



Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Its Implications for the United States

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Abstract:

The United States wanted to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in order to maintain a strong influence in the region, but it was rejected. As a regional player, the organization poses a threat to US interests and dominance in the region. Since there is no direct confrontation between the US and the SCO, the two are still working against each other to denigrate each other. The objectives of the current study are to explore and investigate the US-SCO areas of convergence and divergence. Further analysis and examination of how the SCO may affect the United States is also part of the existing study. This study uses historical, descriptive, and analytical approaches. The current research is qualitative in nature, and the data has been collected from secondary sources. These sources include authentic research papers, annual reports, books, research articles, newspaper articles, and historical records that address various aspects of the study. According to the findings of this study, the organization quickly developed a "global strategic group" that has raised concerns about US influence and interests not just in Central Asia but also in the Middle East and East Asia.

Keywords: United States, Russia, China, Shanghai Cooperation Council, terrorism, summits.

INTRODUCTION

At the external level, the SCO's ties to the West, particularly those with the United States, are valued. At first, the US unnoticed him, and communication between the two was poor. However, in 2005, everything changed drastically, and the US started to modify its contentious stance on the SCO. As it came to appreciate the SCO, the US modified its policy and tried to create collaboration with the SCO in a number of Central Asian domains. The SCO member countries have different opinions about the partnership and collaboration between the two, but they look for win-win outcomes. Because they perceive the US's proximity to them as less of a danger, while some members are dissatisfied with the SCO-US relationship. The foundation of their future interactions will be circumspection, slowness, restriction, mutual collaboration, and compromise. On one hand, the SCO is expanding its regional dominance; while on the other hand, the US seems to be increasing its influence in the region.

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The US came to the conclusion that Afghanistan required SCO help to achieve long-term peace and stability. The SCO summit on Afghanistan in Moscow is a chance for the US to turn shared objectives into complementary strategies, according to Evan Feigenbaum, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs. To enhance the security situation in Afghanistan and the "anti-drug security belt" constructed by the SCO encircling Afghanistan, the US aims to employ logistical infrastructure and routes in SCO member countries.

Despite this, the West, particularly the United States, has a negative attitude towards the SCO. Others refer to it as an "anti-US" or "anti-Western" group while some western experts think it is a security outfit. Some analysts claim that China and Russia are hindering US objectives in Central Asia through SCO platform.

Since the US membership application was turned down at the 2005 conference, the US has started to pay attention to this new organization, which it had previously paid little to no attention to. The US was pushed to remove its military installations from the area during the same meeting, and as a result, Kyrgyzstan asked that the US withdraw its Manas Air Base. On the other side, Uzbekistan wanted additional payments from the US for its military installations there. The US has strongly condemned the action, claiming that it directly contradicts counterterrorism efforts in Afghanistan. Although the SCO was founded to challenge US influence in the area and cope with US-sponsored developments for its dominance in the region, it is not by nature an anti-Western organization.

Because the US is threatened by the coalition of China, Russia, and Iran, this triangle might at any point damage the US' position in the Middle East, Central Asia, and East Asia. As a result, the US is worried about how Iran's participation would affect its economy. Another US viewpoint holds that Russia wants to join Iran as the "gas OPEC" of the SCO and that Iran is in negotiations with other members to create a shared energy market. The BRI and SCO infrastructure policies of China are not supported by the US, but it denounces them and keeps a close eye on them. Because, in a few years, the BRI would serve as a role model for global politics because China offered both of these ideas.

US Engagement Initiatives

Three months after the 9/11 events, the SCO was established. The US increased its activities in Afghanistan and the surrounding area in an effort to find the 9/11 hijackers, including a few SCO participants. Russian personnel briefed US officials about the SCO's actions in February 2002, and the US stated its desire to work with the organization and thought it was a partner in resolving the Afghan conflict. At the time, the Bush administration demanded the creation of an "observer state" to engage with the SCO and secure anti-terrorism cooperation in terms of regional security (Boland, 2011).

As a result, the SCO called for the removal of US forces in July 2005. And shortly after, Kyrgyzstan wanted a lower payment for using Manas Air Base (which housed US troops). The cost of the yearly agreement was increased by the US from 2 million USD to 17 million USD (Nichol, 2009). The Bush administration voiced displeasure at the action but said that cooperation was required to address regional security challenges. Thus, the US submitted an application to join the SCO, but it was

denied. Although the Bush administration has publicly rejected proposals to join the SCO, US suspicion of the organization's goals has hampered future collaboration.

When the Obama administration started emphasizing an "engagement and collaboration" strategy with US allies across the world in 2008, in this context, the SCO meeting on Afghanistan was attended in March 2009 by the US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs. The SCO-Afghanistan Action Plan was proposed as a means of taking coordinated action against organized crime, drug trafficking, and terrorism (Khan, 2019). Secretary of State Hillary Clinton indicated the president's intention to talk about collaboration with the SCO and other Asian countries during a meeting in Hawaii in January 2010. Clinton's plea was turned down, though. After American representatives were given permission to speak with SCO officers in March 2011 to address security, environmental, and humanitarian issues in Central Asia, the two countries' relations marginally improved (Clinton, 2010).

US-SCO Engagement Risks

The SCO membership of the United States is now up for discussion. The SCO's involvement poses the largest danger to the US since it will make it less powerful politically and diplomatically on the international stage due to the fact that the United States is the sole superpower and systemic leader. Because the United States has already lost its position and authority in the world, it should be cautious about the claim that it is "helping authoritarian states, or acting under the auspices of the SCO" (McClellan, 2013). It joined with oppressive or corrupt governments, including those in South Vietnam, Egypt, and Iraq. As a welfare superpower, the United States still works to advance liberty, equality, and human rights. Decisions should be carefully considered to avoid joining the SCO and supporting these harsh and repressive governments, which would damage their status and soft power internationally (McClellan, 2013). A permanent membership in the SCO must now come from a Central Asian country, which is impossible to get from the United States. Now the question is: To protect the SCO's interests and objectives, would the US prefer moderate cooperation? If not, would the United States continue its objectives in Central Asia, necessitating the conversion path? (Khan and Sultana, 2019).

In 2005, China had a significant impact on US opposition to US participation in the SCO. Because of the SCO, relations between the US and China have deteriorated and negatively impacted US influence in Central Asia. Now, if the United States starts to mend fences with the SCO, its action will be vehemently opposed by allies in the open (McClellan, 2013).

A Potential US-SCO Partnership

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the US has asked many SCO countries to aid in the fight against terrorism, with quick cooperation from Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Although the relationships were brief, they nevertheless indicate that a democratic state might work with the authoritarian regime. To include the SCO, the US may need to make clear where it stands on human rights and environmental concerns or find another method to advance democracy by including the SCO governments. Foreign leaders' worries about the regime shift need to be allayed. Indirect connections, bilateral ties, and specific collaborations with the SCO are three approaches that the US must pursue to repair relations with the SCO.

Indirect Contact

SCO's economic and financial openness, as well as its policy and practice of democratic ideals and objectives, may be shaped and influenced by the United States through the use of one or more legitimate organizations (such as the UN, NATO, and ASEAN). This offers two advantages. On one hand, the US has the chance to participate directly in the SCO, and on the other, the SCO will have the chance to join democratic institutions, thanks to the legitimacy it gains from being a part of an organization that is acknowledged internationally through "transparency of participation." Since its inception, the SCO has had little interaction with democratic institutions dominated by the West. Some scholars claim that both India, a permanent member of the SCO, and Mongolia, an observer member, are allies of the US. They both have the ability to provide the United States with informal support. This "indirect interaction," though, may potentially be a bug. Because of the possibility that this action could be a proxy coup or a coup by proxy, it could result in an effective return to the Cold War between the US and SCO leaders (Germanovich, 2008).

Bilateral Relations

The second method of interaction might be bilateral relationships, which would be formal and mutually beneficial with the chosen core member. Without having to interact directly with the SCO, the United States, for instance, may leverage bilateral ties with SCO members to affect US interests in the area. As the SCO denies its legitimacy and engages in direct or formal US interactions, this approach will fall short of achieving the complete openness of the SCO. It can also directly affect democratic reforms and responsible governmental behavior at the same time (Germanovich, 2008).

Selective Partnership

According to this plan, the two will create collaborative teams to address concerns that both parties share, such as counterterrorism and drug enforcement. This tactic may result in the indirect conclusion of bilateral relationships between present US and SCO members and genuine organisations like NATO or ASEAN. By doing this, the United States may find additional chances to collaborate with the SCO on crucial regional and global challenges while lowering the risk of participation. From this vantage point, the US-openness SCOs may be raised (Germanovich, 2008). The management of security concerns in the Asian area is not solely the responsibility of one or two countries, according to US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates in 2007. But many people must work together and cooperate with one another. This implies that the chosen alliance may facilitate US-SCO participation in any of the above-mentioned three.

THE SCO IN FLUX: IMPLICATIONS FOR UNITED STATES

Shanghai Five an Attempt to Counter U-S Influence in Asia

As the US withdrew from the Kyoto Protocol and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty at the start of the twenty-first century, US foreign policy became somewhat more assertive. In addition, his opposition to China and Korea was viewed as firm at the time. As a result of this attitude, the rest of the world began to insist on the formation of cooperative organizations that did not include the United States. These initiatives led to the emergence of the "Shanghai Five Process" throughout Asia. To counter US dominance in Central Asia, the Shanghai Five initiative discreetly but steadily started to develop its economic, military, and diplomatic ties.

The Dushanbe Conference went on to say that it is not an organization opposed to using or threatening to use force in international relations without first receiving permission from the UN Security Council. He also stated that he would not permit any nation or group of states to put regional or self-interest ahead of international concerns. He backed the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) of 1972, criticized the deployment of "block-based" alliances (allies headquartered in the US), and voiced his objection to US missile defense, which covers the Asia-Pacific area, at the Dushanbe summit) and was protected by a mechanism.

Despite this, the organization has made some notable progress, including settling border disputes between member countries, implementing confidence-boosting measures, and taking part in counterterrorism operations against terrorism, extremism, and drug trafficking in the area. It is crucial to adopt cooperative strategies to cope with them. He strongly denounces US "hegemony" and opposes it. But the gang seems to be having some trouble with this level. As a result, the organization is looking for a security system anywhere in the world without the involvement of the US. Additionally, Beijing and Moscow have official agreements in place to guide their "strategic relationship," which is anticipated to be powerful. This will usher in a new phase in Russia's and China's operations. They will successfully establish their credibility in this way at a time when American dominance is growing.

In 2005, the United States submitted an application; however, it was later denied. A US military presence in Central Asia and the unwillingness to join the organization run counter to the objectives of the SCO. Member countries will give cooperation on terrorism and security concerns top priority if they wish to oppose US objectives and limit their impact. The region's economic and commercial exchanges will quicken as a result.

US Military Bases in CARS

To combat terrorism, the US has established two bases, one in Uzbekistan and the other in Kyrgyzstan, both in Afghanistan and Central Asia. While Manas Air Base is situated north of Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, Karshi Khan Air Base is situated in southern Uzbekistan. During the Soviet period, the United States leased both sites. Each airfield held 1,000 American soldiers. The installation, which is not meant to be a permanent presence, is helpful, according to the United States, in improving the security situation in Afghanistan. US forces in Central Asia have been under pressure to leave by the regional alliance, which is dominated by China and Russia. The SCO announced a timeframe for the withdrawal of troops from the area in a statement on July 5, 2005 (Steven and Myers, 2005).

Washington rejected the demands, claiming the bases were covered by bilateral agreements with the governments of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, not the SCO. Earlier, a Pentagon official said that the outposts were not crucial to the US mission and added that the US would pull out its forces as soon as security was reestablished in Afghanistan. According to a top Hudson Institute official, China and Russia utilize the SCO as a tool to further their regional interests. The US arrived to destroy both the Taliban and terrorism. However, there were issues with the transit of illegal weapons, nuclear materials, and narcotics. On the other hand, the area was thought to be very energy-rich. The oil pipeline from Baku, Azerbaijan, to Seyhan, Turkey, needed to be saved, and the US helped. According to Lutz Kleveman, author of *The New Great Game: Blood and Oil in Central*

Asia, the US is "killing two birds with one stone." Some claim that the US presence here is intended to lessen Beijing's and Moscow's influence (Colton, Timothy, and Legvold, 2010). The major goal of the US presence here, according to Stephen Blank, a Central Asia specialist at the US Army War College's Institute for Strategic Studies, is to prevent any neo-imperialist resurgence in Eurasia.

The SCO sought the removal of US forces in July 2005. And shortly after, Kyrgyzstan wanted a lower payment for using Manas Air Base (which housed US troops). The cost of the yearly agreement was increased by the US from 2 million USD to 17 million USD (Nichol, 2009). The Bush administration voiced displeasure at the action but said that cooperation was required to address regional security challenges. Thus, the US submitted an application to join the SCO, but it was denied. Although the Bush administration has publicly rejected proposals to join the SCO, US suspicion of the organization's goals has hampered future collaboration. The SCO deemed the action to be the most concerning because it poses a strategic threat to the military posture of the US and NATO in Central Asia. The SCO's action has been compared by academics to a "soft balance" against the United States (Colton, Timothy, & Legvold, 2010).

SCO is Viewed as an Anti-US Entity in the West

Particularly with the departure of the American air station at Karshi Khanabad from Uzbekistan in 2005, the SCO is perceived as an anti-Western alliance. At that time when the global war on terror had started and the stabilisation of peace in Afghanistan had begun, the Central Asian area came into the focus of strategic strategists in Washington, DC. There were two perspectives on the American military involvement in Central Asia at the time. First, regional foreign policy experts claim that the United States has immediate military objectives in Central Asia (i.e., military operations in Afghanistan only). Second, the opposing party, which believed in the restoration of the nineteenth-century "Great Game," took the form of the "New Great Game." It claims that the United States is attempting to control this region (Hanova, 2009).

With the exception of China, SCO members first saw the US military deployment as a way to combat the danger posed by terrorism and the Taliban. However, as other energy and transportation lines were being built during the ensuing years, Moscow began to refer to the United States as being in its "backyard." Vladimir Putin, the president of Russia, has said that the SCO may be used to counteract Washington's foreign policy initiatives when Russia's interests are taken into account. At its summit in Astana, the SCO reiterated its stance that its members should closely monitor the end of the active military phase of counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan and the deployment of armed personnel on their territories (Hanova, 2009).

It is first required to examine US interests in Central Asia, which some observers claim is the "core," before considering the SCO as an "anti-Western organization." Central Asia has proven to be crucial for US strategic goals in the worldwide fight against terrorism. Prior to 2001, the program prioritized "democratization, human rights dominating US participation, and economic liberalization" over security cooperation (De Haas, 2008).

The development of weapons of mass destruction, maintaining peace and stability, averting international crises, and managing interregional conflicts are the four strategic interests of the US in Central Asia. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is viewed as a vibrant, powerful, and enthusiastic regional organization covering a significant portion of the Asian subcontinent. The

moment has come for Western security analysts to characterize the SCO as the sole insignificant organization in the Asia-Pacific region, however, since the SCO has evolved into a true security alliance (Bailes, 2007).

Given that Central Asian countries have been creating political and economic models of Russia and China, Russia and China have a significant edge against the US. Therefore, democratic rule is not favored here. The SCO does not have requirements for membership, which makes it appear simple, unlike NATO or the EU. Different cultural traditions are said to predominate in the SCO region.

The SCO's objective was not just to keep the West out of the area. This is due to the fact that the SCO's founding members, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, first hosted US military installations on their soil, showing that the group did not immediately take a position against the West. Putin, however, interprets the American military presence in Central Asia as a threat to Russian strength once more, according to Lena Johnson. In terms of "military reform and technological contact, defense development, information collection, and confrontation against emerging threats," the US supports the Central Asian governments (Bailes, 2007). The SCO holds divergent opinions about the West as a result.

SCO and BRI Challenged the US

Following a stop in Russia, Chinese President Xi Jinping made an official visit to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in Central Asia. In addition, to attend the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, the Chinese president must visit the SCO summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and Dushanbe, Tajikistan (CICA). Such in-depth communication between the leaders has important implications for the area as a whole and serves as a model for new forms of international relations for the rest of the globe. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, together with the SCO founding members, are the first countries to join the BRIs, and Central Asia is a favorable location for both the SCOs and the BRIs ("World expands far beyond," 2019). Tajikistan is the first country to sign a cooperation agreement with China on the Silk Road economic corridor. The visit of the Chinese president will greatly strengthen ties between China, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan and will center on SCO expansion and BRI building.

The US does not participate in the BRI or SCO and does not join either, although it is vehemently opposed to both. The skepticism of other Western countries is evident at the same time. On the other hand, it is impossible to overlook the recent worldwide successes of SCO and BRI, which demonstrate their strong suits and room for expansion. Their achievement serves as a role model for world politics.

First, not only do the US and the West belong to this larger world, but the non-Western world has also made significant strides. The non-Western world is far from the stage of progress, even in the face of the West, because the West continues to rule the world. Because of this, the West consistently disregards the needs, desires, and existence of these countries. The SCO and the BRI both lead the world to assume that there is a sizable stage based on power and promise in addition to the West ("World extends far beyond," 2019).

Second, near future of the globe is also being presented with a new framework for international relations that is rich in Eastern knowledge. Because they may share mutual respect and advantages,

as small and large countries strive to establish ties on an equal footing. Instead of forming alliances with countries that share their political and moral principles, some states choose to form partnerships. Sino-Tajik and Sino-Kyrgyz ties, which are at an all-time high, serves as examples of this. Despite the relative insignificance of the US and other Western countries, the BRI and SCO are moving towards a more promising future ("World extends far beyond," 2019).

Third, neither SCO nor BRI are exceptional. He sends warm greetings to the West and the United States. Washington, on the other hand, is wary of them, owing to its geopolitical rivalry mentality. Smaller states like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan will be seen as puppets if the United States does not alter its mentality, and China will adopt the same mentality, because many forms of strategic thinking have led to the wars that are currently occurring around the world. China, which is seen as a key partner in global governance, proposed the BRI and the SCO, and the rest of the world shares this relationship. The Belt and Road Initiative and the SCO demonstrate their enormous importance, as trade protectionism and unilateralism have profound and far-reaching consequences for free trade and multilateralism ("World extends far beyond," 2019). The world will eventually recognize China's efforts.

China Uses the SCO as an Economic Fortress against the US

At the SCO meeting in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated that China's actions against US pressure on bilateral trade tensions are intended to protect the free trade system and legitimate rights. The Chinese side presented the facts of the situation and won the support of the other attendees.

For months, there has been a trade war between China and the US. However, as a result of the United States implementing sanctions on a number of Chinese enterprises, trade tensions between the two have further strained relations. Tensions between countries are voluntarily present. Despite having the ability to make goods locally, the United States imports due to the high cost, which is referred to as a trade imbalance. The underlying goal of the sanctions, he continued, "is to contain China's growth and retain its place as one of the world's top economies," warning that if the US continues with its protectionist policies, there would be a significant backlash (Yunbi, & Xiao, 2019).

The Chinese president appeared to be smiling during the June 2018 SCO summit with the heads of state, yet he came out as feeble. Since the United States had already levied tariffs worth tens of billions of dollars on Chinese imports at that point. As a result, it will contribute significantly to the trade conflict between the two biggest economies in the world because there is still a battle going on between the two countries. According to 2017 research estimate US exports are valued at 2300 billion USD, whereas China accounts for 2400 billion USD globally. As he fortifies relations with allies in the midst of escalating trade tensions with President Donald Trump's administration and a weak home economy, Chinese President Xi Jinping is utilising the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as a fortress against the United States. Xi is scheduled to meet with his closest ally, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and the recently elected Indian prime minister in the Kyrgyz city of Bishkek (Westcott, 2019). The Chinese president will seek its approval and support, but other SCO members may use China's deteriorating position as a negotiating tool.

For its members, the SCO has grown into a crucial platform for discussing regional economic and security problems. Concentrate more on the countries that are in your best interests, even if they are not formally allies, according to Tsang, Director of the China Institute at SOAS University of London. China is focusing on Modi this month, and in response to mounting US pressure, Xi and Modi are looking to deepen their ties on the SCO platform. He has a 2018 informal meeting with regard to it. Although China is India's greatest trading partner, the two countries' bilateral trade was just 84 billion dollars in 2017–18, a small portion of the 600 billion dollars in US–China trade (Westcott, 2019).

Members of Beijing's flagship BRI, which intends to export Chinese trade, commodities, and influence throughout the world, are scheduled to attend the SCO. According to Richard McGregor, senior fellow at Sydney's Lowy Institute, "This is a BRI security force." China wants to secure mountainous terrain for its vehicles, improve its military prowess, and increase its strategic location. The infrastructure program known as BRI was started by Chinese President Xi Jinping. The project is essentially a commerce corridor and consists of a network of ports and railroads connecting China, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. In order to achieve peace and shared prosperity, BRIs are allegedly driving SCO members toward road construction and security in the face of rising trade protectionism and economic nationalism. However, the United States has criticised China's BRI for unethical loans and unrealistic objectives (Westcott, 2019).

Russia and China raise US Bullying at the SCO Meeting on Covid-19

In a video conference, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo demanded "accountability" for the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the six partners in the video conference was Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar. The gathering went on for 70 minutes. This, however, appeared to be a diplomatic ruse to put China under pressure. India must work together to combat the current crisis, and after it is done, we must think about issues of responsibility. What the Indian Foreign Minister said during the video call is unclear, though. On the other hand, it is unclear if India made reference to its stance during the virtual Shanghai Cooperation Organization conference in Washington, where the foreign ministers of China and Russia gathered. The SCO's emergency summit was presided over by Sergei Lavrov, the foreign minister of Russia ("SCO Meet on COVID-19," 2020).

The "corona epidemic is spreading rapidly around the world," according to the foreign minister of Russia, but the US is still determined to advance its "vision of global discipline." They enforce the idea of global discipline using the contemporary circumstances. They claimed that creating and enforcing laws was their responsibility. The outbreak puts multilateral organisations like the United Nations and the SCO in danger and raises concerns about the survival of the international relations system. In addition to placing pressure on countries with autonomous foreign policy, the United States is also raising serious concerns about the WHO. We deny unfounded allegations made against China and Russia.

Wang Yi, the foreign minister of China, said that the United Nations, which was founded after World War II, is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year. But the United Nations-based international order continues to be marred by unilateralism and rising bullying. Minister Wang said that rather than blaming a single country, the international community should act jointly to defeat COVID-19. The Chinese minister urged the international media to "adhere to facts and truth, adhere to science

and reason, prioritize neutrality and balance, respect professional ethics, and adhere to neutrality and balance." Encourage a setting that will help the fight against COVID-19 be won ("SCO Meet on COVID-19", 2020).

Implications for the US and Europe of Iran's SCO Membership

Since Iran's revolution in 1979, there have been a number of disagreements between the United States and Iran. A significant obstacle is the US response to or controversy over Iran's SCO membership. The US submitted an application to join the SCO in 2005, but at that time, the SCO's member countries rejected it. Iran was granted observer status in the SCO that same year. US officials on one hand and Iran's membership on the other were furious that the US request was denied, and the US started to take the SCO seriously because the SCO included great permanent members like China and Russia (Ziegler, 2013). In 2008, Iran reapplied for permanent membership; however, because of US sanctions, Iran's candidacy was not taken into consideration. A nuclear agreement was reached with Iran in 2015, which eliminated a significant barrier to Iran's permanent membership. However, practical progress has been slow. Sanctions were lifted in 2019 when Iran withdrew from the nuclear agreement. The current US President, Donald Trump, however, put economic sanctions on Iran this time, shattering Iran's hope of membership in the UN (Siddiqui, 2019).

The United States opposes Iran's full participation in the SCO for four reasons.

1. The United States has attempted to isolate Iran since the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. The United States increased its diplomatic and financial pressure on Iran over its nuclear program in 2003. The United States petitioned the UN Security Council in 2006 to impose international sanctions on Iran in response to that country's nuclear program. The fact that Iran is a member of the SCO is the evidence that US strategies have failed.
2. The economic impacts of Iran's participation troubles the US and other Western countries. After Russia, Iran has the second-largest gas reserves. The security of Western energy supplies may be threatened by a coalition of Iran, Russia, and other energy exporters from Central Asia.
3. US President Obama made it clear that Asia's national security will go before anything else in the future. The US will focus particularly on Asia in the years to come. China, India, and Russia are assuming a key role as Asian powers in the coming century. The three Asian countries working together will alter the global order, causing the US-EU monopoly to reverse course.
4. The United States is under danger from China, Russia, and Iran's alliance. The US goal of isolating Iran would be damaged if Iran joined the SCO. To some extent, this triangle poses a danger to the United States' reputation in the Middle East, Central Asia, and East Asia (Ziegler, 2013).

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani asserted that US activities posed a "severe" danger to regional and global stability during the SCO meeting in Bishkek. He said that over the previous two years, "the US administration has broken international norms and standards, deploying its economic, political, and military resources in an aggressive manner that threatens the stability of the world" ("Iranian President Tells SCO Summit," 2019).

As Iran is being pressured by the US's strict policies and sanctions, Iran's ability to oppose the US and its allies is another powerful force. Iran believes that if it doesn't receive backing from the region, the US will continue to exert pressure on it for years to come. Without maintaining cordial

ties with China, Russia, and India, Iran would not be able to enlist the backing of all these countries to respond forcefully to US sanctions and policies. However, Tehran has a clear vision for the SCO. Iran is aware of the advantages of the SCO. Iranian internal and external affairs have suffered greatly as a result of the country's isolation in the region. Iran is working to win back the support, trust, and confidence of its neighbors. Iran has set its sights on being near China and Russia, which are the closest passageways in the area, making the SCO an ideal platform for a strong shelter. With the assistance of China and Russia, as well as friendly connections with the other members of the SCO, India has several lucrative business partnerships with Iran. As a result, Iran may be better equipped to deal diplomatically with US policies. The regular meetings between Iranian, Chinese, and Russian officials demonstrate the close ties that exist between these countries on an official level (Iqbal, & Bukhari, 2022).

Turkey SCO Ambitions Challenged EU and the US

The strengthening connections between Turkey and the SCO serve as a reminder of Ankara's commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration. Turkish and Chinese ties are still friendly. However, China has remained cautious thus far despite the fact that a long-term partnership with Turkey is in its best interests. Turkey has been a conversation partner with the SCO since 2012 and will attend as an observer. Turkey announced its intention to join as a permanent member in 2013. The SCO's permanent membership was once again mentioned publicly by President Erdogan in November 2016. U.S. security experts utilize NATO to degrade the SCO's capabilities while disputing its geostrategic importance. However, the United States and Europe are just at risk from Turkey's membership in the SCO. To solve regional security concerns, the West places a high strategic value on Turkey. The SCO has just started its road of expansion, and Pakistan and India were given permanent membership at the 2017 Astana Summit, so now is the ideal moment to pursue strong connections with it and participation in it. Additionally, the SCO has started serious negotiations for enlarging the Middle East (Gaspers, 2017).

From Beijing's perspective, Erdogan's preference for the SCO is comparable to a deal struck by NATO, the US, and the EU. Regarding Turkey's SCO membership, China and Russia don't appear to have any significant issues. Therefore, China appears to have a very strong stance against Ankara joining the SCO. Turkey is crucial to China's BRI because of this.

Is the SCO the NATO of the East?

➤ If So, How....

A statement on global security and stability was agreed upon during the SCO summit in Bishkek, condemning US foreign policy and denouncing "unilateralism" and "double standards." It placed a strong emphasis on the UN's function as well as "multilateralism" and the rigorous observance of international law. The SCO will actively contribute to "strategic stability." The strength of the countries in the region, which is the responsibility of regional organizations, determines the security and stability of Central Asia. Any unjustified NATO or Western meddling will be met with a robust response from the SCO. The SCO would be elevated to a political-military entity, according to the summit. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a counterterrorism organization, not a military base, Russian President Vladimir Putin declared during the summit. Although military is a significant part of it, this does not mean that it should take center stage.

It will take time for the SCO to emerge as the "NATO of the East." However, for the time being, the organization's top priority is regional security. As a result, there is a strong likelihood that the firm will join the security group. "SCO member states will prioritize timely consultation to respond effectively to situations that threaten regional peace, stability, and security," the meeting's resolution on shared security declared. However, the solution would not be dependent on the military, like the NATO charter.

But the truth is otherwise, because the 2007 Peace Mission gave military drills precedence over anti-terrorism efforts. This is a clear example of the SCO's continued military collaboration. Another reality is that the way the drills were conducted alongside the political summit and the remarkable united appearance of the SCO leaders at the conclusion sent a very strong political message.

The SCO has been granted observer status at the UN and is working to forge connections with other international organizations like ASEAN. So, like the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which resembles NATO somewhat, the SCO aspires to become a political force. Collaboration between the SCO and the CSTO has been suggested by Russia and is supported by China. The two decided to take part in future cooperative military training exercises. Thus, in order to advance both regional and global security and meet new challenges and dangers, the Heads of State decided to strengthen coordination between the SCO and CSTO.

➤ **If Not, Why....**

The SCO has stressed several times that it is not an alliance of armed forces. Nevertheless, questions are raised about whether the SCO may develop into the Eastern NATO. The first was the formation of the SCO, an international organization free from dominance and zero-sum thinking. The SCO was not NATO. SCO was founded on harmony and tolerance for difference. The SCO's members do not cede their sovereignty in exchange for security; they do not meddle in one another's domestic affairs; and all of its decisions are reached by agreement rather than by a majority, as is the case with NATO.

There are significant differences between the SCO and NATO, including the lack of collective defense capabilities and a force where member countries contribute to their militaries. The SCO is expanding its defensive capabilities. In order to fight the Soviet Union, NATO was established during the Cold War. Since its formation, NATO has conducted several offensive operations. This makes it quite evident that this is not the defense group he is claiming to represent.

Second, the Chinese government has made it clear time and again that it does not desire to form military alliances or spheres of influence with other states. The SCO has dedicated the last 18 years to the pursuit of shared growth and the philosophies of equality, mutual trust, respect, and respect for other civilizations. The SCO does not wish to take a chance with an adversary. In order to promote global security and growth, it looks to collaborate with both the West and its own members.

Unlike NATO, the SCO has a diversified membership because the political, ethical, religious, economic, and social systems of NATO members are similar. This SCO-member country conflict is an advantage, not a liability. This member-state variety may provide a significant challenge for military alliances (Xin, 2018).

Withdrawal of US-Led NATO Forces from Afghanistan and Aftermath

Afghanistan is currently facing a critical turning point in its history once again. The Taliban's comeback and the withdrawal of foreign armed forces mark the conclusion of the conflict that has lasted for the past 20 years. The US-backed government apparatus collapsed mere weeks after the US started its retreat, putting an end to the US's sweet dreams of the establishment of a democratic regime in Afghanistan. The fact that terrorism, extremism, and drug trafficking are still widespread throughout the country suggests that NATO, ISAF, and the US armed forces have been unsuccessful in making any notable progress there for more than 20 years. The Taliban were once again in charge as the nation's new chapter began. To fill the void created by the withdrawal of international forces, Afghanistan needs increased assistance from international and regional governments and organizations. In this regard, the SCO has been seen as a different setting for promoting peace and security in Afghanistan. The current state of Afghanistan requires the SCO to resume its institutional responsibility for promoting peace and development there. The SCO cannot be militarily active due to its commitment to not meddle in other countries domestic affairs, but it has the ability to handle a country's tumultuous conditions.

The latest meeting of the SCO foreign ministers in Dushanbe was particularly concerned about the deteriorating security situation. Following a thorough discussion, all the country's citizens strongly condemn the continuous violence and terrorist assaults around the country that target members of the public and state officials. They said that the existence of global terrorist organizations was the primary cause of the country's instability. To help Afghanistan combat terrorism, extremism, illicit drug trafficking, and the economic problems that America has left behind, the SCO agreed to provide assistance ("Shanghai Cooperation Group Calls," 2021).

Following the withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan, the IMF, World Bank, and other donor organizations have frozen payments to the war-torn country. Additionally, inside the country, regular bank transfers to individuals have been blocked, leaving the country's residents to deal with skyrocketing inflation, rising poverty, cash shortages, a depreciating currency, and rising unemployment. The \$9 billion in foreign currency held by the Afghan Central Bank has been frozen since the Taliban seized power on August 15, 2021, mostly by the US. The leaders of the SCO have called on the international community to enhance aid to the war-torn country, which is on the verge of collapse following the Taliban's return to power last month, and to unfreeze the assets of Afghanistan. They said that the western world's reluctance to help Afghanistan in this way would result in the country going into a full-blown humanitarian disaster with unforeseeable implications ("SCO Leaders Call for," 2021).

CONCLUSION

The alliance of China, Russia, and Iran poses a threat to the US, as shown by the aforementioned justifications. This triangle has the potential to irreparably damage the US's status in Central Asia, the Middle East, and East Asia. Numerous factors, including Turkey's strong participation in SCO operations, are raising concerns about US influence in the area. Remember that India is the lone US ally in the area, but it appears unlikely for India to choose the SCO over the US given that India has several interests connected to the SCO as well as close commercial and trading relationships with China and Russia, two of the SCO's most important members. Additionally, the current state of the

world sees numerous countries getting involved in politics on a global scale, posing a serious danger to American dominance. Due to the fact that we now live in a global village, the circle surrounding the US in the area is becoming smaller as a result of both China's and Russia's continued expansion, as well as the SCO. Whether or not the United States will be able to continue its presence in the area is still up in the air. But it is certain that the SCO has quickly evolved into a "global strategic group." It has sounded alarm bells for US interests and influence in Central Asia and throughout Asia.

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