

DOES THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (SCO) PROMOTE AUTHORITARIANISM IN CENTRAL ASIA?

A CASE STUDY OF KYRGYZSTAN

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Submitted to

Central European University

Department of International Relations

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts/Sciences

Supervisor: Associate Professor Thomaz Fetzer

Word Count:

Budapest, Hungary

2016

Abstract

In contemporary international relations, the promotion of democracy by Western organizations is not a new phenomenon. However, there are also non-Western organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) that are not preserving democratic principles. Accordingly, they are perceived as an organization that promotes authoritarianism. The thesis explores the intention of the SCO to promote authoritarianism in Central Asia. Central to the discussion is Kyrgyzstan, since, among all the SCO members only Kyrgyzstan is inclined to develop its democracy. Therefore, in order to identify whether the SCO is promoting authoritarianism in Central Asia, there is a need to explore the SCO objectives towards democracy in Kyrgyzstan. The thesis adopts Oisín Tansey ‘strict’ criteria of the autocracy promotion that is based on agency, intentions, and motives. By examining the SCO’s agency, intended policy, and motivations behind its policy, the thesis highlights that it only addresses autocracy promotion with respect to the specific regime type. As a result, I argue that despite the fact that the SCO is a non-Western organization, its objective is to resist democracy rather than to promote autocracy.

Acknowledgment

I would like to express special gratitude to my supervisor Thomas Fetzer for his valuable advice, guidance, patient, and encouragement throughout the dissertation process.

I hereby would like to express endless gratefulness to Matteo Fumagalli and to all International Relations Department staff.

I greatly thank Zsuzsanna Toth, who was along managing to assist with valuable advice, comments and suggestions.

I express special thanks to my family and friends for their endless support, patience and encouragement.

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Introduction

The promotion of democracy by Western organizations by is not a new phenomenon. Stephen Aris points out that “a lot of theoretical literature on regionalism contains an implicit assumption that regional cooperation is only meaningful between liberal democracies similar to those in Western Europe.”¹ However, there are also many non-Western organizations that are different from those of Western Europe because they do not promote democracy and the institutions are not based on the Western style of liberal democracy. Therefore, they are perceived as organizations that promote authoritarian norms. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is one of these non-Western organizations that is perceived as an organization that promotes authoritarian norms. The SCO is the successor of the Shanghai Five and was established in 2001 by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan to solve the border issues.² Later the SCO was broadened to address regional security issues to combat terrorism, extremism, and separatism.³ Recently, SCO has broadened its cooperation to trade, investment, economy, and culture.⁴ The SCO is the regional security organization that deals with transnational threats, but it is not a military organization that is directed to be employed in case of crisis. The member states of the SCO agreed to respect the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of member states.⁵ Accordingly, each state has its own right to choose its own economic, social, and political path.⁶

However, there were overarching questions about the non-liberal nature of the organization. Western scholars presented the SCO as an anti-Western bloc led by China and Russia to counter the US and Western presence in the region.⁷ Moreover, the lack of democratic principles of the member states’ and poor human rights records may allow it to be considered as an autocratic club because of its lack of responsive policy.⁸ Although, the SCO is the regional security organization but does not intervene to the internal issues of its

¹ Stephen Aris, “A New Model of Asian Regionalism: Does the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Have More Potential than ASEAN?,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 22, no. 3 (2009): 452, doi:10.1080/09557570903104040.

² Chien Peng Chung, “China and the Institutionalization of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization,” *Problems of Post-Communism* 53, no. 5 (2006): 3,5, doi:10.2753/PPC1075-8216530501.

³ Ibid., 3.

⁴ Ibid., 3–4.

⁵ Ibid., 9.

⁶ Ibid., 8–9.

⁷ Stephen Aris, *Eurasian Regionalism: The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation* (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2011), 6.

⁸ Ibid., 7.

member states even if there are security challenges, such as the 2005 Andijan event in Uzbekistan and the 2005 Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan.⁹ Thomas Ambrosio argues that the SCO described the protesters of both events as religious extremists, while the struggle against the repressive authoritarian regimes was hidden because the SCO supports authoritarian regimes.¹⁰ He argues that “this indicates that virtually any anti-regime activities in the form of a popular uprising after a rigged election or relatively peaceful protests against an authoritarian leader are deemed illegitimate by the SCO and contrary to the security of its members.”¹¹ Consequently, the SCO is seen as an autocratic club that maintains autocratic norms and values.¹² The member states of the SCO are seen as authoritarians by mutually supporting authoritarian regimes with a non-intervention policy.

However, central to the discussion is the fact that not all SCO members are authoritarians. There is Kyrgyzstan that still keeps developing its democracy but also still a member of the SCO. Kyrgyzstan is a unique case because only Kyrgyzstan shows its inclination towards democracy, while all other SCO members were already authoritarians even before the creation of the SCO. After its independence in 1991, Kyrgyzstan was characterized by a high degree of democratization, however, its democratic successes twice turned to the repressive authoritarian system: the Tulip Revolution in 2005 and the April Revolution in 2010.¹³ Therefore, Ambrosio argues that Kyrgyzstan is believed to be an exception, but as a country is surrounded by the SCO members which “meant that it did not have a realistic alternative to the SCO”.¹⁴ He points out that “after the Tulip Revolution, there was some concern that the post-Akayev government would withdraw from the SCO, but the new regime confirmed its obligations to the organization’s principles.”¹⁵ Hence, as Ambrosio points out, after Akaev, Bakiev’s government laid big hope for the development of democracy but failed.¹⁶ Nevertheless, after the collapse of Bakiev’s regime, Kyrgyzstan again started to develop its democracy. Consequently, in March 2010 the new government called the ‘Return to Democracy’ program where the constitution of Kyrgyzstan was

⁹ Nicole J. Jackson, “The Role of External Factors in Advancing Non-Liberal Democratic Forms of Political Rule: A Case Study of Russia’s Influence on Central Asian Regimes,” *Contemporary Politics* 16, no. 1 (2010): 107, doi:10.1080/13569771003593920.

¹⁰ Thomas Ambrosio, “Catching the ‘Shanghai Spirit’: How the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Promotes Authoritarian Norms in Central Asia,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 60, no. 8 (2008): 1332, doi:10.1080/09668130802292143.

¹¹ Ibid., 1333.

¹² Ibid., 1326.

¹³ Anna Matveeva, “Kyrgyzstan in Crisis: Permanent Revolution and the Curse of Nationalism,” *Crisis States Research Network, London, United Kingdom*, CSRC Working Papers, no. 79 (September 2010): 2–3.

¹⁴ Ambrosio, “Catching the ‘Shanghai Spirit,’” 1342.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

changed from presidential to a semi-parliamentary form of government¹⁷ which represents a more pluralistic regime. According to a 2016 Freedom House report, among all SCO members, only Kyrgyzstan was assessed as a partly free country.¹⁸ Accordingly, considering the fact that all other SCO members were already preserving authoritarianism even before the creation of the SCO, the case of Kyrgyzstan will show whether the SCO is really inclined to promote authoritarianism in Central Asia. The thesis will identify whether there is any intention of the SCO to promote authoritarianism in Kyrgyzstan.

Research question

What intentions do the SCO have behind its behavior towards Kyrgyzstan's shifting regime types?

I hypothesize that the SCO is driven by its ambitious to secure member states own regime and national interest rather than to promote authoritarianism to other states.

Literature Review

Accordingly, there are a number of prominent explorations and tensions as to whether SCO is promoting authoritarian norms in Central Asia. Some scholars such as Thomas Ambrosio and Nicole J. Jackson believe that the SCO, and particularly its two dominant members, China and Russia, are against Western democracy in Central Asia and the SCO members are protecting their own domestic regimes.¹⁹ However, Thomas Ambrosio highlights that the organization can promote not only democratization but also authoritarianism which is always ignored and claims that the SCO is one of those organizations that are designed to preserve or to promote authoritarian regimes in the region.²⁰ He points out that "through a policy of coordination, authoritarian regimes can establish and support international organizations to protect their own and like-minded governments from the possibility of regime change."²¹ So in order to illustrate, he argues that the protesters of the Tulip Revolution and those in the Andijan event were described by SCO as religious extremists but in reality the protesters were against the repressive authoritarianism regimes.²² He claims that the non-interference policy of SCO defends their

¹⁷ Kathleen Collins, "Kyrgyzstan's Latest Revolution," *Journal of Democracy* 22, no. 3 (2011): 150, doi:10.1353/jod.2011.0040; Zakir Chotaev, "Kyrgyzstan after 2010: Prospects for a Parliamentary Republic," *Central Asia and Caucasus* 14, no.2, 2013, 92.

¹⁸ "Kyrgyzstan | Freedom House," accessed April 24, 2016, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/kyrgyzstan>.

¹⁹ Ambrosio, "Catching the 'Shanghai Spirit,'" 1322; Jackson, "The Role of External Factors in Advancing Non-Liberal Democratic Forms of Political Rule," 112–13.

²⁰ Ambrosio, "Catching the 'Shanghai Spirit,'" 1322.

²¹ Ibid., 1325.

²² Ibid., 1332.

domestic political systems.²³ He also argues that any anti-regime activities are considered illegitimate so it is not known how political changes should happen legally.²⁴

In addition to Ambrosio, Jackson argues that Russia being one of the key members of the SCO is strengthening the authoritarianism in Central Asia.²⁵ Russia, through the regional organization such as SCO and CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States), promotes non-democratic form of political regime.²⁶ He argues that there are various means to promote or to support authoritarian regimes. For instance, spreading non-liberal norms and mutually supporting the political regimes in order to strengthen political usually particular elite's regime.²⁷ He claims that the regional organization such as the SCO and CIS were created to strengthen the domestic regimes through various security, political, or economic activities.²⁸ He points out that Shanghai Spirit is driven by SCO member's states to mutually respect and support each other's political regimes.²⁹

Although Christian von Soest agrees that the SCO's two dominant members, China and Russia, are authoritarian and are highly against Western democracy, she points out that "the provision of support to fellow autocrats is mainly driven by the goal of maximizing the survival chances of one's own regime by preventing negative spillovers from democratization, as well as by fostering geostrategic and developmental interests."³⁰ She claims that China, for instance, "with its general cooperation policy ... does not pursue an authoritarian promotion project, but instead tries to foster geopolitical and material interests in order to strengthen the prospects for the survival of its own regime."³¹ Although, she agrees with Ambrosio that the SCO members are protecting their own domestic regimes, however, she maintains that it does not mean that the SCO is promoting the authoritarianism.³²

While Roy Allison and Kathleen Collins go further arguing that the regional organizations in Central Asia such as the SCO reinforced by domestic regime security,

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 1334.

²⁵ Jackson, "The Role of External Factors in Advancing Non-Liberal Democratic Forms of Political Rule," 112.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Jackson, "The Role of External Factors in Advancing Non-Liberal Democratic Forms of Political Rule."

²⁸ Ibid., 112.

²⁹ Ibid., 113.

³⁰ Christian von Soest, "Democracy Prevention: The International Collaboration of Authoritarian Regimes," *European Journal of Political Research* 54, no. 4 (2015): 2, doi:10.1111/1475-6765.12100.

³¹ Ibid., 7.

³² Ibid., 4.

therefore, the regional organization is largely represents virtual regionalism.³³ Allison argues that all Central Asian leaders hold strong presidential power that that is driven by the neopatrimonial system with the personal authority that is why the leaders are fear of any cooperation constrains.³⁴ He calls the regional cooperation as ‘protective integration’ to secure the domestic regimes of the member states, the type of political ‘bandwagoning’ against any political processes and pressures.³⁵ He points out that “the SCO principles which are effectively norms that are different to those currently promoted globally by the US and like-minded powers.”³⁶ That is why the SCO reflects the authoritarian club status quo since it does not poses any democratic principles.³⁷

Similarly, Collins claims that the regional organization in Central Asia is virtual because the organizations driven by Central Asian patrimonial leaders to secure their own regimes.³⁸ The regional economic cooperation is virtual since it requires economic liberalization which seen as a threat to their regime that is why the patrimonial leaders undermining the economic initiatives.³⁹ Nevertheless, she argues that the regional security cooperation can progress such as SCO and CSTO but only in case it will bolster the patrimonial system.⁴⁰ Consequently, the patrimonial leaders preserve their own personal interests that is why the regional cooperation is virtual that designed by leaders for the sake of their own security survival.⁴¹

In contrast, the other group of authors such as Stephen Aris and Timur Dadabaev argue that the lack of democratic values does not mean that the organization is promoting authoritarianism.⁴² Dadabaev highlights that the SCO is described as an anti-Western bloc because of China and Russia, but he argues that “the future of the SCO may be more limited

³³ Roy Allison, “Virtual Regionalism, Regional Structures and Regime Security in Central Asia,” *Central Asian Survey* 27, no. 2 (2008): 185, doi:10.1080/02634930802355121; Kathleen Collins, “Economic and Security Regionalism among Patrimonial Authoritarian Regimes: The Case of Central Asia,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 61, no. 2 (2009): 251, doi:10.1080/09668130802630854.

³⁴ Allison, “Virtual Regionalism, Regional Structures and Regime Security in Central Asia,” 186–87.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 186.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 196.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 197.

³⁸ Collins, “Economic and Security Regionalism among Patrimonial Authoritarian Regimes,” 251.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Stephen Aris, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: ‘Tackling the Three Evils’. A Regional Response to Non-Traditional Security Challenges or an Anti-Western Bloc?,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 61, no. 3 (2009): 457–82, doi:10.1080/09668130902753309; Timur Dadabaev, “Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Regional Identity Formation from the Perspective of the Central Asia States,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 23, no. 85 (2014): 102–18, doi:10.1080/10670564.2013.809982.

than the West fears and Central Asia hopes.”⁴³ He maintains that the SCO’s cooperation is based on Shanghai Spirit which is the mutual trust, benefit, equality, and consultation.⁴⁴ Meaning that SCO’ one of the key priorities is to create a common identity such as anti-colonial or anti-imperialist efforts by respecting the rights of the small states.⁴⁵ By mutual respect and trust, he claims that the SCO is aimed to “safeguard national unity and their national interests, pursue particular models of development and formulate domestic and foreign policies independently and participate in international affairs on an equal basis.”⁴⁶ He emphasizes that the majority of the SCO rejected the Western of liberal democracy by strictly controlling all political and economic aspects of their country which means that the SCO represents alternative model of development.⁴⁷ “The SCO scheme offers the smaller SCO states a comfortable safeguard against external criticism by firmly stating that the ‘model of social development should not be ‘exported’.”⁴⁸

Complementary to Dadabaev, Stephen Aris argues that “a lack of democratic credentials among the SCO member states is often highlighted in order to assert that the organization is ‘a dictators’ club’ with the implication that this makes the SCO inherently hostile to Western liberal democracy.”⁴⁹ He claims the lack of democratic principles does not mean that the organization is anti-Western rather the SCO is a different institution and its framework for cooperation and membership is imperfect.⁵⁰ However, it does not mean that the SCO is anti-Western organization; the SCO is an organization that addresses regional non-traditional security issues.⁵¹ The problem is that the SCO institution is not perfect that is why it has not proved its success in addressing the security challenges.⁵² To illustrate he refers to the Mohammed Ayoob definition of the Third World less developed states where all Central Asian countries fall under his definition.⁵³ Accordingly, he argues that based on the Ayoob’s consideration “Third World regional security is usually ‘inextricably intertwined with domestic issues of state making, state breaking and regime

⁴³ Dadabaev, “Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Regional Identity Formation from the Perspective of the Central Asia States,” 102,103.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 106–7.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 111.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 112.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 113.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Aris, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation,” 460.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

legitimacy’.”⁵⁴ Therefore, he points out that “for the elites of Central Asia, the survival of the state is inseparable from the survival of their regime, as without this focal point they believe the state will implode.”⁵⁵ Similar to Dadabaev, he articulates that the SCO exemplifies “a new concept of security, based on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation.”⁵⁶ Claiming that for SCO members, addressing the security challenges is essential to ensure the stability both to their regimes and region because the SCO is elite based organization.⁵⁷

In addition, Weiqing Song points out that the “the organization has been interpreted in a variety of ways ever since its inception.”⁵⁸ He argues that some scholars claim that the SCO is security organization that addresses the regional security threat while others argue that the SCO is rather created by the elites to secure their own regimes.⁵⁹ Some scholars go further arguing very differently that the SCO is authoritarian club against Western liberal democracy, he states that this view became popular among Western scholars.⁶⁰ Particularly, very critical issue is the strong authoritarians Russia and China and their promotion of the state sovereignty and non-interference principle.⁶¹ Considering all above mentioned, he maintains that different scholars justifies their different interpretation in different manner but “in reality, the SCO is an organization with multifaceted purposes, including regional stability, anti-radicalism, energy security and anti-foreign influence.”⁶² As he states the problem with SCO is the fact that SCO facing remarkable challenges in addressing its core purpose.

As a result, there are different arguments and interpretations of whether the SCO is promoting authoritarianism or not. Particularly, the SCO is perceived as an anti-Western organization led by China and Russia, the SCO member states protecting their own regimes with its non-interference policy, and most importantly all SCO members have seen as authoritarians that is why SCO seen as an authoritarian club. However, the literature fails to address Kyrgyzstan’s development of democracy and who is still member of the SCO. Kyrgyzstan faced two regime changes that ended up with repressive authoritarian

⁵⁴ Ibid., 461.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 462.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 465.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 466.

⁵⁸ Weiqing Song, “Interests, Power and China’s Difficult Game in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO),” *Journal of Contemporary China* 23, no. 85 (2014): 85, doi:10.1080/10670564.2013.809981.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 86.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

government. Yet, Kyrgyzstan keeps developing its democracy. Predominantly, the new government's the 'Return to Democracy' program and adoption of the new constitution that set up a semi parliamentary government.⁶³

Accordingly, in order to identify whether the SCO is really promoting authoritarianism or not, it is worth to explore its intention towards Kyrgyzstan. Through analyzing the SCO's attitude to Kyrgyzstan's changing regime types, the thesis will define whether the SCO is really promoting the authoritarianism. It is important to note that among the SCO members only Kyrgyzstan showed its inclination towards democracy.

Moreover, the SCO is the regional security organization that deals also with transnational threats including trade, investment, economy, and culture.⁶⁴ Therefore, there are diverse intentions and purposes of the SCO in Kyrgyzstan that can be interpreted in various ways. That is why the thesis will primarily focus on the intention of the SCO to promote authoritarianism in the region as a specific regime type. The thesis will contribute to the recent scholarship that has increasingly focused on autocracy promotion. Particularly, it will contribute to the study of whether a non-Western organization such as SCO has to be understood as an organization that promotes authoritarianism.

Besides, considering the fact that there are different types of authoritarianism, the thesis will employ Levitsky and Way's definition of competitive authoritarianism.⁶⁵ Competitive authoritarianism is the "mix of authoritarian and democratic features in a variety of ways, and competitive authoritarianism should not be viewed as encompassing all of these regime forms."⁶⁶ Meaning that the regimes are authoritarian but since they have some elements of democracy, like elections, they identify themselves as democratic. They argue that in reality the "elected authorities possess real authority to govern, in that they are not subject to the tutelary control of military or clerical leaders."⁶⁷

Methodology

In order to examine the SCO intention towards Kyrgyzstan, qualitative analysis will be employed in this thesis. The primary sources are legal documents of the SCO such as the Charter of the SCO and the Convention on Counter-Terrorism of the SCO. Through examining the official documents such as the Charter and Convention, I will explore the

⁶³ Collins, "Kyrgyzstan's Latest Revolution," 150.

⁶⁴ Chung, "China and the Institutionalization of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," 4.

⁶⁵ Lucan Way and Steven Levitsky, "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy* 13, No. 2, 2002, 51–65.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

policies that are intended to promote authoritarianism. I will analyze the SCO member states relations towards Kyrgyzstan's regime change and its democratization. Moreover, I will examine the constitution of the Kyrgyzstan, especially which adopted in 2010 to define the main changes towards democratization.

Besides, secondary sources are the political science books, journal articles, publications, policy papers, and news articles that cover autocracy promotion by external actors. The conceptual section explores political science books and journal articles that explore autocracy promotion by external actors and applies to the empirical analysis.

Structurally, the thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter provides the conceptual framework of autocracy promotion by external actors. The second chapter defined the creation of the SCO and its institutional development. The third chapter explores the democratization of Kyrgyzstan and its regime changes. As a result, the final chapter explores the intention of the SCO to promote authoritarianism in Kyrgyzstan. Accordingly, this will give an answer whether the SCO has to be perceived as an autocracy promoter in the region. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the findings of the study.

Chapter 1-Conceptual Framework

To analyze the SCO's intention on Kyrgyzstan's regime changes or whether the SCO is really promoting authoritarianism in Kyrgyzstan, there is a need firstly to define the concept of the autocracy promotion by external actors. Particularly, the thesis will identify how and in what way authoritarian powers promote authoritarianism? And what are the basic criteria to promote authoritarianism abroad? Considering the fact that there is no unique conceptual framework of autocracy promotion, the aim of this chapter is to: analyze how different scholars tried to conceptualize the autocracy promotion and apply it to the empirical analyses and to identify how regional organizations tend to promote authoritarianism. Lastly, the thesis will apply Oisín Tansey criteria of the autocracy promotion that is based on agency, intentions, and motivations.

1.1 Conceptualization of autocracy promotion by external actors

The promotion of autocracy by external actors has only gained academic attention very recently. Therefore, the concept remains underdeveloped and the literature lacks a unique theoretical framework. Peter Burnell, one of the first contributors to the literature of the autocracy promotion, highlights that the problem of the autocracy promotion is that in comparison to democracy promotion, authoritarian regimes do not have an ambition to openly declare their intention to promote authoritarianism.⁶⁸ Therefore, scholars have to conceptualize autocracy promotion based on the different incentives and objectives that can and cannot be perceived as autocracy promotion.

Scholars such as Marianne Kneuer, Thomas Demmelhuber, Peter Burnell, Oliver Schlumberger, Julia Bader, Jorn Gravingholt, and Antje Kastner believe that autocracy promotion by the external actors does indeed exist and could be seen as an alternative to the Western liberal democracy.⁶⁹ Subsequently, they see Russia and China as regional powers

⁶⁸ Peter Burnell, "Is there a new autocracy promotion?," *Documentos de Trabajo FRIDE*, no. 96 (2010): 2, <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=3188152&info=resumen&idioma=SPA>.

⁶⁹ Marianne Kneuer and Thomas Demmelhuber, "Gravity Centres of Authoritarian Rule: A Conceptual Approach," *Democratization* 0, no. 0 (2015): 1–22, doi:10.1080/13510347.2015.1018898; Peter Burnell and Oliver Schlumberger, "Promoting Democracy – Promoting Autocracy? International Politics and National Political Regimes," *Contemporary Politics* 16, no. 1 (2010): 1–15, doi:10.1080/13569771003593805; Julia Bader, Jörn Gravingholt, and Antje Kästner, "Would Autocracies Promote Autocracy? A Political Economy Perspective on Regime-Type Export in Regional Neighbourhoods," *Contemporary Politics* 16, no. 1 (2010): 81–100, doi:10.1080/13569771003593904.

that promote authoritarianism.⁷⁰ However, the concept of autocracy promotion is defined very broadly since the authors mostly rely on the motives of the regional powers that have close geopolitical allies but do not promote authoritarianism as a type of political regime.

For instance, Kneuer and Demmelhuber argue that the motivation of the autocracy promotion is based on having close allies with geopolitical proximity by providing a set of alternative political practices.⁷¹ Consequently, they argue that “in constructing such a ‘regional regime identity’ and regional power on the one hand and in striving to gain more international weight against what they perceive as a Western democratic domination on the other.”⁷² The authoritarian gravity centres (AGCs) is the new concept that they defines where autocratic countries actively export and actively promote non liberal norms against the development of the liberal norms in the region or neighborhood.⁷³ Therefore, they highlight the fact that these countries “not only manage their strategies and activities on a bilateral level, they also try to use regional institutions or organizations for legitimation and for an authoritarian claim that may transcend the regional level.”⁷⁴ To illustrate, Kneuer and Demmelhuber explore the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).⁷⁵ Indeed, they accept the fact that the promotion of the authoritarianism is barely theorized therefore their concept is driven by the elites since they can effectively influence autocratic actors.⁷⁶ The authors point out that the motivation of the external actors to promote authoritarianism is maintaining close geopolitical allies with the same political regime.

In addition, Burnell and Schlumberger argue that countries either directly or indirectly gain incentives from outside authoritarians.⁷⁷ Similar to Kneuer and Demmelhuber, they also rely on Russia and China as rise authoritarians in global power. They argue that China’s rapid rise represents an alternative to Western democracy.⁷⁸ The Western intervention that is driven for the sake of democracy remains highly questionable because of the US and British invasion in to Iraq and the U.S treatment of prisoners in

⁷⁰ Kneuer and Demmelhuber, “Gravity Centres of Authoritarian Rule”; Burnell and Schlumberger, “Promoting Democracy – Promoting Autocracy?”; Bader, Grävingholt, and Kästner, “Would Autocracies Promote Autocracy?”

⁷¹ Kneuer and Demmelhuber, “Gravity Centres of Authoritarian Rule,” 2.

⁷² Ibid., 6.

⁷³ Ibid., 3.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 7.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 2.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 4,3,5.

⁷⁷ Burnell and Schlumberger, “Promoting Democracy – Promoting Autocracy?,” 10.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 2.

Guantanamo Bay.⁷⁹ As Burnell and Schlumberger maintain, it is important to highlight the decline of democracy and the development of new alternative policies. For instance, they claim that “China’s foreign policy principles with their emphasis on national sovereignty and non-interference contrast starkly with these Western practices – if maybe more in rhetoric than in actual.”⁸⁰ However, the authors did not specifically address the autocracy promotion but take into consideration the decline of the democracy and authoritarian backlash.⁸¹ Of course there is a decline of the democracy but it is difficult to argue that the decline of democracy leads to authoritarian backlash.

Accordingly, Julia Bader, Jorn Gravingholt, and Antje Kastner develop similar theoretical argument, claiming that external actors promote authoritarianism abroad because autocratic regional powers prefer similar political systems in neighboring states.⁸² In like manner with Kneuer and Demmelhuber, they state that “based on ‘the logic of political survival’, our argument is that authoritarian regional powers have an interest in being surrounded by other autocratic regimes because they gain from similar incentive systems in their regional proximity.”⁸³ And similarly, view Russia and China as regional actors that promote authoritarianism, taking as evidence China’s involvement in Myanmar and North Korea and Russia’s involvement in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan.⁸⁴ For instance, China is mostly presented the mercantilist country that seeks economic gain while Russia seen as country who wanted to regain more power.⁸⁵ Nonetheless, they argue that no matter what kind of interest China and Russia have, the political regime type matters for countries, “governments are not indifferent with respect to the political regime type of other states, but do develop a preference towards systems convergence, in particular in their regional environment.”⁸⁶ Considering the fact that authoritarianism is driven by regime security and stability, it is better for an authoritarian power to have a relation with an autocratic country since they can predict their foreign policy. Highlighting the fact that autocratic leaders are chosen only by a small group while democratic leaders by popular elections.⁸⁷ Consequently, the autocracy promoters can support only a small group of elites while

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 9.

⁸² Bader, Gravingholt, and Kästner, “Would Autocracies Promote Autocracy?,” 81.

⁸³ Ibid., 96.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 82.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 81, 84.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 85.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 85–86.

democratic governments are accepted by the majority of the electorates.⁸⁸ Therefore, these scholars rely on the autocracy promotion that is driven by the national interest and to preserve their standings in the region.

While it is worth to argue as Lucan Way, Thomas Risse and Nelli Babayan that the non-liberal regional powers should not be perceived as autocracy promoters only because they preserve non liberal objectives.⁸⁹ The fact that, as Way argues there is an autocracy promotion by the external actors but the non-liberal nature of these actors does not mean that they are promoting authoritarianism they rather furthering their own interest.⁹⁰ That is why he argues that the actual impact of the autocracy promotion is limited since the authoritarian powers as mentioned above mostly concerned with about their strategic interests such as geopolitics or development of the economy rather than promoting authoritarianism.⁹¹ He states that it is important to note that autocracy promotion has different impacts while sometimes it can even foster pluralism like in case of Russian, with respect to Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine.⁹² There is only little evidence of how Russia and China fostered authoritarianism in neighboring countries since autocratic powers did not show much interest in spreading authoritarianism.⁹³ He points out that “both countries have demonstrated far more commitment to the survival of their own regimes than to the promotion of nondemocratic rule in other countries.”⁹⁴

Moreover, Risse and Babayan point out that “Western powers are neither unequivocally committed to the promotion of democracy and human rights nor can non-democratic regional powers simply be described as ‘autocracy supporters’.”⁹⁵ In addition to Way, Risse and Babayan also argue that the main strategic interest of the regional autocratic powers is not to promote authoritarianism but geostrategic interests and to preserve the regional stability.⁹⁶ Therefore, these powers are seeking to counter the Western liberal democracy that values human rights over the stability.⁹⁷ Accordingly, they maintain that the

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Lucan Way, “Weaknesses of Autocracy Promotion,” *Journal of Democracy* 27, no. 1 (2016): 64–75, doi:10.1353/jod.2016.0009; Thomas Risse and Nelli Babayan, “Democracy Promotion and the Challenges of Illiberal Regional Powers: Introduction to the Special Issue,” *Democratization* 22, no. 3 (2015): 381–99, doi:10.1080/13510347.2014.997716.

⁹⁰ Way, “Weaknesses of Autocracy Promotion,” 64, 67.

⁹¹ Ibid., 64.

⁹² Ibid., 64–65, 67.

⁹³ Ibid., 66, 67.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 67.

⁹⁵ Risse and Babayan, “Democracy Promotion and the Challenges of Illiberal Regional Powers,” 383.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 384.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 382.

autocratic powers are open in promoting democracy when it is needed to maintain their geostrategic interests.⁹⁸ Most importantly, they do point out the difference between intention and outcomes because countries such as Russia, China, or Saudi Arabia might not intentionally promote authoritarianism as the West does in promoting democracy.⁹⁹ Non liberal countries propose an alternative model of economic or military partnership which does not demand democracy, in contrast to the West, therefore countries prefer when no one is intervening to the internal issues or posing some kind of democratic prerequisites.¹⁰⁰ As Risse and Babayan maintain, autocracy promotion might be the result of the intentional or sometimes not intentional actions.

Consequently, it is difficult to conceptualize autocracy promotion because as Burnell argues the promoters do not have an ambition to openly declare that they are promoting authoritarianism.¹⁰¹ Therefore, the above mentioned scholars conceptualize autocracy promotion in different ways and analyze it in empirical case studies. However, the concept is defined very generally as some were relaying on the motives of the regional actors while some on the effect of the different actions that resulted or led to the authoritarianism. The conceptualization of autocracy promotion has enhanced the understanding of autocracy promotion and the importance of non-democratic resurgence. Nevertheless, it is worth to identify the basic criteria for the autocracy promotion as a conceptual base because the criteria will give at least a hint as to how autocracy can be promoted. Consequently, scholars such as Peter Burnell and Oisín Tansey develop their own definition of the conceptual framework and identify some sets of policies and criteria for autocracy promotion.

Peter Burnell was an early contributor to the existing body of literature on autocracy promotion by the external actors. In his work “Is there a new autocracy promotion?” he argues that it is hard to identify or to suspect external actors on autocracy promotion because countries such as Russia despite being an autocratic country also employ the language of democracy.¹⁰² Therefore, he advances his own definition of the autocracy promotion that can be inclusive and exclusive. The inclusive is when “the international forces that move its political regime away from democracy and towards semi or fully authoritarian rule.”¹⁰³ The exclusive definition is the agency and intentions of actors to promote autocracy, which

⁹⁸ Ibid., 384.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 385.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 386.

¹⁰¹ Burnell, “Is there a new autocracy promotion?,” 2.

¹⁰² Ibid., 3.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 5.

provides a set of criteria of autocracy promotion such as manipulation of the hard and soft power toward autocracy and destabilizing democracy, borrowing the authoritarian models and their institutions.¹⁰⁴ These are the criteria that he claims will be moving away from democracy towards autocracy.¹⁰⁵ In other words, policies of autocracy promotion that embrace the external initiative based on agencies actions or intentions.¹⁰⁶

In a similar manner, Oisín Tansey in his work “The problem with autocracy promotion” points out that the literature on autocracy promotion showed some patterns of the external actors to promote authoritarianism, but failed to provide a unified set of policies of autocracy promotion that can be applied to support a specific regime type.¹⁰⁷ Tansey argues that recently, autocracy promotion has gained much scholarly attention but only limited progress has been achieved in for the development of the precise concept of autocracy promotion.¹⁰⁸ He maintains that “not all authors who examine the role that external actors can play in supporting authoritarianism at the domestic level use the language of autocracy promotion, but those who do have tended to use this concept in problematic ways.”¹⁰⁹ Meaning that some scholars offer clear definitions of autocracy promotion whereas some conceptualize the concept because “the term ‘autocracy promotion’ carries strong connotations given its similarity to the well-established idea of ‘democracy promotion’.”¹¹⁰

Tansey accepts the fact that recent research has improved our understanding and the importance of non-democratic resurgence.¹¹¹ However, the concept is defined loosely and applied very broadly.¹¹² Particularly, he states that “actions that fall short of these criteria, such as policies designed to promote objectives unrelated to regime type or motivated purely for self-interested objectives, should not be treated as instances of autocracy promotion.”¹¹³ For instance, Burnell’s definition that says autocracy promotion is the move away from democracy toward autocracy,¹¹⁴ he argues his definition is very broad to identify what does

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 6.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 5.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 5–6.

¹⁰⁷ Oisín Tansey, “The Problem with Autocracy Promotion,” *Democratization* 23, no. 1 (2016): 142, doi:10.1080/13510347.2015.1095736.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 143.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid., 142.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Burnell, “Is there a new autocracy promotion?,” 5.

and does not have to be counted as autocracy promotion.¹¹⁵ Therefore, he claims that “in order to properly categorize a distinct form of autocracy promotion, the concept itself would need clear boundaries that relate to the role of actors and their intentions and motivations.”¹¹⁶

Consequently, building on the four above mentioned different considerations of autocracy promotion, the presence of agency that directed to promote authoritarianism, intended policy, motivation behind the policy, and lastly the effect of the policy, he advances his own definition of autocracy promotion that is based only on the first three criteria: *agency, intentions, and motivations*.¹¹⁷ He excludes the effect of the policy arguing that “defining autocracy promotion according to its effects in bolstering autocracy risks including cases that do not involve intentional regime promotion and excluding cases of genuine regime promotion that have simply been ineffective.”¹¹⁸

Consequently, in order to analyze the SCO’s intention on Kyrgyzstan’s changing regime types that will help to find whether the SCO is really promoting the authoritarianism in Central Asia, the thesis will apply Oisín Tansey strict criteria of the autocracy promotion. The fact that the thesis solely focuses on the promotion of the autocracy as a regime type that is why Tansey’s concept will help to identify SCO’s intention to Kyrgyzstan in term of the autocracy promotion because in comparison to other above mentioned scholars Tansey sargue that any ideas such as trade, development assistance, energy, and military support should not have to be considered as an autocracy promotion.¹¹⁹ And develops his own definition of autocracy promotion based on agency, intentions, and motives.

There is a need of agency to conceptualize autocracy promotion. Tansey points out that “the word ‘promotion’ denotes an act of encouragement or support, a conscious campaign of work towards a particular goal.”¹²⁰ That is why there must a promoter with this particular intention since autocracy promotion is foreign act by external actors with a particular intent namely autocracy promotion.¹²¹ Moreover, he argues that a promoter should have to be engaged in deliberate action to promote authoritarianism but “any form of

¹¹⁵ Tansey, “The Problem with Autocracy Promotion,” 144.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 145.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 146.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 152.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 148.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 147.

¹²¹ Ibid.

diffusion that operates without the active encouragement of the authoritarian source simply cannot be viewed as a type of regime promotion.”¹²²

With respect to the role of intentions, he argues that intention in this case means promotion of the authoritarianism as a regime type just the same as the promotion of the democracy.¹²³ The ideas that classified autocracy promotion indirectly with variety of intentions such as trade, development assistance, energy, and military support does not count as an autocracy promotion.¹²⁴ Accordingly, he states that the intention of the actors that promote autocracy is not easy.

As for the underlying motivation, he argues that the motives can sometimes related to intention but they are different.¹²⁵ Motives behind the reason might be diverse such as ideological or self-interested.¹²⁶ There are three ways to identify motives. First, it is driven by the self-interest, when authoritarian countries feel a threat to their political authority. Therefore, in order to preserve their political power they might have their own interest to protect other authoritarians abroad. Second, also driven by self-interest, supporting or protecting the autocracy abroad might ensure compliant allies. Third, it is driven by ideological purposes, authoritarianism as a form of government.¹²⁷ But he argues that only the third motive that is aimed by ideological purposes can be considered as an autocracy promotion while the first two is related to self-interest motivations that is rather the act of democracy resistance.¹²⁸

Consequently, Tansey’s definition of autocracy promotion driven by the ideological purposes while other self-interest motives should not be perceived as autocracy promotion.¹²⁹ He states that ideological concerns must be the main driver of the promoter to promote particular non-democratic norms.¹³⁰ Therefore, I will apply Tansey’s strict criteria to my empirical analysis since the thesis focuses merely to the intention of the SCO to promote authoritarianism as a regime type.

Thus, in the following chapters, I will examine SCO’s attitude towards Kyrgyzstan. Particularly, based on Tansey’s criteria of the autocracy promotion which are agency,

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid., 148.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 149.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 150.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

motivation and intention, the thesis will focus, firstly on the SCO's background and its institutional developments in order to define why the SCO seen as an organization that promotes authoritarianism in Central Asia. Second, I will analyze the changing regime types in Kyrgyzstan which keeps preserving its democracy. Lastly, I will identify whether there is an intended policies and motives of the SCO to promote authoritarianism in Kyrgyzstan.

Chapter 2-Shanghai Cooperation Organization

The previous chapter outlined the conceptual framework of autocracy promotion by external actors. This chapter examines the creation of the SCO and its institutions because the SCO is a non-liberal organization therefore it is perceived or at least purported by most of the scholars as an autocracy promoter. That is why it is important to define the main institutions of the SCO that is seen as the promotion of authoritarianism. Accordingly, this chapter focuses on the historical background of the SCO and its institutional developments.

2.1 Historical Background

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is the successor of the Shanghai five that was established on June 15, 2001 by China, Russia and four Central Asian countries Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan.¹³¹ Initially the Shanghai five was established to solve the border issues with the newly independent Central Asian states.¹³² In 2001 the organization became fully fledged organization that deals with the security issues in the region, primarily, terrorism, separatism and extremism.¹³³ Each member state has its own national concerns about the non-traditional threats in the region. For instance, China focuses on its Xinjiang region, Russia faces problem with separatist movements in Chechnya and Caucasus, while the problem of Central Asian countries are linked to a threat from Afghanistan. The problems are mainly related to the Islamic movement such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the Islamic Party of Liberation (Hizb ut-Tahrir).¹³⁴ There are also observer states such as India, Afghanistan, Iran, Mongolia, and Pakistan and dialogue partners Sri Lanka, Belarus and Turkey.¹³⁵ Moreover, the SCO enhanced its agenda covering not only security but also economy, culture, humanitarian cooperation in the region.¹³⁶

¹³¹ Gisela Grieger, "Briefing European Parliamentary Research Service," *EPRS / European Parliamentary Research Service*, June 2015, 2.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ariel Cohen and Ph.D., "The Dragon Looks West: China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *The Heritage Foundation*, 1, accessed May 22, 2016, <http://www.heritage.org/research/lecture/the-dragon-looks-west-china-and-the-shanghai-cooperation-organization>.

¹³⁴ Grieger, "Briefing European Parliamentary Research Service," 3.

¹³⁵ Aris, *Eurasian Regionalism*, 4.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

The SCO is mostly governed by China who is still the leading member that develops the policies of the SCO.¹³⁷ Accordingly, the SCO is an example of the new regionalism that is based on the mutual respect of the member states sovereignty.¹³⁸ Particularly, China's new regionalism rests on non-interference principles to the internal affairs of the member states¹³⁹ and the cooperative framework of the 'Shanghai Spirit' which is based on mutual trust, advantage, consultations, joint development and respect for cultural variety.¹⁴⁰ That is why the SCO is presented as the new model of the regionalism that builds on the mutual trust and equal partnership since all parties including the small Central Asian countries have the same veto power.¹⁴¹

2.2 Institutional Development

Consequently, the SCO is designed as an intergovernmental organization. There are non-permanent institutions and permanent organs. Non-permanent institutions include the Council of Heads of State as the main decision making body by the Heads of the Government.¹⁴² According to the Charter of the SCO, all other organs except Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) are dependent on the Council of Heads of State because it is the main decision making body who defines the main issues and determines the major activities of the organization.¹⁴³ The Council meets regularly at the annual summits.¹⁴⁴ However, as Aris argues, the state leaders use summits to sign already prepared agreements.¹⁴⁵ After the Council of Heads of State, the other organs are the Council of Heads of Government-the ministers of the each SCO member states that oversee mostly economic issues like the responsibility of the SCO's budget.¹⁴⁶ The Council of National Coordination that is below the Council of the Heads of Government acts as an administrative organ that deals with the day to day activities.¹⁴⁷

¹³⁷ Gisela Grieger, "China's Leading Role in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation," *Briefing European Parliamentary Research Service*, June 2015, 2, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/564367/EPRS_BRI\(2015\)564367_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/564367/EPRS_BRI(2015)564367_EN.pdf).

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹³⁹ Michael Clarke, "China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: The Dynamics of 'New Regionalism,' 'Vassalization,' and Geopolitics in Central Asia," in *The New Central Asia: The Regional Impact of International Actors* (World Scientific, 2010), 122.

¹⁴⁰ Grieger, "Briefing European Parliamentary Research Service," 4.

¹⁴¹ Aris, *Eurasian Regionalism*, 26.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Besides, one of the significant institutional developments of the SCO is the creation of the permanent organs that provide great degree of stability.¹⁴⁸ The permanent organs are Secretariat, the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure, and Business Council and Interbank Association.¹⁴⁹ The permanent organs, for instance, the secretariat is based in Beijing and responsible for administrative provisions, information assistance, and institution functions. The secretariats are appointed for fix term but on a rotational basis.¹⁵⁰ However, the number of appointees of each member state depends on the contribution of the state to the SCO budget therefore the secretariats are mostly from Russia and China.¹⁵¹ Nevertheless, the officials work for the development of the SCO rather than the national interest of the home country.¹⁵² The other permanent organ and considered to be the distinct organ of the SCO is the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS). The RATS is the permanent organ of the SCO that was established in 2004 with the headquarters in Tashkent, the capital city of Uzbekistan to address the three evils of the region which are terrorism, separatism, and extremism.¹⁵³ The RATS is responsible for information concerning the three evils in the region. Other than that the SCO widened its security focus that mainly addresses non traditional threat to include organized crimes and narcotics in the region.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, as Aris claims the SCO developed its cooperative policies to address the non-traditional threats with greater focus to the economic cooperation by member states.¹⁵⁵ The illustration is the Business Council and Interbank Association the important organs that are responsible for the development of the economic integration in the region and financial and budgetary policy.¹⁵⁶

The charter of the SCO lays strong emphasis on the traditional Westphalian principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity and does not contain any obligations about the protection of human rights.¹⁵⁷ Moreover, the SCO does not have any codified decision making procedure accordingly any decision making shall be implemented in accordance with the national legislation.¹⁵⁸ There is a strong need for all member states to reach an agreement; otherwise, if one state decides not to implement a resolution, the process is

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 21–22.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 24–27.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 24.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 24–25.

¹⁵² Ibid., 24.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 25.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 5–6.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 30.

¹⁵⁷ Grieger, "Briefing European Parliamentary Research Service," 4.

¹⁵⁸ Aris, *Eurasian Regionalism*, 26.

undermined because the SCO does not have an enforcement authority.¹⁵⁹ Aris cites the arguments of the Kyrgyz expert Erlan Abdyldaev, to point out that the main problem of the SCO is the non-compliance of the member states with declared principles.¹⁶⁰ Therefore, the Charter of the SCO is not based on strict guidelines and rules rather it is based on certain agreed parameters. That is why the Shanghai spirit is proclaimed as the major guideline of the SCO's cooperation.¹⁶¹ The SCO is an important communication tool designed as an intergovernmental organization where each member states has a veto power which allows small Central Asian states to override the decision and escape the Russian and Chinese dominance.¹⁶² That is why the SCO member states maintain that the Shanghai spirit is designed to respect the sovereignty of the each member states with different values.¹⁶³

To sum up, this chapter outlined the creation and the main institutional development of the SCO that has been perceived in different ways. The SCO has broadened its aim that covers not only security but also economy, culture, and humanitarian cooperation. Accordingly, the institutions are developed based on the equal partnership and dominated by the no permanent body the Council of Heads of State who are the president of the member states that meets regularly at the annual summits.¹⁶⁴ The Charter of the SCO is based on Westphalian principle of the sovereignty with non-intervention policy.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, there are no instructions concerning the cooperation of the SCO, accordingly, the SCO lacks enforcement mechanism.¹⁶⁶ The Charter lacks the democratic principles accordingly, it is criticized as an anti-Western and anti-democratic organization that promotes authoritarianism in the region. However, the thesis concentrates to Kyrgyzstan as a case study since Kyrgyzstan showed its inclination towards democracy. Therefore, there is firstly, a need to explore the developments and shortcomings of democracy in Kyrgyzstan. Accordingly, in the next chapter, I will define the shortcomings of democracy in Kyrgyzstan. And in the last chapter, I will explore whether there are intentions and motives of the SCO to promote authoritarianism in Kyrgyzstan.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 27.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 38–39.

¹⁶² Ibid., 40, 26.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 42.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 23.

¹⁶⁵ Grieger, "Briefing European Parliamentary Research Service," 4.

¹⁶⁶ Aris, *Eurasian Regionalism*, 26.

Chapter 3- Democracy in Kyrgyzstan

The political development of Kyrgyzstan is highly associated with the problem of its democratization. In 1991, after the independence, Kyrgyzstan started to develop its democracy and proclaimed itself as the “Island of democracy” and the “Switzerland of Central Asia.”¹⁶⁷ Among all the Central Asian countries, Kyrgyzstan was marked by a great degree of democratization. However, following the independence, the democratic realization of Kyrgyzstan twice turned to the authoritarianism with the strong presidential system. Consequently, there were two vigorous regime changes in Kyrgyzstan: the Tulip Revolution in 2005 and the April Revolution in 2010.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, scholars such as Ambrosio argues that Kyrgyzstan thought to be an exception among the SCO member states but the new post-Tulip Revolution government did not prove to be liberal as well.¹⁶⁹ He claims that Kyrgyzstan is surrounded by SCO members who are authoritarians which mean that it did not have any alternative to the SCO.¹⁷⁰ However, the post April Revolution government again showed its inclination toward the democracy and in 2010 initiated the program “Return to Democracy” that shifted Kyrgyzstan from presidential to semi-parliamentary system.¹⁷¹ The system represents a more pluralistic form of government which guarantees the principles of a democratic state.

3.1 Tulip Revolution

In 1991, following the independence, the first president of Kyrgyzstan Askar Akaev actively promoted the democratic values.¹⁷² The first Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic was adopted in 1993 which was more or less balanced with democratic principles. However, in order to strengthen his power he revised the constitution four times.¹⁷³ For instance, after one year in 1994 he called for a national referendum to make a parliament bicameral since he failed to get a majority support. In 1995, he called for another referendum asking more power to the president such as the power to dissolve the parliament. In 1998 Akaev proposed to change the number of deputies and restrict the parliament in reforming the state

¹⁶⁷ Anna Matveeva, “Kyrgyzstan in Crisis: Permanent Revolution and the Curse of Nationalism,” 13.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 2–3.

¹⁶⁹ Ambrosio, “Catching the ‘Shanghai Spirit,’” 1342.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Collins, “Kyrgyzstan’s Latest Revolution,” 150.

¹⁷² Chotaev, “Kyrgyzstan after 2010: Prospects for a Parliamentary Republic,” 93.

¹⁷³ “20 Years of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic | Neweurasia.net,” accessed May 23, 2016, <https://www.neweurasia.net/culture-and-history/20-years-of-the-constitution-of-the-kyrgyz-republic/>.

budget. While in 2003, he initiated the national referendum to stay in power until 2005.¹⁷⁴ Accordingly, the democratic successes of Kyrgyzstan changed to the repressive authoritarian system with strong presidential authority which resulted with the overthrow of the Akaev, so called ‘Tulip Revolution’ in 2005.¹⁷⁵ Collins argues that “by 2000, Kyrgyzstan had gone from electoral democracy to competitive authoritarianism”¹⁷⁶ because Akaev relied on his clan and corrupt patronage networks that was widespread in Kyrgyzstan and he was pervaded by his own regime.¹⁷⁷ The protesters were mostly the civil society democratic activists including people who have clan, patronage, kinship, village, or neighborhood ties since localism plays an important role in Kyrgyzstan.¹⁷⁸ As a result, Tulip Revolution erupted the so called the colored revolution in Post-Soviet countries that resulted with the regime change in 2005.

3.2 April Revolution

In the aftermath of 2005 Tulip Revolution, Akaev was replaced by Kurmanbek Bakiyev. At the beginning of his presidency, “Bakiyev quickly set an illiberal course toward the seizure of power and wealth.”¹⁷⁹ Collin argues that “he began increasing the formal powers of his office on the model of Kazakhstan and Vladimir Putin’s Russia while informally gathering political and economic influence into his own family network.”¹⁸⁰ Similarly to Akaev, he also started to use a national referendum to strengthen his power. In 2007 the constitution and electoral system was changed via referendum that enlarged the parliament.¹⁸¹ As a result, the new election system was based on closed party system that allowed Bakiyev to form exclusively pro-presidential parliament since his party Ak Jol (True Path) won the majority of the seats.¹⁸² Accordingly, Bakiyev’s regime became even more repressive and personalized since he controlled all security and economic apparatus, putting his own brothers and son in his own charge.¹⁸³ Accordingly, the government became corrupt since all Bakiyev’s family connections allegedly corrupted the annual profits of the Toktogul

¹⁷⁴ Pınar Akçalı and Cennet Engin-Demir, *Politics, Identity and Education in Central Asia: Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan* (Routledge, 2013), 57–58.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 58.

¹⁷⁶ Collins, “Kyrgyzstan’s Latest Revolution,” 152.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 152–53.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 153.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Pauline Jones Luong, “Recurring Referendums: The Struggle for Constitutional ‘Reform’ in Kyrgyzstan,” *PonarsEurasia - Policy Memos*, July 23, 2012, 2, <http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/recurring-referendums-struggle-constitutional-reform-kyrgyzstan>.

¹⁸³ Collins, “Kyrgyzstan’s Latest Revolution,” 153.

hydroelectric power plant and the loan from the U.S. military transit center at Manas.¹⁸⁴ Pauline Jones Luong argues that “Bakiyev did not merely renege on his commitment to ‘liberal democracy,’ he also violated an explicit agreement with the opposition leaders who brought him to power and who sought the transfer of significant political authority to parliament.”¹⁸⁵

As a result, in 2010 the democratic opposition groups formed a Popular Assembly to overthrow Bakiyev from the government. Roza Otunbaeva was appointed as the head of the opposition coalition because of her pro-Western and democracy commitments.¹⁸⁶ The opposition claimed that only a revolution and genuine democratization they can overthrow Bakiyev’s corrupted regime.¹⁸⁷ During Bakiyev’s presidency Kyrgyzstan became even more autocratic so that there were no any democratic credentials since the opposition groups were restricted or banned to have an access to media.¹⁸⁸ According to Collins, during the 2005 revolution the media outlets were freer so they played a vital role however in the 2010 revolution; it was the Russian media.¹⁸⁹ The Russian media in Kyrgyzstan turned against Bakiyev because Bakiyev promised Russia to get rid of the U.S airbase in Manas but in reality he just renamed it to Manas Transit Center.¹⁹⁰ This made Russia angry because Bakiyev took large Russian loan in 2009. Accordingly, Russian medias that are really widespread in Kyrgyzstan aired critical comments on Bakiyev’s corrupted regime.¹⁹¹ As a result, on 7th of April 2010, there was a popular protest led by the opposition groups and provincial elites against Bakiyev’s regime. In comparison to Akaev, “Bakiyev sent in special forces firing tear-gas canisters and rubber bullets to regain control.”¹⁹² As a result, around 86 people were killed and more than 1,651 people were wounded.¹⁹³ While in the southern part Kyrgyzstan suffered also an interethnic clash between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbek accordingly Bakiyev fled from the country.

3.3 Establishing New Democracy

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 154.

¹⁸⁵ Luong, “Recurring Referendums,” 2.

¹⁸⁶ Collins, “Kyrgyzstan’s Latest Revolution,” 155.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 155–56.

¹⁹⁰ Alexey Malashenko, “Kyrgyzstan: A White Ship amidst the Ice of Post-Soviet Authoritarianism,” *CARNEGIE Moscow Center Vol.14 Issue 2*, March 2012, 9; Collins, “Kyrgyzstan’s Latest Revolution,” 156.

¹⁹¹ Collins, “Kyrgyzstan’s Latest Revolution,” 156.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

The new government led by Roza Otunbaeva who later became a president initiated a 'return to democracy' program that aimed to return the government the democratic credentials in the government and democratic rule of law.¹⁹⁴ The primary initiative was to adopt a new constitution and change the centralized form of government. Omurbek Tekebayev the leader of the Ata-Meken party was committed to shift Kyrgyzstan to parliamentary form of government.¹⁹⁵ Consequently, analyzing all the factors on June 2010 the new constitution was adopted that set up a 'semi-parliamentary' form of government that shared the power of the president and parliament equally.¹⁹⁶ Considering the fact that the both former presidents slowly concentrated most of the powers in their own hands, the new constitution made a major step to improve the separation of power and checks and balance.

For instance, the new constitution provides that the president is elected for only one term of six years. As well as in order to escape the abuse of power of dominant leader Article 63 para. 3 provide that the president cannot be a member of any political party, similarly, Article 60 para. 2 omits reference to the president as Guarantor of the Constitution, which means he cannot call for a referendum.¹⁹⁷ Moreover, the president no longer appoints the state prosecutor, ministry of defense, and national security.¹⁹⁸ Whereas parliament is granted more power to appoint and dismiss governmental officials and most importantly, Art. 74 grant them to approve the program, structure, and composition of the government.¹⁹⁹ At the same time, it is prohibited for a single party to have more than 65 out of 120 deputies in order to prevent the abuse of power.²⁰⁰ Furthermore, one of the vital improvements of the 2010 constitution is the establishment of the constitutional chamber which acts as part of the Supreme Court. The constitutional chamber deals with the unconstitutionality of laws and the decision of the constitutional chamber not a subject for appeal.²⁰¹

As a result, as Shairbek Juraev argues, the final step in forming the new government was the presidential election that was held in October 2011 where Almazbek Atambayev

¹⁹⁴ Anna Matveeva, "Kyrgyzstan in Crisis: Permanent Revolution and the Curse of Nationalism," 6.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ *The Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, (2010)*, n.d.

¹⁹⁸ Collins, "Kyrgyzstan's Latest Revolution," 158.

¹⁹⁹ *The Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, (2010)*.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.; Collins, "Kyrgyzstan's Latest Revolution," 158.

²⁰¹ *The Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, (2010)*.

won the election.²⁰² Nonetheless, scholars such as Juraev and Luong show their concerns about the sustainability of the democracy in Kyrgyzstan.²⁰³ Particularly, Luong claims that the new constitution established necessary conditions to strengthen the parliament, however, there is no condition to foster party development.²⁰⁴ He points out that there is a strong need to develop parties that will have a strong linkage with the local civil society.²⁰⁵ In addition, Collins states that “Regime change may create a new layer of governance at the top, but it does not necessarily change the system and people who are heavily invested in the status quo.”²⁰⁶ The fact that introducing the democratic constitution does not necessarily lead to democratic society. Meaning that the regionalism, clientelism, and the weak system of political parties are still vital challenges of democracy development in Kyrgyzstan.

Hence, Kyrgyzstan has taken considerable strides to develop democracy. The major steps are the restriction of the president’s power and to strengthen the parliament, which represents a more pluralistic system. There are also concerns about the sustainability of the democracy in Kyrgyzstan, considering the fact that there were several regime changes and a number of unsuccessful attempts to develop democracy. The democratic breakthrough certainly exists but the future development of democracy remains to be seen.

Yet, the thesis concentrates on the intention of the external actors in regime changes in Kyrgyzstan. Particularly, the SCO since it is perceived as an autocracy promoter in Central Asia. Among all SCO members, Kyrgyzstan showed its inclination and shortcomings of the democracy development. Considering the fact that all other members strive to preserve authoritarianism, the case of Kyrgyzstan, particularly its changing regimes will show whether there were any intentions or the motives of the SCO to weaken the democratic development in Kyrgyzstan and to promote authoritarianism. Therefore, in the next chapter, I will apply Tansey’s strict definition of the autocracy promotion that is based on agency, intentions and motives of the SCO that may impede the breakthrough development of democracy.

²⁰² Shairbek Juraev, “Is Kyrgyzstan’s New Political System Sustainable?,” *Ponars Eurasia - Policy Memos*, October 19, 2012, 2, <http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/kyrgyzstan%E2%80%99s-new-political-system-sustainable>.

²⁰³ Ibid., 3; Luong, “Recurring Referendums,” 6.

²⁰⁴ Luong, “Recurring Referendums,” 6.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Kathleen Collins, “After the Kyrgyz Spring: Challenges to Democratic Deepening,” *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 19 (2013 2012): 24, <http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/brownjwa19&id=21&div=6&collection=journals>.

Chapter 4-Does the SCO promote authoritarianism in Kyrgyzstan?

The previous chapters illustrated the creation and institutional developments of the SCO as well as democratic shortcomings and improvements in Kyrgyzstan. This chapter explores the existence of any objectives of the SCO to promote authoritarianism in Kyrgyzstan. Considering the fact that there is no unique theoretical framework of autocracy promotion, scholars such as Thomas Ambrosio, Marianne Kneuer, Thomas Demmelhuber, Peter Burnell, and Oliver Schlumberger build different arguments of autocracy promotion based on various economic or geopolitical means.²⁰⁷ However, it is worth to argue that the SCO by itself is a regional security organization that broadened its aim to economy, culture, and humanitarian cooperation, accordingly, there are different objectives of the SCO in Kyrgyzstan that can be interpreted in various ways but not exactly autocracy promotion. That is why in order to define whether the SCO is actually promoting the authoritarianism; the thesis focuses only on ideological purposes while other economic and security is beyond the scope of the research.

The thesis primarily focuses on the promotion of authoritarianism as a regime type, therefore, I will use Tansey's conceptual framework of autocracy promotion by external actors. Tansey's concept of autocracy promotion can be examined only through the intentions and motives that are driven by ideological purposes while any other self-interest objectives such as trade, energy, or any other military supports should not have to be reflected as autocracy promotion.²⁰⁸ Consequently, based on Tansey's concept, this chapter explores more generally the existence of the agency that is the specific agency that has intent to promote autocracy.²⁰⁹ In this case, the SCO's main decision making body which is the Council of Heads of States may be seen as an autocracy promoter. However, to assess whether the SCO can be perceived as an agency that promotes authoritarianism there is a need to examine more specifically intention and motivation of the SCO. Intentions and Motives can overlap but they are not the same, intention relates to the intended policies of the SCO to promote authoritarianism in Kyrgyzstan and motives relates to the underlying reasons behind intended policies which could be driven either by self-interest or ideological purposes.

²⁰⁷ Ambrosio, "Catching the 'Shanghai Spirit'"; Kneuer and Demmelhuber, "Gravity Centres of Authoritarian Rule"; Burnell and Schlumberger, "Promoting Democracy – Promoting Autocracy?"

²⁰⁸ Tansey, "The Problem with Autocracy Promotion," 148.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 147.

4.1 The existence of the agency

According to Tansey, there is a need to identify the role of the agency that act with intent to promote authoritarianism.²¹⁰ In this case, there is no exact agency of the SCO that tends to promote authoritarianism however its main decision body the Council of Heads of States seen as an autocracy promoter. Since, the SCO is dominated by the Council of Heads of States who are the heads of the governments that meets at annual summits to sign already prepared treaties.²¹¹ That is why, the SCO is criticized because of its weak institutional development and because everything is dominated by the Council of Heads of States who are seen as a talking or autocratic club.²¹² However, according to Tansey's concept, if there is a promotion taking place, the agency should act with an active encouragement of authoritarianism because the word 'promotion' means an action or encouragement.²¹³ Accordingly, as criticized the Council of Heads of States can be seen as the talking club which lacks a political will to act. The Council of Heads of States lacks the active involvement to internal affairs of its member states and the enforcement mechanism that is why it is a talking club of the head of government.²¹⁴

Yet, it is evident that the Council of Heads of States especially two dominant members Russia and China countering the US and its spreading of democracy in the region.²¹⁵ However, as Alexander Lukin notes, "attempts to transform the SCO into an anti-Western or anti-American bloc are doomed to failure as that would run counter to the vital interests of member states interested in cooperation with the West in many areas."²¹⁶ "The SCO wants to create additional spheres for cooperation, which did not exist earlier or are impossible outside its framework."²¹⁷ Hence, the SCO is countering the US presence in the region but not involved to promote authoritarianism, namely, as Tansey argues, for autocracy promotion, promoter should actively involve and encourage autocratic sources that require a deliberate action.²¹⁸ He states that "any form of diffusion that operates without the active encouragement of the authoritarian source simply cannot be viewed as a type of

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Aris, *Eurasian Regionalism*, 22.

²¹² Ibid., 7.

²¹³ Tansey, "The Problem with Autocracy Promotion," 147.

²¹⁴ Aris, *Eurasian Regionalism*, 22.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 6.

²¹⁶ Alexander Lukin, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: What Next?," *Russia in Global Affairs* 5, No. 3, 2007, 141.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Tansey, "The Problem with Autocracy Promotion," 147.

regime promotion.”²¹⁹ That is why, it is true that the SCO members countering the U.S presence in the region and they do care about the regime types especially the western liberal democracy. However, according to Tansey, the agency should have intent to promote authoritarianism. He argues that “if promotion is taking place, there must be a promoter acting with intent.”²²⁰ Therefore, there is a need to explore the existence of the intended policies of the SCO to promote authoritarianism.

4.2 The role of intentions

According to Tansey, there has to be a clear policy that intended to promote autocracy as a regime type while other elements like trade, energy subsidies and military support do not count.²²¹ Accordingly, there are a number of criticisms of the SCO that seen as an intention to promote authoritarianism mainly because of its weak institutional development such as the non-liberal nature of Charter and non-interference policy.

For instance, the SCO is seen as autocracy promoter because of its non-liberal Charter that provides sovereign equality of the member states but there is no mentioning about the human rights and democracy.²²² However, its Charter does cover some democratic mentioning in the Charter of the SCO. For instance, art. 1 of the SCO Charter that was signed on June 7, 2002 indicates that “to consolidate multidisciplinary cooperation in the maintenance and strengthening of peace, security and stability in the region and promotion of a new democratic, fair and rational political and economic international order.”²²³ In addition, the Convention on Counter-Terrorism of the SCO June 16, 2009 provides that “understanding the need for ever-expanding efforts in counter-terrorism, and reaffirming that all such efforts must abide by the rule of law, democratic values, fundamental human rights and freedoms, as well as the precepts of international law.”²²⁴ Yet, it is evident that the SCO does not deal with human rights issues and development of democracy. However, only because the Charter is not based on democratic principles like Western organizations; it does not show any intent of the SCO in promoting autocracy. Tansey states that in autocracy

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid., 148.

²²² Rainer Schweickert, Inna Melnykovska, and Hedwig Plamper, “External Drivers of Institutional Change in Central Asia: Regional Integration Schemes and the Role of Russia and China” (Kiel Working Papers, 2012), 7, <http://www.econstor.eu/handle/10419/56381>.

²²³ “Key Normative Documents of the SCO” (Human Rights in China HRIC), 151, accessed May 25, 2016, <http://www.hrichina.org/sites/default/files/PDFs/Reports/SCO/2011-HRIC-SCO-Whitepaper-AppendixA-SCO-Docs.pdf>.

²²⁴ Ibid., 196.

promotion the same as in democracy promotion, there is a need to be actively involved to consolidate an autocratic regime.²²⁵

Besides, its non-interference policy is also seen as intended policy to promote authoritarianism. Inna Melnykovska, Hedwig Plamper, and Rainer Schweickert state that the non-interference policy was adopted to legitimize their regimes through not intervening to the internal affairs they encourage the domestic regimes.²²⁶ In addition, Ambrosio enhances that the protestors of the Andijan event that were against the government were presented as terrorist and extremist forces.²²⁷ Accordingly, they see non-interference policy as intended policy to promote autocracy claiming that through non-interfering to internal affairs when there is a crisis, they are encouraging the authoritarianism by supporting the repressive authoritarian regimes.²²⁸

However, it is worth to argue that non-intervention policy does not indicate any intention of the SCO to promote authoritarianism. The non-intervention policy, firstly, is written in the Charter of the SCO that they will not intervene to the internal affairs. Subsequently, the non-intervention policy can be explained as the lack a political will of member states to make an action since the SCO as was mentioned primarily driven by Council of Heads of States whose main interest is to preserve their own interest. Is it worth to argue that the SCO countries do support other government's regime but only until otherwise their strategic interests are preserved.

To illustrate, the SCO members seeks to preserve their own interest that is why member states lack a political will to strengthen the SCO's institutions because they rather prefer bilateral relations. The SCO is mostly driven by China whose main interest is its Xinjiang province, the Uygur autonomous region that borders with Central Asia.²²⁹ China does not intervening to the internal affairs of the SCO members states since its strategic interest is to develop and secure its Xinjiang province by economic means.²³⁰ Particularly, the SCO member states prefer bilateral relations. China's relation with Kyrgyzstan increasingly dominates by economic relations primarily China interested in construction of

²²⁵ Tansey, "The Problem with Autocracy Promotion," 148.

²²⁶ Inna Melnykovska, Hedwig Plamper, and Rainer Schweickert, "Do Russia and China Promote Autocracy in Central Asia?," *Asia Europe Journal* 10, no. 1 (February 10, 2012): 77, doi:10.1007/s10308-012-0315-5.

²²⁷ Ambrosio, "Catching the 'Shanghai Spirit,'" 1332.

²²⁸ Ambrosio, "Catching the 'Shanghai Spirit'"; Melnykovska, Plamper, and Schweickert, "Do Russia and China Promote Autocracy in Central Asia?"

²²⁹ Melnykovska, Plamper, and Schweickert, "Do Russia and China Promote Autocracy in Central Asia?," 2.

²³⁰ Ibid.

the oil pipeline from Kazakhstan and a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan via Kyrgyzstan.²³¹ Where, the non-intervention policy does not indicate intent of promotion of authoritarianism.

While Russia wants to keep its role as a center of influence accordingly its foreign policy approach towards Kyrgyzstan is dominant. Particularly, after the two regime falls in Kyrgyzstan, Russia demonstrated that it would not tolerate the US presence in the region. However, its non-intervention nether indicate any intent to support authoritarianism because Russia is interested in preserving its own interest and can support any regime only until otherwise their strategic interests are preserved.

To illustrate, both Akaev and Bakiev were authoritarians with strong presidential system but any of them got a support while they were overthrown. Particularly, Bakiev who was overthrown in 2010 had a repressive authoritarian system but the SCO members did not support him because their main interest is not to support or to promote autocracy but to preserve their own domestic strategic interests. Moreover, even Russian media turned against Bakiev's government broadcasting different stories against his corrupted regime²³² because Bakiev did not evict the US Manas Trancit Center which threatened Russian interest in Central Asia. Bakiev during the Astana summit in July 2005 supported to join the SCO declaration to extract the US armed forces in the region.²³³ And he also assured Russia to evict the US Manas airbase in Kyrgyzstan in his official meeting with Russia.²³⁴ Accordingly, Bakiev started openly criticize the rental fees of the US Manas airbase in Kyrgyzstan threatening with possible eviction from the country.²³⁵ However, after the personal visit of the US Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld to Kyrgyzstan, Bakiev increased the renting price from 17 million USD to 60 million USD and just renamed the Manas Airbase to Manas Transit Center.²³⁶ Bakiev claim that the Transit Center at Manas is just a logistics and transportation hub not a military base.²³⁷ This was Bakiev's maneuvering of the great powers in Kyrgyzstan which resulted Russia backed against Bakiev's regime because of the Russia is countering the US presence in Kyrgyzstan.²³⁸ That is why Russia

²³¹ Raffaello Pantucci and Alexandros Petersen, "China and Central Asia in 2013 | China in Central Asia," *China in Central Asia*, accessed May 30, 2016, <http://chinaincentralasia.com/2013/01/19/china-and-central-asia-in-2013/>.

²³² Collins, "Kyrgyzstan's Latest Revolution," 156.

²³³ Kemel Toktomushev, "Regime Security and Kyrgyz Foreign Policy" (University of Exeter, 2014), 106.

²³⁴ Collins, "Kyrgyzstan's Latest Revolution," 156.

²³⁵ Toktomushev, "Regime Security and Kyrgyz Foreign Policy," 106–7.

²³⁶ Ibid., 199.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.

started airing against Bakiev's regime which resulted with overthrowing Bakiev from the government in 2010. This illustrates that non-interference policy is not driven to support the regime but the SCO is rather the organization led by China and Russia to preserve their own interest in Central Asia. Of course both China and Russia are authoritarians but it is worth to argue that authoritarianism is not a guarantee for their strategic interest like in case of Bakiev where he manipulated both Russia and US.

Therefore, the new government with Almazbek Atambayev made emphasize closely work with Russia, closing the US Manas Transit Center in 2014, joining the Russian led Customs Union²³⁹ and extending the agreement of the Russian military base in Kant, Kyrgyzstan that will start from 2017 until 2032.²⁴⁰ Moreover, Russia is also relying on its own regional organizations such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Customs Union where Kyrgyzstan is a member. These illustrations demonstrate that the SCO is institutionally weak organization that does not have an intended policy towards Kyrgyzstan's shifting regime types because as was mentioned the SCO is driven by the Council of Heads of States, the heads of the governments who are lack of political will to cooperate multilaterally, they rather prefer bilateral agreements. Accordingly, the SCO that is mostly ran by China, whose main interests is the stabilization its Xinjiang province through economical means and Russia who is mostly relying on his own Russian led organization to preserve its sphere of influence, does not encourage authoritarianism as a regime type or ideology. The cooperation of the SCO and Kyrgyzstan remains constant since the member states main interests in Kyrgyzstan is preserved.

Consequently, non-interference policy is not an intended policy to promote authoritarianism through supporting the repressive regimes. Tansey argues that the idea of autocracy promotion is an active encouragement of the autocracy as a regime type but non-interference is just inaction of the member states. The intended policies can be identified when external actors supports to preserve the authoritarian regime through manipulating domestic election fraud or violent repression.²⁴¹ However, the SCO member states mainly both Russia and China did not manipulate elections and violent repression for the purpose of saving neither Akaev nor Bakiev's regime. They rather help for instance Russia to opposition to overthrow Bakiev authoritarian regime because of its own interests.

²³⁹ Michael Schwirtz, "Kyrgyzstan Says United States' Manas Air Base Will Close," *The New York Times*, November 1, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/02/world/asia/kyrgyzstan-says-united-states-manas-air-base-will-close.html>.

²⁴⁰ Craig Oliphant, "Russia's Role and Interests in Central Asia," *SAFERWORLD*, October 2013, 9.

²⁴¹ Tansey, "The Problem with Autocracy Promotion," 149.

Although, it is apparent that the SCO member states is countering the US and West presence in the region and highly concerned about the democratization in Kyrgyzstan. However, their concerns are not pursued by the promotion of authoritarianism as a regime type in Kyrgyzstan. Accordingly, it is worth to define the motivations behind the policy since as Tansey argues “the underlying motives behind such an intention, however, may be diverse, and the goal of sponsoring autocratic regimes may be pursued for a variety of reasons: ideological or strategic, altruistic or self-interested.”²⁴² Accordingly, there is a need to explore motivations behind policy that seen as autocracy promotion.

4.3 The underlying motives

As for motives, Tansey points out three types of motivations that drive intended policies to encourage or to promote authoritarianism. The first two motivations are related to self-interest that is why it can be explained not as an autocracy promotion but rather democracy resistance.²⁴³ The third one is ideological which can be characterized as clear motivation to promote autocratic regime.²⁴⁴ Accordingly, based on Tansey’s concept the SCO’s intention or behavior towards Kyrgyzstan can be explained by the first two motivations which are self-interests.

For instance, first motivation is when the transition to democracy seen as a threat to other parties political authority.²⁴⁵ The external actors fear of collapse of their own regime by the effect of democratization, therefore, they pursue to defend autocratic incumbents abroad for their own domestic interest.²⁴⁶ In like manner, the SCO members are countering the spreading of democracy in the region because as von Soest argue “the provision of support to fellow autocrats is mainly driven by the goal of maximising the survival chances of one’s own regime by preventing negative spillovers from democratisation, as well as by fostering geostrategic and developmental interests.”²⁴⁷ Particularly, the SCO member states are openly claiming their concerns towards Kyrgyzstan’s democracy because they see democratization as a threat to their own regime survival. Since both Russia and China see the US as the main instigator of the Colour Revolutions.²⁴⁸ After 9/11, Kyrgyzstan agreed to

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid., 149–50.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 150.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ von Soest, “Democracy Prevention,” 2.

²⁴⁸ Jeanne L. Wilson, “Coloured Revolutions: The View from Moscow and Beijing,” *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 25, no. 2–3 (2009): 370, doi:10.1080/13523270902861061.

provide logistic hub to the US against US led war in Afghanistan.²⁴⁹ Consequently, both Russia and China see US expansion in Central Asia after 9/11 as basis to further its power through provoking of Colour Revolutions such as the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan.²⁵⁰ That is why after the Tulip Revolution, in 2005 at Astana summit the SCO issued the declaration set a deadline for the US military withdrawal in SCO member states.²⁵¹ Since, they fear that spread of democracy and US presence in the region as in case of Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution that resulted with overthrowing the autocratic president will affect their (SCO member states) regime. Therefore, the SCO member states motivation is driven by the self-interest that is to protect their own regime survival.

Second is the protection of authoritarianism abroad in order to safeguard compliant allies like China and Russia.²⁵² As was mentioned, the SCO is headed by Russia and China as big powers in the region and holding Central Asia as their main strategic allies in international relations. Accordingly, it is evident that both Russia and China countering the US presence in Central Asia through the SCO by fear to lose the alignment. Tansey argues that, "powerful states often wish to maintain and protect authoritarian regimes abroad in order to ensure that supportive and compliant allies remain in power."²⁵³ Since the process of democratization may lead to new government with free and fair elections that would change pre-existing alliances.²⁵⁴ He states it is more about the strategic concerns like economic and security.²⁵⁵ Consequently, both China and Russia feared Kyrgyzstan's attitude towards the SCO with its development of democracy since both Russia and China as indicated in the above intended policy part, have strategic economic and security interest in Kyrgyzstan. That is why, according to Tansey's concept, these two motives led rather by self-interests can be best described as "democracy prevention or resistance rather than autocracy promotion."²⁵⁶ He claims that these two motives can be seen as autocracy promotion however both motives since they are driven by self-interest is rather contributes to bolstering autocratic regimes abroad.²⁵⁷ Accordingly, he argues that democratic resistance is self-driven motives to avoid negative consequences such as threat to the regime with

²⁴⁹ Toktomushev, "Regime Security and Kyrgyz Foreign Policy," 178.

²⁵⁰ Wilson, "Coloured Revolutions," 371.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Tansey, "The Problem with Autocracy Promotion," 150.

²⁵³ Tansey, "The Problem with Autocracy Promotion."

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

transition to democracy while autocracy promotion is clear motives to promote autocracy as a regime type.²⁵⁸

Thus, the third motive is the “motivation that can drive external actors to shore up and support autocratic elites abroad, namely an ideological commitment to authoritarianism as a form of regime type.”²⁵⁹ He argues that there are different motives but the ideological one must be as the main driver of policy.²⁶⁰ The commitment that demonstrate to promote autocracy as a specific regime type or any non-liberal regime type however the SCO do not have a motives to promote autocracy as a regime type. As discussed above it is already evident that the intention and motivation of the SCO member states is rather to resist the democracy than to promote autocracy.

To sum up, this chapter outlined the intention of the SCO to promote authoritarianism in Kyrgyzstan based on Tansey’s conceptual framework. The SCO has different aims such as security, economy or culture that is why there might be different interpretations that are seen as a promotion of autocracy. That is why Tansey’s concept that is based on presence or absence of agency, intended policy, and motives behind the policy²⁶¹ helped to identify whether the SCO is really promoting the authoritarianism in Kyrgyzstan as a regime type. As a result, the SCO is not intended in promoting authoritarianism in Kyrgyzstan based on Tansey’s concept of autocracy promotion. Since, there is no agency that has a clear intent to promote authoritarianism in Kyrgyzstan. Accordingly, the underlying motives demonstrated that the SCO is mostly driven by states who are primarily interested in preserving their own interest in Kyrgyzstan. Although, it is evident that the member states showed their concerns towards Kyrgyzstan’s democracy but it is driven by self interest in order to secure their own regimes from the democratization impact. Accordingly, it does not show the SCO’s objectives to promote autocracy rather it is the resistance of democracy.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

Conclusion

The thesis is aimed on a deep analysis of the non-Western organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) that is seen as an organization that promotes authoritarianism because of the lack of democratic credentials. Most of the scholars such as Thomas Ambrosio and Nicole J. Jackson see the SCO as an autocracy promoter because the SCO's member states are authoritarians.²⁶² That is why as Stephen Aris points out the SCO perceived as an autocratic or talking club.²⁶³ However, the thesis all members can be seen as authoritarians since Kyrgyzstan among all the SCO members keeps developing its democracy. However, there were two regime falls in Kyrgyzstan where its democratic development turned to repressive authoritarian system.²⁶⁴ Therefore, Ambrosio argues that Kyrgyzstan perceived to be an exception but post Akaev government demonstrated that Kyrgyzstan does not have an alternative towards the SCO members that it is surrounded.²⁶⁵ However, central to discussion is the fact that after the collapse of the second regime, the new government again started to develop its democracy shifting Kyrgyzstan from presidential to semi-parliamentary system.²⁶⁶

Consequently, due to the fact that all other members are not keen to develop democracy, Kyrgyzstan was chosen as a puzzle. Since, only Kyrgyzstan case would show whether the SCO is really inclined to promote authoritarianism in Central Asia. Therefore, the thesis intended to identify whether there were any intention of the SCO to Kyrgyzstan's regime changing regime types.

I used Oisín Tansey concept of autocracy promotion that is based on agency, intended policy and underlying motives behind the policy.²⁶⁷ Tansey idea of autocracy promotion helped to define clearly autocracy promotion as a regime type that has ideological purposes while any other elements such as trade or development assistance cannot be considered as autocracy promotion.²⁶⁸ Accordingly, it is important to highlight, due to the fact that SCO is the regional security organization that widened its aims to develop economy, culture, and humanitarian cooperation and it has different intends that can be seen

²⁶² Ambrosio, "Catching the 'Shanghai Spirit'"; Jackson, "The Role of External Factors in Advancing Non-Liberal Democratic Forms of Political Rule."

²⁶³ Aris, *Eurasian Regionalism*, 7.

²⁶⁴ Anna Matveeva, "Kyrgyzstan in Crisis: Permanent Revolution and the Curse of Nationalism," 2–3.

²⁶⁵ Ambrosio, "Catching the 'Shanghai Spirit,'" 1342.

²⁶⁶ Collins, "Kyrgyzstan's Latest Revolution," 150.

²⁶⁷ Tansey, "The Problem with Autocracy Promotion."

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 148,150.

in different ways. But, the thesis primarily focused the promotion of autocracy as a regime type.

As a result, based on Tansey's concept of autocracy promotion, the SCO does not intended to promote autocracy in Kyrgyzstan. The findings advocate that there is no agency that has a clear intent to promote authoritarianism as a regime type. Since, the SCO is driven by the Council of Heads of States whose main interest is to preserve their own interests in the region accordingly the institutional development of the SCO is weak. Consequently, its weak institutional development led different interpretations among scholars that the SCO is promoting authoritarianism. For example, its non-interference policy is seen an intended policy but the non-interference demonstrated that it is rather lack of political will of the SCO member states to act. Considering the fact the SCO is driven the heads of member states, they are primarily interested in preserving their own concerns.

Although, it is apparent that the SCO members states especially China and Russia countering the US presence in the region and its spreading of democracy, however, the underlying motives confirmed it is the resistance of democracy rather than promotion of autocracy. The SCO's intention towards Kyrgyzstan's democracy is worrisome because member states fear of democratization impact to their own regimes. Nevertheless, the relationship between the SCO and Kyrgyzstan stays the same and Kyrgyzstan is still a member of the SCO.

Accordingly, based on Tansey's idea of autocracy promotion, there is no agency with clear intent to promote authoritarianism while the underlying motives confirmed that the SCO does not have an ambition to promote authoritarianism in Central Asia. The SCO is rather resisting the democracy in Kyrgyzstan but not promoting authoritarianism.

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