

**SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION: CHALLENGES
AND RESPONSE**



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FINAL APPROVAL LETTER

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DEDICATION



This Work is dedicated to my Parents and my Wife who have always been my inspiration!

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ABSTRACT

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is an intergovernmental organization that includes China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan founded in Shanghai in 2001. Originally formed as a confidence-building forum to demilitarize borders, the organization's goals and agenda have since broadened to include increased military and counter terrorism cooperation and intelligence sharing. The SCO has also intensified its focus on regional economic initiatives like the recently announced integration of the China-led Silk Road Economic Belt and the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union. While some experts say the organization has emerged as an anti-U.S. bulwark in Central Asia, others believe frictions among its members effectively preclude a strong, unified SCO. The SCO states occupy territory that accounts for three-fifths of the Eurasian continent and in total have a population of 3.5 billion, almost half of the world's population. In addition to the eight member states, the SCO has four observer nations, and six dialogue partners. The present study is focused on discussing the SCO's agenda, the challenges the organization faces especially between Russia and China, as well as the achievements it has made in terms of Regional Bloc. As many analyst consider it as anti-West or to put it differently as Hidden Agenda will also be critically analyzed. It will also elaborate that how historically patron of Great Game is declining and the cooperation on the basis of neoliberalism is emerging. The thesis concludes that SCO is an emerging global organization which has effectively resolved regional problems and tensions between Russia and China has improved.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter No1: Theoretical Understanding.....	7
Chapter No 2: The Emergence of SCO.....	11
2.1 Objectives of the SCO	
2.2 SCO and its Agenda Setting	
2.3 SCO and Western Response	
2.4 Critical Appraisal	
Chapter No 3: SCO and Central Asia: Other Regional Organizations.....	21
3.1 Central Asia and Other Regional Organizations	
3.2 Other Regional Organizations: US and West Orientation	
3.3 Comparison on SCO with other Regional Organizations	
3.4 Reflections on Regional Cooperation in Central Asia	
Chapter No 4: SCO: Impediments and Challenges.....	27
4.1 Consistency among the SCO members	
4.2 Economic Challenges	
4.3 Terrorism, Extremism and Separatism	
4.4 Environmental Concerns	
Chapter No 5: SCO: Achievements and its Future.....	33
5.1 SCO: Terrorism and Security	
5.2 SCO and Economic Progress	
5.3 Relations between Member States	
5.4 One Belt One Road (OBOR) Initiative	

5.5 The Maritime Silk Road

5.6 China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

Conclusion..... 41

Bibliography..... 43

Introduction

The study is an attempt to explore whether the formation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (henceforth SCO) is motivated by the aspirations of its member countries to contain the rising political and economic influence of the US and the West in the Eurasia region. The study will focus on the member states' interests in Central Asia and it will also look at future prospectus of the organization as a vibrant, pan regional group. SCO came into being in 2001 from its successor group the 'Shanghai Five' consisted of five countries. After the inclusion of Uzbekistan, its members increased to six. The main agenda of the organization is to fight the 'three evils' i.e. terrorism, extremism and separatism. Since very recent the SCO has given permanent membership to the South Asian rivals India and Pakistan and hence the permanent members are eight now along with the observer states Iran, Belarus, Mongolia and Afghanistan. It also has six dialogue partners i.e. Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia, Nepal, Turkey and Sri Lanka. Scholars are of the opinion that after United Nations, SCO is the second largest forum now with almost 3.5 billion of population and twenty five percent of the global GDP.

The focus of the organization has shifted with the changing regional environment. Initial focus was to solve boundary problems among the newly emerged states of Central Asia. China was a leading power behind the formation of Shanghai Five. Its main aim at that time was to initiate confidence building measures. China has been very successful on solving boundary problems between itself and the Central Asian Republics (henceforth CARs).

The War on terrorism in Afghanistan has emerged one of the main concerns of the SCO, while economic partnership and expansion matters to continue to constitute important aspects of its organizational program. This reach studies the shifting focus of the SCO and its impacts on the organizational working of SCO.

The charter of the organization visualizes friendship among the member countries, developing active cooperation in political spheres, trade and economy. SCO organs within SCO framework have been developed to implement Charter's purposes and agenda. These include the Heads of state conference, the Heads of Government Conference, the Foreign Ministers Conference, the Council of State Coordination and

Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure. These organs help the SCO to maintain its focus on key issues of security, economy, law enforcement, culture and communication.

Statement of the Problem

Immediately after its formation in 2001, the SCO fascinated a lot of consideration at international arena. Throughout this retro, this organization was repeatedly projected as a joint Russian-Chinese effort to thwart the geopolitical influence of NATO and the US in Eurasian region. At the same time since the organization is relatively new so had to face various internal problem among the member states. But at the end of the day the SCO provides CARs a platform for unified and multilateral response to terrorism and make the region an economic hub.

Significance of the Study

Because of its geopolitical and geostrategic location CARs play a very important role in the region. It is placed between South Asia, with a nuclear Pakistan; a potentially nuclear and second largest natural gas reserve Iran; Central Asia, which has vast wealth in terms of resources and Turkmenistan as third largest natural gas reserve; China and Russia. Since SCO is the only organization in the region which brings all the CARs, Russia, China, Pakistan and India at a unified platform. SCO can play a vital role in the peace and economic growth of the region especially in rich reserve Eurasia.

Objective of the Study

Keeping in view the importance of the study, I will try to explore the following aspects to understand the topic:-

- (1) Emergence and objective of SCO
- (2) SCO agenda setting and West Response
- (3) SCO vs other regional organizations
- (4) SCO and hurdles in its way
- (5) SCO achievements and its future

Review of Literatures

SCO has remained a paradox throughout its history. Scholars have presented different interpretation of the organization. The available literature on SCO is lacking coherent

analysis. For instance the role of Russia and China as a big brother has been overemphasized by many scholars.

Another aspect of the available literature is that it tends to view Central Asia and outside powers involved in the region in terms of 'Realism' and 'Great Game' context. In this regards Niklas Swanstrom has said in his article titled, "China and Central Asia: A New Great Game or traditional vassal Relations" that the new great game concept cannot fully explained the CARs situation but it is the only one aspect of the developing relationship in the region.

In his book Lutz Kleveman titled, "The New great Game: Blood and Oil in Central Asia" discusses the intense competition of great powers over oil and gas resources. He analyzed the 'New Great Game' from a broader perspective. He states that the US War on Terrorism (henceforth WOT) is a tool to pursue their prime objectives of securing influence in region to occupy major position of oil and gas resources.

Roy Allison and Lena Jonson book is helpful to understand the regional environment and the interest of the outside powers involved in CARs.

Fidh in their report on "SCO: A vehicle for human rights violations", states that official languages of the SCO are Chinese and Russian which makes it difficult for the human rights organizations to explore their concerned documents. Because of the absence of a normative framework, there is a perception that the SCO's focus is on military and economic cooperation with almost nil consideration towards human rights in the member states. Furthermore, it states that in all SCO member states the human rights' condition is suppressive and defenders of human rights are not encouraged.

Abigail Grace in his article "Quantifying China's Influence on SCO" claims that throughout the history, China has never allowed anyone to interfere in their domestic security issues. But on the other hand, forming up a platform (SCO) to fight against terrorism even in her own western province Xinjiang which is linked with other SCO member states, questioned that how China see other regional security organizations with comparison to SCO. He further writes that it is obvious that Chinese foreign policy objectives eventually drive the SCO's policy goals.

The present work will make use of all these works, while filling the important gaps in the available literature. Last but not the least, the present work takes into account different competing concepts to understand the reality of CARs and SCO's working.

Relevance of the Study

In contemporary global politics, formation of SCO was seen as an obvious development. Worldwide organizations considered SCO as blockade for those who may affect their mutually agreed itinerary. Regional stake holders on the other side regard SCO as a relief. They consider it as a window of opportunity to fight against terrorism, extremism and separatism to form a well progressive, peaceful and developed region. Pakistan is a key player in the region with ideally geopolitically positioned. Pakistan also takes SCO as a big opening to secure its geostrategic interests and using it as a step to follow her legitimate agenda of peace and economic prosperity of the region. On the other hand, China being the SCO founder have also launched the land connectivity which will start possibly from Mongolia and Russia to North Europe, Central Asia, to West Asia and then to Western Europe. It also asks for coordination of fiscal transport and custom policies along the Silk Road. This project will enhance the economic growth of CARs which in turns will result in a peaceful and prosperous region.

Research Question and Hypothesis

Keeping in view the literature contributed by various illuminati, scholars and researchers about SCO, I will try to explore the following aspects to understand the study:-

- (1) For instance it is in a true sense a regional organization or not?
- (2) It will look into the changing agenda of SCO, and why the scholars in West consider it as anti- West?
- (3) How different is SCO in its working from other regional organizations in the region? The SCO has generated several views among observers regarding its aim and goals, why?
- (4) Why there is a different type of attitude among its member states?
- (5) The study will analyze the goals and achievements of the SCO and also assess whether the geopolitical situation in the region is conducive for regional cooperation?

The SCO has generated several views among observers regarding its aim and goals. One of the popularly held views is that the SCO tends to counterbalance the increasing US influence, which in the long run may hurt Chinese and Russian interests in the region. This view has prevailed since the request of US to be observer state in the SCO was rejected by the organization. Another occasion was when SCO asked US to give timeframe for the vacation of bases in CARs.

There are other organizations working in the region like Commonwealth of Independent State (CIS), Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). By comparing SCO with all others, one can say that SCO is distinctive from others. This distinctness can be found in its diverse nature of membership, like it has countries from Central Asia, South Asia and China an emerging global power. The organization has brought all CARs in a single platform that's a big factor in the unification of CARs. It has brought CARs on equal footing with China and Russia. The Shanghai Spirit embodied a new concept of security which envisioned mutual trust and joint security, partnership and non-alliance, respect for other civilizations and quest for common progress. Since the SCO is a relatively new organization so there would be hurdles coming across in its growth. Till to date the SCO is considered as one of the finest regional organization but still there is a long way to go. Lack of political will, cohesion within the organization, economic priorities as well as security and differences between its members are the challenges faced by SCO. Since SCO as per its Charter does not interfere in domestic issues of its member states, so the organization needs to take appropriate mutually agreed steps to overcome with these problems. In recent summits most of the SCO member states have agreed to the notion that there is a need to find equilibrium among foreign policies. SCO has a long charter and other provisions and all of them have to be put into practice for the smooth running of the organization.

However, it is too early to expect conclusive results from the Organization and it is still in the process of defining itself.



Methodology and Research

Keeping in view the interplay of many dynamics and constant factors in the politics of this oil rich region, the study adopts a comprehensive scientific approach based on content analysis, including a variety of source materials. The source materials include documents, newspapers, journals, articles, books, and discussions with various scholars. Most part of the thesis will be based on historical research arguments, because history is very important in the formation of SCO. The method to be used in addressing the questions of this thesis will be research into secondary sources and analysis of currently available secondary sources. For these sources, the period to be consulted will be from 1996 when the ‘Shanghai Five’ was created. Kate L.Turabian’s manual will be used in the process of applying research techniques.

Organization of the Chapters

The study is divided into five chapters. Chapter one titled as ‘Theoretical Framework’ based on realism and neo-liberalism. Chapter two ‘The Emergence of SCO’ will cover the aim and objectives of the SCO. It will also cover the organization shifting agenda. Chapter three named as ‘SCO and Central Asia: Other Regional Organization’, it will cover the role of other organization in the CARs. It will also discuss SCO’s different attitude as compared with other organization. Chapter four titled as ‘Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Impediments and Challenges’. Chapter Five titled as ‘Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Future and Its Achievements’ will cover the challenges facing SCO in future. In the last conclusion will be presented that will identify the areas where the SCO needs to concentrate in order to increase its effectiveness. It will also elaborate the OBOR and CPECP briefly.

Chapter 1

Theoretical Understanding

Since the emergence of Central Asian countries, many regional and international powers have been involved in the region for their varied interests. A complex pattern of cooperation and competition among many actors has emerged in the region with different organization pursuing specific interests. In case of SCO, it has both pan-regional and neo-liberal perspective. However, the motives of every actor are different from one another. For better understanding of the organization, the ground realities of the region are imperative. The SCO is one of the successful displays of neo-liberalism working in this power based international politics as it demonstrates cooperative relationship that has evolved among Central Asian countries and other member states of the organization based on shared interest.

1.1 Great Game and New Channels

The Great Game perspective may also be studied to know about the role of great powers in Central Asia. The 19th century power competition between USSR and Great Britain is also called as Great Game. After the USSR vivisection this turned as the 'New Great Game' and many new actors entered the game like Russia, China and USA. The different dimension of rivalry have been highlighted such as the US vs Russia, US vs China, Turkey vs Iran , all of them are competing for transit routes, to secure oil and gas and other projects. India and Pakistan are also vying for closer links within the region to secure similar strategic and economic interests. This can also be called as the Pipeline Politics.¹ Since the region was under USSR control for a long period of time and till it has tremendous impacts and geopolitical implications for other regional and global powers. Russia will also try to stop CARs under the dominance of other countries. After the 9/11 attack the US has also established military presence in Afghanistan and Central Asian countries. As I have already mentioned that China has a long 3000 km boundary with the three states of Central Asia so the region's importance cannot be miscalculated. On the other side of the equation China would also need closer relation with Central Asian Countries to

¹ Lutz Kleveman, *The New Great Game: Blood and Oil in Central Asia* (London: Atlantic Books, 2002), 66.

secure more oil and gas as well as to secure its western region Xinjiang which is already facing problems from the Uighur separatism. These factors contribute towards the fear of a renewed 'Great Game' among major powers in Central Asia.²

Many analysts believe that SCO may be the part of this new great game. They are of the view that earlier organization established by Russia, like CIS and CSTO and US-NATO partnership for peace in the region were used by the great powers to further their perennial interests. Why the SCO is different organization form others will be dealt in this thesis.

1.2 SCO Neo-Liberal Department

Neoliberal Theory finally augments the Neo-Realism and New Great Game perspective to understand the realities of the region and functioning of the SCO. The growth of the transnational economic and social exchange has significant impacts on power relations between these states. This new theoretical paradigm emerged after the end of Cold War that states on the approach of international organization and other non-state actors that promotes international cooperation. The neoliberalism focuses on democratic governance, public opinion, mass education, collective security and multilateral diplomacy. All these traits can improve the life style of people.³

Two main theoretical frameworks that paved the way for acceptance of neoliberalism and are part of a neoliberal orientation are transnational interdependence. The theory of neoliberalism highlights the complex interdependence that occurs among states in the course of trade, finance and technology and lack of order of issue in term of high level politics. Accordingly military forces have become less useful instruments and welfare is becoming the primary goal and concern of states. This cooperation will result in the lower chance of conflict.⁴ In that case if we study the CARs strategic and economic position, we can understand that the theoretical framework is applicable to both the SCO and Central Asian politics. All the member states of the organization concentrate on the common interests, such as non-security issues. Likely, all the SCO member states have transnational interdependence working in the region.

² Ibid.

³ Charles W. Kegley and Eugene R. Wittkope, *World Politics: Trends and Transformation* (Belmont, CA: Thomson and Wodsworth, 2004), 44.

⁴ Ibid, 45.

Neoliberalism has over a period of time influenced states to understand reforms under influential international governmental organizations and regional groupings. In this context SCO has solved the boundary problems since 1998. It is also working for other reforms like drug trafficking, terrorism and extremism. The growth of the organization and its agenda is the manifestation of successful working of the organization, encouraging cooperation among nations and resolving mutual glitches.⁵ Neoliberals have emphasized the importance of the development of transnational relations and it appears that this process is continuing with growing strength. Thus it will help the states to increase cooperation through international organization. Thus the contact between states becomes stronger. In the context of CARs this has helped to foster the policy of integration like improving the collective situation.

The 9/11 attacks and the subsequent War on Terrorism (WOT) have tremendous impacts on the security situation of the region although cooperation among regional countries have increased. Both Russia and China pledged to cooperate with the US in the WOT. Other extra regional powers like India, Pakistan, Iran and Turkey have also supported and extended military support to US minus Iran. The CARs are facing a threat from Islamic Extremism for example the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan incursion to Central Asia and the Chinese threat in Xinjiang is a major security concerns for the SCO member states.⁶ As the extremism, terrorism problems of these states are interlinked; they have to get their acts together through the expression of common resolve to solve it.

The issue of terrorism was acknowledged and formally incorporated into the SCO charter when it was formally established on June 15, 2001. For that purpose Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) was formed in 2004 which is located at Uzbekistan capital Tashkent. The main task of this body is to work against the spread of terrorism, extremism and separatism. Mutual cooperation among SCO member states on the matter makes the theory of neoliberalism; involving complex interdependence

⁵ Ibid, 209.

⁶ *Xinhua* News, 23 September 2004.

is relevant to the regional cooperation under SCO. The SCO is also working with other organizations to boost the development in the region.⁷

Russia and China have worked for a closer relation on a wide range of issues especially terrorism and extremism in the region. They have reconciled the economic interests as well as strategic interests under the banner of SCO. This cooperation has turned into a mutual economic and security cooperation. SCO is not only useful for the Russia and China but it has also brought benefits for the Central Asian states as well as other regional players like Pakistan and India.

The Central Asian states especially Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are economically very poor and underdeveloped. These countries needed economic cooperation to promote their development and in this regards the role of SCO is very positive. The organization has worked to increase economic development. A comprehensive cooperation promoted by the neoliberal agenda of the SCO can bring about broad based prosperity in the area.⁸

The geo-strategic and geopolitical importance of Central Asia where many countries are involved, the neoLiberalism theory is particularly fitting. These vast resources would need and require closer cooperation between the CARs and other powers. Consequently, increasing interdependence among these states and the outside world is likely to promote greater regional harmony. The present theoretical framework and the present work attempts to analyze the various perspectives to understand the change in focus of the SCO agenda, the challenges currently faced with as well as the organization's strategies to tackle these challenges.



⁷ Gregory Logvinov, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: A New Qualitative Step Forward," *Far Eastern Review*, Vol.30, Issue 3 (2007): 27.

⁸ Sun Zhuangzhi, "New and Old Regionalism: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Sino-Central Asian Relations," *The Review of International Affairs*, Vol.3, No.4 (Summer 2004): 605.

Chapter 2

The Emergence of SCO

SCO started its function decades ago as Shanghai Five Mechanism in 1996. The basic aim of the Shanghai Five was to solve the boundary problems that emerged after the dismemberment of USSR. On April 26, 1996 the Agreement on Strengthening Military Confidence was concluded between the Central Asian States, Russia and China. This agreement included a number of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) to avoid any conflict among the member countries. Later several meetings were held to discuss the regional security parameters and the security threats emanated from Afghanistan along with terrorism, extremism and separatism. This was followed by the signing of a more elaborate accord on 24 April 1997 in Moscow. This accord has importance for good neighborly relations. Besides an accord on mutual reduction of troops in the border areas, the five countries promised that their troops deployed in the border areas would remain in defensive position that they would not use force and also that they would not seek unilateral military superiority.⁹ The member states were able to resolve the boundary problems and create a 7400 km belt of peace and stability in Central Asia. The initial success led the Shanghai Five to move forward and deal with the issue of regional security and stability collectively. The third summit held in Alma Ata on July 13, 1998 reflecting the expansion of its role to include counter terrorism after a significant increase in terrorist activities in China and CARs. The Summit's joint declaration stated that the Organization will take steps to fight terrorism, organize crimes, and drug trafficking and non-traditional security threats. This summit was held for shared desirability and mutual security cooperation.¹⁰

China was keen to break the linkage between the Uighur Separatist and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). At the time a large numbers of Uighurs lived in Central Asia around 200000 in Kazakhstan alone and 10000 in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Thus, the Shanghai Five became a forum for all of the member countries

⁹ Khalid Mahmoud, "Shanghai Cooperation organization: Beginning of a New Partnership," *Regional Studies*, Vol.XX, No.1 (2001): 6.

¹⁰ Xu Tao, "Promoting Shanghai Five Spirit for Regional Cooperation," *Contemporary International Relations*, Vol, 11, No.5 (May 2001): 10.

to make an effort for combating extremism through mutual cooperation.¹¹ The organization assumed an additional responsibility in Alma Ata declaration of 1998, which while emphasizing counter terrorism, stipulated the framework for economic collaboration among the member states. Among the goals of the Shanghai Five were to provide each other with joint international trade conditions to expand the volume of trade, to encourage and support numerous forms of local and borders region economic and trade cooperation in the five states.¹²

The Shanghai Five supplemented economic cooperation and greater contact between the member states, particularly between China and Central Asian States, which had been non-existent during the USSR era. The trade volume between China and Central Asian states rose from 46 million USD in 1993 to 1.5 billion USD in 1996. China's trade with Russia reached 8 billion USD which was almost 36.5% higher than the previous years. However, China remained cautious about its relations with Central Asian States, so to avoid Russia apprehensions.¹³

During the fourth Shanghai Summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan in August 1999, the SCO focus was further expanded to include commitment to fight separatism, religious extremism and terrorism.¹⁴

In Dushanbe, Tajikistan in July 2000 a similar statement was issued that focused on the same issue of three evils. In this summit the main purposes of discussion was to focus on security situation with the holding of joint military exercise this year. It also expressed Shanghai Five's stand on several key issues especially the US unipolarity. It emphasized the multi-polar nature of the world system and opposed the US plan to build National Missile Defence System (NMD) and the deployment of Theatre Missile Defence System (TMD) in the Asia Pacific region. The creation of Nuclear Free Zone (NFZ) in Central Asia was also endorsed in this summit.¹⁵ Thus the Shanghai Five process, starting with a modest agenda of establishing good neighborly relations in 1996, moved towards diverse areas in the following five years,

¹¹ Mahmud, op.cit, 7.

¹² Miller, op.cit, 40.

¹³ Joytsna Bakshi, "Shanghai Cooperation Organization before and after September 11," *Strategic Analysis*, Vol.XXXXVI, No.2 (June 2002): 4.

¹⁴ Mahmud, op.cit, 7.

¹⁵ Joytsna Bakshi, op.cit.

particularly focusing on addressing the key areas of security and development in Central Asia. In June 2001, after the inclusion of Uzbekistan as the sixth member of the organization it was converted into an international organization named as SCO with a much wider agenda and perspective. In 2016, the two South Asian rivals India and Pakistan were also made the permanent members of the organization and hence the total members of the organization increased to eight.¹⁶ The Shanghai convention which created the SCO emphasized fighting terrorism, extremism and separatism as key goals of the organization. It was also decided that a long term program of multilateral trade and economic cooperation would be formulated and efforts would be made to resolve issues relating to security and stability of the Central Asian region. Uzbek president Islam Karimov termed the SCO as a multilateral cooperation mechanism sought to promote to enlarge the areas of interactions and cooperation among the member countries. So slowly and gradually the organization bureaucratic structure was established.¹⁷

¹⁶ *Dawn*, 24 September 2017.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIP



[This image shows the members, observers, dialogue partners and acceding members. Image downloaded from <https://www.cfr.org/background/shanghai-cooperation-organization>]

2.1 Objectives of the SCO

The Charter of the SCO outlined the basic goals and objectives of the organization in detail. The founding document outlined and acknowledged the achievements of the Shanghai Five and enlarged the focus and agenda of the new organization to include diverse areas of cooperation and regional development. The main objectives of the organization are as follow:-

1. The goals of the organization are to create mutual trust, friendship and creating good neighboring relations among the member countries. To create political, technological, cultural, educational relations. Among other were the maintenance of peace, security and stability in the Central Asian region.
2. The SCO is not against any state or an alliance but it adheres to the principle of openness and dialogue. It is willing to share information, communication and contacts with other countries and organizations.

3. The main task of SCO is the maintenance of regional security which can be possible by engaging regional countries and close cooperation among them. Terrorism, extremism and separatism in the Central Asian states should be tackled collectively. For that purpose a special organ was established by the name of Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS). In addition to this, appropriate multilateral documents shall be drawn up on cooperation in curbing illicit migration and other types of criminal activities.
4. It has huge potential and opportunities for mutual collaboration of the member countries in the field of trade and economy. It shall make efforts to promote the development and expansion of cooperation among member countries at the bilateral and multilateral levels. In the framework of the organization a process of negotiating should be undertaken for the establishment of peaceful conditions for trade and economic activities.
5. The member countries of the SCO should be focused on mutual consultation. It will further strengthen coordination regarding regional issues as well as international problems. Their focus will be on the preservation of peace as it is conducive for all. Further it will create a balance global strategic culture in the international situation.
6. The organization objectives are mutual trust and equality as well as respect for cultural diversity that is based on Shanghai Spirit. The SCO believe on joint collaboration among all member states, so that all can get the benefit of globalization.

The Shanghai Spirit embodied a new concept of security which envisioned mutual trust and joint security, partnership and non-alliance, respect for other civilizations and quest for common progress.¹⁸ In 2002 the content of promoting a democratic, just and fair international political and economic order was written into the SCO charter.

2.2 SCO and its Agenda Setting

Over the period of time the SCO agenda has expand along with its interests. It expanded to include new areas to complement its original goals. For the increasing requirements of

¹⁸ Bhadrakumar, op,cit,23.

the SCO new institutions and bodies were established for the smoothly running.¹⁹ It was to protect international security and to speed up the economic development so that to contribute to the world community. Some of the areas agreed to be burst have over time taken divergent shape through increasing cooperation. In the problematic area like Xinjiang and Central Asia mainly problems are created by poverty. Many scholars are of the opinion that poverty is the main cause of terrorism and extremism.²⁰ Therefore, the SCO has expressed economic cooperation by boosting trade, investment in the infrastructure growth among the SCO member states. On the other side of the equation crackdown has been started on narcotics, trafficking of illegal arms in Afghanistan. The organization has also tightened custom regimes around Afghanistan and has implemented relief programs for poppy cultivation.²¹

The organization's focus on economic activities has been persistent and has enhanced over the last few years. For instance, during the June 2002 Summit, Chinese Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, Shi Guangcheng stated "our further negotiations will first focus on the expedition of trade and investments". Further its main focus was to discuss the free trade zone in the region. In September 2003, the leaders of the member countries gathered and signed an agreement for multilateral economic cooperation.²² A long term programme of multilateral economic cooperation was signed approximately for 20 years. Besides fostering economic activity in the region the organization continue to place emphasis on security cooperation especially on counter terrorism.²³ In the meantime, the mechanism for foreign policy coordination among the SCO states is also being modernized. Among the main areas of cooperation the SCO Charter sets forth searching for common viewpoints on foreign policy questions which are of mutual interest. The Deceleration of the SCO issued at St.Peterbergs Summit in June 2007 set forth mutual perspectives on key international problems. SCO member

¹⁹ Mercis, *DW*, 12December 2015.

²⁰ Umbreen Javaid and Azhar Rashid, "China Central Asia Relations and opportunities for Pakistan," *South Asian Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (July – December 2016):554.

²¹ Mercis, *DW*, 12 December 2015

²² Alexender Lukin, "Shanghai Cooperation organization: Problems and Prospects," *International Affairs: A Russian Journal of World Politics and Diplomacy and international Relations*," Vol, 50, Issue, 3 (2004): 34.

²³ *Ibid*, 45.

countries realized that the objectives of the organization could not be achieved without coordinating their foreign policy approaches.

The SCO in effort to enhance defence collaboration among the member countries and they held military exercise jointly against nuclear terrorism from 8-14 August 2007 in Russia. The Peace Mission of 2007 exercises featured Russian and Chinese military technologies.²⁴ However, the organization leadership emphasized that the Charter didn't intend to align against any state. The Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister, Li Hui reinforced the SCO agenda by stating that the 2007 military exercise would contribute to world peace and security and that it did not target any third country. Along with the exercise annual summit was also held in Bishkek on August 16, 2007 with main focus on developing energy resources and boosting security efforts within the SCO framework.²⁵ Although, the horizon of SCO has broadened to accommodate and address the changes at international and regional levels, the shift in focus of the organization on any specific side cannot be termed as change in its agenda setting. The focus of the organization has remained on addressing the problems faced by China, Russia and the Central Asian countries in challenging traditional and non-traditional threats of security.²⁶ With the Shanghai spirit of shared norms and interests the principle of SCO were reinforced and curtail terrorism and extremism. All of the regional countries are prone to this problem in one way or other and they can curb it by joint ventures.

2.3 SCO and Western Response

In the beginning of its formation, SCO has been the hot topic among the scholars at international level. Eleanor Albert writes in 'The SCO' in Council on Foreign Relations that some experts describe the SCO as hidden agenda. Stephen Aris in his article titled 'SCO: Mapping Multilateralism in Transition No. 2' in IPI also claims that at international level this organization was seen as a counterbalance to US and NATO in Eurasia and beyond. One of the issues is that of big brother domination. This is because of the disparity among the SCO CARs members with Russia and China, two being the stronger powers and Central Asian states being weaker states facing basic governance

²⁴ Erica Marat, "Russia and China Unite forces in Peace Mission-2007," *Central Asia Caucasus Analyst, Bi-Weekly Briefing*, Vol, 9, No, 7 (May 2007): 3.

²⁵ Bishkek Declaration," SCO website, 16 August 2007.

²⁶ K. Iqbal, "SCO comes of age," *The Nation*, 13-Jul-2015.

and security problems. As discussed the US, West media and academics often portray the SCO as anti US and NATO of the East. They are of the view that the Russian and Chinese having the predominance can reinforce their view point to coerce the weaker states of Central Asia.²⁷ They are of the view that SCO is likewise professed as a poly for expanding Chinese predominance which means to counter the US power in the region. Such perceptions emerged when the US and NATO forces were given deadline to withdraw its forces and to vacate the Central Asian bases.

Being a strategic partner since 9/11, Uzbekistan remained US close ally in its War on Terrorism in Afghanistan. In a response Uzbekistan was provided military aid as well as security.²⁸ The vacation of the US bases from Uzbekistan meant to avoid any physical presence of the great power in the region and SCO did not consider it an anti-US stance. Both Russia and China have aligned themselves with the US in countering terrorism. Moreover, the two major powers of the SCO and Central Asian member of the organization have scores of bilateral agreements with the US and European Union. The growing interactions of Central Asian States of the SCO with NATO and the organization for security and cooperation in Europe also prevent them from developing hostility against the US in particular and West in general. Most important of all is the fact that if the SCO starts acting as anti-US alliance then it will contradict all its official documents which repeatedly declares it as a regional cooperation organization and not as counter weight to any other international organization or players in Central Asia.²⁹ The SCO does not look at NATO as a model rather its orientation is essentially global. The organization's charter does not have mutual defense provision. Its members do engage in joint military exercises but these are meant to enhance their collective capacity to counter terrorist activities. For instance, at the April 2006, SCO defence ministers meeting the Russian envoy Gregory Logvinov said "the SCO has no desire to transform itself into a

²⁷ Allison, Roy, "Regionalism, Regional Structure and Security Management in Central Asia", *International Affairs*, Vol. 80, No.3 (2006):480.

²⁸ Stephen Aris, *Eurasian Regionalism: The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 108.

²⁹ Vitaly Vorobiev, "The SCO as a Rising Master of the Heartland: How to Enclave the Most Promising Organization in Eurasia to a Next Level," *Russia in Global Affairs*, March 25, 2012.

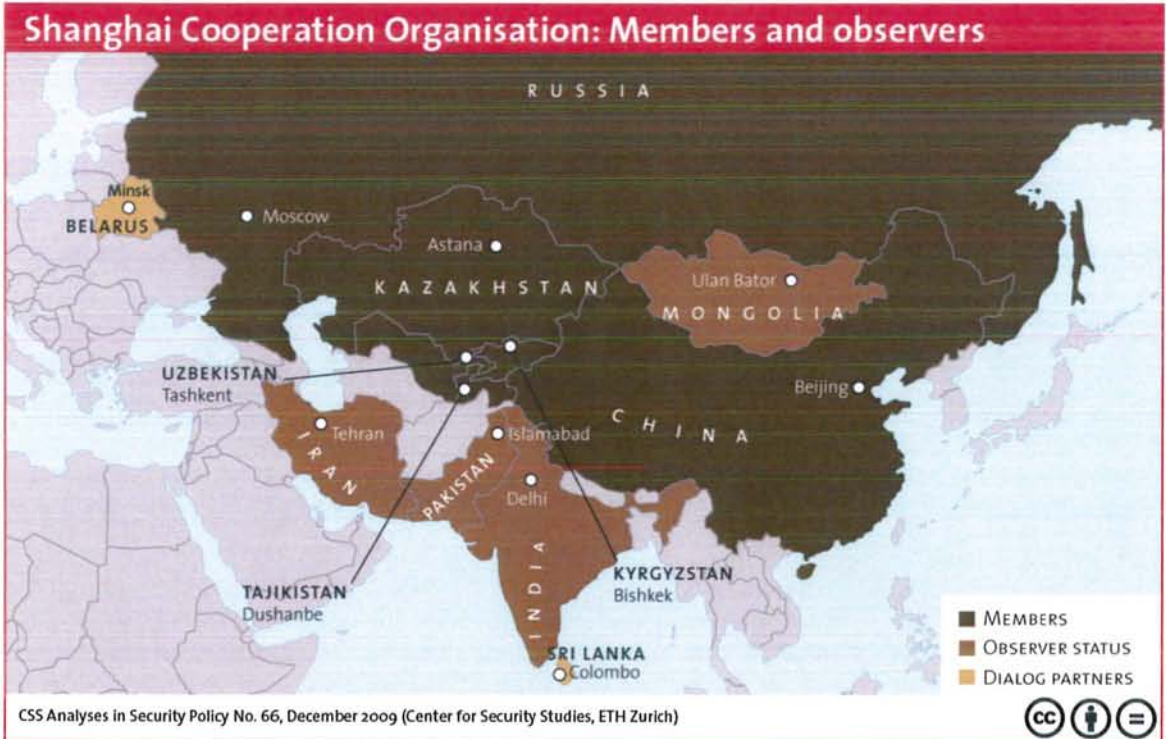
military bloc.³⁰ However, as threats of terrorism, extremism and separatism have increased, extensive involvement of armed forces is necessary for the curtailing of these menaces. Hence there is no military cooperation being undertaken by the member states on the pattern of NATO.³¹

2.4 Critical Appraisal

The organization support multi-polarity but it has not undermined the legitimate interests of any member state or any other external power in CARs. The July 2002 Declaration that was issued in Dushanbe, stated that each member has the right to choose its own political and economic policies. The SCO condemned interference in the internal matters of other countries and supported member states regarding the SCO as an important tool for suppressing domestic opposition, while successfully manipulating Russia's and China's sensitivity to separatist challenges from their Muslim regions. These terrorist threats cannot be handled at the domestic state level as they emanate from trans-border activities. Thus, the SCO provides Central Asian states platform for unified and multilateral response to terrorism.

³⁰ Ann Mcmillan, "Xinjiang and Central Asia: Interdependency, not Integration," in *China, Xinjiang and Central Asia, Transition and Cross boarder Interaction into the 21st Century* (ed.) Colin Mackerras and Michal Clarke (London: Routledge, 2009), 88.

³¹ Thrassy Marketos, *China's Energy Geopolitics: The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and Central Asia*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2009), 189.



[This image shows the members, observers, dialogue partners and dialogue partners. Image downloaded from https://www.reddit.com/Map/shanghai_cooperation_organization_members_and/]

Chapter 3

SCO and Central Asia: Other Regional Organizations

Before the formation of SCO many other regional organizations have been working in the Central Asian region. The crisis management in the region has mostly occurred through bilateral cooperation. There was no the long term conflict prevention because of the lack of trust and political willingness among the CARs. This chapter will focus on other organizations which have been established after the demise of USSR.³²

3.1 Central Asia and other Regional Organizations

After the USSR vivisection the Common Wealth of Independent States (CIS) was established in 1991, consisted of all the ex-Soviet Republics. CIS was established with the behest of Russia which mainly revolved around economic and trade cooperation. This earlier treaty between Russia and Central Asian states helped the SCO as most of the parts were derived from it. It has also helped the SCO in the organizational setup.³³ The CIS reaffirmed the desire of all participating states to abstain from the use of force. However, this organization could not work well and its importance declined after sometime. In 1995, Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus initiated the CIS custom union which was later joined by Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan also. Later in 2000 this was transformed into a Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC) with the basic objectives of Coordinating economic, social, industrial and financial policies of the member countries. Russia has tried utmost to make it a successful security organization but it could not materialized. Most of the work of this body was confined to decelerations only and even its anti-terrorism center turned out to be one of the several uncoordinated regional structures in CARs.

Another regional organization named as Central Asian Union (CAU) was established in 1994 in which three Central Asian States Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

³² Julie Boland, "Ten Years of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: A Lost Decade? A Partner for the U.S.?" (Brookings Institution, 21st Century Defense Initiative Policy Paper, 20 June 2011), accessed 30 Nov 2012, http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2011/6/shanghai%20cooperation%20organization%20boland/06_shanghai_cooperation_organization_boland.6.

³³ Alyson Bailes, J. K. Pál Dunay, Pan Guang, and Mikhail Troitskiy, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization", Vol. 17, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, SIPRI Policy Paper, (Stockholm May 2007), *Voltaire.net.org*. Voltaire Network, accessed Mar. 2013. <http://www.voltairenet.org/IMG/pdf/SIPRI-Shangai_Coop_Org.pdf>. 4.

participated. The main task of the organization was to address their common problems. The aim of this organization was to reduce the Russian dominance in their countries. Further, it aims to create a single economic zone with the lessening of tariff among the organization members. Tajikistan also joined the organization as an observer in 1996. A Central Asian Bank for Cooperation and Development was also established. In 2000 it was renamed as Central Asian Economic Union while later in 2001 it was again changed into Central Asian Cooperation Organization.³⁴ However, this body also failed to develop an effective organization.

Central Asian States also joined the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in 1992, which includes Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The main objectives of the organization were to develop and improve economic and technical infrastructure and transportation system in the region. Further, it was also aimed to improve cultural relation among the member states. Previously, this organization was named as Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD).³⁵ The ECO finalized several institutional projects on which MoUs and agreements were signed. Yet practical implementations of these agreements have been very limited. The ECO like other organizations has remained ineffective due to the lack of commitment and coordination among its member states. The lack of capital also hindered implementation of large scale multilateral projects agreed by the member countries. It has only facilitated the bilateral contact among the member states.³⁶

Another organization named as GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova) was formed in 1997. Its aim was to form strategies for cooperative security, peaceful resolution of conflicts and enhancing technical cooperation within the organization framework. From a regional perspective GUAM has a Black Sea and Central and Eastern European orientation while Uzbekistan is located much farther to the east. Such differences led to the withdrawn of Uzbekistan from the Organization. In a nutshell the role of the organization became ineffective.

³⁴ Maria Raquel Freire, and Roger E. Kanet, "Key Players and Regional Dynamics in Eurasia: The Return of the 'Great Game'", (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 127.

³⁵ R. A. Mullerson, "Central Asia: A Chessboard and Player in the New Great Game", (London: Kegan Paul, 2007), 100.

³⁶ Jing-Dong Yuan, "China's Role in Establishing and Building the Shanghai Cooperation Organization", November 2010, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 860.

3.2 Other Regional Organizations: US and West Orientation

Besides this Russia formed other organizations which too have failed to establish effective coordination amongst the Central Asian countries. These include the Central Asian Nuclear Free Zone, the UN sponsored 6+2 Group and the NATO backed Partnership for Peace (PfP). Beside pursuing regional cooperation with great powers and neighboring states, Central Asian states have undertaken some cooperative initiatives with other regional organizations. The EU has granted them access to GSP which allows tariff discounts on factory-made products and certain agricultural commodities. In 1997, the Asian Development Bank initiated a program named as Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation to encourage regional cooperation. However, this also failed to establish a strong regional harmony.³⁷

For its part the UN has also initiated programs directly or indirectly relating to anti-terrorist activities. These programs deal primarily with overall political and economic reforms for the region. The Central Asian countries have also developed contact with NATO and joined NATO's Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) and PfP programs.³⁸ This mechanism provided the members with opportunity to pursue defense and security cooperation with NATO. Joint military maneuvers have been carried out with the NATO forces on Central Asian region which have enabled Central Asian countries to reduce their military dependence on Russia. With this framework NATO has developed a number of bilateral programs for strengthening its military engagement with the Central Asian countries.

NATO's interest in Central Asia has increased with the ongoing military operation in Afghanistan which has led to increase NATO military presence in Afghanistan.³⁹ NATO took charge of the ISAF in Afghanistan in 2003; its representatives discussed the military transit arrangements and other provisions with the Central Asian states. This has also promoted NATO PfP to counter Russian interests in the region. Although NATO has

³⁷ Kuralai Baizakova, "The Shanghai Cooperative Organization's Role in Countering Threats and Challenges to Central Asian Regional Security", January 2013, *Russian Politics and Law 51, no. 1, Academic Search Premier*, EBSCO assessed May 10, 2013, 61.

³⁸ Eugene B. Rumer, Dmitrii Trenin, and Huasheng Zhao, "Central Asia: Views From Washington, Moscow, and Beijing", (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2007), 141.

³⁹ Jing-Dong Yuan, "China's Role in Establishing and Building the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)", November 2010, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 19(67), 860.

been active in the region, it has dealt with the Central Asian countries only at the bilateral level.⁴⁰ It has been limited to military aspects only. However, all these bilateral initiatives have no major impacts on the regional environment.⁴¹

3.3 Comparison on SCO with other Regional Organizations

SCO has expanded its agenda for regional cooperation which now covers security, economic, trade, cultural and environmental development. However, there are differences among the SCO members over budget and the shortage of funds has hampered the SCO development. Yes the SCO has been far more successful in creating confidence among the countries and enhancing its organizational structure and scope.⁴² The main success of the organization can be attributed to the membership especially Russia and China that has counter balance each other's dominance in the organization. Their participation can stop the influence of outsiders in the Central Asian region. The Chinese strategic push towards Central Asia and a breakthrough in its Central Asian diplomacy because it provides them with security protection. The SCO is a tool for China to participate in the CARs affairs.⁴³ It is pertinent to mention here that China is more suitable partner for the Central Asian countries. It can contribute more to Central Asia's development than any other country because of its geographical contiguity with the region and its booming economy. Plus of these, other countries also do not match its technological development. If we compare the Chinese and Russian stance in the Central Asian region it is having very different approach and policies. Russia has long historical relations with the CARs since its colonial times. The case of China is been different because it is rising in its posture in Central Asia from the scrape. Russia influence in the region is decreasing due to the Chinese penetration.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, Russia is still having deep entrenched power in Central Asia with deep political, economic, military and

⁴⁰ M. S. Ashimbaev, "New Challenges and New Geopolitics In Central Asia: After September 11", (Almaty: KISI Prezident RK, 2003), 82.

⁴¹ Ria Novosti, "Afghanistan SCO Observer Status 'Will Help Fight Terrorism, Drugs,'" *Ria Novosti* (Moscow, Russia), June 14, 2012, Accessed December 11, 2012. <http://en.rian.ru/world/20120614/174027013.html>.

⁴² "Central Asia Strategic Context 20 Years after Independence", *American Foreign Policy Issues*, 33:136-140, (2011), accessed May 10, 2013, EBShost, 140.

⁴³ Stephen Aries, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: 'Tackling the Three Evils' A Regional Response to Non-traditional Security Challenges or an Anti-Western Bloc", *Europe-Asia Studies*, v. 61 Issue 3, accessed EBShost, May 10, 2013, 456.

⁴⁴ Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism," *Comparative Politics*, 13.4 (July 1981): 396.



cultural bonds. In the post-Soviet era, Russia has shifted to a more appealing policy towards the Central Asian countries.⁴⁵ Hence the Russian and Chinese interests along with Central Asian states' interest can be attained within the diversified agenda and exclusive membership of the Organization.⁴⁶

Along with achievements the SCO is also facing similar problems and limitations as the previous organizations have faced. Its overlapping membership with other organizations may result in divergence of interests. Because of different problems and inadequate resources the Central Asian members have often shifted sides in the past that could also affect the organization in the future. However, the membership of the SCO with China as an important player and the organization explicit agenda bring much more credibility to the SCO as compared with other regional initiative taken place in Central Asia. Also the achievements of the SCO are far greater than those by other organizations with the border treaty and confidence building among members being its most important achievements thus far.⁴⁷

3.4 Reflections on Regional Cooperation in Central Asia

Regional organizations have gained importance due to failure of international system to justly distribute the dividends of globalization. Regional cooperation especially under the SCO has helped Central Asian countries to face the challenges posed by globalization. If we analyze regional initiative in Central Asia, other than SCO, the organization which appears to have some potential to influence regional dynamics is Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). This treaty was initiated by Russia in the initial years of its dismemberment as a part of the security framework of the CIS.⁴⁸ The overlapping Central Asian membership of these two organizations and different priorities that member states place on each of these may become obstacle for the unity of these organizations in future. There is also an overlapping of functions between SCO's RATS and CIS anti-terrorist

⁴⁵ China: The Evolution of ETIM." *Stratford* Geopolitical Intelligence, Economic, Political, and Military Strategic Forecasting. <http://www.Stratfor.com/analysis/china-evolution-etim>, accessed May 20, 2013.

⁴⁶ Chausovsky, Eugene. "Militancy in Central Asia: More Than Religious Extremism." *Stratford* Geopolitical intelligence, economic, political, and military strategic forecasting. <http://www.Stratfor.com/weekly/militancy-central-asia-more-religious-extremism> (accessed May 19, 2013).

⁴⁷ Nursultan Nazarbayev, "The Smart Power of the SCO." *Russia & India Report*. Rossiskaya Gazeta - Russia behind the Headlines, 15 June 2011, Web, 20 Mar. 2013.

⁴⁸ SCO, "RATS History," The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (RATS SCO), http://www.ecrats.com/en/rats_history/2010, accessed May 3, 2013.

centre. Similar overlapping exists at many other levels, a factor that may create an obstacle for effective working of any of these organizations.⁴⁹ The important aspect of this organization is that Central Asian Treaty members and Russia have made their own arrangements to address regional problems.⁵⁰ A number of joint exercises have been conducted against the potential terrorist threats in the SCO areas. At the Kant base Russia has placed gunship aircraft and forces against terrorism. Also the Russian government has established regional anti-terrorist centre in Bishkek headed by a Russian General.⁵¹ For some time there had been talks of the SCO working in coordination with the CIS collective security force to help in tackling terrorism challenges. The SCO also signed a MoU with the CIS in April 2005. In July 2005, the CSTO Secretary General announced that the organization was ready to establish working relationship with the SCO. In November 2006, during its meeting in Moscow, the CSTO expressed its interests in joining the SCO's Peace Mission 2007.⁵² This offer was declined by the SCO because it was difficult to unite their militaries in a joint task. The Organization remains the most promising one and capable of enhancing cooperation among its members.⁵³ On the other hand Central Asia does have a history of weak institutions and have socio-economic and security problems since its inception. A collectivity security initiative becomes grim with the political and democratic instability in the region. The Russian efforts to have a joint security and economic initiative also failed because of its superiority and its dominant attitude. As with other regional initiatives, one of the reasons for the failure of regional setups was that they were not aimed to enhance regional cooperation, rather they were used by one or other great power as a tool to promote their own interests in the region.

⁴⁹ Richard Weitz, "SCO Struggles to Meet Renewed Terrorism Challenge," The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst. <http://old.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5848>, accessed May 3, 2013.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ M.S. Ashimbaev, "New Challenges and New Geopolitics in Central Asia: after September 11," (Almaty: KISI pri President RK, 2003).

⁵² Bobo Lo, "Axis of Convenience: Moscow, Beijing, and the New Geopolitics," (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 100.

⁵³ Pavel Felgenhauer, "SCO Fails to Turn Into an "Eastern NATO." The Jamestown Foundation, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=38055, accessed May 27, 2013.

Chapter 4

SCO: Impediments and Challenges

SCO is relatively new organization and there would be problems for its growth in a long term. Although presently it is one of the promising organization but it still has a long way to go. It has a long charter and other provisions and all of them have to be put into practice for the smooth running of the organization. There are many challenges for the SCO like the lack of political will, cohesion within the organization, economic priorities as well as security and differences between its members. Besides potential India-Pakistani conflict over Kashmir, fund problems, lack of recourses for development, Afghanistan conundrum, terrorism, extremism and the differences among the Central Asian countries are some to mention about.⁵⁴ There has also been a serious lack of direction for the cooperative endeavors. However, it is too early to expect conclusive results from the Organization and it is still in the process of defining itself. In this chapter I would discuss the main challenges that have to be faced by the organization in the future.⁵⁵

4.1 Consistency among the SCO Members

The major challenge for the organization remains maintaining cohesion and consistency among its member states. Being the powerful members of the organization China and Russia represent a situation of unequal membership as compared to the smaller CARs.⁵⁶ The Russian strong influence in the region has been considered as a problem for the SCO growth. To reduce their dependency on Russia, the states of Central Asia have pursued strong bilateral relations with the US and other western countries. The Central Asian countries may use US and other Western countries to balance the Russian supremacy in the region.⁵⁷ There are other problems in the region that cannot be related with the US like the indigenous militancy and Talibanization in Afghanistan. Despite these problems

⁵⁴ Nathan Thornburgh and Simon Shuster, "Russia's Long War." *Time* 176, no. 7 (August 16, 2010): 30-35. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost accessed May 22, 2016.

⁵⁵ Richard Sakwa, "The Clash of Regionalisms and Caucasian Conflicts." *Europe-Asia Studies* 63, no. 3 (May 2011): 466, *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCO (accessed May 22).

⁵⁶ Reuel Hanks, *Global Security Watch: Central Asia* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger, 2010), 63.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

the disparity, unemployment and social unrest are the regional issues need to be tackled through SCO very easily.⁵⁸

Another problem is the conflict with each other in many areas. Among Central Asian countries Uzbekistan policies and the role of its president Islam Karimov is seen suspicious by other especially Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Similarly, they have also reservation regarding Sino-Russian Cooperation and policies in the region. And it is also known fact that Sino-Russian interests do not always overlap because of their military and strategic consideration.⁵⁹ Russia focuses in security while the Chinese main interest is to secure economic. Russia has also reservation regarding Chinese security presence in the region and they would not allow their military presence despite that both are the founding members of the SCO. Uzbekistan is strong US ally in the region and one of the stronger members of SCO among CARs.⁶⁰

In the energy sector most of the members of the Organization have different attitude and interests. Such as the Russian government is interested in trans-Siberian railway, the main connecting linkage between Asia and Europe while China's government is interested in the Southern route that start from Central Asia through Caucasus to Turkey to Mediterranean.⁶¹ As the Chinese Western region is underdeveloped and having the problem of Uighurs separatism. In this regards this link will provide the Western region of China a new geo-strategic importance.⁶² In this regard the Chinese government has also initiated the 'Go-West' strategy that means to develop the Western region economically. Further, many Hums families were given approval to settle there so that to change the Uighurs majority into minority. More than 10000 families have been settled there since 2001. China knew that it must work with Central Asia in direction to hutch any external stimulus that could wane its grip on the Province. Thus, this fear of defenselessness on its western border keeps China attentive on Central Asia.⁶³ Further,

⁵⁸ Stephen Blank, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Post Mortem and Prophecy," *CEF Quarterly: The Journal of Eurasian and China*, The SCO at One (July, 2005): 5.

⁵⁹ Rumer, Eugene B., Dmitrii Trenin, and Huasheng Zhao. *Central Asia: Views from Washington, Moscow, and Beijing* (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 2007), 134.

⁶⁰ Zhuanghzi, New and Old Regionalism, op,cit.600.

⁶¹ Tolipov, "On the Role of Central Asian Cooperation Organization," op cit.

⁶² Peter B. Golden, *Central Asia in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 123.

⁶³Ibid, 136.

the interests of Central Asia countries may not match with Chinese and Russian insofar as the exploitations of the energy resources in the SCO region.⁶⁴

For the smaller countries of Central Asia like Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan the membership in the SCO means a prestige and it will be helpful in enhancing the organizational moral also. It will help them to resolve their own internal issues for example domestic stability and economic cooperation.⁶⁵ However, for this SCO still needs the institutionalization process because many problems are still pending among the CARs.⁶⁶ The differences in the international structure of the organization also caused economic differences among the member countries. Central Asian countries also require finding equilibrium among their foreign policies.⁶⁷ The role of the US and the relations of CARs with it can also hinder the organizational effectiveness because extra regional player in the region not only affect the SCO but also their interests can be different.

The effectiveness of strategic cooperation is inadequate in the multilateral foreign policy since 2005 by playing off Russia vs China, China vs US and US vs Russia for gaining maximum benefits. Central Asian countries' short term security significances did not match with the SCO long term developmental programs. Maintaining cohesion among the member states is also a dilemma and question for its greater role in the future.⁶⁸ Main security provider for the region is Russia while China is the economic guarantor but they both have differences over many issues. They seem like rivals in the energy sector as Russia is trying to monopolize the exports from the region while China is engaged in massive transportation to reach the resources. China is also trying to have road linkages towards Europe through Central Asia.

The overlapping is another issue among the SCO member as one country is also a member of another organization at the same time. This resulted into different priorities that create hurdles in the SCO projects and its implementations. The overlapping membership results in differing priorities that member states place on any of the organization which is an obstacle for SCO. It is known that they have different policies

⁶⁴ Ariel Cohen, "The Dragon Looks West: China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *The Heritage Foundation*, September 7, 2007.

⁶⁵ Bohr, op, cit, 497.

⁶⁶ Stephen Blan, op cit.

⁶⁷ Cohen, The Dragon look West, op cit.

⁶⁸ Susan L. Shirk, *China : Fragile Superpower* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007),33.

regarding the SCO anti-terror policy. Most of the members have different stakes in the war on terror. Another serious challenge is the regionalization of Central Asia that is basically state oriented process with no civil society participation. The leaders of the Central Asian countries are authoritarian in nature and they are not fully concerned with SCO agendas which in turn affect the organizational activities. In retrospect the rulers have been reluctant to create mechanism making agreements binding upon their regimes a factor that has hindered implementation and failure of several SCO agreements. Such divergence of policies not only create differences among the SCO member countries but it has also negative affect for the overall smooth running of the organization.⁶⁹

4.2 Economic Challenges

The Central Asian countries are landlocked and mired in extreme poverty. Economic weakness creates other problems like security, border, water and developmental issues. Also the region is too fragmented and the future is too uncertain. Such disappointing economic situation of the organization surely hinders the implementation of SCO's developmental plans.⁷⁰ China and Russia provide for economic development of the region as they face tremendous difficulties in opening up their markets. However, for their part Russia and China can spare limited financial and economic resources for the region. This implies that the SCO has to operate within the budget constraints. Although all the Central Asian members have a common interest in the exploitation of energy resources, expansion of transportation and communication lines, promotion of trade and economic cooperation and they are not been able to create a common market. Till to date they are not been able to create a common market for free trade zone in their region. Even China has concentrated to create a free trade zone among the SCO member states but it was rejected by Russia in one way or other.⁷¹

4.3 Terrorism, Extremism and Separatism

The very rationale of SCO formation was to counter 'evils' that is terrorism, extremism and separatism. Since then terrorism has been the high significance of the SCO program

⁶⁹ Alexander Cooley, *Base Politics: Democratic Change and the US Military Overseas* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 232.

⁷⁰ Bruce Pannier, 'Kazakhstan to assume OSCE chairmanship in 2010', RFE/RL, 1 Dec. 2007.

⁷¹ Kuralai Baizakova, "The Shanghai Cooperative Organization's Role in Countering Threats and Challenges to Central Asian Regional Security", January 2013, *Russian Politics and Law 51, no. 1, Academic Search Premier*, EBSCO assessed May 10, 2013, 66.

as they apparent it the potential threat of the Islamist militants to the regional security and the member countries. To date the member countries are unwilling to share intelligence and also they are very meagerly contributing to this process. To tackle terrorism, RATS was established but due to the lack of economic resources it faces many problems.

For China a major threat is the Uighurs separatist movement while the Russia has the same in Chechnya. The Central Asian countries also face the problems of extremism and separatism and it has spillover effects on both Russia and China. To tackle these, there is a need of collective response and closer links. SCO needs joint collaboration as we have seen in the Andijan massacre the role of the organization was not satisfactory. The only thing they did was to give ultimatum to the US to vacate the basis which was done six months after the Andijan massacre. SCO leaders have expressed several times that the organization activities are not for countering US or any other states, rather one of their main goals is to combat terrorism, extremism, separatism and drug trafficking which is in line with the US led international war on terrorism. Moreover, the SCO leadership has frequently stated that the SCO activities are focused on promoting cooperation in economic and it is non-political in nature.

4.4 Environmental Concerns

In the security sphere the SCO has faces many problems and more urgent one is the water issue among the CARs. As most of these states do not have enough water for their irrigation due to disappearance of the Aral Sea and emergence of deserts. The important water provider is Amu Darya and Syr Darya.⁷² The scarcity of water seriously affected the security and economic stability in the region. For instance due to the little availability of water resources for farming, most of the Kazakhstan land remained uncultivated and that caused the decreased by 45% in 2008.⁷³

The water scarcity and economic mismanagement has aggravated the smooth relations among the Central Asian countries. Solving the Central Asian water conflicts will be a

⁷² Tajikistan: An Uncertain Peace,” (Osh/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2001). Matthew Evangelista, “Historical Legacies and the Politics of Intervention in the Former Soviet Union,” in Brown, *International Dimensions*, 122.

⁷³ Tamara Makarenko and Daphne Biliouri, “Central Asian States Set to Pay Price of US Strikes,” *Jane's Intelligence Review* (2001)

test for the organization long term stability and effectiveness.⁷⁴ The SCO has to work to improve the relations between the CARs especially to solve the water problems. The role of the RATS must also be increased especially to solve the problem of terrorism.⁷⁵

⁷⁴Ronald Grigor Suny, "Southern Tears: Dangerous Opportunities in the Caucasus and Central Asia," in Rajan Menon, Yuri Federov, and Ghia Nodia (eds.), *Russia, the Caucasus and Central Asia: The 21st Century Security Environment*, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999),11.

⁷⁵ Zhao Huasheng, "The SCO in the Last Year," CEF Quarterly, China and Eurasian Forum Quarterly (2005):21.

Chapter 5

SCO: Achievements and its Future

Since its formation, the organization has gradually grown and created mechanism to accomplish its regional efforts. It has been trying hard to achieve its regional ambitions and some successes have been achieved so far. The organization has made progress in many fields especially in security mainly terrorism, economic prosperity, making image in political sphere and has also enhanced its image globally. Two of its most important organs were established such as Secretariat and Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS).⁷⁶ The main function of the Secretariat was to manage the overall activities of the organization while the function of the RATS is to manage the terrorism related activities regionally. SCO is basically security organization but economic has also been the top priority of the organization since it started functioning. There has been clear cut emphasis on regional trade and developing communication among the member countries to foster trade. For example in 2006 the organization summit, 15 agreements were signed and 3 billion US dollars were transacted.⁷⁷ The image of SCO has been increasing and the two most powerful members of the organization have improved their bilateral relations. Similarly the relations between Central Asian members have also been strengthening. When the US forces were withdrawn after the timeline that has been given to it by the SCO, it has further enhanced its independent standing.

5.1 SCO: Terrorism and Security

Improving regional security and stability is the main focus of the cooperation among the organization members. Border security threats especially from Afghanistan call for an operational joint cooperation. Though the organization did not respond to the 9/11 attacks but the question is at that time it was not been able to respond because of its nascent formation and till then it didn't had an effective institutional structure. Later it has increased its potential and many anti-terrorist exercises have been made under the auspicious of SCO. In 2007 for example the 'Peace Mission' of the SCO member states was conducted in the Russian city of Voldsvastik in which the troops of all countries took

⁷⁶ Government White Papers, Peoples Republic of China, The Security Situation (September 13, 2004).

⁷⁷ Dore J, Yu X. 2004. Update on China's Energy Industry Reforms and the Nu, Lancang and Jinsha Hydropower Dams. Chiang Mai (Thailand): Chiang Mai University, Unit for Social and Environmental Research, Green Watershed.

part. It is already been mentioned that RATS was also framed to manage the terrorism related activities of the organization. It is managing border police, custom and national security forces. In a meeting of RATS in 2006, it has identified 14 terrorist organizations that were to be considered as threat to all members. More than 120 terrorist incidents have been stopped since the formation of RATS.

Collection of the terrorist organization, its records and other relevant information is the main task of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure. All the members have conducted different anti-terrorist exercises in 2007, 2009 and 2012 in which all the countries' troops have participated. These kinds of exercises are important to improve anti-terrorist activities among the members and also to update the joint command of different operations. The main focus of the SCO is non-traditional security threats such as drug trafficking and illegal migration. Most of the problems emerged from the fragile Afghan security.

Interaction and cooperation with other regional organizations would also help the SCO to tackle terrorism. For example the establishment of SCO Afghanistan contact group is a good omen as it will assist the reconstruction process. It will also work to stop illegal migration and also the drug trafficking that is faced by all countries inside the organization. The SCO can also collaborate in some joint ventures against terrorist with countries and organizations in the neighborhood in Central Asia. There is a plan for broadening the anti-terrorist efforts and has set up record of terrorist organizations and expanding joint anti-terrorism workout. The database of terrorist organizations is being updated and was completed in 2010. The RATS also aims to set up a protected communication arrangement for security services and many instructors have been trained in this regards.

The major problem for the region security is drug trafficking. In this paradigm all the members have carried out joint police operations and achieved the desired results. Such as the operation named as KANAL was conducted in 2006. Total 19347 kilo gram Heroine was captured and destroyed. Due to porous nature of the Central Asian countries' borders, most of the drug goes to Europe using the same areas.⁷⁸ Some other

⁷⁸ Lieberthal K. 1997. China's Governing System and Its Impact on Environmental Policy Implementation. Washington (DC): Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. China Environment Series 1.

important measures have also been adopted to prevent further deterioration of the anti-drug capability of the region. Within the security agenda military cooperation is also taking abode among the SCO members. In a military field joint military maneuvers were held by China and Russia in 2006. Though, such projects are not directed against any country but it will enhance the cooperation among the member countries. It is pertinent to mention here that most of the SCO activities are the reflection of accepted US and Western policy aims.

5.2 SCO and Economic Progress

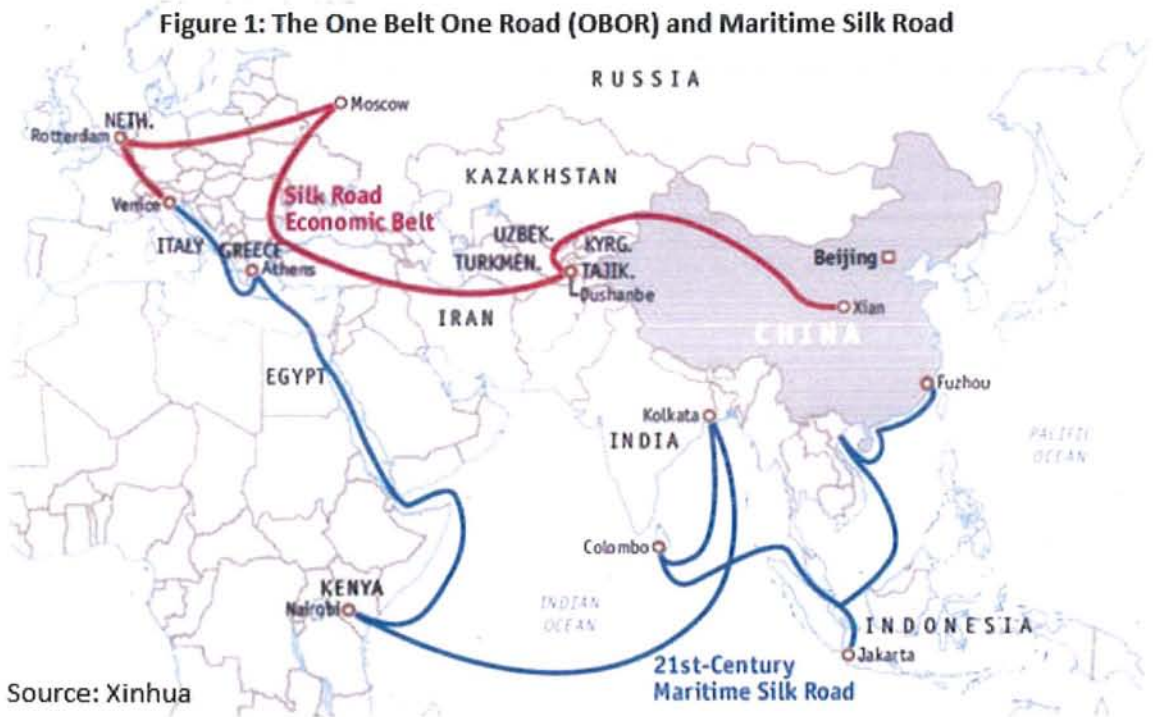
Since its emergence in 2001, economic development is one of the major agenda of the Organization. For fostering economic development many programs have been initiated under the banner of SCO. Such as trade corridors have been setup and tariffs barriers were reduced among the member states. For the trade liberalization and promotion free trade zone were established in the SCO region in 2004, establishment of custom houses were also been set up. The trade volume increased to 1.8 billion US dollars from 460 million US dollars in five years. An important factor was the creation of SCO energy club by the Russian President Putin, added in 2008 that would help the processing of oil and gas reserve. Such projects can bring tremendous prosperity for the areas and also the member states.

5.3 Relations between Member States

During the past decades relations between all the members of the organization have been enhanced bilaterally and multilaterally. During the previous century and especially during the Cold War the relations between China and Russia remained very hostile. Even they had border clashes in 1969. The relations were highly improved when both joined the Shanghai Five in 1996. Similarly the relations between China and Central Asian countries also increased. It has developed into diplomatic, political, economic and militarily. The SCO is also serving as a mechanism to mutually balance Russia and China while involving Central Asian member states. This has also led to reduction of Russian influence in the region and more balanced environment. The harmony among the member states is also a result of disengagement of the West from the Central Asian affairs and focus of SCO on many of the regional problems which were not considered seriously by the West and US. This has resulted in a more positive tilt of CARs towards SCO.

5.4 One Belt One Road (OBOR) Initiative

The OBOR project was started by the Chinese President Xi. Its major aims are to improve China economic activities and leadership in foreign lands. It also aims to increase China geopolitical lens in the neighboring countries. Since 2010, the Chinese government has modernized its economy so Beijing’s concerns are to grow and develop its Western parts. This initiative will have heavy domestic focus and to export technological and engineering standards. It will also upgrade the country industrial activities.

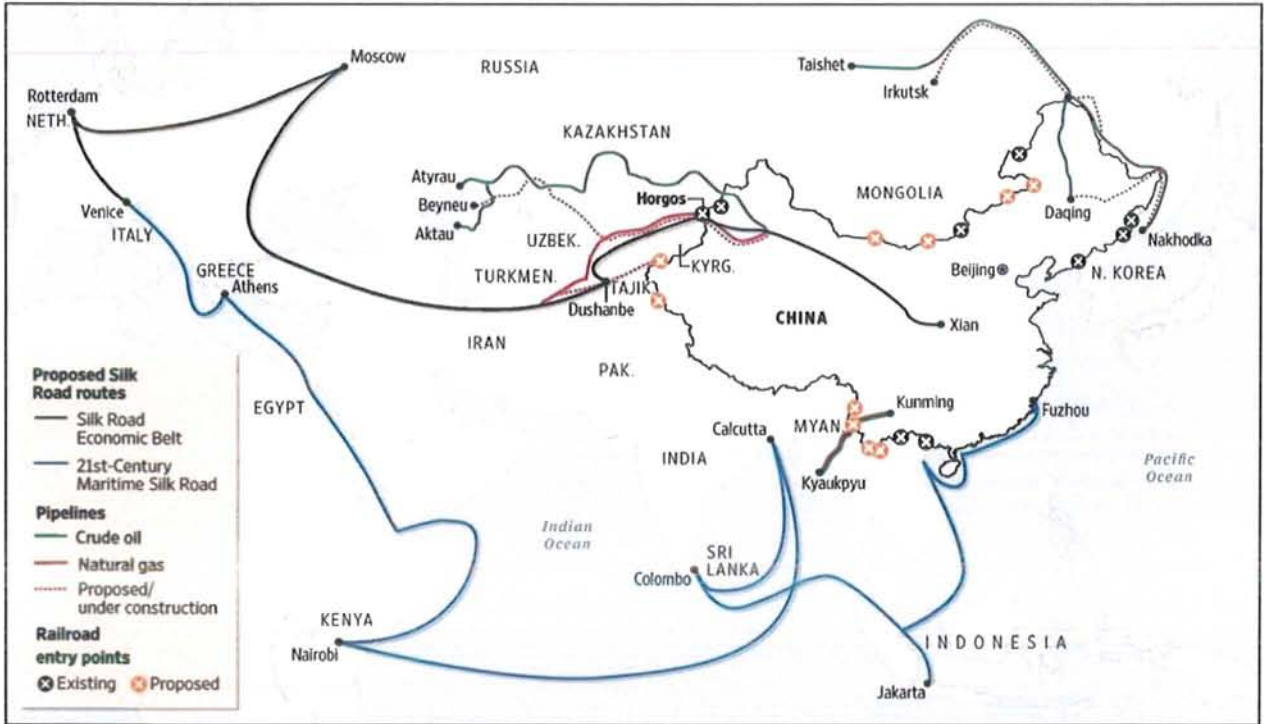


[This image shows the One Belt One Road (OBOR) and Maritime Silk Road. Image downloaded from <https://safety4sea.com/inceco-shipping-cant-afford-ignore-chinas-obor-policy/>]

This initiative is aimed to revive the Old Silk Road, Maritime Silk Road and Silk Road Economic Belt. This land connectivity will start possibly from Mongolia and Russia to North Europe, Central Asia, to West Asia and then to Western Europe. It also asks for coordination of fiscal transport and custom policies along the Silk Road. This project will enhance the economic growth of CARs which in turns will result in a peaceful and prosperous region.

5.5 The Maritime Silk Road

The Silk Road Maritime projects are the recognition of the existing shipping routes in the Pacific region, Asia, Australia and East Asia. There are many areas and ports that lack the capacity but this project will ensure economical and faster trade.



[This image shows the Maritime Silk Road. Image downloaded from <http://sumogroup.com.au/obor-explained/>]

In the Diplomacy Work Conference the Chinese President said “tremendously noteworthy strategic value”. He also said that he wanted to improve relations between China and its neighbors, strengthening economic ties and deepening security cooperation.⁷⁹

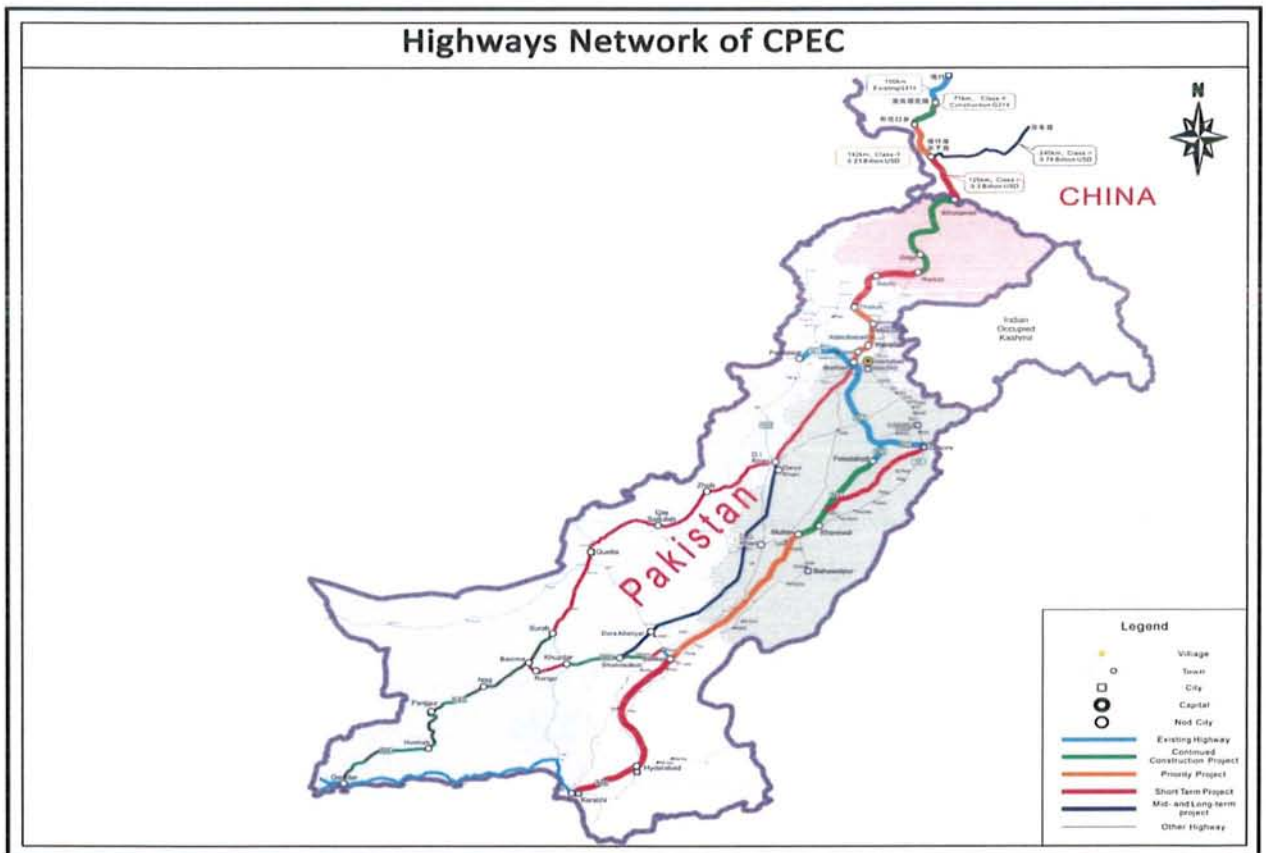
“Maintaining stability in China’s neighborhood is the key objective of peripheral diplomacy. We must encourage and participate in the process of regional economic integration, speed up the process of building up infrastructure and connectivity. We must build the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, creating a new regional economic order”.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ XiJinping’s Important Speech at the Peripheral Diplomacy Work Conference], Xinhua News Agency, 25 October 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2013-10/25/c_117878897.htm.

⁸⁰Ibid.

5.6 China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a project under OBOR that was initiated in 2013. This port is linking Gwadar Port to the Chinese province of Xinjiang. Many analysts consider it as a game changer for Pakistan.⁸¹ The overall estimated cost for this project is 56 billion US dollars and will be completed till 2030. Under the CPEC China will also expand its trade and transport across Central Asia, South Asia, Middle East, Africa and Europe.⁸² It will also give Chinese easy access to the Middle East oil via the Gwadar port of Pakistan. It would also link the Caspian Sea region to the Strait of Hormuz and further to ports located at the Persian Gulf.⁸³ Despite this huge prospective, this project is surrounded by the disagreements on the routes.

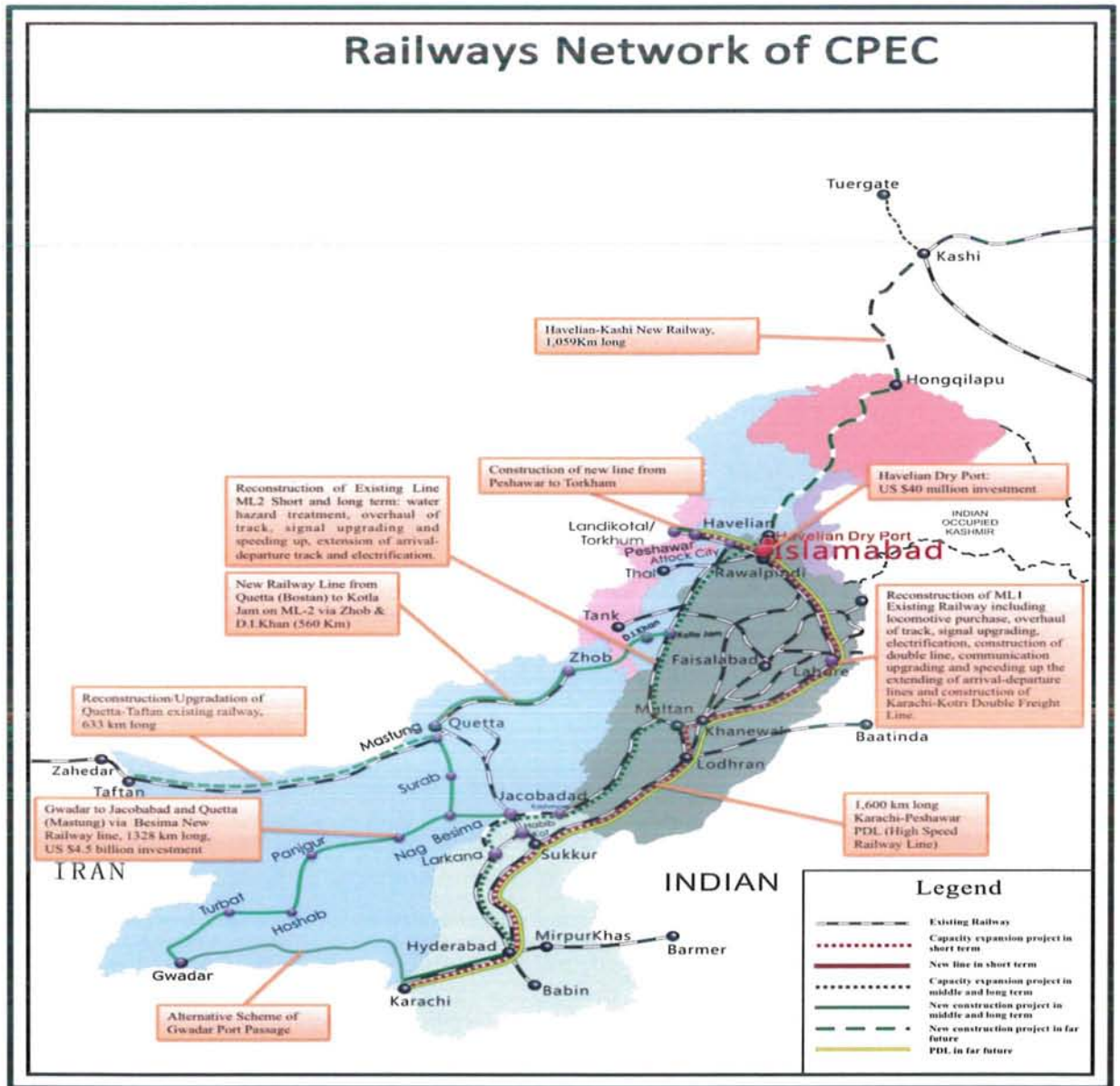


[This image shows the Highway network of CPEC. Image downloaded from <http://cpec.gov.pk/map-single/1>]

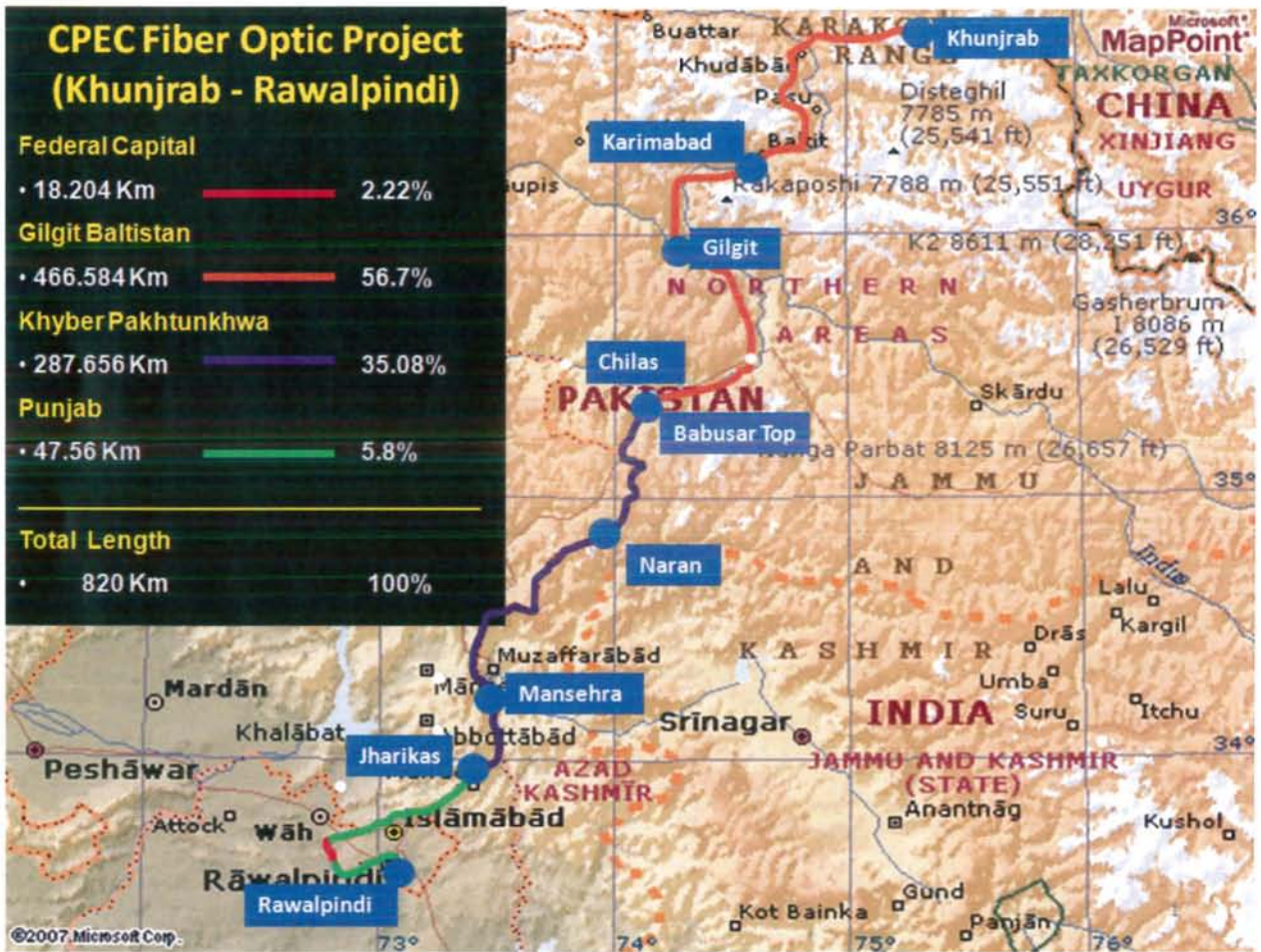
⁸¹ <http://cpec.gov.pk>.

⁸² Chien-Peng Chung, "China's 'War on Terror': September 11 and Uighur Separatism", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 71, no. 6, (July/August 2006):9.

⁸³ <http://cpec.gov.pk>.



[This image shows the Railways network of CPEC. Image downloaded from <http://www.sheir.org/railways-network-of-cpec.html>]



[This image shows the CPEC Fiber Optic Project. Image downloaded from <http://cpec.gov.pk/map-single/3>]

Conclusion

After analyzing the organization since its inception, it is clear from the discussion that the creative agenda of the SCO has not been different but its attention have prolonged from security to economy and other sphere of fields. The challenges faced by the organization have been tackled very systematically slowly and gradually. The diversity of its members and consensus are the two most important aspects of the organization. The Sino-Russian cooperation in the organization is also very important in the strategic point of view. Gradually the SCO has evolved in achieving economic, political and security related activities. Currently the organization does not have a mechanism to solve conflicts, so it should be incorporated into the organization Charter. The SCO Charter doesn't have a specific design for crisis management like in 2005 when protests started in Andijan which effected many Central Asian states but the organization did not play any positive role. It was because of its principles of non-interference in the internal affairs of the member states. So it will need the inclusion of crisis management mechanism to deal with such problems in future.

The SCO will also have to focus more on extending its existing partnership rather than expanding the organization and it will accept new members also. Recently the organization has added two new members India and Pakistan and its membership have increased. Regardless of this, the organization has been instrumental in creating harmony among its members; however, greater economic ventures will further strengthen its international stature. While the SCO countries have military cooperation with the basic aim of strengthening counter terrorism capabilities, the organization does not aim at developing into a military bloc. It has kept its focus on security and economic cooperation while also promoting cultural cooperation among its member countries. The study of the SCO is distinct in the sense that regional cooperation is envisaged through a practical approach of first identifying and resolving traditional security threats and then expanding its agenda to include common concerns and other non-traditional issues through the gradual institutionalization of the organization. The strategy of dealing with the issues of common interests is to be solved mutually and collectively.

Theoretically, a patch work of approaches are required to comprehend the security and strategic dynamics of Central Asia and the same is true for understanding the shifting

agenda of the organization so that to cope the challenges through mutual cooperation. There had been attempts for regional cooperation prior the SCO; however, these could not provide an effective platform for regional cooperation because of similar issues the SCO has to face. The present work has also dealt with the concept of New Great Game which explains competition among the Central Asian States and outside powers for influence and resources in the region. Even though the Great Game idea prevails in academic discussions on Central Asia, it may not be very useful for the present work. There are indeed some elements of rivalry and competition in the region. However, shared strategic interests dominate the relationship of the organization members.

In the post-Cold War period especially after the tragic events of 9/11 the US has also tried to increase its role in the economic, military and political development of the region. Among all the members Russia is traditionally in Central Asia and it has always maintained its influence in what it calls its sphere of influence or near abroad. As a regional entity the SCO has resolved some of the problems of the member states. The expansion of the organization agenda and promotion of cooperation among member countries are indeed a manifestation of successful working of neo-liberalism in Central Asia.

The creation of SCO was realistic decision by the China and Russia and also Central Asian countries. Despite having little bit differences the member countries have come together in a collective framework to maximize their interests through cooperation. There have been prior efforts of regional cooperation in Central Asia. The SCO stands out among these regional ventures as the organization was created with the basic aim of building confidence and promoting mutual cooperation among the member countries.

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