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## Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Sino-Russian Relations under Perspective of Security (A Case Study of CARs)

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### Abstract

The Paper focuses the security aspect of SCO and elaborates the Sino-Russian relations with special reference to security interests in Central Asia. It also highlights mutual relations from cold war to post cold war and post 9/11 2001 that brought both States close to each other on their commonality of respective interests in the region. The part of paper also explains the two major and dominant actors of SCO who developed their relations in the context of regional organization. Furthermore, it tells about the dominant issue of the region with special reference to counter terrorism, its evolution, developments and consequences. By analyzing the Trans border threats this study also elaborates that how the member nations developed a unanimous policy for containing of international terrorism that centered in the region of Central Asia and hurts the interests of the SCO member states. To counter terrorism in the region SCO states adopted multiple strategies for example, military exercises, confidence building measures among the member states, arm trade and reducing game between the East and West of Central Asian republics. The last part of this chapter consists of the Chinese political and military interests in the region of CARS for which the SCO has been organized and developed.

**Keywords:** Sino-Russian Relations, Security Issue, SCO and RATS Performance, Politics in CARS, Sino-Pak Relations and SCO

### INTRODUCTION

SCO started as a security organization focusing on confidence building measures to anti-terrorist measures. The members of SCO countries stress that this organization is mainly meant for economic cooperation and that its chances of becoming a full fledge security organization like NATO is rare. The member countries of SCO have shown their commitment not to interfere in the internal affairs of each other. SCO pays special attention to the stability of Central Asia as it is the region mostly exposed to the menace of terrorism and fundamentalism. Member states have shown their desire to build a security mechanism in the region. Various anti-terrorism programs and military contacts have been developed to help Central Asian states build their security. The

larger states are also interested in the security of Central Asia as any instability in Central Asia will also affect these larger states security. The Central Asian states and larger powers have moved from bilateral relations towards multi lateral relation under the framework of SCO (Frost, 2009).

Before soviet disintegration the relationship of China and USSR were tense due to border disputes. Each of the two states has to deploy troops on relevant borders because of several military clashes due to bilateral disputes. Border negotiations started between the two republics in 1980s but after soviet disintegration, it started between the newly formed Central Asian republics and China. In November 1992, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan started dialogue on security measures. In 1996 and 1997 the leaders of the member nations agreed on taking confidence building measures on the borders and to minimize the number of troops as well which resulted in launching shanghai Five. On 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1998, a summit was held in Almaty Kazakhstan in which member nation-states stressed on peace and stability in the region. They stressed on the eradication of separatism, fundamentalism, terrorism and all kinds of smuggling.(Hu, 1995).

As separatism and terrorism are huge obstacles in prevailing peace and stability of the region. Similarly, weapons smuggling and drug trafficking is the main problem caused due to porous borders. And these drug traffickers have links with terrorists. On 24 august 1999 4<sup>th</sup> summit of shanghai five was held in Bishkek.kyrgyzstan.in this summit again the focus was on regional security and regional cooperation. On 5<sup>th</sup> July 2000, 5<sup>th</sup> summit of SCO, was held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan attended by the president of Uzbekistan as an observer. The member nation-states expressed mutual will to increase the level of communication in all sectors. On 14<sup>th</sup> June 2001, a historical summit was held in shanghai China as the shanghai cooperation organization was formed .Uzbekistan admitted as sixth member of the SCO. The member states agreed on the formation of mechanism to remove the threats harming the region. All the states agreed on joining of Uzbekistan in SCO. On 7<sup>th</sup> June 2002, 2<sup>nd</sup> summit of SCO was held in Petersburg in Russia (Zhao, 1997).

The SCO members agreed on the charter of Shanghai Co-operation Organization and agreed on the formation of Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS). On 28<sup>th</sup> May 3<sup>rd</sup> summit of SCO was held in Moscow Russia and approved and signed the regulation of the executive committee of the RATS. On 17<sup>th</sup> June 2004, in the next annual summit the member countries made an action plan for mutual transactions in all the fields including defense, commerce and economic sector. They also expressed their commitment for taking joint measures against smuggling of drugs and narcotics. SCO Regional Anti-terrorist structure was established in Tashkent with representatives of UN, EU, OSCE, and other international institutions. Afghan leader Karzai and Mongolian external relations minister Erdenechuluum were also present in the meeting .On 5<sup>th</sup> July 2005 the next summit of SCO was called in Astana, Kazakhstan. In this summit the member countries showed their will to take steps for the establishment of peace, security and stability in the whole region and to play an active role in strengthen stability in Central Asia. In this summit member countries called US to vacate Central Asia as soon as possible (Kerr, 2005).

This was the historical summit as Central Asian republics along with China and Russia asked for timeline of vacating their territories which roused reaction from the west as they started calling SCO as anti US alliance and started calling it as a move against uni-polarity. On 15<sup>th</sup> June 2006, SCO annual summit was held in Shanghai, China. The member countries showed commitment to regional peace, stability and security and in case of any threat to regional stability the member realms will take immediate step and formulate a mechanism to combat threats. Afghan president Karzai attended the summit. On 16<sup>th</sup> august 2007, another annual summit was held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan in which member participants showed further commitment to work on threat response and conflict prevention mechanism. Peace of the region must be guaranteed by the armed forces of Central Asia and coordination should be increased in existing regional organization like CSTO and SCO and expressed concern over the situation in Afghanistan (Dittmer, 2001).

#### **ROLE OF RATS IN COMBATING TERRORISM AND SINO-RUSSIAN RELATIONS**

Terrorism encompasses two categories, first includes domestic actions pursued to provoke violence with the goal being political change, what makes this different from separatist behavior is that terrorism activities tend to be of smaller scale and have a lower probability of accomplishing any large scale political change. The second is the threat of transnational terrorism such as militants in Afghanistan prior to the U.S invasion. This threat is particularly problematic for SCO in threatening to overthrow of Central Asian regime. Due to the transnational nature of terrorism it was decided that this menace should be dealt through the forum of SCO. On 15<sup>th</sup> June 2001, the SCO members initiated a joint movement against the three evils of terrorism, separatism and extremism. The parties recognized the threat of terrorism and violence and hence agreed to cooperate with each other (Tolipov, 2006).

The Russian Foreign Minister declared the formation of Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in June 2002. The decision to create this organization was already taken at 2002 St. Petersburg summit. The RATS started functioning from June 2004 and had done a complete survey on the terrorist activities in the region and shared information with member contributors of SCO about these activities. RATS coordinated and shared information between law enforcement, border and intelligence agencies. It not only functioned to counter terrorism but to root out the underlying causes of terrorism like poverty and social inequality as well. RATS had shown results in very short span of time. In 2005, RATS had done a remarkable achievement by preventing 263 terrorist acts and other related crimes in Central Asia. It also kept its link with U.N. The legal documents of RATS are mainly in Russian language. In 2006 RATS made a list of terrorist groups in the region which were 400 in number. These organizations were mainly in Central Asia. RATS had taken action against these organizations and prevented 250 attacks in the region. (Baev, 2006).

In 2009, SCO took many steps for countering terrorism. In 2010-2012 the SCO designed a framework for co-ordination with various bodies. It agreed on increasing diplomatic relations and interaction with the international actors for the eradication of terrorism with the realization that terrorism can't be eradicated without the support of world community. RATS worked under the

Council of Heads of States and all its actions will have to be ratified by the Council. Although SCO anti-terrorism policy was secret to rest of world but the level of cooperation among SCO members was increasing which showed healthy sign for the security of the region. A convention called by SCO for the prevention of terrorism provided a legal base and frame work for the removal of terrorism and bring the member nations closer to each other with the purpose to stabilize the region and remove the obstacles in peace (Tolipov, 2006).

#### **MILITARY EXERCISES AND RESPONSES TO TRANS BORDER THREATS**

CARs states had realized that joint efforts are desired to control the problems of terrorism, extremism and separatism and they had expressed this desire through the forum of SCO although the west consider that the problems of instability in Central Asia was stressed by great powers to intrude in these states but the fact is that these threats were real. Due to the declining social and economic condition of Central Asia these movements have increased considerably. And they were taking advantage of the current scenario to achieve political goals through terror. Members of the extremist group the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) were also reportedly involved in 199's insurgency, in the Balkan area of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, IMU was also involved in the assassination of Uzbek leader Karimov, the political turmoil in Tajikistan and the increasing involvement of Hizbul Tahrir in the Farghana valley. These growing threats to internal security were regarded as reaction of authoritarian political regimes and the socio economic inequality. These threats greatly aggravated the conditions of new republics of Central Asia. The need is that transnational response is needed to control these threats. Farghana valley is one of the regions which have become a major area for extremist organizations like Hizbul Tahrir and the military and defense establishment had been unable to control the situation.(Omeliicheva, 2010).

The only solution to such problems can be to enhance cooperation among Central Asian republics especially to transnational crime. Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan started coordination in 2006, to combating threats jointly. Due to bilateral coordination both states had been successful in neutralizing a group of extremists in Kyrgyzstan and come closer to each other and resolved differences which mainly aroused when Kyrgyzstan involved in the Andijan incident. Uzbekistan was not happy on this move.(Omeliicheva, 2010).Trainings conducted between China and Kyrgyzstan with the purpose to stop Uighur separatist from entering into Kazakhstan and creating menace in China. Uighurs had been doing this act for a long time which made the Sino-Kazakh relations worsen. In August 2003 one thousand troops participated in exercises under SCO, coverage was given on media condemning all such involvement which harm CARs integrity with others (Germanovich, 2008).Similarly, China and Russia conducted combined military exercises in 2005 as an SCO activity. Although western analyst declared workouts as a message to the West that the two great powers of the region are now being integrated. However, they also focused on improving bilateral defense mechanism. Both the countries displayed respective weaponry which consisted of air, land and naval armaments- aircraft, bombers and sub-marines showing that region is not a hot cake for the West and so are ready to contain any foreign involvement in the region. China and Russia however denied any negative ambition and stressed that the purpose is the promotion of peace in the region.(Germanovich, 2008).In July 2009, China and Russia



combined military exercise took place at Zhaonan training base in China. In September 2010, SCO exercise was conducted in Kazakhstan, 5000 troops from China, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan took part in the march. In April 2012, China and Russia launched joint naval exercise in yellow sea of Pacific Ocean, this was the first naval exercise between Russia and China (Aris, 2009).

#### **MILITARY MANEUVERS, CHINA'S INTEREST: AN APPRAISAL**

Russia and China conducted large scale maneuvers in 2005, the year was considered as a landmark by SCO with the purpose of countering terrorism in the region, prevailing peace and provision of security to concerned people. (Aris, 2009). In addition, projection and dealing of armaments among SCO members was announced by Russia and China. 45% of arms were exported to China from Russia including aircrafts, sub-marines amounting of 2 billion per year. The demonstration of weapon system was meant to attract other SCO members and due to this reason observer states were invited for drills. Russia exported 40 percent of its arms to India and Iran was also keen in Russian arms. SCO provided a platform to conclude such agreements and hence fetched member-states closer in security perspectives (Kirchner, 2003). Drug trafficking among SCO members was another issue controlled by RATS as these traffickers were financed by the terrorists groups and so 19285 kg of narcotics was seized by SCO agencies. Keeping in mind that Central Asian region was one of the biggest link of drug trafficking from Afghanistan to Eurasia due to its border with Afghanistan. The security agencies of SCO states are jointly working for the eradication of this evil which had also harmed the youth of this region. (Kirchner, 2003). Tajikistan had also taken keen interest in the eradication of drugs because as it was also a victim of drug threat along with Kyrgyzstan (Frost, 2009). China sought minimization of the risk of armed attacks on its borders as China had to deploy a large number of troops on its borders due to Soviet threat. However structuring Shanghai Five resulted in reduction of troops from Sino-Soviet talks. In September 2006, the five Central Asian states along with China and Russia signed an agreement to make Central Asia a nuclear weapons free zone CANWFZ as China wanted to oust any foreign related state from politics of CARs as U.S. presence in Afghanistan and growing influence will threaten the Chinese gigantic projects of economic development of the region and so SCO was an attempt to limit the influence of U.S. and Russia in security perspectives (Frost, 2009). The main interest of China is to retain the economic development, safeguard the territories and to gain international support and prominence by making various partnerships and abstain from any kind of confrontation with the world powers. This strategy of China maximized access of China to big markets, lessened the threat of militancy, and provided best guarantee for survival of communist regime (Ong, 2005).

#### **CHINA AND SEPARATIST MOVEMENTS**

Apart from above initiatives, Chinese establishment was also worried about the separatist movement started by Muslim students under the banner of promoting radicalism and enhancing Muslim brethren and so developed a link with Muslim students of Central Asian universities. Various groups with different names like adolat, Baraka, tauba, Islam lashkarlari, hizbuttahrir, Akramiya, HizbunNusrat, UzunSoqol, TablighJamaat, LashkarliTaiba, Hezbollah, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, East Turkestan Islamic Movement, The Islamic Movement of Central

Asia, and The Islamic jihad group were established with the purpose to exist an Islamic state in Central Asia. The core concentration of China in Central Asia was to subdue the leanings of separatism. The main separatist movement in Xinjiang was a headache for China. China has seven ethnic groups of which five are located in Xingjiangi .e. Uyghur, Kazakh, Uzbek and Tartar. This Turkic group had inhibited this region for centuries and had a long history of interactions with China and Central Asian region(Christensen, 1996).Uyghurs are 385 non-Han ethnic Chinese of total population not only rejecting Beijing rule but extending the movement towards Tibet and Mongolia. So a loss of control on the Xinjiang region would obstruct Chinese access to the CARs and nuclear capability as nuclear sites are mainly located in Xinjiang. Mean stability in Central Asia and the whole region is in the interest of China and that's why maintaining regional security and counter terrorism is the foremost purpose SCO (Chung, 2004). The main separatist threat faced by China was from East TURKISTAN movement in Xinjiang region. From 1996 to 2003 more than half a million Uyghur fled from China to Central Asian states and Pakistan. But still this movement is small, poorly managed by overseas Uyghur community but occupied by the international jihadist movement. China has however suppressed the Uyghur movement. Similarly in Russia, Chechnya and Dagestan were considered as breeding grounds for terrorism (Sheives, 2006).Among the other Central Asian republics Uzbekistan faces a threat of extremism. This extremism had been boosted by the repressive activities of the government President karimov had ruthlessly crushed Islamic movements which had only radicalize them. The law on freedom of conscience and religious organization was passed which allowed the Uzbek government to suppress any religious activity. Karimov government brought Islamic education complete under state control. Due to these measures Uzbekistan faced a high level of violence. Radical groups like IMU were made and terrorist's attacks got momentum (Sheives, 2006). The main separatist threat faced by China was from East TURKISTAN movement in Xinjiang region emerged in 1933. China has seven ethnic groups of which five are located in Xingjiangi .e. Uyghur, Kazakh, Uzbek and Tartar. This Turkic group had inhibited this region for centuries and had a long history of interactions with China and Central Asian region (Christensen, 1996). This movement was so strong in the beginning that from 1950's to 1980's this region faced 20 large scale uprising. A series of students protest occurred in Xinjiang in 1985, 1988, 1989 which were suppressed by Chinese forces. From 1996 to 2003 more than half a million Uyghur fled from China to Central Asian states and Pakistan. China had suppressed the Uyghur movement. However, Uyghur population in Xinjiang province has become violent. These Uyghurs demand their own state East Turkestan or Uyghuristan(Christensen, 1996). So movement took momentum after soviet disintegration. China had been acting very harshly to suppress the violence and also improved the economic condition of Xinjiang by building roads to Central Asia. SCO countries had expressed their dissatisfaction on the growing links of Chinese Uighurs with the Uighurs of neighboring countries.

#### **SINO-PAK RELATIONSHIP AND ITS IMPORTANCE**

Pakistan has an important border with the Chinese province of Xinjiang. China is an old friend of Pakistan and is assisting Pakistan in many hard times. Pakistan has a border with Xinjiang province

of China which is very important for China due to the security situation in Xinjiang. China has given importance to Pakistan because the peace and stability in Pakistan has a positive impact on China. There were many terrorists organizations operating in Pakistan like Al-Qaeda, Haqqani network, TLP and IMU which are posing security threat to Pakistan and China as well. These terrorists network cross the border of China where they supported the Uighur population and create insurgency in the Chinese province. Therefore China is deeply interested in the stability of Pakistan. Pakistan is gifted with the mineral resources and China needs these resources for its economy. China wants to initiate different projects in Pakistan .Pakistan is also like a bridge for China through which it can access the Muslim countries of Middle East. China can easily get the oil of Middle East through Pakistan .The geographical location of Pakistan is very important for China. Pakistan has also supported China on its stand on Xinjiang.

### **CONCLUSION**

If we look at the SCO countries they are all resource rich countries. There is a huge trade potential in this region but due to the security reasons this potential cannot be fully utilized. TAPI was postponed due to security reasons in Afghanistan. instability in Afghanistan badly affected Pakistan. The project of Gawadar was postponed due to security problems. Although SCO has taken many measures for countering terrorism but still the issue is great. Terrorism is a huge problem due to which there is instability in the region. One of the main goal of SCO was to counter terrorism, extremism and separatism. SCO has taken many measures to counter terrorism like sharing of information etc. Many terrorists have been arrested. Many religious organizations have been banned. Action has been taken against many organizations in Central Asian countries and they have been targeted. Nearly all the Central Asian Republics are poor countries and they cannot control extremism and terrorism due to their weak security therefore SCO has provided assistance to the countries to protect their borders and internal situation. Sectarianism is also one of the huge problems. China is facing a problem of separatist movement in Xinjiang due to ughar population. Similarly, there is a problem of separatism in many countries. Pakistan and India is facing this issue. SCO has taken measures for tackling separatism. Inter-state measures have been taken to control the separatist movements in SCO countries. Hence, SCO has done a lot for the security of the region. Counter narcotics measures have been taken. Drug trafficking has been checked by tightening the borders. One of the major problem of SCO states is porous borders due to smugglers and traffickers cross the border. The border forces has been upgraded for security purposes.

The inclusion of Pakistan and India as regular members of SCO is a very positive sign of improvement of security situation in the region. Now Pakistan will have a stake in the region. The geo-political situation of Pakistan is very important for China. Pakistan can extract great benefits from China and SCO members after its inclusion as the member. China is interested in the stability of the region and Pakistan. The growing U.S. involvement in the region is viewed with suspicion by the China. U.S. has involved in Pakistan, Central Asia and Afghanistan. China view this involvement as containment of China by U.S. therefore it is taking keen interest in the stability of



Afghanistan and the region. China is also interested in the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. China wants stability in the region which is in the greater interest of the SCO members.

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