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Mongolia and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: A Thematic Research Analysis of Position, Context, and Trends

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Abstract. The article analyzes Mongolia's position, situation and development trends within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Based on qualitative interviews with senior officials from Mongolia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Security Council and Ministry of Defence, as well as expert opinions and content analysis (using T-value coefficients), the study explores Mongolia's long-lasting-observer status, the advantages and disadvantages of full membership and its core foreign policy framework as a “third neighbour” foreign policy. The findings highlight a cautious and balanced approach that prioritizes national security and sovereignty amid a complex geopolitical environment.

Keywords: Shanghai Cooperation Organization, advantages and disadvantages, expert, socio-economic, political and social issues, positive and negative attitudes, qualitative analysis.

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Introduction

Over the past 30 years, Mongolian-Chinese relations have quickly transitioned from confrontation to a comprehensive strategic partnership, and have overcome several factors. This evolution, influenced by high-level visits and many proposals, forms the foundation of this micro-studies. It is clear that the initiative, visit and conversation of high-ranking officials from both sides played an important role during this period. On the basis of the reasons above, a micro-ecology study was conducted and its results presented in this scientific paper. The micro-study described here aims to clarify Mongolia's position, situation and attitude towards (Khatanbold O, Purvesuren Bat,

2024) the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. This micro-study aims to identify current situations through qualitative analyses and to systematically demonstrate the impact of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on Mongolia's position, situation and attitude within the SCO. The paper aims to clarify Mongolia's official and public position, current situation and dominant attitude towards the Shanghai Cooperation Organization through in-depth qualitative interviews and content analysis.

Research methodology

The study used a qualitative research methodology, conducting in-depth interviews with senior officials and experts from key government agencies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Security Council and the Ministry of Defence. These participants were selected for their detailed knowledge and relatively neutral views on the subject. Qualitative research¹ between experts highlighted the importance of analyzing relevant information from multiple angles using content analysis. When selecting experts, researchers believed that they were well informed about the topics covered and could express a relatively neutral position on the related issues. The authors tried to draw reasonable conclusions from the source text through qualitative interviews using indicators that capture Mongolia's position, situation and attitude towards the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

The main components of the analysis: (i) Content Analysis – to separate information from various perspectives – who informs, which information, through which channels, which is directed and what result has been achieved; (ii) T-value Coefficient – Quantitative measures ($T=(R-d)/(R+d)$) are applied to classify and summarize the views of participants, "R" means the frequency of positive expressions, and "d" means the frequency of negative expressions.

The following specific results were obtained by analyzing using the above research methods. For example, since 2004, Mongolia has been observing the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which has been in common interest in continuing to do so; (ii) positive and negative positions on whether to participate in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization; (iii) an attempt has been made to examine the benefits and risks of economic, political and foreign policies in detail; (iv) military positions, criticism and appeals to Mongolia's sovereignty, etc.

Key Findings and Discussion

Mongolia's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization will enable it to participate actively in military and security cooperation despite the political and economic risks associated with it. The need to take into account political pluralism and the risks of third-party policies is a common theme among respondents.

In order to clarify the position of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Mongolia, the following analyses are based on the most frequently expressed views on six topics surveyed in the form of questionnaires. These include:

◎ *Analysis of understanding and position of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization;*

¹ This micro-research was carried out in October and November 2024, and the analysis results were processed in January 2025.

- ⊙ *Analysis of whether Mongolia should continue to have observer status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization;*
- ⊙ *Analysis of reasons and conditions not to become a member;*
- ⊙ *Analysis of the economic benefits of Mongolia's participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Analysis of advantages and disadvantages;*
- ⊙ *Analysis of advantages and disadvantages in terms of the benefits, importance in the social, political and foreign policy of its participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization;*
- ⊙ *Analysis of military positions of participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are presented separately as follows.*

1. Analysis of the understanding and position of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

This analysis aims to clarify Mongolia's common understanding and position of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and proposes the following two arguments (Khatanbold O., Purevsuren Bat., 2024, p. 65):

Rationale 1: Has Mongolia played a positive or negative role in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization since 2004?

Rationale 2: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization's objective is to promote mutual trust, friendship, good relations with neighbours, peace, security, regional stability, joint combat against terrorism, separatism and extremism and to clarify Mongolia's policy, trade, and economic cooperation approaches.

The following interesting results were presented when the two previous arguments were assessed by experts involved in qualitative studies.

Mongolia has been an “observer” country in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization for 21 years since 2004. Until now, Mongolia have not formally responded to Russia and China's repeated proposal to become full members of the organization. Since 1990, six presidents and 16 prime ministers have been facing this issue. Over the past twenty years, about dozens of studies on Mongolia's social, economic and political development have assessed and evaluated the issue to a relatively small extent.

Based on the results of this micro-analysis, specific analyses of Shanghai Cooperation Organization's perceptions and positions were carried out and, based on the results of the study, positive and negative attitudes were classified as follows.

According to the expert's statements, the neutral and positive positions were observed: "The current situation is confusing and painful, so Mongolia cannot maintain its current status. However, moving from its position of participating in various activities to a side may be a little painful for our country. However, if Mongolia is offered membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, its economy, territory, existing agreements and strategic partnerships still have grounds to refuse membership in the international organisation. Specifically, this analysis found that 4 of the expressions provided by experts in the qualitative study were positive and 6 negative. This negative position reflects the view that the decision to become a member of our country's organization as a whole could have a negative impact on “the third neighbour

policy". This can be expressed by the content analysis linear model or by the T-value coefficient.

$T = R-d/R+d \quad -1 \leq t \leq +1$	T-coefficient of expressing the general characteristic of the value unit in the document R-frequency of the meaning that confirms the characteristic /positive value-4/ d-frequency of the negated word sentence /negative value-6/
$T=(4-6)/(4+6)=-0.2$ $-1 \leq t \leq +1$	

As shown by the formula above, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's perception is relatively positive, but the "third-neighbor policy" has a dominant negative effect on the first assumption, as confirmed by the formula developed by the researchers ($T=0.2$). The second explanation emphasizes the formula: "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization's objectives are mutual trust, friendship, good neighbourly relations, peace and security, regional stability cooperation, cooperation in combating terrorism, separatism and extremism, political, trade and economic cooperation," which are directly related to the following circumstances, as the survey participants have emphasized.

Analysis shows that respondents have a relatively high critical attitude to the mentioned issues, which means that the objectives of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are mutual trust, friendship, good neighbourly relations, peace, security and cooperation for regional stability, which confirms the importance of the second argument. For example, experts criticized the organization's activities, saying, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization Charter has given priority to dealing with member states," indicating that one side is impossible to join the organization, while the service of members may result in the loss of the foundations of our country's "third neighbour" and multilateral foreign policy. Meanwhile, political leaders tend to believe that there is no guarantee that actions taken by organizations will not be subject to extreme or political biases. Moreover, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a multilateral military and security cooperation mechanism aimed at strengthening border security and trust between Central Asian neighbours, but in recent years it has expanded considerably in economic and geo-economic areas. While it declared its commitment to working on consensus principles, Russian and Chinese founders' influence and position may have been dominated for many years due to the tendency of the organization to oppose the dominant powers of the United States and the West, and the problem of coordinating the interests of both founding superpowers, so the issue of co-ordination remains open. The previous situation has had a negative impact on the organization's development and expansion, and attempts have been made to overcome it at the same time by admitting India and Pakistan, but the absence of tangible results indicates that we must give priority to maintaining a balanced foreign policy with our two neighbours. In some cases, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is regarded as a "hybrid" organization, as if it were a military and political organization. For example, the recent military field exercises, which appear to be aimed at small-scale "wars" by participants, are regarded as tactics that practiced military tactics such as coastal defence and attacking large areas.

Finally, many studies have been conducted on the economic benefits of Mongolia's accession to the member state, but trends in regional and international relations and prospects for cooperation have been observed. This is expressed in the linear model of content analysis or the T-value coefficient, which has the following meaning.

$T = \frac{R-d}{R+d} \quad -1 \leq t \leq +1$	T-coefficient of expressing the general characteristic of the value unit in the document R-frequency of the meaning that confirms the characteristic /positive value-6/ d-frequency of the negated word sentence /negative value-4/
$T = \frac{(4-6)}{(4+6)} = -0.2$ $-1 \leq t \leq +1$	

According to the above-mentioned expressions and analyses, the fundamental positions aimed at strengthening the organization, making it more international and implementing other effective measures are largely expressed as positive rather than negative, as evidenced by the expert's formula ($T = -0.2$). In other words, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization should not be considered to be an economic entity, and its structure should not be. To date, no economically beneficial projects have been carried out within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Currently, when it comes to economic projects between Kazakhstan and China and between Russia and India, it is not necessary to expect much from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization itself, but rather bilateral projects. Furthermore, it is considered that the above-mentioned internal conflict and external factors have led Mongolia to adopt an observer position. Basically, the tension between China and Russia in consolidating its hegemony in Central Asia and the tendency to resist and contain the United States and the West, which has not diminished, but has increased since the conflict in Ukraine, makes it important to firmly maintain the principles of informal neutrality and balanced relations with the great powers. It can be believed that the above-mentioned internal conflict and external factors led Mongolia to take a position of observer. In short, China's and Russia's ongoing struggle to strengthen the hegemony of Central Asia and the tendency to fight and contain the United States and Western Europe has not diminished, but have increased since the conflict in Ukraine, and it is important to firmly maintain the principle of informal neutrality and balanced relations with large powers (Khatanbold O., Purevsuren Bat., 2024, p. 47).

Furthermore, joining a multilateral mechanism dominated by countries with authoritarian regimes in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which seeks to maintain common values such as democracy and human rights, can pose significant risks and challenges for Mongolia. On this basis, the analysis clearly reflects criticism that the participation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation will not only lead to no significant progress, but also carries significant budgetary costs and significant political and diplomatic responsibilities and obligations.

2. Analysis of whether Mongolia should continue to have observer status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

The analysis provides two arguments that clarify Mongolia's common understanding and position towards the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. These are as follows:

Rationale 1: Mongolia prefers the active participation of observers in all non-military activities of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization rather than its membership and its obligation to carry out membership obligations;

Experts participating in the qualitative survey assessed the above-mentioned arguments, expressed support for the establishment of the organization and the preservation of the status of "active" observers. For example, if China exerts clear pressure, if Mongolia declares its commitment to non-alignment, if it actively participates in regional infrastructure and economic cooperation policies and projects, and if Mongolia is suddenly supporting membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Mongolia may be more likely to respond positively to the issue of membership. On the other hand, Mongolia should actively participate in the activities of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), with the exception of military and political cooperation, with the status of observers. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization has not achieved any concrete results and is seen today as an organization that serves only China's interests. In this regard, the researchers support the view that participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization would not only result in significant progress, but also significantly in the costs of budgets and political and diplomatic responsibility. It is generally believed that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's observer status will be sufficient for our country unless global political and geopolitical situation stabilizes and normalizes.

The analysis severely undermines the position of experts interviewed who support the more effective continuation of Mongolia's "active" observation status. This is explained by Mongolia's policy of not joining any alliance. On the one hand, the parties were careful not to change their positions or take unexpected action before the election. The active status of our country's observation may not last for long. This is because the current global development is driven by the need to take into account the balance between China, Russia, and the United States, the hostility, the lack of cooperation, conflict, and a proper understanding of these positions between the parties. The following values are expressed when the following is defined relative to the linear model of the content analysis or the T value coefficient.

$T = R-d/R+d \quad -1 \leq t \leq +1$	T-coefficient of expressing the general characteristic of the value unit in the document
$T = (4-6)/(4+6) = -0.2$ $-1 \leq t \leq +1$	R-frequency of the meaning that confirms the characteristic /positive value-4/ d-frequency of the negated word sentence /negative value-6/

Since Mongolia places the security of its neighbours, especially the security of the region, as the top priority, the analysis found that if the regional security and economic conditions are not favourable, it tends not to make serious decisions. The above-mentioned internal conflicts and external factors can be assumed to have led Mongolia to adopt an observer position. Specifically, the aim of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is to promote mutual trust and the general concept of action, and Mongolia's high-ranking officials have a tendency to continue their status as observers

rather than quickly join the Organization, citing important debates and disagreements about joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (T=-0.2).

3. Analysis of reasons and conditions not to become a member

An analysis of the reasons and circumstances for Mongolia's non-admission to the Organization was conducted, and two arguments (Khatabold O., Purevsuren Bat., 2024, p. 90) were presented to clarify the reasons and risks for Mongolia's non-admission to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Rationale 1: Mongolia is the only country with a shared border with the two main members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization that has no border dispute with any country in the region, and its borders are fully recognised by its neighbours, and has no border designation. There is no reason to believe that there will be no controversy or criticism on the issue in the long term. The main issues addressed by the Member States are the most important concerns related to the threat of regional terrorism, separatism and extremism related to common borders. This issue is becoming the most important concern for all member States and the expansion of cooperation within the Organization prevents Mongolia from avoiding the above-mentioned risks.

Rationale 2: To clarify the positive and negative views of some researchers, they believe that Mongolia's third-party neighbouring policies may be in danger if it joins the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

The following interesting results were presented when experts involved in qualitative research discussed and evaluated the two frameworks mentioned above. For example, the reasons and conditions for the study's participation were viewed from a positive perspective in principle when it came to joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, but Central Asia's importance has recently increased significantly and it is impossible to maintain its independence from the continent. For Mongolians, therefore, the development of relations with Central Asia is extremely important, and in this respect the intentions of the parties to open mutual embassies and then to establish reciprocal flights are clear examples.

Under the above circumstances, Mongolians are not only forced to participate actively in all the processes that are being held in Central Asia, but they also seek to express how, to what extent and why they are participating, as well as to gain a greater reputation in the region. On the other hand, this is an important factor in Mongolia's continuation of its status as an observer in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization under favourable conditions of global economic cooperation, as it has not entered into border conflicts with two neighbours and has been able to move from "friendliness with neighbours" to "a comprehensive strategic partnership. If current conditions change and foreign investment decreases, the chances of joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization can increase accordingly. On the other hand, if regional security issues such as terrorism, transborder crime and immigration increase, if the above-mentioned problems reach the level of risk for our country, we may find ourselves in a position to choose membership status. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization aims to fight together against the threats of terrorism, separatism and extremism. At present, there is little such activity in Mongolia, and the mechanism of fighting transnational crime, especially drug trafficking, may need to be paid more attention. This is understood as the main reason why Mongolia is not participating in

the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which is the only country in the region that has no border conflicts with two neighbours or other countries in the region and aims to resolve border conflicts and conflicts between Central Asian countries. This is directly linked to the fact that today we do not need too many security mechanisms. This is expressed in terms of the content analysis linear model or T-value coefficient, which gives the following value.

$T = R-d/R+d \quad -1 \leq t \leq +1$	T-coefficient of expressing the general characteristic of the value unit in the document
$T = (4-6)/(4+6) = 0.2$ $-1 \leq t \leq +1$	R-frequency of the meaning that confirms the characteristic /positive value-6/ d-frequency of the negated word sentence/negative value-4/

In the case of Mongolia, the reason and conditions for not joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization were analysed by qualitative interviews between high-ranking officials, and it was concluded that the positive reasons and favorable conditions for global economic cooperation were likely factors in Mongolia's continued status as an observer ($T=0.2$). If the situation changes and foreign investment decreases, the question of becoming a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization may arise. Furthermore, Mongolians are obliged to actively participate in various Central Asian processes and therefore try to achieve a higher profile in Central Asia, as they believe that when the security environment changes rapidly, their full participation in the region can play an important role in regional security. However, most of the criticisms are due to researchers' concerns about reducing their excessive dependency on neighbouring countries. The analysis highlighted that Mongolia's refusal to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was the main reason for obstructing regional stability. In fact, the Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization clearly states that all parties must understand that any issue is resolved by consensus.

Furthermore, despite comprehensive strategic partnerships and extensive cooperation between Russia and China, the opportunities, power, and resources for developing and cooperating with other Shanghai Cooperation Organization member states remain very limited. There are sufficient challenges and opportunities for broad cooperation with our neighbours, both those who have joined and those who have not joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. One of them is that the current global geopolitical situation is actually multipolar, and China is one point, and Russia is the other point. As a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, we have both democratic and authoritarian states, and according to experts, we have a full opportunity to make our voices heard as a political consensus organisation.

The above analysis demonstrates in particular that Mongolia's policy of the "third neighbour" has become a major issue in its perspective. Whenever a problem of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is discussed, Mongolia's "third neighbour" policy is raised at all levels. To explore the core of the issue, we tried to clarify the results, present the positive and negative views of some researchers, and if Mongolia joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Mongolia's third neighbour's policy may be in danger. The principles of the approach referred to in the experts' interviews are as follows, for the same reasons that the authors have presented:

First of all, as a small country between two countries, cooperation with neighbouring countries, learning from them and exchange of experiences can be an important tool in Mongolian foreign policy. In this sense, seeking mutual cooperation with the members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and seeking coexistence between these two powers is a geopolitical imperative. Mongolians also have a legitimate desire to establish a community-like association of small Central Asian states at the political level.

Secondly, South Korea and Japan may have attracted Mongolians to northeast Asia, but relations with the United States, Russia, and the PRC may have a greater importance for them.

Thirdly, Mongolia's concept of foreign policy stipulates: "First of all, relations with Russia and China and then relations with developed countries. This is even more clear in the second concept. The developed countries mentioned here are understood to include the European Union and the United States. If we do not maintain the policies of third-party neighbours to some extent, it leads to imbalances. In other words, there must be a third force that helps to avoid extremes in one direction or another. Since our two neighbours are nuclear-armed and authoritarian, it is likely that differences of opinion will undermine the principle of balanced relations between Russia and China in decision-making on any subject within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Therefore, the best option currently is to remain an observer member of SCO. Because all the funds for SCO come from China, it is clear that without China it cannot continue. However, the results of the study revealed that the Eurasian Union was launched by Russia, but that there are no real activities at present.

The results of this research are the following, which critically examine the above-mentioned situation: (i) We need to make our two neighbours understand and explain Mongolia's important "third neighbor policy"; (ii) We believe that if the regional economic and cooperation environment changes, Mongolia's third neighbor policy and its importance, which is still in favour for us, could affect the status of a member state; (iii) We must always pay attention to the potential difficulties posed in implementing multi-pillar and active foreign policy in relations with third-party neighbours; (iv) We may face the challenge of conflicting with third-party neighbouring countries, which may be a matter of military alliances within the SCO. Furthermore, the risk of losing constitutional principles and the need to seek mutual understanding and agreement is raised, particularly in terms of not joining military alliances or not moving goods over territory. Moreover, the results of the research show that there is a tendency to be cautious about losing the principles of balanced relations between us and our neighbours, especially since the basic principles of balanced relations between us and our neighbours may conflict with the decision-making process of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. If you define it in terms of the linear model of content analysis or the coefficient of the "T-value", the following value is expressed.

$T = R-d/R+d \quad -1 \leq t \leq +1$	T-coefficient of expressing the general characteristic of the value unit in the document
$T = (3-7)/(3+7) = -0.4$ $-1 \leq t \leq +1$	R-frequency of the meaning that confirms the characteristic /positive value-3/ d-frequency of the negated word/negative value-7/

Among the specific arguments in the context of the above-mentioned subject, the most important factors in the reasons and conditions for non-adherence to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are the relatively frequently raised question of "third neighbour policy". On the one hand, this means that the status of Mongolia at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization will be increased and Mongolia will be more likely to establish relations with its two neighbours, and both superpowers will certainly not allow it, if there is a tendency to oppose Mongolia and the other two neighbours or to put them in any uncomfortable situation. In this case, the formula confirms that if Mongolia's independent foreign policy is too one-sided, it may negatively affect the "third neighbour policy" ($T=-0.4$). The results of qualitative interviews with senior officials involved in the study confirmed Mongolia's careful balance between relations with Central Asia and Northeast Asia and relations with its third neighbours, and its flexibility and stability in foreign policy.

4. Analysis of the economic benefits of Mongolia's participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Analysis of advantages and disadvantages

The analysis sought to determine the advantages and disadvantages of Mongolia's economic benefits from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and to clarify the situation by proposing the following arguments (Khatanbold O., Purevsuren Bat., 2024, p. 95):

Rationale: Since 96% of the total population of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization member states and 97 percent of gross domestic product are of Russia and China, it is commonly believed that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization protects only the interests of the two countries. In this regard, it is reasonable to consider that most of the economic benefits of the SCO come from closer and mutually beneficial cooperation between Russian and Chinese economies.

The main advantages of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's economic benefits are the development of its integration, major transregional infrastructure projects and the beginning of trade, investment and economic cooperation. In this respect, depending on the current economic development status of Mongolia, there is more or less incentive to join the organization and force it to join. For example, economically, if Mongolia joined the Organization, the two countries would be able to treat our mountains more favourably and provide dozens of concessions. In addition, Mongolians believe that if they join the organization, they may get some economic incentives. On the other hand, Mongolians have been talking about free economic zones and customs clearances for goods for many years, but have never achieved them, and emphasize opportunities for northern neighbours. Many people have pointed out that Mongolia can create economic corridors and railway development and logistics centers. However, we need to understand that the solution to the development and security problems of each country lies not only abroad, but also within itself. In fact, we don't know which "game cards" the major powers have "in their hands" to bring out "which economic leverage cards". But this will be done openly in order to attract more Mongolians and enable them to join the organization, and we can also have the

opportunity to talk to Mongolians about how joining the organization and our two neighbours would benefit us.

Another important aspect is that cultural, humanitarian and educational cooperation is part of Shanghai's largest cooperation. This aims to strengthen the membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and its own influence through the soft power policy of the two neighbours. It should be noted that Mongolia is not a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, but is widely believed to have the advantage of properly optimizing its development strategies and policies, combating corruption and corruption, promoting good governance, and accelerating economic development, thereby reducing its dependence on the two neighbours, avoiding the curse of natural resources and creating opportunities for the development of new green and digital economic structures.

However, it is important to recognize that assuming that countries' independent policies will manifest themselves only if they become a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization will increase their opportunities to participate in economic cooperation. The cooperation of the two neighbours with observer status and the “global strategic partnership” could be more effective and realistic, but it would be more effective to achieve mutual benefits.

In fact, membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization does not bring any significant economic benefits, but only protects from the most dangerous risks such as security, cross-border crime, drug trafficking and terrorism. However, as long as other countries do not impose their “rights” on us, there is no danger. Since membership of Shanghai Cooperation Organization may have a relatively small direct economic benefit, further strengthening cooperation with China and creating new economic opportunities for Russia within the framework of an independent State may be beneficial, but the parties should address the issue carefully.

The next point highlighted by the expert survey was that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's main activities were security, military, and politics, with the aim of becoming an economically beneficial organization but not institutionalized to bring direct benefits to its member states. This difference of understanding must be addressed by pointing out at the level of common sense. The recent discussions on energy clubs, transit and free trade may open up opportunities for long-term economic benefits. For Mongolia, it is important to note that no party has given any guarantee or promise that it would increase loans, assistance, trade or investment if it joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and this reason has not yet been established. The current measures of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, in particular the major powers such as Russia, China and India, often point out that they compete with each other in the proposal and implementation of various projects and strategic initiatives. Therefore, rather than conducting in-depth and realistic research and justifying the economic benefits and benefits to be gained by joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, preliminary and review studies conducted in similar areas (such as the establishment of bilateral and trilateral free trade areas) have generated negative results. However, criticism is naturally directed at the lack of sufficient level for the public to fully understand and understand this work. The results of the above analysis

are expressed from the perspective of the linear model of content analysis or the “T-value” coefficient, and the following meaning is expressed.

$T = R-d/R+d$ $-1 \leq t \leq +1$	T-coefficient of expressing the general characteristic of the value unit in the document R-frequency of the meaning that confirms the characteristic /positive value-6/ d-frequency of the negated word sentence /negative value-4/
$T = (6-4)/(6+4) = 0.2$ $-1 \leq t \leq +1$	

According to the T value coefficient, which describes the advantages and disadvantages of Mongolia's participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, experts emphasize that long-term economic benefits of Mongolia's participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization must be carefully considered, as well as political and geopolitical interests. By expanding and diversifying its economy through internal solutions, Mongolia can overcome poverty and only open grants and assistance (T=0.2) through its membership in the organization. However, the negative side of joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's economic benefits must be considered, especially the risk of tax burdens. China and Russia owe 20 per cent of total tax revenue to Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and India and Pakistan also face the above problems. If Mongolia joins the Organization, it is advisable to take prudent measures to carefully calculate how to determine the need for mutual agreement on tax rates and amounts between the parties.

5. Analysis of advantages and disadvantages of in terms of the benefits, importance in the social, political and foreign policy of its participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

The following arguments are presented to obtain realistic answers by determining the benefits of Mongolia's sociopolitical and foreign policy membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Rationale: The current political circles in Mongolia are divided into those who support the limitation of Mongolia's participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as observers and those who support their participation in the Organization, but no consensus has yet been reached. The most appropriate option, therefore, is not to change cooperation principles but change forms of cooperation at the political level. Although Mongolia is likely to be more active in integration, it is important not to withdraw from its strategy of the “third neighbour”. The main idea of the “third neighbor policy” is not to argue or engage in any activity against anyone.

In the context of the above-mentioned argument, a qualitative interview with high-level experts identified and confirmed the advantages and advantages of socio-political and foreign policy: firstly, since the adoption of the Mongolian democratic "new" constitution in 1992, no decision has been taken in contradiction with the concept of foreign policy, regardless of the political parties in power. That is also a good reason to explain to our neighbours that any national security issue, such as joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, must be resolved by referendum. However, other reasons

can be classified at the discretion of the researcher, and at current Mongolian political level, it is important to consider the most appropriate option for changing the form and not the principle of cooperation with organizations. One of the issues raised in foreign policy was that Mongolia was recognised by all members of the United Nations Security Council, since it was the only country with a proposed “nuclear weapons-free zone” in 1994. However, it should be noted that no country in Central Asia (such as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) has achieved this to date. Thus, Mongolia may become more active in the integration direction, but it is important not to withdraw from the "third neighbour" strategy. Experts do not deny that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization will become the direction of multilateral foreign policy if the global situation is calm, Mongolia's influence is strengthened, and economic fundamentals improve.

The purpose of the study is to highlight the advantages and disadvantages of socio-political and foreign policy in the context of the arguments presented (Khatanbold O., Purevsuren Bat., 2024, p. 98): Independent policy is, in fact, a questionable and sensitive issue for countries completely dependent on China economically. In particular, there is no doubt that 80-90 per cent of Mongolia's economy depends on China. In the long term, our foreign policy will probably be stronger, and the major powers are currently taking a tolerant approach to the issue. Since China is currently the main economic donor, investor and partner of Mongolia, if the above conflict arose, pressure on Mongolians to join the organization is likely to increase significantly. From a geopolitical point of view, if these two powers clash with the United States, especially if China's relations with the United States are seriously tense, Mongolia will be extremely difficult. Today, Mongolians see the third issue as a great achievement, but it is important to consider the effectiveness of this reality. However, if China starts to confront its "third neighbor" in China, it will not only ask: "What will we do?", but will also have to find out if Mongolians can stay free from this situation. In this case, the current decision makers are trying to influence political decision-making via social media because the voices of citizens are powerful in democratic societies, but we do not know how this situation will develop. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, perhaps because it creates a feeling in society that it wants to influence something very large, can only be considered China's very large ambition. In short, as the only organization named after China, we are cautious and therefore facing some strong opposition from society. When political forces make such decisions in foreign policy during their power, other opposition forces are more likely to use them in political games, so they are one of today's most important social and political factors. In all these positive and negative aspects, it may be strongly hoped that they would become some kind of integration partners. In this respect, it is a member of the European Security Cooperation Organization and has been seeking membership of APEC since 1993, although it does not meet the requirements. However, 20 years of observer status at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has been a demonstration that our current political and social psychology is too driven by it. The results of the analysis above are expressed in relation to the linear model of the content analysis, or the coefficient of the "T-value", and the following is expressed.

$T = R-d/R+d \quad -1 \leq t \leq +1$	T-coefficient of expressing the general characteristic of the meaning unit in the document
$T=(4-6)/(4+6)=-0.2 \quad -1 \leq t \leq +1$	R-frequency of the meaning that confirms the characteristic /positive value-4/ d-frequency of the negated word sentence /negative value-6/

When analyzing the benefits and disadvantages of the accession of Mongolia to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on social, political and foreign policy, the significance of Mongolia's accession to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization could determine the path of development for the next 50 to 100 years, and should be decided by public referendum rather than by closed-door political decisions. The formula also confirms ($T=-0.2$) the hypothesis that Mongolia may run the risk of reducing opportunities to pursue independent foreign policy after joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Analysis shows that Mongolia's geographical location may be of great interest to the parties in relation to the influence of the United States, China, and Russia in the Eurasia conflict, and that the situation is relatively positive.

6. Analysis of military positions of participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are presented separately

After joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a study has been conducted to clarify factors and effects on Mongolia's military and military position (Khatanbold O, Purvesuren Bat, 2024, p. 98):

Rationale: Article 10 of the Mongolian “new” democratic constitution stipulates that “Mongolia shall pursue a foreign policy that values peace and complies with the standards and principles of international law”, and article 4 stipulates that “the deployment of foreign troops in Mongolian territory or the passage of foreign troops through the national borders without enacting a law is prohibited. It also states that “international recognition is... The peace policy stipulated in the same law does not include military alliances. However, the “generally accepted norms” are defined as the idea of not participating in the international fight against terrorism.

The above-mentioned argument has been compared by high-level experts: The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation itself is not a powerful military or political bloc, so there is no reason for fear. If this issue becomes complicated and elevated to the referendum level, there is nothing as “less meaningless” as that and it cannot be elevated. This may lead Mongolians to express their opinions about Russia and China.

Mongolia is not a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, but contributes to international terrorism and actively participates in UN peacekeeping operations. When a country becomes a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, its internal legislation must be amended on the basis that any country's national legislation is incompatible with international law. This will be a process that takes time and resources. This requires Member States of the Organization to assume a wide range of responsibilities, including the need to carry them out actively in the security and military defence sectors. Although it is not a military alliance, joint activities in the defence sector are currently underway. One indicator is that long-term

members will be able to carry out various activities in the military and defence sectors, and it is already clear. In order to strengthen the ability of the country to fight terrorism, we can now consider establishing appropriate forms of military and military cooperation, such as joint field exercises, such as the "King's Challenge" and the "Selenge" in two neighbouring and third neighbouring countries, to strengthen its capability to do so. Finally, the accession of India as a full member to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is important, as it has given three pillars to the organization. According to interviews with experts interviewed in the study, India is considered to be Shanghai Cooperation Organization's second-largest country and the largest democracy in the world, an important step towards avoiding the risk of uncertainty in Central Asia.

However, experts argue that when analyzing the negative factors affecting Mongolia's military and military position after joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the fact that all developed countries are participating in "king's quest" military exercises usually held in our country is clearly evidence that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is trying to provide the same services as its Charter does, without distinguishing between members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and non-member countries. Furthermore, although the Member States do not undertake joint exercises within the framework of a unified plan, the implementation of such proposals and initiatives should be seen as an opportunity to positively influence Mongolia's collective security. As noted above, after India joined the Organization as a full member, it is clear that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a governmental consulting organization, and its charter states that it does not accept countries under UN sanctions or those with border or customs disputes, but the fact that the members of the Organization also include countries with these problems makes us think. The question of whether the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is a military alliance could therefore lead to considerable internal debate. It should be noted that after becoming a member, you may be pressured by various military schools to participate in other special operations and operations, and may incur additional costs and delays. Moreover, some issues can be raised as an excuse to block opportunities for military and technical cooperation with Western countries and in some ways exert pressure or force. In such cases, we should consider the explanations we should give. In the above scenario, the following values are expressed by the linear models of content analysis or by the coefficients of the T values.

$T = \frac{R-d}{R+d} \quad -1 \leq t \leq +1$	T-coefficient of expressing the general characteristic of the value unit in the document
$T = \frac{(5-5)}{(5+5)} = 0$ $-1 \leq t \leq +1$	R-frequency of the meaning that confirms the characteristic /positive value-5/ d-frequency of the negated word/negative value-5/

According to qualitative research conducted in in-depth interviews with high-level experts, Mongolia's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has a military status, mainly because its full members are the world's largest and most powerful military alliance. Furthermore, because it is impossible to completely eliminate the strengthening of military and armed forces' policies and their influence,

this formula confirms that any influence and the resulting factor is in the same situation ($T=0$). Another interesting finding of this analysis is that the status of members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization can also be an important factor in ensuring our country's sovereignty and independence.

On the basis of the results of the above-mentioned measurements, we have determined in particular the basic requirements for the following measures.

With regard to Western pressure and coercion against Mongolia's accession to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and its impact on Mongolia's foreign policy: Mongolia is seriously considering the proposals of Russia and China to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. In particular, in 2020, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov said that “the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is prepared to support Mongolia if it tries to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization,” but Russia also said that it “has no intention of influencing the choice of Mongolian colleagues” (Mogrulov, 2021). Consequently, it is likely that the United States and Western countries will exert some pressure on Mongolia. In addition, the United States and Western countries are very cautious, as Russia has always been, to increase Russia's influence in Mongolia and to further strengthen its financial and other ties with Mongolia in an attempt to neutralize Beijing's influence.

Let's analyze the above situation: it is not wrong to say that there are neighbouring countries of third parties who regard the organization as anti-American or anti-Western, but it cannot be ignored that there are cases in which these countries tell us: “If you want to maintain a long-standing and active policy of third-party neighbours, you don't need to join it, you're limited, your foreign policy is limited”. However, India, our third neighbour, has already entered the country. Recent signs indicate that Arab countries are entering the country. Accordingly, the opinions of the experts asked indicate that if Mongolia is a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, it should be taken into account that “third-party relations” will be a resounding problem in the last 30 years and is one of the cornerstones of our foreign policy. Although the question of membership is expressed only through independent decision-making on the basis of international principles that do not interfere in the country's internal affairs, it is natural to emphasize that the interests and aspirations of the general public are of paramount importance. For Mongolia, however, the question of whether or not to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization itself has a negative impact on third-party policies and unnecessarily confuses third-party policies, but we must consider all aspects carefully. In general, international relations have always been between people, and recently it has become increasingly clear that relations between two countries also manifest themselves and are confirmed through human relations. In this context, the analysis results continue to show that we must clearly understand our political and foreign policy concepts for the third and second neighbours.

It is also clear that if Mongolia joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Western countries cannot claim to exert direct pressure and influence, and cannot wait for changes in Mongolia's foreign policy. Considering that countries such as Germany, the United States and Poland may not be interested in joining the Organization, it should be taken into account.

Russian researchers have often criticized Mongolia's observational status, but it should be noted that the Russian Government's position has always been that it is not involved in internal affairs. Sincerity is that Mongolia strives to adhere to its “third

neighbour” policy, expressed in the phrase “be friends with all countries, both in the East and in the West, without bringing anyone close.” In this respect, joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization may also cause Mongolia's relations with these countries to be hampered. This problem can be determined by content analysis linear models or “T-value” coefficients, depending on the expressions provided by the researchers participating in the study: Mongolia's potential to inhibit its relations with these countries through membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization ($T=-0.4$) is expressed in the following formula:

$T = R-d/R+d \quad -1 \leq t \leq +1$	T-coefficient of expressing the general characteristic of the value unit in the document R-frequency of the meaning that confirms the characteristic /positive value-3/ d-frequency of the negated word/negative value-7/
$T=(3-7)/(3+7)=-0.4 \quad -1 \leq t \leq +1$	

To clarify this, Western analysis of Mongolia's position and impact on joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization shows that Mongolia's main reason for pursued "third neighbor" policies is to “never be close to any country in the West or East”. Among the countries that considered Mongolia to be the "third neighbour" were the United States, Japan, the European Union, India and South Korea. Another aspect of the content analysis is that the interesting idea that we should pay more attention to understanding the actual situation in the country of the third neighbor and more importantly to asking the third neighbor what its position would be if it had two large neighbours like our own. It is worth mentioning here.

With regard to the risks arising from the accession to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: When Mongolia becomes a full member of the Shanghai Union, its foreign policy and other policy programs must be aligned to a certain extent with the overall policies of the Organization. Furthermore, the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization may encourage Mongolia's participation in the integration of Eurasia, ensure balance between cooperation with "third neighbours" of the European Union and the United States, and neutralize the risks resulting from it. It should not be forgotten that, on the basis of the qualitative analysis of the risks involved in the research, our third-party neighbours face the question of what will happen if relations with Russians and Chinese are deteriorating. If this happens, Mongolia will be forced to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. This may be due to geopolitical pressures and their circumstances. On the other hand, Mongolia's democratic elections are aimed at providing more economic opportunities for its people, providing them with food, and attracting them through economic growth, which may lead political parties to become increasingly dependent on China. For example, as evidenced by the statements of experts involved in the study, the following risks may occur.

- ⊙ *Loss of independence in foreign policy;*
- ⊙ *Increased dependency on two major neighbours and problems with the third neighbours;*
- ⊙ *Given the risk of being forced to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization due to economic difficulties;*
- ⊙ *Risk of domestic political instability;*

As a result of the above-mentioned risks, the lack of political trust and mutual understanding between parties leads to negative social psychological attitudes, such as the “blackening” and “misinterpreting” of issues every time they arise in today's society. This has a negative impact on the ability to evaluate the issue objectively, identify perspectives and disseminate information. This is expressed by the following methods with a linear model of content analysis or a “T-value” coefficient.

$T = R-d/R+d \quad -1 \leq t \leq +1$	T-coefficient of expressing the general characteristic of the value unit in the document R-frequency of the meaning that confirms the characteristic /positive value-5/ d-frequency of the negated word/negative value-5/
$T=(5-5)/(5+5)=0 \quad -1 \leq t \leq +1$	

Given the risks posed by the accession of Mongolia to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a full membership of SCO does not undermine relations between the United States and other Western European partners, thereby threatening the stability, democracy and sovereignty of the country and influencing the policy of its third neighbour. In addition, the formula confirms that Mongolians are forced to join the organization regardless of risks and difficulties in a matter of time ($T=0$). An important idea revealed in the analysis is that Mongolia's avoiding deep intervention in the domestic affairs and events of Central Asian countries such as Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan prevents it from approaching the SCO, while the organization's serious interference in regional political and economic problems does not rule out the risk of participating in regional political and economic problems. Consequently, it is still fearful that its partner countries will be held responsible or obliged to become members of the Organization.

To address this problem, the following solutions must be implemented. For example,

- Faced with difficulties in obtaining political, development support and assistance from third-party neighbours, the central and most appropriate foreign policy is to continue to play a role of observers to the SCO. Therefore, we must not break the established paths and move on to unknown paths, when confronted with new challenges in international relations.

- ○ The legal status and strong support of regional organizations for regional policy and activities of the Member States are two different issues.

- ○ The status of the regional member states should not conflict with the peaceful existence of the country and its democratic human rights-based regime.

- ○ Mongolia's participation in the organisation will be an organic process. If the SCO itself is institutionalized, our relations with our neighbours and our third neighbours improve, if there is no dispute with our third neighbour as a neighbor, and if the international and regional geopolitical environment becomes positive, we cannot upgrade our status in the organization and become full members.

- Since Mongolia is a sovereign democratic country, the supreme legislative body of Mongolia is the ultimate body to be ratified and signed by the head of state and implemented by the diplomatic authority by the majority of parliament and the Supreme Legislative Body.

○ Today, politics itself is becoming increasingly virtual, ideologically an important indicator of democracy. In this sense, proximity to our democratic countries is appropriate. However, given our geopolitical geography, the question of which of the two great powers should help our third neighbour is complicated. Since understanding, consensus between political dialogue and parties is important, this is why we need to consider it to be important.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the purpose of this analysis is to clarify the political, socio-economic and geopolitical advantages and disadvantages of Mongolia's SCO observer status, based on qualitative interviews with high-level experts. Therefore, the aim is to analyze the quality interviews with experts using a multi-dimensional and multi-dimensional content analysis model to study communication and content analysis content according to who reported, what was reported, which channels were directed, and the results achieved, and to classify participants' views using the "T-value" document coefficients in the "T-value" document sequence. The following analytical conclusions for each data set are presented in detail on the basis of the results of the above-mentioned measurements.

Mongolia maintains a cautious and balanced approach to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), giving priority to its "third neighbour" foreign policy and national sovereignty. Since 2004, the country has been granted observational status, which, despite repeated requests from Russia and China, largely prefers to be a full member. The key analytical points includes:

1. **The preservation of the "third neighbor" policy:** this policy focuses on maintaining balanced relations with the external powers of the immediate neighbour (Russia and China), a cornerstone of Mongolia's foreign policy. Experts have always pointed out that the full membership of the SCO may compromise this policy, increasing Russia's dependence on China, and alienating the "third neighbours" such as the United States, the European Union, Japan, and South Korea. The T-value coefficient of the study often reflects negative feelings about the impact of full membership on this policy (e.g. $T=-0.2$ to -0.4).

2. **Limited economic incentives:** Although SCO has expanded its economic focus, analysis shows that Mongolia's tangible, direct economic benefits from full membership are limited. The SCO is seen primarily as serving the interests of its dominant members (Russia and China), but there is no clear guarantee that Mongolia will increase its loans, assistance, or investment. It was found that SCO was not a primary economic entity offering significant benefits to small members ($T=-0.2$ in terms of the economic benefits of full members).

3. **Concerns about sovereignty and democratic values:** Mongolia's democratic constitution and its commitment to non-alignment cause concern for participation in organizations often seen as military and political blocs influenced by authoritarian regimes. There is concern that full membership could mean changes in internal legislation, participation in special military operations and compromise its independent foreign policy, thus affecting its sovereignty and democratic principles.

4. **Geopolitical neutrality:** Mongolia's geopolitical situation between the two major powers requires careful navigation of international relations. Its observers status allows it to participate selectively in non-military, economic and cultural non-military

activities with the SCO and to avoid competing in larger geopolitical conflicts, especially between China/Russia and the United States/Western Europe. This preserves the ability to maintain informal neutrality.

5. **Focus on regional stability and specific cooperation:** Mongolia actively participates in regional efforts to combat terrorism and United Nations peacekeeping operations. It recognises the role of the SCO in regional stability and counter-terrorism, but tries to cooperate in these areas through observer status rather than full membership, which would entail broader and potentially burdensome obligations.

6. **Conditions for possible membership:** The study suggested that full membership could only be considered if the global and regional geopolitical situation was stabilized, SCO became more institutionalised and less dominated by specific national interests, and if concrete and guaranteed economic benefits were clearly demonstrated, without jeopardising Mongolia's core principles of foreign policy or democratic governance. However, current feelings remain cautious and support a public referendum if such a decision is to be seriously considered.

Finally, Mongolia's current position reflects a pragmatic and self-saving strategy. The objective is to maximize cooperation in areas in which it meets the interests of the country, particularly in the non-military area, while maintaining its observation status in the complex geopolitical landscape of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and carefully safeguarding the independence and sovereignty of foreign policy.

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Монголия и Шанхайская организация сотрудничества:
тематический исследовательский анализ позиции, ситуации и тенденций

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Аннотация. В статье представлен анализ положения Монголии, ситуации и тенденций развития в Шанхайской организации сотрудничества (ШОС). На основе качественных интервью с высокопоставленными должностными лицами Министерства иностранных дел, Совета национальной безопасности и Министерства обороны Монголии, а также экспертных мнений и контент-анализа (с использованием коэффициентов T-value) в проведенном исследовании рассматривался длительный статус Монголии как наблюдателя, преимущества и недостатки полноправного членства и её базовая внешняя политика в качестве «третьего соседа». Результаты свидетельствуют об осторожном и сбалансированном подходе с учетом национальной безопасности и суверенитета в контексте сложной геополитической обстановки.

Ключевые слова: Шанхайская организация сотрудничества, преимущества и недостатки, эксперт, социально-экономические, политические и общественные проблемы, позитивное и негативное отношение, качественный анализ.

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