POLICY RESEARCH JOURNAL
ISSN (E): 3006-7030 (P) 3006-7022

Volume 2, Issue 4, 2024

Received: 26 October 2024
Accepted: 26 November 2024
Published: 02 December 2024

ENHANCING REGIONAL STABILITY: THE ROLE OF THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION IN AFGHANISTAN'S SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT

Muhammad Habib

BS Scholar Department of Political Science, University of Swat

Khabibi1004@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) plays a critical role in Afghanistan by promoting security, fostering economic cooperation, and addressing transnational threats like terrorism and drug trafficking. Its involvement is pivotal for regional stability as it seeks to mitigate the Afghan conflict's spillover effects and strengthen ties among member states. Through coordinated diplomatic and security initiatives, the SCO aims to stabilize Afghanistan and enhance Eurasian geopolitical resilience. This study utilizes secondary and primary data to examine the SCO's role in Afghanistan and its impact on regional stability. The SCO's engagement in Afghanistan is crucial for promoting regional stability, addressing security threats, and fostering economic development amidst complex geopolitical challenges. To enhance its effectiveness, the SCO should develop a comprehensive Afghanistan policy that integrates security, economic initiatives, and political inclusivity to stabilize the region.

Keywords: *The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Afghanistan, Regional Stability, economic, cooperation.*

INTRODUCTION

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has emerged as a pivotal player in regional diplomacy and security since its establishment in 2001. Originally formed by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, with subsequent expansions including India and Pakistan, the SCO aims to foster cooperation on security, economic, and cultural fronts among its member states. Central to its mission is maintaining regional stability in Eurasia, a task that has seen increased scrutiny and relevance given the complex geopolitical landscape, particularly concerning Afghanistan. Afghanistan stands at a critical juncture in its history, with implications that extend far beyond its borders. The country's ongoing conflicts, political instability, and the recent withdrawal of international military forces have raised concerns about its impact on regional security. Given its strategic location connecting South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East, instability in Afghanistan has the potential to destabilize neighboring countries and disrupt regional economic activities, including energy transport routes and trade corridors. The thesis aims to analyze the SCO's role in Afghanistan and its implications for regional stability. This investigation is timely and essential, considering the SCO's evolving engagement with Afghanistan amidst shifting geopolitical dynamics and security challenges. By examining the SCO's diplomatic efforts, peace-building initiatives, and economic engagements in Afghanistan, this study seeks to uncover the organization's contributions, limitations, and potential to foster peace and stability in the region. The SCO's approach to

Afghanistan reflects its commitment to non-interference in domestic affairs and respect for sovereignty, principles enshrined in its Charter. Over the years, the SCO has engaged with Afghanistan through various mechanisms, including summits, working groups, and joint exercises, aiming to promote dialogue, cooperation, and mutual understanding. These efforts have encompassed security cooperation, counter-terrorism initiatives, and support for Afghanistan's economic development, reflecting a multifaceted approach to addressing the country's challenges. The significance of SCO-Afghanistan relations goes beyond bilateral cooperation; it has broader implications for regional stability. Stability in Afghanistan is crucial for preventing the spread of extremism, managing refugee flows, and ensuring economic prosperity across Eurasia. As such, the SCO's role in Afghanistan not only influences the country's internal dynamics but also shapes regional security perceptions and responses. This chapter will critically analyze the SCO's engagement with Afghanistan, assessing its effectiveness in contributing to peace and stability in the region. By exploring the organization's initiatives, challenges, and the broader geopolitical context, this study aims to provide insights into the evolving dynamics of regional security governance and the role of multilateral organizations like the SCO in addressing complex security challenges. Understanding the SCO's role in Afghanistan requires an examination of its diplomatic strategies, security initiatives, and economic engagements within the context of broader regional stability concerns. This thesis seeks to contribute to the scholarly discourse on regional security governance by providing a nuanced analysis of the SCO's contributions to Afghanistan and their implications for regional stability.

Literature Review

James MacAfee (2023) in *The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Conflict De-escalation: Trust Building and Interstate Rivalries* highlights the SCO's pivotal role in managing conflicts among member states and fostering trust within the region. Initially formed as a regional intergovernmental organization focusing on security, economic cooperation, and cultural exchange, the SCO has expanded its scope to include conflict resolution and de-escalation efforts, especially in Eurasian hotspots such as Afghanistan. MacAfee argues that the SCO's approach to trust-building is essential in managing conflicts and preventing escalations in a region marked by historic tensions and geopolitical complexity. His research emphasizes how the SCO navigates interstate rivalries and the obstacles it faces in promoting unity and peace among its member states. MacAfee also explores the SCO's mediation role, particularly concerning the Afghan conflict, noting the difficulties the organization encounters due to competing interests within its membership (MacAfee, 2023).

Arhama Siddiqa (2016), in her study on the *Significance of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) for Pakistan*, examines the SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS), which focuses on countering terrorism, separatism, and extremism within the region. Established in 2004, RATS serves as the SCO's primary institution for addressing security threats, and it has played a significant role in managing terrorism risks emanating from Afghanistan. According to Siddiqa, RATS has expanded its mandate to include drug trafficking, organized crime, energy security, and epidemic threats, emphasizing the SCO's proactive stance on complex security challenges. Siddiqa highlights how RATS facilitates security cooperation among member states through joint counter-terrorism exercises, information-sharing, and the development of international legal frameworks aimed at enhancing collective security against transnational threats originating in Afghanistan (Siddiqa, 2016).

In his article *Afghanistan and the Role of SCO: Pakistan's Engagement for Peace and Stability*, Qaiser Nawab (2023) explores the SCO's broader impact on regional stability and its role in shaping Eurasian politics. Nawab discusses the SCO's significance as a multilateral platform that represents a considerable portion of the global population and includes two nuclear powers, China and Russia, as permanent members. Nawab emphasizes the SCO's efforts to foster regional cooperation, which include promoting neighborhood diplomacy and addressing regional

conflicts through multilateral initiatives. He notes that the SCO's institutional roots can be traced back to the resolution of border disputes among the Central Asian Republics, China, and Russia, thus underlining the organization's role in enhancing regional stability. Nawab highlights Pakistan's involvement in the SCO, from its early observer status to full membership, underscoring Pakistan's engagement in SCO-led efforts to promote peace in Afghanistan (Nawab, 2023).

The reviewed literature demonstrates that while the SCO has made considerable progress in addressing the Afghan conflict, significant challenges remain. MacAfee (2023) highlights that, within the SCO, member states have divergent national interests and strategic goals that often complicate unified action. For instance, Russia's desire to maintain influence in Central Asia sometimes clashes with China's economic ambitions in the same region. Siddiqa (2016) adds that while RATS has contributed positively to counter-terrorism efforts, the complexity of the Afghan conflict with its entangled ethnic, political, and international dimensions—poses ongoing difficulties for the SCO. Nawab (2023) underscores that external powers, including the United States, view the SCO's engagement in Afghanistan with caution, particularly as the organization strengthens its regional influence.

The literature review reveals several gaps in current research on the SCO's role in Afghanistan and its implications for regional stability. Although there is extensive analysis of the organization's primary objectives and security initiatives, there is limited research on the SCO's constructive role in Afghanistan and its broader implications for both regional and global powers. Moreover, few studies address the influence of alliances between internal and external actors seeking to further vested interests within the region. This study aims to bridge these gaps by examining the Afghan conflict in greater detail, assessing the SCO's role in regional and global stability, and analyzing the challenges the organization faces in balancing alliances within complex geopolitical dynamics.

Research Methodology

The methodology employed in this study on the "Role of Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Afghanistan and Its Implications for Regional Stability" primarily relies on secondary data sources. Secondary data have been collected from various scholarly resources, including books, peer-reviewed research articles, reports, and credible websites that provide extensive insights into regional security dynamics, SCO policies, and Afghanistan's political landscape. Additionally, relevant primary data have been gathered through the official website of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, offering access to official statements, policy documents, press releases, and annual reports that shed light on the organization's objectives and initiatives in Afghanistan. Using secondary sources allows for a comprehensive analysis by synthesizing perspectives from multiple experts and identifying prevalent themes in the literature related to the SCO's security approach. Complementing this with primary data from the SCO's official website ensures that the research incorporates the organization's current strategies, goals, and formal communications, adding authenticity and up-to-date information. This methodological approach thus facilitates a thorough examination of how the SCO's activities in Afghanistan impact regional stability, providing both scholarly perspectives and official organizational data.

Theoretical Framework

Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), developed by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, provides a valuable lens through which to understand the security dynamics in Afghanistan and the role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in promoting regional stability. RSCT posits that regions, rather than individual states, become primary arenas for security interactions due to geographical proximity and shared threats (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Central and South Asia, particularly with Afghanistan at their nexus, exemplify a regional security complex where interconnected security concerns shape the behavior of surrounding states. Afghanistan's instability has long had ramifications beyond its borders, affecting neighboring countries like Pakistan, China, Russia, and Iran. By focusing on these interdependencies, RSCT allows us to examine how the SCO—

comprised of key regional actors—engages in Afghanistan's security landscape to mitigate regional threats and foster stability. According to RSCT, regions like Central and South Asia exhibit "security interdependence," meaning the security of each state is closely linked to that of its neighbors (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). In this context, Afghanistan represents a "regional security concern," as its instability threatens regional order through challenges such as terrorism, extremism, and narcotics trafficking. With the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan, SCO member states are increasingly motivated to collaborate on security initiatives to prevent the spillover of violence and extremism. For instance, countries such as Russia and China, both prominent SCO members, have prioritized counter-terrorism and anti-drug efforts, reflecting the regional security complex's principle that threats in one country necessitate collective responses from its neighbors (Singh, 2021). Consequently, the SCO's focus on Afghanistan aligns with RSCT's assertion that regional organizations can act as stabilizing forces within a complex by facilitating cooperative security mechanisms.

One critical feature of RSCT is the concept of "securitization," or the framing of certain issues as security threats that justify extraordinary measures (Buzan et al., 1998). The SCO, in this light, has securitized issues emanating from Afghanistan, especially terrorism and extremism, framing them as pressing threats to regional stability. This securitization has enabled SCO member states to justify coordinated military and intelligence measures, such as joint anti-terrorism exercises and intelligence-sharing arrangements, aimed at countering perceived threats from Afghanistan. RSCT posits that such securitization processes contribute to the maintenance of a security complex, as countries adopt a shared threat perception and engage in collective defense measures. For example, China's concerns over the potential spillover of extremist ideologies into its Xinjiang province have led it to engage actively within the SCO framework to address security risks linked to Afghanistan (Laruelle & Peyrouse, 2013). This cooperative stance illustrates how the SCO uses securitization as a tool to mobilize regional efforts, reduce security fragmentation, and enhance mutual trust among member states. In addition to securitization, RSCT emphasizes the role of "regional organizations" like the SCO in managing conflicts and preventing escalation (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Afghanistan's challenges are not isolated to a single state but rather demand a coordinated response, making the SCO a suitable forum for fostering regional stability. By bringing together Afghanistan's neighbors, the SCO can facilitate discussions on border security, counter-terrorism strategies, and even economic aid to stabilize Afghanistan. In this sense, RSCT's focus on regional organizations as stabilizing entities resonates with the SCO's efforts in Afghanistan, where the organization aims to create a unified front against terrorism and transnational crime. Such collaboration reduces individual states' burdens while fostering a multilateral approach to shared security challenges, which is critical for regional stability. Furthermore, the SCO's ability to integrate both Central and South Asian states exemplifies RSCT's assertion that regional bodies play a central role in navigating security interdependencies and mitigating conflict spillovers within complex security regions (Singh, 2021).

RSCT's focus on inter-regional interactions and the importance of security cooperation among neighboring states offers insights into the strategic motivations of SCO members in Afghanistan. The theory suggests that states within a regional security complex, such as SCO member countries, are likely to pursue strategies that align with both their national and regional security interests (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). In Afghanistan's case, each SCO member, from China and Russia to Pakistan and the Central Asian republics, has unique but overlapping security concerns that are best addressed through collective action. For instance, Pakistan's proximity to Afghanistan and its struggles with terrorism make it a critical stakeholder in Afghanistan's stability. Pakistan gains access to broader resources and support by cooperating with the SCO, amplifying its security efforts. Meanwhile, Russia and Central Asian states view the SCO as an avenue to prevent the spread of militant Islamism and ensure that Afghanistan's issues do not destabilize their territories. The SCO's multifaceted approach to

Afghanistan reflects RSCT's argument that regional complexes are sustained through mutually reinforcing security interests, particularly among states facing similar threats.

RSCT's framework underscores the value of cooperative security strategies within a regional complex, yet it also highlights potential limitations, such as divergent interests among states. Although SCO members share common concerns over Afghanistan's stability, varying political agendas and security priorities can hinder fully unified action. For example, while Russia and China are generally aligned in their strategic interests in Central Asia, Russia's focus on asserting influence in former Soviet republics may at times conflict with China's economic ambitions in the region (Laruelle & Peyrouse, 2013). RSCT's analysis of such "interregional conflicts" demonstrates that regional organizations must navigate both cooperative and competitive dynamics to maintain stability within a complex. In the context of the SCO, balancing these dynamics is essential for its role in Afghanistan to yield lasting regional security benefits.

RSCT provides a comprehensive framework to analyze the SCO's role in Afghanistan by illuminating the region's interconnected security concerns and the importance of collective security mechanisms. By applying RSCT to the SCO's engagement in Afghanistan, this analysis highlights how shared threats, securitization processes, and regional cooperation drive the SCO's efforts to stabilize Afghanistan. Yet, RSCT also points to challenges arising from conflicting state interests, which can limit the organization's effectiveness in achieving its goals. Nevertheless, RSCT's principles underscore that despite potential limitations, regional organizations like the SCO are indispensable in managing security within complex regions, offering a promising, if imperfect, path toward enhancing regional stability.

Afghanistan and Shanghai Cooperation Organizations

Afghanistan has been engaged with the SCO for over 15 years. It signed a protocol establishing the SCO-Afghanistan contact group in 2005; however, its "activity was suspended in 2009." In 2012, Afghanistan became an observer in the SCO when then-Afghan President Hamid Karzai visited China. In 2015, Afghanistan signed a protocol on counterterrorism with the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of the SCO; the same year Kabul applied for full membership in the group. In 2016, then-Afghan Chief Executive Officer Dr. Abdullah Abdullah also requested full membership in the SCO. In 2017, Deputy Foreign Minister Hekmat Khalil Karzai renewed Afghanistan's request for full membership, while Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the resumption of the SCO-Afghanistan contact group to "facilitate peace and stability in Afghanistan." Since then, the contact group is has been meeting annually. In 2018, Afghanistan signed a protocol on conducting consultations on "political issues and the fight against terrorism, extremism and illicit drug trafficking, as well as involving Afghanistan in the regional economic cooperation processes." In 2019, Afghan Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani once again "continue[d] requesting" full membership at the SCO ambassadorial meeting and asked member countries for support in this regard (Khalil, 2021).

Afghanistan has been seeking full SCO membership since 2015 for three main reasons. First, since Ashraf Ghani became president in 2014, he has viewed the continued conflict in Afghanistan as a regional affair, where Pakistan is alleged to be involved in an "undeclared war of aggression" against Afghanistan. This view hasn't changed; in March 2021 Ghani "once again called on Pakistan to end the undeclared war in Afghanistan." There is a consensus in Kabul that to end the ongoing conflict, regional cooperation is needed. In that sense, membership in the SCO will not only help Afghanistan to build regional consensus but will also persuade the SCO to be more proactively engaged in Afghanistan. Second, the SCO's goals are mostly in line with those of the Afghan government under Ghani, whether fighting terrorism, extremism, and illegal drugs or pursuing the economic cooperation and regional connectivity envisioned in the SCO Charter and Afghan developmental plans and National Priority Programs. Full SCO membership will likely increase Afghanistan's security and economic cooperation with the SCO region, as both are

fighting for the same destiny – a region free from terrorism, extremism, and drug trafficking and linked together with more connectivity. Third, seeking membership in the SCO, which counts China and Russia as members, is also in line with the Afghan government's newly coined foreign policy of "multi-alignment neutrality." This new contour in Afghan foreign policy comes as the United States is withdrawing from the country. The Afghan government wants to build its ties with regional countries to somehow fill the power vacuum left behind by the U.S. withdrawal – not necessarily through a military presence, but through enhanced military, security, and economic assistance (Akhtar and Javaid, 2024).

There are several reasons why Afghanistan is a natural candidate for the SCO. Geographically, Afghanistan is a part of the SCO region. It is a direct neighbor to four SCO member states China, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan – and has very close historical and economic relations with the other four: Russia (a former Afghan neighbor in the Soviet era), India, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. Despite not having direct borders with the latter four countries, they are still considered "close neighbors" in Afghan foreign policy. As a result of these geographic ties, no other country currently outside the SCO has more ethnic, cultural, and historical links with the SCO region. Afghanistan has deep ethnic links with the SCO region. Out of 150 ethnic groups living in the SCO region, around 30 are living in Afghanistan. Mostly these ethnic groups are scattered across the region, but Afghanistan is at the juncture of various ethnicities represented in SCO member states. Therefore, Afghanistan's membership will have a multiplier effect in the whole SCO region, resulting in a more culturally and ethnically connected region. At the diplomatic level, Afghanistan has recorded bilateral ties with the formal members of the SCO for centuries, including the newest SCO members, Pakistan and India. In addition, it has also very close relations with SCO observer states, with the exceptions of Mongolia and Belarus, where Afghan diplomatic missions are not present (relations are directed from Afghan embassies in China and Russia, respectively). Still, even in Mongolia and Belarus, Afghanistan has been engaged in the education and economic sectors. Afghanistan also has very close economic and trade ties with most of the SCO member states. This is backed up by statistics. According to the Afghan Statistical Yearbook, in 2017-2018 more than 87 percent of Afghanistan's total imports were from SCO countries; and more than 57 percent of Afghanistan's total exports were destined to SCO member states. In total, more than 60 percent of Afghanistan's total trade was with the SCO member countries. Currently, the prospects for Afghanistan's SCO membership are better than ever before, as U.S. troops are planning to withdraw from Afghan soil based on a deal between the Afghan Taliban and the United States signed in February 2020. The full withdrawal is expected to be completed by the end of August. This will remove the concerns of some of SCO member countries that have been opposing Afghanistan's entry into the group because of the presence of American troops or Kabul's close alliance with Washington. Let us not forget that the Afghan Civil War was the main reason behind the formation of the SCO in the first place. This was pointed out by a former experienced Russian ambassador: "One should not forget that the SCO emerged as a response to immediate threats of terrorism and drug trafficking, which came from Afghanistan in the late 1990s. The SCO idea was born from a collective demand for a regional coalition to combat them" (Khan et al., 2022).

The Afghan state is a natural ally for the SCO's efforts. The Afghan government's fight against terrorism, extremism, and opium cultivation is in line with the SCO's fight against the "three evils," which formed the primary motivation for its formation in 2001. Providing Afghanistan full membership in the SCO will assist the group in better achieving its objectives and boost regional integration and connectivity among the SCO region. Based on a U.N. report last summer, the Taliban have not cut ties with al-Qaida yet, despite pledging to do so in their deal with the United States. The report states that "relations between the Taliban, especially the Haqqani Network… and Al-Qaida remain close, based on friendship, a history of shared struggle, ideological sympathy, and intermarriage. The Taliban regularly consulted with Al-Qaida during negotiations with the United States and offered guarantees that it would honor

their historical ties." Likewise, the Taliban also have ties with Central Asian and Chinese terrorist and extremist groups that are involved and stationed in Afghanistan. Afghanistan's membership in the SCO will likely reduce the threats to the region emanating from Afghanistan, considering the high level of violence and presence of foreign fighters. It will also help address the "power vacuum" left behind after the U.S. withdrawal (Agostinis and Urdinez, 2024). The SCO does not want the region to relive the turbulent 1990s, where a civil war in Afghanistan played a role in conflicts and insurgencies throughout the region: the civil war in Tajikistan, a stirring "Intifada" in Kashmir, insurgency in Chechnya, and the rise of extremists and separatists in Xinjiang. Giving full membership to Afghanistan is the first step to assist in stabilizing Afghanistan and the region. Otherwise, it is likely that regional power politics will emerge in the post-U.S. withdrawal period, paving the way for proxy wars and a period of instability in the region.

1. SCO's Approach to Afghanistan

Despite being a strong regional player and having serious concerns about Afghanistan's stability, SCO is struggling to bring peace and prosperity to Afghanistan. Whether SCO has limited resources to combat terrorism and extremism issues in the country or its political differences among member states is unclear. It is the conduct of bilateral relations between Afghanistan and SCO member states or China and Russia's role in leading organizations. It is the lack of a united military force and institutional mechanism or the current resurgence of the Taliban. Through the given, the study finds the key reasons behind SCO limitations. Afghanistan is the only country through which SCO established direct contact when the former president, Hamid Karzai, was invited to the SCO summit as a guest in June 2004. The SCO-Afghan Contact Group was formed in 2005, and Afghanistan was granted observer status in the SCO in 2012. Besides this, SCO has serious concerns about peace and stability in Afghanistan (Huasheng, 2012). The four permanent members of SCO have a direct border with Afghanistan, while the remaining four have no geographical proximity but have close ties with Afghanistan. However, the question is raised about why SCO feels skeptical about giving full membership to Afghanistan. Previously, the presence of coalition forces and the US considering SCO as an anti-US organization were the main hurdles to granting Afghanistan full membership in SCO (Singh, 2010). The recent withdrawal of US-led coalition forces and the resurgence of the Taliban have once again cast doubt on SCO to give Afghanistan's full membership in the organization. The absence of the Afghan representative in recent meetings of foreign ministers and heads of SCO states about the current situation in Afghanistan is a matter of concern. If the Taliban wishes to participate in the organization's meetings without reservation, it must first gain international recognition. This decision may also pave the way for the SCO to grant it a permanent membership. Besides all these, Afghanistan's full membership in the organization can build regional consensus and further encourage SCO about the country's stability.

The other reason hindering SCO's role in Afghanistan is that China's goals are linked to Afghanistan. China pursues economic diplomacy on a bilateral level in Afghanistan rather than through SCO. China is involved in infrastructural projects, and currently, it is the biggest investor in Afghanistan, allocating $3 billion in contracts with Afghan officials. The Aynak copper mine and oil exploration projects with an estimated $700 million are also included (Devonshire-Ellis, 2021). China has pledged $900 million for regional infrastructure building, with some of the money spent on road and railway construction between China and Central African Republics, but China has allocated no separate funds to Afghanistan under the auspices of SCO (Singh, 2010). Most analysts consider SCO China's vehicle for expanding its influence, helping and advancing China's interests, links and norms across the region (Pantucci, 2021). China uses SCO for its political means through which it influences the Central Asian region to acquire energy resources, economic cooperation, and tackling separatist movements in Xinjiang province. They believe China has arisen as a challenger to India and Russia in financial and energy markets, affecting their articulated cooperation within the organization.

On the other side, under the umbrella of SCO, Russia's involvement in Afghanistan has also been limited, but it minimizes China's increasing influence in the region. SCO and Afghanistan have economic and security ties so far; that is not a compelling factor in maximizing SCO's role in Afghanistan because of Russian obstructionism and skepticism about China's dominance in the organization. Russia and Central Asian Republics tackle their security issues through the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO); therefore, it cannot be imagined that Russia prefers SCO over CSTO in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of coalition forces (Sharma, 2015). If the current situation in the country goes towards chaos and affects Central Asian Republics, then Russia will move with massive military troops to protect the order of Central Asian states instead of Afghanistan. SCO members have different interests and orientations toward Afghanistan, and they all carried out their plans to establish bilateral ties instead of a collective approach towards Afghanistan. They have invested millions of dollars in Afghanistan for their gains. Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are affected by the worst situation in Afghanistan, but they have resorted to Russia and the US. Despite this, Central Asian states assist Afghanistan through military and economic assistance and education (Singh, 2010). Their preferences for bilateral ties weakened SCO's influence in Afghanistan. They should support and help the war-torn country through a multilateral rather than a bilateral approach. Their bilateral attitude, on the one hand, minimizes the SCO spirit of regional stability. On the other hand, they will be unable to fill the vacuum the US-led coalition forces left.

Another factor challenging SCO's role in Afghanistan is the existence of political differences among member states. SCO can work as a multilateral organization, but the inner differences and lack of trust are the major factors hindering its ability to do so. Russia and Central Asian Republics had some differences in their relationship, which affected their cooperation within the organization. Although they resolved their disputes, the border issue between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan remains a contention. Another side is the unstable bilateral relationship between India and Pakistan, which is no secret. Pakistan and India are permanent members of SCO, but the South Asian region is in the tens due to their rivalry, as both countries have conflicting interests in Afghanistan, thus limiting the multilateral potential of SCO (Khan et al., 2023). despite being leading members of SCO, China and Russia have different approaches, especially in economic cooperation. On the one hand, China is offering large bilateral loans to member countries, while Russia's financial support for Central Asian Republics has significantly impacted the organization's multilateralism policy. Both countries have failed to provide economic assistance to Afghanistan through the SCO mechanism.

SCO's key objectives are eliminating three evils and establishing RATS to tackle these issues. Additionally, military exercises among member states are conducted regularly, in which they participate actively. Being a political and military organisation, SCO has no united force. China and India maintain good relations with the Taliban government to secure their investments. Central Asian Republics fear the Taliban's resurgence and voice support for SCO's construction role in Afghanistan. Pakistan asked the international community for Afghanistan's humanitarian aid. Russia calls for establishing an inclusive government in Afghanistan consisting of different ethnic and political forces (Regional powers back aid for Afghanistan as Russia hosts Taliban", 2021). SCO is unlikely to play a significant role in Afghanistan, as seen by member countries' differing stances on the Afghan Taliban regime. SCO lacks the institutional framework and financial resources to increase its influence in Afghanistan. The development fund for SCO has yet to be established. It has an impact on the multilateral organizational potential. SCO does not have the financial resources to sustain its Central Asian initiatives. It will be difficult for the organization to deliver economic support to Afghanistan unless poverty, transportation routes, hydropower cooperation, and water difficulties in Central Asia are addressed. One of the critical reasons why SCO will not be able to play a significant role in Afghanistan is its financial disadvantage. With a budget of about $4 million

and lacking political will and capacity, SCO cannot play an active role in Afghanistan.

2. SCO's Role in the Afghan Peace Process

SCO is a great model of extensive partnership and regionalism. Regional integration via SCO would pave the way for supranational regulatory systems and a flexible model of future alignments. The organization has eight member countries, i.e., China, Pakistan, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and India, including four observer countries interested in acceding to full membership (Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, and Mongolia) and six Dialogue Partners (Turkey, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Armenia). Provided the multifarious nature of integration in implementing different initiatives, the most substantial contours of SCO are harmonizing national interest based on negotiations, political coordination, mutually acceptable solutions to the problems, enhancing people-to-people contacts, promoting inclusive economic development and solid steps for collective activities.

At present, all neighboring countries of Afghanistan, i.e., Central Asian Republics (CARs), Iran, China, Russia, Turkey, and Pakistan, must formulate a consolidated framework to discuss future discourse and to maintain regional peace. The time for musing is over. Regional powers need to make decisions that they would stand firm. All regional countries must send a strong message to the Taliban that there will be consequences if their country is used to host transnational terrorists. After all, one should not forget that Al-Qaeda or ISIS has a large foothold in Afghanistan. Russia, China and Central Asian countries have shown interest in holding meetings and negotiations with the Taliban leaders. After the negotiations, the regional stakeholders will likely devise future strategies. Moreover, the role of multilateral regional organizations will be instrumental in bringing peace and catering to the requirements of the Afghan people. In this aspect, the SCO can play a constructive role in integrating all parties (Role of the SCO in Afghanistan Peace Process", 2021). SCO has a comparative advantage that entails its broad mandate. SCO is in a position to address the security, economic, and human development agendas of Afghanistan simultaneously, combining support for political stability, implementation of large-scale economic projects, and assistance for social capital building. In this aspect, SCO also provides an integrated platform to all the member countries and periphery nations of Afghanistan for negotiations and settlement. SCO can play a constructive role in offering mediation and providing its platform to the Taliban and the U.S. to discuss or reach an agreement. Catering to peace and stability and engaging Afghanistan in major railway and energy infrastructure projects is indispensable for strengthening regional connectivity between Central and South Asia and in the SCO space. Therefore, these significant agenda points must be included in the upcoming meeting of SCO's head of states/ministries/official delegations in September 2021. If the organization manages to succeed, this success would be the best possible illustration of the changing nature of international relations.

3. Implications for Regional Stability

The recent withdrawal of US-led coalition forces from Afghanistan and the Taliban's resurgence create concerns for regional states, particularly SCO member countries. For decades, US-led coalition forces failed to bring peace to the war-torn country, and the vacuum they left in Afghanistan must now be filled through SCO members' cooperation. Therefore, SCO appears to be an alternative platform for restoring peace and stability in Afghanistan. The most recent meeting of the SCOAfghan Contact Group took place in July 2021 and was attended by foreign ministers of all member states. They strongly condemn the withdrawal of coalition forces from Afghanistan, which has left the country in chaos. They offer their support for Afghanistan, which is currently going through a financial crisis. Afghanistan and regional peace depend highly on each other; therefore, SCO member states cannot disregard peace and stability in the war-torn country. The first and most crucial step toward Afghanistan's stability was the establishment of the SCOAfghan Contact Group. The protocol formally signed on the formation of the SCOAfghan Contact Group was to foster cooperation on issues of mutual interest, including

the fight against drug trafficking, the prevention of international terrorism, and the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan. The group's primary duty is to suggest collaboration on matters of shared interest and offer a route for discussions at predetermined intervals or as needed. Making an anti-drug belt around Afghanistan is another task (Huasheng, 2012). The SCO-Afghan Contact Group has held four sessions so far (as mentioned earlier) to discuss the chaotic state of the country. Recently, SCO member states provided Afghanistan with humanitarian and economic assistance to deal with the economic crisis. The Special Conference on Afghanistan in Moscow (March 2009) was the second step toward stabilization.

With time, SCO became more serious about a peaceful Afghanistan, and on June 7, 2012, at the Beijing summit, it granted Afghanistan formal observer status. In the same year, a protocol was signed between SCO-RATS and the Afghan government. It consists of Afghan military training for countering terrorism and extremism and terrorism-related information sharing.17 Earlier, a Coordinating Council of Afghanistan was founded during the SCO summit in Tashkent (2004) to prevent illegal drug trafficking (Khan and Sultana, 2019). Salient of the summit included the fight against illegal trafficking and the development of a regional anti-drug center. SCO member states will use the Central Asian Regional Anti-Drug Information and Coordination Center capacity and Afghan departments to combat cross-border gangs. To effectively combat the threat of terrorism, it is essential to increase counter-terrorism cooperation and employ all available tools. Border control, screening of individuals suspected of terrorist activity, and cooperative action against terrorist threats are some of the areas of cooperation. Other areas include integrating Afghanistan into SCO's regional counter-terrorism cooperation, collaborating to gather information on terrorist groups posing a threat to the security of SCO member states and Afghanistan, and creating a system for expert consultation between the SCO-RATS and Afghan authorities. SCO member states will also work with Afghan authorities to fight illegal trafficking in weapons, ammunition, explosives, and other forms of transnational organized crime. Mutual support in criminal investigation, evidence collection and transfer, and timely exchange of knowledge and expertise about organized crime are also included ("Shanghai Cooperation Organization", 2004).

At present, the Afghan Taliban are facing two internal challenges, i.e., economic crisis and the presence of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Islamic State – Khorasan Province (IS-KP) terrorist groups in Afghanistan. Both groups seriously threaten the war-torn country that has been a battlefield since 2001. As soon as ISIS set foot in Afghanistan, its first target was to eliminate the presence of the Taliban in the country. In a recent meeting of SCO, the Deputy Director of RATS said, "The withdrawal of NATO forces from the country created a power vacuum that was filled by different militant groups." SCO counter-terrorism body RATS is in a position to support and train Afghan forces to control ISIS expansion (Khan and Sultana, 2019). The country's current chaotic situation paved the way for the expansion of ISKP, which may become a serious security threat for Central and South Asia. IS-KP is an active group affiliated with ISIS across South and Central Asia. They consider the Taliban, their enemy and target them along with Pakistani and Afghan nationals. They are also allies of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, and their primary goal is to establish the Islamic State. SCO is the only hope of tackling these terrorist elements in the region ((Khan and Sultana, 2019). SCO should coordinate its members' efforts to neutralize regional terrorist threats coming from Afghanistan, like IS-KP, promote political reconciliation in Afghanistan, and develop a strategy for maximizing connectivity in the war-torn country to guarantee long-term stability.

So far, four SCO-Afghan Contact Group meetings about the country's current chaotic situation have been held. The first meeting occurred in Moscow on October 11, 2017, in which member states expressed their willingness to support the war-torn country in achieving peace and security. The primary agenda was to assist the country in countering terrorism, illegal drug trafficking, and crimes. All parties agreed to strengthen the country's national defense and security forces (Khan et al., 2023). The second meeting was held

in Beijing on May 28, 2018. In their joint statement, all the member countries stated, "We assure the government of Afghanistan of our commitment to stabilizing the country in respect of territorial integrity, independence, sovereignty, and national unity" ("Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China", 2018) The third meeting was held on April 19, 2019, in Bishkek, attended by 40 representatives of eight SCO member states, Afghanistan, and the RATS Executive Committee. In their opening remarks, foreign ministers declared that "based on all types of efforts and initiatives, there is a need for the immediate attainment of peace and prosperity inside the country as well as in the entire region." They further argued that "SCO member states' and Afghanistan's relations are based on deep historical friendship and that they have sincere emotions regarding each other" (Khan et al., 2023). The fourth meeting was attended by SCO foreign ministers in Dushanbe on July 14, 2021. In his remarks, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi told the meeting that "the hasty withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan created a power vacuum, and various militant groups once again found a smooth path to safe haven in the country" (Khan, and Mahmood, 2023). SCO is the only politico-military forum that expresses the expressions of member states about the Afghanistan issue internationally (Jin, 2021).

Following the withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and other contributing organisations froze accounts and blocked payments to Afghanistan, leaving ordinary Afghans reeling from skyrocketing inflation, rising poverty, cash shortages, collapsing currency and rising unemployment. Afghanistan's central bank accounts were also blocked when the Taliban took control of Kabul. At a recent SCO meeting of foreign ministers on Afghanistan's current situation, they asked IMF and especially those who have frozen their accounts, to release those as the country is passing through a critical situation and not put pressure on it (Khan et al., 2023). SCO member states also pledged to provide approximately $40 million in humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, of which $15 million has been provided to Afghanistan so far. Russian President Putin said at the SCO summit via video link, "I believe it makes sense to cooperate with the US and other Western nations to gradually unfreeze Afghanistan's reserves and implement recovery plans through the World Bank and the IMF." He added that Washington should bear the main part of the costs associated with the reconstruction process. Chinese President Xi said, "Afghanistan should be assisted in creating an inclusive political system that would allow it to pursue moderate domestic and external policies by SCO member countries to facilitate a seamless transition." Pakistan has also requested financial assistance for Afghanistan to avert a humanitarian crisis and an economic collapse.

SCO's Current Cooperation and Future Cooperation Strategy

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

All countries and international organizations are welcome to collaborate with the SCO. This collaboration within the SCO strives to improve regional and global security, economic growth, and cross-cultural and humanitarian ties ("Development Strategy of the SCO," 2015). SCO members settle international and regional issues and disagreements through political and diplomatic channels. Member States will strongly oppose the use of space or the deployment of weapons there

for peaceful purposes, and the draught agreement will be preferred above other options within the law to promote transparency and confidence-building. The SCO member states shall consult and hold one another in high regard about the world economic agenda. They will also promote the establishment of an equitable global financial order based on the interests of all parties, which will be acceptable to all governments. Member States will uphold the norms of mutual cooperation while attempting to strengthen the political and aggressive attitude of the conversation over human rights in international forums. By respecting the cultural and civilizational uniqueness of each state, the international community may help to ensure that no human right is violated or given less importance than the other (Zhihao, 2019).

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

Member States rely on a shared, long-term security vision to encourage coordination and cooperation among themselves, making it simpler to address contemporary concerns. The region's security, risks, and challenges will continue to be taken into consideration as Member States collaborate for a prompt and adequate response. SCO works to ensure security, ensure international information, prevent illegal immigration and human trafficking, fight economic crime and corruption, and prevent money laundering. Threats to the region's peace, security, and stability will be addressed through political and diplomatic measures, with a focus on enhancing the processes for a quick reaction. The adoption of the UN Scientific Counter-Terrorism Policy will have the full backing of the member countries of the SCO. To address these three evils, member countries will step up their SCO RATS efforts. Additionally, member countries will continue to support the 2004 anti-drug strategy, psychotropic drugs, and drug trafficking. Measures including coordinated operations against drug traffickers, law enforcement personnel training, collaboration on reducing drug demand, financial, organizational, and technical support, research, training, and practical actions should be prioritized (Weidenfeld, 2017).

One of the main SCO initiatives is to eradicate criminal activities. The SCO will encourage collaboration with the Eurasian Group and the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering to stop terrorist funding and money laundering. The member countries will demand mutual collaboration while upholding the ideals of giving secure borders and unilateral military dominance in order to turn shared borders into borders of peace and goodwill. The group will take action to protect against threats to the political, economic, and social stability of its members' countries, and it will work to create a reliable cooperative system for information space security. Member governments will work to improve collaboration in the area of Internet management under the International Information Security Cooperation 2009 and other treaties to stop using the "three powers of evil" of the Internet for actions that threaten regional security and stability. In order to do this, they will make sure that information and communication technology (ICT) is used more effectively for counterterrorism efforts and that improved processes are in place to deal with cyber threats to the security of member countries. With the assistance of the UN, the organization will step up its efforts to put into practice the "Code of Conduct in the Field of International Information Security" and collaborate with other members of the worldwide community on a universal international ICT code of conduct.

In order to achieve the long-term stability of the organization and provide stability to the SCO area,

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

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

SCO members signed agreements to expand economic cooperation on September 23, 2003. The accords seek to create a free trade zone within the SCO and enhance regional trade (Husheng, 2004). On October 26, 2005, the SCO met in Moscow to discuss joint energy initiatives involving the oil and gas industry, joint resource utilization, and the discovery of new hydrocarbon reserves. The formation of the SCO Interbank Consortium, which will be used to finance future collaborative projects, was also approved at the summit. On February 21 and 22, 2006, Beijing hosted the SCO's Interbank Association's first conference (Oksuz, 2009). Parvez Davoudi, the vice president of Iran, said in an intriguing speech at the 2007 SCO convention that the organization is an excellent location to establish a new banking system that will be independent of the global financial system. To boost the economies of SCO member countries, China loaned them US$10 billion amid the global financial crisis during the Yekaterinburg summit on June 16, 2009. China and Russia said during this discussion that they would like to acquire a significant stake in the International Monetary Fund. Imran Khan, the prime minister of Pakistan, remarked during the Bishkek Conference in June 2019 that SCO countries should prefer to trade in their currencies rather than the US dollar.

The SCO cannot be excluded from collaborating in this matter, as it has in others. As a result, the member countries will work to foster an atmosphere that is favorable for increasing interactions between public organizations and individuals, as well as to strengthen collaboration and links in the areas of education, health, tourism, and culture. The organization's member countries will work to strengthen bilateral and international ties between institutions of higher learning, science, and research. Therefore, the member countries will prioritize the execution of cooperative research initiatives and projects. The 2007 Culture Cooperation Agreement's clauses will be carried out. The member countries of the SCO will cooperate to research and protect natural and cultural heritage areas. As a result, steps will be taken to prevent theft, the unauthorized import and export of cultural property, and the restoration of works of art in locations associated with and related to the ancient Silk Road and to make registries for memorabilia and databases.

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

There are several ethnic and multi religious societies in the SCO region. The member states work to maintain the long-standing history of inter-

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

Conclusion

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has become increasingly significant in shaping regional stability and addressing the complex challenges arising from the Afghan conflict. The SCO's role is not only limited to facilitating diplomatic dialogues and security collaborations but also extends to economic partnerships that support regional cohesion. Afghanistan's geopolitical significance makes it a central focus for the SCO, as instability in Afghanistan affects member states and has far-reaching implications for Eurasian security and global geopolitics. The organization has aimed to combat terrorism, extremism, and separatism through initiatives like the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS), which enhances member states' capabilities to counter these transnational threats. However, the SCO faces critical challenges due to the diverse political agendas, economic priorities, and security concerns among its members. Additionally, the SCO's effectiveness in Afghanistan has been complicated by the ongoing influence of external powers, including the United States, whose objectives sometimes conflict with the organization's regional vision. Despite the SCO's successes in promoting a collective security framework, achieving peace and stability in Afghanistan requires sustained commitment and coordinated efforts from all stakeholders. The SCO has been instrumental in promoting dialogue, addressing shared security concerns, and proposing a non-interventionist approach to Afghan sovereignty. However, the organization faces limitations due to its lack of enforcement mechanisms and the challenges posed by differing national interests within its membership. The SCO must continue to foster consensus among its member states to strengthen regional responses to security threats from Afghanistan. Although the organization has improved its counter-terrorism strategies and provided a platform for diplomatic engagement, there is an ongoing need to adapt its policies and strengthen collaboration mechanisms to respond to the evolving Afghan crisis.

To improve its effectiveness, the SCO should enhance collaboration with other international organizations, including the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). These collaborations would enable the SCO to leverage additional resources, share intelligence, and improve operational effectiveness in counter-terrorism, economic development, and conflict resolution in Afghanistan. The SCO should consider developing a long-term Afghanistan policy that addresses the economic, security, and humanitarian dimensions of the conflict. This policy should be developed with input from all member states and should outline specific objectives, timelines, and actions for both immediate and long-term engagement with Afghanistan.

A clear policy can serve as a roadmap for the SCO's interventions and offer a unified vision for regional stability. As terrorism remains a core threat from Afghanistan, the SCO should prioritize enhancing the capabilities of RATS through technology investments, intelligence-sharing protocols, and regular joint exercises. By improving RATS' ability to address emerging terrorist threats, the SCO can ensure better preparedness and more

effective responses to terrorism and extremism within and beyond Afghanistan's borders. The SCO should invest in economic development projects within Afghanistan, which would promote stability through job creation, infrastructure improvement, and trade facilitation. Establishing economic initiatives, such as energy and transport projects connecting Afghanistan to the broader region, would help address some root causes of instability, reducing the appeal of extremist ideologies.

The SCO can play a constructive role in encouraging political inclusivity within Afghanistan. By facilitating dialogues between various Afghan political and ethnic groups, the SCO could help promote a government framework that respects ethnic diversity and promotes social stability, reducing internal conflicts that often spill over into the region. The SCO should encourage Afghanistan's integration into regional trade networks, which can strengthen the country's economic base and reduce its dependence on external aid. This could include incorporating Afghanistan into the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and other regional projects, fostering trade and connectivity that would benefit both Afghanistan and its neighboring SCO member states.

SCO has made important strides toward promoting stability in Afghanistan, there are areas where the organization's involvement can be expanded and made more effective. By adopting a comprehensive approach that includes economic development, political inclusivity, strengthened counter-terrorism efforts, and improved international cooperation, the SCO can address the challenges posed by the Afghan conflict more effectively. These recommendations aim to provide a pathway for the SCO to enhance its influence and contribute to sustainable peace in Afghanistan, ultimately benefiting regional stability in Eurasia.

REFERENCES

Regional powers back aid for Afghanistan as Russia hosts Taliban", (2021, October 20).. *Aljazeera News*. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/20/russia-hosts-taliban-for-talks-but-warns-no-recognition-for-now

Role of the SCO in Afghanistan Peace Process: Means and Prospects", (2021 August, 21). *Ankasam Ahkacam*. https://www.ankasam.org/role-of-the-sco-in-afghanistan-peace-process-means-and-prospects/?lang=en

Agostinis, G., & Urdinez, F. (2024). The nexus between authoritarian and environmental regionalism: An analysis of China's driving role in the Shanghai cooperation organization. In *Sustainable Development, Regional Governance, and International Organizations* (pp. 38-52). Routledge.

Akhtar, M. N., & Javaid, F. (2024). The Role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the Afghan Crisis. In *Dealing with Regional Conflicts of Global Importance* (pp. 44-62). IGI Global.

Buzan, B., & Wæver, O. (2003). *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*. Cambridge University Press.

Buzan, B., Wæver, O., & de Wilde, J. (1998). *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Development strategy of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization until 2025. (2015). Asia Pacific Energy. https://policy.asiapacificenergy.org/node/1582

Devonshire-Ellis, C. (2021, July 16). China's Belt and Road Initiative and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization have key roles to play in restructuring and securing Afghanistan. *Silk Road Briefing*. Retrieved from https://www.silkroadbriefing.com/news/2021/07/16/chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-and-the-shanghai-cooperation-organisation-have-key-roles-to-play-in-restructuring-and-securing-afghanistan/

Huasheng, Z. (2012). *China and Afghanistan: China's Interests, stances, and perspectives*. Center for Strategic & International Studies.

Huasheng, Z. (2012). *China and Afghanistan: China's Interests, stances, and perspectives*. Center for Strategic & International Studies.

Jin, W. (2021). SCO In Unique Position to Address Afghan Issue Despite Different Concerns. *Global Times. September*, *15*.

Khalil, A. B. (2021). Afghanistan and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. *The Diplomat*, *14*.

Khan, H. U., & Mahmood, A. (2023). THE STABILIZING ROLE OF SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION IN AFGHANISTAN. *Central Asia (1729-9802)*, (92).

Khan, H. U., Shah, M. F., & Khan, M. I. (2023). SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION AND AFGHANISTAN: INTERESTS AND LIMITATIONS. *Margalla Papers*, *27*(1), 82-95.

Khan, J., & Sultana, R. (2019). Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Afghanistan: An Overview. *FWU Journal of Social Sciences*, *13*(2).

Khan, J., & Sultana, R. (2019). Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Afghanistan: An Overview. *FWU Journal of Social Sciences*, *13*(2).

Khan, M. I., Ullah, K., & Ali, S. (2022). Role of Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Regional Politics. *AJAR| Asian Journal of Academic Research (ISSN: 2790-9379)*, *3*(2), 77-91.

Laruelle, M., & Peyrouse, S. (2013). *Globalizing Central Asia: Geopolitics and the Challenges of Economic Development*. M.E. Sharpe.

MacAfee, J. (2023). *The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Conflict De-escalation: Trust Building and Interstate Rivalries*. Cambridge University Press.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. (2018, May 28). *Second SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group Meeting, Beijing*. Retrieved from https://www.mea.gov.in/pressreleases.htm?dtl/29926/Second+SCO+Afghanistan+Contact+Group+Meeting+Beijing+May+28+2018

Nawab, Q. (2023). Afghanistan and the role of SCO: Pakistan's engagement for peace and stability. *Journal of Eurasian Politics*, 15(2), 45-62.

Oksuz, S. (2009). An emerging powerhouse in Eurasian geopolitics: The Shanghai Six+. Ege Academic Review, 9(2), 713-34.

Pantucci, R. (2021, September 15). Afghanistan crisis lingers over the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit. *Observer Research Foundation Online*. https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/afghanistan-crisis-lingers-over-the-shanghai-cooperation-organisation-summit/

Shanghai Cooperation Organization. (2004, June 17). *Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan fight terrorism, drug smuggling, and organized crime action plan*. Retrieved from http://chn.sectsco.org/load/45816/

Sharma, R. K. (2015). SCO's role in Afghanistan: Prospects and challenges. *Mainstream Weekly*, *53*, 24.

Siddiqa, A. (2016). *Significance of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) for Pakistan*. Islamabad Policy Research Institute.

Singh Roy, M. (2010). Role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in Afghanistan: scope and limitations. *Strategic Analysis*, *34*(4), 545-561.

Singh, S. (2021). *The Role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Regional Stability*. Journal of Asian Security, 15(3), 405-421

Zhihao, Z. (2019, May 15). Summit promotes SCO agenda. *China Daily*.