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An Analytical Study of Developments, Goals and Strategies in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Opportunities and Challenges)

Amir Mohsen Bakhshayesh Ardestani

Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran.

Abstract: *In recent decades, the political observers have witnessed major changes in the political, security and economic system on the international scene. One of the most important of these changes is the emergence of regional convergence as an independent international element. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization can be defined in this framework. The organization has gained considerable scope over the years after its establishment in both areas of activity and in terms of its structure. In order to identify and analyze the opportunities and challenges of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, this study examined the developments, regional and global geopolitical policy and the strategies from the beginning.*

Keywords: *Strategies, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Permanent and Non-Permanent Members (Observer), Geopolitical Policy.*

INTRODUCTION

Regional unions and coalitions are created in a situation where changes in the formations of power are brought about in the international politics, the political and international orientation of countries is transformed and the new goals are emerged in the political, economic and security priorities of countries. In these conditions, the manifestations of cooperation and conflict are emerged. Countries are trying to achieve their goals through maximizing cooperation and building up unity among the existing forces. This trend became more desirable after the collapse of the bipolar system. In general, when a vacuum of power is created, actors try to provide their goals through new alliances and new coalitions. In the condition of Iran's isolation, creating capacity for the regional cooperation is necessary. Iran's participation and demand for membership in the Shanghai Organization as a security organization and pact for the first time since the Islamic Revolution marks a turning point in Iran's presence and participation in the multilateral security agreements and treaties, or more robust security alliances with other blocs of global power; given the specific circumstances of Iran's foreign policy and application of the discriminatory and dual practices of international organizations and global blocs against Iran and unilateralism by the United States, it has a major positive psychological burden on Iran's interests. The gathering of China, Russia, Iran, India, and Pakistan and Central Asia around a single axis and organization is a new phenomenon in the region. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a multilateral group initially comprised of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. It was founded in 2001 and enlarged in 2017 to include India and Pakistan (Maduz, 2018). In that sense it is the biggest security organization in the world next to the UN (Oldberg, 2019). The Shanghai Cooperation Organization can cover half of the world's population and, given

the demographic, political, military and economic capabilities of the organization, this new collection can play a significant role in future regional equations.

Formation and developments of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

The Shanghai Group Five was formed on April 26, 1996. At that time, the top five nations of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan met in Shanghai, China. This assembling was considered the first meeting of the Shanghai Group Five (Klaus Fritsche, 1996). The leaders of the Shanghai group Five member states had held a meeting each year between 1996 and 2001. The concern of member states for exacerbating border disputes and military movements was another reason for the formation of the Shanghai Pact Five. These concerns were largely overcome by the conclusion of a series of bilateral and multilateral agreements, in other words, the initial goal of the organization's formation in the early years was realized. It is important to note that there are few differences among the first four members of organization, namely, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (while the existing differences and concerns can be resolved in the form of the Commonwealth Independent States). But there were borders' differences and concerns among the four countries and China. In this way, China, through its agreements of the Shanghai five Convention, released about 7,000 kilometers of its common border with Russia and the Central Asian republics from any major security concern. Given the four thousand kilometers of these borders form the common borders of Russia and China, in fact, by settling border disputes through the Shanghai 5 Pact, in the first phase China, and in the next phase Russia achieved their original goals and interests in the process of moving the pact toward its goals. In Russia's view, this agreement greatly reduced the funding problems for border guards across these vast borders. The three Central Asian countries did not have the ability to provide security at their borders, while they were interested in benefiting from the growing economic potential of China. China also welcomed this opportunity due to the problems in Taiwan and moved its forces to the east (Bruce Pannier, 2006). China did not agree with the regional organizations in the past, and it was the first time that it founded a regional organization. With its potential and rapid economic growth, it appears to be taking the necessary tools to play a greater role as a major power in the future of the international system. By defining itself in a large set, China can fulfill some of its goals, while adopting an economic approach requires that it be present in areas like the Central Asian market and expand its access to energy sources. In addition, the issue of NATO expansion to the east, which was associated with the desire of some former Soviet republics to join the treaty, made Russia and China equally concerned about the security situation.¹ Ideologically, China and Russia are against the dominance of the Western world order and advocate for a change in the status quo (Ahmed, Ahmed and Bhatnagar, 2019). Since the 1990s, Chinese policies on multilateral security have indicated greater acceptance of the need for regional-level problem solving. This view supports Russia's concerns about maintaining security in its 'near abroad', especially among the still-fragile states in Central Asia (Lanteigne, 2018). In 2001, Uzbekistan was accepted as the sixth member of the group. During a statement was announced the establishment of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on the basis of previous sessions agreements. The statement states that the establishment of the SCO has been promoted through the promotion of the process of multipolarity and the democratization of international relations. In this way, on the fifth year of its birth, the group became a multilateral regional organization. The Shanghai Convention on Combating International Terrorism, separatism and extremism has also been signed (Lukin and Machulsky, 2005). At the Sixth session in Shanghai on June 14 and 15, 2001, discussions were held on the existing structure and development, important regional and international issues and economic and security cooperation, and some important documents were signed. One of the most important signed documents was the agreement on the fight against international terrorism, religious extremism and the trafficking of drugs and weapons. In this session, Uzbekistan was approved, by the agreement of the five

¹The article "Developments of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and membership of Iran", listed in: center.aspx / www.csr.ir

countries, as the sixth member of the Shanghai Forum Five. The performance and relative success of the Shanghai Contract five have led it to become a regional organization and the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was officially announced in 2001. At this stage, the security issues in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization were of great importance to the extent that some considered it as a security organization. Security organizations are often formed and continued based on the definition of a common threat, but this concept does not fully apply to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. In an interview after the 2001 session, Putin announced that the slogan of the new organization is "Security through partnership". The authors of this research intended to solve security issues in this framework. It was hoped that with the development of cooperation in the region in the cultural, educational, scientific and economic fields, we could create conditions that would affect security issues (Lukin and Machulsky, 2005). Following the September 11 incident and the US invasion of Afghanistan, as well as the concern about the proliferation of elements of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Central Asia, the importance of this region increased for the West, especially the United States; taking advantage of the opportunity, this country consolidated its presence and the creation of military bases. The member states of the Shanghai Organization also worried about the situation, so these developments became the main topic of discussion among the members of the organization at several meetings. But it's important to note that the views of the Shanghai organization on extremism and terrorism are fundamentally different from the United States' view on this issue; it is why the common concern did not prompt joint approaches by the organization and the United States even at the height of the struggle with terrorism. While the United States views the issue of Islamism as the most important threat to the liberal democracy's hegemony and places this subject as a pretext for achieving its hegemonic goals through the establishment of a link between terrorism and the current Islamist movement, the member states of Shanghai organization view the issue of terrorism or the extreme Islamist movement solely from the point of view of domestic security. The Shanghai session in July 2005 requested the United States to schedule a departure from Central Asian military bases. According to this request, US forces left Uzbekistan Khanabad military base at the end of 2005. Western media saw this change as the advent of a new power in the region (Zhao, 2002). In order to strengthen and expand the organization's activities, the three countries of Iran, India and Pakistan were admitted as observer members. The acceptance of the membership of the three countries of Iran, India and Pakistan as observers in the Shanghai Organization greatly enhanced the capabilities of this organization from the point of view of regional cooperation. In this way, during the past years, the organization succeeded in developing, in addition to the establishment of all necessary organizational institutions, its regional cooperation on a large scale (economy, energy, education, culture, justice, customs, etc.) and introduced itself as a remarkable regional institution to the world.²

The approach and objectives of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's permanent and non-permanent members (observer)

One of the main features of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is the apparent imbalance in the role of its members. It is from this angle that we should recognize this organization, as well as speculate about its future, orienting to the tendencies of the two main actors within it. On this basis, considering China and Russia is important in this organization (Sergli, 2001). In addition to the six main member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the organization also has four observer states: Iran, India, Pakistan and Mongolia. It should be noted that all SCO observers have made their formal request for membership as a main and full member. In fact, the joining of India, Pakistan and Mongolia will make the SCO an organization with half the world's population. Meanwhile, China has good relations with Pakistan and supports its accession to the organization, and Russia is also keen to join India in the Shanghai Cooperation

²"Developments of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and membership of Iran", listed in: [center.aspx / www.csr.ir](http://center.aspx/www.csr.ir)

Organization. Thus, as the observer members become full members of this organization, more and more geostrategic power and significance will be added to it.

Permanent members

- **China's approach to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization**

Since one of the most important orientations and components of China's foreign policy strategy is the geographical area of the countries of the organization, determining the interests of China in this organization depends, on the one hand, on the opportunities that this organization can create and, on the other hand, on the overall goals and tasks of the China's foreign policy strategy.³Accordingly, China's interests in the establishment of the SCO can be summarized as follows at three levels: national, regional, and international.

- ✓ **National level**

In terms of economic interests, importing energy is an important element in China's long-term economic development. With the expansion of the Chinese economy, increasing energy imports will be inevitable. Some of its member states and observers have huge energy resources that can be connected to China via pipelines. This is a great achievement if this region is to become a reliable source of energy for China through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Vaezi, 2006, No. 1).

Security interests can also be considered in three dimensions:

- Ensuring territorial integrity and national unity of China;
- Implementing strict measures to combat transnational crimes and stabilize in the northwest of China;
- Creating greater security in the border areas and providing an appropriate perimeter environment. In the case of China, these three cases are mainly manifested in ethnic separatist activities in the Sinkiang Province (Talebifar and Ghazizadeh, 2003).

- ✓ **Regional level**

China faces the Central Asian countries on the western side of its security environment, countries with a high potential for instability due to various fragility. In addition, these countries (geographically and religiously) are in the vicinity of Afghanistan and Pakistan as countries deeply entangled in international terrorism. This has led to the emergence of extremist and terrorist tendencies in recent years. The significance of the instability potential and the prevalence of terrorism in these countries, for China, becomes apparent when we firstly consider the macro strategy of this country, and secondly, the Sinkiang area and its status. Since the beginning of the era of political reforms of the open doors (1978), the Chinese macroeconomic strategy is the economic development and political stability. Within the framework of this macro strategy, they have designed the trio for their economic development, with the aim of developing standards in the global level. A pursuit of such a goal naturally requires a stable security environment, since a country with a turbulent security environment faces numerous problems in advancing economic development. On this basis, one of the main foreign policy agenda of China is the "stabilization" of the country's security environment, which includes the western side of Central Asia. One of the most desirable ways in this direction from the point of view of the Chinese is to institutionalize and build multilateral structures. On the other hand, China has historically the problem of territorial integrity in the Sinkiang region. Majority of this region are Muslims who have been not attracted in the Chinese society for various reasons; they are strongly advocate of independence. One of the most important of these movements is the Islamic Movement of the Turkestan East, which combines independence tendencies with a reading of Islam, which is closely related to al-Qaeda. The Muslims of this region are deeply linked with the Muslims of the countries of Central Asia. It is natural that the occurrence of instability and the prevalence of extremism in these countries will have serious negative impacts on Sinkiang. That is why the Chinese are particularly sensitive to the developments in these countries, especially the prevalence of extremism. Indeed, the fight against the three evil forces of "terrorism,

³"Developments of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and membership of Iran", listed in: center.aspx / www.csr.ir

extremism and separatism" listed as one of Shanghai's main priorities of the organization is a reflection of this concern (Talebifar and Jafari Pasquaybi, 2008). On this basis, it can be said that at the level of regional analysis, for China, the Organization of Shanghai firstly, is a tool for institutional stabilization in the security environment of the country, and secondly, as an institutional tool to deal with the threats facing its territorial integrity.

✓ **International level**

The rapid economic growth since the country's entry into the era of "reforms and open doors" has made the conditions necessary to move it toward becoming a great power. This growth is such that China, after two decades of economic development, has succeeded in losing its bankroll economy and reaching the fourth largest economy in the world with more than \$ 2 trillion in gross domestic product (Zhao, 2002). From the perspective of some international policy thinkers, the achievement of an actor in a state of "great power" takes place in three stages:

- The first stage is the acquisition of power standards. At this stage, an actor in various aspects of power, especially the economic and military spheres, gradually gains those standards that are comparable to other powers.
- Secondly, this actor seeks to turn power into influence. In other words, it can be said that with the growth of abilities, the interests of the actor are also redefined, and for the sake of protection and advancement, the conversion of power into influence becomes necessary. Gaining influence as the history of international politics` shows can be obtained in many ways. One of these ways is the engagement of other actors in a network of institutions and collective behaviors to protect the interests of the great power by producing the "good behavior".
- In the third stage, the great power seeks to exclude its rival powers from its immediate security environment, because it sees their existence and influence as a threat and, secondly, as a barrier to maintaining their own interests (Vaezi, 2006, No.6).

The behavior of China in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization can be analyzed in this framework. China is an actor who has passed the stage of achieving great power standards, and now in the second stage, it involves engaging other actors in a network of institutions and collective behaviors in their own area, so that it can protect its interests through the production of a desirable collective behavior. In this regard, the country has embarked upon the various initiatives in different aspects of its security environment, in which the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is one of the most important examples.

• **Russia's approach to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization**

From Russia's point of view, what threatens most of all its national security is the threats facing the country from the south, especially in the Central Asian and Caucasian regions where religious extremism prevails. One of the reasons for the instability of the Chechen crisis is the support of the extremist religious forces of the Chechen rebels. In addition, large quantities of narcotics produced in Afghanistan are trafficked into Europe through Russia. Also, the problem of smuggling weapons from this region has become problematic. Because Russia alone cannot cope with these problems, the SCO provides an appropriate mechanism for combating terrorism, extremism, and drug and arms` trafficking (Zhao, 2002). Russia, like China, has pursued, with a range of concerns at the regional and international levels, the creation and strengthening of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization over the past ten years:

✓ **Regional level**

At the regional level, Russia's concerns are centered, as Putin emphasized, on terrorism, separatism and extremism, but these are not the most important issues that persuaded the Russians to establish the SCO. To deal with these threats, the Russians had the most important organization of the Collective Security Treaty. Russia is also keen on establishing close relations with China in the exchange for opening its market for

Chinese goods, weapons and energy to the country. The probability of these goals will be greater in the framework of collective cooperation.⁴

✓ **International level**

What seems to have made the Russians more interested in the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was, first of all, the international concerns of Russia, and later on, the country's need to find an alliance on global issues. Russia's long-term goal of forming this Organization is coalition for its international goals. Russia prefers to cooperate with China in the region in the face of the excesses of the United States in the region of Central Asia and its unilateral efforts on the world issues, one of the most important of which was the unilateral withdrawal of the country from the anti-ballistic missile treaty (ABM) and encouraging the Central Asia countries to the further cooperation with the members of this organization. Russia, because it cannot enjoy Soviet power, seeks to create a situation in which, it is linked with the countries with the important regional and geopolitical roles. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization allows Russia to benefit from strong ties with China. This is a kind of preventive measure of the possible intense operation of US and its allies against Russia's interests in the region (Shouri, 2014). Russia has taken three policies towards the extension of the European security area to include Central Asia:

- An attempt to multipolarize the world;
- An attempt to protect Russia's unity and preserve superiority in Central Asian countries;
- Creating regional partnerships;

These policies allow Russia to ensure its security in a condition of a lack of resources in a transitional period of development (Robin Betty and Rachel Bratson, 2001). Russia's goals of establishing and trying to strengthen the Shanghai Cooperation Organization can be summarized in the following cases:

- The effort to effectively reduce the influence of the West, especially the United States and NATO in Central Asia, that is a strategic threat to Russia.
- An attempt to create a multipolar world by providing an equal status with other major powers relying on China.
- Strengthening its international reputation and prestige.
- Having balance in Western-oriented and Orientalist activities of Russia.
- Strengthening one of the most vulnerable peripheral and security environments in the Far East and Central Asia.
- Helping to unite Russia and possessing superior hands in Central Asian countries.
- Creating a secure environment for more focusing on the economic development reforms.
- Attracting more Central Asia's economic and trade cooperation.
- Countering religious extremism, separatism and international terrorism (Talebifar, A. & Jafari Pasquaybi, 2008).

• **Central Asian countries' approach to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization**

With the exception of Turkmenistan, which has adopted a policy of impartiality and isolation in its foreign relations, the other four Central Asian countries, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, are the main members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Although the Central Asian region is strategically important, it has a fragile political and security situation, and has become a place of the presence and competition of the great powers (Akhavan Kazemi, 2006).

Some of the basic features of the Central Asian region are:

- Central Asia is geographically located at the intersection of Europe in the west and Asia in the east, and is limited to Russia from the north and from the south to the Muslim world.

⁴"China, Russia a Central Asia Unit against US Missile Shield". in <http://www.asiadaily.com>.

- Central Asia has natural resources, especially oil and gas and rare metals. This area has the second largest reservoir of energy in the world.
- Geostrategically, Central Asia is the only region in the world that has connected the four nuclear powers of Russia, China, India and Pakistan.
- In addition to Russia, China and the United States, the European Union, India, Iran, Turkey and Israel have also made extensive efforts to reach and influence the region (Akhavan Kazemi, 2006).

In addition to the general characteristics, some specific features of the countries of the region can be mentioned:

Non-Permanent members (observer)

- **India**

Indians are inclined to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization because of the need to confront Islamist radical groups and the instability and access to the Central Asian market and energy sources, and, despite US efforts, India has become more inclined toward this organization. In fact, India, while respecting its relations with the United States, is more inclined to cooperate with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization for the above reasons. It should be noted that India currently has close ties with Tajikistan and has amilitary Air Base in Ainy of Tajikistan, which holds 12 MIG-29 from the Indian Air Force. India has also received official Kazakh support for joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.⁵ Regarding India's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, it should be noted that India and Russia have very good relations with each other, which is rooted in the past, and its history dates back to the early 1970s. That's why Russia supports India's membership in this organization. China is concerned about the presence of India (as a strategic competitor) in Central Asia. At the same time, although China does not have a strong desire to India's membership, the anti-American considerations can persuade China to accept it. A membership of India with a population of more than a billion people could create an increasing power for the organization (Akhavan Kazemi, 2006).

- **Pakistan**

Pakistanis also tend to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in terms of access to the Central Asian energy resources and expansion of economic ties. On the other hand, Pakistan sees the Central Asian region as its strategic depth and is sensitive to its events. Regarding Pakistan's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the members are uncertain about its membership for its support of the Taliban and some radical Islamist groups. On the other hand, Russia has stated that it will support Pakistan's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, only if India will also join. However, at a Shanghai Cooperation Session in Shanghai in 2006, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf was formally invited to attend the session (Darabi, 2004).

- **Mongolia**

Mongolia has also been keen to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, due to its foreign policy economic approach, to use its financial resources and its effective presence on the wider market of the organization as well as to gain regional prestige.

As a whole, as long as the SCO has not obtained the necessary strength and credibility, it will refrain from accepting new members, especially members whose presence will create tension and which will lead to a strong reaction from the United States or the European Union. Of course, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization can accept some other countries, such as Iran, as a winning card for bargaining with the West and use it to earn points. It's very interesting that the United States has also applied for observer membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and has also proposed to participate in joint military

⁵"An overview of the impact of Iran, India and Pakistan's observer membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization", Islamic Republic of Iran News Agency, 2015.

maneuvers of members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, both of which have been rejected by the members of the organization. In addition, Belarus has also requested the membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which Russia has opposed to the idea that Belarus is not an Asian country, and has emphasized the Asian element of the organization. Also, Vladimir Putin, in his visit to India in 2002, endorsed the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as an Asian identity having a Pan-Asian structure (Akhavan Kazemi, 2006). On the other hand, the analysts believe that India and Pakistan's lack of membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization will make the influence of this organization to be reduced and China's domination over the energy sources of Central Asia and the Caspian region to be neutralized. Of course, the longstanding differences between India and Pakistan over the issue of Jammu and Kashmir affect their membership process.⁶ In any case, it must be acknowledged that the future of this organization will largely depend on its new members.

Status of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the regional and global relations

Transregional powers` approach to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

✓ United States

In general, the reasons for the importance of Shanghai Cooperation Organization for the benefits of the United States are as follows:

- China and Russia, as the two veto nuclear powers of the Security Council, as the main motivators of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), have been struggling with fulling the vacuum of power created after the collapse of the Soviet Union in Central Asia through the Organization, and the United States has been working on removing the vacuum of power. Such movements of the US's rivals in the Central Asia will jeopardize the strategic interests of this country in this region of the world.
- Members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are working together to reduce US presence in the geopolitical, geo-economical and geo-strategic areas of Central Asia. This endangers the interests of the United States and it is probable to become an anti-American alliance in the medium and long term.
- China's economic development through the mechanisms such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a potential threat to the global hegemony of the United States. In the future, the organization can fulfill China's desire to achieve a diversified route to obtain energy resources that are needed for rapid and stable economic development. The occurrence of this equation conflicts with the long-term interests of the United States in Central Asia.
- The acceptance and participation of US foreign policy opponents in the organization is one of the main concerns of the United States in relation to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a clear example of which is the acceptance of Iran's observer membership.
- Shanghai Cooperation Organization's request in 2005 from US to withdraw its troops from Central Asia, as well as the non-acceptance of the United States Observer Membership in 2006, has led US to a negative perception of the organization's goals and future (Khoshandam, 2008).

✓ The EU and NATO

Being Central Asia and the Caucasus in the neighboring countries of Russia, China and Iran has made the region politically and strategically important for the European Union and NATO. After the US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq and the transfer of responsibility of Afghanistan to NATO, the EU and NATO's attention to this region has doubled; some believe that NATO has taken measures in the region in line with its own interests, which could lead to the expansion of the military coalition with the Caucasus and Central Asia's countries. The United States and its European allies, in the form of NATO, designed and operated two

⁶ "An overview of the impact of Iran, India and Pakistan's observer membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization", Sharq newspaper, 2014.

distinct and, of course, relevant, approaches in order to align the process of regional developments with their great and long-term interests:

- Encountering military and security threats in the framework of NATO.
- Creating political, economic and social changes in the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

In the framework of such a large-scale plan, the two North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, in the framework of the distinct specific tasks, achieved two key places in Western interaction with the regional developments, and were proposed by the European and American strategists as two fundamental mechanisms (Khani, 2006). Altogether, through the deployment of high-level military officials of NATO to the region, and the signing of cooperation documents and the creation of military bases in the region, joint military exercises with the countries of the region, the formation of training courses and holding military conferences in the framework of the Partnership for Peace and the provision of financial, technical and logistical assistance to the countries of the region, the EU and NATO are expanding their influence in the region (Dervishi Se Talani, 2005).

✓ **Turkey**

Turkey can be considered as the first influential country in the Central Asian region. As long as the Soviet Union existed, Turkey acted as if the Turk Republics in the eastern part of the country did not exist.

New opportunities in Central Asia and the Caucasus have led to a revolution in Turkey's foreign policy. Ankara is now faced with new and unpredictable opportunities for the 1920's Turk republics. But the size of the Turkish economy itself has its own real limitations on its capabilities in Asia. Although Turkey can quickly expand its options in Central Asia, it cannot alone replace Russia's influence in the region for a long time. Central Asian states are not seeking to replace the Turkish leader for Russians. Turkey's role in the region, at this time, will face a lot of new options and problems. The emergence of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the resentment of Russia and China are among them (Talebifar and Ghazizadeh, 2003). While Russia is aware that can no longer play a complete political and economic unipolar system in the region, Turkey seems to be potentially the largest single rival in the region in the long run.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Regional and Global Geopolitical Policy

In considering the role and position of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in regional and global relations, two important points should be noted:

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the West (USA).
- The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Afghan crisis.

It seems that these two issues are closely related to each other. Nowadays, the West in Afghanistan is acting on the behalf of international and regional actors. In addition, the United Nations, NATO, the European Union, the World Bank and other institutions in Afghanistan defend the interests of the West. Despite the large number of foreign actors in Afghanistan, including countries such as the United States, Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Turkey, Australia, Iran, Pakistan, India and a number of eastern European states, the key role is played by the United States. It depends on several factors:

- First, the US has the largest military force in Afghanistan (34,000 people).
- Second, the United States is the largest country contributing to Afghanistan.

Therefore, in the discussion of possible cooperation between the SCO and NATO in Afghanistan due to common concerns such as security and stability in Afghanistan, the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking, it should be noted that any kind of cooperation between the two institutions depends on the interests, status and positions of the United States (Molazehi, 2005). On the other hand, the West did not worry about this phenomenon in the early establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Because

the West believed that in the post-Soviet territory a regional cooperation institution was created that does not constitute a threat to the interests of the West. But the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's request for a US military withdrawal from the Khanabad Air Base in Uzbekistan in 2005 led the US to become more sensitive to the activities of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Meanwhile, the United States attaches great importance to fight against terrorism and extremism, it is claimed that it has entered Afghanistan for the same reason, and that the presence of its military personnel at the Manas Air Base in Kyrgyzstan and Khanabad is an important part of the program Fighting terrorism in Afghanistan. Kyrgyzstan sufficed only with the increased cost of renting Manas airport by the Pentagon. While Uzbekistan fired US troops from Khanabad Air Base. But the United States did not even take position about the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's proposal to NATO to set a timetable for the withdrawal of foreign troops from the territory of Central Asia.

The subsequent measures of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as a structure that impacted the political developments in the Eurasian territory, prompted US and Western concerns; so in the United States a question was proposed: how could the Shanghai Cooperation Organization threaten US interests and objectives? A joint military exercise of the member countries of Shanghai Cooperation Organization under the title "Peace Mission 2007" awakened the United States and NATO. From the point of view of the scope of the territory and the number of military equipment, the exercise seriously caused US-NATO to think about the future of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Because the presence of 6500 military and 80 combat aircraft in the exercise was a sign of the seriousness of the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to defend their interests. When most Americans were not invited to oversee the process, most analysts, journalists and political figures in the United States referred to Washington as a clear sign of Moscow and Beijing. Insisting on the necessity of setting a timetable by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization for the presence of US and NATO troops in the Central Asian region - presented at the Kazakhstan Session in Almaty in 2005 - as well as the establishment of an Energy club in the Shanghai organization, this organization is a serious threat to the long-term interests of the United States. Russian President Vladimir Putin's emphasis in 2006 was on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Session in China and the fact that there is a need to form an energy club within the organization, which also increased Washington's concerns. But China does not advocate the formation of an Energy Club within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, because it is the largest energy importer, and the formation of an Energy Club is not in the interest of China (Zahedi Anaraki, 2005).

The opportunities and challenges of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

Shanghai Cooperation Organization Opportunities

The SCO, as a regional organization, has many privileges and opportunities. Among these opportunities are the following factors:

Global developments in the last decade have caused more attention to development. The emergence of new economic powers has increased energy consumption in the world. In the meantime, Asia, as the most dynamic economic region in the world, has the highest sensitivity and vulnerability in the "energy security". Energy consumption in Asia has the highest growth rate in the world; with the highest consumption and consumption growth rates and the fastest economic growth in the Asian countries, China has serious concerns about ensuring the flow of energy needed by its economy, because achieving secure energy supplies is a key factor in ensuring the continuation of modernization as a strategic choice for China. Economic growth accelerated to 90 percent in China energy-consumption over ten years (Vaezi, 2006). Therefore, it is very important for the members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to provide energy from the countries that produce the oil and gas for China, and in the next instance for India. The oil pipeline from Kazakhstan's Anaso to China's Alashankoy began early this year. The length of this oil pipeline is 2,962 km and its capacity is 20 million

tons per year (Sergey Koltshin, June 30). This pipeline can be connected to the Caspian Sea in the future, while the possibility of connecting the oil pipeline from Siberia to the China's Vaching zone also exists. A Chinese Foreign Ministry official said that the Chinese and Russian leaders agreed on the construction of this pipeline and that the expert studies will be carried out and that 2011 was intended to be benefited from the pipeline.⁷ On the other hand, the acceptance of the membership of the three countries of Iran, India and Pakistan as an observer in the Shanghai Organization significantly increased from the point of view of regional cooperation, the capabilities and capacities of this organization - if there was a strong will behind it. Having over a third of the world's population and a large part of the Eurasia region with the abundant energy resources and being in a geostrategic position between the two advanced economic spots of the world, East Asia and Western Europe has made the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) very capable and powerful from the perspective of development infrastructure elements. In addition, having four members of the ten main and observer members of the organization of nuclear capability places the organization in a high level in terms of military hardware.⁸

The vast majority of the SCO's official and observer members have totally different religions. China and Mongolia believe in Buddhism, Russia in the Orthodox Oriental Church, India in Hinduism, and Iran, Pakistan and Central Asian countries believe in Islam; in general, four religions and old civilizations are seen together in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The official and observer countries, while respecting the different religions, cultures and civilizations, can represent a symbol of understanding and dialogue between religions and civilizations in the framework of cultural cooperation, as the declared goals of the organization. Putin, the former president of Russia, is focusing on the tenth anniversary of the founding of this organization in an article on the goals of the SCO. In the cultural part, the development of cooperation and coexistence of followers of the religions of Islam, Christianity and Buddhism is one of the goals of this organization, and it hopes that this cooperation between cultures and civilizations will contribute to the global cultural heritage. (Zhao, 2002)

Challenges for the Development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

The SCO as a regional organization faces many challenges and limitations. Among these limitations are the following factors:

✓ **Potential competition between China and Russia**

China and Russia competetraditionally with each other in terms of geopolitics, geo-economy in Central Asia. With the revival of Russian national power, its traditional influence in Central Asia will be greatly strengthened. China will also gain more influence by expanding its relations with the countries of the region. If the competitive aspect of the approach of China and Russia to this region is superior to its cooperative aspect, it will have negative consequences for the development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Tabatabai, 2007).

✓ **Multilateral foreign policy of Central Asian countries**

Central Asian countries all support the development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, but they have their own political, economic, security and geographic conditions. Also, most of these countries follow a balanced foreign policy to expand their ties with major powers. This could have implications for the development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Among the relations between the Central Asian countries with the United States and NATO in the security and political spheres and the joining of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to the NATO Partnership for Peace may make the region a rivalry scene between the great powers, which does not benefit the development of The Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

✓ **The instability of states in Central Asian countries**

⁷"A look at the impact of Iran, India and Pakistan's observer membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *ibid*.

⁸"Iran and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Ambiguities and Hopes," Iranian Foreign Policy Analysis and the International System, Vice-President of Foreign Policy and International Relations, Strategic Researches Center, No. 143, September 2005.

Central Asian countries all have a very concentrated political system in which the power is centered on the President. As a result, there is no mechanism for the peaceful transfer of power in these countries, which can create uncertainty about the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

✓ **Conflicts in the relations between Central Asian countries**

Relations between Central Asian countries are very complicated. Nevertheless, because of the fact that they are all located in a region, with close links in the fields of politics, economics, culture, tradition, and religion, there are conflicts in these fields as well. If these conflicts intensify, this may have some implications for the SCO.

✓ **The difficulty of establishing synergies among the various mechanisms of cooperation in Central Asia**

There are various cooperation mechanisms in Central Asia, including the NATO Partnership for Peace program, Guam, the Eurasian Economic Community, and the Collective Security Pact (CIS). Given that there may be overlapping and conflicting issues among these mechanisms, the SCO faces a serious challenge, especially with regard to the security cooperation (Rahman, 2006).

✓ **Difficulties related to the economic cooperation**

The economic base of the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is weak. Energy and communications are two of the key areas for economic cooperation. However, the investment in the projects in these two areas should be very broad and its duration should be relatively long. China and Russia are relatively developed, but their ability to invest compared to Western countries is limited. In other areas, the level of economic cooperation is not high, and their scale is not so large, so there is no quick profitability (Zhao, 2002). The disparity and discrepancy between the members in terms of their economic abilities deprives them from equal and reciprocal cooperation. Poor countries such as Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Mongolia do not have much to offer to others, while China is competing with countries like the US, Japan and European countries on the trade issues. For this massive economic disparity among members, it is necessary to think.

Conclusion

The modern system of international relations remains in a state of imbalance as it passes through a stage of profound transformation and painful evolutionary development (Alimov, 2018). Given the fact that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has been focusing more on the regional issues in the last ten years and has not had a clear position on the international issues, it can be said that, like many other regional cooperational organizations among the developing countries, there will be internationally little scope for the comprehensive development and political engagement. The impossibility of making a role refers to the political situation of the organization. According to the situation of China and Russia in the international system, these analysts believe that the two countries will not be able to play a decisive role in the foreseeable future. Because serious engagement with international issues is considered to be counterproductive to US policies, and these two countries do not have a counterweight to the United States. For this reason, the organization cannot play a role in the international power equations politically in relation to the important international issues. It can also be said that the role of Russia in the structure of the international system is planned to fulfill the future goals of China and the relative revival of Russia. The rivalry between the great powers and the opposition to unilateralism and the desire of the great powers to play a more active role in the international system will provide a new opportunity for the organization to act.

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