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ШАНХАЙСКАЯ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВА: ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОЕ И ТРАНСПОРТНОЕ ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЕ НА СОВРЕМЕННОМ ЭТАПЕ

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В статье дан анализ развития внешней торговли в странах Шанхайской организации сотрудничества (ШОС) за период 2000–2022 гг. в товарном сегменте. Показана преобладающая и доминирующая роль Китая как на международном рынке, так и в торговле с государствами ШОС. Делается вывод о том, что, наряду с ростом взаимной торговли на пространстве ШОС, несбалансированность торговых потоков в перспективе может способствовать развитию негативных явлений, особенно в случае перехода в этой торговле на расчеты в национальных валютах. В статье показано, что страны ШОС, особенно Китай и Россия, активизировали и усилили свое присутствие в инновационной сфере и глобальном цифровом сегменте. Взаимодействие стран ШОС в инновационном и цифровом направлениях, по мнению автора, дает возможность в перспективе обеспечить цифровое лидерство ШОС в мировом экономическом пространстве и имплементировать цифровые решения и в других странах ШОС, которые сегодня менее активно разрабатывают и применяют цифровые инструменты. В Шанхайской организации сотрудничества на протяжении более чем 20 лет развиваются различные направления двустороннего и многостороннего сотрудничества партнеров. Одним из таких направлений является транспортная сфера. Значение этой сферы растет как в национальных экономиках, например, в КНР, так и во взаимодействии со странами. В статье охарактеризованы новые современные направления сотрудничества стран ШОС в транспортной сфере. Это усиливает интеграционные процессы в межгосударственном объединении в сфере экономики, транспорта и цифровизации.

Ключевые слова: межгосударственное объединение, международная торговля, экспорт, импорт, цифровизация, транспортное сотрудничество, «зеленый» транспорт, экология, выбросы, цифровой транспорт.

SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION ECONOMIC AND TRANSPORT COOPERATION AT THE PRESENT STAGE

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The article analyzes the development of foreign trade in the countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) for the period 2000–2022 in the commodity segment.

The predominant and dominant role of China both in the international market and in trade with the SCO states is shown. It is concluded that, along with the growth of mutual trade in the SCO space, the imbalance of trade flows in the future may contribute to the development of negative phenomena, especially in the case of a transition in this trade to settlements in national currencies. The article shows that the SCO countries, especially China and Russia, have intensified and strengthened their presence in the innovation sphere and the global digital segment. The interaction of the SCO countries in innovative and digital directions, according to the author, makes it possible in the future to increase the SCO's digital leadership in the global economic space and implement digital solutions in other SCO countries, which are less actively developing and using digital tools today. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization has been developing various areas of bilateral and multilateral cooperation between partners for more than 20 years. One of these areas is the transport sector. The importance of this area is growing both in national economies, for example, in China, and in cooperation. The article describes new modern directions of cooperation between the SCO countries in the transport sector. This strengthens the integration processes in the interstate association in the field of economics, transport and improvisation.

Keywords: interstate association, international trade, export, import, digitalization, transport co-operation, 'green' transport, ecology, emissions, digital transport.

Introduction

In the 21st century, the system of the world economy and international economic relations is undergoing an intensified transformation, including through the activation and expansion of regional economic activity. This trend is the result of the increasing growth of global instability [7]. In Eurasia, one of the responses to the growing global instability was the creation and operation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The SCO is developing active economic activity both among its member countries and with other countries of the world, and this activity is assessed by experts as successful and promising [1; 9; 20].

The SCO countries are developing cooperation in the economic, transport, energy, social, humanitarian spheres, and currently in the digital sphere. This cooperation allows them to stabilize their economies and mitigate the negative impact of external factors [4; 10].

In this article, the author analyzes the trade and transport interaction of the SCO countries as the most important components of their economic cooperation.

Results

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a regional interstate association in the Eurasian space, which now includes 9 countries: China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, Russia, Uzbekistan; 3 more states are observers – Afghanistan, Belarus and Mongolia.

The Organization as a whole and the individual countries it includes have achieved significant success in the economic and social, as well as in the field of innovation in the 21st century [12]. For example, China is seriously increasing its GDP production and expanding its presence in the world market

(Fig. 1), attracts more and more significant amounts of investment. Today, in terms of GDP production, China ranks 2nd in the ranking of countries in the world after the United States, and in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) – 1st. Accordingly, China is today the world's largest exporter (it consistently holds the 1st place in the world).

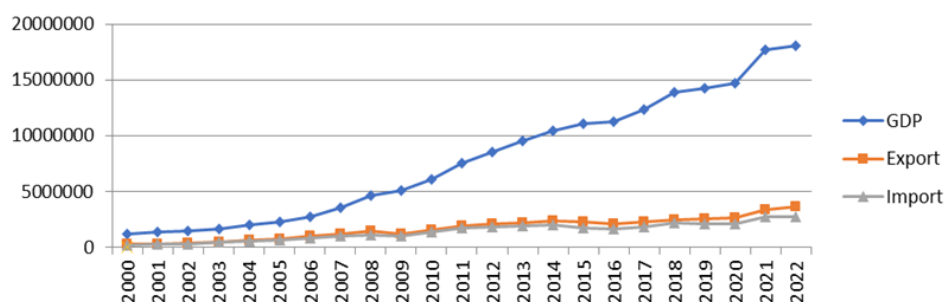


Fig. 1. Dynamics of China's GDP production, exports and imports in 2000–2022, million dollars at current prices at the current exchange rate¹

Various scientific studies in the field of the world economy and international economic relations conducted by domestic and foreign scientists confirm that China's leading global role in a number of indicators is predetermined by its innovative and digital development as a result of technology transfer [8] and significant own successes of the Chinese high-tech industry [2; 3; 16], which determines the development of a number of advantages of the SCO as a whole in this aspect in comparison with the EU and NAFTA as the leading integration blocks of the world.

Established in 2001 to resolve problematic issues that existed between the participating states and ensure collective security [14], the organization has long 'outgrown' a narrowly regional political format. In the research papers of international and domestic researchers, the prevailing point of view is that the SCO represents a new model of international cooperation that successfully operates in various sectors of the economy [12], providing partner countries with mutually beneficial and transparent conditions for cooperation for stable development based on a multilateral compromise [5]. Today, the SCO is paying more and more attention to the development and deepening of economic cooperation both in the area of the association and with third countries, and the areas of economic interaction and cooperation mechanisms have significantly expanded over the more than twenty-year history of the organization. Thus, the participating countries pay attention to "...the convergence of the Organization's activities to expand economic relations

¹ Figures 1–5 and Table compiled by: URL: <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/wds/tableViewer/tableView.aspx>

between the member countries with the Chinese program ‘One Belt, One Road’ [13].

One of the areas traditionally in the focus of attention of the SCO member states as a direction of interaction is foreign trade. This attention is predetermined by the high importance of foreign trade for the participating countries as a catalyst for national socio-economic processes.

China remains the unequivocal leader of the SCO in international trade throughout the period, both in exports (Fig. 2) and imports (Fig. 3). The Russian Federation and the Republic of India have similar export indicators, especially since the introduction of anti-Russian sanctions by Western countries in 2014. To undermine and destroy the Russian economy (Fig. 1), but in terms of imports, Russia has been noticeably lagging behind India since 2009 (Fig. 3).

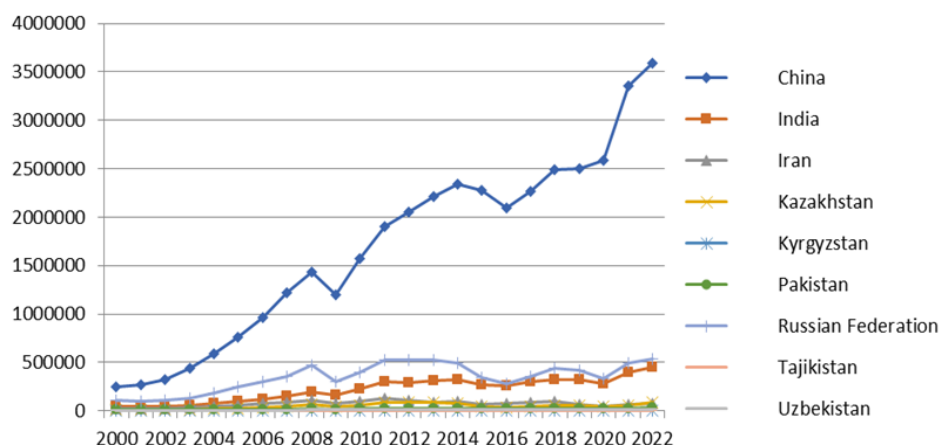


Fig. 2. Dynamics of commodity exports of the SCO countries in 2000–2022 (US dollars at current prices in millions)

Statistical analysis shows that the share of high-tech goods in total exports is growing in the SCO, especially in China, whose exports of high-tech goods are higher than the global average since 2010. In 2022, this share in Kyrgyzstan increased sharply (Table). As for Iran, data on this country is simply not available in the international database. From the table we can see there is also a slight lag in the export of high-tech goods from the Russian Federation. However, the problem here is rather related to the anti-Russian sanctions imposed by Western countries since 2014 and the difficulties for domestic goods to enter the foreign market in the high-tech segment, since the EU, the USA, and Japan are not too interested in the emergence of competitors in this segment and the loss of their dominance [6]. This also largely explains the ‘trade war’ being waged against China by the United States, which mainly affects high-tech goods and services.

Share of ICT goods as percentage of total trade, annual, 2000–2021

	2000	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
World	15,99	11,70	12,03	12,12	12,35	12,29	12,40	14,00	13,16
China	17,71	29,12	26,56	26,50	27,07	27,37	26,48	27,10	25,50
India	714	4 404	2 351	2 480	2 544	3 813	6 478	5 661	8 793
Iran (Islamic Republic of Iran)	0,01	0,04	0,07	0,01	0,01	0,02	–	–	–
Kazakhstan	0,00	0,05	0,19	0,16	0,13	0,11	0,12	0,11	..
Kyrgyzstan	0,18	0,56	0,07	0,37	0,15	0,14	0,18	0,27	3,58
Pakistan	–	0,20	0,24	0,30	0,20	0,16	0,07	0,09	0,08
Russian Federation	0,40	0,22	0,81	0,60	0,63	0,47	0,53	0,51	0,52
Tajikistan	–	–	–	0,20	0,32	0,02	0,14	0,08	0,23
Uzbekistan	–	–	–	–	0,11	0,11	0,12	0,16	0,16

Also from table it can be concluded that the SCO countries remain very differentiated in terms of high-tech and digital exports and significantly lag behind the leading countries in this indicator, especially Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. At the national level, these countries still face objective difficulties in the digital and innovation spheres, such as lack of financing, including foreign direct investment (FDI), lack of highly qualified national personnel and other social, economic, scientific and technical problems. Therefore, strengthening cooperation between the SCO countries (which is confirmed by the experience of Kyrgyzstan in 2021), in our opinion, can significantly improve the situation in the field of digitalization in the SCO in the medium term, which, on the one hand, will contribute to the growth of digital and high-tech production and exports in this group of countries and strengthen its technological, innovative and digital security, and on the other hand, to enable the SCO, on the basis of a synergistic effect, to further improve its position and move towards leadership in the relevant global markets, especially in Asia (Eurasia). In this process, the SCO countries can also benefit from deepening cooperation within the framework of the 'One Belt, One Road' initiative [19].

We can see from the presented statistical data in that China's share in the SCO's total foreign trade turnover in 2022 exceeded 75% in exports and 69.7% in imports. In 2001, these shares were 59.5 and 69.9%, respectively. This is due to the growth of the Chinese economy and its steady diversification towards digitalization and the growth of digital exports.

At the same time it can be noted that the SCO's exports increased by a total of 10.7 times, including China's by 14.4 times, India's by 10.7 times, and the Russian Federation has one of the lowest indicators: exports in value terms increased by 5.1 times, although they reached their historical level in 2022 the maximum, mainly due to the hostile actions of Western countries. However, we can expect further growth in Russian exports, as confirmed by the experience of a number of countries around the world. For example, Iran, like the Russian Federation, which is under the impact of Western sanctions, has

managed to increase exports of its goods to the world market by 2.5 times over the period 2000–2022.

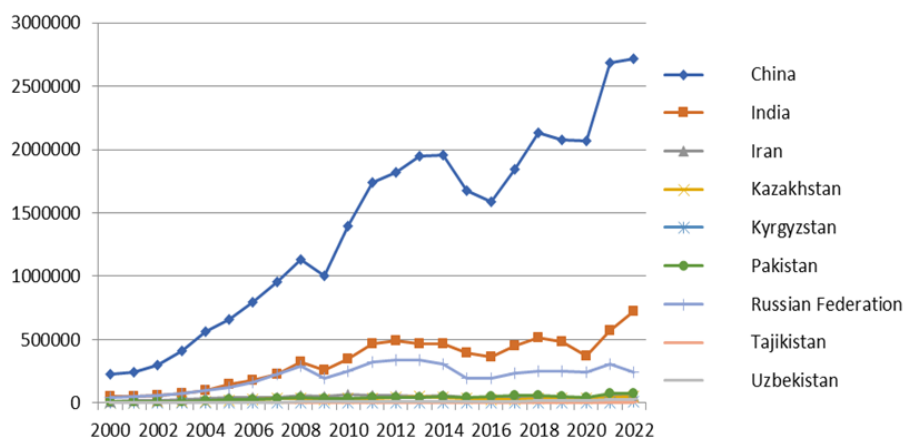


Fig. 3. Dynamics of commodity imports of the SCO countries in 2000–2022 (US dollars at current prices in millions)

As for the value of imports (Fig. 3), its value increased for the SCO as a whole by almost 11 times during the period under review (i.e. about the same as exports), including for China, India and the Russian Federation, respectively, by 12.1, 14 and 5.4 times. This is the lowest growth in the group and a fairly low indicator for Russia; but let's not forget about the anti-Russian sanctions. The value of Iran's imports increased by almost 4 times during the period under study (the lowest figure in the group in 2022). And it became the leader in the growth of imports to the SCO in 2022. Kyrgyzstan became the country, the volume of imports of which increased 17.3 times over the period 2000–2022.

At the same time, in the sphere of foreign trade, including imports, the absorption capacity of the national economies of the less developed SCO countries, and primarily the republics of Central Asia, as well as Pakistan, remains limited, as well as the production potential and the level of demand. Therefore, exports, as well as imports, of the least developed countries of the SCO continue to remain at a low level, and their share in the total trade turnover tends to decrease against the background of the growth of indicators of other countries of the association.

The same tendency to increase the volume of foreign trade and the redistribution of shares in it is also observed in the commodity trade of the SCO partner countries among themselves. As can be seen from Fig. 4 and 5, India and the Russian Federation remained the largest foreign trade partners of the PRC in the SCO in the period under review. Moreover, Russia's exports to China have significantly decreased since 2014 after the introduction of Western sanctions against Russia, and although they have increased since

2016, they were able to recover to the level of India (Fig. 3). However, China's imports from Russia significantly exceed those of all other SCO countries due to the export of raw materials from Russia to China, primarily hydrocarbons, which, in our opinion, is unprofitable for Russia. Iran will become an important partner for China in this area, although today its role as an importer for China remains insignificant.

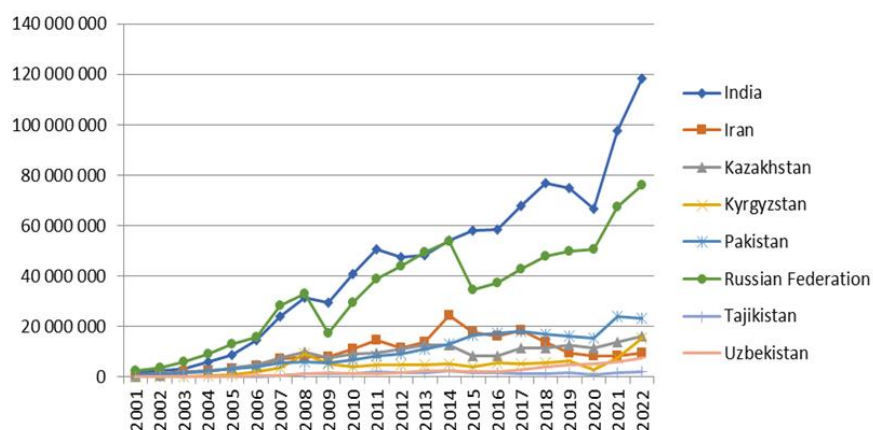


Fig. 4. China's exports to the SCO countries in 2000–2022
(in thousands of US dollars, annual)

Several conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the presented graphs. First, China's total exports to the SCO partner countries increased 64-fold over the period 2001–2022, from \$5 billion in 2001 to \$259 billion in 2022. This growth speaks for itself. China's imports from the SCO member states increased only 13.6 times over the same period.

This leads to the second conclusion – an imbalance in trade in goods between China and its partners from the SCO countries has formed (and is deepening). This imbalance, both in value (the negative balance of the foreign trade balance in trade with China in all SCO countries) and commodity (finished products with high added value from China and raw materials, often with a low degree of processing – from the SCO countries to China), as it seems to us, can create unfavorable trends and processes in the future or phenomena, especially in the case of the transition of the SCO countries to national currencies in mutual trade [11].

Thirdly, the SCO maintains a high dependence of the 'intra-SCO' trade in goods on external factors and processes. So, a comparative analysis of Fig. 2 and 3 with Fig. 4 and 5 demonstrate a high degree of their correlation. For example, in both cases we observe 3 stages in the development of trade and its dynamics: pre-crisis, i. e. prior to 2008–2009, which was characterized by rapid growth of mutual trade in the SCO and with third countries,

pre-pandemic (2010–2020), marked by a high degree of volatility of trade flows of the SCO countries inside and outside the organization along with multidirectional dynamics, as well as post-pandemic (2021–2022), which generally demonstrated an increase in commodity flows, although unstable. This high dependence seems to us to be a factor in destabilizing intraregional and international trade of the SCO, if we consider the situation in the long term.

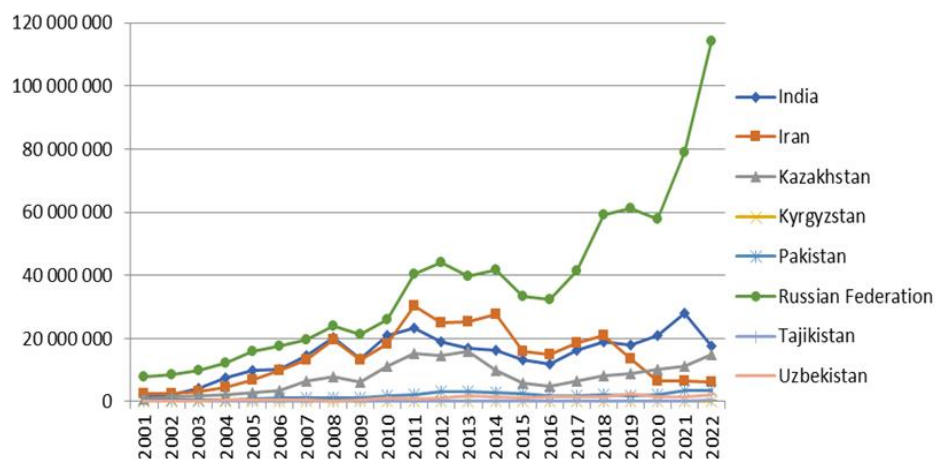


Fig. 5. China's imports from the SCO countries in 2000–2022 (in thousands of US dollars, annual)

Therefore, in our opinion, the SCO countries have the potential and opportunity to intensify their foreign trade, especially with third countries, if they find mechanisms to ensure cooperation in the field of promoting SCO goods to third-country markets by deepening the 'intra-SCO' regional division of labor and the formation of new value chains [15].

In the SCO, the transport component, due to the size of the territory, plays a particularly important role. The significant transport and logistics potential possessed by the SCO is an objective basis for the development and deepening of cooperation between the countries in the transport sector. In the SCO countries, the total length of highways is 13 million km (or 20% of all highways on Earth), the total length of mainline railways is 340 thousand km, and they account for more than 75% of global cargo turnover¹.

It is worth noting that the SCO countries pay great attention to cooperation in the transport sector, since effective transport interconnection increases the efficiency of the economic system as a whole, as well as provides opportunities for the growth of economic integration of the SCO countries, the growth of trade flows between countries (both goods and people).

¹ Генеральный секретарь ШОС: Транспорт был и остается важнейшим драйвером экономического развития. – URL: <http://rus.sectSCO.org/20180912/464176.html>

The development of transport contributes to the development of markets, including regional ones, and this, in turn, improves opportunities for production, business growth and an increase in living standards in general. Transport cooperation facilitates the movement of resources and resource availability in national economies, especially those countries that do not have their own raw materials in sufficient quantities for production, especially for its growth. Finally, developed transport cooperation, the formation of common standards reduces transport costs, which ultimately ensures the growth of competitiveness of national goods in world markets. However, today, new aspects can be added to these traditional advantages of deepening cooperation in the transport sector. These are, first of all, modern transport projects within the framework of the implementation of the Chinese initiative 'One Belt, One Road' [17]. But the lack of a common approach to the implementation of this initiative makes it difficult to implement specific projects, as well as the problems of financing the implementation of joint concepts in the field of transport.

Further, this is such an area of interaction as 'green' transport, which is becoming increasingly relevant in the 21st century, as it has a number of advantages over traditional transport solutions – both for individual countries and regions, and for the global economic system as a whole. These advantages include the following.

Firstly, it is the reduction of harmful emissions into the atmosphere, which will contribute to solving the environmental problem and removing the growing tension in this area. Green transport involves the implementation of a number of measures designed to reduce greenhouse transport emissions (exhaust gases). The green restructuring of transport leads to an increase in labor productivity in this industry, increases the level of innovation, and creates new jobs. Moreover, when achieving the environmental goals of green transport, the likelihood of abrupt environmental changes that can cause economic and social upheavals decreases. Cooperation in the field of 'green' transport in the SCO involves joint activities and projects aimed at the development and application of ecological fuels in the transport system of the participating countries, improving engine efficiency, developing electric modes of transport, and in general its electrification.

Secondly, wider use of public transport and joint promotion of its development. This direction involves joining efforts to develop and improve the efficiency of public transport systems and their accessibility. As a result, the number of private cars is decreasing, as are CO₂ emissions.

Thirdly, from an economic point of view, many countries cannot simply abandon 'polluting' modes of transport. A rational approach seems to be when we talk about reducing emissions with a gradual and systematic reduction of traditional vehicles. The problem of 'green' financing remains in this area. The market for 'green' financing in the region is still small, but it is actively

developing. The largest markets in Russia and Kazakhstan, where green financing systems and ESG reporting requirements have been developed. Almost 400 billion rubles worth of financial instruments have already been issued in Russia, which make it possible to reduce almost 11 million tons of CO₂ emissions (1% of Russia's total emissions).

Finally, the directions of digital transport development have also become a new area of cooperation between the SCO countries in the transport sector. Digitalization is widely developing and spreading in China [17]. The digital direction and digital transport have already been developed in many Asian countries [18]. New projects are being developed within the framework of digital transport, mainly at the country and bilateral levels, but there is no single official program for the development of digital transport in the SCO yet. Among the examples of the development of this area are the following projects.

1. Electronic transport management system for traffic flows. Such systems use modern digital technologies and platforms based on them, which are designed to help improve traffic flows and the transport system as a whole and increase traffic efficiency. For example, in Moscow, so-called 'smart' public transport stops are used, where on a special scoreboard you can see the numbers of vehicles stopping here and the arrival time of vehicles.

2. Online ticket booking systems. For the convenience of passengers, Internet platforms for booking and purchasing tickets have been developed and are being implemented in different SCO countries.

3. Digital transport maps and navigation applications that can be used by computers, mobile phones, etc. These applications are already widely used in various cities of the SCO countries to find optimal routes and improve the efficiency of movement.

4. Electronic payment systems on various types of transport, including with the help of gadgets, make it easier for passengers, especially in public transport, to pay for travel.

Conclusion

Thus, the SCO is actively developing quantitatively and qualitatively. The foreign trade activity of the countries of the association is growing, including the digital component more and more significantly. Transport projects contribute to the growth of mutual trade. It can be concluded that the SCO countries are becoming more and more prominent actors in international trade, relying on the growing economic potential, which, in turn, contributes to the growth of new opportunities for interaction in the regional and global fields.

At the same time, difficulties and contradictions remain in the SCO. They are related both to the differentiation of levels of economic development and to external pressure on many countries of the organization, for example, Russia, Iran, China, and India.

Nevertheless, our research shows that countries have internal resources to counter negative processes. Economic cooperation within the SCO clearly acts as a stabilizer and catalyst for growth, and this is its positive function. There are also new areas of cooperation, such as digitalization, the impact of which on various spheres of the SCO countries is already noticeable and has a positive effect. The strengthening of innovative and digital interaction will be able to have a positive impact on the situation with the climate agenda, which is very relevant for a number of Central Asian SCO countries. For example, desertification is taking place in Uzbekistan, which negatively affects the economic and social aspects of development, particularly, the level of poverty in the country.

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