

ABSTRACT

dissertations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
in the specialty "8D03106 – Regional Studies"

Alibek Balgynbekovich Yermekov

on the topic "Institutionalization of Chinese influence in Central Asia, in the
Context of Aspects of the Regional Securitization"

General characteristics of the dissertation research. This dissertation research is devoted to the study of the evolution of the basic concepts of securitization and institutionalization of China, with a certain projection on the formation of China's regional policy in Central Asia since the formation of Sino-American strategic rivalry and the intensification of confrontation in Russian-Western relations. In this paper, the author analyzed the process of Chinese institution-building in the Central Asian region, as well as the formation of new Asia-centric security patterns.

Relevance of the research topic. The relevance of the research topic lies in the study of the new geopolitical plane of the Central Asian region, as well as the new role of China itself, both in the regional and global context. The formation of Chinese foreign policy in the previous two decades, in the period after the end of the Cold War, developed in the context of a relatively stable international system, during the existence of the "unipolar moment" of the United States. On a global level, this was reflected in the disintegration of the patterns of bipolar confrontation during the Cold War. The balance of power and its military elements began to play a less significant role in international affairs.

The main spectrum of securitization lies within the framework of China's geopolitical rise. After Deng Xiaoping's reforms, China experienced rapid economic growth, which later became reflected in its active global institution-building. During the reign of Hu Jintao, China has accumulated significant economic influence, which raises its international status to the level of a great power. Economic growth affects military modernization, and accordingly, it affects the change in the regional balance. Further, under Xi Jinping, the patterns of Chinese foreign policy have significantly moved away from Deng Xiaoping's four dilemmas. A distinctive feature of foreign policy under Xi has become its more active nature. Thus, China has embarked on global institution-building, as part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and the international system has been characterized by a shift in the global balance of power.

A feature of the Chinese strategy in the Central Asian region is its increased geo-economic component. The relevance of the phenomenon of geoeconomics lies in the fact that it creates and promotes new patterns of security. Geoeconomics, in turn, defines new patterns of security in the period of globalization. And the Central Asian region acts as a classic example of the application of these geo-economic measures and means.

Thus, the transformation of the global configuration of the balance of power has had a significant impact on the SCO. For the Central Asian countries, this actualizes the Asian vector in their foreign policy and security and creates an additional balancing mechanism in complex geopolitical realities.

Thus, Central Asia is gaining greater geo-economic and strategic importance for the People's Republic of China every year, and this requires advisory approaches and research. Within the framework of the relevance of this study, the focus is precisely on the processes of institution-building against the background of increasing security patterns both in the Central Asian region itself and along its perimeter.

The object of the study is China's institution-building in its regional strategies.

The subject of the study is China's diplomatic strategy in the Central Asia region in the context of changing security concepts.

The purpose of the dissertation research is determined by relevance and is to identify the problems and opportunities of implementing the main aspects of China's institution-building in the context of the development of new security patterns in Central Asia based on the analysis of the theory and practice of the foreign policy mechanisms of the People's Republic of China.

Within the framework of this goal, the author has **set the following tasks:**

- Based on the analysis of a wide range of theories of international relations, to determine a methodology for analyzing the evolution of modern Chinese foreign policy in some aspects of securitization and institution-building of the PRC at the present stage.
- To determine the role of the Regional security complex theory (RSCT), as well as the role of Chinese theories of international relations in understanding China's modern foreign policy aspirations.
- Taking into account the new geopolitical conditions, to explore the geo-economic mechanisms in China's foreign policy.
- To identify the features of the PRC's diplomatic strategy to promote institution-building in new realities while shifting the balance of power and strengthening security using the example of the Indo-Pacific region.
- Based on existing practice and experience, identify potential mechanisms for the evolution of securitization and institutionalization in Central Asia, through the prism of the development of the SCO and the BRI.
- To identify the potential of Chinese influence in Central Asia through existing mechanisms and the growing imbalance in international relations, including along the perimeter of the region.
- To assess the impact of the change in the balance of power on the process of institutionalization of Chinese influence in the Central Asian region, taking into account socio-political risks.

The chronological framework of the study covers the period from the early 2000s to 2024. This period is due to a change in the global strategic landscape, which determines the development of modern geopolitical dynamics and the changing role of China in the Central Asian region.

Theoretical and methodological basis of the research: during the analysis of the issues studied in the dissertation, the author used a set of theoretical and methodological approaches aimed at studying various aspects of the state's foreign policy. In this context, the theory of the regional security complex is defined as the

main theoretical approach, which makes it possible to identify key factors influencing the formation of the institution-building of the PRC during the reign of Xi Jinping. Thus, the theory of the regional security complex makes it possible to understand the process of institutionalization of Chinese influence in Central Asia in its main directions.

In the process of analyzing China's institutional strategy, the author of the thesis turned to the theory of neoclassical realism by J. Mearsheimer, which explain the basic foreign policy aspirations of the PRC, especially during the reign of Xi Jinping.

The theory of neoliberalism allows us to understand the foreign policy behavior of the PRC in two keys. In political terms, this is China's "integration" into pro-American institutions in the initial period after the end of the Cold War. That is, according to American experts, this should have led to political liberalization. Keohane and Nye's theory of complex interdependence explains the basic geo-economic mechanisms.

One of the most significant positions is occupied by the concept of securitization of Buzan and Waever. The theory of the regional security complex makes it possible to understand many aspects and mechanisms of the development of the process of institutionalization of Chinese influence not only in Central Asia, but throughout the world.

The author of the thesis also turned to the method of comparative analysis. Here, the objects of comparison were different regions of the world, in particular in the context of Chinese geo-economic mechanisms in East Asia, Southeast Asia, as well as in South and Central Asia.

Scientific novelty. The dissertation research presents the following scientific results that determine the novelty of the work:

- based on the analysis of a wide range of sources and documents and using classical and new security theories, such concepts as "Asiatization of security patterns" in Central Asia and "institution-building of China" are introduced for the first time into scientific circulation;
- a complex set of political and economic processes of building a new foreign policy strategy of the PRC has been identified using the example of the Indo-Pacific region, which is an illustrative case for other regions, including Central Asia.;
- a systematic and comprehensive analysis of China's diplomatic strategy to promote multilateral institutions through the analysis of the transformation of the SCO and the promotion of the Belt and Road Initiative with a focus on Central Asia is made;
- the author offers a new scientific view of China's Eurasian strategy under President Xi Jinping, which is determined by geo-economic parameters and a new alignment of forces in conditions of complex polarity.
- new patterns of China's interaction with Central Asian countries in the first and second decades of the 21st century have been identified, which are determined by the strengthening of securitization and institutionalization concepts.

The practical significance of this study also implies the development of recommendations aimed at their application to a wide range of stakeholders in international relations.

The conclusions of the dissertation research can be used for:

- scientific and teaching activities in the preparation of training courses and textbooks on international relations within the framework of developing domestic Chinese studies and more broadly in the Central Asian region, in Central Asian studies and its relations with the People's Republic of China;
- analytical work for such structures as ministries and departments, business structures, regional and international organizations in the field of security and trade and economic cooperation with the participation of China and Central Asian countries;
- developing practical recommendations in foreign policy and diplomacy to strengthen the potential and reduce the risks arising in the relationship between China and the Central Asian countries;
- consultations and scenarios of relations in the political and economic sphere for the near and medium term between China and the Central Asian states;

The main provisions of the dissertation research submitted for the protection of the position:

1. The analysis of the process of formation of China's modern foreign policy mechanisms is most clearly seen primarily through the prism of classical theories of international relations, such as neorealism and neoliberalism, but the main strategic attention should be paid to the theory of the regional security complex and the theory of peripheral diplomacy of China, since at the moment the Central Asian region is experiencing the process of institutionalization of Chinese influence against the background of changing patterns securitization;
2. The geo-economic approach acts as the main instrument of China's foreign policy in the context of globalization. This, in turn, led to the fact that the balance of power based on military force has conditionally receded into the background, and geo-economics has become the basic mechanism of China's foreign policy and foreign economic strategy. One of the illustrative examples (cases) that can serve as a model is the Indo-Pacific region. The example of this region shows that geo-economics acts as an instrument of diplomatic influence and as a means of institution-building. Elements of the main trends in security, economics, and institutional influence that are observed in the region through Chinese influence are already being projected to other regions, including Central Asia.
3. The securitization of China's external geo-economic interests has laid the foundations for the institutionalization of Chinese influence. In this regard, China's political influence is difficult to measure using classical mechanisms of balance of power, and it is necessary to apply a neoliberal paradigm that focuses on cooperation, in particular in the development and diversification of economic institutions.
4. In Central Asia, by the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century and beyond, China managed to institutionalize its influence. The peculiarity of Sino-Central Asian relations during this period is that there is a shift in the regional balance of power, where China acts as a conductor of comprehensive security for the countries of the region. To strengthen relations and diversify cooperation, the countries of the region need a common agenda based on mutual development

interests, which will contribute not only to strengthening the balance of power both internally and externally.

5. The Central Asian regional security complex is experiencing a number of transformational changes, with the formation of Asia-centric security patterns characterized by the presence and increase of non-traditional security aspects, economic development, environmental factors and the diversification of population migration, etc. For the further development of the complex and multilevel security system in Central Asia, new approaches and greater involvement of the countries of the region in new joint projects and initiatives that will contribute to strengthening security in the region are needed.

The thesis was validated at the Department of International Relations and World Economy of the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University.

The doctoral student's publications on the topic and materials of the dissertation have published 8 scientific articles, which reflect the main research results. One article is included in the Scopus database, five articles are included in journals recommended by the Science and Higher Education Quality Assurance Committee of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan

The structure of the thesis is determined by the logic of achieving the set goals and objectives of the research and consists of an introduction, three sections, a conclusion and a list of sources used.