

SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (SCO) “AN EMERGING POWER BLOCK”

¹DR. MUHAMMAD SHAUKAT HAYAT KHAN, ²PROF. DR. MATLOOB AHMAD, ³KALSOOM AKHTAR, ⁴MUQADSA JABEEN, ⁵DR. UZMA BEGUM ⁶DR. NELOFAR IKRAM

¹Ex. Campus Director

The University of Faisalabad
Khanbishkek1512@gmail..com

²Dean faculty of Arts & Social Sciences

The University of Faisalabad

(Corresponding Author)

dr.matloobahmad906@gmail.com

³Lecturer Islamic Studies

The University of Faisalabad

⁴MS Computer Science Scholar

The University of Faisalabad

muqadsajabeen62@gmail.com

⁵Associate Professor of Govt. Postgraduate Girls College khrick Rawalakot

Azad Kashmir, Pakistan

⁶Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Women University Mardan

Abstract

After the Cold war, a uni-polar world order emerged, response was obvious by China, Russia and its neighboring states to counter geopolitical situation This article attempts to make the case for the empowerment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as such a pole to counter the western dominated geopolitics of the world in general and Asia in particular. The creation and persistence of a bloc such as the SCO is vital for the peace and stability of the world for at least the next 100 years. With turmoil brewing in the Middle East, tensions mounting between Russia and NATO on the issue of Crimea, and naval dominance being asserted in the South China Sea.

Key words: Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) “An Emerging Power Block”, Uni-polar world order, Joint Force, Communication network and making it a viable organization

INTRODUCTION

The geopolitical status quo of the 21st century is witnessing a growing shift as a result of the rise of Economic and Military powers like China and India which are challenging the existing dimensions of power, i.e. USA, Russia, European Union etc. The ever changing geopolitical scenario necessitates the creation of alternative poles of power to which the smaller countries of the world can look for leadership and security. This article attempts to make the case for the empowerment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as such a pole to counter the western dominated geopolitics of the world in general and Asia in particular. The creation and persistence of a bloc such as the SCO is vital for the peace and stability of the world for at least the next 100 years. With turmoil brewing in the Middle East, tensions mounting between Russia and NATO on the issue of Crimea, and naval dominance being asserted in the South China Sea, it is clear that the time has never been better for comprehensive and sustainable Asian unity. The best solution is a banner under which Asian countries can coordinate, communicate and be mutually-interdependent. The article ends with certain policy recommendations for the creation of a militarily strong and economically viable SCO.

Rise of the SCO amidst a disintegrating Unipolar World Order

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the world saw the USA as a singular power dominating and engineering a new world order. In the beginning it seemed as if the US had decisively taken the reins of power in the world, but soon it became clear that there were many challenges that were ready to block its path to glory. The emergence of China and India as economic powers is testament



to this fact. So the US felt it necessary to rebalance its position in view of the long term impacts a multi-polar world might have. This perception was further justified as a result of the multilateral action during the Gulf War and later on by the US led invasion of Afghanistan in 2003 after the September 11 incident. From there the US sought to change the dynamics of the Middle East in order to safeguard its interests and secure its allies in the region.

The invasion of Iraq and the ousting of Saddam Hussain saw immediate backlash in the form of terror attacks and the proliferation of private armies such as ISIS(1). The US and its allies had no solid proofs on which it based its invasion of the country, but the invasion ultimately paved the way for the destabilization of Iraq and the region. The Arab Spring brought about renewed instability to the Middle East. Subsequent change of regime in Egypt, followed by Libya, and later on the anarchy in Syria resulted in massive economic damage to the US. The involvement of ISIS in Syria and subsequent proxy war of Iran and Saudi Arabia (2) wreaked havoc in the region and ultimately lead to military intervention by Russia in order to protect the government of its ally in Damascus (3).

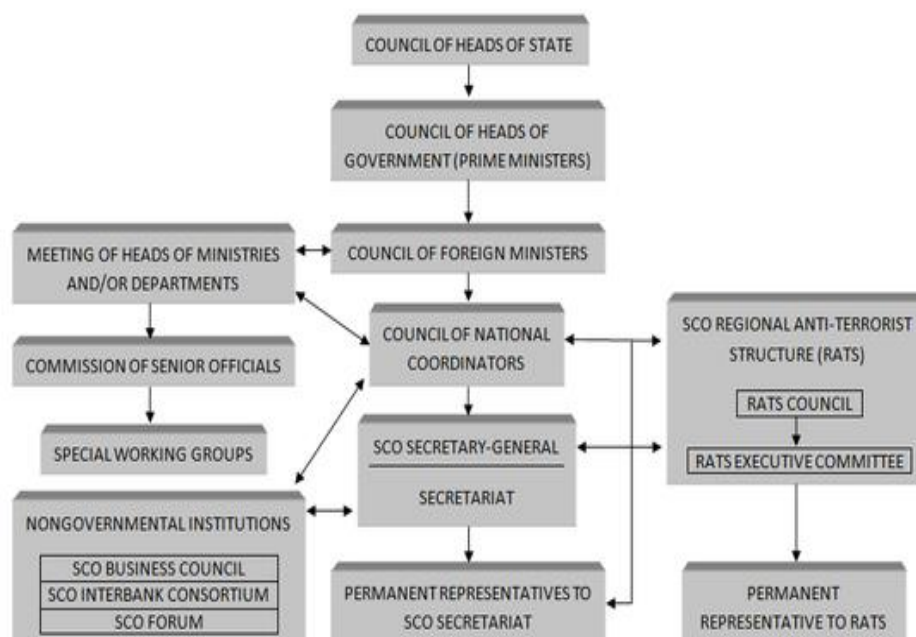
In the South China Sea, the traditional and historic rivalry between China and Japan is being rekindled thanks to the meddling of the US (4). The countries bordering the South China Sea are American allies and are being militarily strengthened by the US in order to counter China's assertion of supremacy in the region. This has led to deliberate provocations along the disputed islands and sea fares and is leading to a massive naval buildup in the region. The signing of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) which excludes the biggest economic powerhouse in the region, i.e. China, is further indication of the US policy of trying to encircle China (5).

The lack of a counter balancing power is believed to be responsible for the chaos that grips Asia at the moment. While Russia is still reorganizing after its economic stagnation, and China on its own was only a nascent power, the US has taken full advantage of the opportunity and has consistently changed unwanted regimes with the help of its intelligence agencies and placed the people of their own choice in these countries to control the world economy and resources. Some might argue that the United Nations (UN) is a counterbalance which is available, but reality suggests that the UN is a counterbalance only on paper. The UN is controlled by the permanent 5 members who possess Veto power, and they regularly engage in feuds among themselves, rather than work together. So it is already crippled from within (6).

In this scenario, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (7), commonly known as the SCO, is an emerging forum which can become a viable counter-balancing bloc of power in order to check the USA and the west. SCO was established on the 26 April 1996, initially with a group of 5 nations i.e. Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In 2001, Uzbekistan was granted membership as well. Recently, two ideological rivals, India and Pakistan have also started the membership process, and shall be granted full membership in 2017 (8). The SCO also has Observer status members, which include Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, and Mongolia. A few countries are designated with Dialogue Partner status, i.e. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Turkey. The SCO has branched out and created a forum called Guest dialogue members, which include countries and regional blocs such as ASEAN, the CIS members and Turkmenistan. There are few countries who have applied for Observer membership including Egypt, Syria, Israel, Maldives, Ukraine and Bangladesh. Organizational Structure of SCO

The organization structure of SCO is as under (9):

THE STRUCTURE OF THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION



SCO Cooperation in various fields

Initially all members had agreed to cooperate in countering extremism and sectarianism which is rampant in Asia. The regional anti-terrorism structure (RATS) was established in 2006 for this very purpose. In 2009, the SCO signed a treaty on collective security to deal with border security, crime, drugs and cyber warfare (10).

SCO also took the initiative to enhance cooperation in the fields of military exercises, intelligence sharing and counter terrorism. There have been a few comprehensive military exercises, extensive war games as a part of the SCO charter in 2003, 2007 and 2009. The heads of powerful states like Russia and China observed military exercises and appreciated the initiative. This dimension added to the regional cohesion and mutual security of the region (11).

One of the key objectives of the SCO is to cooperate in the field of business and trade i.e. establishment of free trade zones (12). The levels of cooperation have been expanded by the decision to establish joint energy projects of oil production and gas extraction, creation of new hydro power projects, joint use of water resources, establishing inter-banking systems, investment in green energy i.e. Solar, Wind, Bio fuels etc. and the establishment of a joint Cyber Warfare Command.

The initiation of the Chinese 21st Century Silk Road has given a boost to these proposals and China is looking to create a viable energy corridor which can benefit the entire region (13). China has pumped 10 Billion US\$ into the SCO for making it more viable and helping in utilizing its resources for the protection of their investment (14).

SCO is also pursuing its goals in cultural cooperation. Various meetings have been held in major cities like Beijing, Tashkent and Astana to improve cultural relations among its member countries (15).

International Power Projection of the SCO

A major facet of the military strength of the SCO is its ability to challenge the dominance of NATO (16). The western media has been rightly propagating that the SCO is a counter balance against NATO. Currently, the SCO includes two permanent members of the United Nations Security Council i.e. Russia and China, and those two countries also happen to possess two of the largest militaries in the world. With the inclusion of India and Pakistan, the balance of military power will dramatically shift in the favor of the SCO (17).

Policy Suggestions to make SCO more viable

There are a variety of avenues which the SCO can engage in order to expand its influence on a global scale. A few have been listed below as policy suggestions:



Establishing a Joint Forces Command (JSCOF)

The first thing the SCO countries should do is to sign a no war agreement with each other and resolve their disputes / differences at SCO level. This may sound unrealistic, but it has been a proven fact that countries which are mutually-interdependent are less likely to go to war with one another. In fact, if such an agreement is reached, it may end historic rivalries such as those between India & Pakistan and North and South Korea. The mutual inter-dependence will guarantee a multipolar world order (18).

The Joint Forces Command should be tasked with the security of the entire SCO region, with each country designating and contributing one composite Brigade level force. The Joint Headquarters can be named as JSCOF (Joint Shanghai Countries Organization Forces) and it can be based at Kyrgyzstan which is almost centrally located.

Brigade Composite Forces should include:

- 2 x Special Operations Platoons
- 1 x Armored Regiment
- 2x Mechanized Infantry
- 1x Air Defense Missile Regiment
- 1 x Engineering Company
- 1 x Signal Company
- 1 x Aviation Regiment
- 1 x SP Artillery Regiment
- 1 x Ordinance Company
- 1 x Medical Company
- 1 x Supply and Transport Company
- 1 x Military Police Platoon
- 1 x Cyber Warfare Platoon

Each country can also give 1 x squadron of Air Force consisting of Jet Fighters, and 1 x Squadron of Bombers. Its HQ can be based at Pakistan; Total 13 Squadron force will be available.

Each country having Naval forces should contribute a naval fleet; including Submarine, Corvette and Attack Frigate vessels. The Naval forces HQ can be based at either China or India. 6-7 fleet naval force will be ready to take part in any operation.

There will total 13 brigades' size forces, which is equivalent to 4 x divisions of Forces or 2 x Corps size or equal to 1 x army size force. China and Russia should contribute 3 brigades' size forces, owing to the size of their militaries. This force should also be incorporated with Medium and long range Nuclear Missile forces with high power radars and long range drones. The Command of forces be changed after 3 years of command from each member country.


Establishing Road / Rail / Air Communication network

All the member countries should lay down or improve existing road / rail / air networks in order to ensure cross country mobility. One major route from China to the Gwadar Port in Pakistan is already under construction, which is financed by China and is designated as the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Similar road networks can be developed or upgraded from China to Kyrgyzstan, from Tajikistan to Afghanistan to later linked to the CPEC route in Pakistan.

Another road network from Russia to Uzbekistan to Turkmenistan and Iran should be constructed. All roads should also be parallel linked.

Establishment of a Joint Reserve Bank and Currency

1. A single currency should be introduced in this bloc in order to remove the hegemony of dollar in this region.
2. Free trade zones should be established in this bloc with very lenient yet effective visa restrictions.
3. Joint power / oil / gas projects should be initiated in order to cater to the energy needs of SCO countries. Later on, if viable and necessary, extra power / oil / gas can be sold to other countries like those in Europe.

- 
4. A joint control system over water resources to be introduced and made use of by SCO bloc countries.
 5. The countries that have poor economic structures be helped to come at par with developed countries like China and Russia.
 6. More attention to be paid towards Counter Terrorism, rooting out corruption and hampering smuggling.
 7. IT parks, educational institutes and cultural exchange programs should be equally shared with SCO bloc countries.

CONCLUSION

It is indeed the need of time to make SCO as a strong viable organization which can challenge the hegemony of the US and the unipolar world order. It will not only stabilize the balance of power in the world, but will further reduce the uncertainty in sovereign countries and will also reduce bloodshed in the name of terrorism. It will also play a major role in creating harmony between states of the region.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1] *Iraq invasion was the cause of ISIS.* (n.d.). Retrieved July 21, 2016, from <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/iraq-war-invasion-caused-isis-islamic-state-daesh-saysus-military-adviser-david-kilcullen-a6912236.html>
- [2] *Iran and Saudi Arabia: Divisions, proxy wars and chaos in the Middle East.* (2016). Retrieved July 21, 2016, from <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/rearvision/iran-saudi-arabia-sectarian-divisions-proxy-wars-chaos/7152358>
- [3] *The Real Reason Russia Is 'Helping' Syria.* (n.d.). Retrieved July 21, 2016, from <http://time.com/4054941/putin-russia-syria/>
- [4] *China and Japan's Simmering Rivalry.* (2015). Retrieved July 21, 2016, from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2006-03-01/china-and-japans-simmering-rivalry>
- [5] *What Will the TPP Mean for China?* (n.d.). Retrieved July 21, 2016, from <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/10/07/china-tpp-trans-pacific-partnership-obama-us-trade-xi/>
- [6] Ross, C. (2016). *The UN is failing. Is it heading the way of the League of Nations?* | Carne Ross. Retrieved July 21, 2016, from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/mar/10/un-failing-league-of-nations-isis-boko-haram>
- [7] "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization". Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Retrieved 2016-07-20.
- [8] "India, Pakistan edge closer to joining SCO security bloc". *The Express Tribune*. 2016-06-24. Retrieved 2016-07-20.
- [9] File: Structure of the SCO.png. (n.d.). Retrieved July 21, 2016, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shanghai_Cooperation_Organisation#/media/File:Structure_of_the_SCO.png
- [10] "Information on Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation". Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Archived from the original on 11 December 2008.
- [11] Blagov, Sergei (31 October 2005). "Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Eyes Economic, Security Cooperation". *Eurasia Daily Monitor* (The Jamestown Foundation). Archived from the original on 1 November 2007.
- [12] Kyodo News (23 September 2003). "LEAD: Central Asian powers agree to pursue free-trade zone.". Beijing: Kyodo News International, Inc. Retrieved 20 July 2016.
- [13] "Russia's Foreign Ministry develops concept of SCO Energy Club". *Kazakhstan Today*(Almaty, Kazakhstan: Gazeta.kz Internet Agency). 1 December 2006.
- [14] <http://cwp.princeton.edu/news/one-belt-one-road-project-and-chinas-foreign-relations>
- [15] Gill. "Shanghai Five: An Attempt to Counter U.S. Influence in Asia?". *Brookings*. Retrieved 20 July 2016.
- [16] Mirza, Maheen. "Shanghai Corporation Organisation (SCO): A New Platform". *TRCB*(The Red Carpet Broadcast). Archived from the original on 5 February 2010. Retrieved 20 July 2016.
- [17] "Security alliances led by Russia, China link up". *Daily Times*. 6 October 2007.
- [18] Rozoff, Rick (2009). *The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Prospects For A Multipolar World*. Canada: Center for Global Research.