asian states met in a regional summit, with plans to make it an annual event.<sup>236</sup> This development was facilitated by the breathing space given Karimov and Nazarbayev by virtue of their membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. They could meet and establish some level of calculus-based trust, which could be built on and reinforced, incrementally.

The rivalry, such as it was, that existed between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan never escalated to armed conflict, despite the ingredients for escalation being present. It was through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization that trust was first built and then reinforced. Karimov's reluctance to use other multilateral forums or intergovernmental organizations meant that the

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<sup>234</sup> Rasler, Thompson, Ganguly, 20.

<sup>235</sup> "Central Asia's Regional Thaw," Uzbekistan Newline, December 24, 2018.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

SCO would be the primary vehicle through which multilateral confidence-building measure could be applied and through them trust could be built, and eventually reinforced, becoming habitual practice between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, and in this way their rivalry could be de-escalated.

## **Conclusion**

Using process tracing this chapter has examined the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan rivalry, how it formed and most importantly how it de-escalated. Because there was little literature on how this rivalry developed, it was necessary to first examine the issues that led to the two Central Asian states becoming rivals. The rivalry process is one of the pathways that serves to connect the thesis's argument. If the relationship between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan post-independence could be classified as some other form of interstate interaction instead of a rivalry, then the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's rivalry de-escalation model, and subsequent arguments, would not make sense. Rivalries are very difficult to de-escalate, and are often intractable, thus it was necessary to establish the rivalry between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. There were three contributing factors that exacerbated relations between the two Central Asian countries. These were disputes over the border and territory, relations between the two strongman leaders, and issues over the Aral Sea and its desiccation. Each of these factors are examined in turn.

Once research for the rivalry was presented, the chapter moved to an examination of the second pathway, diplomatic signaling. The initial signaling in the Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan rivalry occurred mostly prior to the formation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. However, subsequent signaling occurred in the Shanghai Forum and later in the SCO itself. Uzbekistan's joining of the Shanghai Five in 2001, and thus creating the SCO, was a major diplomatic signal to its rival Kazakhstan.

The formation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization led to the creation of CBMs that helped facilitate trust between its members. This included the annual summits, involving the heads of state, and the annual military exercises. While Uzbekistan, under Karimov, was a reluctant participant in most of the SCO's multilateral military exercises, he still participated in drills that featured Kazakhstan's military. Uzbekistan's leader was more enthusiastic about the annual summit meetings where he was often face-to-face with his Kazakh counterpart, Nazarbayev.

The trust built by the SCO's CBMs needed to be reinforced, given the intractable issues that led to the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan rivalry. This trust reinforcement was accomplished due to the repetitive nature of the SCO's summits, which Karimov and Nazarbayev attended faithfully. Through them, the personal bond between the two presidents grew and their animosity lessened, to the point that they began holding regular bilateral summit meetings.

This trust reinforcement continued after Karimov's death when his successor Mirziyoyev sought even closer cooperation with Kazakhstan. Mirziyoyev continued Karimov's policy of attending every SCO summit while expanding Uzbekistan's bilateral ties with its northern neighbor. This trust, now becoming ingrained as habit between the two states, has led to a de-escalation of the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan rivalry, as well as preventing the rivalry from backsliding. It is through the continual reinforcement of this trust that the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan rivalry remains in a state of de-escalation. New president Mirziyoyev, while still authoritarian, has encouraged wider Uzbek participation in Shanghai Cooperation Organization multilateral platforms, including military exercises. The next chapter will examine the third rivalry that emerged among the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's original members, a triadic rivalry that involved Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, and how the SCO's influence has shaped its de-escalation.

**Chapter Six**  
**The Complex Rivalry:**  
**Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan**

**Introduction**

This chapter will examine what appears to have emerged between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, as a complex rivalry, also known as a triadic rivalry, and how the SCO assisted in de-escalation of rivalry tensions among them. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are the two smallest states in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, in terms of GDP, land area, and population. Yet, despite their relatively smaller stature in comparison with the other SCO members, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, along with Uzbekistan exhibited hallmarks of an emerging rivalry. The three states have shared disputes over borders and resource allocation, namely water, since independence.

In 1924, during the Soviet Union's national delimitation, one of the actions taken was the creation of the Tajiki Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in December.<sup>1</sup> In 1929, the Tajiki Soviet Socialist Republic was formed. It was carved out of the larger Uzbek S.S.R. The same national delimitation created the Kara-Kyrgyz Oblast.<sup>2</sup> In 1926, it became an autonomous republic - the Kyrgyz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, which was upgraded to a Soviet Socialist Republic in 1936.<sup>3</sup>

The delimitation had the effect of dividing ancestral lands, preventing pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism from emerging, but also dividing the Central Asian territories along ethnic lines.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kirill Nourzhanov, Christian Bleuer, *Tajikistan: A Social and Political History*, (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2013), 60.

<sup>2</sup> Socuek, Savat, 226.

<sup>3</sup> Rafis Abazaov, *Historical Dictionary of Kyrgyzstan*, (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 17.

<sup>4</sup> Amanda Farrant, "Mission Impossible: The Politico-geographical Engineering of Soviet Central Asia's Republican Boundaries," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 25, No. 1-2, (2006): 63.

Central Asia was governed thusly by the Soviets until the late 1980s, when the central Soviet bureaucracy began to lose control. Nationalism emerged just as strongly in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan as it did in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, even more so. Especially in Tajikistan, nationalism came to the forefront after independence.<sup>5</sup>

Tajikistan has followed the model of post-Soviet authoritarianism present in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and even Turkmenistan, with a singular leader, Emomali Rahmon, as president since 1992.<sup>6</sup> In September 1991, after the Communist failure to oust President Boris Yeltsin, the Tajiki Soviet Socialist Republic declared independence.<sup>7</sup> Soon after, in November 1991, elections were held, which were won by the Communist Party.<sup>8</sup> The opposition, a combination of Islamists and democratic reformers, quickly declared the vote fraudulent and illegitimate.<sup>9</sup>

The government responded poorly to street demonstrations, which quickly spiraled to violence, and from there to a five-year long civil war.<sup>10</sup> Tajik President Rahmon Nabiyeu would be forced out in a coup d'état in 1992,<sup>11</sup> a move that would eventually lead to Emomali Rahmon's ascendancy to the presidency. In 1997 a peace treaty was signed in Moscow officially ending the war, and the country slowly stabilized.<sup>12</sup>

Kyrgyzstan, on the other hand, has undergone a political transition, with two revolutions in the span of five years that overthrew autocratic rulers.<sup>13</sup> As it stands now, Kyrgyzstan is the most democratic of the Central Asian republics, yet still not a full democracy by some standards.<sup>14</sup> It is perhaps the most free state, along with India, in the Shanghai Cooperation

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<sup>5</sup> Payam Foroughi, "Tajikistan: Nationalism, Ethnicity, Conflict and Socio-economic Disparities—Sources and Solutions," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 22, No. 1, (2002): 43.

<sup>6</sup> Madeline Reeves, Johan Rasanayagam, Judith Bayer, eds., *Ethnographies of the State in Central Asia: Performing Politics*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 2.

<sup>7</sup> Gregory Gleason, "Uzbekistan: Tajikistan: A Case Study for Conflict Potential," *Soviet and Post-Soviet Review*, Vol. 24, No. 3, (1997): 223.

<sup>8</sup> Muriel Atkin, "Tajikistan: A Case Study for Conflict Potential," *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review*, Vol. 24, No. 3, (1997): 176.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Richter, "Springtime in Tajikistan," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 2, (Summer, 1994): 81

<sup>11</sup> Payam Foroughi, 42.

<sup>12</sup> Tetsuro Iji, "Multiparty Mediation in Tajikistan: The 1997 Peace Agreement," *International Negotiation*, Vol. 6, No. 3, (2001): 357.

<sup>13</sup> Kathleen Collins, "Kyrgyzstan's Latest Revolution," 154.

<sup>14</sup> Freedom House ranks Kyrgyzstan as partly free, with an aggregate score of 37. This is higher than any other state in the region, but lower than Pakistan or Morocco. Freedom in the World, 2018, "Kyrgyzstan Profile" Freedom House, accessed February 13, 2018 at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2018/kyrgyzstan>.

Organization, but it has also been rife with corruption by its leaders.<sup>15</sup> Thus, it has had more turnover in leadership than all the other Central Asian republics combined.

Both states share a long border, as well, with their larger neighbor Uzbekistan. The irredentist claims over the non-delimited border by all three states began soon after independence and contributed to rising tensions among them. Territorial disputes, in addition to disputes over water allocation, and even ethnic strife has created a triadic rivalry among them.

Rivalries are assumed to be dyadic in nature, most of the rivalry literature is built on the dyadic nature of rivalries, but recent scholarship has opened up the prospect of triadic rivalries existing.<sup>16</sup> That is to say three states are in competition with each other over spatial or positional issues creating rivalry among themselves. In this case there are three separate rivalries present -between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, thus the relationship among these three states is considered a complex, or triadic, rivalry.<sup>17</sup>

The first section of this chapter will analyze the issues that contributed to this rivalry in more detail. This is necessary since, as in the case of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, there is very little literature on the development of this rivalry. Thus, in order to establish the argument that a rivalry exists among these three states evidence of that rivalry needs to be presented. There are three main rivalry issues among Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

One of these issues are the irredentist claims that are left over from the Soviet era and have never been fully resolved through a comprehensive delimitation of their borders. The break-up of the Soviet Union blurred boundary lines in Central Asia causing rifts in the relationship

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<sup>15</sup> Kathleen Collins, Robert Gambrel, "Corruption and Popular Support for Democracy and Government in Transitional Contexts: The Case of Kyrgyzstan," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 69, No. 8, (2017): 1291.

<sup>16</sup> Daniel S. Geller, "Power Differentials and War in Rival Dyads," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 2, (Jun., 1993): 175-176.

<sup>17</sup> Complex rivalries are extremely rare in international politics but there is historical precedent for them. Brandon Valeriano, Matthew Powers, "Complex Interstate Rivals," *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 12, No. 4, (2016): 552-570

between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Territorial disputes are the main issue which have fostered the sense of rivalry between them, but not the only one.

As in the case of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, water allocation has become a source of tension. Uzbekistan with its larger population and cotton production is opposed to hydroelectrical projects in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan designed to enhance their respective power grids. Tashkent fears that would mean less water would flow from the more upstream states. These disputes over such a vital resource have caused friction, which has not been easy to resolve. The last issue that has emerged in this complex rivalry is strife between the Central Asian ethnicities that has erupted into violence, in particular between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in 2010. This violence created a major crisis for the region, and led to tensions increasing between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

These three elements are the core issues in the rivalry, and they will be addressed briefly in turn. This will be followed by the second section of the chapter, which will examine the rivalry de-escalation process. That process began with signaling, first in the Shanghai Five forum and then in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Signaling was less consistent than it was in the China-Russia rivalry, but it was present. The Shanghai Five forum was useful for Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to signal each other, and when Uzbekistan joined, the SCO became the forum all three used to signal each other on easing tensions.

The next section will examine the confidence-building measures the three states used to build trust among them. These CBMs were found within the SCO's structure and included military exercises and summitry. Sideline meetings at the annual SCO summits were especially effective in building rapport between Rahmon and the presidents of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The final section will analyze how trust reinforcement through the SCO's mechanisms led to a de-escalation of tensions in this triadic rivalry. While there are still tensions, especially between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan over their border, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization played an

important role in facilitating trust that kept the rivalry from re-escalating, or so this chapter will argue.

### **Rivalry Process: Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan Rivalry Issues**

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are similar in size: economically, demographically, and in terms of area. Tajikistan is the smallest of the Central Asian states in land area with 144,100 square kilometers of territory. Kyrgyzstan is the next largest with 199,951 square kilometers. Both boast small populations - Kyrgyzstan has roughly 5.6 million people and Tajikistan has a population of 8.1 million. Only Turkmenistan has a smaller population in Central Asia. Finally, the two states have the smallest economies among the Central Asian states with Kyrgyzstan's GDP at 20.1 billion US dollars per year and Tajikistan's at 23 billion dollars per year. In addition, Bishkek and Dushanbe spend similar amounts on their military.<sup>18</sup> Most rivalries are symmetrical, that is between two states of equal or near-equal capabilities. Table 6-1 illustrates these similarities.

**Table 6-1 Country Comparison<sup>19</sup>**

Category	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan
Land Area	199,951 sq. km.	144,100 sq. km
Population	5.6 million	8.1 million
GDP	\$20.1 billion	\$23 billion

Upon independence both states found themselves with disputed borders with their neighbors, including China, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan for Kyrgyzstan and China,

<sup>18</sup> Accurate and current numbers are difficult to come by since both countries are heavily dependent on foreign military aid, but SIPRI estimates they each spend 2-3 percent of their respective GDPs on defense. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Military Expenditure Database, By country GDP," accessed February 13, 2018 at:

[https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/3\\_Data%20for%20all%20countries%20from%201988%E2%80%932017%20as%20a%20share%20of%20GDP.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/3_Data%20for%20all%20countries%20from%201988%E2%80%932017%20as%20a%20share%20of%20GDP.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> CIA World Factbook, 478-480, 830-832.

Afghanistan and Uzbekistan for Tajikistan. The border disputes among Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan are still ongoing, and have been a major source of friction between the three states. The disputes with China have been mostly resolved for both states.<sup>20</sup> Kyrgyzstan finalized its border delimitation with Kazakhstan in 2008,<sup>21</sup> while the border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan is still porous.<sup>22</sup>

Despite these border issues rivalries did not emerge among these states, mostly because the power imbalance between them and Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan were too great. While occasionally asymmetrical rivalries can occur<sup>23</sup> they are rare. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are not credible rivals to China, and Kyrgyzstan is not a credible rival to Kazakhstan. While Tajikistan is still wary of threats along its southern Afghan border, and despite Tajik support of the Northern Alliance against the Taliban, Tajikistan's relations with Kabul have improved remarkably since the September 11 attack.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are two states with similar capabilities and military competitiveness, who have territorial and resource disputes with each other. This section will detail the territorial disputes, ethnic tensions, and resource disputes that marked the at times strained relations between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

### **Territorial Dispute**

As in the case of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is ill-defined. If one looks at a map of Central Asia, they will notice that Tajikistan is almost cut in two by Kyrgyzstan, a small sliver of the country lies north and astride both Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Situated between these three countries, surrounded by two mountain

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<sup>20</sup> Hyer, *Pragmatic Dragon*, 229, 232.

<sup>21</sup> Kyrgyzstan Ministry of Foreign Affairs document, accessed February 12, 2018 at: <http://mfa.gov.kz/en/content-view/delimitatsiya-i-demarkatsiya-gosudarstvennoj-granitsy>.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with William Lawrence, UNDP-EU Border Management, April 21, 2017.

<sup>23</sup> Such as between China and Vietnam, See Brantly Womack, "Asymmetric Rivals: China and Vietnam," in *Asian Rivalries*, 176-194.

<sup>24</sup> During the Afghan Civil War of the late 1990s Tajikistan was considered a rival of Taliban-led Afghanistan. Colaresi, Rasler, Thompson, 38.

ranges, lies the Ferghana Valley. Tributaries to the Syr Daray river have created a fertile basin here and as a result the people of the region are farmers. For centuries the different peoples of Central Asia have interacted here. As in the case of the Kazakhs and Uzbeks Russian imperial rule brought with it redrawn boundaries.<sup>25</sup> The national delimitation under the Soviets in 1924 created more artificial boundaries and forced the people, who had lived in Ferghana for generations, to move into different administrative sections of the valley.<sup>26</sup> By the time of independence in 1991 the valley found itself in the middle of a three-way struggle between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

The Ferghana valley is overpopulated, rural, ethnically diverse, somewhat poorer than the rest of the Central Asian region, and more Islamic.<sup>27</sup> Thus, it is a region ripe for conflict. The valley is home to some fourteen million people. They are crowded into a 300 kilometer long corridor with approximately sixty percent of the people being ethnic Uzbeks, twenty-three to twenty-four percent are Kyrgyz and sixteen to eighteen percent are Tajiki.<sup>28</sup> During the 1990s at the peak of Tajikistan's civil war, members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) lived in the Ferghana valley area of Tajikistan, striking at targets in Uzbekistan.<sup>29</sup> In 1999 Islamic rebels crossed into Kyrgyzstan from Tajikistan, clashing with Kyrgyz troops.<sup>30</sup> In late 1999 and again in 2000 in the Kyrgyz district of Batken, ethnic Kyrgyz clashed with Tajiks over water allocation.<sup>31</sup> And of course there was the violence in Osh, both in 1990 and again in 2010 - Osh lies within the Ferghana valley.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ravshan Abdullaev, Namoz Khotamov, Tashmanbet Kenensariyev, "Colonial Rule and Indigenous Responses, 1860-1917," in *Ferghana Valley: The Heart of Central Asia*, S. Fredrick Starr ed., (London: Routledge, 2011), 72

<sup>26</sup> Kamoludin Abdullaev, Ravshan Nazarov, "The Ferghana Valley Under Stalin, 1929-1953," *Ibid*, 133.

<sup>27</sup> Anchita Borthakur, "An Analysis of the Conflict in the Ferghana Valley," *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 48, No. 2, (2017): 334-350.

<sup>28</sup> Slim, Randa M. "The Ferghana Valley: In the Midst of a Host of Crises", in *Searching for Peace in Europe and Eurasia*, eds. Paul van Tongeren, Hans van de Veen, and Juliette Verhoeven, (Boulder: Lynn Rienner, 2002), 490.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 492.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 493.

<sup>32</sup> Osh is a district of Kyrgyzstan but it lies right on the border so there is a sizable Uzbek population. See Morgan Liu, *Under Solomon's Throne: Uzbek Visions of Renewal in Osh*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 44.

The 1997 peace agreement which ended the Tajikistan civil war also allowed for power sharing with the opposition - the United Tajik Opposition.<sup>33</sup> This power sharing was nominal as the government retained seventy percent of the government's positions, including the presidency, while the UTO comprised the remaining thirty percent.<sup>34</sup> While Rahmon still had absolute control of the Tajik government, the inclusion of opposition figures gave Tajikistan an Islamic tinge to its governance that was absent in the other Central Asian republics.<sup>35</sup>

Due to the porous border and mixed ethnic groups of the region "creeping migration" took place in several areas in the Ferghana. That is to say, members of the same ethnic groups tended to move closer to their ethnic enclaves. For example, villagers living in Tajikistan of Kyrgyz ethnicity started to move toward Kyrgyzstan.<sup>36</sup> This cross-border migration caused serious problems for the Tajik and Kyrgyz governments, as it was tantamount to their citizens fleeing their states, and made a mockery of the borders.

In August 1999 a group of Islamic rebels entered Batken Kyrgyzstan from Tajikistan. There they launched attacks against Kyrgyz targets, taking hostages.<sup>37</sup> They were alleged to be members of the IMU and their goals included the overthrow of Islam Karimov and the establishment of an Islamic caliphate in the Ferghana valley.<sup>38</sup> Kyrgyz authorities were shocked and surprised by the incursion, which was eventually beaten back. Another incursion occurred in Batken the following year, again in August.<sup>39</sup> The Akayev government, along with Tashkent, blamed Dushanbe for allowing the militants to use Tajik territory to stage their attacks.<sup>40</sup>

In May 2006 violence again erupted along the border when armed assailants launched an attack on checkpoints along the Tajiki-Kyrgyzstan border, killing two Tajiki border patrol guards

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<sup>33</sup> Iskandar Asadullaev, "The Tajikistan Government: Perspective on the War and Peace Process," in *Politics of Compromise: The Tajikistan Peace Process, 2001*, accessed at Conciliation Resources on February 27, 2018 at: <http://www.c-r.org/accord-article/tajikistan-government>.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Gregory Gleason, "Power sharing in Tajikistan: Political compromise and regional instability," *Conflict, Security & Development*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (2001): 132.

<sup>36</sup> Christine Bichsel, "Dangerous Divisions: Peace-Building in the Borderlands of Post-Soviet Central Asia," In *Violence on the Margins: States, Conflict, and Borderlands*, eds. Benedikt Korf, Timothy Raeymaekers, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 157.

<sup>37</sup> Matthew Stein, "Compendium of Central Asian Military and Security Activity," (Ft. Leavenworth, Ks: Foreign Military Studies Office, U.S. Army, 2017), 67.

<sup>38</sup> Nick Megoran, "'B/ordering' and Biopolitics in Central Asia," in *A Companion to Border Studies*, 481.

<sup>39</sup> Turat Akimov, "Batken conflict returns," Institute for War & Peace Reporting, August 19, 2000.

<sup>40</sup> Megoran, 482.

and one Kyrgyz guard.<sup>41</sup> The gunmen stole Kalashnikov rifles and fled back into Kyrgyzstan. It is likely that these assailants were criminals or sub-state actors, but this violent incident underscores the seriousness of the border problem between the two states. The Ferghana valley had also become home to criminal elements as it was a major corridor for drug trafficking, especially poppy from Afghanistan.<sup>42</sup>

In January 2014 a major crisis ensued when border guards from both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan had a shoot-out.<sup>43</sup> The incident was triggered by Kyrgyz intentions to construct a road on a disputed section of the border.<sup>44</sup> Tajik border guards objected and a shoot-out commenced, wounding several guards on both sides. The situation escalated and both states sent troops to secure the border.<sup>45</sup> Three days later Bishkek recalled its ambassador from Dushanbe,<sup>46</sup> and a war of words ensued between the Kyrgyz and Tajik governments.<sup>47</sup>

The January incident was indicative of a larger trend as 32 border incidents between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were recorded in 2014.<sup>48</sup> This included an incident in May when Kyrgyz and Tajiki residents clashed,<sup>49</sup> and another one in July 2014 when a Tajik citizen was killed during another gunfight between Kyrgyz and Tajik border guards.<sup>50</sup> These events eventually led to both sides agreeing to create a joint commission to investigate the border incidents.<sup>51</sup> The commission, however, had a daunting task, as more than 900 kilometers of the border was not demarked upon independence.<sup>52</sup> Border clashes

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<sup>41</sup> "Four killed in checkpoint attacks on Kyrgyz-Tajik border," Agence France Presse, Bishkek, May 12, 2006.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with William Lawrence, April 21, 2017.

<sup>43</sup> "Kyrgyzstan Sends Reinforcements to Border With Tajikistan After Shoot Out," Interfax, Almaty, January 11, 2014.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> "Tensions Grow on Kyrgyz Tajik Border Following Recent Armed Conflict," BBC Monitoring, January 17, 2014.

<sup>46</sup> "Bishkek Recalls Ambassador from Dushanbe over Border Incident," States News Service, January 14, 2014.

<sup>47</sup> "Tajik Media Accuse Kyrgyzstan of Biased Coverage of Border Incident," BBC Monitoring, January 17, 2014.

<sup>48</sup> "Nine Border Incidents Occur on Kyrgyz-Tajik Border this Year," Central Asian News Service, December 17,

<sup>49</sup> "Kyrgyz minister: Kyrgyz-Tajik border incident orchestrated," Central Asian General Newswire, May 8, 2014.

<sup>50</sup> "Tajik Citizen Killed, Seven Citizens Injured at Tajik-Kyrgyz Border – Source," Central Asia General Newswire, July 10, 2014.

<sup>51</sup> "Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan Agree to Create Joint Commission for Investigation of All Border Incidents," AKIpress News Agency, August 27, 2014.

<sup>52</sup> "Atambayev Hopes to Settle Kyrgyz-Tajik Border Issue Within Two Years," Russia & CIS General Newswire, December 24, 2015.

continued in 2015, including an intense fight in August 2015<sup>53</sup> but at a much reduced scale, with only nine being reported.<sup>54</sup>

This is due in part to the increased cooperation both border patrols underwent with third-party intervention (namely the OSCE), and in part due to the emphasis on inter-governmental cooperation stressed by both states.<sup>55</sup> The reduction in border tensions did not translate into immediate success in delimiting the border as clashes still persisted at a lower level. As one observer of the Tajikistan border stated, there was “a lot of smoke and light” generated, but also some “fire.”<sup>56</sup> However, Tajikistan did offer a compromise to Kyrgyzstan - the swapping of specific territories, a small amount of territory, 12 hectares. In this way Rahmon’s government reasoned, the ethnic enclaves on the border would be switched with Kyrgyz nationals living in Tajikistan becoming Kyrgyzstan citizens and ethnic Tajiks living in Kyrgyzstan would become Tajikistan citizens. The proposal was considered by Kyrgyzstan President Almazbek Atambayev’s government before being dropped. The delimitation process still continues, and as of the end of 2017 only 519.9 kilometers of the more than 970 long kilometer border had been delimited.<sup>57</sup>

In addition to the border disputes with Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, Dushanbe had, for its leadership, a more pressing concern on its southern border with Afghanistan.<sup>58</sup> For Rahmon, the Taliban and al Qaeda represented a real existential threat to his rule, as he is more mindful of Islamic radicalism than his counterparts in Central Asia.<sup>59</sup> The reality is that the threat was more benign, that the Taliban could not launch serious attacks against Tajikistan and that al Qaeda and later the Islamic State were also not in a position to be too threatening to Central Asia.

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<sup>53</sup> Zhulduz Baizakova, 229.

<sup>54</sup> “Nine Border Incidents Occur on Kyrgyz-Tajik Border this Year,” Central Asian News Service, December 17, 2015.

<sup>55</sup> “Vice PMs of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan to discuss measures to prevent recurrence of border incidents,” Central Asia

<sup>56</sup> Interview with William Lawrence.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with BOMCA official, December 7, 2017.

<sup>58</sup> The situation has stabilized some now that the Taliban are out of power, but the southern border remains a concern for Tajikistan. Interview with William Lawrence, also see Alexander Shaburkin, “Within Shooting Distance,” Moscow Times, October 11, 2000.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with William Lawrence.

However, the threat of a Taliban resurgence, and spillover from the Afghan war was real enough, and Rahmon used it to keep his populace in line.<sup>60</sup>

For Rahmon the border became an increasingly important issue. After the civil war the Tajik president would make frequent trips to the border and made speeches about the inviolability of Tajikistan's borders.<sup>61</sup> In this way Rahmon signaled his government to act on border disputes. Border integrity was tied to presidential authority as the border was used as a tool to control and cow the Tajik people.<sup>62</sup> If Rahmon could not keep the borders secure then he feared his authority as president would be undermined. Thus, border control was of the utmost importance to Tajikistan.<sup>63</sup> The border guard, taking the cue from their president, took the mentality of shoot first when there are any incursions, and ask questions, if anyone was still alive, later.

Kyrgyzstan had as many border problems with Uzbekistan as it did with Tajikistan, if not more.<sup>64</sup> The border dispute with Tajikistan may have been a secondary concern for Kyrgyz leadership as Uzbekistan represented a more direct threat.<sup>65</sup> But faced with incursions and tensions with Tajiki border guards Bishkek responded to Tajik and Uzbek provocations. In its military doctrine Kyrgyzstan lists the border issue as a major external "military hazard" stating that "Incomplete delimitation and demarcation of the State border" needs to be addressed and that "Border incidents and military actions on the state border and in the border areas are likely to occur on the basis of existing unresolved problems."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Interview with EU official, July 28, 2017.

<sup>61</sup> Rahmon speech, October 5, 2009, State Department cable via Wikileaks, accessed March 8, 2018 at: [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09DUSHANBE1121\\_a.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09DUSHANBE1121_a.html).

<sup>62</sup> Interview with William Lawrence.

<sup>63</sup> Law on National Security, June 28, 2011.

<sup>64</sup> "CSTO concerned as Uzbek-Kyrgyz border dispute reignites," PanARMENIAN.Net, May 23, 2016.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with anonymous Central Asian security analyst, October 30, 2017.

<sup>66</sup> Military Doctrine of the Kyrgyz Republic, July, 2013, accessed March 8, 2018 at: <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1374474180>.

## Water Resources

As in the case of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan water allocation looms large in the contentious relationship between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The key difference is that both of these upstream states have a great deal of water.<sup>67</sup> They are mountainous with a high volume of surface runoff and an annual rainfall that more than doubles what Kazakhstan receives.<sup>68</sup> This has led to the two states to have an abundance of the natural resource. However, despite this the two countries have quarreled over allocation of water, most notably over irrigation in the border areas.<sup>69</sup>

In June 1997 the Kyrgyz parliament voted to stop allowing free access to water to the other Central Asian states.<sup>70</sup> This decision mostly affected the downstream countries: Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, but Tajikistan was included.<sup>71</sup> Dushanbe was not pleased about this decision, although it was less vocal than its neighbors.<sup>72</sup> Tajikistan has plenty of its own water, but it sought to harness that water as an energy source in order to become less dependent on its neighbors. However, Bishkek's decision to charge for water, which Dushanbe was planning to use for irrigation, delayed those plans.<sup>73</sup>

The Kyrgyz decision to charge for water exacerbated the water shortage dilemma for Tajikistan.<sup>74</sup> Already reliant on an antiquated, frequently broken, irrigation system for its primary agrarian areas near the Kyrgyz border, a group of frustrated Tajik farmers tired of water shortages took it upon themselves to do something. In March 2008, the group of 150 farmers crossed in Kyrgyzstan and clashed violently with Kyrgyz farmers.<sup>75</sup> This clash only heightened

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<sup>67</sup> Behrooz Abdolvand, Lutz Mez, Konstantin Winter, Shabnam Mirsaeedi-Gloßner, Brigitta Schutt, Karl Tilman Rost, Julia Bar "The Dimension of Water in Central Asia: Security Concerns and the Long Road of Capacity Building," *Journal of Environmental Earth Science*, Vol. 73, (2015): 898.

<sup>68</sup> The average precipitation in Kyrgyzstan is roughly 390 mm per year. United Nations Development Program, "Climate Profile of the Kyrgyz Republic" Bishkek, 2013, 33. The annual average precipitation in Tajikistan is 691 mm with a high of 2,400 mm in the mountains. *Aquastat Survey*, "Irrigation in Central Asia in Figures," 2012: 1.

<sup>69</sup> "Kyrgyz-Tajik spat highlights border issues," Institute for War & Peace Reporting, November 28, 2008, accessed on March 13, 2018 at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/kyrgyzstan/kyrgyz-tajik-spat-highlights-border-issues>.

<sup>70</sup> Zakhirova, 2003.

<sup>71</sup> A Kyrgyz water facility attempted to collect money from Tajikistan for cross-border drinking water. Interview with UNDP anonymous source, April, 13, 2017.

<sup>72</sup> Zakhirova, 2003.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> "Central Asia: Water and Conflict," Asia Report No. 34, (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2002), 2-3.

<sup>75</sup> "Tajik-Kyrgyz water clash a sign of things to come," Institute for War & Peace Reporting, April 2, 2008 Accessed March 14, 2018 at <https://reliefweb.int/report/kyrgyzstan/tajik-kyrgyz-water-clash-sign-things-come>.

the tensions on the border between the two states. Water scarcity had suddenly become a very real concern for two states with abundant water supplies. This dispute over water was relatively minor compared to the two states' disputes with Tashkent over the same resource. But it was beneficial to downstream countries, especially Uzbekistan, who did not want the hydroelectric projects being planned by Bishkek and Dushanbe to be implemented.<sup>76</sup>

The border tension and disputes over water took on an ethnic tenor as Kyrgyz and Tajik villagers in border enclaves fought with each other.<sup>77</sup> The Tajiks are outsiders in Central Asia with all the other Central Asian ethnicities originally of Turkic extraction while the Tajiks are Persian., their language a form of Persian.<sup>78</sup> This has heightened the tensions between Tajikistan and its Central Asian neighbors and their shared ethnicity has led Tajikistan to align at times with Iran.<sup>79</sup>

## **Uzbekistan Rivalry Issues**

### **Border Disputes**

Much attention so far in this chapter has been given to the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan rivalry. However, Uzbekistan looms large in Kyrgyzstan's and Tajikistan's foreign relations. It shares a border, and disputes on those borders, with each of them. The borders are still in the process of being delimited and demarcated but there have been a number of incidents between the three states. In addition, Tashkent has disputes over water allocation with both Bishkek and Dushanbe and there exist simmering ethnic tensions between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz. This section will detail those disputes and show how Uzbekistan figures into this "triadic" rivalry.

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<sup>76</sup> Interview with anonymous source, July 15, 2017.

<sup>77</sup> Jared M. Feldschreiber, "Violence on Kyrgyz-Tajik border highlights ethnic enmity in Central Asia" UPI, August 4, 2015, accessed on March 19, 2018 at: [https://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/World-News/2015/08/04/Violence-on-Kyrgyz-Tajik-border-highlights-ethnic-enmity-in-Central-Asia/3011438705089/](https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2015/08/04/Violence-on-Kyrgyz-Tajik-border-highlights-ethnic-enmity-in-Central-Asia/3011438705089/).

<sup>78</sup> William Rowe "Geolinguistics, culture, and politics in the development and maintenance of Tajiki", *Journal of Culture Geography*, Vol. 28, No. 2, (2011): 259.

<sup>79</sup> Initially Tajikistan was drawn to Iran due to "historical, cultural and spiritual ties," later Rahmon was driven more by security concerns in courting Iran. Kirill Nourzhanov, "Omnibalancing in Tajikistan's Foreign Policy: Security-Driven Discourses of Alignment with Iran," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, (2012): 363-364.

During the Tajikistan Civil War, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) used Tajikistan as a base from which it launched attacks against the Karimov government. This led Tashkent to mine its border with Tajikistan,<sup>80</sup> and even launch airstrikes on Tajik territory.<sup>81</sup> This trend continued after the civil war had ended, as Karimov sought to keep the IMU from returning to Uzbek soil, straining relations between the two states.<sup>82</sup> In 2008 and again in 2009 Karimov's government stated that Tajikistan was still harboring IMU members.<sup>83</sup> The Rahmon government, for its part, denied assisting the IMU, and responded to Uzbek provocations with angry denunciations.

Yet Dushanbe did not escalate tensions with Tashkent. Instead, given Uzbekistan's larger population and more sizable military Rahmon looked for outside help, mostly through the CSTO. In 2008 Tajikistan asked Russia for help with its border problems.<sup>84</sup> But progress was slow, especially after Tashkent limited interactions with the Collective Security Treaty Organization in 2009 and ultimately left the organization in 2012.<sup>85</sup> Any leverage that Russia could bring to bear was lost, and for several more years the disputes lingered.

The Kyrgyz-Uzbek border was also highly contested because the region between the two countries is mountainous and the border is difficult to define.<sup>86</sup> In 2001 Karimov sent a delegation to Bishkek led by his then-premier Utkir Sultanov to discuss the border issue, amidst a harsh winter that created a small energy crisis between the two states.<sup>87</sup> These talks ultimately did not resolve the border issue as neither side would agree to a delimitation plan. In July 2003 a Kyrgyz man was shot and killed by Uzbek border guards in a disputed area.<sup>88</sup> In 2004

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<sup>80</sup> "Uzbekistan Mines Border with Tajikistan," Itar-Tass, October 8, 2000.

<sup>81</sup> Bakhrom Tursunov, Marina Pikulina, "Severe Lessons of Batken," Conflict Studies Research Centre, November 1999, 3.

<sup>82</sup> "Russian foreign minister calls for Dushanbe-Tashkent dialogue," Interfax, April 24, 2012.

<sup>83</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, "Rivalry and Competition in Central Asia," Eurasia Emerging Market Forum, January 25, 2010.

<sup>84</sup> "Tajikistan asks Russia's help to settle border disputes with Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan," AKIpress, July 28, 2008.

<sup>85</sup> As one Uzbek analyst said, "At the same time, without Uzbekistan, any regional security problem will remain unsolved even with CSTO assistance," Farkhod Tolipov, "Uzbekistan Without the CSTO," *The Central Asian-Caucasus Analyst*, February 20, 2013, accessed March 20, 2018 at:

<https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12652-uzbekistan-without-the-csto.html>.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with EEAS official, July 28, 2017.

<sup>87</sup> "Uzbek, Kyrgyz Leaders Meet Over Energy Crisis, Border," AP International, February 26, 2001.

<sup>88</sup> "Shooting on Kyrgyz-Uzbek Border Renews Central Asian Security Fears," Agence France Presse, July 18, 2003.

Uzbekistan started to build a fence along some portions of the Kyrgyz border, which Bishkek quickly denounced.<sup>89</sup>

There were 102 incidents recorded on the border in 2010 and 2011.<sup>90</sup> Several more border clashes followed over the next few years, and in March 2016 a major incident occurred when both Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan mobilized small numbers of troops as a dispute over a mountain intensified.<sup>91</sup> On March 18, Uzbek military personnel conducted a maneuver at the border near the mountain Ungar-Tepa, which the Kyrgyz called Unkur-Too.<sup>92</sup> The Kyrgyz government thought the maneuver was too close to territory it had claimed and so reinforced the border with armored carries and elite special forces troops.<sup>93</sup> Uzbekistan responded in kind. After a week of this border stand-off, and after Kyrgyzstan threatened to label Uzbekistan's actions an incursion,<sup>94</sup> and asking the CSTO for aid, Tashkent eventually drew back its forces.<sup>95</sup> The situation was still tense between the two states until after Karimov's death later that year.<sup>96</sup>

### **Water Allocation**

Both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are upstream countries with Uzbekistan, a downstream country, reliant on water from them (Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan are also reliant on water from the upstream states). Soon after independence the Central Asian states signed an agreement creating the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC), which replaced the water management system the Soviet Union had in place.<sup>97</sup> Ostensibly, this was done to help streamline and improve water allocation among the riparian states, with downstream states providing hydrocarbons for energy to the upstream states in return for water for irrigation.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> "Kyrgyzstan protests to Uzbekistan over attempt to build border fence inside Kyrgyz territory," Associated Press International, June 1, 2004.

<sup>90</sup> Anna Matveeva, "Divided We Fall ... or Rise? Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan Border Dilemma," *Cambridge Journal of Eurasian Studies*, Vol 1, (2017): 10.

<sup>91</sup> "Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in Dispute Over Border Area," Times of Central Asia, March 24, 2016. 2016.

<sup>92</sup> Pete Baumgartner "Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan Deploy Troops in Dispute Over Border Mountain," RFE, March 23,

<sup>93</sup> Cholpon Orozobekova "An Absence of Diplomacy: The Kyrgyz-Uzbek Border Dispute" *The Diplomat*, April 1, 2016, accessed on March 19, 2018 at: <https://thediplomat.com/2016/04/an-absence-of-diplomacy-the-kyrgyz-uzbek-border-dispute/>.

<sup>94</sup> "Kyrgyzstan set to deem Uzbek troop deployment in disputed area incursion" BBC Monitoring, March 24, 2016.

<sup>95</sup> "Uzbekistan pulls back troops from border with Kyrgyzstan," *The Times of Central Asia*, March 26, 2016.

<sup>96</sup> "Kyrgyzstan denies Uzbek troop surge link to border dispute," *Vecherniy Bishkek*, August 22, 2016.

<sup>97</sup> Necati Polat, *Boundary Issues in Central Asia*, (New York: Transnational Publishers, 2002), 136-137.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, 138.

However, this system soon broke down as the downstream states demanded more and more water for irrigation, while not providing the upstream states with sufficient energy supplies.<sup>99</sup>

At the time of independence Tajikistan had wanted to harness its hydroelectric power by building the Rogun dam across the Vakhsh river, a tributary of the Amu Darya,-a project that had been met with strong opposition by Tashkent.<sup>100</sup> Uzbekistan's position is that it needs water from the upstream countries for agricultural purposes and if the Vakhsh is damned it will hurt the Uzbek economy with a reduction in water flow.<sup>101</sup> Tashkent also worried about dam height and safety and an increase in competition for electricity exports.<sup>102</sup> Tajikistan was firm, however, that the dam must be built, and the two sides bickered about the Rogun for several years, with construction frozen as Dushanbe struggled to obtain financing for the project.<sup>103</sup>

Finally, in October 2016 with Russian backing, Tajikistan officially launched construction of the Rogun dam.<sup>104</sup> It is no coincidence that Dushanbe's announcement came after Karimov's death. Uzbek response was muted to Rahmon's announcement. In fact, during President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's state visit to Tajikistan in March 2018 he formerly announced that Uzbekistan no longer had any objections to the Rogun dam, and even offered to assist in its construction.<sup>105</sup>

Kyrgyzstan as well wanted to dam its rivers in order to become more energy independent. Bishkek's big energy project was the Kambarata hydroelectric power plant project - a dam and two power plants astride the Naryn river, originally conceived in 1986, but with production put on hold indefinitely.<sup>106</sup> Both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan objected to this plan as a majority of the region's water supply originated from Kyrgyzstan.<sup>107</sup> But Bishkek, like Tajikistan, needed

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<sup>99</sup> Thomas Bernauer, Tobias Siegfried, "Compliance and performance in international water agreements: the case of the Naryn/Syr Darya basin," *Global Governance*, Vol. 14, No. 4, (2008): 496.

<sup>100</sup> Murdobeek laladjebaev, "The Water-Energy Puzzle in Central Asia: The Tajikistan Perspective," *Journal of Water Resources Development*, Vol. 26, No. 1, (March 2010): 28.

<sup>101</sup> Shavkat Kasymov, "Water Resource Disputes: Conflict and Cooperation in Drainage Basins," *International Journal on World Peace*, Vol. 28, No. 3, (2011): 83.

<sup>102</sup> Sonoko Ito, Sameh El Khatib, Mikiyasu Nakamura, "Conflict Over a Hydropower Plant Project between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan," *International Journal of Water Resources Development*, Vol. 32, No. 5, (2016): 703.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 694.

<sup>104</sup> "Tajik President Officially Launches Construction of Rogun Dam," RFE, October 29, 2016.

<sup>105</sup> "Uzbek President Reaffirms Support for Tajikistan's \$3.9bn Rogun Hydropower Project during First Visit," CEE Energy NewsWatch Today, March 12, 2018.

<sup>106</sup> "Water Pressure in Central Asia," Europe and Central Asia Report No. 233, (Brussels: International Crisis Group, September 11, 2014), 18.

<sup>107</sup> 77 percent of the Aral Sea basin's water comes from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Shlomi Dinar, "Power Asymmetry and Negotiations in International River Basins," *International Negotiations*, Vol. 14, No. 2, (2009): 345.

energy desperately, perhaps more so than any other state in Central Asia. Winters were harsh in the mountainous country, and the barter system the Central Asian states had set up to alleviate the energy and resource disparity between them was not creating the desired results.<sup>108</sup>

Over ninety percent of Central Asia's water resources are located in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.<sup>109</sup> As population in the region is expected to increase in the next few decades (especially in Uzbekistan), water may become a finite resource, and one that is more valuable than hydrocarbons. As such, the three states may be hard-pressed to avoid open conflict over the elixir of life.

### **Ethnic Tensions**

While the border dispute between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan has its origins in the Soviet national delimitation, the underlying ethnic tension adds another layer to this complex issue. The redrawn boundaries meant that after independence many Central Asian peoples were displaced. The dominant ethnic group in the region is still the Uzbeks with Tajiks being the second most populous among all the Central Asian states and Kyrgyz making up the fourth most populous ethnic group with just over four million people.<sup>110</sup> Unlike the rest of the peoples of Central Asia, the Tajiks were originally of Persian extraction; however, there is much shared culture between the Tajiks and their Turkic neighbors in Central Asia.<sup>111</sup> The Kyrgyz people are Turkic in origin, but neither they nor the Tajiks had a separate nation.

The small number of Kyrgyz within the Central Asian sub-region has led them to take an exclusivist nationalistic double identity narrative.<sup>112</sup> They, along with the Tajiks and Kazakhs, were a nomadic people while the Uzbeks were sedentary.<sup>113</sup> Tashkent, for decades, had been the

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<sup>108</sup> Interview with anonymous source March 6, 2017.

<sup>109</sup> Michael Renner, "Troubled waters: Central and South Asia exemplify some of the planet's looming water shortages," *World Watch*, Vol. 23, No. 3, (May-June 2010): 15.

<sup>110</sup> Calculated from CIA World Factbook, 478, 830, 911.

<sup>111</sup> Kirill Nourzhanov, Christian Bleuer, *Tajikistan: A Social and Political History*, 50.

<sup>112</sup> As an example, political positions were exclusively for ethnic Kyrgyz during the Akayev and Bakiyev presidencies. Marlene Laruelle "The Paradigm of Nationalism in Kyrgyzstan. Evolving Narrative, the Sovereignty Issue, and Political Agenda" *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 45, (2012): 41-42.

<sup>113</sup> Babak Rezvani, "Understanding and Explaining the Kyrgyz-Uzbek Interethnic Conflict in Southern Kyrgyzstan," *Anthropology of the Middle East*, Vol. 8, No. 2, (2013): 61.

center of power and culture in Central Asia, and the Uzbeks the dominant ethnic group. After the Soviet delimitation and the formation of the Kyrgyz Soviet Republic, the Kyrgyz people had territory of their own, separate from Uzbek influence.

Kyrgyzstan's official name is the Kyrgyz Republic, which is a non-subtle nod to the national ethnicity.<sup>114</sup> None of the other Central Asian republics identify their states as such, using the suffix -stan, Persian for country. This was a small embellishment on the part of Kyrgyzstan but one with serious consequences. In June 2010, in Osh, southern Kyrgyzstan, ethnic violence broke out between Kyrgyz and Uzbek citizens.<sup>115</sup> The roots of this conflict stem back to 1990 when Uzbeks and Kyrgyz had previously clashed.<sup>116</sup> The violence was almost entirely one-sided with Kyrgyz attacking and killing ethnic Uzbeks.<sup>117</sup> At least 893 people were killed.<sup>118</sup> The violence underscored the heightened ethnic tensions that have been exacerbated by Kyrgyz leadership since independence. Kyrgyz leaders have sought to remake Kyrgyzstan as an ethno-state - purely Kyrgyz, even at the expense of its minorities.

Before independence, in 1990, there were ethnic clashes in Osh between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz, stimulated by the loss of central control of the region as the Soviet Union began to disintegrate. The riots and violence appeared to be spontaneous, that is not planned, but indicative of a growing nationalistic trend as the Central Asian peoples sought their own identities. The main cause for the 1990 violence was that ethnic Uzbeks in Osh were frustrated that land was being given to Kyrgyz at the expense of the Uzbeks.<sup>119</sup> The Kyrgyz, due in part to their small numbers, and partly because they were seen as among the poorest Central Asian ethnicities, resented the Uzbeks.<sup>120</sup>

The 2010 Osh riots have parallels to the 1990 violence but with a marked difference. President Bakiyev was formerly the governor of Jalalabad province, near Osh, and when he was

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<sup>114</sup> Interview with anonymous source March 6, 2017.

<sup>115</sup> Andrew R. Bond, Natalie R. Koch, "Interethnic Tensions in Kyrgyzstan: A Political Geographic Perspective," *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, Vol. 51 No. 4, (2010): 531.

<sup>116</sup> Valery Tishkov, "'Don't Kill Me, I'm a Kyrgyz!': An Anthropological Analysis of Violence in the Osh Ethnic Conflict," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 32, No. 2, (May 1995): 134.

<sup>117</sup> Freedom House, "A Chronicle of Violence: The events in the south of Kyrgyzstan in June 2010," (Oslo: Memorial Human Rights Center, 2012), 193.

<sup>118</sup> The official death toll according to the Kyrgyz government is 893, but some estimates go as high as 2,600 deaths. *Ibid*, 191-192.

<sup>119</sup> Tishkov, 134.

<sup>120</sup> Cai Wilkinson, "Imagining Kyrgyzstan's Nationhood and Statehood: Reactions to the 2010 Osh violence," *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 43, No. 3, (2015): 418.

overthrown in April 2010 the Kyrgyz of southern Kyrgyzstan lost a key ally.<sup>121</sup> The native Uzbek population, repressed under the Bakiyev regime, was more welcoming to the new government.<sup>122</sup> The Uzbeks supported the Bishkek interim government after Bakiyev's overthrow, hoping for change, while the Kyrgyz of Osh supported the provincial government, made up entirely of Bakiyev loyalists.<sup>123</sup> Fearing a loss of power and influence to the Uzbeks, the native Kyrgyz formed informal voluntary militias.<sup>124</sup>

On June 10, 2010 a clash between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz near a casino led to rioting at a nearby university dormitory.<sup>125</sup> Rumor that Kyrgyz girls had been raped by Uzbek men at the dormitory quickly led to widespread riots.<sup>126</sup> The rumor was later determined to be unfounded, but it was too late, the violence had already taken place, abetted, at times, by the Kyrgyz local authorities.<sup>127</sup> By June 14, Kyrgyz authorities had regained control of the streets, and the mostly rural Kyrgyz who had come into the city when the rape rumor was spread, dispersed.<sup>128</sup>

The reaction to the Osh violence by President Karimov was surprisingly muted,<sup>129</sup> even though the violence spawned a refugee crisis. Over 375,000 Uzbeks were displaced due to the violence.<sup>130</sup> Some fled to Uzbekistan although they were told by Uzbek authorities they had to go back soon to Kyrgyzstan. The main reason Karimov wanted the refugees to return is that some of the Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan had fled similar violence in Uzbekistan in Andijan in 2005.<sup>131</sup> Karimov was concerned about extremism in his own country and did not want a repeat

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<sup>121</sup> After Bakiyev was ousted in Bishkek he fled to Osh before he left the country. Sabah Aslam, "Kyrgyzstan: Internal Instability and Revolt in 2010," *Strategic Studies*, (March 2011): 1.

<sup>122</sup> Andrew R. Bond, Natalie R. Koch, "Interethnic Tensions in Kyrgyzstan: A Political Geographic Perspective," *Eurasian Geography & Economics*, Vol. 51, No. 4, (2010): 541-542.

<sup>123</sup> Collins, 160.

<sup>124</sup> "South Kyrgyzstan Slides out of Control", Institute for War and Peace Reporting, June 14, 2010, accessed March 22, 2018 at: <https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/1352822.html>.

<sup>125</sup> Reuel R. Hanks, "Crisis in Kyrgyzstan: Conundrums of Ethnic Conflict, National Identity, and State Cohesion," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2, (2011): 180.

<sup>126</sup> Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission, "Report of the Independent International commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010," May 3, 2011, 27.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 38.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>129</sup> See "Otunbayeva grateful for Uzbek decision not to interfere in Kyrgyz unrest," Russia & CIS General News Service, June 18, 2010, "Southern Kyrgyzstan Tinderbox Awaits Next Spark," The Times of Central Asia, April 19, 2012.

<sup>130</sup> "UNHCR Assisting Some 375,000 Displaced In Southern Kyrgyzstan," States News Service, June 29, 2010. 2015.

<sup>131</sup> "Southern Kyrgyzstan Tinderbox Awaits Next Spark," The Times of Central Asia, April 19, 2012.

of the Andijan massacre, or a resurgence of the IMU. Thus, he wanted those Uzbeks that fled from Kyrgyz violence to return to Kyrgyzstan as soon as possible.<sup>132</sup>

Even though Karimov restrained himself and did not threaten Kyrgyzstan with a military response, he still called for an UN-led investigation into the violence.<sup>133</sup> Additionally, relations between Tashkent and Bishkek remained strained for the remainder of Karimov's reign. The clashes in Osh underscore the ethnic dynamic to Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan relations.

In January 2013, ethnic violence again flared up when Uzbek residents of the Sokh enclave in Kyrgyzstan attacked Kyrgyz border patrol guards and abducted some Kyrgyz citizens. The uprising was large with over 1,000 Uzbeks eventually joining protests that were instigated by a government decision to electrify parts of the border crossing with Uzbekistan.<sup>134</sup> Tashkent blamed the Kyrgyz border guards for the clash.<sup>135</sup> Eventually order was restored, but coming as it did in the shadow of the Osh uprising three and a half years earlier, the conflict raised concerns that ethnic violence was returning to southern Kyrgyzstan. Karimov took a more proactive approach with the 2013 violence, especially as a shooting incident involving Uzbek and Kyrgyz guards happened a few months later.<sup>136</sup> Tashkent increased its troops at the border near Osh, and relations were tense for several years between the two states.

### **Rivalry De-escalation**

The prior section examined the myriad issues that faced these three Central Asian states. Tensions clearly existed, which strained bilateral relations. This situation was so dire that a survey conducted in 2000, the year prior to the formation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, of politicians, academics, journalist, security officials and other observers of

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<sup>132</sup> "Large numbers of refugees returning to Kyrgyzstan need humanitarian aid," UNHCR June 25, 2010, accessed on March 20, 2018 at: <http://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2010/6/4c2486569/large-numbers-refugees-returning-kyrgyzstan-need-humanitarian-aid.html>.

<sup>133</sup> "Uzbek leader urges probe into ethnic clashes in Kyrgyz south at UN chief talks," BBC Monitoring, June 12,

<sup>134</sup> "Border guards attacked; civilians abducted in southern Kyrgyzstan," Russia and CIS General Newswire, January 6, 2013.

<sup>135</sup> D. Azizov, "Uzbekistan blames Kyrgyzstan of provoking border conflict," Trend News Agency, January 7, 2013.

<sup>136</sup> "Uzbek-Kyrgyz Relations: From Bad To Worse," Kazakhstan & Central Asia Business Forecast Report. BMI Research, July 29, 2013.

Central Asian politics specifically noted the poor bilateral relations among all the Central Asian states, excluding Turkmenistan, except for two dyads - Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan-Tajikistan.<sup>137</sup> The relationships among Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan were considered close to hostile.

Karimov, Rahmon, and their Kyrgyz counterpart, Askar Akayev, were reluctant to meet bilaterally with each other, exacerbating their relationships. Enmity, or at least severe tension, existed among the leaders. They perceived threats from each other and so their foreign policy approach within this Central Asian triad was one of caution.<sup>138</sup> Yet, since the year 2000 relations among these states have improved significantly, with tensions de-escalating. This next section examines that de-escalation process involved in this triadic rivalry. As in the case of the China-Russia rivalry and the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan rivalry this section will examine three distinct phases of rivalry de-escalation. The first is signaling, where at least one of the parties to the dispute signals to the other or others their desire to negotiate the issues at stake in the rivalry. This signaling occurred in the Shanghai Five forum and the early years of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

The next section examines the second phase in rivalry de-escalation, the building of trust through confidence-building measures. These CBMs came in the form of participation in multilateral military exercises under the auspices of the SCO, as well as state leadership participation in the SCO's annual summits. Here, compulsory participation forced the principals to interact with each other to the point that trust was slowly built between them. The final section analyzed the way trust was reinforced by the SCO's mechanisms and how this has led to a de-escalation in rivalry tensions between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

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<sup>137</sup> Kirill Nourzhanov, "Changing Security Threat Perceptions in Central Asia," 98-99.

<sup>138</sup> Interview with anonymous source, July 15, 2017.

## Signaling

Signaling in this complex rivalry occurred at various stages. Negotiations between China and Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in the 1990s on resolving their border issues helped lead to the establishment of the Shanghai Five forum, and then the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The Shanghai Accord, signed in 1996, formed the basis for these border negotiations.<sup>139</sup> Tajikistan's and Kyrgyzstan's signing of the Shanghai Accord amounts to an action-based signal. Both states were officially on record on resolving their border disputes. For Tajik President Rahmon, the forum was especially useful in both resolving the border issue and formulating closer ties with China.<sup>140</sup> Dushanbe wanted to emulate this process with Tashkent. Tajikistan's relationship with Uzbekistan defined all of its foreign policy decisions.<sup>141</sup> Even though Tajikistan's civil war ended in 1997, Rahmon was still concerned about Islamic militancy, especially the IMU, thus reconciliation on the disputed border with Uzbekistan was considered a vital foreign policy goal.<sup>142</sup>

All three states were members of the CIS, initially after independence, but found that forum too constraining to resolve border disputes. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, but Russia used the CSTO to further its own dominance of its near abroad, projecting its own power, including binding the member states so they cannot join other international organizations, such as NATO, and otherwise preventing defection.<sup>143</sup> The CSTO was established to streamline cooperation among the CIS states on security issues and may have initially been expedited as a response to the Batken crises which saw Uzbekistan bombing another CIS state, Tajikistan over harboring Islamic militants.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Gregory Gleason, "Policy Dimensions of West Asian Borders," *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (2001): 107-131.

<sup>140</sup> "Tajik Foreign Minister Hails Shanghai Group as Viable," *Avesta*, June 13, 2006.

<sup>141</sup> Gregory Gleason, "Tajikistan-China Border Normalization," in *Beijing's Power and China's Borders: Twenty Neighbors in Asia*, eds. Bruce Elleman, Stephen Kotkin, Clive Schofield, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 286.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> This didn't always work as Uzbekistan left the organization twice, although it did not join NATO. Elena Kropatcheva, "Russia and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation: Multilateral Policy or Unilateral Ambitions?" *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 68, No. 9, (2016): 1533.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 1530.

The Collective Security Treaty Organization may be useful for Russia to keep a stronger influence in its near abroad, but as a platform for conflict resolution it has a decidedly mixed record.<sup>145</sup> The organization did not involve itself in the Kyrgyzstan Osh crisis in 2010 nor has it been used to mediate in the border disputes among Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.<sup>146</sup> In fact, the organization shied away from mediation.<sup>147</sup> Russia was disinclined to use the alliance, perhaps fearful it would be shown to be ineffective.

The Shanghai Five forums were focused specifically on the border, but were primarily focused on China's borders, and it excluded Uzbekistan. The forum did provide an opportunity for initial signaling between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan as Rahmon and Akayev attended each of the five summits. At the fourth summit, two years after the end of the Tajiki civil war, held in Bishkek, the principles signed a security declaration.<sup>148</sup> In it, the Shanghai Five strengthened the Joint Control Group mechanism that had been set up, which also provided the tools for Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to signal each other on delineating their border.<sup>149</sup>

Tajikistan, especially, was eager to continue the success of the Shanghai Five forum.<sup>150</sup> Rahmon wanted to encourage his fellow leaders to make a commitment to the new organization.<sup>151</sup> Tajikistan has had weak political institutions since its independence, and these institutions were made weaker with the civil war. Emomali Rahmon is the central focus of all power in the country.<sup>152</sup> The Tajik president had a constant concern, however, of coups and a re-eruption of an Islamic insurgency against his rule.<sup>153</sup> Thus, he was perhaps less reluctant than other Central Asian leaders to embrace the SCO, he needed its institutions to keep his country stabilized.

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<sup>145</sup> For instance, in the Armenia-Azerbaijan dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia sees the CSTO as a less than reliable partner to resolve the dispute. See: Abdul Kerimkhanov, "Armenia in hysteria: CSTO becomes "pro-Azerbaijani" bloc," Azer News, December 25, 2018.

<sup>146</sup> Interview with UNDP source, April, 13, 2017.

<sup>147</sup> "CSTO cannot intervene in Kyrgyz-Tajik border conflicts," Interfax, July 29, 2014.

<sup>148</sup> "Shanghai Five Countries Sign Declaration on Security in Kyrgyz Capital," ITAR-TASS, August 25, 1999.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> "Tajikistan President Hopes for Closer Ties Among 'Shanghai Five,'" Xinhua, June 12, 2001.

<sup>151</sup> "'Rakhmonov: 'Shanghai Five' Vital for Regional Stability, Security," Xinhua, June 11, 2001.

<sup>152</sup> "Tajikistan: On the Road to Failure" Asia Report No. 162, (Brussels: International Crisis Group, February 12, 2009), 2.

<sup>153</sup> Markowitz, 76-77.

Kyrgyzstan, the smallest state in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, initially saw the SCO as an opportunity to expand its economic growth by increasing trade with China.<sup>154</sup> Kyrgyzstan was the first CIS state to join the World Trade Organization, and it hoped its more liberal trade policies would be enticing to China.<sup>155</sup> Bishkek also hoped to use its relationship with China as leverage against its other neighbors, such as Russia and Uzbekistan.<sup>156</sup> Akayev's signaling on resolving border disputes with his Central Asian neighbors was more restrained than Rahmon's.<sup>157</sup> Nevertheless, he committed Kyrgyzstan fully to the SCO, and signaled his commitment by joining the organization.

When Uzbekistan joined the Shanghai Five forum and created the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, it created an opportunity for both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to resolve their disputes with Tashkent. The first summit brought Karimov into direct contact with his Kyrgyz and Tajik counterparts. The Uzbek president signaled his intentions to ease tensions first by joining the SCO and then in praising the organization as a viable organization.<sup>158</sup> This signal was reciprocated by both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, as both countries' leaders became receptive to meeting Karimov both in public forums during the annual SCO summit, and in private sideline meetings.<sup>159</sup>

Therefore, instead of relying on the CSTO or Russia, the three Central Asian states sought to utilize the SCO and its mechanisms to resolve their various disputes. The next section will look at the confidence-building measures within the SCO's framework that Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan took advantage of to alleviate tensions among them and to help facilitate mutual trust.

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<sup>154</sup> Erica Murat, "Kyrgyzstan: China's Regional Playground?" in *Beijing's Power and China's Borders: Twenty Neighbors in Asia*, eds. Bruce Elleman, Stephen Kotkin, Clive Schofield, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 131

<sup>155</sup> Ezeli Azarkan, "The Interests of the Central Asian States and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *Ege Academic Review*, Vol. 10, No. 1, (2010): 400.

<sup>156</sup> Interview with Thomas Wood, April 6, 2017.

<sup>157</sup> Kemel Toktomushev, *Kyrgyzstan - Regime Security and Foreign Policy*, (New York: Routledge, 2016), 103-104.

<sup>158</sup> "Uzbekistan's President Said Signed Documents Determine SCO Place in World and Regional Policy," RIA Novosti, June 7, 2002.

<sup>159</sup> "Foreign presidents of SCO members arrive in Shanghai for summit," Xinhua, June 14, 2006.

## Confidence-Building Measures

This section will examine the confidence-building measures that helped lead to trust being built among these three Central Asian states within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. As in the analysis of the two previous rivalries, CBMs in this complex rivalry came in two forms – military exercises and summitry.

Kyrgyzstan was a participant in the SCO's first military exercise. It was a bilateral cross-border antiterrorism drill with China held in 2002.<sup>160</sup> The next year Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Russia joined China and Kyrgyzstan in the "Coalition-2003" exercise held in Kazakhstan.<sup>161</sup> This exercise was the first multilateral exercise within the SCO's framework. China, Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan all provided troops, while Tajikistan provided military observers.<sup>162</sup> Thus, there was not an opportunity for the Kyrgyz and Tajik militaries to work closely together, but it was the first time since independence that the two states' militaries were involved in the same drill. It was a small step toward engendering trust.

The next SCO exercise that Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan participated in was in 2006 at the "East-Antiterror-2006" drill held in Uzbekistan.<sup>163</sup> This was a small-scale drill, showcasing special forces, but featured Uzbekistan for the first time in an SCO exercise. Thus, all three Central Asian rivals were together coordinating their militaries for the first time. This drill was followed by two exercises in 2007. The first was held in Kyrgyzstan in May 2007, it was the Issyk Kul Antiterror 2007 exercise.<sup>164</sup> It was similar to the East-Antiterror-2006 in that it was more modest in scale, short in duration, and focused on elite antiterrorism units.<sup>165</sup> Yet, it was the second exercise that brought Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

Later in the summer of 2007, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan participated in the Peace Mission 2007 exercise along with the other four SCO member states.<sup>166</sup> Peace Mission 2007 was the first

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<sup>160</sup> "China, Kyrgyzstan to hold joint anti-terror military exercise," Xinhua, September 24, 2002.

<sup>161</sup> "Yearender: Joint Military Drills Draw Attention Worldwide," Xinhua, December 14, 2003.

August 5, 2003 accessed November 26, 2019 at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/1103974.html>.

<sup>162</sup> Charles Carlson, "Central Asia: Shanghai Cooperation Organization Makes Military Debut," Radio Free Europe,

<sup>163</sup> W. Alejandro Sanchez, "A Central Asian Security Paradigm: Russia and Uzbekistan," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 18, No.1, (2007): 125.

<sup>164</sup> "SCO Conducts Counter-terrorism Exercises in Kyrgyzstan," Uzbek Daily, May 30, 2007 accessed November

<sup>165</sup> "Antiterrorist Exercises of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Begin on the Coast of Issyk-Kul Lake," RIA Novosti, May 30, 2007.

<sup>166</sup> Marcel de Haas, "The Peace Mission 2007 Exercises: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization Advances,"

full-scale military exercise involving all the SCO members, however most of the troop contributions came from Russia and China. Tajikistan contributed a company of paratroopers numbering 100, while Kyrgyzstan contributed a paratrooper platoon of thirty and Uzbekistan sent 15 observers.<sup>167</sup> These were modest contributions for the Central Asian states, but given that Peace Mission 2007 was the first extended and extensive exercise that these rivals participated in, it was an important CBM. As in the case of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, participation for Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan helped to build trust between them, albeit on a small scale. Uzbekistan would not participate in another SCO military drill until 2012, but Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan both participated in Norak-Antiterror-2009 a small antiterrorism drill in April 2009, hosted by Dushanbe.<sup>168</sup> In addition, they attended the larger Peace Mission 2010.<sup>169</sup>

Peace Mission 2010 had more than 5,000 troops participating, with Kazakhstan contributing 1,700 troops, and China and Russia contributing roughly 1,000 troops each. While Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan each contributed at least 100 troops.<sup>170</sup> This was a slight increase in troop contributions over Peace Mission 2007, and demonstrated that Bishkek and Dushanbe were willing to deepen their cooperation on military and security issues. The next exercise the two states participated in was in 2011 at the Tianshan-2 antiterrorism drill that also featured China.<sup>171</sup> Tianshan-2 was, like its antiterrorism drill predecessors, featured special forces, and “hostage rescue” and other scenarios, but with different participants.<sup>172</sup> Where this drill differed from other antiterrorism drills is that it only featured one other participant besides Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in China. Thus, it was a trilateral exercise, providing the opportunity for Kyrgyz and Tajik military personnel to work more closely together.

Kyrgyz and Tajik participation in SCO military exercises continued annually. Tajikistan hosted the 2012 Peace Mission drill, which was the smallest Peace Mission exercise with only

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> “SCO exercises Norak-Antiterror-2009 begin in Tajikistan,” Trend Daily News, April 17, 2009.

<sup>169</sup> “Closing ceremony of Peace Mission 2010 held in Kazakhstan,” Xinhua, September 25, 2010.

<sup>170</sup> Peace Mission 2010, Joint Anti-terrorism Exercise, Ministry of Defense, China, Accessed November 26, 2019 at: <http://eng.mod.gov.cn/SpecialReports/SCO%20Joint%20Military%20Exercises.htm>.

<sup>171</sup> “China, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan hold joint antiterrorism exercise,” Xinhua, May 18, 2011.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

2,000 troops.<sup>173</sup> Uzbekistan was absent from Peace Mission 2012, and the subsequent Peace Mission 2014 drill, but did participate in the earlier East-Antiterror-2012, along with Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.<sup>174</sup> Karimov was reluctant to involve his military in these drills, that same reluctance was not shared by his Tajik and Kyrgyz counterparts. While Kyrgyz and Tajik troop contributions were modest, both countries consistently participated in SCO military exercises on at least a semiannual basis.

In fact, both states' participation, in terms of number of troops, in the SCO exercises increased dramatically from 2012.<sup>175</sup> This willingness to continue participation demonstrates that as a confidence-building measure the SCO's annual exercises appeared to have facilitated at least a modest level of trust between the Kyrgyz and Tajik militaries, albeit slowly. Incrementally, this trust was built, although with the notable absence of Uzbekistan. The remainder of this section will examine the role summitry played to build trust.

All three presidents of these Central Asian states attended every Shanghai Cooperation summit from its inception. This proximity meant the leaders could not avoid each other, and afforded them the opportunity to try and air out their differences and build trust between them. An example of this happened when Tajik President Rahmon and his Kyrgyz counterpart, Bakiyev, met on the sidelines of the 2007 SCO summit to attempt to resolve their disputes.<sup>176</sup> It was also at this summit that the participants signed the SCO's first multilateral treaty – the “Treaty among the Member States of Good Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation.”<sup>177</sup> The treaty provided the framework for deepening cooperation among the member states. Given this amount of latitude provided by the dialogue surrounding the signing of a “friendship” treaty it is therefore unsurprising that Rahmon and Bakiyev took the initiative to have sideline discussions on their bilateral relations. This sideline meeting at the 2007 SCO summit led to two working

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<sup>173</sup> “Over 2,000 servicemen to take part in Peace Mission 2012 anti-terrorist drill,” Interfax, June 4, 2012.

<sup>174</sup> De Haas, “War Games of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization,” 385.

<sup>175</sup> At Peace Mission 2014 for instance, Kyrgyzstan sent over 500 troops and Tajikistan sent more than two hundred, whereas in prior exercises they normally sent smaller numbers Richard Weitz, “Analyzing Peace Mission 2014: China and Russia Exercise with the Central Asian States,” Second Line of Defense, October 8, 2014 ,

<sup>176</sup> “Kyrgyz, Tajik Leaders Discuss Bilateral Cooperation,” AKIPress, August 16, 2007.

<sup>177</sup> Yu Bin, “China-Russia Relations: Between Cooperation and Competition,” *Comparative Connections*, Vol. 9, No. 3, (Jul-Sept. 2007): 2-3.

visits - one by Rahmon to Bishkek in September 2007,<sup>178</sup> and a follow-on meeting in the Tajik town of Khujand between then Kyrgyz President Bakiyev and Rahmon the next year.<sup>179</sup> At the September 2007 meeting five agreements were signed on non-security issues, but the border dispute was discussed between the two presidents.<sup>180</sup> At the 2008 meeting they established the Kyrgyz-Tajik Interstate Coordination Council, with the purpose of accelerating the border delimitation process.<sup>181</sup>

This process proceeded in fits and starts as a few months later the 2008 border clash broke out. Dialogue, however, continued between them until the 2010 revolution in Kyrgyzstan. The toppling of the Bakiyev regime in 2010 caused concerns in Dushanbe of civil war, but in reality Rahmon was more concerned about spreading violence to Tajikistan.<sup>182</sup> Once Kyrgyzstan stabilized, talks resumed.<sup>183</sup> When tensions escalated in 2014, it was easier to scale back the confrontation due to the mechanisms for bilateral talks already in place. Kyrgyz President Atambayev urged, in a speech at the 2014 SCO summit in Dushanbe, the bloc to work toward building trust in order to resolve the border disputes in Central Asia.<sup>184</sup>

The rhetoric by Atambayev mirrors that of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization at large, which emphasizes mutual trust and cooperation, often called the “Shanghai Spirit.”<sup>185</sup> This sentiment was echoed by Rahmon in 2015 when he sent a congratulatory note to Atambayev on Kyrgyzstan’s Independence Day. The Tajik president sought to build mutual trust between his country and Kyrgyzstan on the border and energy disputes.<sup>186</sup> Rahmon and Atambayev

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<sup>178</sup> “Tajik leader satisfied with results of visit to Kyrgyzstan,” *Kabar*, September 18, 2007.

<sup>179</sup> “Kyrgyz, Tajik leaders hold one-to-one talks,” *Kabar*, May 16, 2008.

<sup>180</sup> Rachna Uppal, “Border Issues and Bilateral Cooperation Top Agenda for Tajik-Kyrgyz Presidents’ Meeting,” *IHS Global Insight*, September 18, 2007.

<sup>181</sup> “Bakiyev, Rakhmon to Take Bilateral Cooperation to New Level,” *Central Asia & Caucasus Business Weekly*, May 20, 2008.

<sup>182</sup> “Tajik leader warns Kyrgyzstan against civil war,” *Interfax*, April 24, 2010.

<sup>183</sup> “Tajik leader, Kyrgyz minister discuss bilateral relations, power generation,” *BBC World Monitoring*, March 28, 2013.

<sup>184</sup> President Almazbek Atambayev speech, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, September 12, 2014.

<sup>185</sup> “Spotlight: “Shanghai Spirit” helps build community with shared future for SCO members,” *Xinhua*, June 6, 2018.

<sup>186</sup> “Tajikistan ready for closer and more constructive relations with Kyrgyzstan – Rahmon,” *Central Asian News Service*, August 28, 2015.

continued to meet regularly in private at SCO summits.<sup>187</sup> These bilateral meetings led to greater cooperation in the security field, and allowed trust to be reinforced between the two leaders.<sup>188</sup>

Rahmon also utilized the Shanghai Cooperation Organization for sideline meetings with Karimov. Prior to the SCO's formation the Tajik and Uzbek presidents held only two bilateral summits with each other once in 1998, after the end of the civil war and Rahmon visited Uzbekistan, and once in 2000.<sup>189</sup> The 2000 visit was the only time Karimov visited Dushanbe outside of the SCO's multilateral forum. The two leaders would speak on the phone to each other on occasion, which increased in regularity the more the two met at SCO summits.<sup>190</sup>

These interactions, modest in their inception between the two authoritarian presidents, helped lay the groundwork for further trust to be built. The 2008 SCO summit was held in Dushanbe giving Karimov the chance to travel to Tajikistan for the first time in eight years. At the summit Karimov won a key concession in having the Regional Anti-terrorism Structure's role strengthened.<sup>191</sup> Terrorism, especially cross-border terrorism conducted by IMU remnants in Tajikistan, was Tashkent's primary concern. The commitment to RATS coming as it did at the Dushanbe summit with Karimov present, helped restore confidence in the Uzbekistan-Tajikistan bilateral relationship. Coming as it did one year after the friendship treaty was signed, Karimov's attendance at a summit in Tajikistan, and the warm response by Rahmon, allowed the two leaders to work more closely together. As in the case of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan there was enough breathing space, domestically, for Karimov and Rahmon to maneuver and negotiate without fear of domestic repercussions.<sup>192</sup> In addition, the two states, along with the other Central Asian members of the SCO, used the organization to avoid making a strategic choice

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<sup>187</sup> "SCO Heads of State's meeting in private session," Uzbekistan National News Agency, June 9, 2017.

<sup>188</sup> Interview with anonymous EEAS official, July 28, 2017.

<sup>189</sup> "Tajik, Uzbek Leaders Discuss Economic Cooperation, Regional Security," Khovar, June 17, 2000.

<sup>190</sup> "Tajik, Uzbek Leaders Discuss Ties by Phone," ITAR-TASS, December 24, 2003, and "Tajik, Kazakh, Uzbek Leaders Discuss Relations by Phone," BBC News, March 25, 2004.

<sup>191</sup> "SCO Vows to Strengthen Role of Regional Anti-terrorist Structure," Xinhua, August 28, 2008.

<sup>192</sup> "Tajikistan Early Warning: Internal Pressures, External Threats – Analysis" Eurasia Review, January 14, 2016.

between China and Russia.<sup>193</sup> Thus, internal and external pressures on the Uzbek-Tajik rivalry were minimized, giving Rahmon and Karimov a chance to interact, improve communication, and create the foundations for rivalry de-escalation.

The contentious issues that created this complex rivalry in the first place had not yet been resolved. The border between Kyrgyzstan and its two neighbors was, in particular, a difficult issue to overcome.<sup>194</sup> Momentum had been established due to the confidence-building measures, but that momentum needed to be sustained. The next section will examine how the modest amounts of trust between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan that had been built through the SCO's CBMs were reinforced by continual interaction of these states at SCO summits, and how that reinforcement of trust led to de-escalation of this complex rivalry.

### **Trust Reinforcement**

Reinforcement of the trust built through the SCO's CMBs for this complex rivalry followed a similar pattern to that of the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan rivalry. Uzbekistan's absence from most of the SCO's military exercises meant the burden on trust reinforcement would fall to the annual summits. Membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization proved to be advantageous for Dushanbe. It shored up Rahmon's position at home, and allowed him to maneuver diplomatically with his Central Asian counterparts.<sup>195</sup> The presence of Russia and China in the organization helped to offset domestic pressure, in the form of irredentist claims or national chauvinism over the disputed territory.<sup>196</sup>

Resolving Tajikistan's disputes with Uzbekistan was the paramount concern for Rahmon. Thus, when Karimov came to Dushanbe for the 2008 summit it afforded him the

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<sup>193</sup> Roger N. McDermott, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization's Impact on Central Asian Security," *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 59, No. 4, (2012): 60.

<sup>194</sup> "Kyrgyzstan: Time Needed To Resolve Borders With Tajikistan, Uzbekistan," Radio Free Europe, July 21, 2014 Accessed November 27, 2019 at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/borders-kyrgyzstan-uzbekistan-tajikistan-vorukh-mamataliev/25464479.html>.

<sup>195</sup> Interview with anonymous Central Asian security expert, October 28, 2017.

<sup>196</sup> B.Zh Somzhureka, A.M. Yessengaliyeva, Zh.M. Medeubayeva, B.K. Makangali, "Central Asia and Regional Security," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 51, (2018): 168, and Hooman Peimani, 323.

opportunity to hold sideline discussions with his ostensible rival, in his own capital. The multilateral forum helped to create opportunities for greater cooperation between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The strengthening of RATS, coordinated at the 2008 summit, was vital to both Tajik and Uzbek interests, as IMU still remained a problem in Tajikistan.<sup>197</sup> Also, at the 2008 summit both leaders praised the role the Shanghai Cooperation Organization played in expanding cooperation among the member states.<sup>198</sup>

The 2008 summit was a turning point in the Tajik-Uzbek relationship, but the main breakthrough for the two states came at the 2014 summit when the two leaders discussed having better bilateral cooperation, including smoother lines of communication, as well as relaxing border controls.<sup>199</sup> The SCO summit that year was held in Dushanbe and Karimov visited Tajikistan for the first time in six years, the 2008 SCO summit, and for only the third time of his presidency.<sup>200</sup> Both of Karimov's travels to Tajikistan were to attend the SCO summit, being hosted in Dushanbe.<sup>201</sup> It was the third time in six years that the presidents had met on the sidelines of the SCO summit, having done so in 2010 as well, when the summit was held in Tashkent.<sup>202</sup> The two leaders discussed their border and energy issues, and called for an expansion of friendly ties between their respective states.<sup>203</sup> These meetings created the conditions for calculus-based trust to be reinforced. The more meetings that were held the more the trusting bonds developed between the two leaders became habit.

By 2015 progress has been reported in enhancing bilateral cooperation in trade, transportation, and on water issues.<sup>204</sup> This progress was linked directly to the sideline meeting, where confidence-building measures were agreed to.<sup>205</sup> These follow-up meetings, highlighted

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<sup>197</sup> "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan Planned Terror Attacks in Dushanbe – Ministry," Interfax, July 27, 2007.

<sup>198</sup> "Tajik, Uzbek leaders Discuss Cooperation," Tajik Television First Channel, Dushanbe, August 27, 2008.

<sup>199</sup> "Pundit predicts thaw in Uzbek-Tajik ties following summit talks," BBC Worldwide Monitoring, September 14, 2014.

<sup>200</sup> "Uzbek, Tajik leaders signal thaw in frosty ties," BBC Worldwide Monitoring, September 12, 2014.

<sup>201</sup> "Uzbek President to visit Tajikistan, thaw decades-long 'undeclared Cold War'," Sputnik International, March 5, 2018.

<sup>202</sup> "Tajik president to attend SCO summit in Tashkent," Russia & CIS Military Newswire, June 7, 2010.

<sup>203</sup> "Report sees thaw in frosty Tajik-Uzbek ties," BBC Monitoring, April 30, 2015, and "Tajik, Uzbek leaders to meet tete-a-tete after several years of cold relations," BBC Monitoring, September 11, 2014.

<sup>204</sup> "Report sees thaw in frosty Tajik-Uzbek ties," Asia-Plus, April 30, 2015.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

by the Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation meeting on June 23, 2015, ultimately led to the resumption of air traffic between Tashkent and Dushanbe.<sup>206</sup> This was significant since air communication had been suspended since the beginning of the Tajikistan civil war.<sup>207</sup>

Prior to 2015 the Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation had only met twice on August 22, 2000 and February 18, 2009.<sup>208</sup> Both times momentum was stalled, but since Karimov and Rahmon's meeting in 2014 the commission has met three times, reporting progress each time.<sup>209</sup> In addition to air travel being resumed, the intergovernmental commission sought to resolve the issue over the Rogun dam.<sup>210</sup> Tajikistan took some steps to alleviate the water situation, "building tunnel at different heights..." in order to allow water to free flow.<sup>211</sup> These talks and actions were indicative of reinforcing trust building between Rahmon and Karimov. The two leaders continued this momentum by meeting again at the 2016 SCO summit held in Tashkent.<sup>212</sup>

Two months later Karimov passed away, but his successor Mirziyoyev took things even further than Karimov, adapting an Action Strategy on five priorities for Uzbekistan-one of which was improving cross-border relations with its neighbors.<sup>213</sup> On October 3, 2016 the two sides signed a memorandum, of understanding to resolve the border issues as quickly as possible.<sup>214</sup> Tensions gradually eased, especially after Karimov's death and border negotiations began again for the first time since 2010.<sup>215</sup> In March 2018, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev came to Dushanbe for the first official state visit by an Uzbek president to Tajikistan.<sup>216</sup> The initial foundation for this trip was laid by Karimov when he and Rahmon began meeting bilaterally, if informally on

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<sup>206</sup> "Tajik-Uzbek flights to resume after 24-year break," Avesta, November 30, 2016.

<sup>207</sup> "Dushanbe, Tashkent cannot reach agreement on resumption of flights" AKIPress, January 26, 2015.

<sup>208</sup> "Cooperation of the Republic of Uzbekistan with the CIS countries and Georgia" Uzbekistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, accessed February 19, 2019 at: <https://mfa.uz/en/cooperation/countries/375/?print=Y>.

<sup>209</sup> "Tajikistan says border talks with Uzbekistan constructive," Interfax, February 16, 2018.

<sup>210</sup> Interview with anonymous European Union official, July 21, 2017.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> "Presidents of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan hold talks," Uzbekistan Daily, June 23, 2016.

<sup>213</sup> Interview with Col. Ratkis November 2017.

<sup>214</sup> "The Kyrgyz and Uzbek sides signed a memorandum of understanding," AKIPress, October 3, 2016, accessed March 20, 2018 at: <http://www.for.kg/news-381715-ru.html>.

<sup>215</sup> Interview with OSCE official, July 26, 2017.

<sup>216</sup> "Tajikistan: State visit of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev to the Republic of Tajikistan," Mena Report, March 14, 2018.

the sideline of SCO meetings. Trust was built incrementally between the rivals and accelerated into a more through de-escalation of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan's various crises, through the principle of trust reinforcement.<sup>217</sup>

Attempts had been made in the past to resolve the Tajik-Uzbek border dispute, with only tepid results to show for it. Most notably this happened in 2000, prior to the creation of the SCO, when Uzbekistan and Tajikistan signed a memorandum to begin the process of border demarcation, yet Tashkent subsequently mined the border.<sup>218</sup> Continual participation at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's annual summits helped keep Karimov and Rahmon engaged with each other. Their interactions helped establish some basic, calculus-based trust, which in turn became habit as their meetings continued. Mirziyoyev has placed an emphasis on improving bilateral ties, a process which Karimov began, and that led to progress being made in keeping tensions between them from escalating to wider conflict. Trust was reinforced through the SCO, becoming habit, and without the organization's mechanisms to enhance that reinforcement it is doubtful that tensions would have been so easily de-escalated.

As for the Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan rivalry, de-escalation has occurred more slowly. Relations between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan were more acrimonious over the border than Tajik-Uzbek relations were, yet dialogue continued between Karimov and Kyrgyz president Atambayev, mostly at Shanghai Cooperation Organization summits.<sup>219</sup> Karimov did meet with his Kyrgyz counterpart on sideline meetings at SCO summits on two occasions.<sup>220</sup> The Uzbek president did not meet bilaterally with his Kyrgyz counterpart, except for twice with sideline meetings at the annual SCO summit. One of those times was in June 2016 a few months after a major dispute between the two states that could have escalated to all-out war.<sup>221</sup> Instead,

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<sup>217</sup> "Uzbekistan president to visit Tajikistan," Times of Central Asia, March 2, 2018.

<sup>218</sup> "Tajikistan, Uzbekistan Sign Peace Treaty," Xinhua, June 16, 2000.

<sup>219</sup> "Kyrgyz and Uzbek presidents hold 1st bilateral meeting since September 2013," Interfax, June 24, 2016.

<sup>220</sup> In September 2013 in Bishkek and again in June 2016 in Tashkent Karimov and Atambayev met at the SCO summits. The two did not have any other bilateral meetings during Atambayev's tenure as President. "Kyrgyz and Uzbek presidents hold 1st bilateral meeting since September 2013," Central Asia General Newswire, June 24, 2016.

<sup>221</sup> "Kyrgyz president decides to attend SCO summit in Tashkent," ITAR-TASS, June 20, 2016.

tensions were reduced, and de-escalation of the situation was helped and encouraged by the SCO sideline meeting.<sup>222</sup>

As was the case of Tajikistan, progress was made under new Uzbek president Mirziyoyev. Thus, the foundation for expanded cooperation between the two states had been laid. A year after Karimov's death Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan signed an agreement over water sharing and the Kosonsoy water reservoir.<sup>223</sup> In addition, in 2019 the two states agreed to exchange land along the border in an effort to ultimately resolve their dispute.<sup>224</sup> These moves have helped ease tensions between the states on two fronts, water allocation and on territorial claims. Mirziyoyev has accelerated the cooperative efforts started by Karimov to reinforce trust and keep the rivalry from dangerous escalation. Since Mirziyoyev was Karimov's prime minister for thirteen years prior to becoming president, it seems reasonable he is following the prior regime's desired foreign policy in reaching out to Uzbekistan's neighbors.<sup>225</sup> The SCO proved to be the best forum for this rivalry de-escalation to occur, where calculus-based trust could be established by allowing the rivals breathing space. That trust was subsequently reinforced by follow-on meetings, becoming habit, and thus the rivalry between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan could be tempered and kept from backsliding.

The same dynamics of trust reinforcement in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization hold true for Kyrgyzstan in its rivalry with Tajikistan. Perhaps more so than the other Central Asian states, Kyrgyzstan values its membership in the SCO.<sup>226</sup> Being the smallest state population wise, and one of the poorest in Asia, Kyrgyzstan's leaders – Akayev and his successors – benefited from the prestige membership in the SCO offered. This was especially true for Atambayev, who sought to bandwagon with some of the larger states which Kyrgyzstan

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<sup>222</sup> "Kyrgyz leader orders "principled" stance in Uzbek border dispute," BBC Worldwide Monitoring, August 29, 2016.

<sup>223</sup> "Uzbek-Kyrgyz water reservoir deal marks thaw in relations," BBC Monitoring, October 6, 2017.

<sup>224</sup> Nurjamal Djanibekova, "Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan exchange land in historic settlement," Eurasianet, September 12, 2019, Accessed November 29, 2019 at: <https://eurasianet.org/kyrgyzstan-uzbekistan-exchange-land-in-historic-settlement>.

<sup>225</sup> "Islam Karimov planned to visit Bishkek in September - President Mirziyoyev," Central Asian News Service, December 24, 2016.

<sup>226</sup> Interview with Thomas Wood, April 5, 2017.

did not have a dispute with.<sup>227</sup> Kyrgyzstan had breathing space within the organization. This breathing space was not necessary so much for domestic considerations but to balance against Kyrgyzstan's rivals. Kyrgyzstan has developed a close relationship with China, which gives it a measure of leverage in negotiating with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.<sup>228</sup> At SCO summits then, there was enough insulation from both domestic and external pressures for Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to air their differences over the border and resource sharing. The organization's structure allowed both sides to have their side heard, thus improving communication. Continual meetings at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and follow-up bilateral meetings have led to the reinforcement of calculus-based trust and prevented the rivalry from reoccurring.<sup>229</sup>

The border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is still in the process of being delimited, and demarcated, and there have been setbacks while demarcation is ongoing. Most recently in September 2019 there was a shoot-out between Kyrgyz and Tajik border guards over a disputed section of the frontier.<sup>230</sup> However, these clashes have not prevented Rahmon and Jennbekov from holding talks to prevent an escalation of hostilities.<sup>231</sup> This was not the first time either that the two leaders hastened to meet each other over a border clash. In July 2019 they held talks along their border near the Ferghana valley, which had seen clashes between local border police recently.<sup>232</sup>

These talks have reduced the chances of conflict erupting between the two Central Asian states, and now both leaders appear to be comfortable in joint settings, without the need for a third-party facilitator. According to one official: "the period of bilateral tensions is over."<sup>233</sup> This

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<sup>227</sup> Roy Allison, "Protective Integration and Security Policy Coordination: Comparing the SCO and CSTO," *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 3, (2018): 338.

<sup>228</sup> "China, Kyrgyzstan leaders agree to strengthen ties," Xinhua, June 7, 2018.

<sup>229</sup> "Jeenbekov invites Rahmon to visit Kyrgyzstan with return official visit" Kyrgyz National News Agency, February 1, 2018, and "Tajik president, Kyrgyz FM discuss speeding up border delimitation," Central Asian General Newswire, May 4, 2018.

<sup>230</sup> "Deadly Clashes On Tajik-Kyrgyz Border Leave One Dead," Radio Free Europe, September 16, 2019, Accessed November 29, 2019 at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/deadly-clashes-on-tajik-kyrgyz-border/30167378.html>.

<sup>231</sup> "Kyrgyz President Holds Meeting on Border Clash with Tajikistan," Kyrgyz Television 1, Bishkek, September 17, 2019, and "Sooronbai Jeenbekov and Emomali Rahmon discuss border issues," November 28, 2019, [https://24.kg/english/136226\\_Sooronbai\\_Jeenbekov\\_and\\_Emomali\\_Rahmon\\_discuss\\_border\\_issues/](https://24.kg/english/136226_Sooronbai_Jeenbekov_and_Emomali_Rahmon_discuss_border_issues/).

<sup>232</sup> "Tajik, Kyrgyz Presidents Hold Talks Amid Border Tensions," Radio Free Europe, July 26, 2019.

<sup>233</sup> Interview with anonymous EU official, July 21, 2017.

is a stark turnaround from just a few years ago and occurred without a significant shock in the relationship between the two states. As tensions on the border have eased concerns over water allocation became easier to resolve as well.<sup>234</sup> The rivalry between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan was intense for a prolonged period of time, yet to date it has never escalated beyond border skirmishes.

The role the Shanghai Cooperation Organization played in helping bridge the trust gap was an important one. It was mainly through the use of summitry, but also through the participation in multilateral military exercises, that calculus-based trust was first built, and then reinforced, allowing Dushanbe and Bishkek a platform to nominally work through their differences. For instance, both states had stated a willingness to use force to secure their border, which is another reason the January 2014 border incident was so significant. It was the first time that border guards in Central Asia had exchanged live fire with each other, resulting in death.<sup>235</sup> That crisis, however, did not escalate but gradually the two states stood down. Through multilateral mechanisms set up due to better cooperation between the two nations' border forces, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan were able to defuse the 2014 crisis.<sup>236</sup>

In February 2017, the Tajiki and Kyrgyz border agencies set up a plan to “eliminate conflict situations on the border”, by facilitating better communication with local government officials.<sup>237</sup> This plan was done in conjunction with greater training efforts of the respective border guards on the part of the OSCE.<sup>238</sup> These multilateral and bilateral ventures could have only occurred if the two sides trusted each other enough to allow them to happen. Both presidents met at SCO summits, and their militaries engaged in exercises nearly on an annual basis. This intimate exposure, repeated consistently, led to the notion that they can trust each other being reinforced.

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<sup>234</sup> Interview with anonymous government official, January 26, 2018.

<sup>235</sup> Igor Rotar, “Conflicts Between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan Potentially Undermine CSTO and Custom Union in Central Asia,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 11, No. 27, February 11, 2014.

<sup>236</sup> Interview with anonymous EU official, July 28, 2017.

<sup>237</sup> “Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan adopt plan to avert border conflicts,” *Kabar Online*, February 6, 2017.

<sup>238</sup> Interview with OSCE official, October 17, 2016.

While the border issue between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan has not been fully resolved, the governments of these respective states have started taking a more proactive approach, and rivalry reemergence now appears to be a remote prospect. The two leaders utilized membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to create domestic breathing space and thus could lay the foundations for calculus-based trust to form between their two states. Reinforcement of calculus-based trust has been integral in keeping tensions within this complex triadic rivalry reduced, and preventing rivalry backsliding. There was no major third-party intervention and there were no major shocks in this rivalry, save for Karimov's death. This shock came after Karimov himself had initiated much of the de-escalation process with his neighbors. Karimov, by virtue of Uzbekistan's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, was forced to meet the leaders of his Central Asian neighbors every year. It was more difficult for the Uzbek president to avoid his counterparts in the SCO than in other regional organizations. He had specifically sought entry into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Tajikistan also benefited from having an effective voice within the SCO's structure. The nominally egalitarian dimensions of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, where each member is given a vote, and each member has a chance at the rotating presidency lend it an air of legitimacy. Thus, agreements reached under its auspices carry some heft. Rahmon, could clearly state Tajikistan's position vis-à-vis the border with Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, thus paving the way for smoother communication and thus sustainable cooperation with its rivals.

Membership in the SCO has accomplished several goals for these smaller states embroiled in disputes. As Hoffman suggests, institutional trust provides effective voice and domestic breathing space for rivals. In the case of the SCO, all three of these relatively small Central Asian republics, are given the same seat at the table as larger powers Russia and

China. Their leaders could air grievances in a formalized setting. This provided breathing space for them back home. Internal pressures such as clan politics, and ethnic tensions could be marginalized due to the multilateral format the Shanghai Cooperation Organization uses. There was less pressure on the principles to signal each other, therefore signaling was more likely to occur.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has analyzed the complex rivalry that exists among Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. These three states have had disputes over territory, borders, and water allocation. In addition, Islamic militancy and ethnic strife has boiled over to violence, exacerbating tensions among them. Triadic rivalries are rarely observed in international relations, but they are not unheard of, and the relationship between Uzbekistan and its smaller neighbors Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan fits the definition of a triadic, complex rivalry. There has been a scarcity of literature on this subject, thus it was necessary to establish that their relationship could be categorized as a rivalry. After the argument was made that a rivalry did indeed exist, the second half of this chapter examined that rivalry's de-escalation process, including signaling that occurred in the Shanghai Five forum, and the early stages of the SCO. This led to the three states participating in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's CBMs including military exercises and summitry. These confidence-building measures helped establish and build trust, which was later reinforced by the repeated involvement of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan with the SCO in multilateral summits and military exercises.

The rivalry has de-escalated in recent years, as tensions have eased among the three states. This de-escalation took place despite no major shocks or third-party intervention in the rivalry. Rivalry de-escalation was due largely although not exclusively to the CBMs put in place by the structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, in particular summitry. This allowed

the state leaders had greater interaction with each other. This interaction, spurred by the breathing space and an effective voice in negotiations that membership in the SCO offered, led to calculus-based trust being established among the leaders.

Once calculus-based trust was established among the participants, it was reinforced through incremental confidence-building measures such as summits, and continual bilateral meetings, wherein the trust building became habit, becoming second-nature to the participants. These mechanisms helped mitigate rivalry tensions and prevented the rivalries from backsliding among these Central Asian republics by improving communication and muting internal and external pressure on the rivals. This process was begun prior to Uzbek President Islam Karimov's death and accelerated under his successor, Shavkat Mirziyoyev. Thus, it predates any shock to the triadic rivalry.

Without these forums it is debatable if de-escalation would have occurred, or been sustained as the territorial issues seemed intractable. Tajik president Rahmon reached out to his Kyrgyz counterpart Atambayev only on the sideline of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit meeting. Later on, they engaged in bilateral talks and exchanges, but the impetus for communication came at the SCO. Karimov, likewise, utilized the forum to reach out to his Tajik and Kyrgyz counterparts. After his death, Mirziyoyev enhanced his own profile at the SCO summits, continuing dialogue with the heads of state of the other Central Asian republics. In this way, trust continued to be reinforced by the multilateral mechanisms in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

The SCO was not solely responsible for the rivalry's de-escalation of course; the principle actors needed to take the necessary steps in order to set de-escalation motion. And indeed, there are still contentious issues that need to be resolved, such as the Tajik-Kyrgyz border, so there is a possibility the rivalry could re-emerge. But the organization did provide the platform for these smaller states to start the de-escalation process. Without the breathing space

and effective voice that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization provided, it is unlikely calculus-based trust could be established enough for the de-escalation process of this complex triadic rivalry to take hold, and to prevent the three states' rivalries with each other from backsliding. The next chapter will conclude the thesis, by summarizing its main points and pointing the way to future research.

## Chapter Seven

### Conclusion

This thesis has examined rivalries were present in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and, if so, the organization's capability, if any, to de-escalate rivalry tensions among its members. The research question first poised in the introductory chapter asks whether rivalries existed, and if the SCO has played a role in de-escalating the rivalry, or at least prevented the rivalries from escalating to conflict among its original members. In other words, keeping rivalry impulses, the desire to escalate the rivalry to conflict, to a minimum. The proceeding chapters argued that the structure of the organization was instrumental to build and reinforce trust among its members, which aided in the rivalry de-escalation process.

The SCO's founding members include Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, in addition to China and Russia, and all had or have border disputes with each other. Using process tracing and a case study approach to find a minimally sufficient explanation as to if rivalries de-escalated among the SCO's members, and if so how, the thesis argued that specific mechanisms in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization helped alleviate pressure for these states to escalate their contention over territory and other issues to conflict, by building and reinforcing mutual trust.

Territorial and border disputes are considered a key impetus that can lead to rivalries and then to armed conflict. Since territory is fixed, dispute over ownership of it is prolonged.<sup>1</sup> The SCO emerged out of a border resolution between China and Russia that settled their long-standing rivalry. Mutual trust was the necessary ingredient to ensure that the rivalry de-escalated and did not reemerge. The way the Shanghai Cooperation Organization built trust was mainly

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<sup>1</sup> Monica Duffy Toft, "Territory and War," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 51, No. 4, (2014): 187.

through granting domestic breathing space to its member states through the use of summitry and military exercises. Both parties would also have a more effective voice in any potential negotiations, given the proximity of the leaders to each other during the annual summits. The rival parties could air their differences without fear of reprisals from domestic factions and build a semblance of calculus-based trust between each other. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization's potential role in rivalry de-escalation has not been previously examined in the scholarly literature.

The existing literature on rivalries has focused by and large on rivalries as a whole, instead of individual rivalries, stressing mainly their propensity for conflict escalation, and their impact on the international system. Those studies that examine de-escalation, or termination, of rivalries have emphasized the importance political shocks play in the role of de-escalation. Rivalries are assumed to exist in a stasis state until a shock such as a regime change either escalates it to war or de-escalates it. This assumption is not an accurate assessment of how rivalries de-escalate as this thesis has shown. Instead, this thesis argues that reinforcement of trust is the more assured path toward rivalry de-escalation. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, much misunderstood in its own literature, has incorporated the mechanisms by which it is easier to obtain rivalry de-escalation among its members.

The end of the Cold War, and the return to multipolarity in the international system, has also heightened the rivalry phenomenon. When the Soviet Union broke apart, the newly formed Central Asian republics found their borders contested. These border disputes, coupled with disputes over resources and ethnic enclaves led to interstate rivalries being formed among Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. These rivalries did not erupt into intense conflict between the participants. Instead, they simmered throughout the last twenty years, often overshadowed by the rise in Islamic extremism in the region. Due to this, and the fact

that Central Asia was becoming increasingly dominated by larger powers such as Russia, China, and the United States, these rivalries escaped the scrutiny of scholars.

Simultaneous to these rivalries emerging, the long-standing rivalry between China and Russia began to de-escalate. Despite multiple issues still existing between the two nuclear powers, such as latent feelings of regret about the border settlement and peer competition in Central Asia, they have set aside differences and developed a firm bilateral relationship. This relationship has been built on mutual trust and reaffirmed over the past two decades. Trust is the most important element in rivalry de-escalation, and that trust needs to be reinforced over time. It is not enough to have one-off meetings, establish diplomatic relations, or sign single treaties, if those moves are not followed up on consistently and repetitively. This is done in order to prevent rivalries from backsliding once they are de-escalated.

Thus, this thesis has proposed a new rivalry de-escalation model, one that focuses on the implementation of trust and the reinforcement of that trust via the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as a conduit, as the contributing factor in de-escalating rivalries. Chapter two introduced a review of the literature on both rivalries and trust in international relations. This review found that most scholarship on rivalry de-escalation focused on the existence of political shocks as the main impetus for said de-escalation. Rivalries were considered to be in a form of stasis, unmoving, until a shock, such as a regime change, or defeat in war, began the rivalry de-escalation process.

The literature on trust has focused on interpersonal relationships among leaders, or the ways in which trusting bonds can form between states through shared norms or values. Little has been said about the role intergovernmental organizations can build trust with states that do not have liberal norms or shared values over a prolonged period of time. In addition, the scholarship on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, while still emerging, does not perceive the organization's ability to de-escalate rivalries.

Chapter three conceptualized the methodological framework for the thesis. The first section of this chapter details the research methods used in the thesis, which was a qualitative case study approach utilizing process tracing. This leads into an analysis of the mechanisms that were examined in the thesis: the rivalry process, signaling, and the role the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has had in building and reinforcing trust through confidence-building measures. This chapter laid out a model for rivalry de-escalation that occurs through the structure of the SCO, which enables trust building and reinforcement to take place. This rivalry de-escalation model is then applied to the three empirical chapters which followed chapter three.

Chapter four examined the China-Russia rivalry, one of the oldest, and thus one of the more intractable rivalries in the world. Following the processes laid out in chapter three, the chapter first explored diplomatic signaling in the rivalry, which led to the establishment of confidence-building measures. These confidence-building measures in the form of summits and exchanges between the two countries' leaders and military respectfully, paved the way for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to form. China and Russia wanted to embed the trust building mechanisms that had eased tensions in their rivalry. As a result, the SCO was created, which helped reinforce trust between them and keep their rivalry de-escalated.

Chapter five analyzed the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan rivalry. Since this rivalry is not a consensus rivalry, and since it is necessary to establish that the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan relationship post-independence is a rivalry, due to the fact that rivalries preclude an easy solution to their intractable nature, the first section underscores the issues that created the conditions for rivalry. Conflict over territory and animosity between the two leaders, and disputes over water management all were contributing factors to the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan rivalry. The next section examined the signaling that occurred in the rivalry, which happened soon after Kazakhstan joined the Shanghai Five forum.

After Uzbekistan joined the forum, creating the SCO, both countries became involved in the organization's confidence-building mechanisms. Through summits and military exercises sponsored by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization trust was built incrementally between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. This trust was then reinforced through primarily summitry between Islam Karimov and Nursultan Nazarbayev. This led to a de-escalation in tensions between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, a situation that continued after Karimov's death in 2016.

Chapter six, the final substantive chapter, examined the complex or triadic rivalry that emerged among Uzbekistan and the two smallest states in the SCO, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. These three Central Asian states have border and water allocation disputes similar to the Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan rivalry, as well as the dimension of ethnic conflict. However, there is almost no literature on the development of this triadic rivalry, thus the first section of this chapter analyzed the issues that contributed to the rivalry. The second section examined the de-escalation process, focusing on signaling, first in the Shanghai Five forum, then in the early stages of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. This was followed by an assessment of the SCO's confidence-building mechanisms, summitry and military exercises, and how they assisted in building and reinforcing trust to the point that the rivalry did not escalate to conflict. Rather it has de-escalated and has not reemerged.

This section has briefly summarized the thesis, and its main argument, including the rivalry concept and how the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has managed to de-escalate rivalry tensions among its members. The next section will examine the key findings of this thesis, and what new contribution it makes to the wider literature on rivalries and trust building in the SCO. It adds new understanding on interstate rivalry de-escalation, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

The main conclusion from this thesis is that the SCO has mechanisms that build and reinforce mutual trust between two rivals, and these mechanisms are the most essential

elements of rivalry de-escalation in the organization. This is because trust helps prevent backsliding in rivalries once the de-escalation process has begun. Trust is not easy to obtain, and can be lost just as easily. This reinforcement process is likely the best way to ensure that trust is enduring, that it will outlast regimes. Ideally, this process is formalized, institutionalized, and repetitive, giving leaders no choice but to interact in their chosen forums. Despite the authoritarian nature of most of its members, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is uniquely suited to develop the reinforcement procedure. Trust building should be incremental, and begins with one state signaling another of its intentions. The signal may be overt, but in the case studies presented in this thesis, signaling was often informal. The initial signal may be rejected but if a state is consistent then the other rival state will eventually respond.

Trust that evolves out of institutions and institutional cooperation is more sustainable since it creates domestic breathing space and levels the playing field between the rivals. That trust, once initial rapprochement has been established, needs to be reinforced through formal mechanisms, such as summitry, that only the intergovernmental institution can provide. These mechanisms ensure that trust is reinforced over a sustained period of time, outlasting regimes, and preventing the rivalry from re-escalating or backsliding into conflict. Treaties relate to specific events or issues and thus can be isolated from the wider causes of the rivalry. In addition, norms can and change, and cultural values are not always universally shared.<sup>2</sup> Intergovernmental organizations on the other hand are more enduring. They can create conditions which will coerce cooperation.

For example, Islam Karimov, the former president of Uzbekistan, may have been a major impediment to resolution of the myriad issues facing Central Asia, he may have not been the only issue, but his intransigence certainly did not help his country's relations with its

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<sup>2</sup> Diana Panke, Ulrich Petersohn, "Why International Norms Disappear Sometimes," *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 18, No. 4, (2011): 719–742.

neighbors. However, after consistent and constant exposure to his peer group, the other presidents in the region, he eventually relented and signaled his intentions to de-escalate tensions. It is ultimately unknown if Karimov would have acted unilaterally to de-escalate tensions, without the auspices or support of the SCO. He did reach out to Kazakhstan president Nursultan Nazarbayev, but only after Kazakhstan had joined the Shanghai Five. Their bilateral meetings were inconsistent until Uzbekistan joined the Shanghai Five and then the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

The role of trust building in rivalry de-escalation has been developing more academic scrutiny.<sup>3</sup> This thesis has sought to add to that burgeoning literature, by examining newer rivalries that have not been considered in-depth by previous scholars. In addition, it examines a well-known rivalry, the Russia China dispute, from a different angle, arguing that instead of shocks, it was incremental building and reinforcing of mutual trust that led to de-escalation. Without this key component of reinforcement, it is probable that the still unresolved issues between the two dominant powers may have backslid into rivalry again. Indeed, there are still scholars who predict that the so-called strategic partnership is not sustainable.<sup>4</sup>

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, likewise, is thought to be too brittle to have any lasting impact. The addition of India and Pakistan to the SCO, especially, is seen as a challenge the organization cannot overcome.<sup>5</sup> It is true that the India-Pakistan dispute over Kashmir appears to be intractable. How their rivalry will impact the SCO is ultimately unknown, but the longer they stay in the organization, the more likely it will help temper their dispute. This aspect of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is beyond the purview of this thesis. Research was unfortunately limited to the founding members of the SCO. Future scholarship may indeed

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<sup>3</sup> Ahmad, Ebert, 65-66.

<sup>4</sup> Carla P. Freeman, "New Strategies for an Old Rivalry? China-Russia Relations in Central Asia after the Energy Boom," *Pacific Review*, Vol. 31, No. 5, (2018): 649.

<sup>5</sup> Felix K. Chang, "Organization of Rivals: Limits of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," Foreign Policy Research Institute, September 27, 2018, accessed February 22, 2019 at: <https://www.fpri.org/article/2018/09/organization-of-rivals-limits-of-the-shanghai-cooperation-organization/>.

examine more closely the role India and Pakistan play in the further evolution of this regional intergovernmental organization.

It is probable that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is sustainable for the long term as an IGO. China, at least, has invested a great deal of political capital and prestige to ensure the success of the organization. China has even, recently, backed away from confronting India more forcefully over the Doklam region.<sup>6</sup> The Shanghai Cooperation Organization emphasizes consensus building, and this is consistent with China's wider foreign policy approach in its "peaceful rise" to major power status.<sup>7</sup> For China, the SCO is instrumental in achieving its foreign policy goals. Its confidence-building mechanisms have kept the border lands stable, and allowed the energy-hungry state to explore new markets in Eurasia. The SCO is too important to fail, at least as far as China is concerned, and as China goes so goes the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, at least so far. Future research could focus on the SCO's involvement, if any, in trilateral border disputes. However, with the addition of more members, such as Pakistan and India, the prevalence of trilateral border disputes in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization may increase, especially among China, India, and Pakistan, and thus warrant further study. This thesis excluded India and Pakistan from its analysis, as they were new members, but a follow-on study could examine in more detail what role the SCO may play in resolving border disputes.

Future scholarship on trust can also examine the role reinforcing that trust has on conflict de-escalation. Both Wheeler and Kupchan have touched on how trust can ultimately de-escalate rivalries, after two states agree to meet. But Wheeler focuses on the interpersonal connection leaders make as the decisive factor in relieving tensions, while Kupchan sees societal integration and narrative generation as integral to peace.<sup>8</sup> Kupchan's model only works between states who share democratic norms, and a similar cultural background. Wheeler's approach, while useful in initiating trust, only lasts as long as those leaders who make a connection are in power.

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<sup>6</sup> Kallol Bhattacharjee, "Doklam de-escalation based on mutual agreement, says MEA," *The Hindu*, August 28, 2017, accessed February 22, 2019 at: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-china-agree-to-disengage-at-doklam/article19575154.ece?homepage=true>.

<sup>7</sup> Jaewoo Choo, "Ideas Matter: China's Peaceful Rise," *Asia Europe Journal*, Vol. 7, No. 3, (2009): 400.

<sup>8</sup> Wheeler, *Trusting Enemies, Interpersonal Relationships in International Conflict*, 48, and Kupchan, 37.

A contemporary example of Wheeler's approach of trust being built is between North Korea and the United States. North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has, by many accounts, established a good relationship with U.S. President Donald Trump.<sup>9</sup> They have already met twice, with Trump becoming the first sitting US President to set foot in North Korea.<sup>10</sup> This was done, despite little progress made in North Korean de-nuclearization, and wide skepticism about Kim's actual commitment to de-nuclearization.<sup>11</sup> This scenario is still developing so it is unclear what will happen. In the short-term however, the interpersonal connection that Trump and Kim have apparently made is unlikely to develop into a real de-escalation of the North Korea, U.S. dispute. Nor, will it end the North Korea -South Korea rivalry, despite a similar budding relationship between Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in.<sup>12</sup> Unless there is follow-up, reinforcement of trust, in a sustainable and meaningful way. Leaders come and go, and rivalries whose de-escalation is overly dependent on the interpersonal relationship of leaders risk backsliding. Reinforcement of that trust, therefore, is essential to sustainable conflict de-escalation.

Finally, Hoffman's model posits on how institutions can help build trust between states. However, he does not think that trust is built incrementally, and thinks, like Kupchan, that norms, or treaties, can build sustainable trust rather than intergovernmental organizations. However, these norms should be shared, and Hoffman assumes they are liberal in nature. On how non-liberal states build trust among each other he has little answer.<sup>13</sup> He also gave short shrift to the role Intergovernmental organizations can play in building trust, wherein this thesis has attempted to fill in the gaps in this argument, albeit limited only to the role the Shanghai Cooperation Organization plays in trust facilitation.

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<sup>9</sup> Edward Wong, David E. Sanger, "Trump Will Meet Again With Kim, Despite North Korea's Lapses, Bolton Says," *New York Times*, December 5, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Baker, Michael Crowley, "Trump Steps Into North Korea and Agrees With Kim Jong-un to Resume Talks," *New York Times*, June 30, 2019.

<sup>11</sup> Kelsey Davenport, "Stakes Grow for Possible Trump-Kim Summit," *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 49, No. 1, (Jan.-Feb. 2019): 29.

<sup>12</sup> Choe Sang-hun, "North and South Korea Agree to Summit on Dismantling Weapons," *New York Times*, August 14, 2018.

<sup>13</sup> Hoffman, *Building Trust*, 138.

At first glance the notion of building trust leading to rivalries being de-escalated is elementary. But the proposition, as simple as it seems, still needed closer scrutiny, especially as to how exactly this process worked. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization was chosen as it was a newer intergovernmental organization with little literature written on its processes, and whose members had apparent rivalries among themselves. These rivalries were not always readily noticeable, but the various disputes that emerged in Central Asia in the 1990s led to rivalries being formed. However, despite the ingredients for conflict being present: disputes over territory, authoritarian regimes, and distrust about intentions, none of these rivalries escalated to serious conflict. In fact, they have de-escalated.

The process of how these rivalries de-escalated through the incremental building of trust in the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was a new approach to the study of interstate rivalries, given the relative newness and staying power of the organization. Further study on rivalries could expand on the role nondemocratic intergovernmental institutions such as the SCO can play in instilling trust, and how the reinforcement of that trust can prevent those conflicts and rivalries from reemerging.

Ultimately, there is still much room in the rivalry literature to examine the processes of de-escalation. This is especially true when it comes to how to avoid the reemergence of a rivalry, once it is thought to have de-escalated, or outright terminated. For example, despite having confidence-building measures in place an issue may become too intractable for states to resolve the issue peacefully, and a rivalry may reemerge, or not de-escalate at all. India and Pakistan, especially, present a challenge to the de-escalation model as they may be one terrorist attack away from conflict escalation.<sup>14</sup> Rivalries require constant diligence to prevent their reemergence over time. Nevertheless, there has been a dearth of studies in this specific area of rivalry reemergence. Mutual trust, once established, if it is deep enough, may be enough to

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<sup>14</sup> "Indo-Pak tensions rise amidst global concerns," Daily News (Sri Lanka), February 23, 2019.

prevent escalation in rivalries. At the very least the principals involved should at least give their opponents the benefit of the doubt. This thesis offers one model to prevent rivalry backsliding, which has received little scholarly attention, but it is certainly not the only approach.

The future is uncertain for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. It has succeeded in its initial goals in instilling confidence-building measures, but its detractors argue that its structure is still brittle. It may be a matter of time before the SCO's members devolve into bickering feuds over territory or power projection. Such a scenario seems unlikely as the member states have invested in the structures of the organization. At some point it may become too big to fail. Whether the organization is content to continue on its current development course, or if it will expand its mission is also unclear. New members may also complicate its future. Iran has agitated for years to join the bloc, yet brings with it overt hostility toward the United States and Israel.<sup>15</sup> Adding Iran to the SCO may complicate its relationship with the U.S., and other states in the Middle East. The consensus-building apparatus that is its focus may give way to diverging state interests. More time is needed to observe the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and scholarship on it will no doubt evolve.

The argument presented within this thesis has attempted to shed new light on the rivalry conundrum, which has led more often than not to conflict over the past two hundred years, and especially the role the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has played in de-escalation of several difficult rivalries among its members. A new rivalry de-escalation model was proposed, one that emphasized the reinforcement of mutual trust among these rival states through the various mechanisms available to the SCO, which is still a relatively new intergovernmental organization, with little literature to date on how it manages the various rivalries among its members. This

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<sup>15</sup> Aylin Unver Noi, "Iran and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the Changing International Environment," *Indian Journal of Asian Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 1-2, (June-December 2012): 50.

model was applied to these rivalries that had emerged or existed among the original members of the SCO. Thus, it has offered a new scholarly approach to the study of interstate rivalries, and specifically, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's role in building and reinforcing trust, which has consistently led its members along the path to rivalry de-escalation.

## **Appendix One:**

### **Sample Non-Confidential Interview**

#### **Central Asia:**

#### **Border Interview Questionnaire by BOMCA 9**

November 2017

1. Could you describe the role the EU's Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA) has in the region?

Since the early 90-s of the last century, the European Union increasingly sees Central Asia as one of the strategically important regions for cooperation and development assistance. Trans-regional challenges such as trafficking of drugs, organized and serious crime, trafficking in human beings, and violent extremism/terrorism coming from and through the CA region influence the EU interests. On the other hand, CA is very important from China – EU transit corridor development point of view. Therefore, the EU has been supporting five Central Asian states through various development and cooperation mechanisms. The current basis of the EU approach towards the Central Asian States is described in the document “EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership” that was adopted by the European Council in June 2007 and later on revised several times. It was announced at political level many times that a new EU – CA Partnership Strategy is going to be agreed in 2019.

Because border security is one of the key elements for stability of the whole region, in 2002 - 2003 the EU developed a short-term BOMFER<sup>1</sup> Programme (for 3 CA countries) which proceeded into more sustainable regional scope support instrument - the Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA). At its early phases, BOMCA aimed at enhancing security, supporting fight against illegal trafficking of drugs, and facilitating trade in Central Asia. Since its inception, the Programme has been specifically linked to a number of the EU objectives set forth in its strategic documents.

Launched officially on 23 April 2003 by signatures of BOMCA 1 kick off, the Programme has been implementing its further phases targeting capacity building and institutional development, developing trade corridors, improving border management systems and eliminating drug trafficking across the Central Asia region. During its earlier phases, the Programme focused its resources on creating a modern border management infrastructure with equipment – that were aimed at facilitating more professional and efficient security, law enforcement and trade operations at selected border crossing points (BCPs) on trade corridors, and enhanced security and improvement of working conditions at border outposts. With time running forward, the horizons of BOMCA became broader and the actions of the Programme not only targeted border guards, but also other authorities working in the area of Customs, migration, drug control, etc. The Programme has always followed the concept and principles of the Integrated Border Management (IBM), with the view to improve cooperation and communication channels among CA border-related agencies. The IBM concept is not only built on the best EU practice, but is also aimed at

tackling the issue of coordination and consolidation of actions of the Central Asian border management institutions – one of the challenges that BOMCA had to face.

<sup>1</sup> See: Evaluation of Council Regulation 99/2000 (TACIS) and its implementation: Synthesis Report.

2006. /.../ **1.3.2.1. Support to institutional, legal and administrative reform.** Regional Cooperation (Track 1). Allocations to combat drug trafficking were included in the 2002 and 2003 CA RPs. By providing assistance to the Central Asia Drug Action Programme (CADAP) and it was intended to complement other activities such as the National Drug Information Network (NADIN), the ADMIT project (Anti-drug measures in Tajikistan) and the SCAD programme (Southern Caucasus Anti-Drug Programme). Border management was the theme of a second allocation under Track 1 for the same years and included improving border management in the Ferghana Valley (BOMFER that had the aim of improving cross-border co-operation between the border and customs guards of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). The project contained four main components, namely: establishment of training academies/facilities in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan; a technical feasibility study to develop a communication strategy and network plan for Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan; the procurement of border management- related equipment; and a pilot project on the Kyrgyzstan/Tajikistan border to improve cross-border co-operation. Allocations for Border Management in Central Asia (BOMCA) was also included in the 2004 CA RP that had the overall objective of helping Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan improve the effectiveness of the management of their borders with particular reference to, among others, coherence through harmonising approaches and methodologies. Accessed: [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/evaluation/evaluation\\_reports/reports/2006/728\\_vol4\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/evaluation/evaluation_reports/reports/2006/728_vol4_en.pdf)

Summing up BOMCA's service in the CA region so far, one major conclusion should be made: over the last decade BOMCA was diligently looking for the best and progressive ways to strengthen the capacities of its CA Final Beneficiaries via institutional capacity development and enhancement of professional skills of officials. During 2003 – 2017, more than 8000 officers of CA border-related agencies have received varying types of training, such as Document Security, Veterinary-Phyto-Sanitary and Sanitary-Epidemiology issues, Dog Handling, Customs and Trade Facilitation, Irregular Migration and THB, Integrated Border Management, Risk Analysis, and many others.

The total EU funding and two its Member States (Latvia, Lithuania) co-funding for BOMCA Programme is going to reach EUR 40 207 000 during 2003 – 2019 (*amount except UNDP co-funding for BOMCA 4*

– BOMCA 8).

2. What is the current state of borders between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan? Stable or contentious? Is the border delimited or are there still disputes over territory between the two states? How long has the current state of border relations existed?

After UZB - KAZ local scale border incidents in January 2000, the political reaction was swift and first round of bilateral border delimitation negotiations between KAZ and UZB took place in

Tashkent in February 2000. The KAZ-UZB Agreement on Border Delimitation and Demarcation signed in Astana on 16 November 2001 resolved majority of disputable issues at more than 2150km long borderline. This Agreement covered around 96% of border. Since then, the cooperation between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan has been developing in the spirit of good neighbourliness, fraternity and mutual respect that was confirmed by visit of the President of Uzbekistan to Kazakhstan in March 2017, where the Joint Declaration on further enhancing the strategic partnership and strengthening good-neighborliness between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Kazakhstan was signed.

The full legal resolution of UZB – KAZ border delimitation was politically declared to be closed by the end of 2017 (*time will show was this political goal achieved or not*). Meanwhile, the border delimitation process led by three demarcation groups is ongoing. The information on regular UZB-KAZ meetings can be found at the Uzbek MFA website <https://mfa.uz/en/> Also the following information can be found as well at the MFA official cite of Kazakhstan:

<http://www.mfa.kz/en/content-view/delimitatsiya-i-demarkatsiya-gosudarstvennoj-granitsy>

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3. If disputes over the border have existed between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, when did they first start

(e.g. after declaration of independence, ten years ago, etc.)?

The Almaty Declaration of 21 December 1991 reiterated the principle of territorial integrity and respect to independence of states in the new-born Commonwealth of Independent States geographical area. Both UZB and KAZ inherited problematic issues along their not-defined boundaries. The border dispute at Baghys village (south of KAZ) which was triggered in January 2000 after attempts of UZB side to unilaterally demarcate a borderline in disputable area<sup>2</sup> may be suggested as a starting point of very active political processes to resolve KAZ – UZB border issues. The security situation in Central Asia at that time was fragile, and appearance of potentially new conflict areas was a point of high concern, which obviously required certain urgent steps.

However, in scholars' opinion, the border disputes at local level actually 'silently' already started in Soviet time when sporadic administrative decisions on new boundaries creation in Central Asia districts were far from ideal, taking into account the landscape and diverse historical and ethno-cultural features.

2 See: [http://e-](http://e-history.kz/media/upload/1466/2014/06/26/4ab1192b49709b2684e26d3353921f41.pdf)

[history.kz/media/upload/1466/2014/06/26/4ab1192b49709b2684e26d3353921f41.pdf](http://e-history.kz/media/upload/1466/2014/06/26/4ab1192b49709b2684e26d3353921f41.pdf) ; also - Сейдин Н.Б. Делимитация казахстанско-узбекской границы: проблемы и решения. 09.04.2002., at <http://kisi.kz/ru/categories/geopolitika-i-mezhdunarodnye-otnosheniya/posts/delimitaciya-kazahstansko-uzbekskoy-granicy-problemy-i-> ; Radio Azattyk. 23.12. 2015. *Ветшающее село Багыс на границе с Узбекистаном*, <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/selo-bagys-granitsa-s-uzbekistanom/27444132.html> ; Мирзохид Рахимов. 23.04.2016. *Взаимоотношения Узбекистана и Казахстана: основные тенденции*, <https://camonitor.kz/22861-vzaimootnosheniya-uzbekistana-i-kazahstana-osnovnye-tendencii.html>; Иван ЛАРИН. *Узбекистан в «квартирном» вопросе Центральной Азии*. 05.02.2017., <https://www.ritmearasia.org/news--2017-02-05--uzbekistan-v-kvartirnom-voprose-centralnoj-azii-28217>; Делимитация казахстанско-узбекской государственной границы, 29.08.2017., <http://www.kazportal.kz/delimitatsiya-kazahstansko-uzbekskoy-gosudarstvennoj-granitsyi/>

4. What is the state of the borders between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan? Is it in flux or stable?

The state border delimitation between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan was a challenging issue for many years. However, nowadays the Uzbek-Kyrgyz relations can be characterized by progressive implementation of the reached agreements in the sphere of bilateral cooperation on the basis of equality and respect of mutual interests. So the UZB – KGZ borders issue is in flux.

On October 3, 2016 a Memorandum of Understanding which obligates to solve promptly border issues was signed between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan during the Kyrgyz delegation's trip to Andijan, UZB. The visit of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic Mr. Almazbek Atambaev to Uzbekistan on 24 December 2016 set up new horizons of partnership (see: <https://mfa.uz/en/press/news/2016/12/9848/>). In August 2016 – August 2017, Joint Border Delimitation Commission of both countries held extensive 15 rounds (2-weeks each) of negotiations, including borderline description work during field visits at the borderline.<sup>3</sup> Further positive velocity for border delimitation resolution was achieved during the UZB Prime-Minister visit to Kyrgyzstan on 16 August 2017. It was reiterated that UZB and KGZ Joint Border Delimitation Commission has reached mutual understanding and described borderline in the length of 1170,53 km out of total 1378 km of borderline (about 84%). An intention to sign a Preliminary (Intermediate) Border Demarcation and Delimitation Agreement was announced by the Presidents of both countries.<sup>4</sup> During the visit of UZB President to Kyrgyzstan on 5 – 6 September 2017, the Preliminary (Intermediate) Border Demarcation and Delimitation Agreement was signed as well as other 10 bilateral agreements, including an Agreement on Work of Plenipotentiary Border Representatives. Shortly after, during the visit of KGZ President to Uzbekistan on 5 – 6 October 2017, in total 18 bilateral agreements were signed, including an Agreement on Trust Measures in the State Border Area (*Соглашение между Кыргызской Республикой и Республикой Узбекистан о мерах доверия в районе государственной границы*).<sup>5</sup>

5. If disputes over the border have existed between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, when did they first start  
(e.g. after declarations of independence, ten years ago, etc.)?

This question is hard to answer, as there can be many views and opinions by analytics and lawyers when border disputes first started in between KGZ and UZB. After the collapse of former USSR in late 80-s / 90-s of the last century and Declarations of Independence (UZB, KGZ), there was no border and different scale tensions at the former administrative boundary line appeared time by time.

6. Have there been any border disputes between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan? If so, could you elaborate on their border issues and any dispute mechanisms in place for these two states?

Ill-defined borders have led to regional tensions since the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, and this is the case of TJK and KGZ also. In the circumstances that border delimitation was not resolved issue since 90-s, for both KGZ and TJK the land and water resources are vital to the economies and border regions

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<sup>3</sup> AKIPRESS. 30.01.2017. *Утверждено 47 участков на кыргызско-узбекской госгранице, - вице-премьер Ж.Разаков.* <http://kg.akipress.org/news:1361023> ; also: 11.04.2017. *Кыргызстан и Узбекистан начали очередные переговоры по границам.* <http://www.ritmeurasia.org/news--2017-04-11--kyrgyzstan-i-uzbekistan-nachali-ocherednye-peregovory-po-granicam-29521> ; 07.08.2017. *В кыргызско-узбекских переговорах по границе «есть подвижки»* <http://ca-news.org/news:1398053>

4 KABAR.KG. 17.08.2017. *Кыргызстан-Узбекистан. Прорыв в отношениях и реальные перспективы сближения.*

<http://kabar.kg/news/kyrgyzstan-uzbekistan-proryv-v-otnosheniiakh-i-real-nye-perspektivy-sblizheniia/>

5 KABAR.KG. 05.09.2017. *Совместное заявление президентов Кыргызстана и Узбекистана.* <http://kabar.kg/news/sovместное-zaiavlenie-prezidentov-kyrgyzstana-i-uzbekistana/>; AKIPRESS. 05.09. 2017. *Кыргызстан и Узбекистан подписали 10*

*совместных документов. Подписание завершилось овацями.*

<http://kg.akipress.org/news:1403112>; KABAR.KG. 05.10.2017. *По итогам переговоров глав Кыргызстана и Узбекистана подписаны 13 документов.* <http://kabar.kg/news/po-itogam-peregovorov-glav-kyrgyzstana-i-uzbekistana-podpisany-13-dokumentov/>; 06.10.2017. *В рамках госвизита Атамбаева в Узбекистан подписан второй пакет кыргызско-узбекских документов.*

<http://kabar.kg/news/v-ramkakh-gosvizita-atambaeva-v-uzbekistan-podpisan-vtoroi-paket-kyrgyzsko-uzbekskikh-dokumentov/>

along so called ‘*Ferghana Valley axis*’. A cross-border exchange of fire occurred on the border of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (*area of the Vorukh border settlement, - Tajik enclave within the Batken Province of Kyrgyzstan*) on 11 January 2014, but amid bad consequences, also left understanding for both countries that border delimitation resolution needs further sustainable and efficient efforts. The length of KGZ – TJK borderline is about 971 km. After steady contacts of politicians and work of border delimitation commissions, by the end of 2017 there was a solution achieved on 519.9 km of borderline, thus about 41% of borderline is not agreed so far. According to public sources, one of core issues is that TJK proposals are based on maps of 1924 – 1927 while KGZ side proposals are based on maps produced in 1958 – 1959, and 1989. Also, there is different interpretation of the *Almaty Declaration of 21 December 1991*. The political consultations between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are in process.

7. Have there been periods of reconciliation between any of the two states (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan)?

How long did these periods last?

This question has political sense which requires understanding what exactly is meant by ‘reconciliation’.

BOMCA 9 Programme stays aside from politics.

8. Is there a dispute resolution mechanism in place for two states to resolve disputes? If so, what type (e.g. summitry, oversight from an international organization, or the EU, OSCE, etc, or a task force)? How many times has this mechanism, if in place, been used?

International community (donors) is not allowed and is not directly engaged as a participatory side in border disputes resolution in Central Asia. Only political level advising (like UNRCCA activities), attempts of mitigation, and small scale capacity building are being carried out by many international actors. Central Asia states constantly keep position that border delimitation issues are solved on exceptionally bilateral basis without external involvement. In-depth analysis of the aforementioned questions covering the last 25 years requires considerable analytical work by a team of researchers.

In long-term, the situation may change in the field of border demarcation as it is lengthy and costly work, thus international community (donors) may be allowed to step in with support into the

border demarcation issue in some CA country. But first, it requires political consultations and decisions.

As one of examples, it is worth to mention that in February 2012 the EU Service for the Foreign Policy Instrument (FPI) and the European Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC) signed Administrative Agreement to support the border delimitation in the Fergana Valley area. The overall goal of the project was to allow the bilateral border demarcation / delimitation commissions to produce independent geospatial information based on recently acquired remote sensing imagery from satellite platforms. These maps aim to support the inter-country dialogue on border delimitation. The project embraced Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Uzbekistan was reluctant to receive such support. The JRC contribution and activities in KGZ and TJK in the period February 2012 – November 2013 included the provision of:

- ❖ Digital satellite images of certain disputable border areas;
- ❖ Photogrammetric and computer equipment, including the appropriate software for processing of remote sensing images and map production (equipment was provided for KGZ in total amount EUR 67 749; for TJK equipment was provided in total amount EUR 57 332);
- ❖ GNSS (Global Navigation Satellite Systems) receivers for determining the coordinates and altitudes of an area; and training for local specialists in working with the equipment and software.

**9.** Has any dispute between any of the states (Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan) reached the level of becoming what is known as a Militarized Interstate Dispute (MIDs)? A MID would include actual military conflict, random shootings, as well as simply fortifying the border.

Yes, since 90-s of the last century many Militarized Interstate Disputes appeared at aforementioned borders (borderlines) in Central Asia, involving civilians and armed state officials. But again, preparing a full list and description of such MIDs requires considerable work by a team of researchers. BOMCA Programme did not follow MIDs appearance and has no record of MIDs. BOMCA Programme has never been and is not a kind of permanent representation of an international entity which follows processes in Central Asia and lastingly keeps running regional scope analytical capabilities. BOMCA Programme phases are bounded by robust several-years length and pre-designed as phase-by-phase practical implementation instruments with certain goals which cannot and are not allowed to be broadened beyond particular mandate.

**10.** If a MID has taken place when was it and how long did it last?

Please see the answer to the Question No.9.

**11.** Have there been more than one MID in Central Asia since the beginning of 1990-s? How were the MIDs resolved?

Please see the answer to the Question No.9.

**12.** Have you noticed if there has been a change in tone from Uzbekistan regarding the border since the new President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's ascension as president in the end of 2016?

The change of Uzbekistan leadership in 2016 brought a positive impetus for UZB cross-borders relations improvement, as well as positive signs in many other areas at regional scope. Action Strategy in five priority areas of Uzbekistan's development for 2017 - 2021 was adopted by the President of Uzbekistan in February 2017. As underlined in this Action Strategy for 2017 - 2021, the foreign policy on strengthening ties with neighbouring countries is the guarantee of future prosperity and stable development not only for Uzbekistan, but also for the whole Central Asia region. The 5th priority area of this Strategy is to insure the sphere of security, inter-ethnic

harmony and religious tolerance, and implementation of prudent, mutually beneficial and constructive foreign policy that includes the issue on resolution of the issues of delimitation and demarcation of the state border of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

More information can be found at:

[http://ombudsman.uz/en/press\\_center/news/uzbekistan/the-state-strategy-on-further-development-of-uzbekistan-has-been-adopted/](http://ombudsman.uz/en/press_center/news/uzbekistan/the-state-strategy-on-further-development-of-uzbekistan-has-been-adopted/)

UZB Strategy of Actions: Results and Prospects: <https://mfa.uz/en/press/news/2017/08/12036/> Conference “Central Asia – the main priority of the foreign policy of Uzbekistan” held on 11 August 2017 in Tashkent, details can be found at: <https://mfa.uz/en/press/news/2017/08/11977/>

It is worth to notice that not only UZB – KGZ border delimitation questions have got positive velocity for resolution after Mr. Mirziyoyev became the President of Uzbekistan. Also, border issues with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan have got new impetus for solutions, i.e., the re-opening of BCP ‘Shavat’ on UZB-TKM border for local border traffic in January 2017<sup>6</sup> after 4 years of closure, and intention to finalise Uzbekistan

– Kazakhstan several remaining border delimitation issues by the end of 2017.<sup>7</sup>

**13.** What role does BOMCA play, if any, in resolving border disputes among four Central Asian states

(Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan)?

BOMCA Programme has not been and is not involved in resolution of border disputes.

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<sup>6</sup> 30.01.2017. *Границу между Узбекистаном и Туркменистаном открыли накануне визита Мирзияева в Хорезм.* <http://www.chrono-tm.org/2017/01/granitsu-mezhdu-uzbekistanom-i-turkmenistanom-otkryili-nakanune-vizita-mirziyaeva-v-horezm/>; 07.03.2017.

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<sup>7</sup> 09.02.2017. *Узбекистан и Казахстан решат все вопросы по границе в этом году.* <http://www.ritmeurasia.org/news--2017-02-09--uzbekistan-i-kazahstan-reshat-vse-voprosy-po-granice-v-etom-godu-28318>; 04.03.2017. *О*

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<http://mfa.uz/ru/press/news/2017/03/10327/>; 09.04.2017. *Астана - Ашхабад: что обсуждали Назарбаев и Бердымухамедов.* <http://www.ritmeurasia.org/news--2017-04-19--astana-ashhabad-cto-obsuzhdali-nazarbaev-i-berdymuhamedov-29687>; 09.05.2017. *Закрытые девять лет назад посты на границе Казахстана и Узбекистана вновь заработали.* <http://ca-news.org/news:1392804>

**14.** Please give an example of BOMCA’s successes in border management since 2003.

One of opinions of the external observers is accessible in Internet ([https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/tags/integrated-border-management-ibm\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/tags/integrated-border-management-ibm_en)), namely the 'Evaluation of the European Union's Support to Integrated Border Management (IBM) and fight against Organised Crime over the period 2002 – 2010'.

BOMCA-produced IBM Handbook for Central Asia with best world practices in border management was published in 2010 (in Russian, and in English).

In 2011, BOMCA launched the Regional Platform of CA Border Guards and Customs Training Centres (vocational professional education) and the EU training institutions' for establishment of the training institutions' Consortia via regional workshops and biannual meetings. Since then, BOMCA continuously supports sustainable, durable and increased professional educational cooperation within this Platform.

Within 2012 - 2013 implementation period, BOMCA supported major border crossing points and drug profiling units in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan with the purpose to improve working conditions and motivation of staff deployed at the BCPs and to enhance capacities of law enforcement officers in charge of fighting drugs across borders. Renovations and equipment under BOMCA 8 for BCPs and DPUs in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan amounted to 1 million EURO. Two Drug Profiling Units at Tashkent International Airport and Keles railway station were set up. This has exposed the Uzbek border agencies to the new mode of multiagency cooperation. The DPU established at the Tashkent Airport is considered by the international experts as the model DPU in the region.

In 2005 – 2014, through BOMCA Programme support were constructed, refurbished and/or equipped 45 BCPs and Border Outposts in Central Asia, 7 Training Centers and 7 Training Classes (TCs) for CA Border Guards, 4 Dormitories for TCs, 6 Dog TCs and 3 veterinary Units for Dog TC, 2 Drug Profiling Units (DPUs) in all five CA countries.

Dog training and breeding capacities of Uzbekistan were reinforced. BOMCA helped the Uzbek Customs Dog Training Center to receive the regional training center status from the World Customs Organization. BOMCA assisted the national dog training and breeding programs through provision of premium dogs and equipment. This facility had become the place for regular advanced trainings for the dog handlers from various parts of Central Asia, Afghanistan and Mongolia.

The Distance Learning concept has taken a significant step forward in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan with BOMCA 9 and other international partners support, and work done by Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan officials. This approach comes together with BOMCA-provided technical distance learning equipment sets, followed up by distance lectures from the College of State Border Guard of Latvia (for BGs), and from Riga Technical University (for Customs).

Period of 2016 – 2017 was the time of mid-term review and further upgrade of the IBM Strategy and its Action Plan for 2012 - 2022 in Kyrgyzstan. BOMCA 9 provides the best IBM practices and advisory input, and looks with hope to long-term strategically oriented considerations regarding the future of Kyrgyzstan IBM implementation. The situation with approaches to IBM in other CA countries, and Tajikistan IBM Strategy 2010 – 2025 implementation is diverse.

BOMCA 9 high level experts' team assisted Kyrgyzstan in autumn 2016 to update the action plans on eradication of systemic corruption in two border management agencies, and opened up a wide range of potential for the fight against corruption. During the last decade Latvian and Lithuanian border management agencies dedicated serious efforts to eradicate corruption and reached certain positive results. This experience was shared with CA colleagues.

BOMCA 9 input in training and sharing professional expertise for border guards on profiling and identification of foreign terrorist fighters meets the acute needs of nowadays. BOMCA encourages

that those more than 50 trained officials in 2016 from all CA countries will share with colleagues the new knowledge and information gained during the trainings. The second (upgraded) cycle of additional activities is ongoing in all CA countries in 2017 – 2018, aiming to develop a Methodology on profiling and identification of foreign terrorist fighters at Border Crossing Points, adjusted to local situation. This Methodology, if properly implemented in practice, will not become a ‘magic solution’. But it is a serious step forward to support compliance with the UN Security Council Resolutions inviting to create obstacles to the foreign terrorist fighters’ cross-border movement.

Effective implementation of Customs risk analysis systems contributes to the efficiency of trade facilitation mechanisms and this is another field where BOMCA 9 expert’s knowledge is utilized at the best possible extent. BOMCA is among international donors who advise on WTO standards, and Revised Kyoto Convention implementation. During 2016 – summer 2017 BOMCA 9 experts provided 26 trade facilitation-related different activities in all CA countries.

BOMCA 9 experts contributed to promoting the general awareness of the EU Generalized Scheme of Preferences (GSP+) for Kyrgyzstan and strengthening knowledge of the state agencies on specific GSP+ provisions and requirements. BOMCA looks forward to support respective CA countries in preparation and implementation of the new certification system in the frame of Registered Exporters System (REX) foreseen in the EU GSP+ rules of origin. Those rules are possibly applicable for Uzbekistan and Tajikistan from 1 January 2019.

**15. Have there been any setbacks for BOMCA? If so how were they addressed?**

Overview and institutional memory about BOMCA Programme setbacks faced since 2003 is in possession of the main donor – the EU (European Commission, DG DEVCO). BOMCA 9 is led by a completely new Consortium of the EU Member States, and is not in position to comment the UNDP experience / lessons learnt during BOMCA 1 – BOMCA 8 implementation.

**16. Are policy-makers in Central Asian four countries (Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan) amenable to international organizations, such as the EU, or OSCE, mediating their disputes?**

BOMCA 9 Programme is not in position to comment policies or Central Asia policy-makers actions.

**17. If there is anything else that you think might be relevant to the research study, or if you’d like to make any final comments please add them here.**

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Raitis Tiliks (Mr.),  
BOMCA 9  
Regional Manager  
Bishkek,  
Kyrgyzstan  
[www.bomca-eu.org](http://www.bomca-eu.org)

**Appendix Two:  
Ethics Review**



University Ethics Sub-Committee for Sociology; Politics and  
IR; Lifelong Learning; Criminology; Economics and the  
School of Education

29/03/2017

**Ethics Reference:** 9208-jpm41-politics&intrelations

TO:

Name of Researcher Applicant: James Machaffie

Department: Politics

Research Project Title: "Security Communities and Regional Rivalries: The SCO as Institutional Constraint on Central Asian Security Cooperation"

Dear James Machaffie,

**RE: Ethics review of Research Study application**

The University Ethics Sub-Committee for Sociology; Politics and IR; Lifelong Learning; Criminology; Economics and the School of Education has reviewed and discussed the above application.

1. Ethical opinion

The Sub-Committee grants ethical approval to the above research project on the basis described in the application form and supporting documentation, subject to the conditions specified below.

## 2. Summary of ethics review discussion

The Committee noted the following issues:

Dear James,

Thank you for your responses to the reviewers, and good luck with the research.

Best wishes,

Laura

## 3. General conditions of the ethical approval

The ethics approval is subject to the following general conditions being met prior to the start of the project:

As the Principal Investigator, you are expected to deliver the research project in accordance with the University's policies and procedures, which includes the University's Research Code of Conduct and the University's Research Ethics Policy.

If relevant, management permission or approval (gate keeper role) must be obtained from host organisation prior to the start of the study at the site concerned.

## 4. Reporting requirements after ethical approval

You are expected to notify the Sub-Committee about:

- Significant amendments to the project
- Serious breaches of the protocol
- Annual progress reports
- Notifying the end of the study

## 5. Use of application information

Details from your ethics application will be stored on the University Ethics Online System. With your permission, the Sub-Committee may wish to use parts of the application in an anonymised format for training or sharing best practice. Please let me know if you do not want the application details to be used in this manner.

Best wishes for the success of this research project.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Laura Brace

Chair

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