



Emergence of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and its Relevance in 21st Century: A Constructivist Perspective

Hafiz Khuram Jamil Qureshi¹, Shah Rukh Hashmi²

¹ Independent Scholar, Email: hkj.qureshi@gmail.com

² Assistant Professor, Sukkur IBA University, Sukkur, Pakistan. Email: sr.hashmi@iba-suk.edu.pk

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: Dec 04, 2020

Revised: Dec 11, 2020

Accepted: Dec 28, 2020

Available Online: Dec 31, 2020

Keywords:

Central Asia, China, Regionalism, Russia, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

JEL Classification Codes:

O53, P48

ABSTRACT

Regional integration has been the most pronounced phenomenon of the last decade of 20th century. The end of cold war witnessed the emergence of many regional organizations. The Asian continent also didn't lag behind rather follow suit and established several regional organizations. The-then Shanghai Five also emerged in order to discuss and deal with the border issues of the member states but with the changing scenario at international level it has evolved and broadened its agenda to include extra-regional affairs which are directly or indirectly hampering the progress of the region. This paper is an attempt to analyze relevance and evolution of the contemporary Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) through analytical prism of constructivism. The paper takes into account the constructivist paradigm for regional integration and uses qualitative means to measure the relevance of the organization in an age of regionalization.

© 2020 The Authors, Published by iRASD. This is an Open Access Article under the Creative Common Attribution-Non-Commercial 4.0

Corresponding Author's Email: sr.hashmi@iba-suk.edu.pk

1. Introduction

Shanghai Cooperation Organization; successor of the Shanghai Five mechanism, initiated and developed from the endeavor by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to strengthen confidence-building and to demilitarize borders in 1996, at present extended to reach eight members (Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan); four observers (Iran, Mongolia, Afghanistan and Belarus); and four dialogue partners (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia, and Nepal). The organization has broadened and extended the agenda to include increased military and counterterrorism cooperation, intelligence sharing and disarmament in the border regions to regional economic initiatives like the most debated and discussed Belt and Road initiative by China, and Russia-driven Eurasian Economic Union. The SCO aims to be a conduit for connectivity in the region with regard to energy, transportation and communications. Chinese President Xi Jinping, stated as much when he said, "SCO members have created a new model of international relations – partnership instead of alliance"(Siddiq, 2016).

The SCO has always flourished itself with the "Shanghai Spirit", which has been committed to maintain regional security and stability, building justice and promoting democratic order in response to the new international situation which arises in aftermath of the Soviet decline. It offered a new venue and forum in multilateral diplomacy. Swiftly, the SCO embraced the role of a new international political and economic order as intergovernmental international organization dedicated to combating the three evils of terrorism, separatism and extremism; as the newly emerged post-Soviet Independent territories of Central Asia faced these grave concerns and extended the shocks to the adjacent territorial landscape of Afghanistan, China, and Russia. Furthermore, the extended neighborhood of Central Asia in South Asia; India and Pakistan shared the rampages of these new waves of separatism, extremism and terrorism. As stated in its objectives, the purpose of this organization was to solve and respond to new international situations and new changes, and the proximity of geography allowed the members to join in a concerted effort to share the common destiny and goal to consolidate regional cooperation.

However, if one tries to explore from the historical dimension and observe it from the post-cold war perspective, it is not difficult to find that the formation of the "SCO" was inevitable (Allison, 2018). As the regional power vacuum created in aftermath of the Soviet collapse and dangerous trends of in the form of three evils were the most time needed threats to be responded. Additionally, this historical context not only is easy to be traced from the bipolar world politics, but also the historical coexistence, connected history, destiny and change that the people of this region have shared not only in modern times, but can be traced back to the more ancient middle ages and even earlier. In fact, despite having geographical barriers such as the desert, and the blocking of snow-packed mountains, matter of the fact is that the outreach of the SCO is long-lasting, continuous, stable, and relevant to historical context of the region. Thereby befitting in the formation of identities shaped by common historical process, shared regional contexts and rising threats to these shared identifies, heading the states to take a common action in the form of the birth of the SCO.

What were the factors bringing the two counter forces; Russia and China, closer for the formation of a regional organization? The study would also discuss the puzzle that with the diverging interests in the age of globalization though the organization is expanding its width and scope yet the multifaceted challenges are on the rise. Therefore the study tries to seek answer to the question; how the region and organizational expansion would help further integration and to mitigate the challenges of 21st century? The Study argues that the phenomenon of regional integration, and the idea that the regional problems must be addressed regionally is implemented and manifested in the formation of SCO. The cultural norms, historical amity, common values and socially constructed ideas of belonging to the same historical roots brings the states closer and has facilitated the integration process. This integration was further strengthened by mutual interdependence, political and economic commonalities and shared internal and external threats, e.g. extremisms, separatism and terrorism. The global war against terrorism further stamped the relevance of the organization and paved the way for its expansion and need for transforming its working infrastructure.

This study is organized in a systemic way; beginning with the historical background the study explores the literature for rationale behind creation of a regional organization of Central Asian States, China and Russia. Thus While proceeding further the study justifies the righteousness of timeframe for the creation of SCO and the international environment that paved the way towards regional cooperation among member states. Moving ahead the study discusses about the expansion of regional integration and extension of the SCO along with describing prospects and challenges for extra-regional expansion of SCO. The study then concludes and prescribes few recommendations to improve progress of the organization to make it more competitive and relevant in 21st century.

2. The Historical Background of SCO Region

To analyze, review, and comprehend geopolitics and international relations, one of the first factors to consider is the historical background and time pattern that the region possesses and is based on, it is necessary to initially understand the region in a step-by-step manner (Fisle, 1992). The SCO can be regarded as a rule based organization that gradually generates and organizes the evolving process of expansion that is cautious and well calculated, further many inferences based on common sense and understanding are being explored about the organization and its evolution. The SCO is by no means a political organization that is based on rules and order, but is also a political by-product derived from the formation of many regional orders, subsystems, and local habitats. As the Chinese proverb goes, "Where is the clear channel, it is the source of living water." To have a better understanding about the need and demand for the formation of such political bodies, there must be an attempt to explore the historical roots, must trace the past years of this region from an open perspective and then find out the reason why China initiated first of its kind; a regional grouping.

It can be seen that the contact between China and the Central Asian region, today's Central Asian countries, is quite historic. This history can be traced back to the ancient times without written records. And this kind of connection is multi-faceted and multi-level. This connection includes both the agriculture and animal farming connection and the commercial intercommunication. This connection not only connects the Central Asia with China's North

China region, but also it covers the connection between Central Asia and the farthest of the South of China.

There is a well-known Silk Road that firmly connects the SCO countries. The connection between the Han and Tang dynasties is increasingly close and active, and the international development under the post-Mongolian Empire had more connectivity. Order of the time was to make the exchanges between these areas more frequent and smooth. On the one hand, this order is reflected in economic culture and social interaction, and on the other hand, it is also reflected in regional culture and political organization. Islam moves east along the roads of New, and the Tang Dynasty's town system and the three provinces and six systems are closely related to the military structure of the Central Asian countries under the Persian Empire. The unified national territory built by the Mongol Empire also incorporated the Russian Far East into the SCO of the Inner Asian era (Ebrey & Walthall, 2013).

A deeper look at the region after the inclusion of new members; India and Pakistan are not like an innovation, rather both existed historically under one identity of Indian Subcontinent. However, with the modern phenomena of state system the participation of both India and Pakistan adds into strengths of the SCO and give it an extra-regional transformation. The evolution and development of political ecology is often the inheritance and development of its predecessor system. Although the SCO is a political structure framework of modern society, it also has profound historical roots. This roots have a long history and are deeply rooted. It is worth mentioning that India and Pakistan are in fact not living in parallel with the region where the founding countries of the SCO are located. On the contrary, the connection between them has existed in ancient times.

3. The Remnants of Hegemony: The Political Unit of the Bipolar World

To truly layout a solid foundation for the formation of the SCO, one must understand a new world system in the post-US-Soviet bipolar structure. However, to trace the real essence of such development it has to dig out deep in last century prior to the development of post-war international system of cold war. In 1924, the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic (Turkmenian) became the fifth republic of the Soviet Union and the first Soviet republic in the five Central Asian countries, and after the withdrawal of the Transcaucasia Federation, it became the fourth republic of the Soviet Union. The joining of Turkmenistan also opened the prelude to the entry of Central Asian countries into the Soviet Union.

Table 1: Time when the five Central Asian countries joined the Soviet Union and seceded from the Soviet Union

Country Name	Franchise Time	Independence Time
Turkmenistan	October 27, 1924	October 27, 1991
Uzbekistan	October 28, 1924	August 31, 1991
Tajikistan	August 1, 1928	September 9, 1991
Kazakhstan	December 5, 1936	December 10, 1991
Kyrgyzstan	December 5, 1936	August 31, 1991

The Soviet Union is nominally similar to the federal system, because according to the treaty and the declaration of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union's previous constitutions clearly stipulate the status of the sovereign state of the joining country. However, in the actual operation and operation, the Soviet Union has more to reflect the characteristics of a unitary state. It rather had a higher degree of central authority that dominated fully in the affairs of federating units. The control and leverage of center mounted to highest extinct in post-WWII times and no wonder the result of disintegration of this rule of extreme imperialism form of government.

Looking at the five participating republics (Table 1), the form of construction of the country is quite worth recalling. In modern times, with the bourgeois-democratic revolution, a number of emerging nation-states have gradually formed, especially in Europe. This modern invention has been transmitted to the interior of Inner Asia also, while the Soviet Union relies on the methods and processes of ethnic division as defined by Stalin. This division is a common language, a common territory, a common economic life form, and a common psychological and cultural qualities. Relying on this standard of division, Soviet ethnologists and anthropologists began a re-national identification work.

This national invention was widely used in Central Asia, and Stalin was quite satisfied with it. In fact, a major function of this ethnic identity is based on the value of the United Front in Moscow. Moscow needed to further consolidate its political influence and geopolitical control in the Eastern European Periphery and in Central Asian political landscape, under the bipolar system. To establish more united fronts in Central Asia, which is not very close to Slavonihism, Moscow needed such strings of power to regulate the Central Asia, which was more prone to rise of its own nationalism, in particular if the vacuum of power existed. Although in terms of form and cultural style, imperial nationalism or pan-cultural nationalism runs counter to the traditional small nationalism or at least does not want to do it, it is precisely because of the characteristics of the pan-culturalism that Moscow possesses. It took over the national identity of Central Asia and the prosperity of small nationalism. The complex cultural scenes of the five Central Asian countries and the foundations of the nation-states closely linked to the contemporary era were laid in the Tsarist period. At that time, the Turkish under Ottomans and the Great Slavism under the Russians were merely confined into historical domain and did not appear to suit or triumph over the Central Asian identities.

In such a situation, the small nationalism relied on the advantages of the united front. The initial result of this national invention was the invention of the Kazakh and Kyrgyz peoples. In fact, in the Tsarist era, the predecessors of the Kazakh and Kyrgyz tribes existed, but the use of names was usually replaced by chaos or partial differences. In the Tsarist era, many so-called "Kyrgyz people" were precisely the Kazakhs today, and today we recognized the Kyrgyz people at that time called "the wild stone account Kyrgyz people(Prime, 2008)." At that time, people believed that the Kyrgyz and Kazakhs belonged to different branches of the Kyrgyz tribe, just like the Chahar and Tumut sections of the Chinese Mongolian. Eventually, the official Turkish and Russian empires invented by the Kyrgyz and Kazakh nations were evenly matched. In the Stalin period, this ethnic identity became a matter of course.

It can be said that since the period of national invention in modern times, the Central Asian region has been the subject of united front in Moscow. As a republic of the Soviet Union, the five Central Asian countries enjoyed the benefits and conveniences based on ethnic policies from Moscow on the basis of their own united front. In particular, the three Baltic countries, which have declined in self-recognition after joining the Soviet Union: Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, the five Central Asian countries generally enjoy the welfare and convenience from Moscow.

Compared with the continued united front position in Central Asia, China's relations with the Soviet Union were more complicated. Earlier, during the Qing dynasty, China's northeastern and northwestern region was subjected to aggression by Tsarist Russia, the continuation of such practices in inner Asia and attempts to have more control in post-Tsarist times, realized China that the Soviet Union is also an expansionist imperialist regime that does not leave any chance to seek and annex territory of neighboring countries. Arguably, this was reflection of European Balance of Power System of 18th and 19th century in Asia, as Prussia, Russia, France and Britain always looked for territorial expansion at the cost of others. However, with the establishment of the Republic of China; the first bourgeois democratic republic in Asia in modern times, China managed to oppose such trends in its remote areas, gradually this new modern state gained international recognition (Goodman, 1988).

However, it was still largely a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society relying on traditional Western powers. At that time, China had some similarities with India and Pakistan. The then differences were that China was a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, and India and Pakistan were completely colonial societies; Chinese society was a complex and intricate country, and various places were dominated by different Western imperialists, while India and Pakistan were fully controlled and colonized by a single empire of the Britain. This later provided a reason to proud for China that it was never fully colonized.

Nonetheless, Sino-Russian relations or Sino-Soviet relations have undergone tremendous changes with the arrival of the October Revolution. The influx of communist trends has revolutionized China's northern neighbors. Sun Yat-sen, who once played an important role in the Revolution of 1911, proposed the policy of "joining Russia, joining the Communist Party, and supporting agricultural workers" with the support of the newly established Soviet

Union. The implementation of the Whampoa Military Academy and the Northern Expedition was an effective manifestation of this policy. Later, as the successor of Sun Yat-sen's ideal, the Communist Party of China led this ancient country to realize the course of national independence and national liberation.

With the help of the Soviet Union and relying on the strong industrial base of Northeast China, the newly established People's Republic of China began a prosperous five-year plan (Simon, 1973). However, with the arrival of the Khrushchev era in the Soviet Union, the relationship between China and the Soviet Union began to enter a freezing point, and small-scale conflicts such as the Battle of Zhenbao Island broke out between the two countries. At that time, China ideologically identified the Soviet Union as revisionist, and the United States as an all-time enemy called it "imperialism." In such a situation, China began to work to build a third pole with third world countries, including India and Pakistan.

With the establishment of the combined defense alliance of NATO in the western bloc, the Soviet Union established the Warsaw Pact, as a counter measure to confront military might of NATO and to signal the allies of Moscow. Then with the unfolding of the Iron Curtain, the Cold War began. During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union launched a fierce proxy war in Afghanistan. In order to curb the Soviet Union's forces to cross the Afghan region and further south, and then approach the Indian Ocean, the United States pushed Pakistan to support insurgency in Afghanistan. The nexus went on to seek help from Islamic World and paved the way for full fledged moment against the Soviet army in Afghanistan. The event created space for extremism in this region, including the arrival of Osama bin Laden.

Parallel to this front; the United States' help and support to Pakistan also pushed India to the side of the Soviet Union. Earlier, Pakistan had provided opportunities for China to establish contacts with the United States. During Nixon's visit to China, Pakistan provided tremendous help and support behind the scenes. During this rapprochement, the gap widened in the Sino-Soviet relations, however bridged with Gorbachev's visit to China, and Sino-Soviet relations had ease in coming decades. The disintegration of the Soviet Union, only changed Sino-Soviet relations into Sino-Russia relations and marked the arrival of a new era. Simultaneously, Warsaw Pact ended to its natural death with the dismemberment of the USSR, and the formation of new alliance; the SCO, immediately tagged as a potential adversary to NATO by the west in post-Cold War era (Malik & Schultz, 2006).

4. Emergence of multi-polar System; a Prelude to the SCO

On December 26, 1991, the Soviet Supreme Soviet passed a resolution to decide to stop the existence of the Soviet Union. At this point, the 69-year-old Soviet Union officially declared its disintegration, and the Cold War pattern that lasted for nearly half a century also came to an end. The disintegration of the Soviet Union also marked the transformation of a new world with capitalist political economy and the western cultural dominance. The two-pole world had come to an end, and it had ushered in the "one superpower" situation of political power. The United States has become the world's only superpower.

With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the former Union Republics also declared independence. The five Central Asian countries also declared independence. Due to the loss of control from Moscow, Central Asia had fallen into a new round of power vacuum. It was also during this period that local extremism began to breed rapidly. One of the important military force was the local extremist armed forces on the borders of Pakistan and Afghanistan that were supported by the US government. At the same time, it was not peaceful to say goodbye to the five Central Asian countries in the Soviet era. The constantly growing political and economic problems had plagued Central Asian countries, and their domestic situation had long been in a state of turmoil.

From 1996 to 1997, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan met in Shanghai and Moscow to discuss regional security and stability issues. At that time, Russia had just recovered from the "shock therapy" after the disintegration, and the re-establishment of great state of Russian spirit was echoing in the Moscow. In Europe, Russia had built a CIS (Common Wealth of Independent States) system. Although the CIS was not as strong as the Soviet Union, it was somehow a bulwark to suppress NATO's eastward advance to a certain extent. The immediate issues of further disintegration and rise of extremism on such an alarming rate were serious threats for greater peace in the region.

In the Far East, on the one hand, Russia and Japan had a more heated controversy over the four northern islands of Kuril Islands. The northern four islands are in close proximity with the United States in the northern Pacific and are on the rim of wide opening of the Sea of Okhotsk. Having these multiple but significant tensions on borders, it was inevitable for Russia to look for a comprehensive solution. Though the four northern island never appear in the agenda of the upcoming regional organization, the leaning and siding with China favored Russia to settle its pacific affairs and have a valuable voice from China against Japan. Thus, in the last decade of 20th century, the Sino-Russian relations were also entered into a new chapter.

While, China ushered the outbreak of the demographic dividend after the reform and opening up. The economy was developing rapidly and the domestic political situation was turning to be more stable with each new socio-economic and socio-political development. The irritants and obstacles for China in the Southeast region included the Taiwan issue and the South China Sea dispute. On the other hand, it is the problem of extremist forces in the Northwest. It was in mutual benefit of both China and Russia to side together both on the consolidation of peripheries in inner Asia and proclamation of territorial claims in the Pacific. After all Japan had full fledge support by the United States so was the case of Taiwan and other states from the Southeast Asian region. The later were the claimant of sovereignty and control in the South China Sea.

China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan entrapped into domestic and foreign fronts had various reasons to look ahead and collaborate for some well-coordinated effort. In such a situation, these countries signed an agreement on 'Confidence Building in the Military Field on Border Areas' known as the "Shanghai Agreement." One year later in Moscow, the countries signed the 'Agreement on Mutual Reduction of Military Forces in the Border Areas', called the "Moscow Agreement." The signing of the two major agreements also marked the formation of the Shanghai five-conference mechanism. In fact, it is not difficult to find out from the contents of the meetings of various countries. There were many purposes for countries to increase mutual trust for border security. On the one hand, it will reduce the military deployment between neighboring countries and reduce the military cost of the border, thus maintaining the stability and development of the domestic situation and the long-term stability of the region. On the other hand, countries work together to cope with enemies outside the multilateral borders.

In 1998, this mechanism was officially confirmed and gradually developed into a comprehensive forum where issues of mutual concern were to be discussed. The impetus given by Shanghai and Moscow Agreements enhanced the existed trust and cooperation between the border areas, and gradually deepened into regional politics, national security, regional development and even economic and trade cooperation in various other areas. Finally, at Dushanbe conference in 2000, the President of Uzbekistan was invited to participate in the meeting as a guest of the presidency(Kavalski, 2016). This also laid the foundation for the official formation of the SCO in the future.

5. Materializing the Organization: The Physical Manifestation of the Spirit of Shanghai

In June 2001, Uzbekistan joined the Shanghai-Five mechanism and signed the 'Shanghai Cooperation Organization Declaration' for combating terrorism, separatism and extremisms along with China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Conclusively, the Shanghai Convention, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was officially been established. Along with the establishment of the organization, the "Shanghai Spirit" as the official guiding ideology of the organization was also presented to the manifesto. The Shanghai spirit usually refers to 'mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for diverse civilizations, and seek common development'. It can be found that the spirit of Shanghai is based on the theme of the current era which is peace and development. Moreover, the organization upholds the principle of non-intervention, which is long pursued by China. At least from the official level, it is not difficult to find that the spirit of Shanghai is the result of unanimous consultations between the countries of the founding countries of the SCO. In the actual operation, the spirit of Shanghai has been continuously reflected and displayed.

Under the organization two permanent establishments were; the Secretariat in Beijing, and the Regional Anti-Terrorist Agency in Bishkek. The organization began its joint military exercise on August 6, 2003 and since then regular cooperation on military-security issues is in practice. The formal establishment of the Shanghai area is significant and has received much attention for the internal members of the organization, international external forces, and the international politics in the cross roads of extended regions of participating member states.

From the perspective of China, the establishment of the SCO has been beneficial both for domestic security and foreign policy. On the one hand, the SCO is committed to combating extremism, which is precisely one of the rare problems faced by China in northwestern China. Additionally, the establishment of the SCO can indeed serve as a discussion forum and regional platform for mutual alliances of member states to effectively combat extremist forces (Alperen, 2017). Moreover, the timing of the SCO formation with China's decision to reintegrate into the world after China's reform and opening up. As China is committed to more international participation in enhancing its international influence, which include joining of the World Trade Organization and other multilateral forums. The events such as the successful Beijing Olympic Games occurred at the beginning of this century, and the establishment of the SCO are historic for China. Enabling China to confront multiple challenges faced on multiple dimensions.

Similar to China, Russia, which has just awakened from the decade of instability faced in 1990s, has also benefited from the establishment of the SCO. On the one hand, the establishment of the SCO has given Russia the opportunity to return to the political arena in Central Asia. The sphere of influence of Russia has penetrated into what it believed to be its backyard and enable it to constrain Iran and Turkey, the two potential states who enjoy deep rooted cultural ties with the Central Asian states. Furthermore, the SCO maintains regional stability to assist Russia's to achieve desired situation in the Inner Asia, not causing uncomfortable circumstances as it has faced in the Baltic region where the post-Soviet states joined NATO.

The establishment of the SCO is also of great influence to the international community, especially to the neighboring countries of the organization's members. Some countries aspire to join, some are given observer status, and some are cautiously monitoring the political developments under the SCO. It can be argued that neighboring countries have given recognition and positive comments to this organization that showcases the spirit of Shanghai. This indicates trust and confidence of such regional states towards the SCO, therefore no bulwark appeared against the organization. Rather the organization aspired and openly states to have cooperation with NATO.

The SCO found its place in regional order so swiftly and sort endorsement from other international organizations. For instance, the United Nations, have affirmed this organization over its commitment to combating terrorism, separatism and extremism. Contrary to it some have usual suspicious view about the SCO. Today, for China, the SCO is has multiple challenges of not only three evils but also it has to confront growing American interest in the region. In aftermath of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, the SCO found itself in stronger position and greater responsibility as the member states are participatory of the BRI. Whether these are the founding members of the SCO, the neighboring countries, or the international mainstream society, the evaluation of the SCO is both positive and pragmatic. The establishment of the organization has brought the stability of the region in quite objective and in a well-coordinated way.

6. Fighting Three Evils: SCO's Relevance in 21st Century

A close look at the original founding states of the SCO: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and, finally, Uzbekistan, which led to the formal establishment of the SCO, reveals that the geographical scope and political influence of these countries is exactly the same as and overlap with the ancient Eurasian civilization. The concept of Near East is a broad concept of political geopolitics. In broad terms, Near East China comprises the open plains of northeast China and a wide range of Asian regions of India, the Great Wall and China to the west of the Altai Mountains, the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union, Iran, Pakistan and the Khorasan area of Afghanistan.

The expansion of the SCO and its implementation, taking into account the multifaceted political factors of geopolitics and international relations, to a large extent expansion has enhanced its strength and influence that would give the organization greater negotiating leverage and voice in the dialogue with other international organizations, such as NATO. South Asia, East Asia, Central Asia, and even East Asia and Eastern Europe are embedded in the organization, making it particularly prominent in the international trend of diversity (Cutler, 2018).

One of the major purposes of SCO is fight against extremism, terrorism and separatism; to curb these menaces has always been the priority of the organization. However, due to the geography, troublesome neighbors(Jaffer, 2016) and other issues there has been no effective management over the issue, in such a scenario adding two more countries with domestic and divergent problems of extremism can have implications for the entire organization. Pakistan has already been bombarded by the international community for being unable to address the issue of religious extremism, whereas India under Modi administration (Khurshid, 2017) is also being criticized for the growing hatred and rise of Hindu extremism against minority in India.

Another priority of the SCO has been to solve the border issues between and among member states, whereas the border issues (Khurshid, 2017) between India and Pakistan is globally known. Both seem unwilling to resolve these issues due to overwhelming asymmetry, under the banner of SAARC. India is a potential competitor for China in terms of regional ambitions(Michel, 2017), and its culture have attraction for the majority of Central Asian people, whereas towards Pakistan the Central Asian states have religious affinity, shared values, and norms of social cohesion, giving Pakistan more edge in connectivity (Amjad, 2017) with these states(Khan, 2013).

From Beijing's point of view, Pakistan is a time-tested partner of peace, and a strategic ally. President Xi Jinping's visit to Pakistan in April 2015 resulted in the signing of 51 agreements, with an approximate value of \$46 billion, settling the base for CPEC, a flagship project of the OBOR initiative. The OBOR is aimed at promoting the economic prosperity of the countries along the belt and road, regional economic cooperation, strengthening exchanges, mutual learning between different civilizations and promoting world peace and development.

The proposed OBOR is believed to speed up the development of western China and the revival of the ancient Silk Route. The CPEC will not only increase the efficacy of trade potential for China but also bring fruitful results for Pakistan. Considering the geostrategic location of Pakistan, the CPEC connects the northern and southern parts of the OBOR. The premier exit of the People's Liberation Army's navy and the South China Sea is troublesome, and at the core of global focus. China through the Gwadar port will have access to two oceans. In such a scenario, Gwadar becomes strategically as well as commercially important for China. Such a scenario boosts the potential of SCO and CPEC as of strategic(Nizamani, 2018; Saif ur Rehman, 2014) importance for both the parties.

The SCO has a bright future, and it has a major role to play but only if it sustains consistency towards its goals without internal divide. At present, Pakistan appears to be a justified member; however, inconsistency in Islamabad's policies may have challenges in the future. India, on the other hand, shares nothing but confrontational interests with Beijing, both in short and long term scenario. Although New Delhi has been a close partner with Moscow, ample evidence is available to foresee the country's future towards the western orientation.

SCO's growing participation in Afghan Peace Process, facilitation in fighting extremism, separatism and terrorism, expanding integration efforts to connect Afghanistan due to its geo-strategic location and promoting peace and stability in the region makes it more feasible and available at hand option for the member states to provide for pooling resources to stabilize the region. However the most challenging question will remain the same that if the organization can transform its potential into an effective conflict solving mechanism for newly member states of India and Pakistan to facilitate their territorial dispute and provide some conclusive outcome.

7. Conclusion

The "Shanghai Five" Mechanism established in 1996 to resolve the Soviet Union's remaining border issues and to strengthen cooperation and mutual trust among states in their border management. With an additional aim to counter the domino effect of separatism within newly born states and in Russia and China. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization established with the accession of Uzbekistan on 15 June 2001, with the expansion and implementation of the SCO to which India and Pakistan have joined, the influence of the SCO is increasing day by day and is increasingly attracting the attention of the world(Mudiam, 2018).

In addition, the inclusion of India and Pakistan in the SCO demonstrates to the world the openness, interactivity and peacefulness of the SCO (Aksu, 2017). By promulgating regulations for observer states, provisions for dialogue partners and the admission and implementation of new members, the SCO continues to show the Shanghai spirit to the world (Toops, 2016), by integrating India and Pakistan into its organizational body, the SCO is conducive to promoting regional security, geographical and peaceful development and security and even improving and promotion of the livelihood of member states. Having reaching to three oceans in its outreach and encompassing the wide landscapes of Asia and Europe the SCO has to sustain its cohesiveness and significant role to play in global affairs.

References

- Aksu, A. (2017). China's Growing Role in Regional Institutions: Application of Institutional Realism to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. *The Maastricht Journal of Liberal Arts*:3-12.
- Allison, R. (2018). Protective integration and security policy coordination: Comparing the SCO and CSTO. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 11(3), 297-338.
- Alperen, M. J. (2017). *Foundations of homeland security: Law and policy*: John Wiley & Sons.
- Amjad, M. (2017). The Implications of Pakistan and India's Permanent membership of the SCO. *Modern Diplomacy*.
- Cutler, E. (2018). *SCO UNIX in a Nutshell: A Desktop Quick Reference for SCO UNIX & Open Desktop*, US: O'Reilly.
- David S. G. Goodman, D. S.G. (1988). *Communism and Reform in East Asia*. US: Frank Case and Company Limited.
- Ebrey, P. B., & Walthall, A. (2013). *East Asia: A cultural, social, and political history*: Cengage Learning.
- Fisle, J. L. (1992). *Community and the Politics of Places*. Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Jaffer, N. (2016). The First Enlargement of Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Its Implications. *EDITORIAL BOARD*, 34(2), 63.
- Kavalski, E. (2016). *China and the global politics of regionalization*: Routledge.
- Khan, Z. A. (2013). Pakistan and shanghai cooperation organization. *IPRI journal*, 13(1), 57-76.
- Khurshid, T. (2017). Pakistan-India SCO Membership: Challenges & Opportunities. *ISIS Issue Brief*.
- Malik, V., & Schultz, J. (2006). *Emerging NATO: Challenges for Asia and Europe*: Lancer Publishers.
- Michel, C. (2017). It's Official: India and Pakistan Join Shanghai Cooperation Organization. *The Diplomat*, 12.
- Mudiam, P. R. (2018). The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Gulf: Will India Prefer a Further Westward Expansion of the SCO or its Consolidation? *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies*, 12(4), 457-474.
- Nizamani, U. (2018). The China Pakistan Economic Corridor and Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Implications for South Asia's Strategic Stability. *Journal of Current Affairs*, 2(2), 74-90.
- Prime, F. (2008). *Conflict and Social Order in Inner Asia*, Netherlands: Koningklijke Brill NV.
- Saif ur Rehman, D. M. (2014). Significance of Shanghai Cooperation Organization-Pakistan's Perspective, *Margalla Papers*: 65-84.
- Siddiq, A. (2016). Significance of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) for Pakistan. *ISSI Issue Brief*.
- Simon, S. W. (1973). China, the Soviet Union, and the subcontinental balance. *Asian Survey*, 13(7), 647-658.
- Toops, S. (2016). Reflections on China's Belt and Road Initiative, *Area Development and Policy*,1(3),352-360.