

The SCO and the Strategic Panorama of South-Central Asian Region; A Study through the Lens of Pakistan

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer (Corresponding Author)

Lecturer in International Relations at Informatics Group of Colleges Arifwala

Email: akramzaheer86@yahoo.com

Gul-i-Ayesha Bhatti

PhD Scholar of International Relations, Minhaj University Lahore

Dr. Binish Khan

Lecturer in Pakistan Studies, Government Graduate College Arifwala

Publication History:

Received: March 01, 2023

Revised: March 07, 2023

Accepted: March 18, 2023

Published Online: April 01, 2023

Keywords:

SCO,
Geopolitics,
Strategy,
BRI,
Paradigm Shift,
Central Asia,

Research related to Academic Areas:

Pakistan Studies, Central Asian Studies, SCO
Studies, Post-Soviet Studies, China Studies,
Regional Studies,

Acknowledgment:

This paper has been extracted from the PhD dissertation of **Author 01** while, **Author 02** & **Author 03** assisted him to modify the facts.

Ethical Consideration:

This study has no aim to hurt any ideological or social segment but is purely based on academic purposes.

Abstract

The Asian continent has recently gained special importance in world politics because of its rich human and material resources. It has also shown a rapid developmental pace in the second decade of the 21st century. Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and other Central Asian states are now forming Asian hubs. China on one side and Russia on another of these countries, make this region extremely significant from the strategic and geopolitical points of consideration. It is important to note that all these above-mentioned states are mainly Islamic countries sharing a common faith but with violent sectarian gulfs occasionally triggered as well. The region has long been suffering from cold war impacts as it was sandwiched between Russian and American regional attempts for supremacy. SCO's role in conflict resolution and regional development is vital these days. This article examines the possible clash of interests among international and regional stakeholders with the growing influence of SCO. It will help understand the changing paradigm of the geopolitical nature of the region.

Copyright © 2023 IPICS Journal as an academic research-oriented non-profit initiative of Rehmat and Maryam Researches (SMC-Pvt) Limited, publishing from Islamabad, Rawalpindi, and Lodhran under the registration from Security and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP). This is an open-access article. However, its distribution and/or reproduction in any medium is subject to the proper citation of the original work.

Introduction

Central Asian and South Asian geographical region is of prime importance in 21st century. China has the largest interest regionally in this area for the reason that its border is shared with Pakistan, Tajikistan, Kirgizstan and Uzbekistan. China's interest can also be weighed because of its mega projects such as Belt Road Initiative and CPEC. China is even a greater investor than Russia at this point in time. Russia's

involvement is crucial because of this century-long rule in the area and interest. The possibility of Russia's intensions to regain power in the addressed region is glowing. Recent role of China and Russia in the region is very active and in the limelight on the media. Pakistan has a warm sea on one side and the other side is a natural resource-rich Central Asian states and China alike to link to the Middle-East and rest of the world. Central Asian countries do have the opportunity to link through Iran through various proposed port to have access to warm waters for trade.

The connection through Iran and Pakistan's warm water is closest and most convenient to Central Asian states as compare to other routes towards Europe which appear longer and more expensive. Pakistan's access to this region until Ukraine is either possible through Afghanistan or through Tajikistan but Pakistan doesn't have any direct land route with Tajikistan. There is a small land strip of Afghanistan in between Pakistan and Tajikistan which is mainly highland territory (Radionov & Gasiyarov, 2021, p. 267). Industrial development in Europe brought infrastructure, communication and cultural advancements in all around the globe as well. These developments left a long-lasting impact on the modern world by creating a gap in rich and poor countries of haves and have not but coupled with the concept of enlightenment which supported cultural and social openness (Hongming, 2016, p. 19). Both addressed states are the outcome of development. Asian continent is witnessing a rapid progress in all spheres of its life. GDP growth is the highest in recent years compared with rest of the world regionally (The World Bank, 2021). Road and Belt initiative, China Pakistan economic corridor and multiple other projects would bring people closer and cultures mixed (Menhas, Mahmood, tanchangia, Safdar, & Hussain, 2019). Is the Asian region capable of digesting such speedy progress to its strongly rigid heterogeneous community with the features of lack of tolerance, fundamentalism, radicalism and extremism? This article will analyze the potential of Asian region to accommodate such grand changes. This will also discuss the deep-rooted connection of material development and cultural-social openness.

Research Methodology

Historical and descriptive methodology will be used along with the evaluative approach to compare data. secondary sources will be used during the course of research work which may include survey reports, newspapers, articles, statistical data, research works, poll results. The nature of the research demand qualitative method and quantitative method to be used for the purpose of analysis and collection of data.

Geopolitics of South-Central Asia

The Asian continent has seen many changes in the recent era. The liberation of many central Asian States from the clutches of Communist and NATO's departure from the region has made this region an opportunity for many to benefit from this openness of region. Central Asian states knowing their potential became active in developing new relationships. War-stricken decades caused losses of lives, values, assets and morale. All these elements post-independence of Soviet Union became important to be restored (Lane, 2014, p. 132). China as an immediate neighbor is already a stable international actor with a rightful stake other than anyone else from outside. China economic success can be assured if China is able to get a reasonable share from this region. It has the geographical, military and economical strategic advantages because of its location and rich resources. Afghanistan's presence in the middle of Central and south Asia is a big challenge for China (G Weinbaum, 2006, p. 03). It may be the biggest hurdle in connecting various trade and link routes. Other stakeholders have strong presence in Afghanistan and their presence may produce an obstacle in China's peaceful economic rise. China and Russia are two major regional Asian powers to control and influence developments in the Asian region. American long-standing presence in the region cannot be denied as well. Recently there are great developments in world power's economic and strategic structures. A regional organization such as SCO is becoming greatly influential and creating

an effective order in the region. At the same time declining American influence can also be witnessed when states are taking long-run mega initiatives without American presence in contracts such as Pakistan and China in CPEC and China with other states in Belt Road Initiative project. Chinese world economic influence is at a very rapid pace which has made her leading economic leader and long-run investments in Asian region seem a very strong foundation for regional hegemony while Russia also seems equally interested in regaining its glory. Both are key actors in conflict resolutions these days. Asian continent with almost half of the world's population contains three major atomic powers China, India and Pakistan closely bordered with each other. China as an emerging regional and international actor is playing a very active role in regional politics. Pakistan remained an important state for superpowers in the recent past because of its geographical location and strategic position. However, Indian role has always been suspicious in regional stability (Guota, September 13, 2013, p. 60). Security and stability are the backbones of any progress. Past events such as separation of Bangladesh, insurgencies of Tamil tigers, separatists of Baluchistan, tyranny in Kashmir, terrorist support in Afghanistan and issues in Maldives and Nepal reflect Indian negative role in the region (Zaheer, November 27, 2021). India seems to be an opportunist state which would put others on stake for her benefits. It is very important to analyze Indian futuristic strategy for region. Indian past is maligned with support for adding tensions and accelerating of conflicts. There is also need to discuss Indian response to new Asia. Whether India will play role in leading the region to heights of progress, stability, and development or it will reflect on its previous trends. This dimension will decide whether India would accept the growing influence of SCO or it would react negatively. China needs to bring India to a harmony for regional development (Zhu, 2019, p. 38).

Afghanistan has been a safe haven for militants who were involved to destabilize regional countries. Even Chinese Muslim province Sinkiang (Xinjiang) remained affected area from various Tajik and Uzbek militant organizations. Pakistan has helped greatly China in dealing with militants and sharing security joint activities to safeguard the region. The proposed TAPI which will link Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India can be a great economic project but hurdles are large in number in its materialization (Bhatti, December 16, 2022). Iran and Pakistan are major powers to benefit and compete if central Asia needs access to warm waters and trade route to Europe, Middle East and Africa (Khetran, Winter 2016, pp. 63-64).

Iran-India joint project at Chabahar is one of the efforts to attract central Asian states but at the same time IPI Iran-Pakistan-India proposed gas pipeline is again a new development if materialized. Russia's interests are more than any other and it can be witnessed by Russian involvement in Ukraine and other regional countries. Chechnya's unrest is causing Muslims in Central Asian states with anti-Russian feelings which can lessen Russian influence (Wani, February 03, 2023).

Asian continent with its multi socio-cultural and religious diversity intensifies disputes because of the clash of philosophies and interests of various communities. It has also been a focus of international powers because of its rich resources which meet the need of the international community. Region has long been under stress because of wars and various armed conflicts. Bipolar world made Afghanistan their battlefield to contain each other. Afghanistan connects central and south Asian states and all neighboring countries got a stake in this battle of superpowers. The whole region faced the pressure of this regional international conflict (Liu & Zhang, 2019, p. 291). Now when China and Russia are seeking economic progress in the region, the security issue is to be tackled as well. There is a need for the analysis of the security state and solutions being offered to this region along with developmental progress initiated for long run to exist. It would also discuss the strengths and weaknesses of proposed security orders especially the Consociational Security Order (CSO) mainly associated with Chinese strategies. It is almost impossible to gain economic success without being fully secure. Security and energy are the backbones of development. Both are essential needs of thriving states (Hachigian & Sutphen, 2009, p. 11). Before execution of any

plan or strategy, a country has to arrange inputs for growth which are security and energy. Unfortunately, energy rich region is lacking security for many decades. In order to restore peace and improve security measures an effective organization is a must need. UNO failures in maintaining peace and security devastated the situations in many regions and conflicts were increased. Now the world is looking for more effective organization which can serve the purpose of mediator to resolve issues. SCO can fill this gap by actively playing role in resolving conflicts and bringing nations in close cooperation. Possibilities are bright and declining American influence has given an opportunity to new international actors to avail this status which the China best suits (Hass, March 01, 2021).

SCO and Belt Road Initiative

Belt Road Initiative has emerged as a 21st-century mega economic and strategic project. It has the potentials to challenge existing economic and political orders. One of the world's most populated regions is the direct beneficiary of its materialization. Within the SCO, the nexus of three atomic powers (China-India-Pakistan) and almost world's half population can make it hit a big success which may propose a new shift into current economic and political power balances (Sood, 2022, pp. 263-264). Pakistan's rule can be very vital because of CPEC as a sign of prosperity and great opportunity for the nation. This may also require a greater policy revival for Pakistan which can further lead to other regional alliances to readjust their future growth dimensions. Therefore, the role of a regional organization SCO may likely be responsible for dispute settlements and motivation for stakeholders. It will also evaluate the strengths as well as limitations of the success of SCO in its functioning. In addition, it will also possibly will the adjustments of orders and the possibilities of grand shifts in the power structure regionally and globally. SCO may also focus on the futuristic dimensions of various developmental projects in case of both successes and failures. Immediate reactions are noted carefully to perceive various state policies being frequently shifted and restructured in compliance with its execution. New alliances are getting stronger and previous relations are revitalized indicating greater future changes as well. China can be most important country to initiate land links and give passages to bordering states. These routes and regional role of SCO is crucial in this decade to bring countries to be useful for each other. A biggest hurdle in the development of the region particularly in Afghanistan is the unrest of more than four decades of international clash in the region (SIPRI; Asif, January-March 2011, p. 1).

The SCO: Institutional Balance, Expansion and Effects

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization stemmed mainly from growing concerns about security threats in the Central Asian region in the absence of regional institutions to deal with evolving threats. The Soviet Union collapsed in late 1991, and the newly independent states of Central Asia faced serious challenges of their own. Because the so-called three evils (Terrorism, Separatism and Religious Extremism) are international and cross-border in nature, China alone cannot adequately remedy them in the region. At the same time, years of border negotiations, military confidence-building, and the gradual development of mutual trust between China and its Central Asian neighbors and Russia laid the foundation for the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and Beijing took advantage of this chance and directed it (Yuan, July 11, 2022, p. online). This was a fact that it was not so much dissatisfaction with the existing arrangements as the absence of any institution considered an adequate response to emerging security threats that led to the creation of the SCO.

The SCO evolved as a regional multilateral organization out of the so-called Shanghai Five, China and the former Soviet Union (and since late 1991 Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan). During the negotiation process, the so-called "Shanghai Spirit" was promoted, which promotes "mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, mutual consultation, respect for the diversity of cultures and the pursuit of common

development (Jinping, September 16, 2022)." All parties, large and small, have committed to finding peaceful solutions of conflicts through dialogues, cooperation, coordination and confidence building (Yuan, July 11, 2022). In 1996 and 1997, the two major military confidence-building agreements were signed, with troop and arms reductions along the China-Russia and China-Central Asia borders (Yuan J.-d. , 1998, p. 72) (Yuan 1998). Following the successful conclusion of the border talks, Beijing and its counterparts in Moscow recognized the need for a regional organization to address the emerging non-traditional security challenges of the still fragile of Central Asia states and China's northwestern region of Xinjiang. In June 2001, in Shanghai, the original five parties to the border talks and Uzbekistan established the SCO, with the key objective of combating the so-called three evils (Yuan., 2010, p. 857). Over the past twenty years, working closely with Russia and Central Asian members, Beijing has not only continued to uphold the Shanghai Spirit (Jinping, September 16, 2022), but has also promoted the principles of respect for sovereignty, non-interference and equality within the organization, multipolarity and multilateralism in international politics, and strong partnership-based cooperation between members and state-organized economic regionalization and globalization (Lijian, December 20, 2021).

However, Russia's suspicions arouse about China's intentions, but at the same time to promote norms and rules that would promote multilateral and bilateral relations within the framework of the SCO, Russia would struggle to prevent (Sun, August 26, 2021). Russia clearly wants to retain its influence in Central Asia, which was traditionally part of the former Soviet Union and is now seen as both its backyard and the heart of Eurasia where it has a vital geopolitical interest. After the establishment of the SCO, Moscow continued to promote the indispensable role of the CSTO as a critical security actor in the region (Yildirimckar, October 2019, p. 98), of which China is not a member, and launched the EAEU in 2015 with Belarus and Kazakhstan where it remains a supreme body. The dilute influence of the SCO where China wields more influence and Moscow seeks to counter internally through institutional balancing. Russia's role in the SCO is also unsure: it sees its value as a collective counterforce vis-à-vis the United States and the West, but its limited capabilities also drive a wedge between its commitments to the organization and what it can contribute and lead (Yuan J. , July 11, 2022, p. online).

This explains why the CSTO and the EAEU are more substantively important to Moscow, while the SCO is more symbolic. From Beijing's perspective, maintaining a stable working relationship with Moscow both within the SCO and throughout the wider Central Asian region represents an institutional balancing effort to maintain Russia while Russia's hedging behavior reflects its attempt at cooperative hegemony with China as power asymmetry continues to grow (Bossuyt & Kaczmarek, Jan 06, 2022). In many ways, the SCO has enabled China to project power into Central Asia, as well as secure energy supplies and advance its economic interests. Central Asian countries have also turned to China for investment, economic assistance and security cooperation. As former Soviet republics, these independent states sought a delicate balance between the region's two great powers, although its elites seem to have supported towards China, motivated largely by pragmatic reasons (Christoffersen, November 30, 2022, p. online). Beijing is taking advantage of opportunities for joint military exercises to expose the PLA to overseas experiences, coordinate with other militaries and establish military outposts in Central Asia in the name of combating the "three evils" under the patronages of the SCO. PLA outposts in Tajikistan and counter-terrorism patrols in the border area between Afghanistan, China and Tajikistan have been reported (Standish, October 14, 2021).

Indeed, a delicate and carefully nurtured co-management of the organization by Russia and China has kept the region in relative stability and the SCO viable and even flourishing. For more than two decades, the SCO has been gradually institutionalized, with well-structured layers of dialogue mechanisms ranging from annual summit meetings between heads of state and ministerial-level meetings covering defense, foreign affairs, homeland security, economic development and finance (Yuan J. , July 11, 2022; Chung,

2006, p. online). The SCO Secretariat was established in 2004; this was followed by the creation of a Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) in 2005. Over the years, the SCO has also sought to develop and encourage closer economic and energy cooperation among member states. An SCO development bank has been proposed to help facilitate regional trade and investment. Since 2005, Peace Mission, a biannual joint military exercise by member states, has taken place (Xinhua, September 21, 2021).

As the SCO has evolved, it has also faced multiple challenges, particularly from the perspective of Beijing and also Moscow using the organization as a unique institutional balancing strategy to minimize the United States larger presence (Zaheer, Ikram, Rashid, & Majeed, January 16, 2023, p. 08). In fact, the exclusive institutional balance strategy arose in the wake of several events that posed significant threats to the very viability of the SCO. The first was that the United States had been authorized by several SCO member states to establish or use military bases in support of its operations in Afghanistan. The spirit of such a military presence could become more permanent by alarming for the regional states, particularly China and Russia. United States support for what was dubbed Kyrgyzstan's 'Tulip Revolution' in 2005 convinced Beijing and Moscow of the need to strengthen the organization's internal cohesion, shared values, and coordinated responses to external efforts by interference and, more specifically, pressure on the United States (IPIS, 2021, p. 01).

In June 2017, the SCO officially accepted India and Pakistan as full members of the organization. The expansion is of great diplomatic, security and economic importance to the organization, as it now covers 40% of the world's population and 20% of its GDP on the strategically critical land mass of Eurasia and South Asia (Hillman, June 08, 2017). While Russia has played an active role in promoting India's membership, the expansion has aligned with Beijing's geostrategic ambitions, as it would further expand the SCO's presence, and even influence, in two critical geostrategic regions Central Asia and South Asia (Khetran M. S., 2019a, p. 84). The inclusion of Pakistan would allow the SCO to expand its assistance and coordinate policies against terrorism and ethnic separatism that pose major threats to the security of Chinese interests. It could be argued that the expansion of the SCO to include India is an inclusive institutional balancing strategy under the prevailing rules and norms of this organization (Yuan J. , 2018 , p. 115). Beijing is keen on to promote an Asian-style security concept that emphasizes comprehensive joint cooperative security and sustainable development to counter US-led regional alliance systems and network security agreements (Zaheer, Ikram, Rashid, & Majeed, January 16, 2023, p. 08).

In addition, the inclusion of India, along with the existing BRICS group and the China-India-Russia trilateral framework, means that Washington's efforts to engage New Delhi in checking Chinese challenges in South Asia. While India is likely to continue to establish strong and cooperative ties with Washington as important foreign policy goal. SCO membership and shared perspectives with China to promote a multipolar international order also suggest that India would be more watchful within the SCO or be a part of any encirclement against China. Indeed, India's membership, in addition to its participation in the Asian Infrastructure Development Bank (AIIB) as a founding member, suggests that it was drawn to the potential security and economic benefits (Kumar, February 27, 2014). The first round of expansion of the SCO took place at a critical moment in international politics. China was in a much stronger position than when the organization was created more than 15 years ago, to consolidate and expand its influence and promotes the kinds of diplomatic and economic agendas that would serve its national interests (Doshi, *The Long Game*, 2021, p. 261).

Under the Obama administration, Washington sought to maintain its primacy in Asia by launching a multi-pronged rebalancing or pivoting strategy, largely in response to growing perceived and actual Chinese power in the region. Although largely seen in its military aspects as redeploying most United States naval and air assets in Asia, the Obama administration has actually placed a greater emphasis on building

diplomatic relations and security partnerships (Sutter, 2009, pp. 189-190). The SCO expansion further cements Beijing's growing influence in Central Asia and extends to the subcontinent. It advances an agenda that China has been pursuing for years but has so far been unable to make significant progress. Indeed, the SCO has been a testing ground for China to play a significant role in both launching and leading a regional organization vital to its national interests. The creation and consolidation of the SCO has helped member states not only to better coordinate and deploy resources in response to these challenges but has also, facilitated a sense of common interests and encouragement for cooperation. A stable Central Asia and the cooperative nature of SCO members assist an interest regarding maintaining regional security, stability, and cooperation in energy, trade and investment.

It goes without saying that the expansion of the SCO also carries potential risks and security especially in the Indo-Paki and Pak-Iran tension and conflicts. At the same time, Chinese assessment at the time noted more gains and opportunities than potential challenges and even serious problems; it turned what were perceived as manageable risks into major diplomatic, security, and economic advantages for the legitimacy of the organization, its dynamics, and its geopolitical significance, were greatly underestimated, as subsequent events will show. Given the ongoing conflicts between India and Pakistan and rising tensions between China and India, preventing them from bringing their differences within the organization has become a critical management issue for the region (Zaheer M. A., China's Foreign Policy towards Pakistan and India, August 26, 2022).

Conclusion

SCO has recently taken active participation in multiple dimensions to resolve regional conflicts among Asian states. Its sphere of influence is on a rapid rise and this reflects a big change in the strategy of China and her cooperation partners. It is indeed essential for China to seek help of an international organization to legitimize her actions with the consent of stakeholders as in the case of the international hegemon US which got support from UN throughout its military and economic expansionary ventures. A series of economic corridors and huge sums of investment cannot be done without prior feasibility and a concrete plan. China's Belt Road Initiative and CPEC increasing role of SCO are all closely linked steps. SCO has filled the gap of the ineffectiveness of UN in resolving regional conflicts which might have been more influenced by US involvement for her greater interests. SCO seems to be playing the role of economic motivator and dispute mediator. Past few years are witness of the phenomenon that Asia is the focus of economic activity with greater shifts in state policies. Enhanced membership and consent for actions of SCO would further legitimize China's supremacy in the region which is less confronting and more cooperating. However, the biggest challenge in the smooth running of the state of affairs of SCO under the patronage of China is the satisfaction of other stakeholders who have deep-rooted interests in the region for more than half a century. India can play a decisive role in the triumph of projects by being part of it, as well as failure by being the antagonist. US resistance would also decide the fate of the Asian region because US along with its allies possess the potential of derailing any initiative. At the same time security measures are an essential part of successful economic projects. No development is possible without peace and a secure business environment expected by the international business community in order to invest. China needs Russian and Indian support to work together for a sustainable prosperous future. China's soft image and progressive mindset has the potential to bring these states closer to mutually benefiting from thriving economic growth. It will create regional supremacy as well as there are possibilities for international regional order to be established in the coming decades.

The Russian invasion in Ukraine has raised serious questions for China about how it can maintain an important partnership and promote its shared interests through the SCO and other regional institutions. Meanwhile, there are serious risks that, China could be faced sanctions. Putin's unwieldy behavior and

aggressive approaches to dealing with former Soviet republics, from Georgia, and Kazakhstan to Ukraine, can seriously undermine China's regional agendas and place in the SCO. How Beijing handles this difficult challenge and balances between breaking away from Russian aggression and not walking away or being seen by Moscow as a defector at a critical moment. Despite conflicting interests and differences in foreign policy approaches the strategic partnership with Russia may keep the SCO viable and united. After Iran's membership of SCO and US withdrawal, Afghanistan has widened its geographic entrenches South Central Asia could bring terrorism back to an unstable Afghanistan. But the most important transformation of the SCO as a regional institution is its utility in the Chinese special institutional balancing strategy against the US, to give the latter access and influence in Central Asia and South Asia.

References

- (2021). *The World Bank*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=TJ>.
- Ministry of Foreign Affair of the People Republic of China . (April 6, 2007). Retrieved April 11, 2022, from www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_66385/2649_665393/t309361.shtml
- Asif, F. (January-March 2011). Pakistan's ties with Central Asian States Irritants and Challenges. *Conflict and Peace Studies, Volume 4, Number 1*, 1-10.
- Bellacqua, J. (2010). *The Future of China Russia Relations*. Kentucky: University Press.
- Bhatti, G. (December 16, 2022). *The potential to become a transit economy*. Retrieved February 22, 2023, from Pakistan Today: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2022/12/16/the-potential-to-become-a-transit-economy/>
- Bossuyt, F., & Kaczmarek, M. (Jan 06, 2022). Russia and China between cooperation and competition at the regional and global level. Introduction. *Eurasian Geography and Economics, Vol 62, issue 5-6*, Online.
- Christoffersen, G. (November 30, 2022). Central Asia over a Decade: The Shifting Balance in Central Asia between Russia and China. *The Asian Forum*.
- Chung, C.-P. (2006). China and the Institutionalization of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. *Problems of Post-Communism* 53 (5), 3-14.
- Doshi, R. (2021). *The Long Game*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Doshi, R. (2021). *The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order*. London: Oxford.
- Ezdi, a. (2015). *Regional Dynamics of economic corridor*. Lahore : The News.
- G Weinbaum, M. (2006). *Afghanistan and Its Neighbors: An Ever Dangerous Neighborhood, Volume 31*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace.
- Guota, S. (September 13, 2013). *India Redefines its Role*. London: Routledge.
- Hachigian, N., & Sutphen, M. (2009). *United States, Pivotal Powers, and the New Global Reality*. Online: The Stanley Foundation.

- Hass, R. (March 01, 2021). *How China is responding to escalating strategic competition with the US*. Retrieved February 14, 2023, from Brookings: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-china-is-responding-to-escalating-strategic-competition-with-the-us/>
- Hillman, J. E. (June 08, 2017). *India and Pakistan Join the Shanghai Club*. Retrieved February 23, 2023, from CSIS: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/india-and-pakistan-join-shanghai-club>
- Hongming, Z. (2016). *Culture: urban future; global report on culture for sustainable urban development*. Online: UNESCO.
- institute, p. c. (2014). *trilateral talks*.
- IPIS. (2021). Kyrgyz Political Crisis of the "Tulip Revolution" to "Colorless Revolution": From the Perspective of Political Sociology. *Central Asian & Caucasus Journal* vol. 16, Issue 70, 1-27.
- Jinping, X. (September 16, 2022). *Ride on the Trend of the Times and Enhance Solidarity and Cooperation to Embrace a Better Future*. Retrieved February 15, 2023, from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China: https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/202209/t20220916_10767110.html
- Khetran, M. S. (2019a). SCO Membership and Pakistan: Prospects of Relations with Central Asia. *Strategic Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 2, 83-95.
- Khetran, M. S. (Winter 2016). Economic Connectivity: Pakistan, China, West Asia and Central Asia. *Economic Connectivity*, Vol. 36, No. 4, , 61-76 .
- Kumar, S. (February 27, 2014). India: Drawn To The Shanghai Cooperation Organization. *The Diplomat*, <https://thediplomat.com/2014/02/india-drawn-to-the-shanghai-cooperation-organization/>.
- Lane, T. (2014). *Lithuania: Stepping Westward*. London: Routledge.
- Lijian, Z. (December 20, 2021). *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson's Remarks*. Retrieved February 15, 2023, from Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Solomon Islands: http://sb.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/fyrth_17/202112/t20211220_10472027.htm
- Liu, W., & Zhang, H. (2019). *Regional Mutual Benefit and Win-win Under the Double Circulation of Global Value*. Peking: Peking University Press.
- Menhas, R., Mahmood, S., tanchangia, P., Safdar, M. N., & Hussain, S. (2019). Sustainable Development under Belt and Road Initiative: A Case Study of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor's Socio-Economic Impact on Pakistan. *Sustainability*, Vo. 11, Issue 21, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11216143>.
- Radionov, A. A., & Gasiyarov, V. R. (2021). *Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Industrial Engineering*. Singapore: Springer.
- Rana, A. a. (2014). *Threats to sino-pak friendship*.
- Salman, A. (2015). *Pakistan-China economic corridor A cost-benefit Analysis*. the express tribune.

- Shira, D. (May 15, 2018). *China to Sign Free Trade Agreement with Eurasian Economic Union on May 17*. Retrieved April 10, 2022, from China Breifing: <https://www.china-briefing.com/news/china-sign-free-trade-agreement-eurasian-economic-union-may-17/>
- SIPRI. (n.d.). *Central Asian security*. Retrieved February 22, 2023, from STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL: <https://www.sipri.org/research/conflict-peace-and-security/asia/central-asian-security>
- Sood, R. (2022). Managing the China, India and Pakistan Nuclear Trilemma: Ensuring Nuclear Stability in the New Nuclear Age. *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament, Volume 5, Issue 2*, 262-280.
- Standish, R. (October 14, 2021). *From A Secret Base in Tajikistan, China's War On Terror Adjusts To A New Reality*. RFE/RL's Tajik Service.
- Suisheng Zhao. (2010). *Chinese Foreign Policy: Pragmatism and Strategic behavior*. London: ME Sharpe.
- Sun, Z. (August 26, 2021). Progress and Prospects: Sino-Russian Strategic Coordination in Multilateral Mechanisms. *Chinese Journal of Slavic Studies*, Online.
- Sutter, R. (2009). The Obama Administration and US Policy in Asia. *Contemporart Southeastern Asia Vol. 31, No. 2*, 189-216.
- Wani, A. (February 03, 2023). *Slow, Not Steady: Assessing the Status of India-Eurasia Connectivity Projects*. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/assessing-the-status-of-india-eurasia-connectivity-projects/>: Observer Research Foundation.
- Xinhua. (September 21, 2021). *SCO "Peace Mission" anti-terrorism drills officially start in Russia*. Online: Xinhua Global Service.
- Yildirimckar, E. (October 2019). THE NEW CHALLENGES OF THE SCO AND TURKEY-SCO RELATIONS. *JOURNAL OF POLITICAL ADMINISTRATIVE AND LOCAL STUDIES, Vol:2, Issue:2*, 93-108.
- Yuan, J. (2018). Beijing's institutional-balancing strategies: rationales, implementation and efficacy. *Australian Journal of International Affairs, Vol. 72, Issue 02*, 110-128.
- Yuan, J. (July 11, 2022). Forging a New Security Order in Eurasia: China, the SCO, and the Impacts on Regional Governance. *Chinese Political Science Review*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41111-022-00223-7>.
- Yuan, J.-d. (1998). Sino-Russian Confidence-Building Measures: A Preliminary Analysis. *Asian Perspective 22 (1)*:, 71-108.
- Yuan., J. (2010). China's Role in the Establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. *Journal of Contemporary China 19 (67)*, 855–869.
- Zaheer, M. A. (August 26, 2022). *China's Foreign Policy towards Pakistan and India*. Retrieved February 23, 2023, from Pakistan Today: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2022/08/26/chinas-foreign-policy-towards-pakistan-and-india-2/>
- Zaheer, M. A. (November 27, 2021). *The growing influence of SCO*. Retrieved February 22, 2023, from Pakistan Today: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2021/11/27/the-growing-influence-of-sco/>

- Zaheer, M. A., Ikram, M., Rashid, S., & Majeed, G. (January 16, 2023). The China-Russia strategic relationship: Efforts to limit the United States' influence in Central Asia. *Stosunki Międzynarodowe International Relations*, vol. 3 issue 3 .
- Zhu, C. (2019). *Annual Report on the Development of the Indian Ocean Region (2018): Indo-Pacific: Concept Definition and Strategic Implementation*. Beijing: Social Science Academic Press .