ШОС и БРИКС как инструменты продвижения многополярности Китаем и Россией

Черемисин Михаил Алексеевич
магистрант, кафедра политики и государственного управления, Циндаоский университет, tcheremisinmikh@yandex.ru

В статье рассматривается роль Шанхайской организации сотрудничества (ШОС) и БРИКС как ключевых платформ, с помощью которых Россия и Китай продвигают многополярный мировой порядок. На основе современных научных и аналитических источников анализируется, как обе страны используют эти институты для противодействия западной гегемонии, продвижения альтернативных нарративов суверенитета и цивилизационного разнообразия, а также для развития экономического сотрудничества и сотрудничества в сфере безопасности. В статье освещаются совместные инициативы в Центральной Азии, Арктике и в области культурной дипломатии, а также выявляются внутренние проблемы: асимметрия властных отношений, нарративная биполярность и риск инфраструктурного популизма. Делается вывод, что, хотя ШОС и БРИКС стали важнейшими инструментами институционализации многополярности, их долгосрочная эффективность зависит от преодоления внутренних диспропорций и достижения конкретных результатов, выгодных всем государствам-членам.

Ключевые слова: многополярность, ШОС, БРИКС, Россия, Китай, глобальный порядок, мультилатерализм, суверенитет.

Introduction

The transition from a unipolar world order dominated by the United States to a more multipolar system has become a central theme in the modern international relations. In particular, Russia and China as two major revisionist powers have actively promoted this transition through various multilateral frameworks. Among these the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) stand out as crucial instruments for advancing a multipolar agenda. This article explores how Moscow and Beijing utilize these organizations to challenge Western-centric models of global governance, foster alternative narratives of sovereignty and civilizational diversity and create new centers of power.

The urgency of this topic is underscored by the growing geopolitical tensions, particularly the confrontation between Russia and the West over Ukraine, and the escalating U.S.-China rivalry. According to Chernega [1], the plurality of unequal poles in the emerging multipolar order inherently carries risks of intensified competition, but the main driver of tension remains the struggle between the West, seeking to preserve its dominance, and states that reject it – primarily Russia, China and the Global South. In this context the SCO and BRICS serve as institutional vehicles for coordinating positions, pooling resources, and projecting alternative visions of world order.

Theoretical Framework

The concept of multipolarity has evolved significantly since the end of the Cold War. As Malchenkov [4] demonstrates in his comparative analysis of Russian, Chinese and Indian strategic documents, the term has different connotations across these states. For Russia, multipolarity is closely linked to geopolitical balancing and resistance to Western hegemony, while for China, it emphasizes economic globalization and civilizational uniqueness. Last but not least India often carries an economic rather than geopolitical emphasis. Despite these differences, all three countries share a commitment to a world order based on sovereign equality and non-interference.

Theoretical approaches to multipolarity often draw on Joseph Nye's concept of soft power, which highlights the ability to attract and persuade rather than coerce. In this direction Russia and China have increasingly invested in soft power instruments – for example, cultural diplomacy, media outreach, educational exchanges – to reshape their international image and build alliances. It is worth saying that constructivism further enriches this analysis by focusing on identity formation and social interaction. Cultural diplomacy serves both as an internal means of redefining national identity and as an external tool for expanding influence [2]. It is important to note that postcolonial theory adds a critical dimension, examining how Russia and China position themselves as allies of the Global South against Western cultural and epistemological hegemony.

In the context of the SCO and BRICS these theoretical lenses help explain how Russia and China construct collective identities, promote alternative norms and challenge the existing international hierarchy. Moreover, the SCO, originally focused on security and counterterrorism, has expanded to include economic and cultural cooperation. As for BRICS, this economic grouping has evolved into a political platform advocating for a more equitable global financial system and greater representation of emerging powers.

The SCO and BRICS as Platforms for Multipolarity

The SCO and BRICS embody different but complementary aspects of the multipolar project. The SCO, founded in 2001 by China, Russia, and four Central Asian states, was initially designed to address regional security threats such as terrorism, extremism, and separatism. Over time it has become a broader platform for political, economic and cultural cooperation. Safronova [6] says that the SCO is not a military alliance, but its members share a commitment to countering unilateralism and promoting a multipolar world order. Later the accession of India and Pakistan in 2017 further expanded the organization's geopolitical reach, though it also introduced new complexities.

Let`s also consider the role of BRICS that emerged as a coalition of emerging economies seeking to reform global governance institutions. Its annual summits have increasingly focused on political coordination, with joint statements emphasizing the need for a multipolar world, respect for international law, and opposition to unilateral sanctions. For Russia and China BRICS provides a platform to engage with other major developing countries – Brazil, India, South Africa – and to advance initiatives such as the New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement, which aim to reduce dependence on Western-dominated financial institutions.

Both organizations serve as instruments for what Yudina [7] calls "political and diplomatic cooperation in strengthening multipolarity principles." They allow Russia and China to coordinate positions on key international issues, from UN reform to conflict resolution and to present a united front against Western pressure. Moreover, they facilitate the creation of alternative narratives that challenge the universality of Western liberal norms. However, Dzhekshenkulov [3] argue that the declared multipolarity within these structures often reproduces narrative bipolarity,

with Russia and China dominating the discourse while smaller states remain objects rather than subjects.

Russia-China Cooperation within the SCO and BRICS

Russia and China have deepened their strategic partnership within the SCO and BRICS, aligning their efforts to promote multipolarity. A landmark development was the 2015 joint statement on cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Union and China's Belt and Road Initiative, which explicitly mentioned the SCO as a platform for linking these projects. This approach aims to create a new Eurasian geopolitics based on infrastructure connectivity, trade facilitation and financial integration.

In the security sphere Russia and China conduct regular joint military exercises within the SCO framework, such as the "Peace Mission" anti-terrorist drills. They also cooperate through the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure to combat the "three evils" of terrorism, extremism and separatism. However, Safronova [6] points out that the SCO is not a military alliance and both countries carefully avoid formal obligations that would constrain their strategic autonomy.

Economically China is the driving force behind many SCO projects, while Russia often focuses on security and energy. It is important to say that this division of labor has led to tensions, as some Central Asian states prefer bilateral cooperation with China to multilateral SCO initiatives. Nevertheless, both Moscow and Beijing recognize the value of the SCO as a forum for coordinating their policies in Central Asia and countering Western influence.

In BRICS, Russia and China have pushed for greater political coordination, including joint positions on Syria, Iran, and Venezuela. They have also promoted the use of national currencies in trade settlements, reducing reliance on the U.S. dollar. The New Development Bank, headquartered in Shanghai, and the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement are concrete outcomes of this cooperation. As Yudina [7] notes, these initiatives reflect a shared desire to create a more balanced and just global order.

Central Asia is a key region where the SCO and BRICS intersect with Russia-China cooperation. The SCO provides a framework for managing security challenges, while BRICS offers economic and political solidarity. However, Central Asian states often remain objects rather than subjects in the Eurasian discourse shaped by Russia and China. The authors introduce the concept of "infrapop" – a pathology of infrastructure discourse where media projection far exceeds actual implementation [6].

The Arctic is another arena where Russia and China cooperate on multipolarity. Pitukhina et al. [5] analyze the Northern Sea Route and the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC) as new trade routes that reduce costs and strengthen economic ties. Particularly, China promotes the Polar Silk Road as an extension of the BRI, while India lobbies for INSTC. For Russia these projects offer opportunities to diversify trade and attract investment. However, the authors note that India's engagement in the Arctic is less robust than China's, and India's potential NATO ties could complicate cooperation.

Conclusion

The SCO and BRICS have become indispensable instruments for Russia and China in their quest to promote multipolarity. They provide platforms for political coordination, economic cooperation, and cultural exchange, while challenging Western hegemony and offering alternative visions of world order. However, their effectiveness is constrained by internal asymmetries, narrative bipolarity, and implementation gaps. To realize the full potential of these organizations, Russia and China must ensure that smaller states are treated as subjects, not objects, and that declared projects are matched by concrete results. Only then can multipolarity become a reality that benefits all.

The SCO and BRICS as Instruments for Promoting Multipolarity by China and Russia

Cheremisin M.A.
Qingdao University

JEL classification: H87, F02, F15, F29, F40, F42, F49

This article examines the role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS as key platforms for Russia and China to advance a multipolar world order. Drawing on recent academic and policy sources, it analyzes how both countries use these institutions to counter Western hegemony, promote alternative narratives of sovereignty and civilizational diversity, and foster economic and security cooperation. The article highlights joint initiatives in Central Asia, the Arctic, and cultural diplomacy, while also identifying internal challenges such as asymmetric power relations, narrative bipolarity, and the risk of infrastructure populism. Finally, it concludes that while the SCO and BRICS have become essential instruments for institutionalizing multipolarity, their long-term effectiveness depends on addressing internal imbalances and delivering concrete results that benefit all member states.

Keywords: multipolarity, SCO, BRICS, Russia, China, global order, multilateralism, sovereignty.

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