



Role of Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Regional Politics

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Abstract:

It is impossible to overlook the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's (SCO) influence on regional affairs. The SCO views border management as a crucial step. The SCO is also keeping a close eye on the situation in Afghanistan and the region. Regional stability and security are two important goals of the SCO. Along with this, SCO plays a major role in the bilateral relations between the member countries. While SCO 's role in global governance to promote the regional economy is also commendable. The objectives of the current study are to explore and investigate the SCO's incremental role in the region. This study used a historical, descriptive, and analytical technique. The current research is qualitative in nature, and the data used in it were gathered from secondary sources. These sources include; authentic research papers, annual reports, books, research articles, newspaper articles, and historical records that address various facets of the study. This research work has concluded that the SCO is fully capable of exercising greater influence and bringing greater results in the years to come.

Keywords: China, Russia, Afghanistan, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, regional politics, peace

INTRODUCTION

The SCO is a political, economic, and security alliance that was established on June 15, 2001, in Shanghai, China. The organization's charter, which was approved on September 19, 2003, was signed in June 2002. Before entering Uzbekistan, the countries of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan were founding members of the Group of Five when it was established on

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April 26, 1996. When Pakistan and India were granted full SCO membership, the group grew on June 9, 2017, in Kazakhstan, during the Astana Conference, when Pakistan and India were admitted to the SCO. With the addition of these two states, the SCO now has eight full members. The SCO appointed the Heads of State Councils (HSC) as the highest decision-making body with a high rank. This group has meetings once a year with the aim of establishing decisions and guiding principles about important subjects. Regular military drills are organized among SCO members. These military drills are held to encourage cross-border coordination and cooperation in the fight against terrorism and other external threats, as well as to uphold regional peacekeeping. In terms of population and geographic influence, SCO is regarded as the leading regional organization in the world.

SCO is engaged in a variety of activities in the security sector. Border control is seen as a crucial SCO stage. Since the participating countries ratified the Border Agreement in 2002, it is impossible to deny the SCO's involvement in terrorism. The group stated in a 1998 declaration that it would work to eliminate negative characteristics such as terrorism, militancy, and extremism. RATS, which will aid in the battle against terrorism, was founded by the SCO to combat terrorism. The group identified 952 people and 30 terrorist and extremist organizations in 2006–2007. The RATS handles a variety of terrorism-related matters. As a result, SCO member states engage in annual joint military drills, which also include "peace missions," where the armed forces of the participating states may exchange information. Additionally, the SCO closely watch the regional situation in Afghanistan. Its long-held goal is for Afghanistan to be secure and stable, because regional stability depends on Afghanistan's stability. A special meeting on Afghanistan was conducted in 2009 by the Organization for Security and Stability in Afghanistan, and the "Afghanistan Contact Group" was established in 2011.

In 2016, the organization developed its 2025 plan at the political, economic, international (security), cultural, and commerce levels. SCO has a similar function in the world of business. Member countries engage in trade and other economic activities together in the economic sphere. From 2001 to 2017, there was an increase in economic exchange among the member nations, from 1.87 million USD to 24.2 million USD. China and Russia, two of the organization's core players, fought against one another in World War II. On the SCO platform, the two sides' conflicts were reconciled. China's border and other concerns with Russia and other Central Asian nations were therefore resolved through this forum. It is envisaged that this would serve as a significant forum for resolving disputes for the recently admitted states of Pakistan and India. Because of this, majority of the SCO countries were at odds, but the group offered a forum for them to mend and improve their relationships.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The intergovernmental international organization, the SCO, has serious concerns about peace and stability in the region, especially in Afghanistan. Nicharapova (2019), in his paper, discovered the SCO's role in Afghanistan's peace and stability. He finds some viable solutions, such as granting full membership in the organization and releasing special funds, and restoring peace in the war-torn country with the help of other regional organizations such as the UN, SAARC, EU, and CSTO. In terms of regional security, the SCO has been compared to NATO and dubbed itself the "NATO of the East." De Haas (2008) highlights that the SCO is moving towards an alliance with NATO-like

activities and a depth of cooperation. According to Oldberg (2007), the SCO is a useful forum for member countries to collaborate, and the organization has shown flexibility and adaptability through rapid growth, the formation of new institutions, and a broader agenda. Further, through SCO, states can promote cooperation on a bilateral and multilateral level and reduce their differences. This has helped prevent conflicts between members and promoted cooperation against international terrorism. Boland (2011) takes a picture of the SCO 10-year backdrop. He says that in its ten years of existence, the organization has developed its institutional structure, established good relations with other states and organizations, conducted several military exercises and peace missions, and established an interbank association. Regarding regional stability, Kalra & Saxena (2017) say the SCO is not an organization that opposes any grouping, region, or specific nation-state. It serves as a vehicle to enhance economic and social prosperity in the region.

RESEARCH METHOD

For this research paper, the qualitative method has been used along with the analytical and historical approaches. The current study investigates and explores the SCO's role in border security and management, counterterrorism, military exercises and peace missions, and Afghanistan's stability. This study focuses on the SCO's role in member-state cooperation in terms of political, security, trade, economic, cultural, and humanitarian cooperation. The SCO's role in global governance cannot be ignored. Primary and secondary sources have been analyzed to find out the SCO's role in the region. The data has been collected from authentic research papers, annual reports, books, research articles, newspaper articles, and historical records.

EVOLUTION OF SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION

The stages of the SCO's evolution before and beyond 2017 may be described in terms of "mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for cultural diversity, and pursuit of common development." The stages of SCO development prior to and during the membership expansion in 2017 may be understood. The "Shanghai Spirit," defined as "mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for cultural diversity, and pursuit of common development," was first presented during the establishing period, from 2001 to 2004. The Shanghai Convention on Combating the Three Evil Forces (terrorism, separatism, and extremism) was attended by SCO member countries, who agreed on a charter and endorsed a framework for global commerce. RATS in Tashkent and the secretariat in Beijing had both been formed in 2004.

The Treaty on Long-Term Good Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation among SCO Member States, signed by heads of state, served as the foundation for the organization's internal structure and procedures. The 2007 agreement codified the principles of enduring friendship and peace and reinforced the member countries' shared understanding of equality and collaboration. The legal foundation for SCO security cooperation was solidified by the 2009 Convention against Terrorism and the 2017 Convention against Extremism, while regional collaboration was boosted by a binding 2014 Intergovernmental Agreement on International Road Facilitation. The SCO Development Strategy to 2025 made clear the plan and course for the next ten years. Security secretaries, border guards, economic ministers, and emergency assistance ministers all have official meeting procedures in place. The Inter-Bank Association, the SCO Forum, and a Council of Businessmen were established. As part of their internal cooperation, the SCO member states urged the United

States and other nations to set a timeline for removing their military outposts in Central Asia at the Astana Summit. The coordinated anti-terrorism military exercise known as the Peace Mission became a routine. The Belt and Road Initiative is supported by all parties concerned. A SCO University is available for collaborative education (Hao, 2021).

Since 2004, when Mongolia was recognized as the first observer state, the SCO has grown outside China. As of 2017, the group included six member countries, six observer states, and six dialogue partners. At the Astana Summit that year, India and Pakistan were accepted as full SCO members. The SCO has evolved throughout the years, working for its many distinct members while increasing its influence and ambition. The extended SCO has become the largest regional organization in the world, covering 60percent of the Eurasian continent, with a population of over 3.2 billion and the GDP of its member states accounting for about a quarter of the global total. In order to create a multifaceted network, it strengthens collaboration with dialogue partners, observer states, and other international and regional organizations. The "Shanghai Spirit" and global governance are highlighted by their lofty aim and objective. By 2035, the SCO will have achieved the transit of goods, capital, services, and technology outlined in its Outline for Economic and Trade Cooperation. Handling member variety and differences is one challenge for the SCO, making coordination and coordinated action more challenging (Hao, 2021). Another is the major-power competition that has emerged as the US has stepped up its regional strategic containment of China and Russia while also luring and dividing SCO member states. In a pandemic, regional security, which is already complicated, becomes considerably more so.

In favor of Shanghai Spirit and Shanghai Wisdom, the organization shies away from antiquated paradigms like the Cold War mindset, the zero-sum game, and the clash of civilizations. Its guiding principles of non-alignment, non-confrontation, and non-targeting of any third party support the idea that all states, no matter how large or small, are treated equal. Relationships emphasize collaboration over affiliation. Its vision of security, collaboration, and civilization fosters a new type of international relations (Hao, 2021).

Cooperation is prioritized by the organization in order to ensure regional stability, which is a necessary prerequisite for member countries' socio-economic development. The SCO model is based on cooperative security, shared security, and universal security. Central Asian countries have avoided becoming "Middle Easternized" because they have successfully countered non-traditional security challenges and established a secure environment that supports both economic growth and a peaceful way of life. All of the member nations' economies have typically been doing well, with GDP and per capita GDP growth above the global average for the same time period, while trade facilitation has also increased. Without good security coordination among SCO members, this would not be possible.

The SCO assists key states in achieving peaceful coexistence and win-win outcomes at the regional level. Through cooperation inside the SCO framework, China and Russia have avoided competitive conflict and have worked together in Central Asia for the past 20 years. Regional cooperation, institutional frameworks for the economy, commerce, and investment are all encouraged by the reciprocal benefits that result from bilateral and multilateral approaches. Over 13 times higher than at the time the SCO was established the shared economic output of SCO member states is close to \$20 trillion USD. SCO's total international commerce is now worth US\$6.6 trillion, which is a

hundred times more than it was twenty years ago. For South-South cooperation between developing nations, the SCO Interbank Association, and a Council of Businessmen, a push for trade growth through investment, resources for loans to meet financial constraints, and demonstration projects offer invaluable expertise (Hao, 2021).

Success in Addressing the Security Concerns

Since its inception, the SCO has prioritized the fight against terrorism and its complete eradication. Members of the SCO face the threat of terrorism, and they have come together to combat it (Bakshi, 2002). Member states are collaborating with each other to confront Islamic terrorism. For example, China is frightened of Islamic terrorism in the Uygur and Xinjiang regions, while on the other side; the Russians are fighting Chechen fanaticism. The Uzbek government is also threatened by the "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan." Tajikistan has always been a source of suffering and is also not concealed from Islamic terrorist groups. Since the Taliban took over Afghanistan, all Central Asian states have viewed the country as the epicenter of terrorism and extremism. The countries of Central Asia are concerned about how terrorism and these wars may affect other countries. The SCO platform is seen by Central Asian states as a superior and regional forum for answers. A RATS organization has been formed by the SCO to address and combat terrorism. Despite limited RATS resources, SCO members have prevented over 600 terrorist attacks across the countries (Dehshiri, & Turkaman, 2017).

Border Security

The SCO's idea of border management is related to China's border security strategy of 1990, which established a "new approach to neighbors' security." In 1996, China initially presented the "new security concept," which was centered on doing away with outdated ideas and emphasizing collaboration and mutual gain. He desired to mediate territorial conflicts and settle border issues with neighboring countries. Framework agreements are preferred by China because they are beneficial for regional ties. Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan all border China. Border control is one of the SCO's key responsibilities. At the 2002 summit, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, China, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan, all SCO members, inked boundary agreements. The atmosphere for border concerns was designed by these accords. Border control was formed when border crossings and people's mobility expanded throughout time, which resulted in more collaboration between security organizations (Matveeva & Giustozz, 2008).

Anti-Terrorism

The SCO issued a statement in 1998 emphasizing the need to fight terrorism and refrain from using one another's territory as weapons. It was also the SCO's main objective when it was founded in 2001. A crucial component of SCO's security strategy is the formation of RATS. In June 2004, it was established. The SCO is governed by a council made up of representatives from the anti-terrorism agencies of the member states. Initially, an "information exchange hub" was formed with the goals of sharing intelligence on terrorism, stifling the funding of terrorist organizations, and observing and looking into coordinated counter terrorism efforts.

RATS was initially still learning, which prevented it from completing many jobs in 2007. It gathered sufficient information about 30 terrorist organizations and 900 individuals between 2004 and 2007

to prosecute them. In addition to reporting on the arrest of 15 eunuchs, the Institute of Nuclear Physics conducted an anti-nuclear terrorism drill in Tashkent in 2006. RATS attended the April 18–19, 2019, International Conference on Countering International Terrorism, where the RATS Director General highlighted the assistance provided by SCO countries in the fight against terrorism (Yussupzhanovich, & Tulkunovna, 2019).

Military Exercises

The SCO has started a series of "counter-terrorism exercises" since 2003. Both SCO law enforcement personnel and members of the armed forces from the member countries are present. The execution of these exercises reflects several goals. Among them are enhancing the security forces' capabilities, acquiring and practicing new talents, making group counterterrorism plans, and learning one another's military prowess. Providing opportunities for bilateral interactions with other SCO members, ensuring security needs, and informing the West, particularly the United States, that Beijing and Moscow's security is centered in Central Asia (Weitz, 2008).

Every year, including in 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2019, the SCO holds military drills. On August 24, 2018, Peace Mission 2018, the newest SCO exercise, got underway in Chebarkul, Russia. Participating militaries came from all eight SCO member states. For the first time since their independence, Pakistani and Indian forces participated in the SCO's peace mission. It was also the first time that both countries' militaries had participated in the exercise at the same time (Rafi, 2018).

The SCO is undertaking these exercises to achieve a number of goals. This improves the capacity of the armed forces of member states to prevent and combat regional terrorism. The SCO countries have implemented border-based weapons control tactics, as shown by their most recent exercises. Beijing and Moscow use these drills to demonstrate to the West, particularly the US, and other regional nations that they are in charge of ensuring the security of the Central Asian countries. Additionally, Central Asian countries like conducting business primarily with the SCO (Weitz, 2008).

Afghanistan

Afghanistan's stability and peace are crucial for maintaining the stability of Asia as well as the region as a whole. NATO forces led by the United States and the Taliban have made Afghanistan a victim of violence and war. It is impossible to disregard Afghanistan's strategic importance for the SCO members. The peace and stability of Afghanistan contribute to peace and stability in the whole region. The SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group was established by a protocol agreed in Beijing by the SCO and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. To develop ideas and proposals for tackling terrorism and drug trafficking, this contact group was established. Additionally, it would aid Kabul in restoring its war-damaged economy and in national reconciliation (Lalrinfel & Tripathi, 2018). The attendees of a "Plan of Action of the SCO and Afghanistan on Combating Terrorism, Drug Smuggling, and Organized Crime" held in Moscow in March 2009 adopted a "Special Conference on Afghanistan" (Seiwert, 2021). In May, the Afghan government and the SCO RATS agreed to exchange information and cooperate to prevent, discourage, and defeat terrorism. Afghanistan became an official observer of the SCO in 2012 (Weitz, 2015). The Afghan Contact Group has been a topic of discussion in four SCO summits.

As the US-led NATO started to remove troops, the Kabul administration regarded the organization as an alternate forum for regional peace and development. The country still has challenges with terrorism, extremism, and drug trafficking; therefore, the protracted deployment of US, NATO, and ISAF soldiers did not have any beneficial effects (Khan & Sultana, 2019). The Afghanistan Contact Group was reactivated in 2017 and began working to foster goodwill and peace with both the Taliban and the Kabul-based civilian government. All SCO members have made efforts to assist Afghanistan in achieving much-needed peace, stability, and prosperity (Wani, 2021). China, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan are four SCO members that border Afghanistan and are particularly concerned about the stability of that country. Due to the multilateralism it represents and its close physical proximity to Afghanistan, the SCO has a clear advantage in tackling the Afghan issue. The SCO may have a big impact on the Afghan situation since it serves as a worldwide platform for expressing the opinions and concerns of SCO member countries about Afghanistan. Following the meeting of the foreign ministers of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group in July 2021, a joint statement was released. "We confirm that our countries are prepared to considerably increase their economic, political, and humanitarian cooperation with Afghanistan", as stated (Jin, 2021).

Members of the SCO want to raise awareness about and take action against the production of illicit drugs in their region by battling psychotropic substances, drugs of abuse, and their precursors. Members of the SCO were ready to actively participate in the formation and implementation of Tran's regional development initiatives that would aid in the fight against the Taliban in Afghanistan. The socioeconomic situation of the country would be improved and stabilized by such actions. At the SCO summit in 2017, Afghan President Abdullah declared that his country is committed to working with other SCO members and that Afghanistan's political will and dedication to the SCO's goals of enhancing regional connectivity and promoting the security and stability ("Abdullah Calls on SCO Members", 2017).

The SCO will be encouraged to evaluate its institutional capability for maintaining stability in the region by paying closer attention to Afghanistan in light of the post-withdrawal circumstances and its expansion. The organization is able to speed up efforts to prevent SCO members from being infiltrated by terrorists and to promote the stability of the country's democratic system. The SCO called on all interested governments and international organizations to cooperate more closely. Afghanistan will "stabilize and develop" under this plan, with the UN acting as the primary coordinator. The foreign ministers of the eight participating countries held a lengthy debate on the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan as the US withdraws its troops from the country during a summit on Wednesday in the Tajik city of Dushanbe ("Shanghai Cooperation Group Calls," 2021).

Due to the suspension of payments from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, foreign governments, and other donors as well as the blocking of routine bank transfers to individuals in Afghanistan, the average Afghan is currently experiencing skyrocketing inflation, rising poverty, cash shortages, a depreciating currency, and rising unemployment. Since Taliban insurgents entered Kabul on August 15, the central bank of Afghanistan's foreign deposits, the majority of which are held in the United States, have been frozen. Leaders of the SCO have pleaded with the international community to unfreeze its assets and send relief to the war-torn country as

Afghanistan teeters on the brink of collapse following the Taliban's return to power last month ("SCO leaders Call for," 2021).

The emergence of ISIS in Afghanistan seemed to pose a new threat. The country had been at war with the Taliban since 2001. Both ISIS and the Taliban began fighting for control of Afghanistan after ISIS rejected the Taliban's rule in the country. Foreign troops leaving the country will leave a vacuum that other insurgency organizations may readily fill. The deputy director of the RATS executive committee, Vitaly Burov, made the following statement in regard to this: "The RATS will assist and collaborate with Afghan troops to resist the ISIS rise in the region" (Jin, 2021; Lalrinfel & Tripathi, 2018).

However, it could be difficult for the Afghan Taliban to replace the former administration as an observer in the SCO this year. Why? Taking into account that main countries have not publicly acknowledged the Afghan Taliban, if the Afghan Taliban wants to keep their observer status, regional countries and the international community must acknowledge their legitimacy.

SCO's Current Cooperation and Future Cooperation Strategy

Political Cooperation

At all levels, the SCO member states are still having political discussions. The Council of Heads of State, the Prime Minister as Head of Government, the Council of Foreign Ministers, and the Secretaries of the Council of Secretaries all hold regular meetings where these discussions take place. The establishment of a rational world, democratic fairness, mutual respect, the application of international law, non-interference in domestic matters, and collective values are all highly valued by the SCO. The SCO aims to create a strong framework for global and regional security that respects the legitimate and equal interests of all member countries and fosters collaboration in the fight against intergalactic conflict. The SCO member countries are committed to working together to maintain peace, increase regional confidence, and promote world stability and security. Based on respect for one another's national interests and international law, member countries will cooperate with one another in international affairs.

All countries and international organizations are welcomed to collaborate with the SCO. This collaboration within the SCO strives to improve regional and global security, economic growth, and cross-cultural and humanitarian ties ("Development Strategy of the SCO," 2015). SCO members settle international and regional issues and disagreements through political and diplomatic channels. Member States will strongly oppose the use of space or the deployment of weapons there for peaceful purposes, and the draught agreement will be preferred above other options within the law in order to promote transparency and confidence-building. The SCO member states shall consult and hold one another in high regard about the world economic agenda. They will also promote the establishment of an equitable global financial order based on the interests of all parties, which will be acceptable to all governments. Member States will uphold the norms of mutual cooperation while attempting to strengthen the political and aggressive attitude of the conversation over human rights in international forum. By respecting the cultural and civilizational uniqueness of each state, the international community may help to ensure that no human right is violated or given less importance than the other (Zhihao, 2019).

Cooperation in Security

The SCO primarily monitors the security conditions and worries of its member countries in Central Asia, frequently addressing the risks presented by terrorism, separatism, and extremism in the region. However, it is expanding its social development sector efforts (Haider, 2013). In order to solve these security issues, the SCO decided to establish RATS during a summit that took place in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on June 16–17, 2004. On April 21, 2006, the SCO announced its intentions and took another step in the battle against transnational terrorism and drug trafficking (Shanglin, 2006). In order to advance cooperation on matters including security, criminality, and drug trafficking, the SCO and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) inked agreements in the Tajik city of Dushanbe in October 2007 (Business Recorder, 2007). According to the SCO's plans to take particular action against cyber warfare, the agreement should be deemed a "security concern" and "injurious to the spiritual, moral, and cultural sectors" of other nations (Colton et al., 2010; Suyash, 2017).

Member States rely on a shared, long-term security vision to encourage coordination and cooperation among themselves, making it simpler to address contemporary concerns. The region's security, risks, and challenges will continue to be taken into consideration as Member States collaborate for a prompt and adequate response. SCO works to ensure security, ensure international information, prevent illegal immigration and human trafficking, fight economic crime and corruption, and prevent money laundering. Threats to the region's peace, security, and stability will be addressed through political and diplomatic measures, with a focus on enhancing the processes for a quick reaction. The adoption of the UN Scientific Counter-Terrorism Policy will have the full backing of the member countries of the SCO.

In order to address these three evils, member countries will step up their SCO RATS efforts. Additionally, member countries will continue to support the 2004 anti-drug strategy, psychotropic drugs, and drug trafficking. Measures including coordinated operations against drug traffickers, law enforcement personnel training, collaboration on reducing drug demand, financial, organizational, and technical support, research, training, and practical actions should be prioritized (Weidenfeld, 2017). One of the main SCO initiatives is to eradicate criminal activities. The SCO will encourage collaboration with the Eurasian Group and the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering to stop terrorist funding and money laundering.

The member countries will demand mutual collaboration while upholding the ideals of giving secure borders and unilateral military dominance in order to turn shared borders into borders of peace and goodwill. The group will take action to protect against threats to the political, economic, and social stability of its members' countries, and it will work to create a reliable cooperative system for information space security. Member governments will work to improve collaboration in the area of Internet management under the International Information Security Cooperation 2009 and other treaties to stop using the "three powers of evil" of the Internet for actions that threaten regional security and stability. In order to do this, they will make sure that information and communication technology (ICT) is used more effectively for counterterrorism efforts and that improved processes are in place to deal with cyber threats to the security of member countries. With the assistance of the UN, the organization will step up its efforts to put into practice the "Code

of Conduct in the Field of International Information Security" and collaborate with other members of the worldwide community on a universal international ICT code of conduct.

Trade and Economic Cooperation

In order to achieve the long-term stability of the organization and provide stability to the SCO area, economic cooperation is an essential tool. The living standards of the people are directly impacted by economic growth in the area, and there are obvious opportunities for improvement. The SCO will significantly contribute to the region's economic development, which is crucial for the member states. The vital of member countries goals include fostering an atmosphere that is more conducive to investment and business, assisting with corporate activities, and carrying out projects in key infrastructure development sectors (Zhihao, 2019).

It is impossible to dispute the SCO's accomplishments in the areas of commerce and economy. Trade among the organization's member countries grew to US\$255 billion in 2018, or an average of 17.2 percent. Year-on-year by the end of 2019, China had invested more than 87 billion USD in SCO membership alone, and more than 237.8 billion USD had been contracted for Chinese development projects overall, totaling close to 255 billion USD. Projects related to energy, minerals, and industrial productions have therefore grown significantly. In the meantime, new strategies for collaboration have evolved. The establishment of the Zone of Local Economic and Trade Cooperation has given the BRI and the SCO a new global platform for cooperation and shaped the option of developing two pathways, including ones for the local and foreign markets. Routes on land and the water will serve as bridges.

SCO members signed agreements to expand economic cooperation on September 23, 2003. The accords seek to create a free trade zone within the SCO and enhance regional trade (Husheng, 2004). On October 26, 2005, the SCO met in Moscow to discuss joint energy initiatives involving the oil and gas industry, joint resource utilization, and the discovery of new hydrocarbon reserves. The formation of the SCO Interbank Consortium, which will be used to finance future collaborative projects, was also approved at the summit. On February 21 and 22, 2006, Beijing hosted the SCO's Interbank Association's first conference (Oksuz, 2009).

Parvez Davoudi, the vice president of Iran, said in an intriguing speech at the 2007 SCO convention that the organization is an excellent location to establish a new banking system that will be totally independent from the global financial system. In an effort to boost the economies of SCO member countries, China loaned them US\$10 billion amid the global financial crisis during the Yekaterinburg summit on June 16, 2009. China and Russia said during this discussion that they would like to acquire a significant stake in the International Monetary Fund. Imran Khan, the prime minister of Pakistan, remarked during the Bishkek Conference in June 2019 that SCO countries should prefer to trade in their own currencies rather than the US dollar.

Cultural and Humanitarian Cooperation

The SCO cannot be excluded from collaborating in this matter, as it has in others. As a result, the member countries will work to foster an atmosphere that is favorable for increasing interactions between public organizations and individuals, as well as to strengthen collaboration and links in the areas of education, health, tourism, and culture. The organization's member countries will work to

strengthen bilateral and international ties between institutions of higher learning, science, and research. Therefore, the member countries will prioritize the execution of cooperative research initiatives and projects. The 2007 Culture Cooperation Agreement's clauses will be carried out. The member countries of the SCO will cooperate to research and protect natural and cultural heritage areas. As a result, steps will be taken to prevent theft, the unauthorized import and export of cultural property, and the restoration of works of art in locations associated with and related to the ancient Silk Road and to make registries for memorabilia and databases.

The 16th SCO Cultural Meeting took place in the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek. Along with culture ministers from member countries, SCO Secretary General Xi Zhaoong attended the event. They talked about implementing cultural cooperation between the SCO's member countries in the fields of culture, art, and mutual understanding. Thus, the member countries aimed to promote mutual respect and understanding, deepen cultural relations, guarantee the coexistence of various ethnic groups, and raise awareness of both contemporary and historic traditions among their respective populations (Zhihao, 2019).

There are several ethnic and multi religious societies in the SCO region. The member states work to maintain the long-standing history of inter-ethnic and inter-religious concord, as well as cooperation between various countries and religions. To improve understanding and discussion between various cultures, member states must secure the participation of observer countries and dialogue partners (Zhihao, 2019). One cannot overlook the SCO's collaboration in the health sector. Future health initiatives from the SCO will target maternal and child health, the prevention of chronic and contagious illnesses, the control of contagious diseases, the monitoring of epidemics, and more. Regarding natural beauty, the area provides a better representation of the SCO. Due to its stunning natural surroundings, the area attracts people from all over the world. These member countries receive millions of visitors from throughout the world each year. The member countries will seek to increase the flow of tourists from each other's countries and raise the standard of tourism-related services. Member countries will place a high priority on environmental conservation. Member states will work towards a draught concept of cooperation in this area as they continue to collaborate on environmental preservation and the prevention of the negative consequences of climate change (Zhihao, 2019).

SCO's Role in Global Governance

Plans call for strengthening the SCO's relationships with the UN and other organizations, its cooperation with member countries, and its focus on economic development concerns to ensure that the organization plays a greater role in global governance to promote the regional economy. A new security concept, including a security community and intense pressure on the "three evil forces," will be needed to ensure regional security and stability. This concept will need to address both symptoms and core causes. A wall to prevent "color revolution" infiltration and the adoption of comprehensive measures to strengthen member states' capacity to ensure the security of other member states' people and property on their territory are also planned (Hao, 2021).

To foster regional collaboration, the SCO should stick to win-win cooperation to achieve integrated growth. The establishment of a rule-based framework for regional cooperation and the transition from soft to hard limits on rules and regulations for cooperation will take place. Create a diverse

global financing and investment model; supervise the transition from government-driven project collaboration to market-driven project collaboration in order to strengthen the Belt and Road cooperation model; Utilize members' comparative advantages to promote the integration of Central and South Asia and boost teamwork in the area of the digital economy (Hao, 2021).

Mutual learning and inclusivity will be part of human connectedness. The SCO should speed up personnel exchanges and increase non-governmental exchanges; boost media and youth exchange to increase understanding and trust between countries; carry out collaboration in environmental protection, technology, and poverty reduction while boosting cultural and people-to-people relations. Strengthen educational cooperation and promote the SCO University.

Inter-State Harmony

The SCO's main goal is to bring its member states' political systems closer together. In this sense, the SCO offers a chance for constructive communication between the heads of the member countries. The SCO provides member countries with a forum to reach consensus on problems that aren't unattainable but are challenging to address. It would be appropriate, for instance, to discuss China and Russia in this context. Yale and Korea had fought World War II against each other, so the two thought it would be challenging to be united on a range of subjects. But in the modern world, these two opposed parties have been successful in eradicating regional partners thanks to the SCO's platform. Since the 1980s, relations between the two states have substantially improved; a striking illustration of this is the agreement the two countries made in 2004 through the SCO platform over a long-running border issue (Bei, 2007). The SCO platform has given the two states the opportunity to improve their trade ties with Central Asian countries. The two countries had essentially little trade with Central Asian states in 1991, but now they both have increased trade with the region. In 2017, China's trade volume was between \$35 and \$37 billion, compared to \$9.33.9 billion for Russia (Paramonov, et al., 2018).

India and Pakistan are yet another instance. In 2017, India and Pakistan were given the chance to join the SCO as full members. The SCO will serve as a crucial forum for the two parties to settle disputes. The two states will attempt to address their differences through bilateral discussions as part of the SCO framework. Due to domestic political agendas, the two countries accuse each other of aiding terrorism. The SCO will make an effort to stop it from expanding internationally. In summary, the SCO is a crucial forum for disagreements between members rather than a site for disputes. For the first time since their respective countries' independence, the armed forces of the two countries joined forces to participate in the SCO Peace Mission 2018 ("SCO Could Give Platform," 2018).

The member countries' foreign policies have gotten along better as a result of the SCO. The SCO's charter has a particular process for handling this. Member states have the right to pursue shared interests at the level of foreign policy, as stated in its charter. The Central Asian countries have taken their efforts to resolve disputes with one another more seriously thanks to the SCO platform. Annual gatherings of the ministers of the SCO members are held by the member countries. These ministers take part in the talks. The discussions have strengthened the member countries' political and economic stability while also boosted confidence in one direction. Border conflicts between

Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as well as between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, have been successfully addressed (Berdibaevich et al., 2015).

The SCO has helped the expanding political, economic, and security situation in the area. The SCO is valued more highly than any other organization by Central Asian countries. Although Central Asian states are among the landlocked countries that benefit from maritime routes from China and Russia, they also have rich energy sources. The primary winners are China and Russia, who stand to gain from their respective countries' oil and gas deposits. This leads to the conclusion that mutual understanding serves as the foundation for the collaboration between SCO members. These states must create and sustain connections at the political and security levels as a result of this mutuality.

Future Development

Deeper SCO collaboration is necessary because of the regional instability. Increasing variables of uncertainty and instability are a serious challenge for member countries given the fragility of both global and regional conditions. The reality of NATO's eastward expansion and the pervasive "three evil forces," among other things, converted the Shanghai Five into an SCO mechanism in the early years. Economic hardships and color revolutions compelled SCO members to band together. Now that the virus is spreading and enormous changes not seen in a century are speeding up, there are significant threats to the socioeconomic progress of SCO member countries at home. As a result, the SCO is motivated to advance self-reform, expand collaboration and exchanges, and broaden involvement in global governance. This increases awareness of a community with a common destiny (Hao, 2021). As a result, the SCO is going through a dramatic transformation as it moves from internal collaboration to both internal and external engagement, from security cooperation to all-around cooperation, and from regional cooperation to regional administration. The SCO must be strategically oriented, keep to a problem-oriented approach, pay attention to circumstances, and move ahead in order to address obstacles including balancing justice with efficiency, disparities in important countries' interests, and external pushback.

The SCO should go forward with the times by creating a new sort of international relations and a community with a common destiny for humanity, all the while enhancing the Shanghai Spirit and respecting the values of non-alignment, non-confrontation, and non-targeting any third party. The SCO's vision on security, prosperity, cooperation, culture, and global governance is widely acknowledged by its members as having fundamental values for the new era and will create a "SCO consciousness" (Hao, 2021).

A further objective of the SCO is to promote cohesiveness among its member states through dialogue, communication, and mutual trust while respecting member diversity, differences, and preferred development paths, as well as the equality of large and small countries. The SCO must improve member complementarity and strategic communication, continue to build confidence and dispel mistrust, and look for common ground while putting aside differences in favor of win-win outcomes. In the interim, the SCO should enhance the decision-making process, set up appropriate working and oversight procedures, promote institution construction, and implement mechanisms for conflict resolution, retribution, and withdrawal to increase cooperation effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study demonstrate how the SCO's notion of collaboration has continuously improved and grown over the last 20 years since the organization's founding in June 2001. Its collaboration mechanisms have continuously improved and increased, as have the sectors in which they may cooperate. It also faces challenges and development difficulties along the way, such as the intensification of the great power game in the region, the deterioration of the sense of community among its member states, and the alteration of cooperation patterns following expansion. This is in contrast to how it has grown over time and advanced its cooperation practices. The Shanghai spirit will direct its multilateral cooperation vision in terms of its potential. The SCO framework also offers significant assurance for upcoming international collaboration. The new type of international relations will significantly fuel the concept of multilateral collaboration. It is finally agreed that the SCO is perfectly capable of exercising greater influence and producing greater outcomes in the years to come.

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