

ASIA PROGRAM

INDIA AND THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION

BY EMERIC HOCHART

MASTER STUDENT IN HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
AT UNIVERSITÉ CATHOLIQUE DE LILLE

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February 14th 2019: the Indian people suffer an extremely serious terrorist attack, about 41 soldiers died in a suicide attack commissioned by the Islamist group “Jaish-e-Mohammed”, based in Pakistan. From this follows a diplomatic conflict and a severe deterioration of the relations with Pakistan; the main point of this conflict being the Indian response by surgical strikes on training camps of the responsible terrorist group, in the Pakistani Kashmir. Tensions are currently at their peak, whereas the two States are members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Then what is the importance of this organization for India?

With the entry of India and Pakistan in the SCO, people that are part of the Organisation are now more than 3 billion, which corresponds to almost half of the world’s population under the aegis of one economic and security organization – an historical first – far away from all the same types of organisations in the world. The situation is evolving importantly and quickly in Asia. This is the case especially for India and Pakistan, these two States have particular and unique situations. That will interest us throughout this analysis is the case of India, and particularly its integration, its economic and safety interests, but also the limits and difficulties that are still there today.

This will give us an interesting entry point to better understand the Indian as well as Shanghai Organisation’s situations on their positive and negative sides. The SCO study and analysis are particularly important and it will be crucial to always keep in mind that we are talking about an Organisation without the USA, neither as a partner, nor as an observer. The United States of America did not in any way contributed to the SCO foundation and operations, although we can say that SCO has been founded faced with the American hegemony and with the will of not being dependent on the United States for safety, and more recently for the economic development.

The face of the world is changing, definitely for Asia, with the presence of two giants of Southern Asia in SCO, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and Humanity History that is evolving before our eyes.

SCO’s strengthening is and will always be a major event in international relations, the change of the global balance is played out at the present time, and the integration of India and Pakistan in the SCO is one of these pivotal events that make history. Each integration

to an organisation of this kind must be monitored and carefully analysed, this is the case for India and Pakistan, and this should be the case for the current potential candidates.

IMPORTANT ECONOMIC AND SECURITY INTERESTS

Security interests: a key element of the member states cooperation.

Historically the SCO has been created to answer to its members' security needs, in particular the border management of the former Soviet republics, the issues related to the Soviet weaponry left there, and at last the management of the problem caused by the growth of terrorism. It appears logical and legitimate to begin with that matter.

The main objectives are the following:

- Stabilisation of the regional and continental security, this first point is vital to lead the following ones: Asia must be a stable and pacified area, the dangers must be reduced to a marginal level.

To achieve this, it is important to resolve the border problems, still numerous between some members of the organisation, like the Kashmir region which is disputed by the Pakistan and India, but also the tensions between India and China for two regions: the Aksai Chin and the Arunachal Pradesh. We can still note progress in 2005, with the recognition of the sovereignty of China on the Tibet by India, and the recognition of the sovereignty of India on the Sikkim (a region located north of Bangladesh and between Nepal at West and Bhutan at East) by China. However, we are still far from the resolution of the totality of these tensions, but it represents a necessity for the members of the SCO.

- Terrorism is the one danger on which all the member states agree on, whether it is for India concerning the Kashmir, or china and its fight against terrorism in the Xinjiang and central Asia. This kind of problem is often a source of polemics and also full of complexity. To solve this, the member states insist a lot on the anti-terrorist cooperation with an important system of intelligence between them. As India is one of the Asian countries who suffer the most of Islamic terrorism attacks, we can easily understand its posture and its interest on the matter.

Let's also mention the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation military situation at that day:

First of all, SCO has three of the biggest global military powers with Russia, China and India, whose expenditures allocated to Defence take place among the 10 most important budgets at a global level and are developing major projects of modernization and military development. To this is added the presence of four nuclear powers in the organisation: Russia, China, India and Pakistan.

Let us review the global nuclear powers: the four aforementioned and North Korea for Asia, France and Great Britain for Europe, Israel for Middle East and finally the USA (first military and nuclear power that surpasses all the countries of this list).

Altogether, that makes nine proven nuclear powers including four members of SCO and four members of OTAN (the USA, France, Great-Britain and the particular case of Israel that is not a member but an ally and observer of the organisation) and a "non-aligned" : North Korea, which, however, seems to be close to Pekin and Moscow. Thus, the entry of India and Pakistan is a significant change of the nuclear balance in the world, SCO has four nuclear powers, so does OTAN.

Thus, security interest is obvious for India, with its entry (and Pakistani entry) in SCO the world balance itself a little bit more, putting stronger into question the American hegemony particularly on the military and security points. SCO is a military power that is able to ensure its international security, it doesn't need OTAN or the United States for that, it can manage by itself the conflicts linked to terrorism and has the necessary resources to not link to the USA on these questions. The SCO situation on this point clearly demonstrates this strong desire for create a leading organisation without the presence of the USA and OTAN, to be noted that this goal is central in all domains: SCO is a rival of the USA at OTAN, it is really important.

The economic interests

There is an evolution within SCO which is capital to note and understand: if the SCO has been created to answer security issues, it is not the only objective of the organisation anymore. Indeed, it became quickly an organisation with extremely ambitious economic objectives, particularly thanks to the possibilities offered by the Asian area belonging to

the SCO: it is a huge market and there is in Asia a lot of economic and commercial opportunities. In this context of economic growth, India can take its share of the cake.

First of all, the main economic objective of India is to reinforce its collaboration with China, Russia and all the Central Asia countries for the energy industry. India is the world's biggest consumer of energy and the SCO facilitates its access to the Central Asia countries, those countries got important reserves of oil and gas. Seeing this opportunity, India seeks to access this market.

However, India faces a difficulty to do so: the presence of Pakistan and the problem of Kashmir prevent India from accessing Central Asia and stabilise both its commerce and its economic relationships with those countries. The relation between Pakistan and India should have improved this year, the attack of February 14 of 2019 on a military convoy by a young Indian of the Kashmir, which made 41 victims among the soldiers, had been claimed by the Islamic group "Jaish-e-Mohammed" (JeM), and although this group is officially banned by Pakistan, New Delhi has accused Islamabad to support this "terrorist organisation" by letting it "operate and develop its terrorists' infrastructure". The relationship between the two countries are now more tense than ever.

It is important to keep in mind that we can add maritime conflicts to border tensions, particularly around the fishermen issue, there would be between 98 and 210 Pakistani fishermen in the Indian jails versus 483 Indian ones imprisoned in Pakistan. And although they are frequently liberated (strongly mediatised liberations), we note that these releases act as a barometer of the diplomatic relations between the two countries. This conflict has at its origins the dispute for the "Sir Creek" swampy estuary that is a region full of hydrocarbon and shale gas.

These maritime conflicts do not end at the fishermen issues but extends to all the Arab-Persian Gulf notably on economic issues, as a matter of fact Pakistan has a negative view on the linkage between India at Iran, for that reason Pakistan is supported by its Saudi ally. That enables us to note two blocks in the Gulf: Iran and India from one side and Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on the other side. This currently takes shape with the deployment of the Indian Navy (including nuclear submarines and the Indian aircraft carrier) close to the Pakistani national waters in response to the attack of 14th February.

Facing those tensions with Pakistan, India cannot build an economic project to stabilise its exchanges with Central Asia. The solution found by New Delhi is Iran. The idea is quite simple: to get around Pakistan and Kashmir, India must find another road, and Iran seems to be the perfect candidate for that.

The project is taking shape by the construction of an important port in Chabahar and Bander Abbas in Iran to open a road to Central Asia and access the resources wanted by New Delhi (this project is a part of a bigger one, called the NSTC and involving Russia, Iran, and India, which we will talk about later). It is also interesting to see that Iran is a “state observer” of the SCO and is actually put forward by the member states to become the next member of the SCO. Its candidacy is for now supported by Russia and India, and seems positive to China for the project of the “New Silk Roads” (OBOR). The Iranian ports would then assure an important presence in the Persian Arabian Gulf, which would reinforce the SCO’s influence there, and even in the whole Middle East. Also, this would add a huge and helping support to Iran with its diplomatic and security issues with the USA and Israel (this would be a new blow for them).

The collaboration within the SCO

One of the main objectives of the SCO is the collaboration between its members, it is about resolving their conflicts, rivalries and all other tensions existing between them: and they are particularly numerous. It is also important to know that the SCO is not as strict as the European Union about the integration in the organisation. For the SCO the most important is to not be in open conflict with a member but does not require to have fully resolved the existing tensions. This is an explanation on why two countries such as India and Pakistan are in the organisation, that would not be the case in the European Union with the same situation.

Concerning India and Pakistan, both have become members of the organisation without having settled their common problems: promises and agreements have been sufficient. This led to a beneficial consequence: the reinforcement of the SCO, but also to leave intact tensions or even strong rivalries.

However, the objective is to resolve the problems between the member states thank to their common cooperation and the framework given by the organisation to appease the

tenses. For the case of India, it is concretized since its integration in the SCO by a permanent work on the resolution of the border conflicts with Pakistan and China, and the stabilization of its own international situation.

The results are visible in several domains, firstly economics with the multiplication of agreements with China and Russia, and the evolution of the economic relationships. The economic possibilities pushed India into willing to appease concretely its relationship with China and Pakistan. It worked with China, but the tenses with Pakistan have resumed in the beginning of the year because of the terrorist attack which caused the death of 41 soldiers.

At last we observe a real diplomatic and military cooperation in the framework of regular military exercises in the SCO, for example during the peace mission 2018 we saw Indian and Pakistani soldiers participating in the same operations without this being a problem. We can deduce that these exercises for the security represent a tool for the reconciliation and allow us to observe a tendency: the reconciliation between India and Pakistan was real in 2018, thanks to the SCO and its cooperative missions.

There is a real interest for India to be in the organisation, and even if its problems are far to be resolved, there is some tangible results : a concrete appeasement of its relationship with China, which is now based on a rivalry more than “conflicts”, then by the possibility that the tenses with Pakistan find a solution, a possibility which takes the shape of a promise regarding the results of the last three years on the question, despite the actual situation.

REINFORCE THE RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA AND CHINA, APPEASE THEM WITH PAKISTAN

“Your natural neighbour is your natural enemy and the neighbour of your neighbour is your friend” – Chanakya (heretic Brahman and one of the first known Indian political thinker, 350 BC- 275 BC)

Thenceforth how could we imagine a possible improvement of the relations with Pakistan? It is before all the presence of the organisation that prevents the severe aggravation of the relations, a conflict would not be of any interest for the member states.

Pakistan and India cannot allow themselves to enter in conflict, the risk of drastically decreasing their relations with the other members, or even to lose their place in the SCO and all of their economic interest, is too high. That prevents the risks of an open conflict between these 2 countries, and in that meaning, the organisation works very well, from the fact that interdependence links are created throughout the years, and so are the agreements and the reinforcement of the links between the members. This is a first reality we can observe here.

Let's take the point of view of India on the question: India needs to resolve the situation in Kashmir and more globally, the situation with Pakistan, and that for two reasons: to get an easier access to central Asia for the resources, because passing through Pakistan and the Kashmir is effectively the fastest way and theoretically the less expensive (a way impossible to take nowadays because of the bad relation between India and Pakistan about the Kashmir), and finally to get linked to the "New Silk Roads" to benefit from all its economic opportunities. Because again the situation in Kashmir is blocking India.

The chosen solution is Iran, which has access to the anted resources. This plan is the best for India, since its relations with Pakistan will probably not be improved before a long time, while its relations with Iran are progressively improving since several years.

How does India attend to proceed? By using the framework of the SCO and its members. The strategy is quite simple: India must improve its relations with China and Russia, which are improving their relations with Pakistan, from that moment, it will be appropriate for them to appease the relation between Pakistan and India and stabilise all kind of cooperation and future relation. So, it is about getting external help, and the SCO allows that, from where the pertinence of the words from Chanakya "Your natural neighbour is your natural enemy and the neighbour of your neighbour is your friend". If it seems impossible to solve a problem at two, it is necessary to obtain help or an arbitration from a tierce party, and the more influent and interested this third party is, the more the situation will be interesting to stabilise the situation. Obviously, we are talking about a long-term solution, but that is what the SCO allows to do, and what the Russian and Chinese implication in the Indian and Pakistani economies let us think.

Privileged relation between India and Russia

The last topical item on these relations is the recent signature of an agreement between India and Russia to supply five anti-aircraft defence systems S-400. This signature takes place during a period of important demand on Russian equipment; indeed India was not the only one buyer. We can note that Iran and Turkey also are; furthermore, Turkey is a particular case as it is a member of OTAN that buys weapons to Russia, in the current internal political situation of OTAN and the tensions between members...

In addition to this agreement relating to advanced Russian missiles that worth 5 million dollars, about twenty documents of cooperation have been signed between New Delhi and Moscow. Even though India is also a USA's partner on the military side, we can consider that India does not privilege this partnership anymore. Today Russia is so far the first weapon provider of India, far away from the USA (they remain second).

Of course, the relation is old and based on other key fields, this relation could have been set in January 2007 with the visit of Vladimir Putin who wanted to take advantage of the power climb of the Indian economic situation, becoming little by little an important regional power indeed international. This power climb is acknowledged, as testified by the Russian will of alignment but also American, Chinese and even European that we can observe since more than ten years from today. At this moment the two states agreed on a trade exchange volume reaching ten billion dollars in 2010, we can note the deepening of spatial cooperation and the widening in terms of Defence beyond trade (widening drastically deepened as part of SCO). The main economic field of the cooperation is the energy security that is one of the pillars of their relation, based on nuclear, gas and oil. (As examples the Iran-India pipeline, the one-million-dollar project Sakhaline-1 on the Siberian oil drilling, India is the first foreign investor of Russia in this field; and the nuclear cooperation is seen as very important).

Then we add to this a truly important point in terms of international relations: Russia supports the United Nations Security Council reform and the Indian integration in this "reformed council" as a permanent member, this point is crucial in terms of UN governance, especially currently where it seems to be thought concrete. On that question India is part of the G4 composed with India, Japan, Germany and Brazil all wishing to enter the UN Security Council, that one of the permanent members is supporting. That clearly

demonstrates a political willing to act. So, it seems to be a situation worth watching carefully, a rise of five to nine permanent members seems more and more possible, as the re-organisation of the forces balance in the international political chessboard. Let's note that Russia is in a certain way acting as mediators of the relations between India and China regarding its important support to India in terms of international policy.

The Indo-Chinese relationship, a complex relationship, yet improving?

Historically the relationship between India and China has always been extremely complex and often conflictual. We remember in particular the war of October 1962, and the historical tensions around those regions: Tibet, Aksai Chin, Arunachal Pradesh and the Sikkim. Furthermore, there is a real rivalry of influence between the two Asian giants for the first circle of influence of India: Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. We can also take into consideration the economic rivalry, India is jealous of the "New Silk Roads" project from which it cannot take benefits, and finally the rivalry for the Indian Ocean dominance. For this last point, it is a difficult objective to put in place, firstly because of the Chinese strategy called "the String of Pearl" which is particularly well advanced (implantation of military bases, and strong naval presence in the Chinese Sea and at the Suez Canal) plus the presence of the US Navy on the Indian Ocean (and its domination on the Malacca Strait, and the presence of numerous military bases).

It is in this context that India is setting up two important projects with regard to the dominance of the Indian Ocean: the first project is to gradually increase the number of Indian military bases between India and Africa and the second concern the "Freedom Roads" (this is just the nickname given to the "Asia Africa Growth Corridor": AAGC) with the ultimate goal of competing with China's "New Silk Roads" project.

The relationship is definitely complex, yet there are points of agreement, for example it is in the interest of both China and India that the situation with Pakistan improves to foster a positive climate for the country for economy and trade. For Asians in general it is necessary to stabilize and pacify Kashmir in view of its central geographical position in Asia, Kashmir could become the trading hub between East and West Asia and with the Middle East, at least theoretically. Similarly, for commercial reasons it is necessary to stabilize relations between India and China, particularly at the level of borders and claims.

Thus in 2005 an agreement was found, India recognizes the sovereignty of China on Tibet and for its part China recognizes the sovereignty of India on the Sikkim (region in the Himalayas between Bhutan and Nepal and a real access point to India for China). It did not solve all the problems, but it is a first step. Then, in this sense we observe for several years the multiplication of economic agreements and exchanges, as well as greater economic cooperation between the two Asian giants, today China is the largest trading partner of India, which represents the pillar of the relationship between the two. And this suggests that the relationship should only improve and allow more cooperation.

Finally, the progressive construction of a cooperation or even a friendship between China, India and Russia certainly represents a situation to watch carefully.

For example, China and India together account for 40% of the world's population and 18% of global GDP, the friendship between China's future first economic power and the fast-growing economic power India (to the point of being the first former colony to exceed its former metropolis in terms of GDP, to relativize all the same, but this remains important) is to watch as well, this shows that the economic centre of the world is clearly in Asia, despite the many divisions.

PERSISTENT IMPORTANT DIVISIONS

"The New Silk Roads" against the "Freedom Roads"

These two strategic projects are similar in their objectives, namely to stabilize access to resources, stabilize and pacify trade routes and promote economic cooperation. Both are therefore identical? Not really.

First, the Chinese project is much older (autumn 2013) than the Indian project (November 2016), then the Indian project focuses mainly on the Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia and Africa where the Chinese project extends to Europe, Asia and Africa. The concrete objective is to connect the Indian ports of Jamnagar (State of Gujarat) and Calcutta respectively with those of Djibouti and Sittwe in Myanmar. This project has the particularity that it concerns the great powers away from the Chinese project, namely India (for the reasons previously mentioned) and Japan (which has its own conflicts and rivalries with China). The aim of this alliance is to combine Indian knowledge of the

continent due to an ancient presence with Japanese expertise in infrastructure construction. The project focuses on the following areas: agriculture, health, manufacturing, sustainable development and modernization. By moving closer to Africa, India seeks to avoid isolation from China's plans: "the String of Pearl" and the "New Silk Roads" that would put India in a state of dependency.

Moreover, India sees in a negative view the development of Chinese investment in Pakistan, especially in infrastructure. To see Pakistan, his historical rival being integrated into Chinese projects while India is *de facto* shelved is also cause of frustrations for India. The consequence of this situation is the existence of this Japan/India project as well as agreements with Iran such as the NSTC ("North-South Transport Corridor") between India, Russia and Iran, which aims to create a long commercial corridor of 7200 km to improve connectivity between India, Iran, Russia, Caucasian countries and Central Asia.

The NSTC is concretized by the development of Iranian ports such as Bandar Abbas and the use of Indian ports like Jawaharlal Nehru and Kandla, this project would simplify the economic links between cities like Mumbai, Tehran, Baku, or Moscow for example.

Why is India building its projects in parallel with Chinese projects? Mainly because India is *de facto* put aside from Chinese projects and that the strong economic and commercial relations between the two countries do not reassure New Delhi on its relationship with China. India wants a relationship of equals with China and wants at all costs to avoid isolation and dependence. That is why it is developing its own economic and strategic projects, to which China does not participate.

The Chinese strategy forces India to create its own strategies to promote its development and strive for a balance of powers, yet the two projects are different in scope and extent: Chinese projects range from China Sea to China, to Europe via Central Asia, Russia, the Middle East and Africa. This project is the expression of Chinese power as a world power (project in which China has the hand). In a different way, Indian projects are regional or continental, they are very targeted. The NSTC is limited to Asia and is an agreement between three major powers, so India is not dominant (relatively to Russia and Iran). For its part, the "Freedom Road" is an Indo-Japanese project on the Indian Ocean (Indian Sub-Continent, Southeast Asia and East Africa) demonstrating the fact that India is before all a regional which tend toward a continental power.

The tensions in Himalaya and the Chinese influence in the Indian first influence circle

The different tensions between China and India are not only economic but also involve “games of influence” and politic and strategic ones. There are still tensions around Indian border territories with China and the claims made by the two countries for the Aksai Chin and the Arunachal Pradesh. Plus, there is also the fact that China tries to economically “conquer” countries near India, making possible an isolation and a forced dependence to China.

First of all, we will differentiate the 3 circles of influence of India. The first one concerns close countries: Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Pakistan. The second one is an intermediary circle composed of Asian countries and those linked to the Indian Ocean: China, Russia, central Asia, South-East Asia, Iran and some African countries such as Djibouti. And finally, the third circle concerns far countries linked to India internationally, especially Japan and USA.

The problem is that China has a strong implication in this first circle of influence, with its huge economic capacities. We observe an increasingly important rapprochement between China and those countries. Pakistan is more and more linked to the “New Silk Roads” and China’s presence becomes more important than India in countries like Nepal or Bhutan.

Although there is an important rapprochement between India and China thanks to the SCO, which promotes the economic and commercial relations between them, however this has to be relativized. As we have seen earlier, the tensions and rivalries are still great, and India, as for China, do not appreciate the strategic choices of its neighbour. We can clearly talk about a strong rivalry despite the positive influence that SCO is supposed to bring to the relations between its member states.

Rivalries: the main drag of SCO development

A deeper analysis of the inner situation of the SCO is essential: The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation promotes both security and economic development, those are the actual main objectives of the organisation. In that sense the objective is reached: under the SCO’s

Under the aegis the members are making a lot of agreements between them, are more and more bound to each other, making Asia the hotspot of world trade and more and more of the global economy. The SCO promotes this evolution since 2016 with the creation of economic initiatives, and by letting its members with a great liberty of choice concerning their economic strategies (which allows as well rivalry and competitiveness).

At the security level, this is also a success, cooperation is impressive, strategic and military partnerships work well whether for military equipment trade or for counterterrorism intelligence. Even if we can relativize this verdict especially according to the conflicts in Kashmir and more generally between Pakistan and India.

Yet the SCO does not solve some important problems, rivalries continue to exist between members, we talked about India-China rivalries but there is also China-Russia rivalry around Central Asia or for Pakistan. To summarize the rivalries exist and are at the centre of the organization's internal policy, one can also choose to see this as the expression of multilateralism and positive competitiveness, but this does not fully promote cooperation.

But this is just rivalry and there is still tensions, the SCO does not solve the tensions between members, the border tensions between India and China or between India and Pakistan, which are still far from being resolved, the possibility of establishing trustful and positive relationships is far from being apparent. The organisation is currently powerless to handle these issues.

This situation comes from a structural and institutional problem of the organization as the consequence of the fact that it was not originally founded for this purpose. In addition, the SCO has great difficulty in changing and acquiring the expertise needed to deal with such problems. On the other hand, we can note a real effort in this direction.

So, what is the concrete purpose of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation? First of all, to offer a framework for discussion and negotiation, as well as a political and economic framework for cooperation. The SCO promotes the building of positive relationships but does not impose them totally, it suffices to see the conditions of integration of India and Pakistan to the SCO for that, it was not necessary to definitively resolve the tensions but only to make concessions and promises, the consequence of this is that today Kashmir

continues to be one of the most dangerous parts of the planet at the centre of a conflict between two nuclear powers. We can also mention the disputes about the borders with China that are today not fully resolved as they remain since the 1960s. Therefore, if the SCO pursues its goal of political empowerment and wants to go further in cooperation it will be forced to end up facing these extremely central problems and to establish a real climate of trust between the members, it is the *sine qua non* condition for the construction of a stronger Asian cooperation.

So what about India in all of this? India is clearly benefiting from its integration into the SCO, which has strengthened its cooperation with China and Russia, which, beyond the rivalries, is still beneficial to India's economic development. The SCO also provides India with better access to the Asian market and the continent's resources. And even though relations with Pakistan are still not pacified and stabilized, there is still a positive development since the integration negotiations. Unfortunately, with the current situation in Kashmir, it is difficult to say when and how this relationship will be solved for the better.

India clearly benefits from its integration in the SCO, and SCO also has benefited: the integration of India reinforces clearly and totally the cooperation, increasing the demographics of the organization and giving it the support and participation of a developing economic power that is particularly important and interesting. How far will India go in the development of her power? With India and Pakistan, the SCO strengthens its international weight making it the most powerful economic organisation in the world, with the world's largest population, a security provided by the power of four nuclear powers and of two permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. Moreover, in the SCO, members are active and set up particularly important international economic projects. Enough to impose durably the organization on the international chessboard. ■

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Collection supervised by Barthélémy COURMONT, research director at IRIS, lecturer at the Université Catholique de Lille, and Emmanuel LINCOT, professor at the Institut Catholique de Paris – UR “Religion, culture and society” (EA 7403) and Sinologist.

courmont@iris-france.org – emmanuel.lincot@gmail.com

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Supervised by Barthélémy COURMONT, research director at IRIS, lecturer at the Université Catholique de Lille.

courmont@iris-france.org

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THE FRENCH INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AND STRATEGIC AFFAIRS

2 bis rue Mercoeur

75011 PARIS / France

T. + 33 (0) 1 53 27 60 60

contact@iris-france.org

@InstitutIRIS

www.iris-france.org