

Chapter 2

Role Of SCO In Regional Politics

As every member of any alliance or union has its perception of joining the organization, hence it has been obvious with every member of the SCO as “The SCO covers one of the largest geographical areas of any regional organization, from Kaliningrad to Vladivostok and from the White Sea to the South China Sea. If its observer states are added, it reaches the Indian Ocean and the Middle East as well. Its members and observers collectively possess 17.5 percent of the world’s proven oil reserves, 47–50 percent of known natural gas reserves, and some 45 percent of the world’s population”. The above-mentioned natural resource-rich areas, connectivity, geostrategic importance shows the vitality and importance of the organization but there had suspicion and disagreement among the scholars regarding the real motive for the formation of SCO. As some suspected that it was formed as an Anti-NATO front after the collapse of the USSR and dismantling of the Warsaw pact. some consider, it just a “talking shop” which had nothing relevant output but a “paper tiger” which does not make any relevant sense in geopolitics. Initially from “shanghai five” to the formation of SCO in 2001, it was nothing but a forum to solve boundary disputes peacefully and build mutual trust among the nations but after the formation of SCO, the agenda and psyche of the organization got clearer and showed that it had much more vision and aim regarding their goals and destiny.

The formation of SCO in which it became 5+1 which is the inclusion of Uzbekistan as the new member which does not share a border with China had indicated the broader perspective of the founders and it was growing to a much larger extent. Cooperation on the dispute between China and Russia has shown that they have some serious policy and agenda in the establishment, which can be clearly understood from the declaration of its objectives, in which SCO members stated “they are strengthening mutual trust and good-neighbor friendship; Promoting effective cooperation between member countries in the fields of politics, economy and trade, science and technology, culture, education, energy,

communication, environment, and other areas; Jointly dedicating themselves to safeguarding and safeguarding regional peace, security and stability; And the establishment of a new international political and economic order of democracy, justice, and rationality". The above-mentioned objectives made other regional nations to join as it has something to offer to everyone. As everyone was facing several challenges in the initial stages of the 21st century, hence it was a great deal for the major and minor players in the region to get a favor out of it. The most important aspect of SCO was that the organization gave freedom to its members to manage its relations with other nations and respected the sovereignty of the member states by not intervening in the internal matters of the nation this had been described as the "shanghai spirit". This indicated that the main aim of the SCO is not to form a supranational structure rather forming a multilateral structure. This was the most demanding feature for the authoritarian regimes that had been under serious pressure from the western democratic countries in the region. The SCO also provided equal status to every nation irrespective of its power status or influence this may not be the reality but after all, it had been on paper that provided the moral basis to the organization.

The most surprising thing was the joining of two hostile nations, which is India, and Pakistan coming together and Iran that had been facing sanctions from the international community on its nuclear program became members in 2005. The Astana summit in 2005 changed opinion about the organization, where it explicitly criticized the airbases of NATO in the central Asian region and demanded a deadline for the withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan this gave a clear indication that the regional powers will not tolerate the intervention of western countries in regional affairs. The implementation of social and political development based on western values and interpretations was negated. The SCO also challenged the hegemony and monopoly of the USA in the same summit by warning it to refrain from intervention in any country's problems based on their assessment.

In other regions, the concept of multilateral organization can be understood through two cases one in which the organization is legitimate but in the other way it might be

legitimate but could be ineffective. The first case where the organization is legitimate suggest that the it has been doing some excellent performance but in later case it might not be doing good but it has not been harming the member states. Earlier it was considered as legitimate but ineffective but as the organization matured it has been doing some betterment to its member states.

Different Perspectives of Member States on SCO

2.1 China

After the end of the cold war, a new wave of regionalism erupted in the world and china realized the importance of regionalism in its development and was eager to grasp this opportunity to sustain and flourish in international politics as during the cold war most of the nations were in great pressure to support either bloc which was USA and USSR. China and Russia had not been in good relations and the only cause of it was the “threat from the west”. Deng Xiaoping had earlier evaluated that a new world war is not possible and it has no immediate conventional or traditional threats rather non-traditional threats were the chief concern for China due to instability and separatism in Xinjiang, Narcotics from Afghanistan, and ethnic conflicts in the region.

China also perceived that if the security vacuum that had been generated after the disintegration of the USSR could also lead to the conventional threats in the future if this scenario would not be nipped in the bud as china feared that as Russia loosed its control in the CAR this would ultimately result in the intervention of NATO in the region under the veil of development, democracy or human rights that can destabilize the CAR and would lead to the direct engagement with NATO.

Economic perspective:

The most demanding feature for china from the beginning of the 21st century was to “peaceful rise” in global politics without any coercion. The focus of china was to influence the neighboring countries financially rather than focusing on military dominance. China was very much clear in its approach regarding the CAR as it knew that interfering in the region would result in the conflict between Russia and China as Russia

would never tolerate any military alliance other than CSTO in the region where it has been the sole dominant in the organization and hence china tried to make friendly relations with its CA countries by providing loan on low-interest rates.

China was very much eager to get natural resources from CAR, which has been present in huge quantities in the region. At in beginning of the 21st century, china was the nation after the USA in energy resources consumption and the natural reserves of china were depleting very fast hence, it has to rely on other alternatives to sustain its development pace that could be fulfilled by SCO, as it can provide several possibilities for its energy security, trade, and commerce “In 1992 import and export trade between China and the five Central Asian countries totaled \$459.35 million. It increased to \$872.41 million in 1997 and over \$2.3 billion in 2002. The total volume of trade between China and the five Central Asian countries increased to over \$8.730 billion in 2005¹⁰. On the eve of the 2006 Shanghai Summit” Furthermore, China and Kazakhstan cooperate in energy. In December 2005, the Atasu-Alashankou oil pipeline between the two countries was opened. In due course, this Sino-Kazakh pipeline will be enlarged from 1,000 to 3,000 kilometers and will eventually provide China with some 15 percent of its crude oil needs. China was very much eager to get direct access to the western countries through its “new silk road” initiative, which would be cost-effective in transportation and time saving for china. This initiative has some social and political impacts also for the regional population to make a friendly environment for trade. As China tries to beguile the CAR by exaggerating about the “old silk rout” and telling the fairy tales of its prosperity. However, no one can deny this fact but the core suspicion by several thinkers that do it simply a means by china to exploit CAR or it has something to pay in return to CAR. Geopolitically in the 21st century, the CAR has become the most important area.

¹⁰ Yao, S. (2008). *Chinese Foreign Trade Performance and the China-US Trade, 1995-2004: A Graphical Analysis Based on China Customs Statistics*. US Internet Trade Commission, Office of Economics.

Security and Military Perspective:

Initially, the SCO, which was an annual meeting mechanism in its raw state known as “shanghai five”, was formed to solve the border disputes that had been the most crucial issue for china, as it doesn’t want a military threat from its northwestern front. The formation of “shanghai five” was based on a mechanism in solving border disputes and forming mutual trust on the borders as the northwestern province has been unstable hence china tried to stabilize the security on its north western province. The other perspective in CAR is to contain US in the region. The china also want to legitimize the suppression of Uyghur Muslims in the region and there are several other objectives which will be discussed in the next chapter however there has been no intention of china to form a military alliance through SCO due to mutual conflicts between the nations as practically it does feels feasible till now .

Political approach:

The most important element for any regime to survive is to maintain its legitimacy in a country. The legitimacy of a government can be tested because of whether it has been capable of maintaining the sovereignty and integrity of the country. The Chinese regime was well aware that if it would not be able to stabilize its northwestern province then it would meet the same fate as Russia. The core feature of SCO that highlights “separatism” had its deep root in its Xinjiang province where the most population comprises Uyghur Muslims and non-Han people who had been constantly demanding autonomy from Beijing. China was well aware of the fact that the withdrawal of USSR troops from Afghanistan and implementation of the Taliban regime which was an Islamic extremist group could encourage the Uyghur Muslims for independence hence china tried to collectively suppress the uprising of Uyghur Muslims by declaring east Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) a terrorist group through SCO. The Uyghur Muslims were getting aid and assistance from neighboring countries' areas. China also introduced the “shanghai spirit” in SCO whose focus was to non -intervention in the domestic affairs of a country. The main hidden agenda of the “shanghai spirit” can be perceived as the human rights

violation which had been done by communist regimes on Uyghur Muslims and the demand for democracy in the region could be curbed.

China was very much tensed regarding its “one China policy” approach however, it had not been seeing any threat in near future but it was well aware that in long term it could upset its aims and motives hence to legitimize and isolate Taiwan in world affairs by warning the SCO members to refrain from Taiwan issue. “China largely neutralized this risk shortly after the independence of the Central Asian states from the Soviet Union when the Chinese government itself established diplomatic relations with them.¹¹”

2.2 Russia:

Russia and China had started normalizing their relations after a decline in relation from 1960 to 1980 and started reviving their relationship under suspicion from 1985. Nevertheless, after the collapse of the USSR, both China and Russia were in dilemma to tackle the situation that had aroused in CAR. Though Russia never wanted that any other party should intervene and challenge its hegemony in CAR but paradoxically it was ready to cooperate with China rather seceding its local turf to NATO or the EU. Russia knew very well that if it would not come in the loop with china sooner or later it might lose its CAR dominance .as Russian think tank evaluated that china might not be able to challenge the Russian military might but it would be a potent threat economically and hence it tried to take advantage in stabilizing the CAR from china.

China was well aware that instability in the region would hamper its growth and could lead to a huge setback to its ‘peaceful rise’ approach. Hence, it agreed to cooperate with Russia in the region and solve the border disputes peacefully. Russia was not only focusing regionally but internationally through the prism of SCO where it was eyeing on

¹¹ Pan, G. (2007). China and energy security in Central Asia. *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, (6 (48)).

providing an alternative to the nation against the hegemony of the USA and demolition of unipolar world order. Russia was not in a state to challenge NATO after the dissolution of the Warsaw pact and hence it was focusing on maintaining its regional dominance and formation.

Political Perspective:

The political approach in SCO of Russia was much similar to china in domestic affairs regarding legitimacy. After the disintegration of the USSR, Russia was facing the threat in the North Caucasus, Ukraine, and several pro-democratic forces as china was facing the same in Xinjiang province. Russia had been severely criticized for its human rights violation in Chechnya and Hence, it was drawing support for its human rights violation by declaring it as its domestic affair from the international community. Russia was very clear that all the founding members of SCO were non-democratic and everyone wanted to suppress the domestic rebellion of democratic forces Hence, Russia tried to execute or repress the opposing forces who had taken shelter in the SCO member states.

Though Russia did not want the intervention of china in CAR, it knew that if it would not join SCO china might solely drive the organization and it might be isolated from western countries and other regional players. Russia's main concern was to solving regional issues and cooperation multilaterally and dominating the CAR through other organizations like CIS and CSTO.

Russia knew the intentions of the USA who had been constantly trying to isolate Russia by cutting it from other CAR states through its "greater central Asia policy" whose main aim was to ally with central Asian countries by sidelining Russia. The Russian leadership knew that if it wants dominance in the region it might not be able to tackle this issue and china was also concerned regarding this alliance and hence it might benefit mutually.

Russia also wanted to strengthen its relation with another UNSC member i.e. China which had a similar communist rule where other members were of anti-Russian stance and pro-democratic. The Russian regime also trusted the Chinese cooperation, as both the

countries were 'sovereign globalizers' where they were participating in globalization but on a selective basis. Russia cashed the opportunity by a founding member of SCO, as it had the advantage of selectively include the nation in the organization. As the SCO, charter clearly states that the inclusion of other members would be done unanimously. Russia also got an opportunity to frame the foreign policy of central Asian states as Russia's china synergy can put severe pressure on the states to make limited relations with western countries this could be evaluated in the events that showed. After the formation of SCO, the Russian thinkers genuinely undertook several initiatives to cash the opportunities present in the organization.

Military and Security Cooperation:

After the end of the cold war and the disintegration of the USSR in 1991, Russia tried to shift its policy from a bipolar world to a multipolar world so that it can challenge the hegemony of USA led alliance. However, no one can deny the fact that Russia was preparing for another Warsaw pact alike alliance but during the 1990s Russia had severely deteriorated economically and politically as well. Hence, Russia perceived that if it would be able to successfully retain its regional dominance it could challenge NATO in the coming future.

“Russia tries to create geopolitical pluralism, reflecting an emerging multipolarity that can be used in interregional interactions, including the SCO, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).¹²”

Russia feared that if NATO would be able to get a foothold in the region it would significantly impact the Russian interests in the region and NATO can install its puppets and could form an anti-Russian perspective in the region. Russia was well aware that it would not be able to counter the NATO alliance unilaterally and as it had seen its fate during the cold war; its earlier partners in the Warsaw pact had accepted the hegemony of NATO or were under great pressure to obviate from Anti-NATO alliance.

¹² ÜNALDILAR KOCAMAZ, S. (2019). The Rise of New Powers in World Politics: Russia, China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. *International Relations/Uluslararası İlişkiler*, 16(61).

In 'shanghai five' Russia was very interested in solving its border disputes so that it could use its military might in other parts of the region. Russia wanted to de-escalate border tension with its neighbors and make friendly relations with them. Russia wanted to maintain its dominance in the CAR without any conflict and the best possible way it saw was to give a fair share to its competitor in the region is China. Russia and China both were concerned with the approach of NATO toward CAR but no one wanted to degrade its relation with NATO. The reason for the issue was that no nation was in a state to contain counterbalance or challenge the NATO geopolitically.

After the 9/11 attack on the US and the military action of NATO in Afghanistan raised concerns for Russia and other SCO members as it might lead to conflict between Russia and NATO in the region in near future as earlier it had been described as "great central Asia partnership". Russia had been the biggest supplier of arms and ammunition to non-NATO countries and hence it tried to form an anti-NATO alliance by supplying arms and technology to China and central Asian states which could boost the arms industries of Russia through SCO and would help its allies to get technologically competitor to NATO in the military sphere. The SCO would also help in pressurizing central Asian states to maintain some distance from military tie-ups with western countries. Russia's analysis was that in a globalizing world the countries would focus on economic factors in their bilateral or multilateral ties rather than solely relying on military factors. Though Russia was having military ties with CAR through CSTO through the experience, it had evaluated that for national interest a nation would shift to any alliance. Russia was getting a

great deal through SCO where the lead role had been played by Russia and China which would help regional stability by controlling the regional partners to stake the region for lease or loan to western countries.

SCO declaration mentions the peaceful disposal of border disputes, which has been a boon for Russia as it, staves off the possibility of western countries' intervention in the region on military bases. The SCO also helped Russia to contain illegal drug trafficking

from Afghanistan by which thousands of people were killed every year and it would further help in curbing the funding of terrorism in CAR. After the NATO operation in Afghanistan, the NATO engagement with central Asian states increased rapidly. The military bases of NATO in central Asian states angered Russia. The military bases were signaling the interest and real motive of the USA which was to extract energy resources from CAR and sidelining Russia in the region from the energy group but Russia wanted to maintain its patent right on CAR. The USA also wanted to balance and challenge the monopoly of Russia in the military sphere as after the disintegration of USSR the Russia had some exclusive rights on military engagement in the region. The USA established its military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan on the grounds of tackling anti-terrorist activities in the region however the core reason which china and Russia perceived was that the USA want to create separate supply routes that do not include Russia.

Economic Perspective:

In economic aspects, the SCO has nothing much to offer to Russia as it has its substitute for the Eurasian economic union. Russia had not shown any promising approach towards the SCO in the economic sphere. The core reason was that if it would allow the economic policies formed through SCO, Russia would ultimately lose its dominance or monopoly of the region. The economic might of china had caused serious threats to the monopoly of Russia in the region, for instance, China had always proposed to form free trade zone in SCO However, Russia had always opposed this move while stating that the free trade agreement must be signed among equal economies. Since all of the member states are much behind China in the economic sphere which would result in the exploitation of weaker members. However, the hidden reason behind this approach was that Russia would lose the central Asian market due to the availability of cheap and modern products of china. Russia also wanted its monopoly in the gas and energy sector from which it imports gas and other minerals and then exports it to Europe and other countries. Since the formation of SCO China had invested heavily in the central Asian region to fulfill its energy needs. For example, “the second Euro–Asia land bridge running east-west from

China to Europe via Xinjiang will compete with the first Euro–Asia land bridge running on the trans-Siberian railway. The former is heavily promoted by China, the latter by Russia. Similarly, the development of the north-south route from Central Asia via Afghanistan to the Indian Ocean will compete with the corridor running from India, via Iran, the Caucasus, and up to Russia”. The above examples are a clear-cut indication of the growing influence of China in the region and Hence, Russia wanted to minimize the impact of this competition by not signing the FTA as it has other alternatives to freely trade with central Asian states.

2.3 Central Asian States:

After the formation of Central Asian states in the region, the new dynamics aroused strategically and globally for major players in the global arena. before the disintegration of the USSR, the region undisputedly belonged to Russia and it was the sole driver of the region no other country or alliance was in a state to challenge the monopoly of Russia but after the disintegration, the region became a battleground for regional and global powers for its natural resources, geopolitical and geostrategic importance.

On a global level, NATO and the EU wanted to curb the influence of Russia in the region. While Russia tried to maintain its dominance in the region by forming CSTO. The main aim of formation CSTO was to avoid and restrict the presence of NATO in the region however the central Asian states wanted a military alliance with Russia but they want to explore other alternatives for their development and hence, they opted for a ‘multi-vector policy’ of balancing. The central Asian states which were the members of SCO were either underdeveloped or developing the states were also fighting to save their autocratic regimes and to tackle the challenge of new demarcation of borderlines with china. the CA region was facing non-traditional threats such as drug trafficking, narcotics, Islamic extremism, and local insurgency. The most important reason for central Asian states was to tackle the Afghanistan issue which had deep roots in the central Asian region and more specifically in Fergana valley. During that period and till now no state has been able to tackle the insurgency or drug trafficking solely which had been visible to

them in the humiliating defeat of the USSR in Afghanistan hence all states wanted to tackle the regional problem collectively.

The other reason for joining SCO was that it had been providing membership on an equal basis, which had not been present in CSTO to central Asian states whereas they had been treated as junior partners. While the central Asian states observed that SCO would help to manage relations with China and Russia simultaneously and it does not prohibit them from managing their relations with the west. The SCO would also provide support of two great powers in tackling terrorist activities that were internal or cross-border to central Asian states. The organization also provided power infrastructure, which could help in the development of the central Asian region, all help in rapid development in its energy resource sector that could ultimately boost its economic development and provides access to different trade routes. All the central Asian states had some different opinions and perspectives in joining SCO. Broadly, the central Asian states had some common motives in joining SCO first and foremost was it would provide political legitimacy to the autocratic regimes which might be threatened by the west in the future. The other factor was it can counterbalance Uzbekistan's intention of dominating the region and the most important was it would provide economic assistance in the development of the region. Kazakhstan needed financial assistance; as after disintegration, there had been a contraction.

2.4 India:

The SCO has been the first of its kind organization for connecting the Eurasian region to south Asia and more specifically India. The organization has been of vital importance for India for its 'connect central Asia' policy. The SCO has of vital importance for India as it provides a platform for countering terrorism; India views "the SCO as an Asian body and not as a military bloc or a body to counter the West. It considers the SCO useful organization extremism and separatism, which have been the main concern for India and a dialogue platform for the regional countries to discuss economic and security issues. It is argued that this organization brings all the Central Asian countries and its neighbors on

the same platform where India can interact with all Central Asian countries at the same time”. Politically the SCO platform provides India to interact with other regional powers for stability and peace in the region irrespective of the fact that though Russia, China, and India shares platform in other regional organizations like BRICS on dealing with the regional issue the SCO has been a ‘platform of a different kind’. India never saw the SCO as a military block rather it views it as a platform for tackling regional issues and a political block. the SCO provides some exclusive features like it allows to maintain or balance its relations with the USA. it also gave a full guarantee of its sovereignty which states that the organization will never interfere in internal matters of the country.

The inclusion of India and Pakistan as full members in the organization has changed the dynamics of region and organization, earlier where china was unilaterally driving the organization. After the inclusion of India, India has provided some balance to the organization as India and Russia collectively working to balance the unilateralism of China. The other concern for India has been the fact that in the 21st century India needs a huge amount of energy for its development, which could be fulfilled by the central Asian region easily. The other concern for India’s stability is mainly dependent on Afghanistan stability, which could be provided or supplemented through the efforts of SCO hence the organization has been of very important for the Indian perspective

2.5 OSCE and SCO:

The OSCE and SCO the same circumstances during their inception as both were formed to de-escalate the tensions among nations. The formation of OSCE traces back to 1973 when the cold war was going and the world was divided into two groups one which had been led by the USA under NATO and the other led by USSR under the Warsaw pact. During the 1970’s the conference on security and co-operation in Europe to ease the relationship between NATO and Warsaw pact. The focus of the organization was the political and military stability of the region. There were other objectives too such as financial, environmental aspects, and respect for human rights. Similarly, The SCO was formed to maintain a balance between two regional powers and peaceful disposal of border disputes among member states. SCO played a crucial role in de-escalating tension

and confidence building between China and Russia. The initial focus of OSCE was to solve the disputes peacefully and respect the sovereignty of the nations. The similarity between SCO and OSCE could be traced back from their historical development from their raw state to the full-grown organization. The OSCE in its initial phase was just a conference and treaty signing platform and a consensus reached among the member states to respect the “Helsinki accord” which was signed among the states to respect the “Decalogue document” which enumerates ten objectives that should be considered while engagement among its member states. Initially, all the European countries except Albania and Andorra had joined the CSCE including the two antagonists USA and USSR joined. Geographically the conference constituted Europe, the central Asian region, and North America. The OSCE and SCO similarity in their formation and functioning as both organizations had been formed on political and military bases for the stability of their respective regions. Both emerged to stabilize their regions and comprehensive security. However, after maturing they started shifting their focus on other regional problems like environment, trade, energy security, connectivity, credit, and finance, etc. They also focus that the security of a state does not solely depend on its affairs, but it greatly depends on its regional security. It had been mentioned in their charters that regional stability would ultimately result in national security hence, both the organizations focus on co-operative security. the organizations also focus on conflict prevention and peaceful resolution of disputes. As SCO which was earlier “shanghai five” was formed for the peaceful resolution of border disputes and trust-building among its members. The two organizations had collectively stood against the arms race among nations. Both organizations also propose respect for human rights and fight against terrorism however the definition of several issues varies among organizations.

Difference:

Both organizations had some differences in their working as well as in their structure. The first notable reason for which SCO had been criticized by western thinkers is due to its non-democratic forms of government. The SCO has been majorly consisting of

autocratic regimes due to which it had been alleged that SCO was formed to save autocratic regimes from pro-democrats due to the above reason both the organizations deviate heavily from each other on human rights issues. As OSCE heavily criticizes the human rights violation, conversely SCO though it had mentioned it in its charter it had severely violated human rights. The suppression of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang province of China, the recent incidents in Hong Kong by China, the North Caucasus in Russia, the Andijan in Uzbekistan, Fergana valley in central Asia, and many other examples can be traced in the violation. The SCO members treat the human rights violation as the internal matter nation as all the authoritarian regimes use it as a weapon to suppress the voice of rebellion or protests against them. The SCO members except India had a very tight grip over freedom of the press. The abduction or murder of free journalists had been reported many times. The NGOs had been harassed and the human rights activists have been forced to leave the nation or contained to visit the affected areas. Several features of human rights have been missing in SCO as the use of social media sites like Facebook, freedom of speech, the rights of minorities have been severely crippled by autocratic regimes and intolerance against the opposition.

The two organizations have several variations among them in several aspects as OSCE treats its observers as genuine observers while in the case of SCO for example in case of Iran, India, Pakistan it treats its observers as small level partners who were not only observers but actively participated in organizational work however this had been said that the reason for this difference was strong bilateral ties of the observer states with the two major driving powers which are china and Russia. India shares a strong bond with Russia while Pakistan had been the close allies of China and Iran had a good bond with Russia and china or both.

Cooperation between OSCE and SCO:

SCO has had relationships with OSCE since its inception. The Ministerial Council's Decision to Counter Terrorism in 2001 called on the participating states and the Secretariat to expand dialogue with partners outside the OSCE area on the Bucharest Plan of Action to combat terrorism. "*SCO is invited to various OSCE activities, for example, to participate in the OSCE conference with regional and sub-regional organizations and initiatives to prevent and combat terrorism on 6 September 2002*¹³" (Shanghai Cooperation Organization). In the terrorist area, there have already been some general statements about the need for more cooperation. For example, in his speech to the Permanent Council of the OSCE on July 18, 2013, SCO Secretary-General Dmitry Magentsev announced the SCO's openness for cooperation in addressing regional threats such as terrorism and the illicit drug trade. (OSCE and SCO - Perspectives for Cooperation, Daniela Pissoiu, November 2015¹⁴). Both the organizations agreed on the issue of scrapping and banning the sources of financial assistance provided to the terrorist groups and cutting the arms supply chains of the terrorist groups. OSCE and SCO collectively focus on the radicalization propaganda initiated through the internet and sharing information on terrorism. The organizations also view the Afghanistan issue as not only a neighbor state issue but also a transnational issue that had been affecting the Eurasian region. The major concern about Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Syria is its foreign fighters who had been attacked by several nations. The foreign fighters have been the major issue for both the organization and they had agreed to extradition and prosecution of terrorists. Another major issue for the region is narcotics, which have been the chief source of financial assistance to the terrorist outfits and separatist forces, and both the

¹³ de Haas, M., & van der Putten, F. P. (2007). The Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Towards a full-grown security alliance.

¹⁴ Pissoiu, D. (2015). OSCE and the SCO--Perspectives for Cooperation. OIIP-Austrian Institute for International Affairs.

organizations have agreed to collectively cut the narcotics network in the region and sharing information.

2.6 NATO and SCO:

Before evaluating the role of NATO and SCO in CAR, we have to analyze the formation of NATO as the formation of SCO has been elaborated earlier. The concept of the formation of NATO had its roots in the events that happened just after World War II. After WWII the allied powers took control of Germany and it was divided into four zones among the US, Soviet Union, France, and Great Britain. In the Potsdam conference, it was agreed that Germany would be ruled uniformly through all the four zones. The main reason for it was to revive the German economy since it would be beneficial for the whole world and more specifically Europe. The Potsdam agreement got breached in 1947 and the possibility of unification of Germany got to an end. Due to increasing tension, Russia blocked the routes to West Germany which had been collectively ruled by the US, France, and Britain. However, the US continued its supplies to West Germany through airlift. The blockade had brought the US and the Soviet Union to the brink of war. However, in the due course of time, several other events had been taking place in international politics which had been creating a serious threat to the US interests. The Soviet Union had started showing its intention of expanding its influence in the world. The elections of Czechoslovakia where the influence and intervention of soviet led to the formation of government of communist regime, which had been in the backyard of Germany. The increased voting share of communist party of Italy also raised concerns for the NATO allies. Furthermore, events in Germany also caused concern. (North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 1949, Office of the Historian, Foreign Service Institute United States Department of State). In addition, Europe had become economically weak and militarily exhausted after the Second World War. The US perceived that economically strong and militarily mighty Europe would lead to the collective security of the region and would help in the prevention of expansion of the Soviet Union or communism in the region. In this move, the US proposed the ‘marshal plan’ in 1948 for

the recovery of Europe. The US feared that the west European states might make a deal with the Soviet Union due to their security concerns. To tackle this crisis the Truman agreed to ally with the European-American alliance to tackle this situation. In 1948, the 'Brussels treaty' was signed between Great Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. This clearly stated that war against one member would be considered a war against all. However, the US Congress had not passed the resolution yet but it got its assent to the resolution, which had been presented by Senator Arthur H. Vandenburg in May 1948. The process of joining the alliance started.

Difference:

While comparing the inception of NATO with SCO we find that since NATO had been formed to challenge the traditional threats while the focus of SCO was to fight against non-traditional as well as traditional threats. In the formation of NATO, we found that it had been an alliance against a defined enemy while the SCO had no such targeted enemy in its formation. The formation of NATO demanded some special rights from respective states like providing military assistance and unified military command to fight against the threats while SCO has not yet established any such command. The maturity of NATO could be evaluated by its intervention and operations in different countries and regions like in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Africa, etc. while SCO had no such intervention in any countries. There had been very serious variation in the approach of the member states in dealing with both the organizations. As NATO, countries took a collective and undivided stance on most of the matters inversely the stand of SCO countries in most of the matters do not stand collectively. The SCO does not prohibit any nation from forming an alliance or agreement with other organizations or nations while NATO had clearly stated in its charter that no state would be allowed to join Warsaw Pact. The SCO also declared in its charter that it would respect the sovereignty of the member states however in the case of NATO it had been seen that the sovereignty of the nations had been compromised to a certain level. The other feature of NATO had been that the organization plays a key role in the framing of the foreign policy of the member states while in the case of SCO the

member states are completely independent to take their decisions. Initially, there had been a weak and incoherent alliance in west Germany in the military sphere.

2.7 Regional Challenges and SCO

Fergana valley and role of SCO:

The Fergana valley had been a geographical area that has been a depression in Tien Shan Mountain in the north and Alay Mountains in the south. As all the river systems had been the cradle of civilizations in the same way, the river *Syr Dayra* led to the development of the central Asian region. The region played a significant role in the development of the great silk route where the people of the region sold horses, perfumes, glasses, etc. to Chinese people and in return bought silk from the Chinese. The Fergana people sold this silk to Arabian, Assyrian or Jewish traders. Hence, it played a great role in connectivity between the empires. It had been of great importance that due to their trade the Sogdian language became the common language of traders in international trade. The region flourished during that time.

The region saw several invasions from different empires in history initially from alexander the great, Kushan rulers from India. During Kushan rule, the Persian people of the region ruled the region however due to the migration of the Turkish people the region led to a demographic change in the region. in the 8th century the region came under the rule of Arabs which led to the introduction of Islam in the region. The death of the Samanid who was a Persian descent ruler led to the end of Persian rule in the valley. Conquering the Fergana valley, the Kara-Khanid established the Turkic descent dominance in the region. They ruled the region from the 9th century to the middle of the 13th century but after the invasion of Genghis Khan who destroyed most of the cities of Fergana and the central Asian region in the 1230s. However, the rule did not last for too long as after his demise the empire was fragmented and one of his sons ruled the region

until the 1370s after which Timur lane ruled the region from 1371. From 1371 to the 16th century, the descendants of Timberlane ruled the region. In the 16th century, the local ruler of the region Shaibani Khan threw out Babur from the region who was one of the descendants of Timur. In 1709, the independent Uzbek state was established which had its capital in Kokand. It is comprised of the complete Fergana valley, eastern Uzbekistan, northern Tajikistan, and southern Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. However, the Uzbeks conquered Tashkent, which made an easy pass way for the Russian invasion of central Asia. The tsarist empire in 1876 after which a new political order was established conquered the region.

Reasons for the Fergana Valley Issue:

The Bolshevik revolution changed the history of the region as the war broke out between the tsarist empire and the opponents. The Bolshevik faced strong resistance from the *Basmachi* Movement, which was born in Fergana Valley and spread rapidly to other parts of former Turkestan. The *Basmachi*'s were Muslim guerrillas who resisted the Bolshevik onslaughts in the early 1920s¹⁵. However, they were defeated by the red army. The Tsar. Lenin established the People's Commissariat of Nationalities, with Stalin as the Commissar, which commenced the creation of a federation based on 'Nationality-based Territorial Statehood'. It led to the emergence of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1922¹⁶. The Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) was created in 1924 within the Uzbek SSR. It was given the status of Tajik SSR only in 1929. The Kazakh and the Kyrgyz ASSRs within the Russian Federal Republic were given the status of full republics, and thus became Kazakh SSR and the Kyrgyz SSR in 1936.

The reason for dividing the region with overlapping ethnic identities was to curb the potent threat which the Russians had faced during the Fergana valley resistance in the

¹⁵ Whiting, L. (2017). Tajikistan: A Crumbling Peace?

¹⁶ Pathak, K. K. ENERGY RESOURCES IN KAZAKHSTAN. *CENTRAL EURASIAN JOURNAL*, 145.

Bolshevik revolution. The Russian perceived that if the region would not be divided on a nationalistic basis in the future it would lead to collective rebellion against Russia on a common religious (Islamic) basis and Turkic descent. The region faced several changes from the 1920s to 1991. During the Soviet Union times, the economic activities in the region took place and the people from the different regions started settling in the valley. Since the borders of autonomous regions were porous which led to the migration of people from one region to another? The migration of people also led to demographic change in the region. Several channels and trade routes were formed in the region. The communication and transport ran from one region to another and hence this led to the misconception of borderlines among the states, which became independent in 1991.

After the disintegration of the USSR in 1991, the region was divided into three nations, which were Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. After disintegration, the valley was not only divided on a political basis but also got fragmented on an ethnic and religious basis, which became a big concern for all three countries. It also affected the relations among all the concerned nations of the region. Afghanistan came under the rule of Mujahideen in the 1990s, which motivated the central Asian rebels against the government and rule under sharia.

Xinjiang Province Problem;

The region had been the homeland of Uyghur Muslims before the formation of the PRC. However, it had come under the rule of several empires in the past. However, they got short-lived autonomy in 1933 and from 1944-49. After the formation of the PRC irrespective of the communist government, it took a soft stance against the Uyghur Muslims. they also promised to provide autonomy to the region but the promise has been broken which led to the outrage in the region and demand for separate homeland has been raised which resulted into several separatist or terrorist attacks on china by the separatist groups. The problem has its ties with other regional terrorist groups. Hence it has been the chief problem for the whole region .

2.9 Role of SCO in Regional Security against ‘Three Evils’

The SCO has been an intergovernmental international organization that had been formed to counter the three evils, which had been the main concern for all the member states. The main problems, which were addressed during the formation of SCO, were extremism, terrorism, and separatism. Since all the three activities were somehow interlinked with each other in the region all, the members tried to secure the region from all these ‘three evils. All the actions took by any terrorist outfit were interlinked to each other. For example, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which has been an extremist, as well as a terrorist outfit, has its links with the Taliban. While the separatist movement in Xinjiang EITM (which has been declared a terrorist group) has its connection with several terrorist groups. All these problems had been interlinked with each other as all the separatist forces and extremist forces use violent means to protest or rebel. Hence, the major problem, which aroused in the region, was terrorism. All the groups whether it is terrorist or extremist have come into an alliance to achieve their goals.

Framework for Fighting ‘Three Evils’

In the charter of SCO in 2001, the members explicitly mentioned that “joint combating terrorism, separatism and extremism in all their manifestations, fighting against illicit narcotics and arms trafficking and other types of transnational criminal activity, and illegal migration” under article 1. The SCO declaration clearly stated the seriousness of the problem in which they had faced several attacks from the regional terrorist groups. Several treaties had been signed in the SCO to counter terrorist activities, which are

- *The Concept of Cooperation Between the SCO Member States on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism, June 5, 2005*

- *Treaty on Long-Term Good-Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation Between the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, August 16, 2007*
- *The Convention Against Terrorism of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, June 16, 2009, made the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism more concrete*
- *Program of Cooperation among the SCO Member States in Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism 2010–2012, June 16, 2009*
- *Agreement on the Training of Personnel for Antiterrorist Units of SCO, The Member States, June 16, 2009*
- *Program of Cooperation among the SCO Member States in Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism 2013–2015, June 8, 2012*
- *Statement of the Council of Heads of State on International Information Security, June 15, 2006*

(The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Counter-Terrorism Cooperation, Zhao Xiaodong, © Institute for Security and Development Policy, 2012).

2.7 Regional Anti-terrorist Structure:

The SCO was the first regional organization that exclusively formed a unit to counter-terrorism. In this direction under article 10 of the SCO declaration, it was explicitly mentioned that the RATS will be a permanent body of the organization to fight against terrorism, separatism, and extremism whose headquarter will be in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. However, it also stated that a separate international treaty signed by member states would govern the functioning and financing of the organization. There have been several tasks that had been allotted to the RATS to counter-terrorism activities. The RATS has been formed to maintain relations with the member states other anti-terrorist unit and other

international organizations, which have been fighting against the same. The RATS has been functioning in providing training and assistance in countering the “three evils” to other organizations. It has been also working in sharing information with other organizations about the terrorist movements in the region. The RATS have several other tasks like searching, apprehending, and transferring persons with suspicion or charged with terrorism activities. The RATS have been working in the execution of operational search action on the demand of member states.

The RATS have conducted several military exercises under the SCO framework which includes

- *Peace Mission-2005: counter-terrorism exercise in Vladivostok, Russia, and Shandong, China, August 18–25, 2005*
- *Tian-shan-1-2006: an anti-terror exercise in Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan, and Yining in Xinjiang, China, August 24–26, 2006*
- *Volgograd Anti-terror-2008: an exercise in Volgograd, Russia, August 14–September 4, 2008, in Norak, Tajikistan, April 17–19, 2009*
- *Peace Mission-2009: anti-terror military drill in Khabarovsk, Russia and Tainan, China, July 22–26, 2009*
- *Peace Mission-2010: anti-terror military drill in Zhambyl, Kazakhstan, September 9–25, 2010*
- *Tianshan-2-2011: joint counter-terrorism exercise in Kashgar, Xinjiang, China, May 5–8, 2011*
- *Peace Mission-2012: anti-terror military drill in Tajikistan, June 8–14,*

(The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Counter-Terrorism Cooperation, Zhao Xiaodong, © Institute for Security and Development Policy, 2012).

The RATS have been playing a significant role in countering the illegal narcotic supply chain, which has been the chief source of finance for terrorists, separatists, and extremist groups. It has been effectively implementing the treaties and agreements signed between the states. The assistance provided by RATS in countering terrorism has been praised by all the members of SCO. However, some suggested a separate military setup for SCO for tackling the terrorist activities in the region. While RATS became useless, when the terrorism has been stating sponsored as it cannot intervene in the terrorism-sponsoring country due to the SCO charter declaration.